

**TANGAZA COLLEGE**  
**THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA**

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**THE AFRICAN CONCEPT OF MARRIAGE AND THE  
INCULTURATION PROCESS:**

**A case study of the African Bible on the ground project at Our Lady of  
Mt. Kenya Benedictine Monastery, Nanyuki**

**MODERATOR**  
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**A Long Essay Submitted In Partial Fulfillment Of The Requirement For  
The Bachelor of Arts In Religious Studies**

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## **DEDICATION**

To my late mother, Leonida Ngaira, who brought me up in the Catholic faith,  
and to Mary Radcliff who donated land to the Benedictines in Nanyuki, as her  
contribution to the mission of Evangelisation. May the Lord grant their souls Eternal  
rest.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

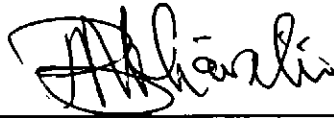
It is in the will and love of God that this study is realized. To Him be praise and glory forever. I wish to thank Mr. Benson Mulemi for accepting to supervise this study. I appreciate his committed availability and guidance. I also wish to acknowledge and appreciate the assistance and facilitation given by Fr. Raymond Tamale, O. S. B, the families of Mr./Mrs. Solomon Wachira and Mr./Mrs. John Mathai in Nanyuki.

Sincere thanks to Dr. Joseph Malusu of Kenyatta University for his constructive criticism of the initial draft of this essay, Dr. Daniel Waweru Gakuya, O. S. B of Nairobi University for approval of the findings herein on Agikuyu Traditional marriage, and Fr. Alex Ojacor of C.U.E.A for correcting language and presentation. I appreciate the role played by Mr. Joseph Kamindo Githae as an immediate resource person on the Agikuyu culture.

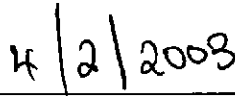
Sincere thanks go to the teaching staff of Tangaza College for the formative commitment and concern, the library Staff who guided and enabled me to collect the secondary data, and the student's body for creating a conducive learning atmosphere. Last but not least, I wish to thank my confreres, the Benedictines in Kenya for their love, concern, and support in my theological studies. God bless abundantly all who have been of any help to facilitate the successful completion of this essay.

## DECLARATION

I, declare that this long Essay is my original work achieved through my personal reading, and critical reflection.. The essay has not been submitted to any other college or University for an academic credit.

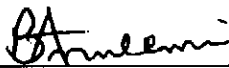


MUKHAVALI, BENEDICT, O.S.B.

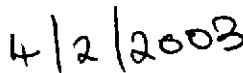


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This long Essay has been submitted for examination with my approval as the college supervisor.



MR. MULEMI, A. BENSON



Date

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Culture is a set of meanings and values that organise human life and a world view. In the life of each individual and especially the faithful, there are particular significant and decisive moments for discerning God's call and embracing the mission entrusted by Him. Inculturation enables the local church to live the best of the tradition of her people in a way that fully integrates them within the life and message of Jesus Christ.

Naturally the human person experiences a longing and emptiness that converge in a basic inner yearning that prompts what we explain as a religious experience. This experience is expressed in a community sharing the same inner awe that builds a structure of worship, rituals, ordinances, symbols, and a relationship among members. A people's Religion explain and give a phenomenological meaning to life, explaining what, why, and how a people do what they do with a transcendental relationship.

Every human culture has a particular religious expression. This explains why, for instance, even after over hundred years of evangelisation of the Mt. Kenya

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C. H. Kraft, *Christianity in culture*, 45-63

region, there still exist traditional sects and a plurality of Christian denominations. The African Bible on the Ground project attempts to develop a methodology that explains the essential religious values that have found different expressions in African cultural situations. This is in the strict view of evangelisation from the new catechism of Christian theology, as "the discipline that articulates an understanding of the meaning of God in our lives based on an in-depth and systematic investigation of both the Christian faith tradition and the lived experience of people".<sup>1</sup>

Marriage, an essential phenomenon of the human nature, is a concern of the mission activity. In the process of inculturation, the African Bible on the Ground focuses on the human culture. Cultures are deeply rooted in humanity with a witness of openness in a particular expression. The focus of the project is to ensure that Christian living gives meaning to cultural values that are essential tenets of a people's life.

This essay considers the traditional African values of marriage, with special reference to the "Igikuyu"<sup>2</sup> and the people settled around Nanyuki town. The study is based on analysis of the implementation of "the African Bible on the ground project". The project demonstrates a concrete and new approach to marriage in the modern society, to help people discover Christ in their marriage and family life. The family is the centre of a human community and the basic formation of the individual person.

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<sup>1</sup> H. Croome, : *Christian Religious Education* - 22."

<sup>2</sup> Agikuyu - The traditional reference to the people. Modern usage will have Gikuyus

## 1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The church in her mission is revisiting the African cultural values in the era of reformation, in the light of the Gospel. From the pre-formation, (Jer. 1:4), our being formed and created by God, to the age of formation in which we have received the Christian faith from the missionaries, inculturation initiates the age of reformation, in which our cultural values are addressed by the mission activity.

Mt. Kenia, according to Fr. Raymond, O.S.B. is the monument of God, the mountain of transformation. It has a tremendous cultural and religious significance to the people of central Kenya. According to the Agikuyu, it is the home of "Ngai", God. The local people relate to it with deep reverence, as a sacred reality, a manifestation of the presence of God and the mysterious origin of the first human being - "Mugikuyu".<sup>1</sup> Similarly, God lived on Mt. Sinai from where He manifested His mysteries (Ex. 3:1).

At the foot of Mt. Kenia in the Agikuyu belief, "Ngai" instituted marriage, the origin of the Agikuyu people. "Gikuyu" was instructed and directed on how to establish a family and relate to "Ngai", as he did to Adam, (cf. Gen. 1:27-28). He provided a woman, Mumbi - the procreator, to Gikuyu. He prepared the marriage and a home for Gikuyu and his wife Mumbi. In the Agikuyu Mythology, "Ngai" instituted both the "Mbari"- family and the "Mohiriga". He solemnised the marriage between the daughters of Mumbi and the nine youngmen (cf. Gen. 2:18-

<sup>1</sup> Mugikuyu — the person, the cultural person

<sup>2</sup> Gikuyu — the ancestor

25) Thus, marriage among the Agikuyu is divinely instituted and blessed to generate the human family. Thus, "Marriage belongs to the order of creation and to the order of redemption"<sup>7</sup> It has its origin and orientation in God.

The African Bible on the Ground Project focuses on a wholistic formation of the person from this perspective. The project realises the necessary fact that, every human group, and society, has a value system, such that, "any discussion of inculturation demands an understanding of cultural pluralism and of the relationship between religion and culture"<sup>8</sup> Inculturation is the process by which the Gospel message adopts and expresses itself within a cultural value structure.

Nanyuki area, marked with a varied ethnic blend and diverse cultural and religious manifestation, was originally a war zone between the *Mau Mau* freedom fighters and the colonial army. The land and part of the house that is now the Benedictine monastery originally belonged to an army major. It was donated to the Benedictine Monks by Mary Radcliff, to built a spiritual centre on it, (cf. appendix 4). All the people settled in this place migrated from their original homes, some as servants and workers of the white settlers and army officers, while others have bought land. The Samburu, Meru and Agikuyu are the original people geographically.

A pastoral insertion and analyses on the influence of this nature of settlement indicate that, the Agikuyu family and clan structure has been interfered with, making it hard to promote cultural values and observe ceremonial rituals. There exists an

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<sup>7</sup> J. Kenyatta, *Facing Mt. Kenya*, and in the traditional belief

<sup>8</sup> W. Kasper, *Theology of Christian Marriage*

<sup>9</sup> A. Shorter, *Towards A Theology of Inculturation* 45

<sup>10</sup> According to the Administrative boundaries

urban type of settlement in which individualism, and selected neighbourhoods are embraced. People live as individuals, and relate according to social classes, and not as families or clans. This reality has substantial influence on this community, which calls for a new pastoral approach.

The social morality in the study site does not promote the traditional cultural and Christian values, with a special concern to marriage and family life, due to lack of society support. Sexuality as a fundamental component of personality's, modes of being, and manifestation, of communicating with others, of feeling, of expressing and living the human love, is the most corrupted.

Prostitution within Nanyuki town and its environs is a reality<sup>1</sup>. This is facilitated and promoted by the presence of the British soldiers who come for joint military training with the Kenyan soldiers, and the Army and Airforce barracks next to the town. Sexuality should be ordered to the conjugal love of man and woman in marriage. The physical intimacy of the spouses become a sign and pledge of the spiritual communion (C. C. C., no.2366).

As the Church in Africa experiences the inevitable Western cultural influence due to globalisation, there is the definite increase in passive consumerism, which has robbed people of their precious cultural values. This promotes other social issues such as, violence in families, broken marriages, single parenthood, attempted suicide and suicide cases, and abject poverty.

African cultural and Christian values are left to the aged who are becoming fewer every other day. The African Bible on the ground revisits, in an illustrative pedagogy, the African values as a way of life of our ancestors, translated and relived

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<sup>1</sup> From field research and study of town between 1996-2012.

in the light of the Gospel as a way of life of Jesus Christ, our proto ancestor. This study intends to analyse the remedies developed and demonstrated on the project to counter the collapsing meaning of the sacrament of matrimony.

