



THE EFFECTS OF THE MISSIONARIES' STRATEGIES UPON THE AGIKUYU RITUALS IN THE LIGHT OF KIAMA KIA ATHURI AND ITS PERSISTENCE: A CASE OF ANGLICAN CHURCH OF KENYA, DIOCESE OF MOUNT KENYA SOUTH: 1960-2020

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Accepted: November 5, 2021

ABSTRACT

The study assessed the effects of missionary's strategies on the rituals in light of Kiama kia athuri (Council of elders) among the Agikuyu Anglican Christians in the Diocese of Mt. Kenya South (DMKS). This persistence has caused conflict in the Church leadership due to Kiama Kia athuri rituals. The Church holds the view that these rituals are contrary to the Christian faith. Kiama members maintain that the rituals are compatible with Christian faith. The general objective of this dissertation was to investigate the effects of the missionaries' strategies among the Agikuyu ritualistic life and the persistence of Kiama Kia Athuri. The guiding objectives were first, to establish how Kiama kia athuri rituals were culturally performed in the pre-colonial second, to evaluate how the missionaries historically interacted with the Agikuyu ritual practices in light of Kiama kia athuri and third, to examine how the Agikuyu in the DMKS view the practice of Kiama Kia Athuri today. The hypothesis was that proper understanding of the Kiama Kia Athuri; dealing with the loopholes in the Church and coming up with the right theology by the Church will reduce the drifting back of the Agikuyu Christians to their cultural tendencies. This was to answer the questions on how Kiama Kia Athuri functioned during the pre-colonial period, how the missionaries historically interacted with the Kiama Kia Athuri, and the present views of the Agikuyu Christians and traditionalists concerning the Kiama Kia Athuri. This was a triangulation of qualitative and quantitative research whereby a historical research methodology was used. Research design was primary and secondary data collections. Primary data involved interviews, questionnaires and focused group discussions (FGDs). Research design and technique were interviews and questionnaire. The sampling methods were purposive and snowballing. The target population was the clergy and the Christians in the diocese. The data was collected through open-ended questionnaire, semi- structured interviews for in-depth investigation. The research results showed that there was a problem with Christian with its aspects of sacrifices (blood) praying facing Kirinyaga and libations. However, the study revealed that amicable dialogue can reduce the rift between Kiama and the Church.

Key Words: *Kiama Kia Athuri, Agikuyu Rituals, Anglican Church*

CITATION: Ndung'u, S. N., Onyango, E., & Githuku, S. (2021). The effects of the missionaries' strategies upon the Agikuyu rituals in the light Of Kiama Kia Athuri and its persistence: A case of Anglican church of Kenya, diocese of Mount Kenya South: 1960-2020. *The Strategic Journal of Business & Change Management*, 8 (4), 643 – 675.

INTRODUCTION

The early missionaries in Kenya interacted with the local communities in their religious functions. They viewed Africans' religiosity as incompatible with the Christian faith. However, these cultural-religious practices and customs have persisted. The main aim of this study is to analyze why *Kiama Kia Athuri* has persisted among the *Agikuyu* Anglican Christians. What is its effect on the church?. The study investigated the missionaries' encounter with the *Agikuyu* culture and their influence in this process. The study further explored today's views of *Agikuyu* concerning the place of *Kiama kia Athuri* vis-à-vis the Christian faith in the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK), DMKS.

The *Agikuyu* had their social organization and structure before the coming of missionaries and colonialists. This was through the Council of Elders, *Kiama kia Athuri* or *Kiama kia Mhuri* or *Athuri a Kiama*. This was supreme in religion-political and socio-economic entity. The missionaries emphasized the worship of God of Heavens (Yahweh) and the atoning sacrificial blood of Jesus Christ. The *Agikuyu* worship *Ngai* (God) of the Mountain-*Kirinyaga* (Mt. Kenya) whom they approach through animal sacrifices, praying facing *Kirinyaga*.

In the recent past about 17 years ago, there has been a regrouping of *Agikuyu* cultural groups such as *Thai*, *Kiama kia Ma*, *Ngwata Ndai*, and *Mungiki* advocating for the old *Agikuyu* way of worship to *Ngai* led by *AGikuyu* elders. Several *Gikuyu* councils such as *Kikuyu* Council of Elders Association Trust (KCEAT) registered in 2014 and *AGikuyu* Council of Elders (GCE) registered in 2018. This is an indication that the *AGikuyu* people are persisting to hold to their culture.

The study focused on *Kiama Kia Ma* adherents who adhere to Christian faith. First, this is a relatively new term adopted around 2008 perhaps in relation to post-election violence (PEV) aiming at brokering peace with elders of other ethnic groups (see Englebert, 2002:52). Early writers such as Leakey

(1977), Kenyatta (1938) and Bewes (1953) among others do not have this title. Secondly, they might have adopted this title to distinguish and disassociate themselves with the above radical and extreme functions which advocate for female circumcision and divination.

Anglican faithful in DMKS have joined *Kiama kia Ma*. This has created some misunderstanding. Some Christians view *Kiama Kia Ma* adherents as backsliding to the pagan traditional way of rituals, worship and as a form of syncretism. However, Kiarie (2011) quoting James A. Scherer and Stephen Bevans (1999) notes that syncretism is not a problem of a local church, but its universal problem. He alludes those critics of syncretism argue that all religions including Christianity practice syncretism. The term has been used negatively by some quarters such as Christian missionaries when they encounter with other cultures especially in Asia and Africa, while African theologians who advocate for acculturation view it positively. Christians Africans view syncretism negatively saying, through the blood of Jesus, people are redeemed from their cultural inclinations, there is nothing good that can be borrowed from the culture while African Christians view syncretism positively saying that culture and Christianity complement each other.

Despite these divergent theological perspectives among the Christians, the persistence is being propelled by the political and economic tendencies more than the religious aspect of it. For instance, during the Kenyatta era in 1968, the government relied on 1968 Kikuyu oaths to maintain political power within *Nyumba ya Mumbi* (the House of Mumbi) [currently the phrase *mundu wa Nyumba* (a person of same house) is being used to denote the same], this was after fallout with Jaramogi Oginga Odinga politically and assassination of Tom Mboya a Minister in Kenyatta government in a broad day light and in a cold blood which culminated in a heinous massacre when Kenyatta visited Kisumu (Sabar, 2002; 80, Githiga, 2001, 10, Elkins, 2005 ; 75, Gachini, 2014; 107). However, members of the East African Revival Movement (*EARM*) or

Tukutendereza movement resisted saying, “that they cannot mix the blood of Jesus with that of a goat”. In the Moi era, the 1982 coup de tat attempt was the genesis of cracking down of any tribal groupings. Moi muscled power to himself and all gathering were suspected to be political clandestine movement, any suspicion of rituals was taken very suspiciously and were met with ruthless hand of the government agencies and machinery (Kalu, 2005; 373). The 2007/8 PEV had political and economic inclination because *Agikuyu* elders wanted their tribesmen to continue enjoying land economic gains from the areas they were being evicted from in the Rift Valley. In fight for this political and economic dominance and gains, the adherent of *Kiama* comes from all walks of life such that Christians are being initiated to these councils.

Problem Statement

In the past seventeen years, there was an increased initiation to *Kiama Kia Athuri* (Council of elders) among the *Agikuyu* Anglican Christians whereby *Agikuyu* traditional rituals are carried out to Ngai facing *Kirinyaga*. Embracing a new phenomenon caused a change that could otherwise be felt and a concern. The missionary entry introduced aspects of the traditional changes among the *Agikuyu*. This persistence caused controversy within the Anglican Christians pertaining to rituals. This research was an attempt of evaluating effects of the missionaries’ strategies upon the *Agikuyu* culture in the light of *Kiama Kia Athuri* rituals, its’ persistence and implications among the *Agikuyu* Christians of the ACK, DMKS.

Objectives of the Study

The research aimed at evaluating the effects of the missionaries’ strategies among the *Agikuyu* establishing the implications of the persistence of *Kiama kia Ma* rituals in the Church. The study’s specific objectives were;

- Establish the way *Kiama kia Athuri* was conducted in the pre-colonial period.

- Investigate the historical interaction of the church missionaries’ strategies with *Kiama kia Athuri* process.
- Examine the present views of *Agikuyu* Christians and traditionalists about the *Kiama kia Athuri*.

The research was guided by the following hypothesis

- The proper understanding of *Kiama kia Athuri kia ma*; dealing with the loopholes in the Church and coming up with the right theology will reduce the drifting back of *Agikuyu* Christians to their cultural tendencies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The *Agikuyu* People: The *Agikuyu* originated from Gikuyu and Mumbi. Mugai (divider of all things) created the earth (Kenyatta, 1938: 32). Mugai then created *Kiri-Nyaga*, (a dotted mountain) as His dwelling place whenever He visited His people. *Kiri-Nyaga* displayed His might and majesty (Kenyatta, 1938, 33). In any difficult situation, *Ngai* advised Gikuyu to offer a sacrifice under the sacred *mukuyu* tree facing *Kiri-Nyaga* raising their hands as they prayed (Bewes, 1953; 317, Temu, 1974:78).

Agikuyu live in Central part of Kenya which they believe was bequeathed to them by *Ngai*. Its beacons are four mountains namely *Kiri-Nyaga* in the North, *Kiri-Mbiroiro* (Ngong Hills) in the South, *Nyandarua* or *Thibara* (Aberdare Ranges) in the West and *Kirima kia Njahi* (Kilimambogo) in the East (Muriuki, 1974; 26, Cavicchi, 1953; 12). The land trust-ship is under the custodian of the senior most man in the clan and under *Kiama* in the national level. The community was governed by the *Kiama kia athuri*. Temu (1972:79) notes that “to be a *kikuyu* is a religion itself”. The *Agikuyu* social organization was achieved through rites of passage, rituals and ceremonies which were very religious (Leakey, 1977:1, Wanyoike, 1974: 83). The *Kiama* was in control of the social organization and order from family level to national level though women played key roles behind the curtains (Wanyoike,

1974: 31, Worthmann, 1987: 147).

Agikuyu Rites of Passages: The *Agikuyu* rites of passage created a complex social structure that fully integrated an individual to a full member in the tribe with new authority, responsibility and functions (MacGlaser, 1964: 48, Cavicchi, 1953; 16). The memorable rites were birth, rebirth, circumcision, marriage and death (Werner, 1911; 449, Bottignole, 1984: 32, Kiboi, 2017; 9-17)). Those circumcised on the same day formed *riika* (age-group). *Riika* unified them despite coming from different location, clan, or family. They acted as one body in matters pertaining to tribe. *Riika* had a strong oneness of brotherhood, sisterhood or blood hood amongst themselves (Bunche, 1941: 49, Akiiki, 1995; 28, Kanogo, 2005; 49, see Fiedler, 1996; 97). Hence the *Agikuyu* proverbs “*Nyumba na riika itiumagwo*” (the clan and age group cannot be repudiated) and “*Riika na nyumba itiuraga*” (one does not lose the age group or the clan right) (Wachege, 1992: 11).

Before *irua* (circumcision) and after *irua*, the *irui* (initiates) were inculcated with the essential information pertaining on the law, beliefs and customs of the *Agikuyu* (Kenya, 1938:88, Worthmann, 1987: 148). After healing the *irui* discarded the old clothes and were vested with new ones, signifying transition in their lives from childhood to adulthood (Kenya, 1938:87).

Women *irui* were vested with jewelry while men were vested with warrior’s equipment’s. They were now fully fledged members of the community. Men joined the warrior grade. They started the journey to climb the four stages of *Agikuyu* eldership through payment of goat to elders every time one was expected to join the upper grade (Kirwen, 2005; 107, Getonga, 2014; 102-4, Muga, 1975:59, MacGlaser, 1964:51).

Kiama kia Athuri (Council of Elders): The *Agikuyu* were governed by *kiama kia athuri* chosen from the entire tribe. There were territorial and national units with defined responsibilities in areas of religion particularly the worship to *Ngai* and to

carry out sacrifices due to pestilence or famine (Kenya, 1938; 8, Muriuki, 1974; 128). These eldership stages were important rite of passage to *Agikuyu* men. It gave them social location of authority, influence and power. Women attained social status, responsibilities and duties as that of their husbands, “failure of a husband to go up the tribal social ladder, a wife was ridiculed by other women” (Kenya, 1938:101, Leakey, 1977:4, Hopley, 1910: 430).

