

**COLONIALISM AND ITS IMPLICATION ON FAMILY STABILITY  
AMONG THE AEMBU, KENYA, 1895-1965**

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**A Thesis submitted to the Graduate School in Partial Fulfilment of the  
Requirements for the Award of the Degree of Master of Arts in History of Chuka  
University**

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## DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATION


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This thesis has been examined, passed and submitted with our approval as the University supervisors.

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## **DEDICATION**

To my mother Jane Nkatha, my late father James Kaaria, my brother Dr. Alex Kaaria (Gitoo), my sister Betty (Mbe), my sons Ryan Best and Jim Best I dedicate this work.

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## ABSTRACT

This study explored the topic of colonialism and its implication on family stability among the Aembu, Kenya between 1895 and 1965. The Aembu family value system by 1895 was authentic, clear and secured, but with the coming of colonialism it encountered many challenges that the post-independence government wished to address in the 1965 Sessional Paper number 10 on African Socialism. Colonialism therefore had longstanding implications on the Aembu family value system. This study was guided by three objectives: to examine the African family value system in Embu North Sub-County, Kenya from 1895 to 1920, to establish the cultural evolutions brought about by colonialism on the African family value system in Embu North Sub-County, Kenya, 1895-1965 and to assess the aspects of Aembu family value system that have been preserved from 1920 to 1965. The study was informed by the Cultural Evolution Theory which is based on the premise that the culture of human beings' changes gradually over a period of time due to competition among cultural traits as people interact. Those customs, beliefs and traditions that are fit and suited for survival and can compete favorably are the ones that survive and get transitted over the weaker ones. It is the nature of cultural competition that has led to extinction of some cultural aspects such as languages and the gradual decline of the African family value of polygamy in African communities. Descriptive research design was used for it enabled the decription of state of affairs as they were. The study was conducted in Nginda, Ruguru-Ngandori and Kirimari wards in Embu County. The respondents were sampled using purposive sampling and snowballing sampling technique. The study targeted 79,556 Aembu people in Embu North as per the 2019 census from which a sample size of 50 respondents was drawn from the three wards for interviews. The sources of data included: oral sources, archival sources and secondary sources which were corroborated to meet the reliability and objectivity of the research. Data was collected through oral interviews and focus group discussions. The study analyzed and presented data through Qualitative Data Analysis. The study established that; the Aembu were polygamists whose homesteads comprised several huts for different members; they had a supreme council *Kiama kia Ngome* and were mixed farmers; they had an elaborate family value system with strict safeguards on social, political and economic aspects that ensured a very stable family unit. Missionaries built the first station in Embu North Sub-County at Kigari in 1910 after arriving in 1906; there was concerted effort to end female circumcision and ensure monogamy was exercised in place of polygamy; there was positive and negative implication on family values after imposition of colonialism; people abandoned some cultural practices, embraced others and merged the good from both cultures. The study concluded that the coming of the British missionaries to Embu North Sub-County impacted on European imperialism and led to cultural subjugation. The study has contributed to the historiography of the Aembu.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

<b>ACK</b>	:	Anglican Church of Kenya
<b>CET</b>	:	Cultural Evolution Theory
<b>KNA</b>	:	Kenya National Archives
<b>LNC</b>	:	Local Native Councils
<b>KCA</b>	:	Kikuyu Central Association
<b>GoK</b>	:	Government of Kenya
<b>DC</b>	:	District Officer
<b>CMS</b>	:	Church Missionary Society
<b>FGD</b>	:	Focus Group Discussion
<b>FGM</b>	:	Female Genital Mutilation
<b>KDHS</b>	:	Kenya Demographic and Human Survey
<b>MoHEST</b>	:	Ministry of Higher Education and Technology
<b>NACOSTI</b>	:	National Commission of Science and Technology

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background to the Study**

African Family Value System describes the structure of beliefs, ideals, standards, norms and practices that bind together relatives in an African community (Buchowski, 1993). The Family Value System acted as a benchmark of determining those who either deserved to be applauded or ridiculed because of their actions. (Igboin 2011). Alubo (2012) observes that the two factors that promoted the success of the family value system were teamwork and oneness. The enlarged family was significant in enhancing moral integrity, psychological support, guidance and care of the aged, instinctual love, social and economic cooperation (Uddin & Rahman, 2017). Similarly, the government of Kenya in 1965 in the sessional paper number 10 on 'African Socialism' incorporated mutual social responsibility in the family where the state took it as its obligation to ensure equal opportunities to all its citizens, eliminate exploitation and discrimination, and provide needed social services such as education, medical care and social security to promote the welfare of all.

Halevy (1951) postulates that in Europe during the Victorian age family values were very closely interwoven with religion, that is, Christianity. Families were large groupings of relatives though the most basic was a nuclear family. Victorian girls had to exude innocence, inexperience and a cultivated fragility. Division of labor between men and women existed where men had professional jobs that earned income to provide for the family while women's role was basic housekeeping and child bearing. A woman was the living testimony of her husband's social status and she was supposed to be chaste, religious and an 'angel' in her house. The English society was greatly patriarchal and women were tutored to be submissive to the husbands, fathers and even brothers. The father was lord and master and his authority was never questioned. The Victorian woman was not cut for the industrial work and life, and therefore did not own property outside of marriage, and could not even vote. The Victorian ideal was to later be brought into Africa by the European colonialists.

Klein (1950) observes that the Married Women's Property Act of 1882 and 1892 removed the husband's control over his wife's money. Yet political changes did not take place until after the First World War when the 1918 Act allowed women over

thirty years to vote. Women over twenty-one years of age had to wait until 1939. Family values in the Victorian ideal therefore are no different from what the traditional African family values were before colonialism. When the British came to Africa for instance, they did not recruit women into wage labor. However, they affected the traditional African family when they brought a new religion that was the fabric on which the African family values were woven.

Pothast-Jutkeit (1997) mentions that Latin America and the Caribbean during the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade witnessed Traditional African Families who had their authentic family value systems make attempts to maintain these values due to their African background in these new places they found themselves. In Latin America, African families were compelled to follow the principles of Europeans, especially due to mixed marriages and rise of mixed-race children. Richardson (1977) also observes that in the 18<sup>th</sup> century the British colonizers from Western Europe brought their way of life to the new world, the Americas forced the Indian slaves on the plantations to give up many of their old customs and adopt European ways. Most of the social and intellectual habits of the colonists such as language, folklore, ideas on education, law and religions were also brought from Europe. These families therefore had to cope with the influence from the European and Christian family norms and thereby had to either set aside theirs, adapt the new or merge the two sets of divergent family values.

Mijung and Catherine (2007) observe that Confucianism is the most influential philosophy that has guided the culture in East Asia (EA), regarding family and social context. Confucianism emphasizes the old-style confines of ethical responsibility and the ideal of good human life as a whole. This concurs with (Zheng 2016) that for the last 2,500 years Asian family values and attitudes have been guided by Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism. Parents use Confucian values and ethics of familial devotion, family harmony and gender roles to socialize and educate their children. Family values have changed a great deal throughout the Asian continent after colonization.

Colonialism had the greatest influence on the African family value system. Wood (1968) postulates that the imposition of colonial rule in Central, Southern, Northern and other parts of Africa led to a migrant labor system. Consequently, there was displacement of families and tribes-men from the villages who went to provide labor

in the plantations, mines and industries. The movement of laborers to urban centers in search of jobs affected the family-based kinship ties and altered the whole social structure of communalism.

Rodney (1981) adds that by working in settler farms and engaging in farming of cash crops, they benefited the capitalistic demands of European settlers who were motivated by individualism. In return, individualism fueled continued exploitation of African labor force. Rodney further observes that the British, French and German colonizers in the African continent initiated formal education in Africa with an objective of training Africans to assist in administering the colonies. Africans were educated to become messengers and clerks in the British administration. Missionaries were mandated with provision of formal education. Colonial education was characterized by a fifty percent dropout rate at the primary level. The formal school system liberated a few Africans who acquired education in addition to the value of individual capitalism. The education system destroyed the tightly-knit social solidarity of Africans and perpetuated individualism that Europeans capitalized on in their subordination and underdevelopment of Africa.

This similarly agrees with Viera (2007) that the missionary education provided by the Protestant Missionaries and the White Fathers among others led to the change of the cultural pattern encompassing church attendance, adoption of Christian morality and even table manners. By coming up with boarding schools which were alienating pupils from cultural influence of their homes, they believed the new converts will easily forget and give up the African family traditions and customs. Viera further contends that in Africa, the cultural interaction with the West was spearheaded by the missionaries with an intention of changing the African societies in their civilization mission. Missionaries valued the European culture as superior to that of Africans. To civilize the Africans, missionaries enforced the European habits and ethics to their African converts. For example, they prohibited the African idea of polygamy since it was seen as sin. Additionally, acceptance of Christianity meant that one has adopted western cultural norms, beliefs and lifestyles. This means that westernization favored the desires and needs of European missionaries. Though not all Africans embraced Christianity, the above arguments aided the cultural exchange and partly contributed to erosion of the traditional African family values.

Ojua et al., (2014) observe that assimilation of western culture played significant roles in altering and influencing the neglect and, sometimes, abandonment of the African family value system in the colonial period. The value attached to formal marriages which involved community involvement starting from choice of a marriage partner to the wedding ceremony has been replaced by formal Christian marriages. Again, polygamy which was cherished and valued by Africans before independence is now being condemned because of modernity associated with Christianity. As such, there is rise of small nuclear families made up of the father, mother and children or one parent with his/her children. As a result, individuals are prone to loneliness and stress during times of sickness or sadness due to the creeping in of individualism.

In Kenya, before 1844 most parts had not witnessed a lot of westernization largely because European colonialists had not stepped in the country. Makiwane and Kaunda (2018) note that the family system was closely knit with all its systems running within the confines of traditional laws that governed people's lives. The coming of colonialists in 1895 led to the introduction of a working family phenomenon. In this case, the kinfolk's value system has been weakened by becoming an arena of meeting rather than a place of living and sharing. The traditional African family values were now challenged and this had a huge implication on the family.

The influence of colonialism on the traditional family value systems was also visible among the Aembu. Ambler (1989) and Saberwal (1968) show that the British colonialists succeeded in effectively colonizing the Aembu in 1906. All the years up to 1920 when Kenya became a British protectorate, the colonialists were laying administrative structures and exercised their rule in Embu using the colonial appointed African chiefs. After enforcing of British rule, the Aembu started exporting their labor to Nairobi and on plantations owned by Europeans. By 1930, more than 25% of the Embu men provided work outside home. This aided in the disintegration of the traditional African kinship system and the idea of communalism since men were separated from their families.

According to the book on the history of Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK) Diocese of Embu (2010), missionaries came to Embu between 1909 and 1910. These were the Church Missionary Society (CMS) missionaries who immediately pitched tent at



Kigari, in Embu North Sub-County in 1909. Both the colonizers and Christian missionaries had the same objective of assimilating Africans. This is to mean, a missionary spreading Christianity and a colonial master administering a colonial possession were the same person with different approaches to a common agenda, which was to 'civilize' the African by replacing his African culture and civilization with their westernizing influence. For instance, the traditional African family value of polygamy and female circumcision were fought by the missionaries.

Ambler (1989) argues that the Church of Scotland Mission and the CMS issued pastoral letters with instructions prohibiting the concept of parents subjecting their daughters to female circumcision. Though they were met with opposition from the Aembu and Mbeere communities leading to massive secession of Africans from the mission stations, they had great influence on transforming the African family values and the general African culture. Colonialism deeply affected the Aembu family from their traditional practices that shaped family values. During circumcision, the young had family and cultural values systematically inculcated and when such practices were prohibited there was to be a challenge adopting the alternatives brought by the missionaries. Studies done among the Aembu have focused on other aspects outside the impact of colonialism on the traditional family value systems. This academic gap necessitated the carrying out of this study.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Before colonialism the family value system among the people of Embu North Sub County was clear and secured. With the coming of colonialism, the family has encountered numerous changes. On realizing the great role played by the family unit in the development of the nation and the numerous challenges it faced during the colonial period, the government of Kenya in 1965 in the sessional paper number 10 on African Socialism incorporated mutual social responsibility in the family where the state took it as its obligation to ensure equal opportunities to all its citizens, eliminate exploitation and discrimination, and provide needed social services such as education, medical care and social security to promote the welfare of all. Despite this the family is still facing a lot of challenges. Studies on colonialism among the Aembu have focused on other issues, thus the implications of colonialism on the African

family stability among the Aembu has not been given much scholarly attention hence this study.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The study examined colonialism and its implication on the African family stability in Embu North Sub-County, Kenya, 1895-1965.

### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- i. To examine the African family value system in Embu North Sub-County, Kenya from 1895 to 1920.
- ii. To establish the cultural evolutions brought about by colonialism on the African family value system in Embu North Sub-County, Kenya, 1895-1965.
- iii. To assess the aspects of Aembu family value system that have been preserved from 1920 to 1965.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- i. How was the African family value system among the Aembu in Embu North Sub-County, Kenya, from 1895 and 1920?
- ii. What were the cultural evolutions brought about by colonialism on the African family value system in Embu North Sub-County, 1895-1965?
- iii. Which aspects of Aembu family value system have been preserved from 1920 to 1965?

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The study will contribute knowledge to the field of social historiography, particularly colonial family history of the Aembu of Embu North Sub-County. It will enable scholars to appreciate the changing and diverse nature of the family value system. The research findings will also benefit scholars searching for information regarding transformation of the African family values during the colonial period among the Aembu in Embu North Sub-County, Kenya. The findings of the study will also enable the government to come up with strategies to safeguard the family.

### **1.7 Limitations of the Study**

Data was collected through three sources; oral sources, secondary sources and archival sources. The limitations of primary sources was inaccuracy because data depended on the memory of the informant, which sometimes lapsed especially among very old informants. This limitation was overcome by corroborating data from oral sources with secondary and archival sources to achieve accuracy and objectivity. Data collected from some secondary sources had the limitation of being Eurocentric and therefore biased. This limitation was overcome by having a variety of Afrocentric and Eurocentric perspectives which helped the researcher weed out any bias. Data gotten from archival sources had the limitation of being inadequate, scanty and non-comprehensive to the research area of study. This limitation was overcome by corroborating the archival data with oral and secondary sources to achieve comprehensive research results.

### **1.8 Scope of the Study**

The study covered colonialism and its implications on the African family stability among the Aembu of Embu North Sub-County. The study started in the year 1895 since it marked the onset of establishment of colonial rule among the Aembu. The study ends in 1965 which marked a new era in Kenya after independence where the Kenyan government wanted to safeguard the family unit by rectifying the misdeeds of colonialism and ensuring more stability in the traditional African Family, by incorporating the sessional paper No. 10 of 1965.

### **1.9 Assumptions of the Study**

The study was based on the following assumption:

- i. The African family value system among the Aembu in Embu North Sub-County in Kenya, had developed considerably before the advent of colonialism.
- ii. Cultural evolutions brought about by colonialism transformed the African family value system among the Aembu between 1895 and 1965.
- iii. Some aspects of African family value system of the Aembu have been preserved 1920 to 1965.

### 1.10 Operational Definition of Terms

The study's key terms were operationally defined as follows.

- Aembu** : A community that live on the southern slopes of Mount Kenya. It is located within Manyatta Constituency in Embu County.
- African Family** : A group of people related by blood and/or marriage and functions as a social and economic unit.
- African Family Value System** : Refers to a structure of beliefs, ideas and standards, norms and practices that bind together relatives in an African community
- Colonialism** : The action or process of the British settling among the people of Embu North and establishing control over the Aembu in social, political and economic components.
- Embu County** : One of the 47 counties of Kenya found in the older Eastern Province.
- Family Stability** : The absence of divorce, family feuds, single parent families, individualism and self-centeredness, neglect of the old members and abandonment of traditional family values.
- Family** : Members of an Aembu grouping that are related by marriage, adoption or birth.
- Family Values** : A set of ideas and standards which guided the pattern of life of Africans and brought about family stability.  
Refers to a structure of beliefs, ideas and standards, norms and practices that bind together relatives in an African community.
- Values** : The standards which community members adhere to. They determine what is good or bad in a community.
- Westernization** : Assimilation of Western culture. That is, the social process of converting the traditional family values of Aembu to the customs and practices of Western civilization.
- Western Family** : A group of people related by blood, marriage or adoption that have been influenced with ideas, customs and practices of the Western world.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 History of African Family Value System**

The African family value system was a wide range of agreed on principals that governed the way in which every member of the African family conducted their personal affairs as well as those of the community. This section explored the evolution and progress of the African family value systems with an aim of understanding their composition and changes that have taken place and the outcomes of such changes.