## **1.2 THE CHURCH, MARRIAGE, AND INCULTURATION**

The church in her mission, "Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptise them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." (Matt. 28:19), has the passionate responsibility to live up to the command and commission of her master. This teaching and command is a child of a particular time, within a cultural context, but with the universal orientation towards diverse global cultures, in a new age. It is in this realisation that the African synod celebrated the incarnation of the mission activity in Africa, in the life experience of every people in the African world.

This essay focuses on inculturation as a "process by which a particular people respond to the saving word of God and express their response in their own cultural forms of worship, reflection, organisation, and life"<sup>11</sup> This is to demonstrate and clarify to the church in our time that, God prepared the African people in a special way to translate and receive the Christian faith through their cultures.

Christ's faithful are incorporated in the church through the sacraments. According to Can. 204, par 1, the Christian faithful are those who, inasmuch as they have been incorporated in Christ through baptism, are constituted as the people of God. For this reason, since they have become sharers in Christ's Priestly, Prophetic

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<sup>11</sup> A. Shorter, *Evangelization and Inculturation*, 32.

and Royal office in their own manner, they are called to exercise the mission which God has entrusted to the Church to fulfil in the world, in accordance with the condition proper to each one.

Marriage, one of the sacraments, is a phenomenon that is common and natural to all humanity, expressed in diverse cultural contexts. Can. 1134 explains, from a valid marriage arises a bond between the spouses which by its very nature is perpetual and exclusive. In a Christian marriage the spouses are consecrated for the duties and the dignity of their state by this special sacrament. This bond between the male and the female persons in a matrimonial partnership is the centre of human life. It is perpetual and exclusive factor of the human nature. The African Bible on the ground project considers marriage as a natural fact of the human person, hence presents it as the creation of the word of God, with a relevant foundation in the scripture.

As Pope John Paul II, launched the new evangelisation for the third millennium, "he invited both the lay Christians and the Ministers to turn with renewed interest to the Bible".<sup>12</sup> The Holy Father has a view of inculturation that must be founded on and expressed in the scripture. He says,

In order that the word of God may be known, loved, and pondered and preserved in the hearts of the faithful, (cf. 2 Th 2:13-14), great efforts must be made to provide access to the sacred scriptures. Specifically, this should be done through full or partial translation of the Bible prepared as far as possible in co-operation with other churches and ecclesial communities, accompanied by study guides for use in prayer in family and Christian community. Thus, efforts must be made to try to put the sacred scriptures into the hands of all the faithful right from their earliest years.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Apostolic Letter Tertio Millennio Adventente*, Nov. 10, 1994, No. 40.

<sup>13</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium in Africa*, September 14, 1995, No. 58.

The African Bishops stressed the importance of evangelisation of inculturation, the process by which Catechesis takes flesh in the various cultures. They emphasised inculturation as an urgent priority in the life of the particular churches for a firm founding of the Gospel in Africa. Inculturation is a term that denotes "the presentation and re-expression of the Gospel in terms and forms proper to a culture, a process which result in the reinterpretation of both, without being unfaithful to either"<sup>14</sup> The Bishops stressed it as a requirement for evangelisation and one of the greatest challenges for the Church on the continent on the eve of the third millennium, as God's family.

The project has very relevant and lasting meaning to the local Church. Just as the Pope's representative to Kenya said, "This is a new way of understanding the Holy Book"<sup>15</sup> Many participants have requested that this "*mohiriga*" be called "The African Bible on the ground *in the village of Hope*". At the village, people get in touch with their true cultural selves, revisit, define and emphasise their values. At this village that is the project, life is generated and promoted, people get formative support and exhortation. The project defines and affirms their identity. The African Bible on the Ground project in the village of hope is the first ever in Kenya to take on a practical implementation of the church's recommendations as far as New Evangelisation of the African continent is concerned.

The project demonstrates the prophetic Christian teaching found in the African cultures, and its rootedness in God's revelation, which is intrinsic to them. As Schillebeeckx observes, "the structural changes which have taken place in the

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<sup>14</sup> A. Shorter, *Evangelization and culture*, 32

<sup>15</sup> His Excellency Giovanni Fontana, February 27, 2001, at the project site

society. . . have profoundly affected the position of marriage and family life. The family has suffered a fundamental loss". " The urban reality of Nanyuki town that sets the objectives of this study, has consequently affected marriage and family life.

### **1.3 OBJECTIVES TO THE STUDY**

The general objective is to analyse the influence of the multiethnic settlement nature in Nanyuki on the cultural values of marriage and family life of the Agikuyu people

Specifically, this study sets out to evaluate the influence of "The African Bible on the Ground Project," on the inculturation process with reference to the African concept of marriage, modelled on the Agikuyu traditional marriage

The third objective is to evaluate the project's initiative to empower the family through transformational enlightenment as the central basis for any human community, among the Agikuyu

Finally, the author would like to reflect on the effort and vision of the church community, in the context of the ethnic groups in Kenya, in the universal mission of the church as God's family in Africa. This is done in order to demonstrate the theological relevance to the sacrament of marriage on the African setting.

## **1.4 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY**

God prepares every people in a particular cultural context to encounter Him. He reveals Himself in a special way to a people in their cultural and historical experiences. This study and reflection is a response to the concern of the whole church to promote indigenisation by studying and reflecting on every effort of a Christian community to realise the process of inculturation.

This essay and reflection on the project is a contribution to the effort of the Christian community towards inculturation, in the academic reflections through examinable practical evaluations.

This is part of the second phase of the project. It is very important to note that a great effort must be made to bring out a documented theological analysis of what the local church has realised in practical terms

The author's focus and concentration to marriage is an attempt to document this theme (of marriage) to provide study guides for on going formation in marriage processes and its establishment, as well as counselling of families, and benefit other readers.

The African people, called by God to maturity in faith, have a need and therefore a right to contextualize the word of God within their value systems with reference to a systematic documentation as the current one. This study suggests a wholistic approach to meet people, as formed by a cultural family in the sacrament of matrimony.

## **1.5 METHODOLOGY**

The Christian world has approached the issue of inculturation, and contextualization with a keen interest. The focus of the methodology is to clarify and come to the affirmation that, God created the African person in his image and likeness, and has prepared him/her, for eternal salvation from the basic human family, in the sacrament of matrimony. This is based on the authors pastoral experience in the study area. The people involved in the project were interviewed as key informants, using a standard interview schedule.

### **1.5.1 KEY INFORMANTS**

These included the Initiator and director of the project, Fr. Raymond Tamale, O.S.B. The sponsors of the hut on marriage, Mr. and Mrs. Wachira, and other contributors to the project Mr. and Mrs. Mathai, members of the the Christian community.

Other respondents included four Small Christian Communities, who take an active role on the project. Christians of other denominations, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of October, a group of 27 members of the Methodist Church from Meru; on 12<sup>th</sup> of October, a youth group of 30 members of the Gospel Out reach Church of Nanyuki. On the 13<sup>th</sup> the author had 25 members of the C.M.A from Nyeri Arch Diocese. More information was elicited from other beneficiaries of the project such as guests on retreat (3 Benedictine Sisters between 7<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> of Oct.) and counselling services, all in the year 2002. A tape recorder was used with the permission of the respondents.

This facilitated the author's collection and analysis of the detailed information given

The author took time on the project site to make a personal observation, reflection, and evaluation, in order to internalise the facts on the ground. This effected inferences that have been used to make a personal reflection and comment on the project

The author worked hand in hand with the essay moderator who has observed keenly the progress of the study for guidance in the whole work of research and compilation. The methodology adopts a mission theology style for new evangelisation

### ***1.5.2 SECONDARY DATA***

Inculturation is a task of great concern for the church in the new millennium. To reflect within the specific scope of the subject marriage, the author has studied within the wider context of research taking note of and acknowledging the extent many other scholars have gone in the understanding of the same phenomenon from their specific dispositions.

Works on marriage, especially those from the perspective of inculturation have been reviewed in this essay. This has helped and guided the author to understand the meaning of concepts, academic emphasis and focus in the area of study. Literature has been reviewed on the church's understanding of marriage as a natural phenomenon between man and woman and as a sacrament. These facilitates an African Christian theology of marriage

## **1.6 LIMITATIONS TO THE STUDY**

Much of what is on this project has begun off in a very simple and practical way in consideration of the deliberations of the African synod, and the works of many scholars. This is the first written attempt on this enormous reality that has challenged many, and has become the centre of focus for both scholars and ordinary persons. Such a pilot undertaking has its challenges. This was attended to through literature review in the same field.

Though the project site is far from the author's Institute of study, he managed to move to Nanyuki during the holidays. This allowed him time to take an active role in the events on the project site.

The blend of cultural groupings settled in Nanyuki has several ethnic languages which the author is not familiar with. Some bilingual interpreters conversant with the ethnic languages and either English or Kiswahili facilitated the interviews especially when respondents found it difficult to be interviewed in Kiswahili or English.