The four stages of *Agikuyu* eldership are: -

Athuri a mburi imwe (Elders of one goat)

Athuri a mburi igiri (Elders of two goats)

Athuri a mburi ithatu (Elders of three goats)

Athuri a mburi inya (Elders of four goats)

The First Missionary in Kikuyu Land: The first Anglican missionary to work among *Gikuyu* was Rev. A.W. MacGregor in 1900 and Rev. Harry Leakey in 1901 respectively. They started mission station at Kabete (1900) (Temu, 1972:91, Capon, 1962:6). Kiarie (2011) quoting Barker (1986; 122) and Kamunyu wa Kang’ethe (1988; 24) notes that the CMS missionaries were aligned to the Evangelical wing (Low Anglicans) of the Church of England. They stressed on personal salvation through the blood of Jesus only and His Imminent coming therefore putting all their effort towards converting many heathens as possible. This notion made missionaries view anything in the culture as pure paganism therefore coming up with a lot of dos and don’ts. They advocated for negation of cultural norms and practices such as beer drinking, dances, ceremonies, sex (except for procreation), smoking and possession of the worldly material. Thus, they introduced theology that was selective, individualistic, pietistic and often unreflective.

For missionaries to achieve their dream of converting as many heathens as possible, Karanja (1999) argues that the CMS and CSM missions agreed in 1902 to divide Kikuyu land into spheres to ease competition of the few converts in the initial stages of evangelism. CMS got a sphere from Ngong to Mt Kenya and CSM the West of the line. Therefore, the *Agikuyu* had no choice but to

choose the Mission and the teaching; they found themselves being influenced by the teaching of the mission in their respective spheres. Joseph Wandera in Phiri argues that due to Joseph Wandera in Phiri argues that due to such arrangements it is only the Anglicans and Catholic that are across the country while Methodists, Presbyterians and Reformed are regional (2016; 785).

The Missionaries Acquire Land: In futility, MacGregor searched for land for no one was ready to sell their inheritance, a land bequeathed by *Ngai* to them. Finally, MacGregor persuaded Chege Wa Kanyi of Kabete to sell land to him. Chege agreed after consulting with his sub-clan. MacGregor paid forty-three goats all black with white patches on their necks. This land was on a patched rock which Chege had viewed of no importance to sub-clan (DMKS, 2014: 69). In this aspect, Leakey fulfilled *Agikuyu* traditional requirement for buying land.

The First Converts in *Gikuyu* Land: MacGregor started his mission work by establishing a school. The first students were children of the poor for they had no herds to look after (Bewes, 1953: 205, DMKS, 2014:70). The children of '*Nyagacu*' (unfaithful women in marriage) were enrolled in schools. This shows that the poor and those who had no influence in the society were the first to embrace Christianity. They were viewed as social outcast in the society. Elders viewed their conversion as inconsequential in the society.

The Missionaries' Conception of the *Gikuyu* and Cultural Practices

The missionaries and the European adventurers had a different opinion towards the *Agikuyu*. Majority spoke negative things while minorities were positive about *Agikuyu* people.

The Negative Attitude: Ingham (1962) and Bottignole (1984: 40) argue that "the *Kikuyu* were poorly described by the Europeans because they defended their territory". Publications back home by these European adventures portrayed Africa as "a dark continent, a place of cultureless savagery,

people living in an imaginative world of spirits, gods and demons, full of a immorality, criminality, lack of ability for organized social life, and capacity for higher civilization" (see Barnes, 2007:810, Phiri, 2016; 89, Elans, 2007; 810). Hollingsworth (1960:144) and Onyango (2003; 26) agree that Missionaries drew from Social Theory of Darwinism of superiority of races to describe Africans. They encouraged settlers to settle at Tigoni which they said had "a few savage herders, thus relocating the *Agikuyu* people to reserves and rendering others landless" (Overton, 1983: 111).

The Positive Attitude: Missionaries like Scott, Ruffie, Barlow, Bewes, Binns and Macgregor were positive about Africans (Kibicho, 2006; 47). Ingham (1962:163) and Bunche (1941:49) note "*Kikuyus* are industrious, hardworking, careful agriculturalists and sociable". Catholic missionary notes "*Agikuyu* show honesty, and rectitude, stealing is not known to them, respectful, good harmony among them is praise worthy" (Bottingnole, 1984, Cavicchi, 1953; 17). Kibicho captures the following about the *Kikuyu* sacrifices as he quotes Barlow sentiments in 1908 in CMS magazine.

The *Kikuyu* have a quite a wonderful system of sacrifices, perhaps almost unique among the tribes of East Africa... *Akikuyu agikuyu* have a distinct difference between sacrifices to *Ngai* and those to spirits, showing *Kikuyu Agikuyu* idea for the Deity, it is not so vague and confused with that of the spirits of the ancestors as it is supposed to be the case of many other tribes (2006; 84).

These missionaries first sought to understand *Agikuyu* and their culture. Each and every society has got its good and bad side; no society is perfect. Therefore, there were cases where some *Agikuyu* cultural customs failed these moral standards and biblical expectations. Missionaries ought to have rectified these shortcomings while upholding what was good using *Agikuyu* world view and thought form.

The Missionaries' Views towards *Agikuyu* Rites of Passage: The *Agikuyu* had rites of passage which were carried out by *Kiama* Elders. Many scholars have written about female circumcision saga, marriage pertaining to bride price, circumcision of boys which were in the domain of *Kiama kia athuri*. However, rites of passage on second birth, *Kiama* and *ituika* which brought a lot of controversies in the Church are scantily discussed by scholars. Therefore, this study will major on them, for they are very crucial and mandatory for eligibility in *Kiama kia athuri* initiation. Therefore, it is imperative to address how the Church engaged with these rites.

The Second Birth Rite (*Guciarwo Keri*)

Leakey notes that this rite had several terms such as "*guciarwo ringi* (to be born again); *guciarwo na mburi* (to be born by means of a sheep); and *guciarwo keru* (to be born a second time)" (1977: 550). This ceremony initiated the child to a full membership in the family; thus, severing the strong relationship of a mother and a child (Ward, 2000:268, McGlasan, 1964:49). This ceremony was performed when a child was about two and half to eleven years, giving a child his/her own identity, with a spirit and body of its own (Leakey, 1977: 550).

Second birth gave the boy the responsibility in his family such that if the father died, he could participate and assist in disposal of his body and inherit property (MacGlaser, 1964:49, Ward, 2000:208). Leakey (1977) and McGlasan (1964) agree that "this rite was compulsory and one could not undertake other rites if they had not undergone the second birth rite".

The father of the child to be reborn gave the sacrificial ram, suffocated it, and pierced its breast to draw blood. Fellow council of elders and family elders could then assist to slaughter (Leakey, 1977:550-2, Ward, 2000:268). From the skin the father cut two long straps; from right side if a child to be reborn was a boy and left side if a girl. Then the meat was roasted. Firewood used for this ceremony was fetched by boys, warriors or council

elders (Leakey, 1977:553).

The child was placed at its mother's leg and bound with sacrificial animal intestines to symbolize that the two were one. The mid-wife (if possible, the one who attended the mother during the Childs' delivery) came and cut off the goats' intestines to symbolize the severing of the umbilical cord. Cutting four times if a girl or five times for a boy; saying each time he cuts "*Ndatua*" (I give a name) other women respond "*tua*" (give a name). During the last cut the mid-wife named the child. The goats' intestines were treated as they were the afterbirth (Leakey, 1977:554). Mother's head was shaved and the hut swept. That night the parents had to have ceremonial sexual relationship twice referred to as "to make sacrifice for bearing child". However, Leakey does not mention this ritual sex and nakedness of the mother. The rest of men who participated in the sacrifice "could not sleep with wife or any woman or eat meat connected with a similar or any form of sacrifice" (Leakey, 1977:559, Ward, 2000:268).

The Missionary and *Athomi* versus Second Birth Rite

The missionaries and *athomi* objected this ceremony for it was a sacrificial ceremony involving animal and it was idolatrous. It was also very ridiculous, awkward and embarrassing for a naked boy of understanding to sit between her naked mother's legs and demand of the ceremonial sexual relation by the parents (Karanja, 1999:132, Mugambi, 1989; 42, Spencer, 107).

Athomi* *Kiama kia athuri* versus Traditionalist *Kiama kia athuri

Karanja (1999) argues that "moral decay of *athomi* as early as 1909 left the missionaries like Macgregor and Hopper at a quagmire desiring to have Christian *Kiama* based on *Agikuyu* eldership requirements and ethos". Lonsdale further argues that *Agikuyu* elders detested *athomi* as "cursed leaders", while Bewes (1953) notes that "by 1929 *athomi* wanted to be nominal Christians holding to traditional belief". Karanja (1999) argues that the greatest reason missionaries' envied *Kiama kia athuri* was

increased extra marital affairs and illegitimate pregnancies outside marriage bed among *athomis*'. Tignor (1976; 56) concurs with Karanja quipping that "*Athomis* preferred their *Kiama* to be under the authority of *Agikuyu* council of elders than *Athomi Kiama* under missionaries'. This dismayed the missionaries". Kiarie construe that "as not all those who ate the bread to their fill understood the real significance of the meal (John 6:26)", same might have happened to the early converts" (2011; 4).

Traditional council of elders was in charge of discipline in the society and there were stringent discipline and measures for the offender. For example, the *Boran* of Ethiopia represents a view held by majority of African communities in regard to pre-marital sex;

If a man was accused of having canal knowledge of an unmarried girl, it was a grave offence; he was ostracized, heavily fined and excluded from the community life. He was not allowed to attend any meeting of any kind; he was not allowed to participate in the activities of his age-mates; like going to war, hunting or attending ritual ceremonies (Mbennah, 2001:25, see Njau, 2000:38, Bewes, 1953:202).

In my view, the African dealt with equal measures such heinous acts deserved, however, the missionaries were in dilemma of how to discipline their errant members and make them accountable of their misbehaviors because they saw the African measures to curb mischief and immorality as primitive.

The bone of contention with the *kiama* was *muratina* and blood. Kenyatta (1938) and Leakey (1977) argue that *muratina* (traditional brew) used for religious ceremonies was prepared differently and ingredients used were different as *muratina* for casual drink. The elder

who prepared *muratina* for religious use was carefully selected by the elders for that special duty and purified himself for that special assignment? The *muratina*, equipment used and Ceremony were

held in great honour. Missionaries failed to inculturate these aspects towards the Altar Wine and Holy Communion service as Apostle Paul exalts in 1 Corinthians 11: 23-30. The goat or sheep used for sacrifice were without blemish and their blood held in great honour for its atoning effects. It was through them *Ngai* answered their prayer. The missionaries failed to inculturate these towards Christ as the Lamb of God and His atoning Bloodshed at Calvary. For example, Bishop Vincent Lucas of Msasi, Tanzania of University Mission of Central Africa (UMCA) felt that "the Flour sacrificed under the *msolo* tree was a true foreshadowing of Christ's True sacrifice at Golgotha, thus he regarded ATR, social order and organization as a wild tree onto which Gospel could be grafted" (Fiedler, 1996; 38).

The *Ituika* Controversy

This was the domain of the 4th graders *Kiama kia mataranguru*. The 4th graders mainly dealt with the political and religious aspect of the *Agikuyu* people. The last *ituika* (handing over of power) took place between 1890/8, when Maina *riika* handed authority to Mwangi *riika* (age groups). *Agikuyu* had two *riika's* which ruled namely Maina / Irungu and Mwangi. The members joined *riika* by birth. The rule was if the father belonged to Mwangi, the son belonged to Maina and the grandson belonged to Mwangi while great grandson belonged to Maina (Kershaw, 1996; 277, Kenyatta, 1938; 101).

A generation ruled for between 30-40years, therefore, *ituika* ceremony was expected at around 1928-1936 when *Mwangi* was to hand over to *Maina* (Cavicchi, 1953; 16, Karanja, 1999:172). Leakey notes "*ituika* was carried out from territorial to National level" (1977:6). The requirement was that the incoming generation paid goats to outgoing generation. The outgoing generation would build a mud hut and used it to instruct the leadership of the incoming generation (Kenyatta, 1938).