Idang (2015) conducted a study on African culture and values and observes that the values that people uphold sets them apart from others and their culture attempts to maintain those values that are important for survival of people in a community. He further observed that a people's culture is an embodiment of interrelated values ranging from social values, moral values, religious values, political values, aesthetic values and economic values. Idang however, does not consider the fact that African family values have evolved over time due to many reasons and the impact on society is guided by these influences. His study contrasts with the present study in that Idang (2015) analyzed the significance of African culture and values in the contemporary society, while this study analyzed how colonialism impacted the African family values, the evolution of these indigenous values and what has caused the change over time. This is the gap that the current study tried to fill.

Therbon (2004) researching on the African family asserts that the traditional African family was patriarchal in nature. Patriarchy extended to male supremacy over women alongside power and authority of fathers over the children and wives. In this regard, decisions such as choice of a marriage partner and the marriage ceremony itself could be concluded by the parents without consultation of sons and daughters getting married. He however established that some African communities such as the Ashanti community in the modern-day Ghana and Agikuyu in Kenya required direct consent of the sons and daughters. Since the Aembu are closely related to the Agikuyu, there was no scholarly evidence indicating that the sons did not seek consent from their parents so as to marry. This study examined whether there was parental consent before marriage and the importance of obeying or not obeying the consent of the

parents during marriage arrangements in strengthening the family value system in the pre-colonial Aembu society in Embu North Sub-County, Embu County, of Kenya.

Mbiti (1975) writing on African religion observes that before any form of colonization was introduced to Embu, the traditional family system that comprised children, parents, grandparents, and other relations such as brothers, sisters, cousins, the departed as well as those yet to be born, was intact, stable, indigenous and authentic. This family value system ensured that the kinship ties created helped each family member either young or elderly and people were always together in good and bad times. Mbiti's study did not critique the impact colonization had on the African family value system, neither did it interrogate family value changes among the people of Embu North Sub-County, a knowledge gap that this study intended to fill in the area of the study.

Ciarunji (1997) shows that established community institutions naturally regulate behavior among family members. The findings of her study were that the Aembu had major generation age sets or *nthuke* that formulated laws and dealt with religious matters such as community-wide rituals and sacrifices. The families were built on a foundation of two age sets or moieties namely *Nyangi* and *Kimanthi* that ensured none of its members contravened the expected family values. Ordinary cases and disputes were settled at a lower level by the council of elders known as *njama*. *Kiama Kia Ngome* or *Athuri a Ngome* was the highest council of elders which was respected for its authority and sense of justice and was known by the rings they wore (*Ngome*) as a mark of identity. They ensured family values were upheld by interpreting the law and delivering judgments on cases such as murder and those touching on witchcraft in the families. This study went a step ahead to understand family value system in the realm of change occasioned by the coming of colonialism and a modern system of administration in which cases revolving around the family are settled in law courts among the Aembu of Embu North sub-county.

Mwaniki (1974) in his work, Embu historical texts contends that the Embu community was greatly organized with several safeguards that guided family practices and moral decorum of the Aembu. He observes that virtues on sexuality within the family were highly valued and conception outside wedlock was very rare. Young men

were careful not to meddle with girls since the punishment meted would not only cause immense physical pain, but also a great deal of ostracism by his age mates. Many taboos were taught to young people which forbid sexual intercourse, where scorn, insult and even ostracism were served to sexual offenders. He further posits that all these norms were observed in the distant past among the traditional Embu society. After the period of colonialism, sexual relations outside marriage is a common phenomenon. Some people get as many as three children out of wedlock and the society turns a blind eye. This is a complete departure from the past and this study strived to establish if colonization is to blame for this disarray or other factors are involved. Mwaniki also asserts that the Aembu dressing was traditionally scanty for the children. Children had very little clothes and most went almost naked before 1906. Their usual clothes were made from soft fibers of trees like *mugumo*, *mukuu* and *mukutha*. At about three years of age, only girls would wear the fiber cloth. *Kivenia* was two pieces to hide the private parts only joined together with a string.

Mwaniki further observes that the typical attire was changed as an individual grew, with a full loin cloth given to a girl at about eight to ten years old when she would be becoming shy. At about twelve years old she would have a skin loin cloth which she would use even after circumcision. An old woman could wear a long heavy cloak called *kigoori*, similar to that of the old man but unlike the old man's hers had no fur on. Boys at first got either the two-piece *kivenia* or a small goat kid skin called *njiniki*, for covering the front private part. Boys had large skin almost at circumcision age. This would be his life dress up to old age when he would wear a long skin cloak or *kithiri*. The study harnessed Mwaniki's observation to establish whether the change in the traditional family value system is caused by colonization in Embu North family set up.

In his research on marriage and family systems in Nigeria explaining the African value attached to virginity among the Hausa girls in Nigeria, Otite (1994), establishes that virginity was a mandatory requirement for those getting married for the first time. Failure to conform to this tradition made the husband to beat the woman and raise complaints to her parents. He was even allowed to symbolize her lack of virginity by hanging a calabash in their house. Nnazor and Robinson (2016) agree that in other African societies, virginity was enforced through rituals and rites of passage which

encompassed the proof of intact hymen, reed dance and female circumcision. These studies are also supported by Kang'ethe (2014) who observes that there was a lot of prestige and admiration for a girl who had pre-marital virginity. This implies that traditional African societies expected young females to remain virgins before marriage. The above observation was vital to the study since it enabled the proposed study to determine the moral significance of virginity in a family among the Aembu community in Embu North Sub-County, Embu County, Kenya.

## **2.2 Cultural Evolutions brought about by Colonialism**

A research done by Mbiti (1975) about marriage and family life reveals that marriage was God ordained with the main purpose of bearing children. Marriage was viewed as a sacred duty mandatory to every normal person to ensure mankind does not diminish from the face of the earth. He further observes that anything that intentionally goes towards the destruction or obstruction of human life is regarded as wicked and evil, for which reason, marriage is a religious obligation. He continues to observe that by the time European powers entered the interior of Africa in the nineteenth century, the African peoples had long histories of their own, with some of their great empires and civilizations having passed away and others weakened by the Arab and Europeans slave trade. But there were still some powerful kingdoms such as those in what are now Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Ghana, Nigeria and Ethiopia, some of which have survived to this day. People were subjected to foreign rule from Europe, and for a period they were made to forget their heritage or to despise it.

Mbiti therefore acknowledges that the coming of westernization in Africa disrupted the African way of life, but has not indicated what made up these civilizations or ways in which this harmony that existed before westernization was affected or the depth of influence on the traditional family value system. This was a scholarly gap that this study wished to address in Embu North Sub-County, Embu County, Kenya.

Mbiti (1969) focused on African religion and philosophy. He claimed that European conquest of Africa reached its formal climax during the Berlin Conference of 1884 / 1885 during which the major European powers politically shared out the whole of Africa apart from Ethiopia and Liberia. He further argued that those that arrived included settlers, businessmen, gold and diamond miners, colonial administration and



most importantly missionaries, who founded new cities, constructed railways and roads, introduced new laws and economic systems and above all a new religion that changed the African way of worship.

Okoth (2006) supports Mbitis' assertion that European colonization of Africa materialized on July 1<sup>st</sup> 1895 when the British Government created the British East Africa Protectorate making Kenya a colonial sphere of influence. These authors shed light on the arrival of colonialism into the African continent and the general changes colonialism had on the important family value of communal worship. The two studies did not interrogate the impact of the arrival of colonialism on other family values outside the family value of communal worship and African religious rituals, a gap this study set out to fill.

Therbon (2004) observes that during the colonial period, parental arrangement of marriages for children started to deteriorate with the exception of the Hausa of Northern Nigeria and Minyanka of Mali whereby the youths experienced freedom in terms of choosing the marriage partner and could participate in wedding arrangements. However, the consent of parents still plays a critical role which, sometimes, acts as an obstacle. In the modern era, they still play a key role in dowry negotiation. The change could be attributed to the idea of individualism as propagated by Christianity and education in choice of a marriage partner. Though this study is not against individual choice of a life time partner, it is against the idea of ignoring and neglecting the involvement of the parents in marriage arrangements.

In times of marriage crisis, the support of the family is highly required. This could partly explain the high rates of separation and divorce that are being witnessed in African societies. Before colonialism parents and the entire clan participated in arranging the marriage of their sons and daughters. Based on this observation, the study examined the mechanisms that were applied to preserve the African culture of viewing marriage as a community and not an individual affair in Embu North before independence.

Burstyn (2016) observes that the introduction of the Victorian ideology in Kenya reinforced the gendered spheres of work and patriarchy. The Victorian ideal relegated

women to the domestic sphere of work and men to the public sphere. For wage labor, the African males were preferred over females and the rural-urban migration was common among men in the colonial period. Men's participation in paid labor aided in maintaining their superiority at the family level. Allman, Geiger and Musisi (2002) supports this assertion that the British Matrimonial Act of 1957 applied double standards that favored men in marriage. African men were given a legal option to divorce their women due to adultery alone, while women were entitled to file for divorce only in case the adulterous allegation accompanied other crimes such as rape, cruelty and bestiality among others. The two studies paint the Victorian ideal as a policy that was meant to preserve the already existing patriarchy among the African family setup. This study sought to establish whether the Victorian ideal as implemented in the African context preserved the traditional African family value system, destroyed or preserved it.

Daniel and Lucy (2013) observe that the most notable change during the colonial period was the introduction of homes for the elderly as well as remand homes for law breakers of that time. This meant that the aged Africans were isolated from the rest of the community members which was against the traditional African society. Offenders were rehabilitated within the community and only on rare occasions would an offender be excommunicated or expelled from the community. The authors observe that western formal education changed most of these old age customs in a negative manner. As much as the present study agreed with these sentiments, it differed in the fact that the cultural evolution theory on which this study was anchored views the best cultures to be those that survive and get transmitted over the inferior ones, and if so, the western culture could not only have brought losses, which the study wished to establish in Embu North Sub-County.

Igboin (2011) conducted a study on colonialism and African cultural values. He demonstrated that colonialism had negative impacts on the African cultural values touching on the family. The findings of his study were that colonialism introduced individualism, oppression, capitalism and corruption which degraded the African moral value system. Consequently, some traditional African family norms and values like communalism were abandoned and replaced by a capitalist societal structure that encouraged selfishness and individualism. This study sought to identify whether

colonialism was entirely destructive to the African family values or there was something positive that colonialism rendered to the African family value system, a case study among the Aembu of Embu North Sub-County Kenya 1895 -1963.

Weisner et al. (1997) note that the extended family has the mandate to care and provide support to the needy and elderly in African societies and even though these families appear to be overstretched and lack adequate resources, they continue to form the basic support systems for helpless members including children. Additionally, the extended family support maintains great influence in taking care of widows, orphans and the sick as well as the disabled members of the community. They however observe that the advent of colonialism disrupted the family set up when men were separated from their wives and taken to participate in the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War while others were sold out as slaves. In addition, the wage labor system that required Africans to work in settler farms or migrate to urban centers, destroyed the kinship ties. The study fully agreed with sentiments from these authors and went a step further to interrogate the impact colonialism had on this harmonious system created by traditional African family unit a case study of Embu North Sub-county, Kenya.

### **2.3 Aspects of African Family Value System That Were Preserved between 1920 and 1965**

Omari (2014) writing about the family in Tanzania contends that the adoption of western system of education with its individualistic inclinations killed various traditional customs and values which functioned throughout the family. He shows that education was formalized in order to generate workers who would serve the colonial state, and the few who got an opportunity to be educated were socialized in African manners. The traditional family institutions which were entrusted with socialization process were destroyed or weakened. This reduced contact between parents and their children who spend a lot of time in school. As a result, some educated youths have learnt western norms of homosexuality, lesbianism and even pornography. In effect, the rate of rape and crime has increased in the Tanzanian society, evidence of the weakened family system. Though the author does not mention that even the uneducated engage in social evils and crime existed before colonialism, the emergence of pornography, lesbianism and homosexuality are foreign ideas which have affected the moral set up of African families.

Weisner et al. (1997) observe that the retrogressive traditional African practice of widow inheritance is dying gradually. Traditionally, widow inheritance was perceived as a way of perpetuating marriage when the husband died a practice that is common in African societies. Western values and Christianity have played a prominent role in eroding the African family value of widow inheritance. The authors found out that twenty percent of widows in Sub-Saharan Africa are not inherited because the changing society that has embraced Christianity and assimilated the western ideas that are against levirate marriages. In cases where young widowers are inherited by the brothers of the deceased husbands, they are taken advantage of sexually without economic support of children. The feared sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS menace could also be contributing to the low rate of widow remarriage. Though widow inheritance may not be in existence in the study area, the practice of single parenthood is on the rise among the young and elderly people. It is a challenge that this study wished to examine whether deteriorating family values account for the high rise of single parenthood in Embu North.

Omari (2014) further states that western education and the weakening role of the family in socializing the youths has led the selection of life partners to be left in the hands of the youth. Through interaction in schools, working places and social functions, the youth are able to choose their life partner which has contributed to inter-tribal and inter-racial marriages in Tanzania and most African countries. Many of such marriages occur in urban centers compared to rural areas. The author observes that the modern youth are not taking a keen interest in the kinship based on how some of these marriages are organized. Instead, there is an emerging class alliance founded on education which is becoming stronger than before. At this point, it is good to mention that restricting the youth to preserve their traditional family values by marrying girls from their communities may be retrogressive. This study sought to establish whether the education propagated by the colonial masters and the resultant western influence has changed the methods of choice of a marriage partner and conduct of the married couples among the Aembu of Embu North Sub-County, Embu County, of Kenya.

Mbiti (1975) notes that within one family or household may be found two different worlds coexisting where the children may be attending university studies, while the

parents are illiterate and concerned primarily with farming. In such a household, there are two sets of anticipations; cultural-economic standards and world view. The new change shows itself outwardly in many ways such as education, clothing, houses, food and moral behavior. This is a general view of what is being witnessed in the whole world, and this study investigated the family setup in Embu North sub-county, Embu County, Kenya which was different and also the same.

Obidi (2005) asserts that the extended family brought unity and prosperity in the family and others welfare superseded the welfare and interest of the individual. The influx of western imperialism into Africa changed the African social structure and the pattern of family life. He continues to observe that after westernization the world eats tinned food, drinks Coca-Cola, works in industry, watches European champion leagues, World Cup, African Cup of Nations, American movies, whilst the African traditional values decline in importance and this should be de-emphasized. This study sought to establish whether the current Embu North family is experiencing such effects of westernization as other parts of Africa, how these have affected the family values and any possible remedies.

Haralambos (1980) maintains that in small scale, non-literate societies in Africa, such as hunting and gathering bands, formal education was unknown. Young people learned their lessons for life largely by joining in the daily round of the social group. Similarly, Obidi (2005) observed that children's education began in the nuclear and extended family circles. During family meetings and visits to relatives, children learned about their origins, ancestors, gods, heritage and the origin of annual festivals. One may add that every member was taught to acquire positive personality traits like honesty, hard work, courage, endurance and sociability. The introduction of western/institutional education in Africa was part of the globalizing process of western expansion. Today individuals receive education in the class room, using laboratories equipped with chemicals and internet facilities. These two researchers point to the fact that the African family has been affected in different ways which this research agreed with, but sought to find out whether this was true of Embu North family set up and find out any solution to the prevailing negative effects.

Mbiti (1969) observes that modernity has changed African culture and planted a form of culture which is shallow at least on the African soil. It is a culture characterized by the writing system and comic strips, of contemporary music and the radio, television and magazines, pictures of semi-nude women, of individualism and economic competition, of mass production and ever accelerating speed of life. Men and women are forced to live in two half cultures which do not unite to form a single culture. Those who bring the foreign culture give it to Africans only in part while withholding the other part and the Africans also receive part of that culture and reject the other part, and they kick away part of their traditional cultures while retaining the other part. However, as much as these part of Mbitis sentiments are agreeable by this research, his study did not manage to clearly illustrate how the merging of the immiscible cultures impacted the family value system, or where the traditional African family has been placed by all the ensuing confusion, a study gap the current study wished to fill in Embu North Sub-County, Kenya.

The missionaries contributed to westernization through evangelism and civilization. ACK Diocese of Embu (2010) records that the Church Missionary Society sent Rev. Dr. Johann Ludwig Krapf who arrived at Mombasa in 1844, a German Lutheran Evangelist who translated the New Testament into Swahili language and produced the first Swahili dictionary. In 1909 the late Rev. Douglas Hooper came from CMS Kahuhia center accompanied by a Mr. Kigondu, went to Kigari where he was received by chief Kabuthi and bought land where he established a missionary center, (ACK Diocese of Embu, 2010). In many areas including Embu, the missionaries faced a lot of opposition as they tried to convert Africans into Christianity by convincing them to abandon their religion and adopt Christianity. Among the controversial practices that the missionaries encouraged Africans to abandon include female circumcision and polygamy. This led to hostility and Africans withdrawing from the mission centers. Since the missionaries converted some Africans, it was interesting to find out if the converted Africans in Embu North Sub-County continued with their traditional practices or abandoned them completely immediately colonization ended.