The project is still at the infant stage and still adapting to the pastoral situation. This implies teaching and conscientising the people. This reflection, on the theme of the African Christian concept of marriage finds concrete and authentic expression in human cultures, as is developed in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE AFRICAN BIBLE ON THE GROUND PROJECT

The project comes as the long awaited realisation of the wish of Mary Radcliff, who donated this land to the Monastery. This is a spiritual centre, Our lady of Mt. Kenya Monastery, situated at the foot of Mt. Kenya, 4 kilometres from Nanyuki town. Before, the centre was a formation house for the Benedictine monks. The centre was officially opened on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January, 1979. The thought to change this into an inculturation centre came from Fr. Raymond, O.S.B. between 1999-2000, when the project began. The project is spread on approximately three acre land

In 1993, the Pontifical Biblical Commission issued a document, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, which recommends that, "inculturation of the Bible... local Churches have to make an effort to convert foreign Biblical form into another form more closely corresponding to the culture of their own land."<sup>1</sup> The African Bible on the ground is a practical process by which the word of God meaningfully addresses the culture of a people as part of God's plan of salvation. It is a practical expression and demonstration of the incarnate Word of God in our human cultures. The African person is guided by the African Bible on the ground.

<sup>1</sup> Pauline Publications, *What the African bible*, 3

into a personal response to the Word of God and expresses it in his or her own cultural structure

The African Bible on the ground takes on the approach of pre-formation, formation, reformation, and transformation. Pre-formation (Jer 1.4) explains our very origin in God. Before we were born in a cultural context, God knew us and consecrated us. As a cultural people, in a process of faith formation, we have been formed by missionaries in the Christian faith. The reformation is the period of inculturation in which the local church is expressing her response to Christianity in her own cultural forms of worship, reflection, organisation, and life. An incarnation of the word of God in the cultures that is to bring about active holiness in a process of transformation. The project seeks to remind us of the cultural values and traditions that we are part of, in the wider context of Divine Revelation.

## **2.1 THE INITIATIVE**

The cultural form of worship, reflection, organisation, and life forms a liturgical structure in which this inner awe is expressed. "In order that the sacred liturgy may produce its full effect, it is necessary that the faithful come to it with proper disposition, that their thoughts match their words, and that they co-operate with Divine grace." By the exhortation of the Kenya Episcopal conference, Fr. Raymond came up with an idea, which he shared with his local church community. They set out to find a new methodology of proclaiming the word of God to the people in practical, relevant, and illustrative demonstration, by interpreting the daily

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<sup>1</sup> Vatican II, *Constitution on sacred liturgy* 31

life events, which express a common shared human experience, within the revealed word of God

The Christian community agreed that the matrimonial life needed pastoral attention. The sacrament of matrimony and family life touches and addresses the very basic meaning to be human, for an individual belongs to at least one family in the life time. Mr. Solomon Wachira offered to sponsor the building up of a locally set hut in which marriage and family counselling could take place. This was the beginning of the project. Currently, other Organisations and Religious congregations are offering to sponsor the building of a hut or something else, as the project expands into addressing other aspects of human living

The initiative the local Christian community has taken is within the universal initiative of the church, to express and root the Christian message within the local perspective of every faithful in every culture. The project attempts to provide contextualized gospel message through practical presentation of the Bible on the ground, to meet profound human needs

## **2.2. THE BIBLE ON THE GROUND**

The African Bible on the ground attempts to present African expressions, imageries, elements of culture and traditional religious ideas, as essential human aspects for salvation, transformed by the Grace of the Word of God.

The Bible on the ground expresses in illustration a meaningful relation of the African Bible to an African context today. For a more serious and elaborate use of the Bible, the project provide Christian communities and families with enriched

cultural values interpreted within the Christian values. The African Bible on the ground offers a realistic and dynamic ability to interpret the word of God in familiar terms to the local Christian communities. The power of the word of God brought forth the earth, out of which the human person was fashioned. (Gen. 2.7).

The Bible on the ground aims at concretising into lived experience, the relationship between humankind and the word of God. By these it focuses towards the glorious redemption, by the very fact of the incarnation of the Word of God into our human nature. (cf. John 1.14) Marriage as a cultural phenomenon is a practical symbolic expression of the covenantal love of God to the people. The African Bible on the ground is laid in two major phases, the Bible therapy and the African village as is elaborated below, in our study, focussed on marriage.

### **2.3 BIBLE THERAPY**

The opportunities and dangers of involvement in the contemporary reality of marriage present the church with a challenge to which she is bound to respond to in her preaching and practice. The Bible is a power that transforms a person, the family, and society. It is the mind of God addressing the state of a person within the establishment of marriage, as a way of salvation, that brings eternal happiness to the couple. Thus, the Bible is to be read in the family for wisdom, and practised for holiness. It contains light to direct spouses, and food to support them in their discernment. It is their guide on their journey to a holy family and the pilgrims' staff to support them in their matrimonial commitment. Christ our saviour as the ultimate revelation of God's love for the world (Jn. 6.14), is the grand subject. The family is

invited to read it carefully, frequently and prayerfully to fill the memory and rule the hearts, for they are part of this story, the family of God.

The communion of the love between God and people, a fundamental part of the revelation and faith experience of Israel, finds meaningful expression in the marriage covenant, established between a man and a woman. For this reason, the central word of revelation, 'God loves his people,' is likewise proclaimed through the living and concrete word whereby a man and a woman express their conjugal love. The concept of African rite of marriage as a process finds meaningful expression in the Christian notion of pilgrimage. "In communion with her Lord, the church also a messianic people is going forward towards a future and a binding city"<sup>19</sup> It is a journey from within, a search for intimate relation, a means of detaching from the tumult of things and events, and the discovering of Christ in their commitments. As one searches God to find Him with more sweetness, The Bible therapy makes married couples find Him and search Him with a greater vigour, for it addresses their concrete life situation.

The Bible Therapy brings married couples in the understanding that their way of life is a participation in the whole soteriological event of Christ. "As marriage is very closely tied to the culture in which it is found, whenever the culture undergoes significant changes, the institution of marriage may be seriously affected as well"<sup>20</sup> In marriage there is a mutual surrender of the whole person to the other for life. Hence, the Bible therapy invites the couple to understand the many challenging life situations the family is faced with, Christ managed all these through

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<sup>19</sup> The pilgrimage in the Great journey. Paxime publications Africa, Nairobi, 1998, Pg 14

<sup>20</sup> W. G. Ishim, *Parity of marriage: Marriageally Reconsidered*, Spearhead 195 - 197, 1989, Page 142.

his community and in prayer. As a community they will learn to accept themselves, empty themselves in self-sacrifice to one another, and in giving the selves to the community.

The strong message of Jesus to the couples in the Bible therapy on the project is that you have doubted me enough, excluded me from your daily experience. He invites them to take courage, to surrender wholly and join him to carry their matrimonial 'crosses' to the hill of hope. In his own passion he reminds couples that, I suffered, died for you and you are still doubtful. Hold the cup of salvation, lift it up and drink from it, and I will be with you to the end of time. (cf. Matt. 26:28). The therapeutic process engages and directs couples to emulate Christ in his incarnate life, as a union of communion in God.

## **2.4. THE AFRICAN VILLAGE**

The African Bible on the ground project assumes the Agikuyu traditional structure of families – *mburi*, forming a clan – *mohiriga*, or village. Matrimony, which is both a traditional rite of passage and as a Christian sacrament, has the general orientation to community life. The personal response of an individual is reached in relation to a particular community within the social life in the society. Thus, the "family into which he is born is a family of orientation and later when he marries he forms a new family – a family of procreation"<sup>21</sup>

At the project site, there are nine huts build in a simple African style with various African decor, that constitute the African village. These form what the

<sup>21</sup> E.O. AYOGBA, *An Introduction to the study of African Culture*, (Ibadan), 15.

Agikuyu call, '*mohiriga*'. Nine is a very symbolic number to the Agikuyu and especially in relation to the origins of the society in marriage. Each hut is a '*mbari*' - a family in which values of cultural experience are analysed and given a Biblical reference. The family as the centre and origin of human formation, brings an individual into communal participation, which initiates active holiness.

Among the Agikuyu, this structure of living is divinely instituted. They believe that 'Ago' established this social structure when he provided the young men to marry the nine daughters of Munibi and Gikuyu. This system helped in the administrative roles, educational responsibilities, and defined social relationships among families. A functional analysis will show that these families complement one another in the expression of the social and communal life.

This structural organisation of the society is not evident in the area of study, because Nanyuki is a multi-ethnic settlement area. One of the oldest settlers and key informant in the area, indicated that, no one can claim any piece of land here as his/her ancestral property, because everyone has moved to this place from some other place. People have settled in this place from different parts of the world – including Europeans and thus, it is not possible to talk of homogenous cultural practices in a traditional set up.

The new hope the project is giving to the people here is that, although they have lost their traditional cultural village settings, they belong to the new village, the new family of God in Africa, and the new community – that is, the church of Christ. Each hut contains an African cultural concept explained in the light of Christian values, such as, service, the African meal, prayer, and others. Thus, it addresses a particular situation of a family within a community.

## 2.5 MARRIAGE AND COMMUNITY LIFE

"Many different answers have been provided by various cultures and societies throughout the history of mankind to the question of the content and meaning of the shared life of man and woman in marriage".<sup>22</sup> From the very beginning in many different ways in which marriage has been understood and practised in the history of human cultures, sexuality has always been characterised by a certain vagueness, openness and flexibility, in which case it has to be given form and definition by society. There is a natural inclination in mankind to marry, which is realised in the act of human freedom. The African Christian concept of marriage is a journey in the company of God, who initiates it from the stages of preformation, formation, reformation and transformation, and brings it to fulfilment in Christ.