The *athomis* objected this process and they pegged their decision on the following three points: - Goats offered as a fee were for sacrifices;

- This was a pagan worship and idolatry.
- Ceremonies were obscene and evil; they cited the ritual sex acts whereby a chosen elder slept with his senior wife in the hut in a broad daylight.
- The *athomi* felt that the *ituika* purpose of handing power was now overtaken by the new colonial government; therefore, *Agikuyu* form of governance was now redundant and irrelevant (Karanja, 1999:173, Ward, 2000:282, Kershaw, 1996:36&277, Ingham 1962:304, Harlow, 1965:359,

Horace, 1936:165). This is the ceremony which united the *Agikuyu* countries i.e., South, Central and North at the *Mukurwe wa Nyagathanga*, the ancestral homestead of *Gikuyu* which was bequeathed to him by *Ngai* (Leakey, 1977:6-7). Karanja (1999:174-176) and Strayer (1978) concurs that the essence of this rite was to deter dictatorial governance by one generation; it was a very peaceful transition of power.

Muriuki (1974) argue that the colonial government capitalized on this conflict because without *ituika*, the *Agikuyu* lost their unity, religious and political direction to colonial government and missionaries' advantage.

In my view both the missionaries and colonizer understood the meaning of *ituika* which was to avoid dictatorial governance and uphold democracy as Kenyatta (1938) argues. If they grasped this, they deliberately hindered this event to disorganize the *Agikuyu* people and advance their political and economic selfish gains of continuing colonizing them hence the popular *Agikuyu* saying "*gutiri ngurani ya mubea na muthungu*" (There is no difference between the priest and the settler). This sentiment by *Agikuyu* is that Missionaries allocated themselves big chunks of land as colonizers did. Karanja (1999) and kimambo (1999; 340) concur that "at Kikuyu; CMS acquired 30 acres for main station and 15 acres for out stations, CSM 3,000 acres and Consolata in Nyeri acquired 3,000 acres". Gachini notes that "Catholic Diocese of Nyeri has

been sued by squatters who claimed that a land of 2,761 acres was alienated from their fore fathers between 1956 and 1965" (2014; 60). My sentiment is based on the fact that they supported *Aembu Nduiko* ceremony (equivalent of *Agikuyu ituika*) of 1932 for it was to illegitimate female circumcision (Ambler, 1989:139).

A Brief History of Diocese of Mt Kenya South

The origin of the DMKS can be traced to the first two German Lutheran missionaries through CMS to Kenya, Dr Krapf and Rebmann who came to Coastal region in 1844 and 1846 respectively. They put up their first mission station at Rabai Mombasa (CPK 1994). Karanja (1999) notes that "Kenya-Uganda railway construction opened the hinterlands for mission work, CMS opened mission stations in Kikuyu land". The first Anglican missionary to work among the *Gikuyu* was Rev. A.W. Macgregor in 1901. He started mission station at Kabete (1901). Karanja (1999) notes "that the Rev Canon Harry Leakey joined MacGregor at Kabete in 1901".

The first *Gikuyu* to be ordained as priests were Rev Samuel Nguru and Rev Yusuf Magu. By 1934, Leakey had started 13 Churches; Kabete in 1901; Kiambaa in 1914; Thimbigua in 1917; Muongoiya, Gacarage, Karura, Ndunyu, Kirangari, Ndumberi, Kiambu, Kanyariri, Kibichiku and Kangemi (Ng"eny, 1994).

Church in Kikuyu land expanded from Ngong Hills to Moyale, leading to formation of Diocese of Fort Hall in 1961, its first bishop was Obadiah Kariuki. In December 1964 it was re-named "Diocese of Mt Kenya" and in 1975, the diocese was divided into two; Diocese of Mt. Kenya South and Diocese of Mt. Kenya East. Bishop *Kariuki* headed diocese of Mt. Kenya South with its headquarters at Kiambu and Bishop David Gitari diocese of Mt Kenya East (DMKS, 2004, Saba 2002, Githiga, 2001). In 1984, the Diocese of Mt Kenya Central was curved out of DMKS and in 1998 Diocese of Thika was curved leaving the present DMKS (ACK Lectionary, 2021).

The DMKS has been served by five bishops namely Bishop Obadiah Kariuki (1961- May 1976), Bishop Sospeter Magua (Aug. 1976- Sept. 1982), Bishop

George Njuguna (1984-1995), Bishop Peter Njenga (1996-2004), Bishop Timothy Ranji (July 2004 to 2019) and Bishop Charles Muturi (19th Dec 2019-to date). The diocese has had two assistant bishops; Bishop Eshbon Ngaruiya and Bishop Charles Muturi (2010-2019). It is worth to note that the second Archbishop His Grace Mannases Kuria hailed from this diocese. The diocese covers some parts of Nairobi, Kajiado and Kiambu Counties (DMKS, 2014 & 2019, Ng'eny, 1994; 116).

The diocese has one bishop, 16 archdeacons, 37 area deans (rural deans), 218 priests, 15 deacons, 8 sub-deacons, 18 Church Army officers, 129 evangelists, 495 lay readers and 52 auxiliary office staff making a total of 989 work force (DMKS, 2019;12, Appendix 1). There are 14 archdeaconries and 184 parishes with a total of 59,777 Christians (DMKS, 2019; 10, Appendix 2). The population is made up of 9,000 KAMA, 15,000 MU, 10,000 KAYO, 2,500 Choir members and 28,000 Brigade and Sunday school members (DMKS, 2019; 11, Appendix 3).

To Examine the Present Views of *Agikuyu* Christians and Traditionalist about *Kiama kia Athuri*.

The *Kiama* persistence

Karanja (1999: 174-175) concur that "Christian African, the African Christians and nominal Christians continued to co-exist in the Church". This had repercussions because of their divergent perspective towards African culture. Njoroge explains the dilemma the *Agikuyu* encountered, "Once exposed to Christianity and modernity, many *Amugikuyu agikuyu* people lived a life of tension between affiliation to *Gikuyu* traditional values and the pull of modernity" (2017:212).

Englebert postulates that "traditional resurgences take various forms occurring at different stages of social organization" (2002:52). Orchardson argues "that government policies inhibit some cultural practice". However, these policies do not totally eradicate such traditional ways of life (Bunche, 1941:51, see Njau, 2000:36). I concur with their

sentiments because despite government inhibition policies vices such as female circumcision and early forced marriage are thorny issues that the government is dealing with currently. (2002:116). Raboteau affirms this by alluding that "despite slaves living in Europe, Latin America and America for so long, ATR traits persist even today" (2004:16).

Ezokuwu (1996:31) and Ward (2000:269) concur that subsequent Independent African Governments and Christian Africans vehemently fought Africans' cultural practices and religion which they deemed inconsistent with national development and Christian faith. Such attitude led to such practices being carried out secretly. Katherine notes that "Tanzania's Iraqw Council of elders hold their meetings and rituals very secretly to avoid government attention" (1997: 563, see Njau, 2000: 36).

Horzinger (2016), Englebert (2000) and Oni and Segun (2010) argues that political insurgencies in the world (Africa) have led to resurgence of traditional forms of governance and social organizations led by Council of elders. The effects of these elders are also felt "in religious institutions in the areas of the role of Council of the elders and women for religion permeates African life from birth to death". Ezokuwu concurs that "re-affirmation of the African eldership and values has cast serious doubt and challenge on Christianity" (1996:4). This further reaches to mythical origin that is deeply entrenched on kingship (Segun 2010:3). Elizabeth Ezenweke argues that "a religion may be suppressed, but its core tenets continue to exist and at one point resurfaces" (2016:202). The above sentiments by scholars have shown that the failure of the government in political arena is causing different countries to seek answers in their old cultural social order and organization led by the council of elders; eventually elders' effects are creating contention with the Christianity in the area of rituals.

Idowu (1962) challenges the Western views on African religions. He challenges the Western anthropological assumptions and descriptions of

African cultures as primitive, inferior and their religion as animistic and polytheistic. He advocates the study of African culture and religion to deconstruct the destructive Western notions. Upkong (1996) also argues that the African Church must identify with its culture for it to remain relevant, thus resulting in its growth.

Kwame Bediako (1999) argues that the fusion of the Western culture and Christianity succeeded in only enslaving the Africans minds. He asserts that anything that the Africans did in pre-Christian era was viewed as harmful, valueless and primitive. Bediako argues that the African Church must eliminate this notion for her to realize genuine conversion and growth.

Laurenti Magesa (2004) argues that inculturation is a process that occurs when a faith inculcated in a cultural set up meets with another culture. The encounter results in a new faith that is embodied to the old culture. Therefore, there is a need that the Gospel and Culture dialogue as equals to result in a formulation of a distinct and unique theology that suits. While Charles Nyamiti (1994) states that inculturation is an aim and effort of theologically incarnating the Gospel teaching in the African cultures

Humphrey Waweru (2011) notes that contemporary scholars such as Wole Soyinka (Nigerian) and Ngugi wa Thiong'o (Kenyan) started to question the colonialists and the missionaries' negative views, attitudes and perceptions towards, African culture, traditions and religion. They advocated for Africans to embrace their culture and decolonize themselves from the European prejudices. Waweru reiterates that theologians like Jean Marc Ela, Desmond Tutu, Buthelezi and Boesak called for the Theology of Liberation. He further notes that Tharusha Tshibangu argues that the African Church must become truly African in the areas of structure and rituals so that the individual African Christians can be able to address the tension they feel due to Christianity commitment and their own culture.

Benezet Bujo (1990) argues that colonialism robbed Africa of their cultural identity and filled them with an inferiority complex, making them despise their African origin. In this line, Brown Ndung'u Ikenye (2002) asserts that colonialism led Africans to be shameful, doubtful and apprehensive about their culture, thus creating feeling of danger and rage leading to paranoid vigilance. He advocates for decolonizing and deconstruction of the African mind.

Uhuru Hotep (2003) argues for decolonizing of the African mind by dismantling white supremacy belief and the structures, which uphold them in every area of African life in an effort to recover and reconnect with best traditional practices as a means of ending dominance of the African psyche.

John Pobee (1979) maintains that the aim of the African theology is interpretation of the essential Christian faith in authentic African languages in the flux and turmoil of our times, so that there may be genuine dialogue between the Christian faith and the African culture.

Stephen Belcher (2005) clearly shows the different myths of Africans from all over. However, he does not show how these myths affect their religion, day to day life, their perspective, world view and their thought forms. This study focused on how *Agikuyu* myth of origin affects their world view, perspective, religion and thought forms.

The above scholars are writing in post-colonial era. However, this study narrowed to *Agikuyu* people of Central Kenya deducing how the *Agikuyu* cultural persistence of *Kiama kia Athuri* is affecting the country politically, economically and religiously. However, this study limited itself on the religious effect for that is the major focus of this study.

Council of Elders vis-à-vis Government Institution

The United Nation (UN) membership is 193 nations of which Kenya is member; 103 states recognize existence of ethnic groups in their constitution, 70 states grant special political and cultural preferences to these ethnic entities, 61 state like Ghana, India, Indonesia, Nigeria et al recognize

traditional form of governance, social organization and customary laws (Horzinger, 2016:469). The Juri Globe World Legal Systems Research Group (2016) highlights those traditional customary laws and practices are affected in some states to date whereby 57% of the world population is involved while the Afro Barometer Survey Round 4 (2015) quoting Logan (2009 & 2013) states that “many African countries are embracing traditional forms of governance headed by council of elders in conflict management”. In a survey they carried in 19 African countries, 44.7% respondents had more confidence in their traditional elders and institutions thus Africa is adopting “hybridization in its political leadership” (www.afrobarometer.org). Emmanuel Mbennah (2001) argues that “the Great Lakes and Horn of African Regions” are using traditional institution led by the council of elders in search of conflict resolution caused by political upheavals. Walls concur that “African National Cohesion is pegged on repression and apprehension of African culture and governance so that different ethnic groups have a common ground to share their identity” (2002:108). Ezukwu concurs with Walls in the sense that Yoruba of Nigeria and Bamuleke of Cameroon bled their fundamental cultural aspects and modernity (1996:3-4).