Mbiti (1969) observes that the modern African family is facing problems like reduction in family size, parents losing the respect they traditionally enjoyed,

education weakening the family solidarity, Marriage becoming an individual affair, high rate of divorce and separating, increase in concubines and general alienation from societal life. In contrast, there were rare cases of divorce and separation in the traditional African family set up. Hence, this study investigated the influence of these problems on the family value system in Embu North Sub-County, Embu County, Kenya.

#### **2.4 Theoretical Framework**

The study was guided by the Cultural Evolution Theory. The Cultural Evolution theory is based on the premise that the culture of human beings changes gradually over a period of time. (Mesoudi, 2011). That is, the alterations in socially transmitted knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, skills and customs among others evolve over time (Richerson and Boyd, 2008). Among the proponents of the Cultural Evolution Theory in the 19<sup>th</sup> century is Edward Taylor (1832-1917) and Lewis Henry Morgan (1881-1881).

The research done by Charles Darwin (1809-1882) on evolution influenced the formulation of the Cultural Evolution Theory. The biological principles of evolution such as variation, competition and inheritance were originally used in comprehending the evolution of species (Darwin, 2003). The biological concepts inform the understanding of cultural evolution because of the parallels that can be drawn between them. In his work, Darwin argues that individuals in a species possess diverse characteristics, for instance the different sizes of beaks among the finches. During competition, the individual's characteristics determine the success in the fight for the limited resources.

In this case, finches with more than average beaks increase their chances of survival because they will eat more food than others. Over a period of time the finches which are fit for survival will reproduce and pass on their characteristics to the offspring. After a generation, the average size of finches will have increased (Mesoudi, 2011). Darwin used this concept to explain that biological changes evolve in the same way the beak of the finches changed.

The principles of Cultural Evolutionary Theory are drawn from the similarities between Darwin's and cultural evolutionary theory. First, Mesoudi (2011) observes that people have various religious beliefs, knowledge, practices, skills and values that they uphold. The expressions of these divergent cultural views are evident in the family values among communities in different continents. Second, competition among cultural traits due to interaction of people favors those customs, beliefs and traditions that are fit and suited for survival and can compete favorably. In a world with limited resources, cultural practices and values that are favored by nature due to their tendency to adapt and compete favorably continue to exist. It is the nature of cultural competition that could be leading to extinction of some cultural aspects such as languages and even gradual decline of the African family value of polygamy in African communities. Third, the beliefs, attitudes, knowledge, skills and other cultural traits are passed from one individual to another through cultural transmission just as genes are transmitted from the parent to the offspring in biological evolution (Creanza, Kolodny & Feldman, 2017).

The principles of Cultural Evolution Theory were used in this study to enhance the historical understanding of the evolution of family value system during the colonial period. It helped to trace the African family values such as the size of families, ethics, customs and concern for the welfare of each other among other variables and how they were transformed during the colonial period. Colonialism being the biggest agent of change, has altered integral traditional family norms, for instance the favoring of large polygamous family sizes which has continued to gradually evolve into monogamous families due to the high cost of living and scarcity of resources between 1895 and 1965.

The theory was used to analyze data by establishing the already existing traditional family values, their struggle for survival in a rapidly changing environment occasioned by European colonialism and the emerging forms of family values after the supposed superior culture overrode the indigenous African family values among the Aembu.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Location of the Study**

The study was conducted in Embu North Sub-County of Embu County situated in the southern slopes of Mount Kenya. It is located within Manyatta Constituency in Embu County which has an area of 111.75 square kilometers and 24,300 households and a total population of 79,556 (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Embu North Sub-County has three wards, Nginda, Ruguru-Ngandori and Kirimari. The location was chosen because due to the colonial rule, the Aembu were drawn into the migrant wage labor system that involved African men seeking for jobs in Nairobi and British settler farms which separated men from their families leading to gradual disintegration of traditional family set up. The Church Missionary Society (CMS) and Consolata Mission which established their presence in early 1900 also appeared to contribute to altering the African family value system by opposing polygamy and female circumcision. Moreover, no related research has been conducted in the area of the proposed study. Figure 1 shows the location of the study.

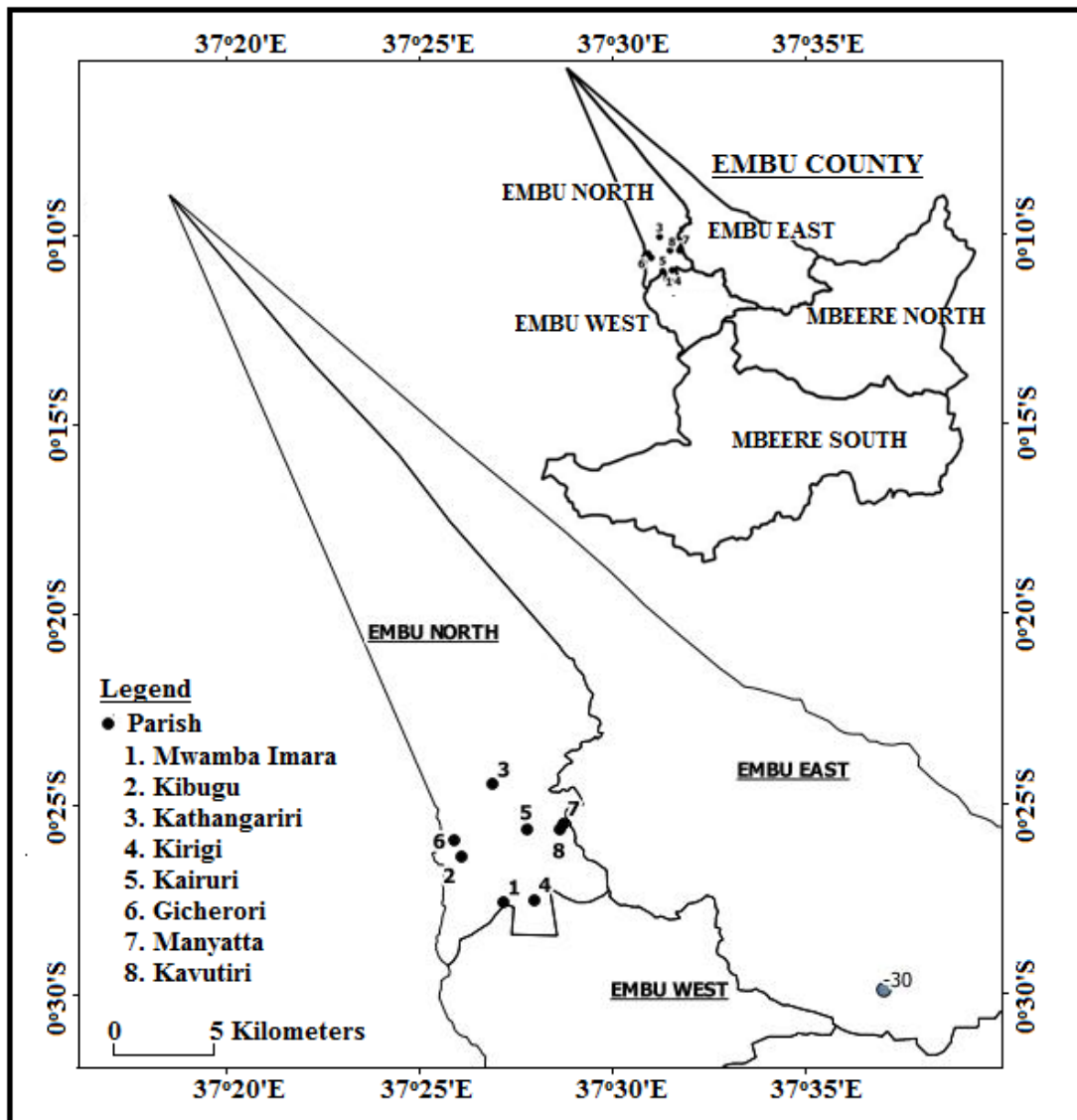


Figure 1. Map of Embu North Sub-County

Source: Embu County Integrated Development Plan

### 3.2 Research Design

The study used descriptive research design. The design was used to examine the African family value system of the Aembu from 1895 to 1920, to examine the cultural evolutions brought about by colonialism on the African family value system of the Aembu from 1895 to 1965 and to assess how the African family value system could have been preserved for the stability of the family from 1920 to 1965. This study described, recorded, analyzed, reported and presented the findings of the current study as they exist.

Kothari (2004) suggests that descriptive research design is used to depict the features of a particular situation or individuals in an accurate way. This design was preferred for this study because it described, recorded, analyzed and presented why and how the state of African family value system among the Aembu during the colonial period existed.

### **3.3 Target Population**

According to Kenya National Bureau of Statistics in 2019, the area of study had a population of 79,556 people as indicated by the Kenya population and Housing Census 2019, (GoK, 2019). The target population includes the total number of individuals from which the sample will be drawn (Mugenda & Mugenda 2003). (Borg & Gall 1982) adds that the target population refers to all members of the actual set of people, events or objects to which the study wishes to generalize its findings. Therefore, this study targeted the 79, 556 people of Embu North Sub-County, in Embu County, Kenya.

### **3.4 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size**

The researcher purposively sampled the target population of Nginda, Ruguru-Ngandori and Kirimari wards using Kathuri and Pals (1993) Table so as to get the required sample size. Kathuri and Pals recommend that from a target population of 79,556, the recommended sample size is 382 respondents. From the 382 respondents the researcher purposively identified the first favorable respondent who witnessed the first missionaries that offered missionary services at Kigari in Embu North. He also attended the mission school and dropped out after some time and witnessed much of the changes that the Aembu family values experienced. This respondent identified other respondents with desirable characteristics through snowballing technique and this ensued until data saturation of fifty (50) respondents was achieved and they were all interviewed.

Purposive sampling method was employed to identify the first respondent. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) observe that the goal of purposive sampling is to select cases that are likely to be information rich with respect to the purpose of the study. They further point out that a researcher who proposes to use purposive sampling must specify the criteria for choosing the particular cases. According to Kithinji (2016), the

few identified subjects name others they know have desired characteristics through snowballing technique until the researcher gets the desired cases required. For this study therefore, the criteria included age, gender, religion, residence, marital status, level of education and occupation of the respondents. Table 1 was used for determining needed size of randomly chosen sample from a given finite population of n cases such that the sample proportion will be within plus or minus .05 of the P with 95% level of confidence.

Table 1:  
Sample Size Determination According to Kathuri and Pals (1993).

N	S	N	S	N	S
10	10	220	140	1200	291
15	14	230	144	1300	295
20	19	240	148	1400	302
25	24	250	152	1500	306
30	28	260	155	1600	310
35	32	270	159	1700	313
40	36	280	162	1800	317
45	40	290	165	1900	320
50	44	300	169	2000	322
55	48	320	175	2200	327
60	52	340	181	2400	331
65	56	360	186	2600	335
70	59	380	191	2800	338
75	63	400	196	3000	341
80	66	420	201	3500	346
85	70	440	205	4000	351
90	73	460	210	4500	354
95	76	480	214	5000	357
100	80	500	217	6000	361
110	86	550	226	7000	364
120	92	600	234	8000	367
130	97	650	241	9000	368
140	103	700	248	10000	370
150	108	750	254	15000	375
160	113	800	260	20000	377
170	118	850	265	30000	379
180	123	900	269	40000	380
190	127	950	274	50000	381
200	132	1000	278	75000	382
210	136	1100	285	100000	384

N=Population size

S=Sample Size

Source: Kathuri & Pals (1993)

### **3.5 Research Instruments**

Data was collected using interview schedules, archival documents and secondary sources.

#### **3.5.1 Interview Schedule**

Interview schedules are sets of questions that guide an interviewer as he proceeds with inquiry. (Orodho, 2004). Interview schedules give the right balance between maintaining control of the interviewee and space to redefine hence generate novel insights. Interviews for this study were conducted on a one-on-one basis. The researcher interviewed fifty respondents guided by the criteria described in section 3.5. Interview schedules were used because they are useful in extensive inquiries and lead to achieving fair and reliable results as noted by (Mugenda & Mugenda 2003).

The following interview schedules were conducted: Respondents of ages 85 years and above were used to give information on traditional African family values up to 1895 because history is passed on orally from one generation to another and is reliable up to the fifth generation. Respondents of ages below 85 years of age were used to give information on cultural evolution of traditional family values occasioned by colonialism and the effects of colonialism on the traditional family values because they had eye witness accounts.

### **3.6 Type and Nature of Data Collection**

Data was collected from primary sources, archival sources and secondary sources.

#### **3.6.1 Primary Data**

Primary data was obtained from oral interviews with respondents and archival information. The objectives of the study acted as themes during collection of data. That means, there was information on the Aembu African family value system from 1895 to 1920, during the colonial period (1895-1963) and the way in which traditional family values of the Aembu would have been upheld system during colonial period and after, up to the drafting of the 1965 sessional paper No. 10 of 1965.

### **3.6.2 Archival Data**

Archival data was obtained from the Kenya National Archives regarding the British colonization of Kenya, specifically among the Aembu in the southern parts of Central Kenya, the role of missionaries and British imperialists in the westernization of the Aembu family value system during the colonial period. Archival information also informed the study about the Aembu family values before the colonial period. Researcher's archival permit is provided in Appendix V.

### **3.6.3 Secondary Data**

Secondary data was obtained both from published and unpublished documents and books like journals, newspapers, magazines, unpublished thesis and periodicals from various libraries and from electronic sources. The three data sources were corroborated to give valid and reliable data. The information from historical documents on the Aembu family system, British colonialism and influence of westernization during the colonial period was obtained from the available written materials.

### **3.7 Data Analysis Procedures and Presentation**

Data was analyzed by the use of Qualitative Data Analysis. Qualitative Data Analysis was used to describe and interpret the African family value system of the Aembu from the period 1895 to 1920. The phenomenon under study was colonialism and its implication on the African family stability in Embu North Sub-County, Kenya between 1895 and 1965.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze and present the research findings from oral sources. Thematic analysis started with transcription of the recorded data into texts. Textual data was subjected to content analysis which encompasses coding and arranging the coded data into categories based on the objectives of the study. Once the researcher was familiar with the coded data categories, then the established patterns formed the study themes. The analyzed data was presented in form of narratives. Qualitative data from interview guides was analyzed using descriptive narratives. Finally, all data was merged to ensure consistency in data presentation and therefore present a credible and general picture of the area under study.

### **3.8 Logistics and Ethical Considerations**

The researcher obtained a clearance letter from the Chuka University's Ethics Committee which was used to seek a research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). The researcher presented an introduction letter to each respondent that informed of the purpose of the study. With the consent of the respondent, the interview was conducted after booking an appointment. Confidentiality of the respondents was observed and the respondents were assured that the information obtained will only be used for the purpose of research according to Grinyer (2002). Where a respondent requested for anonymity the request was granted. Finally, the researcher acknowledged all who had ensured the success of the study. Researcher's self-introductory letter is provided in Appendix V.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE FAMILY VALUE SYSTEM OF THE AEMBU, 1895 TO 1920

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the background of the interviewees from the context of respondents' age, gender, religion, residence, marital status, level of education and occupation. This was done in the belief of obtaining respondents with common characteristics as per the objectives of this study stated in Chapter One of this thesis. The history of the Aembu, their language, their social political and economic discusses organization has also been presented in this chapter. The chapter concludes by presenting the Aembu family value system.

#### 4.2 Background Characteristics of Respondents

This section discusses the background characteristics of the respondents.

##### 4.2.1 Respondents' Age

The researcher asked the respondents to state their age in years. A total of 50 respondents were purposively sampled using a snowballing technique. The results of the respondents' age are shown in Table 2.

Table 2:  
Respondents Age

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
70 - 85years	20	40%
Above 85 years	30	60%

Out of the 50 respondents interviewed, the youngest respondent was 70 years old and the oldest was 111 years. The approximation was arrived at through one of the respondents who was born at the time when the CMS Medical Mission at Kigari (Chief Kabuthi) was first occupied in September 1910 by Dr. and Mrs. Crawford when Chief Kabuthi sold five acres of land to the mission station, and the school also continued running. This was supported by a respondent 97 years of age who elaborated his difficult time learning how to read and write at Kigari Mission Station, and the "seed-like" medicine they would be given by missionaries at the center as well as the classmates who would drop out of school after undergoing female circumcision. Archival data on the establishment of Christian Missionary station at



Kigari in Embu (KNA/DC/EBU/3/2/) also supported this assertion. Individuals of ages 70 -85 were useful in providing information on the cultural evolutions brought about by colonialism on the African family value system of the Aembu. They also provided information on how the African family value system could have been preserved for the stability of the family from 1920 to 1965. Informants of ages 85 and above were used to provide the first witness accounts on traditional family value system of the Aembu from 1895 to 1920.

#### 4.2.2 Respondents' Gender

This study defines gender as the state of either being male or female. It also means division of labor between men and women. The results of the respondents' gender are provided in Table 3.