The traditional African people confirmed life already in the mother's womb immediately it was conceived. As a gesture of appreciation, the indigenous African community served the expectant mother – this is the preformation period for the child by the society. The parental care thus becomes a psychoformation in which the qualities of security, trust, love, and hope are confirmed and instilled in the child as a continuation and deepening of mutual love. Thus, marriage confirms the continuity of the life of the community.

Married life is a call to service, with roles and duties one acquires with this new status in the society. Traditionally a mother serving a child by bathing it serves

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<sup>22</sup> W. Kasper, *Theology of Christian Marriage*, 5

both the community and the child, for the child does not belong to the mother alone but to the whole community – this is the formation period for the child in the particular culture. The virtue of service is instilled in the child who learns service by serving the community. The African Bible on the ground re-directs the child and the family toward the objective service of the community – this is the reformation period for the child in which service is objectified. Christ transforms this service by the washing of the feet of the twelve Apostles, who represented the twelve tribes of Israel, and asked them to go and do the same.

Reconciliation is part of the life of the traditional African community. The Christian concept of the sacrament of reconciliation has these elements, the individual, the community and the transcendental. Through marriage, communities reconciled and lived in peace. Traditionally this is one reason why people gave or received girls in marriage.

This study confirms that marriage belongs to the order of creation and redemption. The traditional African communal meal such as that at a marriage ceremony has elements of the Eucharist at the material level. The meal, therefore, gives us the ordinary requirements for redemption. As St. Thomas says, Grace builds on nature, the African meal at marriage, as a symbol of unity and life, becomes a necessary preparation for salvation. The ordinary requirements in the African meal are transformed into Divine and redeeming requirements that points us to the heavenly banquet.

Prayer for an African in the family setting is a continuous awareness of the presence and faithfulness of the Supreme Being in ones' life experience. Traditionally couples prayed for a blessing of their marriage with a child. The

African prayer has elements of thanksgiving, petition for the present needs and praying for future plans. These elements are transformed into saving acts by grace in the prayer of our Lord, who gave us a formula and words with which to pray to our Father.

Africans have a strong sense of family and that is why the African synod addressed the church in Africa as God's family. The family is the basic Christian church in Africa. Christian communities are a reality in Africa because of the strong influence of extended family relations. The project is working out a modality in the pastoral sphere to establish strong family values. The family is a place where people root their being, and form identities. God's family in Africa lives in communion with the whole Catholic Church.

As Mbiti observes, "Africa is caught up in a world revolution which is so dynamic that it has almost got out of human control. It is a revolution of man as a whole, and, therefore, no people or country can remain unaffected by this new rhythm of human history. It is a total change, and one which affects all spheres of life. The family is the most severely affected part of Africa."

The project offers seminars, retreats, talks, to people on different aspects of life. There is marriage encounter sessions for couples, family counselling for troubled families and also family support and education. Youth activities through which they educate one another or receive talks from facilitators on the project. The project also encourages the creation and formation of small Christian communities. The next chapter outlines and explains the pastoral response that aims at reconstructing the dignity of marriage as a sacrament, and the realisation of a holy family, considering both traditional cultural and the Christian Gospel values.

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<sup>1</sup> J.S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, Page 236 - 238

## *CHAPTER THREE*

### **MARRIAGE AS A PROCESS**

Marriage is a universal social institution that defines a sexual relationship for the founding of a family and binds it for the protection and rearing of progeny. Marriage gives form and acceptance to the mating complex in a society and promotes the solidarity of the kinship groups that are involved in the marital matrix. Every society has certain rules which regulate sexual practices, they are socially determined and in any given instance depend on a specific culture, its demands, and prescriptions.

In all its basic forms, marriage is the approved means for the founding of a family. The desire for legitimate offspring is a principle motive for marriage in every traditional society. Obviously the mutual comfort sought in the married state includes satisfaction of the sexual needs of the partners as defined and expected in the society. The arrival of a child enhances the emotional and psychological lives of the partners, a process through which the maintenance of a value system is met and family institution perpetuated.

In the traditional Agikuyu community marriage and its obligations occupy a position of great importance. One of the fundamental features in the Agikuyu system of marriage is the desire of every member of the tribe to build up his own family.

group, and by this means to extend and prolong his fathers clan. This results in the strengthening of the tribe as a whole.

The Agikuyu regard the physical operation on the genitals of both sexes as the starting point for the process of marriage. It signifies that the individual operated upon has been given all the essential information on the laws and customs of the tribe during the pre-initiation ceremonial songs and dance. The form of intimate contact between young people is considered right and proper as the very foundation of a morally, physically and mentally sound community. It safeguards the youth from nervous and psychic maladjustment. These guiding principles ingrained in the very hearts of the young people serve as checks to sexual promiscuity.

The Agikuyu marriage is a process of development. It begins from the time after initiation to the establishment of a family which constitutes a permanent union between one man and one woman or several women. On signing the matrimonial contract, marriage ceases to be a personal matter for it builds not only the bride and the groom, but also their kinsfolk. It becomes a duty to produce children, and sexual intercourse between the man and his wife or wives is looked upon as an act of procreation and not merely as a gratification of a bodily desire.

Culturally, the desire to have children is deep rooted in the hearts of both man and woman, and on entering into matrimonial union, procreation is regarded as their first and most sacred duty. A childless marriage is an abomination to the couple, their parents, and as such a disgrace to the clan. It is only after the birth of the first child that the couple becomes the object of higher regard among their fellow age mates. Marriage is one of the most powerful means of maintaining the cohesion

of the Agikuyu society and enforcing a conformity to the kingship system and the tribal organization without which there is no social life.

From the literature on what various scholars say and write about the Agikuyu system of marriage, and the interviews with key informants, six stages through which the marriage system is organized have been identified. The first one is the choice of mate. The young man with his "*Rika*" - age mates initiates the process by visiting the girls home to propose to the girl. The family takes over, through the remaining five stages that is, investigation, paying of bridewealth and public declaration, signing the contract, the wedding day, that ends with the ceremony of adoption after the performance of the "*Kiriro*" - mourning performed by girls. (cf appendix 5) To it's completion marriage becomes the connecting link between one generation and another, and one clan and another. Marriage binds the interests of clans close together and make them share in common the responsibilities of family life.

The author observes that, the traditional system of marriage is something known to modern generation as part of the stories of the ancient Agikuyu people. Generally, for some who have a knowledge of this process, it remains a traditional cultural practice which does not find full expression in the modern society. Practically they combine all the stages into three, for those who have time, visit to the brides home with the parents, payment of "*rorocio*" - bridewealth and the actual marriage.

Responding to a situation of a multi-ethnic settlement the project illustrates a process of marriage through ten developmental stages, that seek to remind the modern society of the cultural values and traditions and the Biblical revelation and

message that it is part of, as God's plan of salvation. The project emphasizes the redemptive and salvific role of marriage in the order of creation. Thus, emphasis is on the life and not the institution. The project addresses the human person in the stages that it adopts for an inculturation process. It is the life by a people that is so central to the sacramentality of this natural phenomenon that finds different expressions in the different cultures. In this, the common elements in the Agikuyu traditional marriage are transformed

### **3.1 COURTSHIP**

Among the Agikuyu courtship is based on mutual love and gratification of sexual instincts between the individuals. The young boys and girls are left free to choose their mates. From infancy, there is close social interaction between the sexes which provides them with an opportunity of becoming acquainted with one another before actual courtship. They met during the traditional dances and when they grouped together for "*Nguiko*" among age sets, - "*Rika*" after initiation, - "*Irua*."

Traditionally a young man, accompanied with his mates visited the girls home and in her mother's hut proposed to her to seek her consent. Modern society provides young people with a variety of meeting places such as schools, colleges, working place, and urban settlements, where they develop relationships that end up in marriage outside the traditional set ups. The parents feel neglected when they learn of the progress, at times when they are already cohabiting.

The project encourages both parents and the young people to nurture the virtue of discernment. This is done during talks, seminars and other activities

discerned to be appropriate for this sharing. The young people should know why they are getting married, whether it is the right and best thing to do at the time, and the right person. The parents are encouraged to understand that the change we experience in the society is part and parcel of our being. We must focus on the goodness in the nature of the sacrament of marriage and not prioritise cultural definitions, unless it is deemed inevitable.

### **3.2 INVESTIGATION**

Investigation in the Agikuyu system of marriage is a process that begins when the man informs the parents of his plans to marry, to the time the girl is fully adopted in the family of her husband. There are some clans among the Agikuyu society that do not intermarry, for example, the *Wathierandu* and *Accera*. The parents would wish to know first from which clan is the proposal, the suitability of the family and its social status.

The parents arrange to meet the parents of the girl and among other things they carry with them is *"Njohi ya Moorio"* -- the beer for asking the girl's hand. They discuss objectively after which the girl's consent is sought. As a gesture of consent she serves the beer. At the conclusion of this friendly gathering, they join in a prayer, *"Kurathimithia"* uttering blessings for future unity and progress of the two clans.