Orchadson argues that in Kenya, political leaders camouflage under their ethnic and political strong holds. They are crowned elders by their respective ethnic council of elders and elders of their political strongholds. They maintain their statesmanship and eldership and have a political mileage. (1998:86-87, Kirwen, 2005; 99). For example, following the “Handshake” between President Uhuru Kenyatta and Raila Odinga, Kikuyu Elders visited Odinga at Bondo.

To reciprocate, the Luo Council of Elders in conjunction with KCEAT planned inaugural visit by Odinga to Nyeri in a later date with the aim of pulling a bigger crowd than what the Deputy President Ruto attracted at Murang’a. However, the other function of GCE objected to the visit. The bottom line of this is to gain a political mileage

(Daily Nation, October 18, 2020; 22). This insinuates that traditional councils of elders are being used to access political and economic powers and control by the rich.

Englebert (2002:51) alludes that “several African states such as Ghana, South Africa and Uganda have promulgated constitutions that embrace traditional leaders from 1990s”. The Kenyan Constitution promulgated in 2010, Chapter 2, section ii, 2 (a) encourages cultural practices which are consistent with the natural law. In my view, the political elites allow and ascribe to cultural practices which add a niche in their political endeavors but not necessary out of conviction or the values of these customs and practices.

Council of Elders’ vis-à-vis Christianity

The greatest contention between culture and Christianity is on rituals conducted by the *Kiama kia athuri*. This contention was incubated by the missionaries who viewed anything African as evil and hatched under African Church leadership who hated their culture even more than the missionaries. Wall (2002:107) argues that “converts and educated elites denied so many aspects of their African heritage”.

The African patriarchal hierarchical order has been reflected from different scholarly perspectives such as Feminine Theology, African Biblical Hermeneutics, Systematic, Missiology, Sociology, Historians, Political Scientists, Anthropology, Traditionalist and Missionaries. These perspectives views vary accordingly (Phiri, 2016:89). In my views the Feminist Theology, African Hermeneutics, Missiology, Systematic, Sociologists, Missionaries and Historians has a distinct implication to Christianity engagement with African culture in the sense that they use the bible to evaluate the African cultures.

From feminist theologians, patriarchal (council of elders) is viewed as a tool of oppression. Esther Mombo and Hellen Joziase define patriarchy in feminist perspective as “unjust hierarchical and dualistic ordering of life in which the male has the

power and authority and female is subordinate” (2016:159). In my view, though the feminist theologians are right in arguing that some cultural aspects which were propagated by elders like female circumcision, forced widow inheritance and early and forced marriages denied fullness of life. I disagree with their views when they argue that land held in trust ship by male elders for the clan disempowered women economically, they use two perspectives to anchor their argument. In cultural set up the senior most male in clan held land in trust ship. Not all men were in charge, therefore there were no landless people; there was no land economics attached to land as we witness today.

Therefore, in this recent time its fair for all gender to inherit land bearing in mind colonization of Africa interfered with Africa and its economic set up. Demarcation of land and issuance of title deeds is European invention not Africans.

I argue that some aspects under domain of elders like land trust ship, respect, oneness of community, chastity of life, morality et al enhanced life. However, Njau (2000: 37) argues that “through circumcision women acquired authority and status in the society”. It’s worth to note that these cultural issues that are being debated today have been a thorny issue from the time of missionaries. Capon (1962) deduces that “not only the missionaries from different missions disagreed, CMS missionaries disagreed too”. For example, on subject of female circumcision; Kabete and Embu missions advocated for complete abstinence while Kahuhia and Weithaga missions saw no harm in the continuance of practice as long it was a minor operation. He further notes that even at Kabete, around Kiambaa area, converts were tolerant of cultural practices. However, all agreed that female circumcision was evil (1962; 41).

Julius Gathogo (2011) from an African hermeneutic perspective construe that “Agikuyu legend of Gikuyu and Mumbi was intended to strengthen patriarchal through the Kiama to demean women and exert power over them”. In my view, Gathogo’s view is not correct for most scholars show that in

honor of women in *Agikuyu* culture pegged on the myth, their clans are named after Gikuyu and Mumbi daughters and in honour of Mumbi, *Agikuyu* are referred to as “*Nyumba ya Mumbi*” (House of Mumbi). In the same thought of argument, Mombo and Joziase deduce that “cultural and religious teaching are used to subordinate women.” They further argue that “a woman is either identified with a father, husband or son” (2016; 163). However, I argue that this concept of referring women as above is worldwide even today; it is not confined to *Agikuyu* people.

Gathogo (2011) concludes that “*Kiama kia athuri* has no place in modern civilized world”. In contrary to this view Mbennah (2001) clearly demonstrates that councils of elders in the Great Lakes Region are effective in restoring order in countries devastated by political skirmishes (see Englebert, 2002; 51, Ezukwu, 1996; 3-4, Oni & Segun 2010).

Waweru (2007) argues that “the goat that a man offer to elders does not matter, what matters is the integrity and maturity of the man who is offering that goat” (2007:44). Waweru further points that “the four grades of *Kiama kia athuri* can be equaled with ACK offices such as deacon, priests, bishops and archbishops. *Muthigi* can be equated to the bishops’ staff as well as other roles a bishop undergoes before consecration as an initiation process”. Ezukwu (1996:14-18) and Muga (1975:44-45) argue that the Church can learn from the Council of Elders who never bestowed power over one person, but the *Muthamaki* (leading elder) who used his influence and persuasion but not coercion. It is in this aspect Wachege (1992) denotes Christ as the leading *Muthamaki*. I support the above scholars’ views and arguments because there is an outcry by laity due to abusive language and threats of curses thus forcefully making the Christians do the will of the clergy.

The extreme view of the Christian Africans is that Christianity has nothing to do with the culture. They hold the dialectic model of discontinuity of the ATR and exclusivist position that salvation is only found in Christ (Phiri, 2016; 90). Such proponents are

theologians like Byang Kato, Ela and Bujo who emphasize that African culture need theology to free it from its oppressive and depriving customs and practices (Waweru, 2007:62). Upkong contest this view and states that “there was a close relationship between African cultural values and biblical perspectives” (2016:95), thus holding the dialogic model of continuity of ATR to Christianity and inclusivism position that salvation in Christ but through other non-Christian religions or philosophies (Phiri,2016;90).

However, such views as inclusivism are viewed by the Christian Africans as a pure paganism wholesomely. Margaret Murugi Mwangi and Lay Canon Gideon Numa argue that “Bishop Ranji has fought the battle of syncretism belief of some clergy who compromise their faith by indulging in cultural practices of *Mburi cia Kiama* which has nothing to offer to Christianity” (DMKS, 2019:163). Bishop Ranji had cautioned the clergy to strongly stop and avoid cultural practices contrary to Christian faith (min 04/cc/15).

Stephen Sykes and John Booty (1980) deduce that Anglicanism meet a challenge when it meets with other cultural and social models of tribal leaders. These models pose a threat of distorting the nature of pastoral authority in the Church. In that line Ward and Stanley (2000) construe that these tribal leaders’ model cause controversies ending in hibernation, only to resurge again creating more controversies. Therefore, this study seeks to address how Missionaries interacted with *Kiama kia Athuri*, controversies thereof and the current controversies due to persistence.

The traditionalists hold the view that *Kiama kia Athuri* Kia Ma adherents are Christians. Kambo argues that: *Kiama kia athuri kia ma* membership comprises of 80% of Christian of different denominations and faiths who hold leadership position in their Churches” including professionals such as doctors, lawyers, politicians, businessmen, pastors, priests. *Kiama kia athuri kia ma* uphold the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) and Joshua 24:1-15 “Me and my house we will serve the Lord”, the

Kiama kia athuri kia ma demonized by the Anglican Church is absolutely not the one I know of as a member. Its good wisdom to criticize what one knows about (*Kiama* circular: 26th July 2016; 12).

The *Kiama kia athuri kia ma* hold the view that they are advancing their culture as Jewish had the culture and Christ did his mission within their culture. Mbiti argue that “Africans hear and see confirmation of their own cultural, social and religious life in the life and history of the Jews people as portrayed and recorded in the pages of the Bible” (1986:26, see Lonsdale, 1999:206). This is the position of pluralists who hold that Christ is simply one of many truths (Phiri, 2016; 90).

The above statement corresponds with Karanja (1999:74) and Parrats (1987:34) argument that the new faith was understood within the social milieu in which it was received. Such statement by the council elder deduce that both traditional and biblical cultures are true, however Christian Africans feel that its either biblical or traditional culture for both cannot be right.

I concur that Africans easily blend the culture and the Christian faith (see Galgalo, 2012; 24). This is the fact that both those who ascribe to *Kiama kia Athuri kia ma* and African Christian perspectives attend Church service in the morning, partake the Holy Communion and in the afternoon attend *Kiama kia Athuri kia ma* and equally participate in its rituals and ceremonies. However, I propose that the *Kiama kia athuri kia ma* should be made to know “Christ as per excellence” and “Christ above culture”. They should clearly understand the difference between the *Agikuyu* Ngai and God (Yahweh) of Heavens worshipped by Christians.

The elders are questioning denominationalism and their divergent doctrines. Thus, the argument posed by Juvenal Ndayambage and I concur with states; “a truly religious society has one faith and One Church, but religious pluralism where different religious faiths exist within a single society splinters society weakening the influence of religion and inhibiting

religion from acting as a cohesive force within the society" (2014:75).

Muga (1975) and Ward (2000) concur and argue that "before Christianity, there were no denominationalisms within African ethnic groups thus people held the same view, however Christian denominationalism has caused different views from one bible thus creating confusion". For example, during the consecration of Catholic Bishop Kimengich of Eldoret Diocese, the Vicar General remarked, "elders from the North Rift will also conduct a traditional coronation during two-day installation" (The Standard, Saturday 1st Feb 2020, pg. 10). The elder rituals are embraced in one denomination and castigated in the other.

Robert Runcie (1988), former Archbishop of Canterbury construed that, "there is misuse of authority in the Anglican Church by bishops and clergy". He deduces that "a lot of power is being used instead of authority". Tengtenga (2005) concurs when he decries "the veto power of the ordained and how one usurps all powers to himself suppressing all others". They note that "Bishops wield a lot of power over the clergy". However, Runcie and Tengtenga do not deal with how Anglicanism deals with the issue of veto powers in the cultures it meets in her endeavors to evangelize and effects of these to the Christian faith. This study interrogated how the *Agikuyu* social order and organization courtesy of *Kiama kia athuri* can be inculturated to diffuse misuse of authority in the Anglican Church.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher used a triangulation of research methods in order to get in-depth information from the respondents. The techniques used were interviews, case and observations or surveys (Kinoti, 1998; 9). The study embraced the use of descriptive with both qualitative and quantitative; aiming at presenting the state of the church after the influence of the church missionary society. Interviews and FGDs methods was used. The researcher used both primary and secondary data

(Peter, 1994:63). Primary data was collected from the field through interviews, questionnaires or FGDs, Secondary data was collected from libraries and archives. The sampling frame was the *Agikuyu* elders, Church leaders and the Christians in the DMKS. The study employed both purposive and snowball samplings for in-depth information from the respondents as elaborated below. The researcher used questionnaires, interviews and focus groups discussions. The interviews and focus groups were guided by unstructured questions schedules (Peter, 1994; 77-78).

RESULTS

The rite of passage to *kiama* in the pre-colonial period

This objective gauged the current *Agikuyu* understanding of the rite of passage to *Agikuyu* eldership. The older people explained that "it was a must to join *kiama* in pre-colonial period". On the rites of passage, 60% of the respondents were very familiar with the process of initiation to *kiama*. The number of the goats paid as a fee to the elders, requirements and the role of *kiama* in the society. This corresponds well with Appiah argument that "the elderly in the African society are the custodian of knowledge" (2014). Younger generation mostly Christian Africans that was 30% were not conversant with the process of initiation to *kiama*. Kirkwood argues that "the more a convert forgot the culture, the more they were viewed as a good Christian" (1993; 169). Younger respondents affiliated to *kiama* were aware of the process were represented by 10 %. For they have received instructions from the elders during the initiation process and subsequent teachings.