Table 3:  
Respondents' Gender

Respondents Gender		
Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	40	80%
Female	10	20%

Out of the 50 respondents interviewed, 40 were males accounting for 80% while 10 were females accounting for 20%. This discrepancy was accredited to the fact that majority of the respondents who gave the colonial history of the Aembu were males. All the 40 village elders interviewed were males because naturally men were the custodians of the traditional codes of conduct and the guardians of morality in the community as well as the political leadership of the Aembu community. Women were largely involved in domestic chores and were quite subordinate to men, mainly following through the rules set by the men. The male respondents were valuable in providing a good understanding of the traditional African family value system of the Aembu shortly after the coming of European administrators and missionaries to Embu North during the colonial period and the activities they executed. Some of them were actively involved in the local administration of the clans and villages in the *miviriga*, others were part of the Embu council of elders, *Kiama*, while others worked in the colonial municipal council of Embu during the colonial period.

Kiura (OI, 2021) of Nguviu village in Nginda, Embu North, chaired several *miviriga* meetings to determine whether an offender was liable of punishment, *Kuthingwa*, or not. He was also a worker in the municipal council of Embu during the colonial period. The researcher found it necessary to interview both males and females because both hold divergent views on traditional African family value system as well as the cultural evolutions brought about by colonialism and this guaranteed an all-inclusive nature of the present research.

#### 4.2.3 Respondents' Level of Education

This study describes the level of education as the highest and professional academic attainment by the respondents. The results on the distribution of the level of education of the respondents are shown in Table 4.

Table 4:  
Respondents' Level of Education

Respondents level of education		
Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage (%)
PhD	0	0 %
Masters	0	0 %
Bachelors Degree	7	14 %
Diploma	3	6 %
Standard Seven	6	12 %
No Education	34	68 %

Out of the 50 respondents interviewed, none had attained the PhD or Masters level of education. Only seven respondents had attained Bachelor's Degree, three had a diploma, six had acquired education up to standard seven while thirty-four had no certificate. A few of the respondents with no certificates reported that they only attended school a few days, weeks, months but not more than a duration of one year before dropping out for various reasons. The researcher sought to establish the level of education of the respondent since education is a major indicator of socio-political development and it also helps citizens to make informed social decisions through general enlightenment about participation in family life. From these findings it was deduced that missionary education was not welcomed by the majority of the Aembu and this made it difficult for them to adopt fully the values of the British as they continued to strongly hold onto their traditional social, economic and political values.

It therefore becomes a clash of two different sets of values, a situation of instability that affected the Aembu family values.

#### 4.2.4 Respondents' Residence

For this study, residence refers to the specific location of the respondent. The respondent was asked to indicate his or her residence and results of the distribution of the respondents' residence were recorded as shown in Table 5.

Table 5:  
Respondents' Residence

Residence	Frequency	Percentage
Ruguru-Ngandori Ward	30	60%
Nginda Ward	10	20%
Kirimari Ward	10	20%

Out of the 50 respondents interviewed, 30 were from Ruguru-Ngandori Ward accounting for 60%, 10 hailed from Nginda Ward accounting for 20%, while 10 respondents were from Kirimari Ward accounting for 20%. The Nginda and Kirimari respondents were very crucial in providing data on the traditional African family value system of the Aembu during the epoch of 1895 to 1920 when the African family values were largely indigenous while the Ruguru-Ngandori respondents provided the research with valuable information on cultural evolutions brought about by colonialism and how they transformed the African family value system among the Aembu from 1920 to 1965, as they first-hand received the impact of a mission station and administrative center of the British set up at the heart of their land in Kigari.

#### 4.2.5 Respondents' Occupation

This study defines occupation as the activity done by the respondents to earn a living. The researcher asked the respondent to indicate his or her occupation. The results of the respondents' occupation are shown below.

Table 6:  
Respondents' Occupation

Respondents' Occupation	Frequency	Percentage %
Informal	40	80%
Formal	10	20%

Out of the 50 respondents interviewed, forty were active in informal employment accounting to 80% while ten had been in formal employment accounting to 20%. The informal employees were subsistence farmers with twenty-one from Ruguru-Ngandori Ward, twelve from Nginda Ward and seven from Kirimari Ward. Those in formal employment comprised two from Ruguru- Ngandori Ward, two from Nginda Ward and six from Kirimari Ward. The researcher established the respondents' occupation because one's profession is linked with a person's wellbeing therefore a noble socio-economic improvement pointer.

#### **4.2.6 Respondents' Religion**

Religion refers to immense faith in a supernatural or divine power. The researcher asked the respondent to indicate his or her religion. The informants' results were distributed as follows in Table 7.

Table 7:  
Respondents' Religion

Respondents' Religion	Frequency	Percentage %
Christian	50	100%
Muslim	0	0%
Hinduism	0	0%
Any Other	0	0%

All the 50 respondents interviewed were Christians accounting for 100%. The researcher established the respondents' religion since it was vital in providing evidence on whether or not the religion introduced by Christian Missionaries during the colonial period impacted on the traditional African family values of the Aembu.

#### **4.3 The History of the Aembu People**

This segment discusses the pre-colonial history of the Aembu people so as to understand their origin, migration and settlement as well as their socio-political and economic organization. This creates a foundation on which their traditional family value systems can be understood during the colonial period. The data discussed was gotten from interviewees in the three wards of Nginda, Ruguru-Ngandori and Kirimari.

#### **4.3.1 Origin, Migration, Settlement of the Aembu in Embu North Sub-County**

Mwaniki (O I, 2021) basing his origin of the Aembu from Embu mythology observes that God (*Ngai*) is the one who created Mwenendega, the founding father of the Aembu nation and gave him a beautiful wife whom he named Nthara or Ciûrûnjî by the fact that he found her on a river. He had gone to take his cattle to drink at the Gogo salt lick in Mûkûûrî when he met her. River Gogo separates Mûkûûri and Gîtare localities at the edge of Mûrûriri. The beautiful woman refused to talk to him initially but after he persisted on praising her beauty she later agreed not to return to her people and live with him on condition that he would never abuse her or tell her negative things, or else there would be consequences. Her parents were not known and therefore she was believed to be God's gift to Mwenendega. He lived in a grove (wood) known by his name, which is now near Runyenjes town, but no one knows when he settled in his grove.

The above narrative was supported by Muturi (O I, 2021) when he observed that the Mwene Ndega grove is a sacred place to this date. Mwene-Ndega and his wife Nthara begot their first two children a boy named Kembu and a girl named Werimba. Kembu and Werimba committed incest and Werimba became pregnant and this made them get expelled by their parents from their forest home, so they settled near Karûngû where they lived as man and wife. Other daughters of Mwene-Ndega and Nthara and those of Kembu and Werimba, married and established homes throughout Embu country. Their descendants became known as the children of Kembu, or Embu. The importance of daughters suggests that the Embu society was originally matriarchal. One day, Mwenendega forgot the old promise and reproached his wife Ciûrûnjî. There was thunder, after which it rained so heavily and the old couple was never seen again, as they were believed to have drowned. The adult children of Mwenendega and Nthara survived and populated the entire Embu land. So the Aembu as known today, were known as the Ndega after the first Embu ancestor who was called Mwene-Ndega.

According to Njoka (O I, 2021) the Aembu are a Bantu group of people who trace their roots to Ethiopia which in oral history is referred to as Tuku or Uru. They trekked from this place and settled in modern Embu between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. From Ethiopia they moved southwards to Lorian Swamp, an area of

wetlands on the Ewaso Nyiro River in Wajir, in the North Eastern province of Kenya. From Lorian swamp area the Embu moved further South to the modern areas of Tigania, then to Igembelands. They interacted with the people of Tigania and Igembe who fiercely resisted their arrival and they were once again on the move. On their southward movement they got into the land of Tharaka. The extremely arid conditions of Tharaka and consequent famine forced them to proceed further south and they finally crossed river Thuci to Igambang'ombe. This observation is supported by (Mwaniki, 2010) who adds that Igambang'ombe means where the noise of cattle is heard.

A 98 year old female respondent Ngembi (O I, 2021), supports this by noting that the noise of the cattle the Embu heard were Ūkavi (Maasai) whom the Embu conflicted with and raided. The interaction between the Ūkavi and Embu greatly reduced the Aembu numbers as fighting raged on but still the Embu learned a few cultural aspects that greatly improved their culture especially the aspect of circumcision for boys and girls which they did not practice before and new pastoral methods. The Aembu successfully expelled the Wamaasai and stayed at îgambang'ombe for some years. From îgambang'ombe due to population pressure majority of the Embu people continued moving and settled at the Mwenendega grove, a place around modern day Runyenjes. One section of the Aembu followed a route further south to settle at Kîambere Hills briefly, where they clashed with the Mbeere. Here an Embu man is said to have secretly ran away with a daughter of a Mbeere man named Cianthiga. This contributed to bitterness and animosity between the two groups and the Embu chose to move out of Kiambere and leave the Mbeere alone. When this group moved they finally settled at Ithanga Hills in Mwea.

A great famine at Ithanga hills in Mwea pushed the Embu to their present locations in Kirimari, 'the mountain top' modern day Embu town. The other section that had briefly settled at Mwenendega grove increased in numbers so fast and needed to keep moving further away from the grove and ended up in areas of Manyatta, Kigari, Ruguru-Ngandori and Mutituuri. These places were bushy and heavily forested and they cleared land and established settlements.



Figure 2. Kirimari Ward  
Source: Research assistant 17<sup>th</sup>/April/2021

From the discussion it is evident that the Aembu people however much hostility they faced from their enemies or the environment, never broke from the original groupings to live in far off places away from their kinsfolk. They always moved as groups of large families and where circumstances favored them they settled as one large family. This is the reason the Aembu people are not found elsewhere in Eastern province except Embu County. The unity they cultivated from the times of migration and settlement ultimately developed into a culture of oneness and mutual social responsibility that evolved into a tightly woven fabric of authentic family values that led to a very strong social organization that ensured holistic development of every family and by extension community member.

#### **4.3.2. Aembu Language**

Njoka (O, I. 2021) notes that the Aembu speak the Kiembu language as a mother tongue, a language that belongs to a larger cluster of the Bantu language. The Kiembu language spoken by the Aembu is distinct in word pronunciation from other surrounding Bantu languages but it is also closely related with the languages spoken by peoples that neighbor the Aembu. Wambeti (O I. 2021) supports this assertion that the Embu regard their language as Embu proper or the original language from which their neighbors borrowed to form their languages. To the south of Embu are the

Mbeere people who speak Kimbere dialect. Njeru, Nthia and Ember (2002) also observe that to the west, Embu neighbors are the Kikuyu in Kirinyaga, Nyeri, Kiambu, Muranga and Nyandarua counties who speak their different Bantu dialects but different from Kiambu. The Meru people border the Embu to the East. Native Embu speakers can tell apart a speaker from areas close to Mount Kenya, because they speak with a slight dialect locally called *Kiruguru (Kirûgûrû)*.

#### **4.4 Social Organization of the Aembu**

Njoka (O I, 2021) asserts that the Aembu lived in cone roofed huts with a circular base. Before any construction was begun, the ground chosen would be blessed then the land would be cleared and the house-size marked on the ground. Most of the land being very steep and sloppy meant a lot of time was spent digging to get a flat place where a hut could stand without being washed down the slope by heavy rain and erosion. The huts were mostly built on the topmost part of the steep slope for security from invaders and again because of land topography. Ngondi (O I, 2021) also observes that insect resistant trees like *mûû*, *mûkwego* and *mûthaite* would be sought to produce the poles and posts for the construction. After the skeleton of the circular hut was created with huge strong poles standing vertically around the hut and firmly dug into the ground for support, the thin poles crisscrossed horizontally from one vertical pole to the other. The huts would then be thatched with green banana leaves first, then there would follow two layers of ferns and a third final layer of reeds or tough grass. Some people would leave the hut at this point ready for use, while others would smear the walls with wet mud and plaster it with a mixture of wood ash and cow dung making the hut very warm and good looking. These would ensure rain water and cold air doesn't penetrate the structure. The Aembu homes were fenced with *magiri ma mûtare* branches that led to the main roads called *kîritîro*. A woman's house known as *ngucu/ kîrûru* was where the woman and her daughters cooked and warmed themselves with fire. Between one house and another were several connecting paths and if one did not want their space trespassed they would plant a tree branch, *îthîgî* to communicate to trespassers.

Njoka (O I, 2021) asserts that the Embu men being polygamous could marry as many women as one would be able to cater for materially. This meant the polygamous man had to put up a hut for each woman he married since co-wives did not share a hut.



When you entered a homestead, you would first see a cattle shed on the left side. The granary for storing cereals was a smaller hut and built at the far end of the compound, raised from the ground with poles to keep off water and rodents from accessing the grains. From the front entrance, *gîtonyero/ mûvîrîga* there would be huts around the compound, the wives huts with the single doors facing the middle part of the compound. The first wives' hut was built to the right of the man's hut and the subsequent wives huts would follow in order of most senior behind first wives' hut. In the middle of the compound was the man's hut, *gaaru* whose door faced away from the other huts. Young sons and unmarried daughters slept in their mothers' hut. The young uncircumcised boys would sometimes sleep in their father's hut but after circumcision the men lived in their own huts that they themselves built between the first and second wives huts. They could also curve space in the grain store and live there. Figure 3 shows a traditional Aembu homestead.



Figure 3. A Traditional Aembu homestead

Source: Boma Zetu, 26<sup>th</sup> March 2021

Nthiga (O I, 2021) records that a homestead was called *mûcii* made up of many huts (*nyomba*). Many homesteads in the same neighborhood formed a village (*îtûûra*). In many cases *îtûûra* was made up of families of related members who would form a *mûvîrîga*. *Mûvîrîga* would also mean a door or an entrance to a homestead. The men

in the *îûûra* formed a local administrative unit called *Athuuri a mûvîrîga*. If anyone in the village committed a crime or there was a ceremony the village council of elders commonly referred to as *Athuuri a mûvîrîga* would meet and plan the course of action to take. There was distinct unity among members of *îûûra* or *matûûra* because it was always expected that blood relations had to be supported at all times.

Njoka (O I, 2021) observes that the Embu speak the Kiembu language that is rich with wise sayings and idioms. Mastery of proverbs and idioms demonstrated intelligence and brought a person honor and respect. By using proverbs, people could talk about a person or situation without being specific or openly ridiculing a person and thereby avoiding resentment. If for instance elders sat to hear a case and got hungry and the concerned were not showing signs of feeding them, an elder would let this be known by casually exclaiming “hungry stomachs have no ears,” to mean the council needs a fee from both parties, usually in the form of a goat, to be eaten by the elders as they continue to listen to the case.

Kinyua (O I, 2021) asserts that greetings were a sign of good manners, well-wishing, decent behavior and established one of the most important parts of Embu culture. Failing to greet somebody created a strain between the parties involved and the person not greeted would show the discontent by inquiring the source of the bad blood. The common and formal greeting begins by asking a person about how he or she is faring, *wî mwaaro?* After the appropriate response, the two parties shake hands. Refusal to shake another person's hand was an outright sign of an existing rift between the two parties. People of generally the same age or status let their eyes meet as they greet each other and shake hands. Young people greeting elderly people usually avoid eye contact, as a sign of respect, by looking either down or sideways. As a show of hospitality, the Embu visited each other at any time of the day. A visitor is always offered food or something to drink especially porridge or milk. Maitha (O I, 2021) supports this view by observing that if one declined a food offer without a suitable clarification it was considered an insult to the person offering the food and it would be taken to imply that the food is poisoned or bewitched which would sever the relationship between the giver and the reluctant receiver.

Kivuti (O I, 2021) giving his opinion of Aembu' relationship with other people alludes that they related very well with people around them. They related on very friendly terms with their Mbeere neighbors to the south, the Agikuyu to the west and the Chuka and Meru to the South. A similar assertion was made by Mwaniki (1973). The Embu would supply staple food like bananas, maize and beans in return for goats, skins, sorghum and pigeon peas in times of famine which was more common in Mbeere land whose weather conditions are arid and semi-arid. This view was supported by Munyi (O I, 2021) who asserted that the Embu and Mbeere related like relatives because they also jointly own sacred grooves (*matûiri*) in Mwea, which is one of their old dispersal points during their migration. Sometimes when the Akamba attacked the Mbeere, the Aembu supported the Mbeere to fight off the antagonists.

Njiru (O I, 2021) opines that the Aembu were a deeply religious and prayerful people that worshipped one supreme God, *Mwene Nyaga* or *Mwene Njerû* meaning owner of the white snow. *Mwene* means owner while *Njerû* means white. So they believed He lived in Mount Kirinyaga on the snowy top, hence He is the owner of the white snow. From the mountaintop He was able to see the whole of Embu land and what every person was doing. As the people woke up healthy, planted and harvested or even went through misfortune they invited the favor of God and His mercy.