Both the parents and young people pray and hope that there should be no impediment. Hope is the beginning of their Christian life. The young people will always hope for the support of their parents. Due to the element of inter-marriage

among different races, tribes and clans, parents always pray and hope that the bride will not take their son away, but rather settle to expand the clan. As they keep hoping, they pray for God's intervention and guidance – "*Kurathimithia*"

### 3.3 BRIDE PRICE/WEALTH

Bridewealth – "*Roracio*" is mandatory, in the Agikuyu customary law, the more you gave, the more suitable you became. After the first visit by the parents to the girls home, they come back to prepare the "*Roracio*" – bridewealth, which is brought to the girls home in instalments. The engagement is not publicly announced until the required amount for sealing it is sent. Among the Agikuyu, not less than 30 sheep<sup>1</sup> and 30 goats was to be given, in a fabulous marriage.

The young man was to provide animals for the ceremony of "*Giuthinja Ngouma*", in which the signing of the contract is performed. Not less than six animals (lambs) are slaughtered. In this ceremony the boy gives special gifts to the mother and clan members of the girl, as an appreciation for bringing the girl up, and to repay for anything she might have lost, broken, while growing up. (An element that should be adopted in bridewealth).

The centre of activity is the paying of the bridewealth. The meaning and dignity shifts from person centred to objects. The African Bible on the ground comments bridewealth as a gesture of appreciation and care. Thus the attitude and element of 'purchase' should be purified. The most important concern here should

<sup>1</sup> Sheep was rarely given for *roracio*, they were used for special offerings and sacrifices.

be the persons exchanging their vows. The virtue of appreciation and care should be cultivated so that, the person and not the "*toracio*" should be the focus.

### **3.4 PUBLIC DECLARATION**

The public declaration climaxes in a ceremony called "*Ngurario*" – pouring out the Blood of unity. They slaughter "*Ngoma ya ngurario*" to announce publicly that the girl is engaged. They are certain that there are no impediments that will disgrace the union into dissolution. In our modern experience, marriage plans are known to the individuals and secondly to their friends. The parents may learn of it later. They exchange their engagement rings privately in most cases.

On the project parents and the young people are encouraged to develop the virtue of openness. Which entail self-acceptance. The parents have to accept that they are living in a different social world from their own, and so with different approaches to the same natural phenomenon that is marriage. On the other hand the young people must accept the fact that they belong to a people and so part of the history of that particular people. Marriage is not and will not be a private institution.

### **3.5 CELEBRATION OF MARRIAGE**

The traditional Agikuyu way of celebrating the wedding day lacks the decency and dignity that should be accorded to this very special stage in marriage. Though some scholars would prefer to paint it "white" as a meaningful and valuable traditional drama, it is primitive and demeaning. After the boy has paid all the bridewealth and he is ready for his wife, he approaches the mother to arrange a

special day when his wife can be brought home. The arrangement and the day are kept secret from the girl. She is ambushed and carried to the boy's home, by his female relatives.

The wedding day marks the celebration of both families and clans as they witness to the exchange of vows between the bride and the bridegroom. The two clans come together and in a ritualised celebration seal their union. This should enhance the mutual respect of the spouses towards one another, in a covenant of mutual self-giving.

After observing the customary procedures of marriage, Jesus accepted and blessed the marriage at Cana. He is the bridegroom of God's people of the new covenant (Mk. 2:19). In Jesus Christ at Cana, the couples are definitely invited to share the wedding feast in the kingdom of God, an invitation in which every couple partakes as they unite themselves to the body of Christ, the church.

On the wedding day therefore, the African Bible on the ground encourages couples to cultivate the virtue of prayer. Prayer purifies and strengthens the marriage. "Marital spirituality creates a health triangle, with God as the third person of the relationship. God is gift. Grace for both the individuals and the marriage".<sup>25</sup> A family that prays together stays together. Both clans are encouraged to pray for the purity and strength of this marriage.

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<sup>25</sup> R. J. Wicks. R. J. Persons, Ed. *African Handbook of Pastoral Counseling* 2, 323.

### 3.6 PSEUDO STAGE

The Agikuyu custom provides that all women must be under the protection of men, and to avoid having prostitutes – “*Ngaharu*”<sup>21</sup>, all women must be married by the age of 15-20 years. The fun and excitement of the process of marriage ends with the “*Kiriro*” and the adoption ceremony. The pseudo stage is a period in which the bride is the centre of attention. Everyone seems to be concerned with her. For the man she is just about to make him a real man by giving him a child. In modern marriage it is the time of honeymoon, still at the emotional level, in the world of feelings. They want the flamboyant wedding and reception, retreat into famous resorts. At this stage they have not internalised the sacrifices, commitment, and responsibilities that come with the matrimonial covenant.

The African Bible on the ground confirms that this stage must come and be experienced as part of the process of maturity. One most important thing the couple should know is that, it won't be honeymoon forever as the human person is like a flower. He unfolds and show the true self as they continue to live together. Traditionally after the first child, the man goes out to look for another young woman to marry, but in the modern weddings, a lot of money is spent that at the end of the honeymoon the couples are bankrupt. The couple and the families are encouraged to develop the virtue of readiness, because the selves must come real.

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<sup>21</sup> Traditionally this word is not used because there were no prostitutes. There are other words formed by modern generation such as *Mabaga*. “*Ngaharu*” is more original.

### **3.7 CHAOTIC STAGE**

The African Bible on the ground realizes that, this stage is an inevitable reality in marriages. As the self unfolds, it will definitely result into conflict between the couples. If the couples persist in this individual selves and not realize the reality of their unity, they will experience misunderstandings, quarrels, and even fights in the family. A general analysis will verify that it is because of this stage in marriages that most women resort to single living.

In the area of study, this stage seems to hold on for sometime. There is violence in some families, to the extent that a partner threatens to kill the other. In some cases either the man or the woman will commit suicide because he/she cannot withstand their marriage any more. Some of these extremes are as a result of incest, when a husband, for instance, shares the conjugal rights with his daughter; or adultery in which case either the man or woman is unfaithful to their marriage.

The couples should realize that the marriage bond is made up by two individuals who are unique and different. For instance, the genetic make up, their educational, and sociological backgrounds are quite different from each other. Understanding of this indissoluble unity will only be realised in the virtue of endurance, based on the spiritual triangle in which one's relationship to God informs one's relationship to spouse, and one's relationship to his/her spouse informs one's relationship to God in the love, thanksgivings, communications, exchanges, and forgiveness experienced with each other.

### **3.8 SELF-EMPTYING STAGE**

In the chaotic stage the couple realizes that, they are not what they thought they were. However, to promote the bond of unity in matrimony, the couple must realize at this stage that they must become one and indissoluble. To realize this, the couple must make personal sacrifices in order to become what they are. Though the human person remains the unique individual, the sacrament of matrimony calls for a sacrifice, a giving up of the egocentric tendencies and focus on the development of the common vision for the marriage.

The spouse must pray and cultivate the virtue of objectivity. Their relationship with God's plan of salvation, should give a common vision to their marriage, transforming egocentric individuality into the unity and oneness of their marriage. They will develop an informing decision making relationship, and facilitate reconciliation. Their driving force in their liberating desire and the freedom to choose should be the marriage and not the individual selves.

Self emptying must be founded on self acceptance. The couple should accept what they have accepted in the matrimonial covenant, a mutual self giving to the other in love. The Agikuyu say *"kumba kia muthoni na muthoni iguaga hamwe."* Together let us live and if need be together let us die their marriage remains indissoluble.

### **3.9 INTEGRATION STAGE**

This stage constitutes the true marriage. Their marriage transcends the physical nature into the spiritual reality in which it is molded. The understanding of

marriage at this stage goes beyond the cultural definitions and determinations. The man should learn to appreciate his wife, not as an object of activity, but as a person. The fruitfulness of marriage at this stage comes from the inner essence of personal love itself, thus it empties itself in self giving for the common vision of the marriage.

The couples find themselves in a new way at their child/children, and the children thrive as secure human beings, in the mutual love of the parents. When their mutual love transcends itself in children, it also takes place in the wider context of human society as a whole. They change the way they address one another. Thus, they cultivate the virtue of oneness. The marriage at this juncture, has come of age, and has to strive in holiness.

### **3.10 THE HOLY FAMILY**

In the effort to remind an African of the cultural values and traditions he/she is part of, the major task of the African Bible on the ground project is to make him/her realize and appreciate that he/she is part of God's plan of salvation. He is presented as the third person of the marriage, who Graces the marriage and transforms this physical union into a spiritual union that expresses His love for His creation. The couples' love for God informs and strengthens their love for one another, and thus, they become the sacrament of God's love to the family and to the entire human society.

A family striving in holiness integrates all the activities of life and operate as one. To eat together in the African context is a sign of peace and reconciliation. It

expresses the mutual love shared among family members. Praying together as a family is a significant realization of the fundamental role the family has to play in the order of creation and redemption, from which it joins the pilgrimage of the entire church towards the beatific vision as they congregate as the body of Christ, to celebrate the mysteries of salvation.

It is for the strength and bonding of the African family that the African synod witnessed the family growing together in holiness as the basic foundation of the Church of God in Africa. It remains united to Christ in her practice of the virtue of holiness.