Respondents making 60% of the interviewees concurred that *kiama* was the governing council or the government of the day. BI concurred "that *kiama* was in charge of religious, economic, political and social order of the *Agikuyu* people". *Kiama* had several grades. Each grade was accorded its duties, rights and responsibilities. The respondents agreed that there were four eldership stages namely

Kamatimu, *Horio*, *Matathi* and *Matuuranguru*. *Kamatimu* responsibility and duty was to protect the community. B5 said “they were like the modern armed forces”. This grade was joined immediately a man got circumcised at around age of 18 years. *Kamatimu* comprised men aged between 18 years to 40 years Elozukwu concurs that such arranged in leadership where power was entrusted in the hands of the many discouraged dictatorship and coercion (1996; 14-16). In FGDs; that is 23 out of 30 (76%) of respondents felt that “every man and woman was expected to marry”. Therefore, when *Kamatimu* married they joined the *kiama*. B8 postulated that “it was mandatory to offer the goat when they got their first-born child”. To join this grade, the requirement was to be a father therefore one’s character and integrity never mattered. The young father was advised on how to take care of his wife, children and the extended family. This then reveals that family unit was highly valued and family life education given a paramount place in the society. In this line of argument from feminist perspective, Mombo and Joziasse concurs that “ideal man in Kikuyu culture gives offspring and is able to lead. He is responsible, the head and tough so that his family feel his presence when he is around and he provides for his family” (2016; 167).

The 2nd graders were referred to as *Horio* (pacify). This was also referred to a *kiama kiria kinene* (The Senior Council) which vital role was to dispense justices; their office badge was a *muthigi*. Due to this vital role, B7 argued that “their character and integrity mattered a lot”. This was aimed to create a mentorship in the society. Mombo and Joziasse from feminist point of view affirm that “a *Kikuyu* man respects himself and is respected in the society. The man as a patriarch, a leader, is a strong image” (2016:168).

The 3rd graders were known as *matathi* and the office badge was *muthigi* and carried *matathi* leaves. The 4th graders were referred to as *matuuranguru*. This was composed of very elderly men who their wives had passed child bearing age. B1 postulated that “the 3rd and 4th graders were the

spiritual leaders and priest. They guided the community in all sacrifices, circumcision and other ceremonies. They had power to curse”. In the same thought line Mbiti argues “that elders are thought to be near God and could go to the places where God was and sit there on behalf of the community” (2012; 19).

However, respondents agreed that *Agikuyu* had no permanent offices of a leader, king or a ruler. *Kiama* members were equal, but whenever they met, they choose one who acted as a *muthamaki*. After the occasion he relinquished that office. B20 noted, “that why *kiama* members greetings were ‘*wanyu wakini*’ (greetings to my equal).”

During the goats offering in the forest women were not allowed in that meeting. B1 elaborated, “How can we let women near our council. Our secrets must not spill out”. This was in reference to the *Gikuyu* and *Mumbi* myth of creation. How *Ngai* blessed the couple with only daughters. However, *Ngai* provided young men to marry the daughters. The men went to live at their wives’ compound, therefore women become the rulers. The myth elaborates that over the years women become very domineering, ruthless and cruel rulers. Therefore, men conspired to overthrow them and they succeed. Therefore, this reveals that *Kiama* in essence is used to maintain influence, power, identity and control.

Parrinder postulates that “African people live is filled and marked with complex and intertwined rites of passage, without them one never took part in the tribal life (1962; 94). To *Agikuyu* men, the rite of eldership was highly regarded. Therefore, it was marked with an elaborate ceremony in the forest. There was great feasting and women were expected to cook and take food at a designated point. Men picked food and in return, filled the baskets with meat for their wives and children back home. B1 said “A *Gikuyu* man has never slaughtered and failed to give his family meat”.

Kenyatta (1938) notes that, During these ceremonies, discipline was of essence and

paramount. No indiscipline was tolerated and indiscipline such as drunkenness was heavily penalized. The culprit was penalized a goat. If the habit persisted the culprit was allowed to attend the ceremony and after the prayers was requested to leave. If it persisted further, the culprit was ex-communicated for *kimera kimwe* (one season or six months)". B10 emphasized "if such a man never amended his habits he was deposed from a higher grade to a lower grade.

Such heavy penalties were meant to deter men from indiscipline when in the community. So that they do not disgrace the *kiama* and the duties, rights and responsibilities accorded to them. Fear was inculcated in men. B 30 a lady emphasized.

They greatly feared to be seen drunk and staggering, they were heavily reprimanded and penalized. One day a friend of my husband got drunk and urinated on himself. When my husband learned of it, he hurriedly acted. Then he called his other friend and discussed the issue. Their tones could tell the seriousness of the issue. I overheard as I prepared tea.

However, Ng'ang'a (2019; 180) argues that " it is the fear that drove people to obey in order to avoid the repercussions of such things as curses or segregation and not a true conviction that leads to repentance as in Christianity. The bible is the final authority in all matters and conduct.

During the *kiama* ceremonies in the forests men were grouped according to their grades. They were counseled in matters of family, morality, respect and their responsibilities. They also discuss tribal matters but no politics. Currently political matters are in domain of Kikuyu Council of Elders. Men were regarded as the head of their families therefore they are expected to set a good example especially to their juniors. Therefore, *kiama* had strict rules and regulation to be followed by the members. For example, meat from the forest was meant for the bona fide wife(s) B10 emphasized.

Digressing to other function or to a mistress was a heinous crime. Even to have a mistress in your

village was not acceptable. How could you counsel the younger generation? Such behavior was heavily penalized. *Kiama* members were expected to live a pious life. Be of good character and integrity. Men were expected to join the ladder of grades as they age. There were clan, territorial and community council of elders.

The study showed the current *Agikuyu* understanding of the rite of passage to eldership as it was done in the pre-colonial period, the roles and responsibilities of the *kiama kia ma* members. This was paramount for these understanding is the one informing the persistence being experienced and the practices thereof.

Sacrifice (blood), rituals, libation, dances and ceremonies

The *Agikuyu* social life was marked by rituals throughout the year. Mbiti argues that "the *Agikuyu* depended on elders in all aspects of their life characterized by rites (2012; 370). Such rites were accompanied by ceremonies and dances, which European viewed as evil and demonic. Richard Simiyu Wafula (2015) notes that "missionaries de-Africanized their converts as the first step of making them good Africans". The *Agikuyu* had no formal set up of education but informal. The songs were used for communicating messages and education to the initiates (Kenyatta, 1938; 67). B18 said "that why they had obscene words intended to educate but not for immorality". Respondents noted that these ceremonies were viewed from religious point of view. B1 retorted "in African set up there is no demarcation between the profane and religious or secular and sacred".

An alien cannot easily comprehend the African concept of sacredness. As such, an alien ends up confusing and demarcating secular from sacred. Fiedler argues that "the missionaries must aspire first to understand the Africans they intend to evangelize to; their culture, thought forms and worldview before they judge them" (1996; 79). The missionaries made a mistake for..of using their thought form, worldview and perspective in trying

to understand the *Agikuyu* thought form, worldview and perspective. Missionaries ended up misinterpreting and misjudging *Agikuyu* rites. They ended up terming *kiama* rite as ritualistic and sacrificial. B29 noted that they confused *Ngoima ya igongona* offered under the sacred *mugumo* or *mukuyu* tree offered by the 4th graders with the goat offered to *kiama* by the initiates. Missionaries and *athomi* therefore preached against using goats as sacrifice. Ng'ang'a writing from Christian African perspective argues that "when you become a Christian, you totally surrender your past. Your worldview is no longer the traditional worldview (2019; 169-171).

B5 explained that the goat for sacrifice was referred to as *Ngoima* not *mburi*. *Ngoima* was castrated before it started to mate therefore it was perceived to be pure, it had to be of one color and unblemished for it to be acceptable for sacrifice. Such goat never went for grazing. It was housed in wife's house in *gichegu* (goats' pen) and greater care was taken over it. This *ngoima* was very precious to the family. So, *Agikuyu* used to sacrifice that which was very precious and dear to them. On one hand, *mburi* for *kiama* used to graze openly and it was not a must that it was castrated.

In most ceremonies, libation with *muratina* was carried out. This was a sign of unity with the ancestors. The missionaries confused ancestor unity with Western practices of ancestor veneration, therefore they condemned libation. B8 stated, "they even misinterpreted *ngoima* (spirits) our ancestors as Satan or devil". The missionaries equally confused *muratina* for sacrifices and for casual drink. This drink was prepared from honey, sugarcane and *kiratina* fruit. They termed it as evil and illicit. B10 expound "that *muratina* for sacrifice was carefully prepared." The elder to prepare purified himself for a week. Special utensils for that occasion were used. This was held in great honor. The preparation process and handling of sacrificial *muratina* and for casual drink were very different. Most respondents held the view that *kiama* was not

sacrificial; however, that was missionary's misinterpretation.

Due to this misunderstanding, missionaries decided not to baptize children of those who got involved with *kiama* and parents who had not wedded in the church. Esther Mombo argues that, "children born out of the wedlock became a symbol of sin to their parents" (2013;864). However, respondents felt that CMS and CSM held such views and not Roman Catholics, hence the reason why Roman Catholics command huge population of Christians in Kenya. B25 narrated that in 1947, he was in Standard Four, he passed well but because his father belonged to *kiama*. He was denied admission at CMS Kabete intermediate school whereby missionaries were in charge of admission; eventually he joined Catholic school at Riruta.

Judicial System

The *Kiama* was in charge of law and order in the society (Leakey, 1977;996). Therefore, to deter crime in the society, they melted heavy fines to the culprits. If offenders failed to raise the fine, the clan paid the fine. In the African culture and more so *Agikuyu* perspective, a person belonged to a society. The clan (*muhiriga*) was the primal tie. Therefore, when a person became a notorious thief, the *muhiriga* had the right of executing him either by lynching him with dry banana leaves or throwing him down a cliff locked in a beehive (Kenyatta, 1938:109). In the same argument B21 said "this was to deter others in following in his footsteps. The missionaries and Europeans viewed such mode of melting justice as primitive, salvage, archaic, repugnant and barbaric". However, the European had such penalties like life imprisonment or death. It is only the executing method that differed; they hanged. They introduced their punishments in their colonies and built jails. European mode of executing was viewed as civilized while that of *Agikuyu* as primitive. Yet both punishments led to death and were meant to deter others.

Elderly respondents explained that in order to maintain law and order in the society, the elders had concepts of *migiro* (taboos), *thahu*

(uncleanness), *mehia* (sin), *kirumi* (curse) and *kirathimo* (blessings) which were associated with rituals. From infancy children grew strongly warned not to commit *migiyo*, *thahu*, *mehia* and to avoid *kirumi* while they were encouraged to seek *kirathimo*. B5 and B7 concurred that “these were like the set rules to be followed. They set dos and don’ts in the society”. However, In FGD, 70% of respondents felt that missionaries failed to understand the concepts which were parameters that were used to deter evil and encourage good morals and behavior in the society.

Circumcision

The 4th graders announced the dates of circumcision. Respondents explained that missionaries objected to female circumcision. Karanja notes that “the missionaries’ were very much against circumcision that was the domain of the elders. Missionaries completely objected to female circumcision” (1999; 172). B1 quipped “it became an anathema to circumcise a girl”, Respondents noted that some *Athomi* circumcised their girls secretly. The missionaries had no problem with boys’ circumcision, but they greatly objected to ceremonies and dances which they termed as obscene, evil and devilish. The ceremonies were meant to create memorable times to initiates just like the modern graduation do. The pains endured were meant for introducing one to adulthood life where courage, perseverance and responsibility were necessary. Missionaries at some point objected to traditional men circumcision rite and contemplated to outlaw it, *Agikuyu* resisted. B17 retorted “not even the *athomi* of the highest level could come to terms of a full grown up *Gikuyu* man not being circumcised”. Ward notes that “The missionaries outlawed night dances and ritual in it, material for counseling and *atiiri* (sponsors) and teachers were carefully chosen by the missionaries. Boys of *athomi* were circumcised in the Church compounds” (2000; 266). B30 alluded “by missionaries allowing boys” circumcision in the Church compounds shows they did not fight culture blindly, however they fought girls” circumcision that

had no value”. Some resisted, this caused a great division between *athomi* and traditionalist. Those who wanted to uphold the rite did what they knew could effectively communicate the message. They composed a song called *Muthirigu* to ridicule the *athomi*.