*Mwene Njerû* was believed to be the source of all goodness, but He also punishes the people when they disobey Him or do wrong to one another. People, led by the most sacred elders, sacrificed a goat that is of one fur colour to *Mwene Njeru* to ask or thank Him for His blessings, to end a catastrophe like drought famine and epidemics and for his protection. Njuki (O I, 2021) supports this opinion by pinpointing that the Embu would also beseech *Mwene Njerû* to grant them long life because living and dying of old age was a blessing everyone wished for. Prayers and sacrifices were traditionally made to *Mwene Njerû* because He is the one who created the Embu and gave them land to live in and everything they have, so He is the one prayers and sacrifices are directed to.

However, the Aembu believed in and revered ancestral spirits, *ngoma*. They would bring blessings upon the living when the living behaved in accordance with the wishes of the departed. However, if *ngoma* were unhappy about the way the living

conducted their affairs they would cause harm like illnesses. The living therefore endeavored to do the correct things to be at peace with ancestors. The spirit of ancestors dwelt in caves or under specific trees. Ancestors received sacrifices from the living through religious specialists like *mûndû mûgo* (plural *andû ago*) the medicine man. KNA/DC/EBU/3/2 records indicate that every little Division in Embu land had one or more medicine man who would as a rule combine the functions of physician diviner and maker of *choros, igongona* against illnesses, witchcraft and beasts. He also gave personal charms for protection against accidents and disasters, safety of a village, success of crops, prevention of unwanted children, cursing of people and forecasting the future. This however changed with the coming of European missionaries that forced most of the Aembu to become Christians. With the coming of Anglican Church of Kenya and Catholic Church the Africans in Embu were left no choice but to abandon their traditional religion and join Christianity.

A female respondent, Werimba (O I, 2021) observes that there were evil people who were associated with causing harm to other members of the society by using evil powers like witchcraft and sorcery (*arogi*). Such people would be on occasion found in other peoples' homesteads at night stark naked executing their evil acts. These evil people could turn others into cats, dogs or snakes. Diviners who had powers to reverse effects of witchcraft were sought. A *mûrogi* would cause death of a community member or unexplained illnesses or life threatening misfortunes. Guilt of involvement in witchcraft was confirmed by elders raiding the suspects' house in the company of a medicine man and diviners. The discovery of witchcraft paraphernalia that was said to range from human skulls and bones, hair, nails, pots with black extremely poisonous concoctions, animal body parts like claws, eyes, bones and domesticated wild animals like snakes and owls would be the confirmation of involvement in the vice. If one was caught with such staffs they would be stuffed into a *mwatû*, a beehive and the elders would roll him or her down a steep cliff next to Ruringazi River after which the person would drown in the river, a ceremony that was once witnessed by Ngoroi (O I, 2021).

Ngoroi (O.I, 2021) further notes that the Embu also believe in the spirits or *ngoma* which were of two types, the evil spirits and the good ancestral spirits. The evil spirits are malevolent and they brought misery to the people without provocation. Even

when seen, they are not easily recognizable, and sometimes they may be heard singings but are not visible. They are not offered sacrifices but rather are bribed with some meat or animal blood. Ancestral spirits, on the other hand, are good spirits who protect people from evil spirits and other misfortune. But they also discipline people when they are disobedient. People appease them with sacrifices but do not worship them as they worship Mwene Njeru. When seen, they are easily recognizable as deceased relatives. It is believed that they form families, raise children, cultivate, and keep animals, just as they used to when they were alive.

Mucangi (O I, 2021) points out the fact that Aembu circumcised both boys and girls to usher them into marriage, which every person had to undergo so as to ensure both familial and community continuity. Circumcision would be held any time in the year except two months before the long rains. Traditionally, males were circumcised between the ages of 18 and 22 years. When it was time for the boy to be circumcised he would show his readiness by paying a goat called *mbûri ya nduo*, the goat of circumcision. The boys would be taken to Rupingazi River on a cold morning and dipped in the water to ensure pain reduction during the cut. Gicovi (O I, 2021) remarks that the circumcisor, *mûtani*, would pull the initiates' foreskin and cut it off with a *kaviû*, a sharp knife after which the organ would be wrapped in banana leaves and fiber to stop bleeding and heal. After that he would be led back to his parents' compound and live there as he heals in a specially built hut under the care of a specially appointed sponsor or supporter.

In seclusion the initiate got education on family and community secrets and general conduct and expectations as a grown up. Some mischievous fathers would prolong the circumcision of their sons, so as to get prolonged services of the boy as a shepherd because after circumcision a boy graduated to a warrior and could no longer herd animals. He was expected to pay another goat when the actual time for circumcision came, which entitled him to get married. This goat was called *mbûri ya nthûmbî*, the goat of the cap and was named after a cap made for him by recently circumcised men to indicate his newly acquired status and their acceptance to go to the next stage of life.

Werimba (O I, 2021), a female respondent from Nginda asserts that girls as well underwent clitoridectomy between the ages of 14 and 18. The girls had to be initiated before their first menstruation, otherwise, they could only be married as a second wife which was a less prestigious position. During the ceremony both boys and girls were expected to prove their courage and thereby their readiness to accept adult responsibilities, by persevering extreme physical pain without crying or flinching. Circumcision for boys and clitoridectomy for girls was followed by elaborate celebrations, (*maambura*). The entire neighborhood would be engulfed in feasting and in every homestead with an initiate, visitors would be welcomed and given food, as the saying was, “*mwana tî wa mûndû ûmwe,*” meaning a child does not belong to one person alone. After the cut the initiate would heal in a hut under the supervision of supporter or sponsor. Parents whose sons and or daughters were circumcised were held in high regard and felt prestigious.

After the physical operation and healing, the initiates would be allowed to marry and start a family. The Embu people practice exogamous marriage. This means that they married from other clans, not their own clans as marrying within one's clan is taboo and is considered incestuous therefore prohibited (Mucangi, O I, 2021). Marriage would begin with a serious suitor delivering a calabash full of beer to the girls' father. If the girls' father consented, this young man would be permitted to be visiting the girl in her mothers' kitchen, '*ngucu*' awaiting the dowry '*rûraio*' payment and marriage rituals. Marriage involved the payment of bride-wealth to the bride's family. Bride-wealth used to be in the form of livestock like five to ten cattle and twenty goats. Bride price would culturally not be fully paid at once even if it was affordable to the groom. Bride price was thought of as a way to thank the parents for bearing and bringing up a daughter to maturity and thereby enabling a man to have a wife. It was also a measure of a man's commitment to his wife and responsibility for his family. Marriageable girls lived with their mothers, and suitors were entertained there.

Information from oral interviews indicate that the Aembu were a polygamous people and a man could have as many as four wives so long as he was materially able to cater for all of them. By the time the white men set foot in the Embu country some men like Njagi wa Mûthagato had five wives.

Divorce was unheard of and marital violence was permitted among the Aembu. If a wife did not obey the husband she would receive a heavy physical beating from him. Since dowry payment was in form of cows, if a woman ran back to her fathers' house and refused to go back to the abusive husband, the husband would be given back the cows he gave as dowry by the woman's parents and the marriage would be considered permanently dissolved. This, however, was a rare scenario as observed by Gitonga (O I, 2021) who confessed to having five cows being returned to him by his father-in-law when he went to follow up and get his wife from her parents after she had ran away from him. On arriving the father-in-law told him that since his daughter had resolved not to live with him, he did not want to continue enjoying the animals Gitonga had paid as dowry, and when Gitonga understood the situation, he took the animals and led them away to his place. The one son the two had sired remained her mother's and could not be given inheritance by Gitonga even when he grew up since all ties with the mother had been cut by returning of the bride price.

Ndwiga (O I, 2021) asserts that the Aembu social life is seen in the way they name children. Traditionally the first two children born in a marriage were named after the parents of the man, and then the other two after the parents of the wife. Since the Aembu were polygamous, a couple would get as many as ten to fifteen children, but due to the high mortality rate many children died in infancy. For this reason the Aembu parents who lost many children in infancy wanted to ensure that their children would grow to maturity, just as the young of wild animals did, without much care and would give them animal names to ward off the spirit of death. This is why some children had names such as Njiru or Mbogo which means a buffalo, Nthia which is an antelope, Njoka, a snake, Ndwiga, a giraffe, Njuki, a bee, Njogu, an elephant, Nyaga or Kivuti an ostrich, Ngoroi, a columbus monkey or Munyi, a rhinoceros. Other Embu names came from natural phenomena such as Mbura, the rain, Riua, the sun or Nduma to mean darkness.

Some other names were derived from behaviors associated with characters of the person the child was named after. For instance, if the relative to be named after was a drunkard the child would be named Kinyua or Mukundi. The main significance of this naming practice is that it gives honor or recognition to the person after whom the child is named; it creates a special relationship between the child and the person she

or he is named after and creates a particular bond between the parents and the child and the person after whom the child is named. All this influences and dictates the behavior between all the individuals involved. (Marigu, O I, 2021) points out that she was named Marigu after her fathers' mother who had the habit of carrying ripe bananas and other fruits even when she went to visit other people or to the farm and since children especially knew they would find edibles in her basket they always accompanied her.

Ngembi (O.I, 2021) also notes that failure to get a child was a terrible misfortune that everyone was afraid of and would be attributed to sorcery or being bewitched in which case the man would take a second wife. The birth of a baby boy was announced by five ululations, *ngemi*, while that of a girl would be announced with four ululations. A girl would be named after four days while a boy would be named after five days. A child was viewed as the wealth of a lineage or clan and also brought recognition and respect to both parents. The children had to undergo a ritual a few days after birth known as *kuumagarua*, taken out or rather to be introduced to the outside world. An older girl presented the baby girl with a tiny bundle of firewood, similar to that carried by adult women, and an older boy presented the baby boy with a small bow and arrow. This symbolized the lifetime chores, and the different worlds of the two sexes.

Before the 1920s the Embu did not bury their dead and would throw them away in the thick forest to be eaten by wild animals. They believed that the burying of the dead body was like burying fertility. Those who handled the dead body underwent elaborate cleansing rituals to rid them of bad omen, (*mûgiro*). To avoid this trouble, if a person was seen to be dying or too sick to survive, he or she was carried from the village to a safe distance where a temporary shelter would be erected for them and they are left there. Food and drink portions would be given to them to ensure they are not neglected to starve to death but die with some dignity. There would be someone assigned to occasionally go and check if the person had died yet. When the person died as was expected the corpse would be dragged away and eaten by wild animals. The person tasked with watching over the dying person would return to the village and report by saying, *Mûndû nwareenderwe ii mbiti*, loosely translated to mean, the person was loved by the animals, a very good sign. This would mean there was no



*thahu* or uncleanness to the living, an assertion supported by archival records (KNA/DC/EBU/3/2).

Mbogo (O I 2021) narrates an experience where his grandfather Mucira was about to die and he was carried to the heart of the bush. While there he prostrated on the ground and they concluded he was dead. They sang a song for the dedication of Muchira to hyenas and they started leaving for the village. As the rest walked, one of the grandsons overcame with emotion walked forward but still looking back at his abandoned grandfather. He then saw Mucira open his eyes and move his head. The young man ran back and the rest of menfolk thinking he was emotional and would end up touching a corpse and get *thahu* shouted at him to stop. He alerted them that he had seen Mucira moving. Some men ran to the village and announced to the elders what had happened. Since no one could believe this the entire village ran to the bush to see for themselves. They met Muchira struggling to sit down. He would sit and then fall on his face. Finally, he sat steadily and they carried him back to the village. Within a weeks' time he had improved so much but in his experience of escaping death or being dead for a short while he emerged with a new language that no one understood much of. He lived for a few more years and died peacefully in his hut. This second time though, a medicine man had to be sought to confirm that he was seriously dead and not like the previous episode when he cheated death in the bushes.

Gicovi (O I, 2021) contends that the Embu believed in life after death and that the body's spirit did not die but lived on and depending on the behavior of the living relatives, could be benevolent or malevolent. Death, as the last stage in the life cycle, is one event that the Embu do not celebrate as it brought untold sorrow and pain to even react in any way about. The young who died were mourned and especially if they left no children before they died, the people would say, *oona tî mûtigu mbeeû*, translated to mean the dead has not even left a seed, a descendant. According to the Embu, no one dies a natural death and therefore death was attributed to some evil magic or sorcery. Deaths that were beyond human explanation were often attributed to the power of magic and sorcery. The Embu would not understand how thunder would strike one of two people killing or paralyzing only one, or a flood sweeps away one person's crops and leaves the neighbors' plants intact. To the Embu, this would be interpreted to be the work of an evil person, a witch.

The Aembu were a patrilineal society in which all authority was vested on the men and the women were subordinate to men, (Muturi, O I, 2021) Women were supposed to execute all domestic chores in the home that included caring for children, growing some types of crops like millets and beans and preparing meals. They also collected firewood, fetched water and carried out barter trade on food crops. This labor burden increased when the men went away for raiding, war or for wage employment with the coming of the British. Ileri (O I, 2021) notes that there were two major parameters that were used to gauge a man's social and economic success. A man was considered rich if he had many wives and children. For example, Senior Chief Muruatetu, probably one of the most famous polygamists in Embu not only had 16 wives and many children, but he was also a respected administration officer for the colonial government. The village of Muruatetu bears his name and a school is named after him.

Njogu (O I, 2021) speaking about the Aembu dressing observes that the Aembu used to wear clothes made of animal skin. Animals like sheep, goat and cattle provided skins that were tanned through soaking in special herbal concoctions to produce soft leather clothing. These clothes were replaced gradually by linen, synthetic, woolen, nylon and cotton clothes that were introduced in the early 1900s by Europeans. Both men and women wore jewelry that included necklaces, earrings, ankle and knee bracelets. Women adorned themselves with more jewelry than their male counterparts. Both men and women also decorated their bodies in the same manner for instance scarification, filed teeth, V-shaped fillings between the upper two incisors, pierced and extended ear lobes. The youth of both sexes wore long hair, while the elderly had clean-shaven heads.

The Embu primary food sources were plants and animals. A wide variety of food crops were cultivated by the Aembu (King'ang'I, O I, 2021). These included maize, beans, bananas, sweet potatoes, yams, arrowroots, cassava, and sugarcane. In addition, a few animals like cattle, sheep, goats, and chickens, were kept. The main food that was made was *nyenyi* a mixture of maize, beans, bananas, and green vegetables. It was cooked in a big clay pot. Once cooked, the ingredients are mashed together until well mixed. There was also meats from fowl or animals occasionally. There were food taboos that were observed by the people. For instance, it was taboo

for men and women who had drunk cattle blood to eat the meat of wild game, same with circumcised men and women to eat chicken, for it was considered as food for children, women to eat eggs, men to drink milk after eating the meat of wild game and women to eat the meat of a cow that had died in labor. It was also a taboo to eat meat from monkeys, clawed animals, and snakes.

Mwinga (O.I, 2021) asserts that the Aembu people showed their hospitality by sharing. Food was supposed to be shared and to be accused of being a selfish person *mûndû mûthunu* is not only a terrible insult but also labels a person as unworthy to receive other people's support, even in times of trouble. When there is no food to be offered to a visitor or a person passing by an explanation is usually offered. It was very bad manners to try to eat more than others, particularly if the people were eating from the same bowl.

The Aembu had several recreational activities like storytelling that were given to the young to instill virtues onto them as they grew up. The old told stories to instill bravery to the young as well as good manners, in the evening as they wait for food to get ready. Riddles and proverbs, *ntemi*, were also shared from old to the young. The Embu also practiced song and dance where they used dance attires made of sisal fiber, birds feathers and would use animal horns as music instruments. They participated in games like soccer among the boys, where anything with a round shape would be converted into a ball and kicked. Children also skipped rope and played hide and seek. Adult men would play wrestling where two opponents struggled to tackle each other to the ground with arms interlocked at the back and round the armpits. If one man was felled to the ground with a leg or body tackle they lost the match. The last man of the two to remain standing was the winner of the match. (Ngoroi, O I, 2021).

Alcohol taking was also a recreational activity and the Embu indulged in taking locally made brew. According to KNA/ DC/EBU/3/ 4 archival sources, Sd, D.R. Crampton the District Commissioner in Embu land on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1927 recorded that the principal vice of the Aembu was drunkenness which was done by almost all men, old and young and it was making most of them quite unproductive in their daily activities. This indulgence into social drinking was because the materials to make alcoholic drinks like sugarcane juice, bee honey and a variety of millets were

available and took a very short time to prepare. Beer from sugarcane was made ready in a night and was not very intoxicating unless taken in large volumes. Alcohol made from bee honey was not very common but was very intoxicating. The one from millet, *mwere* or *mûvea* was also potent but took a lot time and energy to prepare. This was drunk by men and women and also during farm work. Alcohol was a favourite pass-time activity as well as means of paying dowry or showing hospitality to male guests.

All the above cultural practices indicate that the Aembu were traditionally a people whose culture was very rich, which consequently shaped the family values they upheld and brought a harmonious family value system.