Theologically, there are cultural elements in the process of the traditional Agikuyu African marriage that demean the sanctity of marriage. Bridewealth should be evaluated to avoid the element of "purchase." Marrying for children should not be the sole purpose for marriage. In most African cultures a ratified and consummated marriage is one that produces offspring. The primary aim of the African marriage is to beget children and thus any marriage which is not fruitful is not considered a marriage. This conflicts with the Christian understanding of marriage, since a sacramentalized ratified and consummated marriage is indissoluble. This problem of childlessness introduces "*ghost women*"<sup>2</sup> in marriages.

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<sup>2</sup> The wife is said to be punished for not conceiving. Some cultures, like among some clans of the Luhya, the wife will bring her younger sister into the marriage – or men, the elders arrange that a male relative visit the couple's wife in secret for procreation.

## *CHAPTER FOUR*

# **EVALUATION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

“Theology as a function of the Christian church must serve the needs of the church. A theological system is supposed to satisfy two basic needs, the statement of the truth of the Christian message and the interpretation of this truth for every new generation”.<sup>28</sup> It reflects on the human person from the perspective of the eternal truth of his foundation and the temporal situation in which the eternal truth must be received. The reflection and illustration of the relevance of the Holy Book to Africa, which is the task of inculturation, includes the African people in the realities and promises of salvation history.

### **4.1 EVALUATION**

While respecting existing thoughtful theological formulations, a living theology has to be always in the process of re-expression as it is interpreted in the unfolding history. Reflecting within the Roman Catholic theology, this living

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<sup>28</sup> P. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, 3.

theology has its focus the human community. The African Bible on the ground in the village of hope project has flourished in this, for it is the product of the community. A reflection of this nature is not confining nor restrictive but a directive into the revealed incredible love of God for humanity as is manifested more concretely in the person of Jesus Christ. Christian marriage has a prominent role in being "*a real symbol*" of God's concrete love for humanity. Christ himself elevates this institution to the dignity of a sacrament. The african Bible on the ground outlines it's relevance and positive implication to inculturation for marriage in all cultures is a sacred institution.

There is so much similarity in the points of development in the presentation of marriage as a process. Marriage in the Agikuyu mythology is a divine institution willed and actualised by God. In Gen. 2:22, God brings Adam his spouse, in the same way he brought Gikuyu a spouse, called Mumbi. God therefore "appoints" a wife to a man (Gen. 24:14:44), prepares her for a man from all eternity. (Tobit 6:18).

The basis for inculturation can be discerned in the traditional mythology, and in the five stages of the Agikuyu traditional marriage. Through the ten stages, the African Bible on the ground project outlined and developed the essential elements of the traditional values in marriage as a process of growth to holiness. As the Agikuyu cultural process links the origins of marriage in God, Christian calling and the proclamation of the Gospel emphasises the fact that it is a constitutive part of God's plan of salvation for humankind, in our preformation, made manifest and actualised in Jesus Christ.

The project realises that, even though a theology of marriage can be discerned in all human cultures, a Christian marriage belongs to the sacraments of

the church, which takes a definite shape within the christian cultures with a uniformity, that makes marriage come under the Church's legal competence. The African Bible on ground initiates an inculturation process in consideration of this fact. The Church defines properties of the Christian marriage as unity and indissolubility, which are also properties of African marriage, purified by the African Bible on the ground project.

Considering the historical background of the study site, that is, a military operational area, it gives an air of a '*military culture*'. For young people who have grown up in this environment, and educated by the military, the soldiers have become their role models. They have grown up, married and now with families, with a military admiration. This culture affects people's perception of values and their way of life. This may promote violence in families, thirst for personal freedom, and marriage break ups. The soldiers have a kind of suicidal motto "to plant seeds" wherever they are and that creates an immoral social set up that promotes prostitution.

Nanyuki as a border town to three provinces with about six different resident ethnic groups and many other communities, cannot realise a homogeneous cultural practice. The cultural custom of these ethnic groups, and indeed in most African societies, women subordinate under the patronage of men. This cultural provision and formation influences the attitude of men towards their wives in marriage.

In as much as the project acknowledges and appreciates the cultural provision for the care of women, it emphasizes and stresses the fact that, this must be in line with God's wish for humanity. It must have the qualities and elements of the Divine orientation. The dignity and equality between man and woman is so

clearly stated. God created man in his own image – male and female he created them. (Gen. 1:27) The reason for man not being alone (cf. Gen.2:18,20), is explained in St 36:29f that, where there is no wife, man is unstable and transient. Thus, men in this relationship are to accept women as their equal partners.

Modern society generally is moving out of the cultural practice of polygynous families, to a more encouraged monogamous families. A general survey of this study reveals that polygyny is not still a pronounced issue in the pastoral experience. Many people confess that no sober mind will cling to a polygynous life in the current social and economic constraints. This facilitates the mission of the Bible on the ground project to dignify marriage as a sacrament.

"Bridewealth is the most significant, as well as the most prevalent characteristic for affirming the kinship and affinal group aspect in marriage".<sup>9</sup> An attitude of purchase, acquiring, buying off, was unfortunately attached to bride wealth in the traditional marriage process as a priority. This demeans the dignity and sanctity of marriage. This element has changed with the modern society. In the area of study, and infact in many other cultures, the customary procedure of bridewealth is not practiced. A young man gives what he is able to give to the girl's parents.

The understanding and the reasons for bridewealth has to be purified and retained. Some young parents in the study area, intimated that bridewealth is meant to ward off the consequences of a curse which manifests itself in the family in various ways, as something must be given for marriage to be straight. The African Bible on the ground project emphasizes the cultural importance of Bridewealth as affirming the kinship responsibility. However this should be done only as a gesture

<sup>9</sup> W. G. Blum, *Forms of marriage*, Speakehead 1989, 47.

of appreciation and care. This is the attitude the Agikuyu demonstrated in giving the special gifts at the feast of "*Ngũrũro*."

Something that still remains prevalent in the African customary marriages, that require patience in the inculturation process, is the primacy of procreation. Theologians such as Augustine and Thomas Aquinas have given a theological synthesis of the course of marriage as "descendants, mutual love, faithfulness, and the sacramental sign".<sup>30</sup> The emphasis is still put on procreation. The Bible (cf. Gen. 1:28) also expresses the goal of marriage, as multiplication through progeny. The Blessing of a marriage with children is a gift of God and a reason for joy. (Ps. 127:3ff; 128:3-6). The Bible confirms that a childless marriage is a misfortune and a penalty from God. (cf. Lev. 20:20ff; Isa. 47:9; Isam. 1:15ff)

In the same Bible we are told of the indissolubility of marriage as a covenant. "Death, (and also being a prisoner or missing in time of war) can dissolve a marriage".<sup>31</sup> Porneia, which means unlawful marriage, in particular, marriage between blood relations, (cf. Lev. 18:6ff; Acts. 15: 20, 29), is voidable. Such marriages in the New Testament, of candidates for Baptism were dissolved, (cf. 1Cor. 5:1). Apart from this, St. Paul taught that in death alone can marriage be dissolved (cf. 1Cor. 7:39; Rom. 7:1-3). The church also has taught authoritatively that, "By their very nature, the institution of matrimony, and conjugal love are ordained for the procreation and education of children, and find in them their

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<sup>30</sup> W. Kasper, *Theology of Christian Marriage*, 8.

<sup>31</sup> J.B. Bauer, ed., *Encyclopedia of Biblical Theology*, 552.

ultimate crown".<sup>41</sup> These sounds logically in the African orientation to the primacy of procreation in marriage and reasons for a dissolution.

From these analyses, some Christians find the church's teaching hostile to life, if not, at least very remote from reality. The new code of law of Emperor Theodosius of 438 A.D. acknowledged and ratified the validity of marriage through the partner's expression of consent in the presence of a witness. The 1917 code of canon law emphasised marriage as a covenant and not a mere contract, with three ends as mutual surrender of the whole person, procreation, and rearing of children. According to the new code of 1983, the essential properties of marriage are, unity and indissolubility, which were also mentioned in the 1917 code. The African Bible on the ground project develops a new approach to the understanding of marriage which focuses on the mutual love of the partners, founded primarily in theology while remaining thoroughly human.

An essential aspect of love is that, it does not stay with itself, but tends to be fruitful. This was in the past given a purely biological justification, by which fruitfulness meant begetting children. The African Bible on the ground project endeavours to re-express this justification in modern society emphasizing the fruitfulness of marriage as coming from the inner essence of personal love itself. With absolute patience, the project seeks to explain to the couples that human sexuality cannot be restricted simply to the sex act and the reproduction of the species, which restrict marriage fruitfulness to purely biological justification. A marriage without children can be happy and fulfilled, for love has a value and meaning of its own.

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<sup>41</sup> Vatican II, *church in the modern world* 48.