Some respondents felt that the simple operation does not make a man as *kiama* insinuates though it is necessary. It is the maturity that matters. We have so many men circumcised, yet behave childishly. B16 said “it does not matter whether women attend or not, it is the behavior change that matter”. In the same agreement B29 emphasized “Prophet Jeremiah advised Jewish when they put a lot of emphasis on physical operation to circumcise their hearts too” (Jeremiah 4:4). B3 pointed “its it is circumcision made without hands...circumcision of Christ (Colossians 2:11), that makes a man”. In the same argument, Ng’ang’a argue that “how does a simple operation on a fourteen-year boy make him a man, whether circumcised or not, he is just a boy, he becomes a man by learning and taking up the behaviour of an adult” (2019; 212).

Social life

The missionaries aspired to change the social life of Africans by introducing Western culture in conjunction with Christianity. They viewed African houses as non- Christianity. Kirkwood notes that “In South Africa missionaries wondered; when will these Africans move from heathen kraal to the Christian home? This meant re-structuring African society this is square houses, iron sheet, gates and fences” (1993; 126). The European re-defined African beauty. She further quotes Mrs. Price 1879 assertion that:

In colonized and especially Christian countries, slender figure is admired, unlike Africa where fat African model is appreciated; because it is thought a dishonor to eat too much. The more civilized and more Christ-like the *Bakwene* became, the more they would admire slenderness and not fatness... when *Agikuyu* girls first went to mission school, first they stripped off their traditional attire, jewel

and beads and replaced with European attire, their pierced ear lobes were sewn (Kirkwood , 115, 164).

Reed (1999) notes that young men especially educated had a passion for European attire such as suits, ties, boots and commodities such as liquor and cigarettes. They coupled this with European white color jobs. Harry Thuku baptized in 1908 construes that “young men were looking for modernized fashions, out of imitation not because the missionaries won them over”.

This section has shown the current *Agikuyu* understanding of the contention that arrival of missionaries and Europeans caused in the community. However, respondents agreed that missionaries introduced good things such as education, hospitals, farming practices and modern civilization.

The presents views of *Agikuyu* on *kiama kia athuri*

The objective sought the present views of *Agikuyu* people on the relevance of *Kiama* today. To examine whether *kiama kia athuri* has been an issue in the DMKS. The researcher asked the question “Can you remember a cultural issue(s) that a bishop(s) that you served under faced? Majority of the respondents from the tenure of bishops George Njuguna to date captured cultural issues such as women ordination, burial rites, dress code, *kamweretho* (women paying dowry for themselves), *kiama kia ma* and *mburi cia kiama*

. B30 reiterated “even Archbishops Manasses Kuria and David Gitari faced cultural issues such as burial rites and women ordination” [Provincial letter dated 11th March 1999, min cc/11/2007]. B35 said, the cultural issues had been there but became prevalent near the end of Bishop Peter tenure. It is Bishop Timothy who has really dealt with the cultural issues of *Kiama kia athuri* and *mburi cia kiama* and now Bishop Charles.

The clergy respondents explained that the archbishops never openly fought culture while Bishops Njuguna and Njenga were very moderate on cultural issues. B35 explained that “Bishop Njenga balanced culture and Christianity. However,

Bishop Ranji took the issue of *mburi cia kiama* head on and aggressively preached against *kiama*”. B35 sentiments were confirmed by B1 who has been *Kiama* national leader for long postulated

The missionaries tried to kill *Kiama* but failed. However, President Moi tried after 1982 failed coup de tat to kill *Kiama* for the second time and failed... Once we were hiding in the forest carrying out the initiation, we were caught and locked in a cell together with our meat.... However, when president Kibaki ascended to power in 2002 *Kiama* thrived and men in great numbers started to join *Kiama*.

This argument reveals and places the reason why the contention seems to have died and resurged about fifteen years ago. Bishop Njenga retired in April 2004 and Bishop Ranji took over in July 2004. Therefore, Bishop Ranji took the leadership of the DMKS two years after President Kibaki ascended to power and when there was no political pressure against *Kiama kia athuri*, therefore *kiama* had already carried extensive campaigns to recruit men, *Kiama* initiation were carried out openly, hence the reason it became a big issue in the DMKS during the tenure of Bishop Ranji.

Themes such as politics, relevancy, and *kiama* transformation, respect, rituals, dialogue, persistence and theological inculturation cropped up.

***Kiama* relevance**

In the interviews, 35% of respondents felt that some aspects of *Kiama* are very relevant today for it brings men together thus uniting them. They felt that if the *Kiama* take its role properly, then it can lead in curbing vices such as drugs and substance abuse, and be mentors and role model in the society. B8 said “If *kiama* in pre-colonial guided the community very well, why not now?” Bevan notes that “the East Asia bishops called for some elements of Oriental culture of traditional asceticism... teachings and practice be promoted to enhance Asian spirituality” (2002; 59)

On modernity and church, 30% of respondents felt that *Kiama* is irrelevant for the times have changed and modernity and new structures of governance are in control. Therefore, *Kiama* has been rendered redundancy in the society. *Ituika* is meaningless today. B14 explained “*Kiama* is irrelevant; it has been overtaken by the bible and the blood of Jesus”. However, 20% of respondents held the view that *Kiama* is “Relevant but” because it is fighting the same vice that the government and Church are fighting such as drunkenness, immorality, sanctity of life and other abuses in the society such as female circumcision. however some aspects like rituals and sacrifices are outdated. 15% of respondent felt that *kiama* is „irrelevant but“ the concerns that they are raising are genuine, but they are not the right agency to implement them, government is capable.

KIAMA TRANSFORMATION

Culture is like a living organism; therefore, over the years it evolves, culture is not static. Therefore, the hibernation and underpinning of *Kiama* by missionaries, colonial and subsequent independents government for many years; *Kiama* has experienced several transformations. Several grouping like *Kiama kia ma*, *mungiiki*, *ngwata ndai*, *thai* and *Kenda muiyuru* have emerged, such grouping have created confusion and it is difficult to differentiate these groupings. *Kiama kia ma* do not advocate for 2nd birth rite, female circumcision, obscene and sexually oriented dances during circumcision rite of boys. They do not advocate for *guthiga* or joining warrior ship. B5 explained “we have to align with modernity”. However, women are not allowed in the compound. The majority of the respondents asserted that they hold to the traditional teachings which are relevant today such as issues of morality, respect and men responsibilities in the society. They do not advocate for warrior ship which have been overtaken by modernity. B1 quipped “instead of spear and shield, we give initiates a book and a pen for the battle that is before them is that of education”. Most of the respondents felt that the missionaries did not give *Agikuyu* a chance to make

decisions on what to uphold or disregard in their culture.

The teachings were done orally in the cultural set up but initiates were allowed to take note and on the graduation day they are were issued with a certificate to remind them of this rite of passage. The certificate has replaced the elaborate ceremonies and dances whose purpose was to instill memories for life.

On the issue of initiation to *kiama*, B1 explained that though the rite process is carried out as in the pre-colonial period. It is not a must that one drinks *muratina*. We have introduced water and soda; however, meat must be roasted and not boiled meat. Christian Africans respondents felt that as long as rituals are performed, *Kiama* has no place in the Church.

Rituals and sacrifices (blood)

Christians Africans and clergy respondents felt that *kiama* initiation is full of rituals and sacrifices which are demonic and contrary to Christianity. Any African rite of passage had a ritual which is the reason and meaning of that ceremony. *Kiama* is viewed as ritualistic, secretive, sacrificial, idolatry and demonic. B14 said “That’s why they hide in the forest”. The rule of *kiama* is that only the initiate participates in its proceeding thus creating a room for non- members to speculate what transpires. Thus *kiama* has been accused of being discriminative, demeaning and segregating women and non-members. The majority of *kiama* respondents held the view that each and every institution or organization including the Church is secretive in nature.

Don’t we have three Houses in the Anglican Church, House of Bishops, House of Clergy and the House of Laity? When each House meets and discusses their agendas is that being discriminative or demeaning the other? Not at all, it is just following rules and regulations of the Church.

Therefore, in this regard the traditionalists held the view that it is their way of doing things in orderly and proper way that is misunderstood as ritualistic.

In this aspect they equated the orderly manner that Holy Communion is carried out in the Church with *kiama*. They argued that in the Church, one gets initiated into baptism which is the first ritual. Then one is confirmed to be ushered in the Lords Table. They argued that one cannot be confirmed if not baptized. It is this process that makes one a full member and communicant in ACK.

They argued that when one becomes ripe for marriage. One must wed as per the Church rules and regulations failure to which one forfeit the right to Holy Communion (HC) until one rectifies what went wrong. In ACK the woman continues enjoying the right to HC even if she violated the wedding rules and regulation for it is viewed that it is the man who initiates marriage. Does this mean that Church discriminates and demeans men? It is also a common thing to see a young person of 12 years who have fulfilled Church requirements on Holy Sacrament receiving HC element while older people who have violated the same rules or does not meet the requirements does not receive HC. Does this mean the Church demean and humiliate old people? No Therefore as the Church has rules and regulations towards the rituals, so is *Kiama*.

Clergy respondents felt that there is no comparison between the Church rituals, initiations and sacrificial giving with those of *kiama*. They held that HC is a memorial service and there is no blood involvement nor are ancestors involved in the Meal like the way *kiama* do libations. They postulated that Christ sacrifice was final and God of Heavens is prayed not the god of *kirinyaga*. B40 deduced that “first, you cannot compare an elaborate structure of the Anglican Church with that of *kiama*. Secondly, what the blood of Jesus cannot do, the blood of goat can neither do”. Clergy construed that once a Christian gets involved with other rituals contrary to Christian faith, automatically one stops being a Christian even if they continue terming themselves as Christians. B29 postulated “Apostle Paul reprimanded Galatians because they started in the Spirit and ended up in the flesh that what *kiama* members are doing”. Gatu argues that

“eradication of African rituals and systems were never fully replaced by Church rituals, structures and systems and never satisfied the needs of Africans”.

The dilemma, battle, perceptions and contention in the *Agikuyu* minds and hearts concerning rituals and sacrifices in relation to culture and Christianity is clearly elaborated by B7,

I do not think *Agikuyu* prayed a false God. *Agikuyu* had no idols, but a supreme God, *Ngai* whose dwelling place was *Kirinyaga*; they associated *Ngai* with snow and majesty displayed by *kirinyaga*, even in the bible God majesty is through his creation. We also sing that Jesus blood washes as white as snow, that is why elders approached *Ngai* in time of dire need and he answered them. In their ignorance they sought *Ngai* who is now revealed in Jesus Christ, that’s why I cannot face *Kirinyaga*. I now face the Cross. But to me, my forefathers never worshipped idols. I don’t think it is right to say they worshipped and sacrificed to demons; no it was like in the Old Testament. They really purified themselves before they approached *Ngai* and *Ngoima ya igongona* was carefully chosen. In this regard the blood of the unblemished *Ngoima* offered under *Mugumo* or *Mukuyu* tree, that lamb is now Jesus, John the Baptist said, „the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world“ [John 1:29]. Therefore, to me the blood of goats is replaced by the blood of Jesus, who was sacrificed once and for all, I cannot mix the blood of goats and that of Christ.

How Church can relate with *Kiama* members

The study showed that *kiama* members have leadership roles in the DMKS from local Church to the diocesan level. B1 quipped “we are Church leaders”. This sentiment was amplified by B14 who said “during this year Synod, we had a number of *kiama* members. They are our husbands and brothers and we know them. They are full communicants in our Churches”. In the ACK, one to be elected as a leader must be a full communicant.

The above sentiments have shown that in the Church, Christians of different inclinations towards

culture have continued to co-exist for a long time. This however has caused a conflict whether *kiama* members should hold leadership position in the Church. B1 quipped,

I cannot understand why *kiama* have generated a heated debate nowadays. We have harmoniously worked and related with the Archbishops and Bishops in this diocese. This debate started about 15 years ago. Sometimes *Kiama* members contribute 98% of materials and money needed to construct some Churches or Church developments.

On the issue of giving, 85% of the respondents felt that *kiama* members generously contribute than those who profess Salvation. They are more committed to the Ministry and devout themselves fully than most of the Christians. B3 retorted "Can they be the Cornelius of the day [Acts 10], this is a waking call to the born-again Christians to revisit how they serve and their dedication to the ministry.