#### **4.5 Economic Organization of the Aembu**

The Aembu economy was mainly based on mixed farming. They kept animals as well as cultivating their land. According to KNA/DC/EBU/3/4, the animals the Aembu kept included cows, sheep and goats. Cows were many before the British set foot in Embu country but reduced drastically in number after the British punitive expedition of 1906 where they lost so many cattle, a loss from which they never recovered. This made cows to be very highly priced thereafter. Njue (O I, 2021) supported this assertion by noting that cows were not usually used as food as the Aembu rarely slaughtered cows or bulls. These were preserved for payment of bride wealth as well as for providing meat and milk. Cattle were also used as compensation for blood wealth, which means, in the case a person killed another person he or she would compensate the deceased family with a given number of cows. Livestock was also used for transactions concerning various life cycle ceremonies and dispute settlement procedures. Cows would be strictly slaughtered during famines.

Muchiri (O I, 2021) asserted that due to few livestock numbers raiding against neighbors was practiced. Sheep and goats were used for a ritual known as *kûthiga kagoondu*. This is when two people laid claim on ownership of a similar piece of land, or if a person was accused of stealing and insisted on their innocence. The *mûvîrîga* elders would convene a casing session where a sheep or goat would be brought, *ng'ondu e nthigo*. A stick with a sharp pointed tip would be forced through the mouth of the animal all through to the anus. The accused would be instructed on the specific words to utter as they forcefully moved the stick back and forth through the live

animal. He or she would say, *naakorwa na mavîtia, nîrorîwa nî kagoondu gaaka*, meaning, if I am guilty as alleged, may this sheep kill me, may I die like this sheep. The sheep would die from this treatment and so would the guilty party within a year's time.

Werimba (O I, 2021) observes that among the crops cultivated included banana varieties like *mûraaru*, *gîtumia*, *gacukaari*, *kîambu*, *kîmwana/ mûtagato*, *gîtîgî* and *mûtika*. They also grew several millet varieties like *mûvea* and *mwere* used in stone grinding to produce porridge. Land was communally owned but there were demarcations that served to show the boundaries of a persons cultivated land. Land disputes were common and neighbours occasionally would seek the services of *mûvîrîga* or *kîama* to resolve conflicts (King'ang'I, O I, 2021). The Aembu had a well-defined system of labour division and execution. Girls and womenfolk cooked and watched over children while boys and menfolk cleared thick agricultural bushes and took care of all livestock. (Njue, O I, 2021).

The Aembu also traded with their neighbors like the Mbeere, Kikuyu, Chuka and Meru. They exchanged farm products for animals, and again because some commodities were absent in their land and present in other areas (Maitha, O I, 2021). Ngondi (O I, 2021) notes that hunting and gathering was practiced but to a very small scale. The Aembu killed elephants for ivory but gave the meat to the Ndorobo hunters who were often with them. The ivory was sold to the coastal traders who came all the way to the interior. The Aembu also kept bees in beehives, *mîatû* singular *mwatû*, and used their larvae and honey for beer. Honey was also used to sweeten porridge for children and it was also mixed with medicinal herbs because it was considered medicinal too (Wambeti, O I, 2021)

#### **4.6 Political Organisation of the Aembu**

Political organisation refers to the system of maintaining law and order and therefore regulating the behaviour of members in the community. The Aembu had a well-defined system of authority that started at the *mûciû*, homestead level. Njeru (O I, 2021) reported that the Embu were traditionally organized into a patrilineal system through which descent was traced to the father. This meant that the overall source of authority in a home was the father, *vaava*. He was the one in charge of his wife and in

case he had several wives, all of them and their children received directives from him. He made decisions on when to plant, where and what to farm, time for everyone to be home and such other ground rules. If one of his wives misbehaved for instance insulting him or fighting with other co-wives, he had the prerogative of warning her against the misconduct and if she persisted, he would serve her a punishment through physical beating. If the woman could not take the treatment from the husband she could run back to her parents' home. The husband would ordinarily not go looking for her and as a rule, she was supposed to get back with a sheep, known as *ng'ondu ee nthingo*. She was also to be accompanied by a mediator, probably a brother, uncle or any other male relative. The sheep would be given to the man as compensation for the pain he underwent staying alone in the absence of the runaway wife. As the sheep would be presented to him the mediator would listen to the complaints the woman had against the man and also hear from the man with a motive of reconciling the couple.

Outside the *mûciî* or homestead, there was a village council *mûvîrîga* that comprised men whose children had already been circumcised and married. The *mûvîrîga* heard and determined cases ranging from land boundary squabbles between neighbors, mistreatment of family members by one member like a man who mistreated his wife(s) or children, women who ran away from their husbands, parents who neglected children and people who went against customs or broke taboos.

Mwaniki (O I, 2021) observes that the Embu society was originally not divided into any generations, but the *Nvaraganu* (annihilator) famine, the worst ever recorded in the history of the Embu, wiped the Embu human and livestock population so much that it was decided wise to divide the entire community into two moieties (two major social groups) or generations for better preparedness in times of such occurrences. Kimanthi and Nyangi emerged and drew membership from different territories. Nyangi was made up of members from the North-West and Kimanthi from the South and East of the larger Embu County. The two moieties would meet in specified groves (small patches of the original forest untouched by man) and share meat and other foods, drinks as well as bring up mechanisms of saving people in their moiety in case disaster struck as well as make rules governing their moiety.

The *Nvaraganu* famine also led to a culture of giving out people to other neighboring communities for adoption until the famine situation eased. Women and children would be given out to the Meru, Chuka and Agikuyu neighbors. Some of the people given for adoption during these catastrophes would be retrieved, or get absorbed into the neighboring communities through marriage after the famine. Njeru (O I, 2021) reported that from the moieties of Kimanthi and Nyangi came up numerous clans that originated from Mwene-Ndega and Nthara, namely; IgaMuturi, Iruma, Kina, Igandu, Gicuku, Matau, Ngai, Kithami and Njuki, Thagana and Irumbi. Other respondents mentioned that there were as many as twenty-five clans.

Gitonga (O I, 2021) noted however that each clan was made up of various lineages, with a lineage consisting of a number of minor lineages or extended families. Within this system of organization, Embu males were also divided into age-groups which represented different levels of authority, status and obligation. A *Kavici*, young uncircumcised boy graduated into a warrior, also known as *Mwanake* after circumcision. During the circumcision process a young boy after undergoing the physical operation to remove the foreskin of his penis from a *Mûtani* or *Muruithia* after a dip in the cold morning waters of *Kavingacî* stream would be given to the care of a supporter or sponsor who would educate him intensively on matters of the community and on being a man.

Kinyua (O I, 2021) posited that after circumcision a young man became a warrior and joined the various age sets, *mariika*. The warriors would meet and plan raiding with the blessing of *mûndû mûgo*, a diviner who would bless them as well as inform them of any unprecedented occurrence like a misfortune during the raid. The diviner would not accompany them during the raid though. Warriors also protected the community against external aggression and also participated in cattle raids that would be executed on the neighbors like the Chuka, Meru, Gikuyu, Mbeere and Akamba. The young warriors were very brave and fierce and captured livestock and even gained territories from their defeated neighbors. Two of the most famous battles were fought around 1870 and 1890 when Njerû karûkû a celebrated war hero led the Embu against the Chuka successfully and in 1900 defeating the Akamba.

The Embu warriors also staged a fierce battle against the British in 1906 and even killed a white man. The warrior who killed the white man was praised immensely but when he undressed the white man's corpse and realized it was uncircumcised he felt bitter to know that he had only killed a boy and not a man. He however took away his gun. Once a warrior got married and got grown children he would graduate to another age-set of *Athuuri*.

The Aembu had a warrior council also known as war council, *njama ya mbaara*. As much as the warriors would independently make decisions regarding raiding, on other weightier matters affecting the community, they were under the instructions of the war council. The major functions of the war council were to make and execute decisions regarding war, the protection of people and property, execution of justice as well as executing the decisions or rules made by the clan councils (Munyi, O I, 2021)

From the above discussion, it is evident that both the social, economic and political organization of the Aembu wholly shaped their family values. The practices they had put in place provided a platform on which everyone conducted themselves within the confines of acceptable family values. Everything was done to ensure the success and stability of the family unit, in a space where there was proper monitoring by the established institutions to ensure family units were stable and family values upheld and safeguarded at all costs.

#### **4.7 The Family Value System of the Aembu, 1895 and 1920**

The research in this section sought to establish the African family value system of the Aembu in the period 1895 to 1920. The discussion begins with the nature of family values of the Aembu at the time of British arrival in Embu North up to the time Kenya became a British colony in 1920. This was done to establish how the Aembu family values originally were before they were interfered with by westernizing influence of missionaries and colonization. The information given was based on oral interviews conducted with the people of Embu North Sub-County in the wards of Nginda, Ruguru- Ngandori and Kírîmaarî.

Njoka (O I, 2021) outlines that the Aembu families operated on a well-defined system of values that were derived from different aspects of the people's lives. The Aembu



political, religious, economic and social ways of life were used to form a set of values by which every individual in the community operated by. By the time the Europeans set foot in Embu North in the year 1906, the Aembu had a well-structured value system that ensured a regular rhythm of life. He further notes that though the missionaries arrived in Embu and set a mission station at Kigari in 1910, there was little impact on the Aembu family values until way later after 1920 when the mission station gained proper grounding among the Aembu and things started changing from what had been.

The missionaries did not turn around the family values of the Aembu immediately as their main preoccupation was to establish physical structures for the church, health centre and a place to offer education in as well as spread the gospel to the locals which took some time. From around 1915, the missionaries were able to make the mission station functional but it was a big struggle to have the Aembu to adapt to the new Christian religion, bring in their children to school to an extent of changing their family values. There was noted to be a huge struggle as the traditional practices were deeply rooted and these are what shaped family values for many years that followed. Change on family values came eventually, but not immediately.

Everything surrounding family values among the Aembu emerged from the very act of starting a family. After a girl got circumcised she was considered ripe for marriage. A boy would identify a girl to marry and he would go to the girls' father and indicate his interest to marry her. The father to the girl would investigate and rule out weird traits in the man's family like stealing, witchcraft, incidences of people with madness or strange diseases or laziness. The girl would be allowed to interact closely with the young man in courtship. They were allowed to visit each other. Any time the suitor would come visiting he would be entertained by the girl in her mothers' *ngucu*. This was to ensure the young man behaved extremely well and gave his in-laws-to-be an opportunity to know him more and gain confidence in him as a future member of the family and partner of their daughter. The man also through courtship having gained enough confidence that he wanted to marry the girl took the next step of notifying his father of his intention to get a wife. His father would now gather male relatives and they would send a message to the girls' home that they intended to visit officially and start off bride price negotiation talks. Once permission was granted by the girl's

family there would be a series of visits in which the groom to be would surrender the bride wealth which included a given number of cows, goats, sheep and guards, *Kînya*, of traditional brew. Munyi (O I, 2021) contended that once bride price was paid which would not be exhausted at once, the young man would organize how his bride would get to his home, which was a rather dramatic event. On the day the bride was to be brought home to the groom, the young man would have his age-mates and friends build a new house the same day. The bride would be waylaid from her home by the groom's strong brothers, male cousins and friends by coercion, mostly done as she went to fetch water from the river or firewood from the bushes and be carried shoulder high to the groom's home and into the newly built house.

Another respondent, Ngondi (O I, 2021) supports this assertion by observing that the groom would come later and find his bride already home in the new house and he would consummate the marriage union. The grandparents, aunts and older female relatives would be on standby behind the new hut and would ululate to bless the marriage only if the groom would be heard groaning, *kûthamara/kwîthegema*. If he did not groan, then it could be known that he will not be able to handle family responsibilities. In this case the female relatives would go and prepare him porridge made from the flour of ground *ûgîmbî*, the black millet, believed to give men strength, after which he would be able to *kwîthegema/kûthamara*, groan. He would now be considered strong enough to be a husband. Men were supposed to be strong in physical strength and emotional intelligence as they were the ones that set the value systems in their families. Seeking parental consent during marriage is therefore seen to have been in existence among the Aembu alongside parental and communal involvement in the marriage affair and this served to strengthen family unions.

Mwaniki (O I 2021) also observed that the Aembu had several unifying factors that ensured harmonious living, among which was the belief in common ancestry. From their oral traditions Aembu believed each and every Muembu was either a son or daughter of Mwenendega and Ciûrûnjî. This meant that everyone viewed their neighbor as a blood relative hence people would act in utmost care and concern towards each other's welfare. This oneness formed the basis of family values that were witnessed in the Aembu communal life and families. This changed with the

coming of missionaries and colonialism where there was more concern for individual welfare than communal welfare.

Kivuti (O I, 2021) asserts that above all councils that were established in Embu land, the senior-most council was known as *Kiama kîa Ngome* which dealt with civil and criminal justice for the entire Embu country. To qualify for membership to this council, a *Mûthuuri* had to meet some given criteria, for instance owning a given amount of wealth in terms of wives, children and livestock. They were also men of great wisdom, fairness, religious or medical knowledge and highly regarded in society. *Athuuri a Ngome* also referred to as *athamaki* rulers were characterized by the rings that they wore on their legs and necks called *Ngome*, of either white or red color depending on the moiety they represented either *Nyangi* or *Kimanthi*. There were no chiefs in Embu until the British introduced them.

Stanley, the district Commissioner Embu in 1914 noted that *Kîama kîa Ngome's* mandate was to hear and make decisions on the most serious cases such as murder, sorcery and inter-clan conflicts (KNA/Sd/.N.A. Kenyon Stanley District commissioner Embu 31st /3/1914). It sat at given times mostly after a fortnight for litigation. For the Kiama to establish if one was guilty there was an ordeal, *gûcûna îkama*, where a knife was heated till red hot by elders seated in a circle. The elders would examine the tongues of the parties to ensure they were not doctored with a view of nullifying the test. The president of the Kiama would guide the parties on the words to utter as they rapidly passed their tongues on the hot knife blade three or four times. After a short interval the parties were to show their tongues to the elders. The red hot blade was expected to burn the guilty party. If the blade did not blister anyone it was decided that both were innocent and the case was dropped. The Kiama would also have the ordeal of *kûthiga kagoonda*, albeit done differently from how the *mûvîrîga* did it with a stick.

Gitonga (O I, 2021) further adds that in the case of a murder the suspect sometimes would deny the allegations and be presented before the *Kiama kia Ngome*. A sheep or goat would be presented as well as the suspected killer and the complainants. The weapon used in the killing and the animal would get marked with white clay in a specific way. The accuser and accused would sit opposite each other and a medicine

man would carry the goat round them seven times, at the end of each round throwing it over the head of each of the principals, muttering incantations as he does this. The goat is then put in the middle of the circle and each of the principals involved were required to stab the animal seven times in turns with a spear, until the animal dies repeating the prescribed form of oath or statement ending with some such words as, “if this is not the case may I die as the goat does”. If the accused was a killer he was supposed to die within the year, alike the complainant who had accused another falsely of such a heinous crime (KNA/Sd/.N.A. Kenyon Stanley District commissioner Embu 31st /3/1914).

Sd. D.R. Crompton District Commissioner in 1923 noted that with the coming of European administration the Kiama was retained and Embu division was divided into nine locations each under a gazetted headman. There was one Kiama for the whole division which sat as a rule every six weeks at Embu station. He observed that the Embu were great litigants who kept their Kiama busy with cases surrounding land boundary squabbles and debts connected with marriage dowries. It was however noted that in 1923 there was a great public outcry against the Embu Kiama which by then sat at Karue on account of its oppression and corruption. The Kiama was dissolved and a new one elected to sit mostly at Embu station. Local Native Councils were also established and courts that operated under them established. With more and more empowerment of the courts, the Kiama lost its authority and the cases revolving around family matters now had to go through long bureaucracies that incidentally created a loophole for members to commit more related crimes with ease. From oral sources it was evident that when people realised a case at the European established courts could take a lot of time before conclusion, people were able to commit more crimes. It was also noted that administration of justice among the Aembu was more efficient with the existence of the traditional ways of administration because it was instant justice.

Muturi (O I, 2021) asserts that married people rarely got into extramarital affairs. However, a few would stray and start such relationships but it was mostly discovered. When a woman strayed and conceived a child out of wedlock, the husband would investigate the case and get evidence on it. He would present the case to the *mûvîrîga wa athuuri* for a case, *ciira/gûciirithua*. If the accused man was found guilty, he was

supposed to give a fine of two bulls. One of the bull was uncastrated, called *ndegwa ya îvîcî* and a castrated one *ndegwa e ngaramba*. These two were slaughtered and eaten by all in a *kaurugo* ceremony. He would also give a young goat *mbarika* and a sheep, *mwatî* to the husband of the woman he was having a sexual relation with. The *mbarika* and *mwatî* were given whole to compensate the man whose wife had been straying to compensate him for the pain and return the cheating wife to the husbands' matrimonial bed and also compensate the children of the woman for the shame suffered from their mother's infidelity. This heavy punishment with the accompanying public embarrassment was greatly feared because the public fining ceremony would be known by all in the community and taint one's image greatly. The Aembu in the marriage institution therefore maintained marital purity so as to ensure they set a good example to the younger generations.