## **4.2 CONCLUSIONS**

God in His son in the Human reality should be meaningfully and relevantly explained within the African cultural contexts. All cultures were purified and elevated in that one single act of love. Hence, The African Bible on the ground project has analysed cultures carefully, evaluating them in terms of the values, goals, and focus, in order to discern the will of God and how to respond to it within the the cultural context

This study has considered three issues or subjects in relation to the new evangelisation. These are, the traditional Agikuyu marriage, inculturation in the Church, and the African Bible on the ground project. The study outlines how the cultural values in the Agikuyu traditional marriage in an inculturation process on the African Bible on the ground project transcends into a sacramental institution. The project enables one to travel back into a typical African traditional culture that has formed him/her, as part of God's revelation and plan of salvation. This emphasizes our common origin, and nature in image and likeness of God, forming a new culture of the family of God in Africa in marriage, as a reproduction of his love, faithfulness, and creative power. The project builds on these qualities in the inculturation process to effect an African Christian formation of the person in the family.

This study presents the task and goal of the African Bible on the ground project as to authenticate matrimony as a sacrament in which ones relationship with God informs ones relationship with the spouse, and in their relationship to each other, relate to God in the love, thanksgivings, communications, exchanges, and

forgiveness experienced with one another. The African Bible on the ground project emphasizes that, a faithful relationship in matrimony will initiate the realization of a morally upright society.

The church community identifies herself strongly with this project, which realizes the recommendations of the African synod in a practical and applicable way. It is possible that St. Paul's mission approach of forming local missionaries is realized in this Church community. As they refer to it as "our project", they have funded the project locally and have maintained it as their response and contribution to the mission of new evangelisation of the African continent in the 3<sup>rd</sup> millenium.

The concern of the study as initiated by the project in marriage as a covenant is the person. The wholistic formation of the person in the family. The African cultural formation has no place for modern elements in human relations such as homosexuality, lesbianism, pedophilia, and single motherhood, that are being adopted by some Africans in the western civilisation. Thus, the project has a potential to handle such social issues that degrade, demean the sanctity of the sacramentality of marriage.

The Kenyan constitution does not clearly define the terms and conditions for contracting a marriage. Some customary forms have been dehumanising and enslaving. The draft bill of the new constitution chapter V on the bill of rights gives the project a bright future because it defines and sets age limits for a marriage contract. Customary marriages that have involved underage girls in some cultures, some forced, may now get a constitutional legal regulation. This is to strengthen the church's call for an articulated dignity and purity of the contract in marriage as a sacrament.

The African Bible on the ground is an effort of the local people in their search to understand and express their faith in God and has proved an eventful revelation in the Christian world. As an expression and demonstration of a living theology it is not confined and not restrictive, but an integration of the traditions of the people within the life and message of Jesus Christ. This makes Religion a living experience of the worshipping community.

#### **4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The process of inculturation with its focus and goal on the origins and destiny of a human person respectively, will bear fruit. There is a close relation in the explanations of the origins of the human person in most cultures, and especially in the sacrament of matrimony. Almost all cultural myths explain marriage as a divine institution. Indeed, marriage as a natural phenomena with the human person can be the basis and instrument for evangelisation, for it is the source and foundation of all other human activities.

Tribalism as a disease is eating up so many Kenyans, and indeed Africans as a continent. The project has the potential to root out this disease by re-expressing and re-stating the attitude and value of service in the human society. The project builds on the natural qualities and values instilled in the child from the parental care. Cultures are learned, and so there is no particular culture that is naturally oriented towards exclusivity. The African Bible on the ground re-directs our focus on the origins of cultures in God, through common concepts for inculturation.

As a formational centre, missionaries to Kenya, and in fact to Africa can find an articulated exposure and insertion into the African reality in which they are to work. The project addresses all human cultures and especially in the African context. It is a common experience across Africa for instance, to talk about the substantial exodus from the traditional cultures to the embrace of a western life style. As a missionary in this kind of changing reality, an understanding of the background formation of the people, as is provided on the project, is of significant importance.

As the project acknowledges these potential success, some elements will have to be put in place to realise an actual success.

- (i) The personnel on the site must be improved. The director of the project assisted by two other members of the community are insufficient to attend to the enormous presence of the visitors to the project site. The project needs enough qualified personnel to attend to the needs of the people.
- (ii) The huts build in a simple African style are not permanent. This might be in future strenuous to the local donors who have funded the project to maintain. The project must generate some income, by letting participants pay a fee for services offered, in order to maintain itself.
- (iii) Counselling sessions, and in fact any session on the project needs time. To the experience of the author, it takes at least six hours to walk around the project. A working fixed program should be in place in order to manage adequately the visitors.
- (iv) To allow people time to reflect and sufficiently articulate the whole process, the centre should have a sufficient catering and boarding facility.

(v) The African Bible on the ground project in the village of hope offers a potential ground to develop and realise strategies for inculturation. With a very dynamic approach, it is open to various trends of discussion in the inculturation process. Inculturation may not need an explosive beginning, but an implosive one, a move from within

Personally I find this project as a major step in the realisation of the synodal church in Africa. As the project is scheduled to be launched in march of the year 2003, I would encourage the local church to make this a source and fountain of spiritual formation of the Church in Africa, as the true family of God. It is an effective centre for ecumenism, and especially among the Christian Churches. The number of other Churches, apart from the Roman Catholic who take part in teachings and seminars has significantly been impressive. The project has the ability to dialogue with people from different denominational backgrounds, because the starting point is the human person as a cultural being.

## APPENDIX 2: ABBREVIATIONS

al	Alm - other persons.
App	Appendices
Can	Canon Law
C. C. C	Catechesism of the Catholic Church.
C. K. R. C	Constitution of Kenya Review Commission
C. M. A	Catholic Men Association
cf	Confer Compare
CUEA	Catholic University of Eastern Africa
ed(s)	Edited by.
etc	and others.
Ex.	Exodus
Gen	Genesis
1 Cor	1 Corinthians.
I. M. C	Institute of Missionary Consolata
Isa	Isaiah
1 Sam	1 Samuel
Lev	Leviticus
Matt	Matthew
Mk	Mark
N. Y	New York
O.S.B	Order of St. Benedict
par.	Paragraph
Ps	Psalms
Rom	Romans.
Si	Sirach (Ecclesiasticus).
U. S. A	United States of America.
vol	Volume of a series of books.

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## APPENDIX 4: THE HISTORY OF THE SETTLEMENT

The area was originally a war zone between the Mau Mau freedom fighters and the colonial Army. The whole land around the Barracks was an open field in which the soldiers did their military training and exercise. Nanyuki was a small town for white settlers with a small settlement in its background for the Africans who worked for the white settlers. The village was called "Kwa Mbuza" -- of the goats -- because they kept goats. The original people here are the Gikuyus, the Samburu and the Meru.

After independence, the British Army moved away and the land around the barracks was given out. The African soldiers occupied the barracks. The land and part of the house that is now the Benedictine Monastery was originally of an Army major who sold it to "Bwana Picha" -- the name the local people gave him. He sold the land to Mr. Billwinder who later sold it to a lady Mary. Mary donated the land to Benedictine monks with a request that they establish a spiritual centre. It was for some years the novitiate house.

The local government had to keep the town clean. They moved the village "Kwa Mbuza" next to what is now the monastery. Among the first people to settle were Atiti and Gachithi who are by now dead, and a lady, Wakaburi who is still alive until today. The village is still called Kwa Mbuza though was moved a little further from the Monastery again. Next to the monastery is another settlement "Kanyoni" named after the Army major who owned the land. He sold part of the land to the Game Ranch and on a small piece that remained, settled his servants. Another group that settled were some of the women who brewed local beer sold it to the soldiers. They settled in "Mukuri" -- Valley between the monastery and the barracks. They were moved and now settled with others in what is today called "Kwamwea".

## **APPENDIX 5: THE PROCESS OF MARRIAGE AMONG AGIKUYU**

The physical operation on the genital organs of both sexes is regarded as a starting point for various activities in the tribal organization. It signifies that the individual operated upon has been given, during the course of the initiation ceremonial songs and dances, all the essential information on the laws and customs of the tribe.

Among the things taught during this period are the matters relating to rules and regulations governing sexual indulgences. The social life of Agikuyu youth covers a wide field of activities. They have been taught from childhood to develop the technique of self control in the matter of sex, which enables him to sleep in the same bed with a girl without necessarily having sexual intercourse.

The form of intimate contact between young people is considered right and proper and the very foundation stone upon which to build a race morally, physically and mentally sound. It safeguards the youth from nervous and psychic maladjustment. These guiding principles ingrained in the very souls of the young people (men and women) serve as checks to sexual promiscuity.

### **MARRIAGE SYSTEM**

In the Agikuyu community, marriage and its obligation occupy a position of great importance. One of the outstanding features in the Agikuyu system of marriage is the desire of every member of the tribe to build up his own family group, and by this means to extend and prolong his father's *mbari* (clan). This results in the strengthening of the tribe as a whole.

### **COURTSHIP**

Among the Agikuyu it is based on mutual love and gratification of sexual instincts between the individuals. A family is constituted by a permanent union between one man and one woman or several women. Through marriage a man acquires sole right to sexual intercourse with the woman or women whom he marries. On signing the matrimonial contract, marriage ceases to be a private matter, for it binds not only the bride and the groom, but also their kinsfolk. It becomes a duty to produce children, and sexual intercourse between the man and his wife or wives is looked at upon as an act of production and not merely as the gratification of a bodily desire.

The desire to have children is deep-rooted in the hearts of both man and woman, and on entering into matrimonial union they regard the procreation of children as their first and most sacred duty. A childless marriage is an abomination to the parents and a disgrace to the *mbari* (clan) as a whole.