Teachings

On teachings 60% of the respondents expressed the need for the church embark on more teaching concerning Christian doctrine. B30 quipped "clergy are hiding in the pulpit and misusing pulpit authority instead of teaching". They felt that such topics as *kiama* are not pulpit material, where are hurriedly spoken of; proper teaching is required. They felt that if clergy are to preach about *kiama*; then they should carry out proper research to be factual without any pre-conceived idea. By doing so their sermons will be relevant otherwise if they continue preaching from sheer hearsay; then they become irrelevant; these makes men even more defensive leading to more initiations to *kiama*. Respondents felt that, during sermons, Christians raise questions in their minds. The Church does not adequately answer or create a forum for questions; eventually congregants seek answers in *kiama*.

The Church is the conscience of the society and should not be subjective. It should keenly reach out, listen to the cry, needs and question of the people and then give the true gospel. B40 said,

Jesus ministered to the Samaritan woman and answered and corrected woman perspective when she raised the issue of praying on the mountain or Jerusalem. Jesus calmly met the Samaritan woman at the point of her need. It is the duty of the Church to correct incorrect theology, guiding people to worship in truth and in Spirit "neither in Jerusalem nor the mountain"" (see John 4:1-25). The Church as the true guardian of the society must remain focused and relevant in all situations. Its mission is to shine and scatter darkness before her.

In the above view, 90% of the respondents explained that it was the duty of the Church to correct the wrong theology of *kiama* instead of creating a tug of war. The issue of *kiama* members worshipping two Gods- *Ngai* of *kirinyaga* and God of heavens (Yahweh) interchangeably as need be, therefore to *Kiama* members are One God. B28 explained that

Laban made the same mistakes as *kiama* members, „May the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their Father, judge between us". Jacob swore in the Name of the Fear of his father Isaac (Genesis 31:53-54), Jacob corrected the theology of Laban that his God was same as God of Abraham, Jacob put the distinction.

However, B10 warned that Churches must be careful with the Sunday school children for her husband has been in *kiama* for almost ten years and he have introduced his boys to praying facing *kirinyaga* raising their hands chanting "Thai" when they were as young as six years. Respondents felt that the content of the Sunday school teaching materials needed to be well constructed and effectively taught.

FGDs respondents felt that there is a need to revisit Catechism classes. They argued that though this is the duty of clergy who are theologically trained, the duty has been left to evangelists of which some are not theologically trained. They emphasized the need of all evangelists to be trained and clergy to be more involved in teaching catechism. B28 noted

Catechism is hurriedly taught aiming at memorizing instead of understanding. The reason being, the effectiveness of the clergy and evangelists is based on how catechumens memorize during confirmation day. Poor answering of questions is heavily reprimanded by the bishop, to avoid such shame and a sense of humiliation before the congregation. The clergy and evangelists aim at perfecting memorization and not understanding; therefore, memorization is given priority than understanding. The performance is also measured on the number of candidates presented, therefore to have a higher number, some catechumens are taught for less than a year.

Ex-communicate

On the issues of relationship between the Church and *kiama* adherents, 25% of respondent felt that the Church should ex-communicate the *Kiama* members. They are intruding in the Church. The Cross has nothing to do with *kirinyaga* and the blood of Jesus has anything to do with the blood of goats. Jesus is the One and for all sacrifice.

Co-exist

On the co-existing, 15% of the respondents felt that the wheat and the tares should be left to grow together, however the Church being aware of the situation should embark on teachings. The Church should put regulation and rules concerning eligibility of such Christians in the Church leadership, in doing so a lot of love should be exercised. This section has revealed that to *Kiama* members there is no difference between *Ngai* and God of heavens (Yahweh).

Factors influencing *Kiama* persistence

The respondents captured the following issues as the reasons for the persistence of *Kiama*; politics, social evils, identity, power and control, lukewarm Christianity, peer pressure, misfortunes.

Social evils

On the social evils, 15% of the respondents felt that modern government structures which sometimes are corrupt, social vices like disrespect, prostitution, single parenthood, immorality and

substance abuse are causing people to search for answers. B30 explained that "Men reverting to *Kiama* are the symptoms, the Church should treat the causes and men will stick in the Church. The Church is dealing with a confused society and as leaders we should dwell much in teachings".

There has been a trend in the society where men are mistreated by their wives and children when they become of age; especially when they retire thus men living a secluded life. Such fear is making men to look for consolation in *Kiama*.

Respondents accused Church of immorality, embezzlement of money and drunkenness (see min 18/cc/2012). Church is portrayed as being abusers rather than the shepherds of Gods flock. Schumacher notes that "this erodes the dignity, respect and trust of the clergy" (1974; 45).

Politics

Under politics, 20% respondents felt Kenya's General Elections from 1992 to date have experienced a kind of contention that leaves the country divided on ethnic basis. Such reconciliation is spearheaded by elders as per their ethnic requirements. This has revealed that in order to maintain political dominance and economic gains like land that *Agikuyu* has amassed in other areas which are not cultural *Agikuyu* land mostly in Rift Valley; *Kiama* is used to broker peace, reconciliation and political block to maintain political power, control and wealth.

Peer pressure

Under peer pressure, 15% respondents concluded that men are under pressure from their peers especially during social gatherings like *uracio* whereby they are denied entry into the negotiation room. Equally the Church disallowed alcohol in its totality. *Kiama* is persisting and attracting large numbers due to peer pressure, idling and people have liberty to do what Church condones like two wives or drinking. B35 quipped "*kiama* is advocating for the wide path contrary to Christians' advocacy of the narrow path. This has attracted many men. The fear of being different

from one's peers is causing people to join *Kiama* (Ng'ang'a, 2019; 111).

Respondents felt that *kiama* adherents are looking for socializing and sense of belonging in a social group. Humans are social beings. They are trying to fill that gap. In social gathering non men members are segregated, leading to a sense of humiliation. This has prevailed upon men to join *Kiama*.

Power, economic, identity and control

The new government and Church structures dislodged men from their influential social class. The welfare of women and girls were given the first priorities. 15% of respondents felt that through empowerment of women, men were dislodged from their seats of power, economic, influence, identity and control. Therefore, through *kiama* men are trying to reclaim their former position and social location in the society. Mombo concurs and notes "patriarchy order life whereby men have power and authority and female is subordinate" (2016; 159).

In the Church circles, women issue especially their ordination become very evident. In 1971, one of the agenda in Anglican Consultative Council held in Limuru, Kenya was women ordination. Diocese of Maseno pioneered in ordaining the first women Rev Lucia Okuthe on 14th Jan 1983 and Rev Emily Odido on 29th July 1984 as a Deacon and a priest on 15th Dec 1985 by Bishop Okullu created a lot of tension within the ACK (Onyango, 2003; 79-83). When Bishop Emily Odido Onyango was elected Assistant Bishop of Bondo diocese in 2021, (first Woman Bishop in Kenya) it was contested, eventually she was consecrated. The first women to be ordained in DMKS was in 1997 when Bishop Njenga asked in his charge "it is important we ask ourselves why women have never been ordained in our diocese; the Synod approved" (min Synod 07/1997, min 27/1997, see min 13/1989). Kiundu notes that women also resisted women ordination „Women should not be entrusted with ordained ministry and leadership because they can be easily tempted" (2016; 50). B30 and B35 concurred "during celebration of 150 years (1994) of evangelization in Kenya. The Church joined the secular at expense of

men; lenient decision favouring women were made. The Church failed to balance. The end result is decreased number of men in Church Councils, leadership and in attendance".

Majority of respondents (78%) in the FGDs felt that clergy prefer women in Church leadership for it is easier to manipulate women especially in matters of money (see min 018/cc/2018, bullet 6; min 32/cc/2019). In this aspect men with potential in Church are threat to the clergy. When such men are elected to such a position, the clergy use threatening language such as that of cursing to have their way; men take a back seat (see min 031/cc/2019). This has revealed that even in the Church, men do not feel at home, therefore they search where they can feel at home.

B6 and B24 agreed that it is not easy to serve in the Mothers Union when the husband is deeply entrenched in *Kiama*. The husbands advocate for rituals which are contrary to their wives' faith, women give in. In this aspect the MU leadership accuses us of taking parts and entertaining these rituals in our homes, for example during *ruracio* and *gutinia kiande* ceremonies, men ask for] *muratina*, libation, praying facing *kirinyaga*; also, the way women wear the traditional dress. What do you do and the husband is the head of the family? Majority of women serve with broken hearts.

Misfortunes

On the misfortunes, 10% respondents felt that misfortunes, pestilences and calamities in families make people seek answers in their culture. B5 retorted "there is *ndwari* (infirmities) and *murimu* (sickness). *Ndwari* originates from such incidences as a refusal to honor a parent's request; it is incurable while *murimu* is curable. B5 and B1 construed "there is a lot of underutilized prime lands in Kiambu, simply because the parents cursed such lands. We have witnessed children coming to seek for advice." Orchardson concurs that "misfortunes and illness lead one to seek traditional rituals (1998; 85). Nand the same thought line Ng'ang'a deduces that "some Christians associate some calamities with their culture teachings and

requirements, hence when faced with such, they seek solution in their cultural rituals so as to appease their ancestors (2019; 109)

Lukewarm Christianity

Under Lukewarm Christianity, 25% respondents lamented of the superficial Christianity. Over the years Christianity has not been properly entrenched as way of life but like a social club or for convenience purposes (Galgalo, 2012; 5). This luke warmness is making men comfortable in practicing syncretism. Majority of the respondents (95%) felt that the clergy should preach the true gospel that leads to conviction. Therefore, it is duty of the Church as the light of the world to have programs of substance that touches the hearts, mind and the intellect of the congregants. Such preparation by the clergy fills the vacuum in the men's hearts and one is left to make the right choices. B35 emphasized "Jesus never fought his culture he preached the gospel truth; people made their choice and got entrenched in their faith." Galgalo argues that "if the Church practices *Missio Dei*- putting Christ at the center of it all- people will be well grounded in their faith (2012; 36)

In the FGD, respondents felt that luke warmness of the Christian starts when no clear examples are coming from the leadership. The leadership matters a lot in Christian grounding. B40 explained that, Jesus could comfortably say to his audience, "Learn from me, can the leadership say that today? " Therefore, Church leadership should be exemplary in issues of money and immorality. The Church then should aspire to be like the early Church that imitated their leader- Christ, until outsiders called them „Christians- Christ like“. B30 emphasized "such reaction by the leadership leads the congregants in the right direction. The authority should be pious; full of love letting its light be the guiding principle followed by total commitment to Jesus Christ."

Respect

Respondents agreed that in the *Agikuyu* community high level of respect especially towards the elders was advocated. They explained that the Western

culture of individualism and emphasis of individual rights has eroded this aspect (Fiedler, 1996; 22). Respect has declined a lot and has become a concern in the society. However, *Kiama* accused the Church of being part and parcel of this problem in the society. There has been a trend or some statements by clergy such as "*niaritaye atananjia ngutondoira, nguuta ruta na ngukoma alta-ini*" (Let him retire before he starts stammering, salivating, and sleeping in the altar). B20 quipped "these are statements from the Church leadership". Bishop Ranji frequently decried vulgar language by the clergy (min 031/cc/2019; min 048/cc/2019).

The respondents accused the Church of showing disrespect to the retired clergy. Bishop Ranji had decried disrespect of junior clergy towards their seniors (min 018/cc/2018, bullet 6; see Kiundu, 2016; 51&54). Respondents argued that retired clergy are forgotten and ignored by the junior clergy. Therefore, the Church is accused of having a dustbin for her retirees, including archbishops and bishops. In such situation they are rendered irrelevant in the Church yet they are very resourceful, potential, have great expertise and are respected elders in the society. Archbishop Gitari lamented "The ACK constitution is clear that we be invited for Synod, we are rarely invited" (Chitando 2014; 315). B14 said "the Church should learn from Archbishop Gitari. During his burial they lamented "you took our father when he was strong and returned him to us when he was old, frail and sickling and you forgot him". B8 argued "if this is what the Church does to its very own, who are we? *Tunajipanga mapema* (we prepare ourselves earlier)".