Kinyua (O I, 2021) also points out that sexual crimes were not completely absent among the Aembu, as some members of the community would exhibit behaviors that were out of place culturally. In a rare case where a man committed rape to an unmarried girl and his identity was discovered, he was forced to marry her immediately. This would be decided in a *kaurugo* ceremony where the rapist would give a bull as a fine so that the council of elders would sit and hear the case, *kûnyua kaurugo*. The man would be given seven days within which he was supposed to pay her full bride price and keep her as his wife, since he had already made her his wife through sexual contact. If he declined to marry her, a heftier fine of a second bull would be imposed and would be given to the girl's parents as compensation for the damage caused to their daughter and to them as a family. The girl would thereafter be cleansed by a medicineman and given back to her parents, and she was now clean enough to get married by another suitor. The Aembu society was therefore very protective of its sexual values and had structures in place to ensure everyone acted in utmost self-control and anyone who went against the moral code of conduct was heavily punished which deterred members from committing a similar offence.

Ngembi (O I, 2021), a female respondent observed that in the family life, if a woman erred the husband would correct her by physically beating her, commonly known as *kûriva mûtumia* to instil discipline. Some women were not resilient and would run back to their parents' homes, *kwînûka*. Once she arrived at her fathers' house, she

would stay there overnight and return the following day accompanied by a male relative, *mûkîama* who would go to plead for her acceptance back by the husband. She also had to take with her a sheep, *ng'ondu ee nthingo*, as compensation to the husband for the pain he suffered in her absence, taking care of children and domestic chores which men were culturally not supposed to do. The penalty was a sheep and a large gourd of locally made brew, *Mûthingi arê nthingo mûtumia acooke akime njoovi na mvûva ya kînya*. If a woman was adamant on not returning to husband, and the husband had not paid any dowry for her, then she was free to stay at her father's house and even remarry elsewhere. It was very hard to stay with a woman without *kûraia*, paying dowry. This meant that every man put in a lot of effort to ensure that he paid dowry before taking a wife. Every man married and every woman got married, which meant that there were almost no children born out of wedlock. If you impregnated a woman, before paying her dowry, you had to marry her.

Werimba (O I, 2021) further observes that both boys and girls were initiated into adulthood through circumcision. Before the actual physical cut, there was a whole week dedicated to festivity. *Ûrîngu*, female circumcision/ clitoridectomy was conducted on girls aged 14 to 18 years, where the older circumcised girls and womenfolk would visit the initiate in her mother's hut and guided the initiate into adulthood as she healed from the cut. The initiates would be trained on how to be excellent wives, mothers and daughters-in-law. They were also guided on how to respect their husbands, take care of domestic chores and be excellent homemakers. This ensured the girls who got into the marriage institution were well trained on their responsibilities and would steer their families in utmost wisdom. The boys also underwent circumcision and would likewise get extensive training from the male counterparts like elder brothers, cousins, uncles and male neighbours. The training accorded to the initiates ensured the people that got into family life were adequately equipped to deal with the demands of family values and they would in turn transmit the same family values to the younger generations.

A female respondent, Maitha (O I, 2021) pointed out that an uncircumcised girl who begun her menstruation would be married off to an old man. She was called *mûkomaanthî*, meaning one lays on the ground. This is why girls were clitoridectomized from around fourteen years of age before they were grown up

enough to start menstruation. So long as girl had gotten initiated, she could stay in her father's compound for as long as a suitable marriage partner would come around. If none was quickly forthcoming, her relatives would search for a good family with unmarried son and their parents would be alerted that there was someone in a given village who was good enough for marriage and the young man with the hint would go searching and if he found the said girl appealing to him then he would start off the necessary marriage arrangements. Ordinarily though, the Aembu young people searched for marriage partners on their own and then they could report to their parents. This ensured that no person of marriageable age remained unmarried, an assertion supported by Mbiti (1975) when he observes that marriage was the life line of the African community and every marriageable person was to get married else there was no allowance for someone to remain outside the marriage institution, as it was great misfortune to do so. This means that there was a lot of value attached to the family set up that was the biggest avenue of exercising family values for the stability and continuity of the Aembu community.

Nthiga (O I, 2021) asserts that girls and boys attended night dances in a given village. Girls and boys would come from all neighboring villages and dance all night long. Boys were tasked with the responsibility of taking care of the girls during the night and since each boy was attached to a girl to be under his care, he was as well the one to take her back home after the dance, *kûmwînûkia*. There was no intimacy exercised as all concerned were responsible and consequences of doing so were dire. Some grown-ups would be in attendance to keep a hawk's eye on the activities of the night. After the dancing the boys would escort all the girls home safely. The girl was allowed to accommodate a boy in the men's house if he came from a village further off. If he behaved inappropriately towards her he was barred from future dances. If a girl got late to arrive home, it was expected that she would spend the night at a neighbor's place but the following day, the neighbor who had accommodated her would accompany her to her home and explain on her behalf the reason for the action to her parents to avoid punishment. If a girl was out late she was beaten up by her mother with a *mûraagi*, a cane. This was done to ensure the youth enjoyed leisure activities and still observed the set regulations and remained pure or chaste members of the community, the same values they would proceed with to marriage and adulthood.

Maitha (O I, 2021) further posits that in the worst case scenario that a Muembu girl fell pregnant or rather conceived a baby before undergoing initiation, she would be married off to an old man. Before she was married off, a lone hut would be erected for her in the fathers compound where she would spend her days alone nursing her pregnancy before the appropriate old man to marry her was identified. This made majority of the girls to avoid premarital sex because it was common knowledge that girls in such an eventuality would solely bear the consequences of such a misdeed. It was a big taboo, *mûgiro* for an uncircumcised boy to have sexual relations with a married woman. Girls at the time of marriage were therefore expected to be chaste and this was something that all the members of the society cultivated among the youngsters by ensuring all through their lives, they did not have an avenue where they could tamper with their chastity. However, if a girl did lose her virginity there were many modes of humiliating punishments greatly feared that kept the young people in check and retaining sexual purity up to marriage.

Njeru (O I, 2021) noted that the Aembu families were a blend of monogamy, polygamy and exogamy. A man could marry one or up to five wives so long as he could cater materially for all. The practice of polygamy would be accelerated if ones' wife bore daughters only and he would get another wife to bear a son since a son was considered as an anchor to the home, *îgiri rîa gûtiira mûciî*. Polygamy would also be done by a man for the reason of diversifying his perceived good genes or acquiring good genes from a family whose daughters would be considered to have specific good traits. Those who were in polygamous set ups had very organised systems of executing familial obligations and dispute resolution. Since every man was not polygamous, there are those who took only one wife and lived with her all through their adult life. In such families there were fewer people involved and the management of the family unit was easier and smoother compared to majority of the polygamous homes.

Being the head of the family, either in a polygamous or monogamous home, *Vaava*, the father set the rules by which everyone in the homestead subscribed to. This is to mean every family had a unique way in which it conducted its family affairs, but it was noted that the ground rules in every home were based on utmost respect for elders, obedience and mutual social responsibility. Mwaniki (O I, 2021) observes that



women in a polygamous home, co-wives, were supposed to live in utmost peace, respect and love for the success of the family unit. It was however not always peaceful as polygamous homes had more squabbles than monogamous family setups. The co-wives were not especially supposed to fight or else, their husband would physically batter them, kick them out and they would need to come back with *mbûri/ng'ondu ee nthingo*, a sheep or a goat as compensation. This punishment regimen was greatly feared and kept co-wives in check without petty fights amongst themselves.

The husband was therefore greatly feared and respected and this ensured peace and harmony in the family set up. If a woman beat up a man a stronger man was sought to beat her up so that she could learn to respect the male gender which was the community's expectation that women respect men and not engage in physical fights with them. This further ensured respect for both genders. Mwaniki further points out that there was unspoken respect between the circumcised and the uncircumcised men, *ivîcî*. If a circumcised young man found the conduct of a *kavîcî* to be wanting, the later would be cautioned and given a clear directive on how he was expected to conduct himself as the older members were supposed to shape the character of the younger members.

Ngondi (O I, 2021) points out that there were people who were not allowed to marry like the mentally sick, the disabled, those infested by jiggers or those with extraordinary complications. However, if one was in this category and he was from a very wealthy family, some girls would offer to get married to such a person even if he was disabled because of the property in his home, or the simple fact that there's comfort in having a husband who is disabled and will not especially beat her up. Since wife battering among the Aembu was a pronounced practice, the woman would sometimes choose a weakling or a disabled man who would pose little threat. (Mwaniki O I, 2021) remembers an incident when one time when he was a little boy, his mother was slapped by the father and banged against a wall. She cried bitterly and told Mwaniki who was about five years old to follow her to the grandparents' home. But on second thought she did not go because it was a long distance away and she had another small baby who was only a few months old. Again if she went and overstayed she knew she had to come back with a fine, a goat. So the mother cried for hours and

when the father found her still crying, he beat her up some more and she just stayed put at home. Wives had to have respect for the husband and if for any reason the man was away for instance herding she took over the management of family affairs.

If a man had many wives he would erect a house for each of them and his hut, *gaarû*, would be at the middle of the compound. All the wives would cook and have an organized formula of who would give food to the husband and at what time. It was a terrible tragedy for a woman if the husband refused to eat food cooked by her, because it would mean he was annoyed with her conduct. This was referred to as *kûthingwa*, to be sealed. The husband was always served first in a *kûnga*, plural, *ciûga* which was calabashes, but porridge was drunk from *njere/kînya*, a gourd. To assist in eating food, a raw banana skin from the fleshy stalk was cut with a sharp scrapper, *kaviû* and served to scoop food and eat. These practices further strengthened the family values of cohesion, respect and obedience for each other in the family set up.

Muturi (O, I 2021) noted that if a man misbehaved he was called by elders and he would give *nthenge*, a he-goat, as a penalty. He would be barred from interacting with other men until he gives another goat called, *nthenge ya gûcookia athuurirî*. Until he gave this fine, he would be called *mûthuuri kîvûcî*, to mean an uncircumcised grown man, a very bad insult. A negligent father would have a delegation of older men sent to him. This is if he formed a habit of the following; if he was always beating up his wife or wives or grown-up daughter(s) who were supposed to be punished by their mother; if he acknowledged that he did not want the wife and the children anymore. A *kaurugo* ceremony would be conducted where he would give two goats and a bull to the elders. Once he gives these two, the woman was set free to go and get married elsewhere or just return to her father's house where she would stay with the children.

For a woman who ran away and refused to return to her husband's home, abandoning the children with the husband she was not allowed to remarry but later when her children grew up they could go for her and reinstate her to their father's home. Such a husband would have no choice but to stay with her. This was possible because when sons grew up they always protected their mothers and could be a threat to the father who would be weaker in physical strength than the sons. This ensured all children were taken care of and there was no negligence on the side of parents.

Men were always put in check to ensure that they were there for their families and were not unleashing brutality or terror on the other family members as much as a lot of power was accorded to them by the society. This however changed with the coming of the Europeans with a different and lengthy judicial system that made it easier for parents to abscond their family responsibilities and consequently many children were not able to be accorded proper care. With the European system still, divorce became a common place practice that was absent in the traditional set up.

Ngemi (O I, 2021) observes that there were deeply entrenched marital customs that regulated behavior among married women whilst upholding the value of perseverance in families. A married woman was not supposed to misbehave. If she committed some crime or an act that was unacceptable by the husband he would return her to her fathers' house. When they arrived, the accusations would be laid bare. Then the parties would be listened to and solutions offered. Since authority came from the men, if an animal was slaughtered in a home, the women folk ate after the men had eaten.

Kivuti (O I, 2021) further observes that children were not allowed to move from home to home aimlessly. A disobedient child was likely to receive a curse so they obeyed their parents to avoid this misfortune. Parents blessed their obedient children and children had the responsibility of taking care of their parents even in old age. Children's disobedience would be punished if they mixed goats and cows during grazing; eating food or fruits given to them by strangers. This was done to avoid poisoning because some evil people would poison children to death with the intention of hurting and paining their parents; playing with kids from the neighbourhood who were non-family members till late hours. Children who broke home rules were whipped with a whip made from rhinoceros' skin, especially the deviant ones who would steal chicken, eggs or commit other such acts. Children were warned to avoid suspected witches or wizards. All these values were inculcated at childhood for the stability of the family.

Ileri (O I, 2021) observes that no grownup was supposed to misbehave in front of children lest they taught children bad mannerisms. Even if a young man wanted to approach a girl to ask for her friendship, if the said girl was accompanied by a child at the time, he would postpone his advances lest he sends a wrong message about

grown-ups to the child. When a boy child grew up to around twelve years he would reduce visits to his mother's house and be seen more with the father as he gravitated towards adulthood. If a young boy misbehaved his father would punish him by beating. If premarital sex happened or an uncircumcised boy forced a girl into such an act the matter would be taken up by elders who would ensure that the boy gets circumcised immediately. Sometimes young boys and girls approaching puberty would mischievously mix and engage in premarital sex. When this happened they would both be forced into undergoing circumcision lest the girl gets pregnant uncircumcised.

Most girls and boys married when they were chaste or virgins. This purity was extended into marriage where couples maintained this purity and in the case when a man went to war or travelled to a far off village for some time the wife would not engage other sexual partners. However, there were some few exceptions where married women and men secretly got into extramarital involvements which was heavily punished when discovered.

Njoka (O I, 2021) points out that people recognised the existence of God, *Mwene Nyaga*, owner of the white snow of Mount Kenya. *Kîrîmaari gîa kîrînyaga*, Mount Kenya, was a place of prayer. During divination the rituals were done facing *Kîrînyaga* the mountain. *Mwene Nyaga* received sacrifices from unblemished animals if there was a calamity. If for instance there was unexplained loss of children in a family, it would necessitate sacrificing. After this was done and the couple got another child, the child would undergo a ritual where he or she would be removed from the house through an opening made from the back side of the hut, then brought back to the house through the front door. This would mean the baby was a grown up and the spirit of death that used to come kill previous children would now come but this time round find a "grown up" and leave. The child would also be given a name of an animal. Traditional religion was therefore seen to have shaped the family values to a large extent. This changed after the coming of the missionaries in Kigari that slowly led to the end of traditional rituals like sacrificing and the coming of western medicine that reduced mortality rate by proper maternal care.

Nthiga (O I, 2021) observes that the Aembu associated thunder with the devil, *mwanangi* either punishing someone. There were beliefs that if a girl for instance was ill mannered she could be punished by spirits especially during her circumcision. If a spirit spoke to her that she would die while undergoing the process it was deemed a very bad omen. One time a girl named Wambeti was to undergo the cut and spirits spoke loudly in the dead of the night saying, “*ariritii, Wambeti ûgaakua ûkîrua*”, meaning, Wambeti you will die undergoing the cut. Since one would not remain uncircumcised, she would still undergo the cut and sure enough she would die. The community would rather circumcise Wambeti and see what happens than have her uncircumcised. There was no solution because the spirits had spoken.

Mwaniki (O I, 2021) narrates an incident to further show the role the traditional religion played in shaping the traditional family values of the Aembu. When Mwaniki was coming from Nkubu in Meru, he saw his fathers’ figure/ghost in the bush and then it disappeared. He had left his father in Embu so there was no way he was in a bush in Nkubu which is very many miles away. When he arrived home in Embu, he was notified that his father had been arrested by the white men and taken away. This was a notification of impending danger at home. On another incident, he saw his mother who had died a long time ago sitting on a box dressed smartly. His mother spoke of happiness she was experiencing and how happy she was of his progress in life, especially having married and sired children. She however told him that his wife who was running away every other time for petty reasons and void of violence in the home would not last in the home and that Mwaniki would bring up his children alone. The mother's ghost vanished and several years later his wife ran away one final time never to come back again, and he brought up all his seven young children alone, till they became adults.

Mwaniki had another experience from his village in the olden days about two men, one named Mûrû wa Cagara and the other one Maria. The two had to cross River Rupingazi to the other side. The only way to cross the river without a bridge was to climb a huge tree that grew on one side of the river and whose branches spread to the other side of the river, hop from branch to branch and to the other side. The two heard voices as they started off “*Maria ringa, aca, Maria cooka*”, meaning, Maria cross, no, do not cross. It was raining and the River was swelling up with more water. In this

case the spirits were not talking to Mûrû wa Cagara and wanted to save Maria and punish Mûrû wa Cagara. Both men crossed the river but by the time Mûrû wa Cagara hopped the last branch to the other side he was unable to walk and was barely dragging his body to avoid falling into the river and drowning. He told Maria that his lower body felt dead. Maria carried his friend who could not walk to the village. From that time his two legs got paralyzed.