Among the Agikuyu, the rearing of a family brings with it a rise in social status. After the birth of the first child, the couple becomes the object of higher regard on the part of their fellows. Marriage is one of the most powerful means of maintaining the cohesion of Agikuyu society and of enforcing that conformity to the kingship system and the tribal organization without which social life is impossible.

## INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE

### Choice of Mate

Among the Agikuyu, boys and girls are left free to choose their mates without interference on the part of the parents on either side. From earliest infancy there is close social intercourse between the sexes, which provides them with an opportunity of becoming acquainted with one another for a considerable time before courtship begins. Courtship is the art of wooing, also the relationship of wooer and wooed prior to a formal marriage.

### 1<sup>st</sup> Stage

When a boy falls in love with a girl, he does not tell her directly or display his devotion in public, as this would be regarded by the Agikuyu as impolite and uncalculated. He shares the matter with one or two of his best friends in the age group to which he belongs. They pay a visit to the girl's home as a group and enter the mother's hut. They seek the consent of the girl.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Stage

The young man goes home and reports the matter to his parents. The parents prepare to meet the parents of the young girl. Among other things they carry is *njohi ya mumario* - "The beer for asking the girl's hand". After the parents have discussed objectively, the girl is asked whether she has agreed to be engaged - she takes a sip of the beer as a sign of consent and gives it to the parents. At the conclusion of this friendly gathering, they join in a prayer, *kurathumithia* - Uttering blessings for the future unity and progress of two families.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Stage

The parents go home and start preparing *Ruracio* - Dowry (sheep and goats), which is brought to the girl's home in installment. When the amount required for sealing the engagement has been sent, a day is fixed for actual engagement ceremony called *Ngurario* - Pouring the blood out, the blood of unity.

## PUBLIC DECLARATION

The significance of *Ngurario* and the slaughtering of *Ngooma ya Ngurario* is in the final place to announce publicly that the girl is engaged. Secondly, provide the relatives on both sides with an opportunity of meeting and getting to know one another. Thirdly, to decide on how much *Ruracio* should be paid. (Agikuyu law - 30 sheep and 30 goats)

The main feature of their ceremony consist in the killing of a fat sheep kept for this purpose. From this time on the interests of the two clans are closely linked.

### 4<sup>th</sup> Stage

After this the boy's parents will start investigating about the girl's maturity etc. when they are through with this, a final day is fixed when to sign the marriage contract. All representatives of the two clans and friends are invited. The ceremony is called *Guthija Ngooma*. Even at this stage the girl's consent is sought. She must provide the knife and participate in the slaughtering of the first lamb. About six lambs are slaughtered. There is plenty of drinking and eating. There is a dance, then it is time for the boy to give a special present for the girl's mother and for the members of her clan.

The girl can now go with friends and work with the mother of her bridegroom. The function of *Ngooma* is to furnish a public wedding ceremony in which the girl is betrothed to her fiancée.

## WEDDING DAY

### 5<sup>th</sup> Stage

After the boy has prepared a hut and necessary preparation for household equipment, he approaches the mother to arrange a special day when his wife can be brought home. The arrangement is made according to certain propitious days of the moon, in accordance with the clans history and traditions. Traditionally, the day of marriage is kept secret from the girl. The boy's female relatives set out watching the movements of the girl, she might be in the garden weeding, or in the forest collection firewood. On finding Her they carry her shoulder high, as she struggles and refuses to go with them. At times the women of both clans engage in a mock fight in the process of carrying the girl.

For a period of 8 days, the girl performs what is called *Kiriwo*-weeping in which girls only participate. This is considered as the age group mourning for the loss of the services and companionship of one of their number, who by marriage, has passed to another age-group.

The boy has to show by certain signs that the girl was a virgin, and the girl too has to do the same to show that the boy is physically fit to be a husband. In case of impotency on either side, the matter is put before the families council and the marriage is annulled at once.

## CEREMONY OF THE ADOPTION:

### 6<sup>th</sup> Stage

After the *Kiriwo*, the ceremony of adoption is performed. A fat sheep is slaughtered, the fat is fried and the oil is used to anoint the bride. The girl is admitted as a full member of the husband's family. She is now free to mingle with its members and take part in the general work of the homestead.

## FEMALE

The Agikuyu custom provides that all women must be under the protection of men, and to avoid prostitution all women must be married in their teens i.e. 15-20 years of age. It was necessary to have a number of female children who could look after the welfare of the tribe as men went fighting enemies. They are the salt of the earth, they have a sacred duty of creating and rearing future generations. They are the connecting link between one generation and another, and one clan and another, through marriage, which binds the interests of clans close together and makes them share in common the responsibilities of family life. And so they say, *Keima Kia Muthoni Igouga Hamwe*- "Together let us live and if need be together let us die."

## **APPENDIX 6: KENYA'S CONSTITUTION ON MARRIAGE**

The current working Kenyan constitution has a biased standing on marriage. Marriage is considered legal on the basis of the agreement between the man and the parents or guardian of the girl. No matter the age of the girl, in as much as the parents or guardians have given her in marriage, and the man to whom she is given accepts that she is his wife, the marriage is valid. The draft Bill of the constitution of Kenya Review Commission, Chapter V the Bill of rights, article 38 on family explains that, the state will recognize the family as the natural fundamental unity of society and as the necessary basis of social order, hence it is entitled the respect and protection of the society.

To bring a meaningful respect to the institution of marriage, the Bill states that every person who is at least eighteen years of age, has the right to marry, based upon the free consent of the parties, and has the right to found a family, and both are entitled to equal rights. It explains that parliament shall enact legislation that, in a manner consistent with the article and the other provisions of the constitution, recognizes marriages concluded under any tradition or system of Religious personal or family law, or systems of personal and family law under any tradition, or adhered to by persons professing a particular religion. These if enacted will bring about a clear definition of the forms and terms under which marriages are contracted.

## **APPENDIX 7: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

### **(I) Raymond Tamale OSB.**

The founder and Director of the project. The African Bible on the Ground in the village of hope.

1. What is this, "The African Bible on the Ground."
2. Is the African Bible another Bible different from the known Bible.
3. What prompted this deep reflection on the issue of inculturation.
4. Explain the demonstrations and teachings of the African Bible on the Ground in the scope of "a true church re-expressed."
5. Explain the relevance of the project to the local people in the context of the whole Christian reality

### **(II) Mr. and Mrs. Wachira**

The Wachira family funded the whole construction of the hut on marriage.

1. What inspiration or experience motivated their commitment to the realization of the project.
2. How has this involvement influenced the family life as a Christian family.
3. Does this theme "African Christian marriage", influence the life style of the Christian values in the society
4. What is the goal objective of the project.
5. The Kenyan constitution has no definitions on terms and forms of marriage.

### **(III). Mr. and Mrs. Mathai**

A long settled family in this place and actively involved in the activities of this local church.

1. The General response of the people to the Christian faith
2. The social structure and the value system of the people
3. The beginnings of the project, the challenges
4. The future of the project and the effect on the church community.

### **(IV) Methodist church**

Emphasized so much the idea of ecumenism

1. You have come to the catholic church
2. Is the project about the roman catholic living?
3. What inspires you on the project
4. What future does the project hold for the christian church?
5. How does the project influences your faith understanding

# CONTENTS

DECLARATION .....	i
DEDICATION .....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .....	iii
CHAPTER ONE .....	1
<b>1. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background To The Study .....	3
1.2 The Church, Marriage, And Inculturation .....	6
1.3 Objectives To The Study .....	9
1.4 Justification Of The Study .....	10
1.5 Methodology .....	11
1.5.1 Key Informants .....	11
1.5.2 Secondary Data .....	12
1.6 Limitations To The Study .....	13
CHAPTER TWO .....	14
<b>2. THE AFRICAN BIBLE ON THE GROUND PROJECT.....</b>	<b>14</b>
2.1 The Initiative .....	15
2.2 The Bible On The Ground .....	16
2.3 Bible Therapy .....	17
2.4 The African Village .....	19
2.5 Marriage And Community Life .....	21
CHAPTER THREE .....	24
<b>3. MARRIAGE AS A PROCESS.....</b>	<b>24</b>
3.1 Courtship .....	27
3.2 Investigation .....	28
3.3 Bride Price/Wealth .....	29
3.4 Public Declaration .....	30
3.5 Celebration Of Marriage .....	30
3.6 Pseudo Stage .....	31
3.7 Chaotic Stage .....	33
3.8 Self-Emptying Stage .....	34
3.9 Integration Stage .....	34
3.10 The Holy Family .....	35
CHAPTER FOUR.....	37
<b>4. EVALUATIONS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>37</b>
4.1 Evaluations .....	37
4.2 Conclusion .....	43
4.3 Recommendations .....	43
<b>APPENDIX 2: ABBREVIATIONS.....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>APPENDIX 3: BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>APPENDIX 4: THE HISTORY OF THE SETTLEMENT .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>APPENDIX 5: THE PROCESS OF MARRIAGE AMONG AGIKUYU.....</b>	<b>52</b>

**APPENDIX 6: KENYA’S CONSTITUTION ON MARRIAGE ..... 55**

**APPENDIX 7: QUESTIONNAIRE ..... 56**