The retired clergy should be accorded respect and allocated to teach some issues in the Church especially in family life, morality and integrity. The respondents explained that some clergy uphold the retired clergy and involve them in the ministry. However, there are some clergy who mistreat them; they rarely involve them in the ministry. The respondent explained that sometimes they visit retired clergy secretly without the knowledge of

Vicars. They contribute from their pockets and not from the Church coffers for such clergy do not approve such visitations. These are the clergy who really sacrificed, the diocese is where it is because of the sacrifices they made like serving large parishes without means of transport or intentionally delaying payment of their allowances so that income generating projects are completed.

The respondents felt that to avoid such incidences, it is the duty of the diocesan office to officially place a clergy in an able parish upon his retirement with clear responsibilities of that clergy. They should not be left at the mercies of the incumbent. Though respondents in Church leadership applauded the diocesan office effort towards paying their NHIF cover and some upkeep allowances, the good working relationship of the three bishops in the diocese, the Emeritus Bishop Njenga, Emeritus Bishop Ranji and the diocesan Bishop Muturi, however they said there is room for improvement. Respondents felt that "it is during Church services we are reminded that so and so is retired, elsewhere we refer to them as "Bishop" or "Reverend".

B1 emphasized that upon retirement the State accords some of the retired archbishops and bishops' huge responsibilities in high profile government offices, for example; retired Archbishop Eliud Wabukala and retired Bishop Njenga both from ACK for the State recognizes the potential of such ministers. The Church should learn from the State (see Cavvichi, 1953; 17").

Though the issue of respect declination has become a thorny issue in many ethnic groups, the Church is being accused for it is the conscience of the society. Therefore, any misdemeanor by the Church leadership is viewed very critically by the society. Appiah notes "youths were warned strongly not to disrespect the elders nor take for granted their counsel nor ridicule the wisdom and expertise of the elders and ignore their experiences gained as they age (2014: 15). Men are yearning for respect accorded to the old in the society; they are seeking answer in the *kiama*..

Dialogue

Majority of respondents felt that no amicable dialogue has been carried out in the diocese. However, respondents had varied views.

On the need for a dialogue, 55% of the respondents felt that there was a need for a dialogue, however not a dialogue that will try to outrun each other but a neutral dialogue that is based on facts aiming at teaching. The dialogue should allow each function to express itself. These respondents felt that the entry point should be issues that are common and the differences to be discussed later. The guiding principle should be the essence of one God and his virtues and values. Then that which does not work with this one God is discouraged and disbanded. For this to succeed majority felt that titles should be put down and men sit together as men and discuss issue as men.

On the dialogue, 30% vehemently said "No" to such dialogue. They held the view that each function will try to out-run the other and prove itself right. Therefore, such dialogue cannot bear fruit. These are two religions; they have nothing in common.

Furthermore, 10% were apprehensive they answered, "Yes however 'they felt that unless they are guided by the biblical principles, then they are not good while 5% said "No but". They felt that though such dialogue may not bear fruit. They felt that the arguments by both sides need to stop. They should agree to disagree but stop name calling, mutual respect should be exercised.

Inculturation of *kiama*

These tried to answer the question on what Church could borrow from *kiama*. In the discourse of this study, it clearly came up that *kiama* are using cultural hermeneutics while Christians are using biblical hermeneutics. Cultural hermeneutics means that one understands and uses the culture to interpret the scripture. Biblical hermeneutics one uses the scriptures to interpret the culture, scripture takes the precedence. These are two parallels with no point of convergence.

On the need for inculturation, 30% felt that there is need to enculturate the good aspect of *Kiama* like grading system in KAMA, social responsibility by men. B35 asserted that "Jesus fulfilled the cultural aspect of the Jews which did not conflict with his mission; therefore, no all aspect of culture is bad." Fiedler suggests that "traditional rites, social order and organization can possibly be Christianized and used to strengthen the Church in Africa". 45% respondents said "No" emphasizing the God of Heavens, Yahweh and not the God of the Mountain; arguing traditionalists" emphasize on Universality of God, whereby God reveals himself in our culture. They felt that all that culture does is even better fulfilled in the Church. In the same thought line Fiedler argues that 'traditional rites, social order and organization can possibly be Christianized and used to strengthen the Church in African thus the Church helping to preserve good African cultural aspect (1996; 85). However, Kiarie cautions that "when inculturation takes place there are risks as well as gains achieved (2015; 148). In the same line Ng'ang'a argue that "if a purpose in a culture is good, you look a way of retaining it while discarding the things that make that custom bad (2019; 211).

The 15% respondents who said "Yes but" held the view that inculturation is good; a lot of caution should be exercised when determining what to inculturate. They felt very minimal aspects of *kiama* are needed to be inculturated such as grading and respect. Bishop Ranji had decried that "the African Sunday celebrated in the diocese embrace cultural aspects that conflict with Christian faith" (min 048/cc/2019). This affirmed the argument expressed by Ng'ang'a that "great care has to be exercised on deciding what has to be inculturated for not all aspects of African culture is compatible with the gospel (2019; 22).

Elozukwu argues that "good aspects of traditional rites such as marriages, initiation or birth are retained" (1996; 4). However, the 10% of the respondent who said "No however", felt that these are two religions but as Christianity borrowed from

the Judaism, we too can borrow from our culture selectively.

From the above argument, it is clear that respondents with cultural inclination hold the dialogic model of continuity of ATR to Christianity and inclusivism position of Salvation in Christ through other non-Christian religions or philosophies, while other are holding the pluralistic view that Christ is one among many Truths. Majority of respondents with Christianity inclination held the dialectics model of discontinuity of ATR and exclusive position that Salvation is only found in Jesus Christ (Phiri, 2016; 89)

In this aspect majority of respondents are of opinion that inculturation is not possible for African culture is not compatible with Christianity. Kiarie (2015; 172) referring to scholars such as Hillman (1993; 24), Mugambi (2013), Houston (2013), Wandera (2006), Galgalo and Mombo (2008) argues that:

African clergy are alienated from their own culture. This is due to theological formation they receive that is Western oriented and conditioned, with no African concerns. This limits the contextual approach that would encourage African clergy to engage their context critically while doing theology and thus inculturation is not encouraged, resulting in alienated priests detached from African realities. This is in spite of the Lambeth conference of 1998 commending and encouraging authentic inculturation in the Anglican Communion.

The above argument shows that there is a need for the clergy to be aware of their cultural inclinations so that they are able to critically engage with their ministerial challenges at informed position and amicably give concrete and convincing answers guided by the scriptures.

Galgalo concludes that Lack of proper, relevant and adequate theological education lead to ineffective ministry, therefore right theology is the key to realizing strong Christians and effective people and transformation power of the Gospel (2012; 49)

The researcher observed that the level of education and age allowed an open mind in the area of inculturation.

On the level of education, 35% of respondents were for secondary education and below, while 40% had certificates and diplomas and 25% had degrees and above. The researcher accepted the answers given for no verification of educational documents were done.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The first objective of this study was to find out how *kiama kia athuri* was perceived in the pre-colonial period in the *Agikuyu* community in Kiambu county. The finding is that this was a highly regarded rite among men. To join the first grade the character and integrity of the initiate never mattered for the young man was counseled on how to cater for his young family and how to relate with the extended family. However, once a man got his first child it was mandatory to join *kiama*. To join the other upper grades were also mandatory as one aged. However, the integrity and character of the initiate greatly mattered for the vital role they played in judicial and religious matters.

The second objective was to find out how colonial government and mission societies interacted with the rite to *kiama kia athuri*. The findings were that the missionaries collaborated with the colonial government in dissuading practices which they termed as primitive, barbaric and archaic such as dances, rites, brews and customs that they termed as incompatible with Christianity such as libations, female circumcision, sacrifices, ceremonies and praying facing *Kirinyaga*. The *Agikuyu* resisted such moves however the *athomi* sided with the missionaries. This created a great conflict and divisions among the *Agikuyu* people in areas such as circumcision, *ruracio*, *muratina*, and *kiama kia athuri*. The European replaced this *Agikuyu* governance structure with European governance structure, constitution and judicial systems while Missionaries introduced new religious beliefs, structures and denominations, which never

satisfied the African people. They introduced the statutory grown-up age to be 18 years where a person needed his own will and consent to such issues as marriage or drinking. This gave young people a right to indulge with in alcohol at their will. The cultural way of regulating beer was severed and done away with; end result was alcoholism in the society.

The third objective was to find out the post-colonial *Agikuyu* people views on *kiama kia athuri*. The *kiama kia athuri* persist even today despite missionaries and colonial government efforts to annihilate it. The finding showed that this rite of passage to *kiama kia athuri* is highly entrenched and valued in *Agikuyu* culture. Majority of respondents agreed that the society was well organized, guided and disciplined under the governance of *kiama kia athuri*. They agreed that vices such as disrespects, immorality, prostitution, single parenthood and corruption were very minimal in the society.

The finding showed that today *Agikuyu* are divided on the relevance and importance of *kiama* in the modern society. However, majority of respondents agreed that for about 15 years now, men in large numbers including those in Church leadership are initiating to *kiama kia athuri*.

The findings further showed that majority of the respondents felt that, issues that *kiama* emphasized such as respect, morality, men responsibilities and integrity are genuine concerns in the society, they are lacking today in the society. However, they were a sharp division on the rites of passage concerning ceremonies, ritual, sacrifices (blood) and religions aspect of libation and praying facing *Kirinyaga* which majority respondents with Christian inclination termed as idolatry. The research revealed that *kiama* adherents today have transformed. The findings showed that current *kiama* has stopped advocacy for rites such of 2nd birth, circumcision, dances and elaborate ceremonies, warrior ship, women circumcision *guthiga*, *hukuro* and traditional operation apparatus, however they maintain praying facing *Kirinyaga*.

The finding showed that majority of correspondents felt that amicable dialogue based on mutual understanding can eliminate the differences that are being experienced between Church leadership and *kiama kia athuri*. They viewed that both functions can find out their common objective like social vices like disrespect, immorality, single parenthood, prostitution and corruption and unite in curbing them. The finding showed that the shortcomings of the Church leadership especially the clergy is lending the Church irrelevant in the society, therefore a need of for clergy reformation. The finding further showed that it is the duty of the Church to teach the true theology by preaching the true gospel. The Church is one to correct the theology of *kiama kia ma*.

The researcher recommended that: -

- The ACK, DMKS should have comprehensive theological training of the clergy whereby imminent cultural tendencies such as dowry, circumcision and council of elders are critically taught and students are well informed. This will help the clergy to correct the doctrines taught by *kiama kia athuri* from understanding point of view.
- The ACK, DMKS should plan and organize comprehensive and substantial programs, seminar, retreats, conventions and conferences for men where persisting cultural issues are discussed. Participants question and answer sessions should be given eminence. Such move will create forum for dialogue thus enhancing the understanding of doctrinal issues raised by such cultural groupings. In so doing the Church will confront these issues theologically from a point of understanding
- The ACK, DMKS should inculturate the good aspects of *kiama kia athuri* in KAMA such as

grading of KAMA members and lifelong teaching in KAMA where Christian principles are taught.

- The ACK, DMKS through her clergy should devolve theology from the pulpit to the congregation level so that the congregants become more conversant with theological discourse. This is Church to emphasis on more teaching.

The findings showed that the rite of passage to *Agikuyu* eldership was highly regarded and every man was expected to join eldership and go up the grades ladder. Missionaries and colonizers tried to abolish this rite before they clearly understood the meaning of this social structure and organization of men. This created a lot of controversy and conflicts. Although today the *kiama kia athuri* has persisted there are aspect like politicking and commercialization in it. The research showed that there is a problem with Christian with its aspects of sacrifices (blood) praying facing *Kirinyaga* and libations. However, the study has revealed that amicable dialogue can reduce the rift between *kiama* and the Church. The burden of correcting the theology and doctrines of *kiama* on praying facing *Kirinyaga*, libations and sacrifices lies on the Church leadership through preaching the true gospel as Jesus did.

Suggestions for further research

This study cannot claim to have exhausted the study on *Kiama kia ma kia athuri* bearing in mind that the practices vary greatly from one region to the other and from one clan to the other. The DMKS covers three counties namely Nairobi, Kiambu and Kajiado there is a need for research in the remaining six archdeaconries especially in Kajiado ad Nairobi which are cosmopolitans.

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