When the two narrated the story to a medicineman, *Mûntû mûgo* they were informed that the ancestral spirits had punished Mûrû wa Cagara and that was his fate and nothing could be done. He became such a burden to his family as he was not mobile. This punishment was served to him because he was a hard man to his wives and children. Traditional religion played a great role in forming family values that ensured the stability of the Aembu families. People were careful not to treat others the wrong way because they were being watched by the ancestors and could earn a life shuttering punishment. It is also evident that all the social activities the people carried out were the sources of family values that the Aembu families thrived on. The various restrictions put in place regulated the behavior of every member of the family and created the foundation upon which family values were formed and practiced. This therefore ensured a stable family setup where family values were upheld and measures taken against those who were uncompliant.

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

From this discussion it is evident that before colonialism and missionaries brought any western ideas that changed family values among the Aembu significantly, there were many safeguards established to regulate the behavior of all members of the society. Though there were missionaries and colonialists in Embu Country by 1920, change did not come abruptly and the western family values gradually took time to overshadow the traditional family values, especially after Kenya became a British colony in 1920 which was marked by an increase in European involvement in native affairs.

**CHAPTER FIVE**  
**CULTURAL EVOLUTIONS BROUGHT ABOUT BY COLONIALISM ON**  
**THE AFRICAN FAMILY VALUE SYSTEM IN EMBU NORTH SUB-**  
**COUNTY, KENYA, 1895-1965**

This section begins with a brief discussion on the evolution of family value system in Africa during the early years of colonialism. It then proceeds with the discussion on how the traditional Aembu family value system evolved as a result of colonialism. The African family had a well-organized value system in which all family affairs were executed in absolute order and adherence to laid down protocols. By the time the Europeans arrived in Africa either as colonialists or missionaries, there was much order in the way family life was carried out because of the solid established structures. Ojua, Lukpata and Atama (2014) observe that these value structures or systems were used to ensure and promote order of socialization and morality in the African society. This social harmony was depicted in marriages and family relationships, legal systems, religious, economic and political structures.

According to Inglehart (2018) cultural evolution states that people's values and behavior are shaped by the degree to which survival is secure. The Europeans wielding more powerful weapons like the gun left majority of the Africans with one option, to abandon their cultures and values in preference of the European ones. This was because the Europeans did not only force their political ideas on the people but also brought with them a new way of life which they forced on the Africans. This created a situation among the Africans where they had their indigenous cultures on one hand and a new western culture being forced on them on the other hand. There was also the aspect of the new western culture being more enticing to some Africans than their traditional cultures. This partly explains why some Africans welcomed the Europeans and received western education, medical care and many other European provisions as others put up a bitter struggle to reject the foreign influence.

**5.1 The Process of Cultural Evolution in Embu North**

Mbiti (1975) observes that from 1895 when Kenya became part of British East African protectorate, Europeans embarked on a process of executing their political mandate among their African subjects alongside promoting their culture. Though promotion of European culture was previously executed by the missionaries, now more than ever they were supported by Britain, their mother government through

protection against the Africans who fought to resist any western influence on their culture. When Kenya was declared a British colony in 1920 the British had a lesser geographical area to govern and this served to further hasten the process of traditional African cultural evolution.

The British in their quest to establish colonialism in Embu North engaged in military expeditions and the Aembu resisted. This account is recorded by one of the well-known British officials during the exertion of colonial authority in Kenya, Meinertzhagen (1957) who led a military expedition against the Aembu. From his diary on 10<sup>th</sup> March 1904 he records;

I moved camp today further into the heart of the Embu country and built a strong zariba on the left bank of the River Ruingazi. From our camp we get a fine view of Mount Kenya. I remained in camp this afternoon, sending out strong patrols in every direction. The people of Embu are showing a considerable amount of fight and in two cases have charged right up to our bayonets. They must have lost heavily. We lost 3 soldiers and 11 levies, all killed except 4 levies. We captured only 7 head of cattle and 22 goats the whole day. The Waembu are a branch of the Wakikuyu, whom they closely resemble, but they speak a different language and have different customs. Their huts are mostly made of banana leaves and not of grass. they have two types of knobkerrie, one being long (about 2 feet 6 inches) with a ribbed head, and the other a much deadlier weapon, having a round stone lashed to the end, the whole being bound with leather. Their dancing shields are also unique, being thin and narrow. Their spears are mostly of the bay-leaf type, but smaller and more elegant than those of the Wakikuyu. The Waembu have curious wicker jars for storing food.....they are astonishingly heavy and one which we rolled down a slope went crushing into a banana grove and demolished several trees before it was checked.

On 17<sup>th</sup> March 1904 Richard Meinertzhagen records on his diary that he marched into Fort Hall and the Embu expedition come to an end;

“To my mind the people of Embu have not been sufficiently hammered, and I should like to go back once and have another go at them. During the first phase of the expedition against the Embu we killed 250 people and took 498 cattle and 1,500 goats and sheep”.

This is the amount of damage done to the people of Embu by the British in a bid to force westernization and colonialism on them. Meinertzhagen's damage was in form of death to Africans and confiscation of African animals to make them keep quiet and force them to obey the new British administration and westernization. He gives an account of the weapons used by the Embu people against European invasion and his assault on them. However, he does not shed any light on the effect this forceful



intrusion he spearheaded had on the people of Embu. After the Embu were subdued, colonial rule was imposed on them.

The above account was supported by Munene (O I, 2021) who notes that the British killed hundreds of Aembu warriors and confiscated their cattle. Some of the British soldiers even raped the Aembu women which was culturally unacceptable. The Aembu finally lost the war because the British guns could not be matched with the Aembu weapons. When the Aembu warriors were finally quelled, they had to be disarmed and forced to return their arms to Ngûirî near Nembure a place above Mount Karûe. They surrendered their weapons which comprised Ngo (shields), Matumo (spears) and Mbiû (swords) and thereafter they were matched to *Nthithiarî* the old name of Embu town also known as Kîrîmaarî. The word *Nthithiarî* came from a tree called Mûthithia. The defeated Embu warriors were to clear the bushes as a punishment and uproot the many Mûthithia trees at the place. This was a show of surrender and defeat and thereafter the white man established his settlement at Karue but later moved to Embu town which was safer and more central for easier control of the Embu country.

According to Kariuki (O.I, 2021), the British colonialists took political control and taxed the Aembu families. The taxes were paid by all adults but women paid tax through the husbands. Those without a husband had their brothers pay the tax on their behalf. Men in family life paid tax too and since the tax amount was four shillings, almost equivalent to a total months earnings from European jobs which was six shillings, many men paid tax and were left with little money for their other family expenditures, a life of big struggle. It was even worse for men of little means who had polygamous families and had to pay tax for all their wives. This money economy very quickly changed the family dynamics as men left their homes to go to towns and European farms for casual labour. This meant that men had to relinquish their responsibilities to the women.

During the outbreak of the World War 1 in 1914, some young Aembu men were taken away to fight in the Kings African Rifles. Most of these young men left young families and young children behind. Some who died rendered their wives widows and their children fatherless. These widows would be remarried or stay as single parents

and bring up their children alone. This changed the traditional role of women in the family from feminine to masculine where they became primary caregivers in their households, a situation that became much expounded during the colonial period (Gicuko, O I, 2021).

Kimani (O I, 2021) contends that the British soldiers disregarded traditional customs by defiling African women and even whipping them as they asserted their political authority on the resistant Aembu people. Defiled women found it difficult to form families as the Aembu men considered it bad omen, *Mûgiro* to marry someone who had a history of being raped by a white man. Again, the white men engaging in such atrocities set a bad cultural example to the African young men that women can be defiled with little consequence. This served to destroy the family values that were geared towards protection and preservation of vulnerable people among the Aembu. With time during the colonial period therefore, cases of rape and molestation increased.

Kimanthi (O I, 2021) also asserts that it's due to the harshness of the European colonial rule that the Mau Mau war broke out in 1947 to 1952. Men went to the forest to fight while the women and children were restricted in enclosures to avoid contact with the Mau Mau. Many men in protest of the forced labour and taxation joined the Kikuyu neighbors to fight the white man. This situation left women with bigger family and civic responsibilities. The women now had to support their men who fought the guerrilla warfare against the whites with food, weapons, medicine, clothes and information as well as take care of the home setup. This put a huge strain on the women, as providing was difficult with little resources and unfriendly circumstances.

Similarly, Njagi (O I, 2021) posits that at this same time that the Africans were restricted in reserves and persevering horrible conditions with the state of emergency and with little social amenities and supplies, there was a locust invasion which destroyed crops. Due to the food shortage that ensued the Aembu would collect the locusts, *Ngige*, from trees into pots, fry them and eat. Mothers would prefer to serve their children the scarce food and stay without. The family setup was now thrown into disarray and the values that were the yardstick of family life evolved abruptly. Gender

roles were reversed and the patriarchal society was now reorganized into one where women had more responsibilities and power consequently.

## **5.2 Evolution of Traditional Religious Rituals and Communal Worship**

Cultural evolution refers to a situation where an already established and functional culture is impacted heavily by a perceived “superior” culture to such a point that the former loses its grounding and changes immensely in the direction of the “superior” culture. The coming of westernization and its dominance over the African traditional cultures led to cultural evolution of the African cultures and values. This is a gradual process that happens through change in people’s behavior achieved through instruction, imitation and other forms of social transmission.

Colonialism and missionaryism brought changes in different aspects of the African life. The traditional African family values changed as the Africans adopted a new religion, Christianity and discarded their traditional religious practices that shaped daily family life. The practice of offering sacrifices that the Aembu involved themselves in through their religious specialists and elders in times of calamity or thanksgiving was abandoned as it was considered by the British to be a barbaric practice. The Africans had to adopt the Christian religion, attend worship in a church building, have a worship that was planned and sequential, read and understand the written scriptures as well as partake the Holy Communion and baptism. These were alien religious practices to the Africans. There came discontent and conflicts among family members when some family members fully converted into Christianity while others held onto their traditional religion.

The coming of missionaries tampered with the Aembu traditional religion and practices that were greatly valued like sacrificing and communal worship on which family values of reverence for God and ancestors were anchored. The missionaries at Kigari Mission Center fought female circumcision and according to a male respondent, Magu (O I, 2021) this destroyed the respect married women had in marriage for their husbands. For instance, married women would not eat meat in the presence of men. This level of respect got lost and his opinion was female circumcision was supposed to be supported or in the absence of the physical cut

women at a given age needed to be taken through a vigorous training on the value of respect as they got in the marriage institution.

In 1932 the Anglican Church of Kenya passed a decree against female circumcision. When the Kigari church announced that *irîngu itîkaarua* meaning the uncircumcised would no longer be circumcised, Magu (OI 2021) could not fathom the disrespect that would ensue if a *Mûrîngu* would talk back at him and so he quit attending the mission church. He further observed that from this point there started a division between those Aembu who were circumcised or willing to take their daughters through the rite and those who obeyed the word of the Europeans. The uncircumcised were considered children and could not easily get married and if they did, it's the Christian sons who would marry them. Some parents stuck with Christianity and still wanting to circumcise their daughters took them to non-Christian friends or to their maternal grandmothers to secretly undergo the rite.

In case this was discovered through Christian whistle-blowers the parents who had committed this crime would be arrested and jailed by the government for a number of months. By the time the jail sentence would be completed, the mission church would have excommunicated them from the church. This assertion is supported by Mr A. P. Palmer in his handing over report to Mr P.G. Derrick, who notified him that in 1956 the African District Council passed a resolution declaring female circumcision to be contrary to Native Law and Custom. This measure was passed without any consultation with the natives and when the circumcision season arrived, those who were apprehended were brought to court and fined. This brought so much discontent among the natives that they unlimitedly engaged in the activity that Mr Palmer administratively stopped any further prosecution and suggested to have only licenced circumcisers operate and only under the consent of the parents of the girl (KNA/DC/EBU/2

The type of families being formed evolved from polygamous to monogamous when more Africans in family life departed from polygamy as influenced by the new religious teachings and expectations of colonial masters. With the emergence of western education, many Africans who got educated changed their ways of life as they got into white collar jobs, an evolution from the traditional peasant economy.

This shift changed family life since people's daily activities shape their values, aspirations and practices that ultimately become a new culture. The Africans thereby gradually changed aspects of their culture in favor of the European culture that had proved more superior.

### **5.3 Positive Evolution of Traditional Family Value System**

A detailed observation and analysis of the western influence on African culture reveals that there was both good and bad influence. Rodee (1983) observed that the African social problems are characterized by one-crop economies, pervasive corruption, spiraling inflation, massive unemployment, overcrowded cities and destructive villages. The African material culture which incorporates physically tangible and noticeable artefacts which people invented to meet their needs also underwent massive evolution. The farm implements, hunting and gathering tools, cooking utensils, building and construction materials and the other tangible tools and weapons also evolved to ape those of Europeans that were more sophisticated, efficient, easy to use and led to more productivity compared to the ones used in the cottage industries and homes by the Africans.

The non-material culture which incorporates the people's psychological state of mind and their behavior that is acquired through socialization includes morals and values, habits, language, religion, attitudes, knowledge and control systems that regulate human behavior. Both material and non-material cultures of the Africans have undergone massive evolution both positively and negatively with continued interaction with the western culture. The African family value system has also evolved as evidenced by the big efforts put in place by the western world on women empowerment and education. Though cultures are naturally meant to evolve even without external interference, in the case of Africa, the biggest agent of change has been identified to be European colonialism and missionarism. Other agents attributed to the acculturation of African family values include trade, migration and wars.

According to Cultural Evolution Theory on which this study is anchored, Mesoudi (2011) observes that the best cultures are those that survive and get transmitted over the inferior cultures. The Western culture is seen to have positively impacted the traditional African family values of the Aembu. With the onset of colonialism and

missionarism in Embu North, the families that anchored their family health on traditional healers, medicine men, *Andû Ago* were introduced to Western medicine by the missionaries at Kigari Mission Center. Before the coming of the new medical practices, the mortality rate was very high and very many children would not survive past infancy. Maternal deaths were also many as the traditional midwives were not able to handle medical emergencies at birth or complicated health problems. Vaccination for children after birth was introduced and the children could receive these services at sub-centers like Mbuvari, Kigari, Manyatta and Kairuri. This greatly improved family health and many children were able to survive unlike before. Cleanliness was emphasized by the colonialists and the Aembu were taken through mandatory creation of proper drainage around their homes.

A man named Karigûûrî was tasked by the white people at Kigari to enforce cleanliness and proper hygiene in Nginda and Ruguru-Ngandori. If he found a home, town or *duka*, (shop) dirty he could arrest the culprits and upon presentation to the white men punishment was executed. People were made to dig pit latrines unlike when they relieved themselves in the bushes and diseases like dysentery, typhoid and cholera would affect them.

The missionaries introduced new methods of lighting in homes which greatly improved family life. Paraffin was used in tin lamps with a wick and there was more comfort in the Aembu homes. The paraffin was also used as fuel for cooking alongside other sources of fuel for cooking and lighting. This eased the burden of the womenfolk in Embu homes who had to fetch firewood to provide lighting and fuel Nyakio (O I, 2021)

There were some practices that the Aembu practiced that were deemed culturally acceptable but quite retrogressive. KNA/DC/EBU/3/2 records that if a woman gave birth to twins at the first confinement the second to be born was thrown away and occasionally the first born also. Children born feet first and children who cut their upper teeth first were also thrown away. This was also done for a child born before the midwife was present to “receive” it. Some of these practices were stopped by the Europeans to much delight of the women who bore the blunt of the mean practices

and lived in perpetual fear of losing their children in case their births fell under the above specified criterion.

The Europeans also introduced a new mode of dressing different from the traditional Aembu dressing. (Mwaniki O I, 2021) opines that the trousers that the women were introduced to were far much better than the traditional ones as they covered more skin thereby more modesty. This view was supported by Kaumbuthu (O I, 2021) who asserted that the Embu traditional dressing was scanty where the young girls in puberty went around with bare chest as their breasts were not considered as nakedness. They also wore a *Njuri* a small piece of goat skin that was used to cover the back side only. This exposed them to cold in the cold seasons and at night. The old men and women's dressings *Kigoori* were descent as they were long robes that covered most of the body parts and kept them warm. The two respondents' opinions agree that the Embu traditional dressing was not entirely decent but the clothes brought by the white men were more decent and warm.

Mwaniki (O I, 2021) also posited that the white people improved the Aembu dressing by introducing footwear like shoes that were non-existent in the past. People used to traverse long distances barefooted and accidents of being pricked by thorns or hitting a tree stump or a stone caused injuries on the feet, where many people lost their toe nails through such accidents. Europeans also brought beds, mattresses and blankets that brought more comfort during sleep unlike the *Miarîro*, makeshift beds with crisscrossing tree branches that the Africans used, or the bare floors with animal skins spread across.

The views of the two respondents were disputed by Ngige (O I, 2021) who opined that the white people tampered unfavorably with the Aembu dressing. Some of the dressing that were introduced were very short for women for instance the miniskirts and the short dresses were seductive to the men as they covered little skin and left much of it to imagination. Asked why the traditional dressing was not seductive yet the unmarried girls walked bare-chested, he said that a naked mad man or woman in the market place does not have many eyes on their body, as when the whole body part is uncovered, there's nothing more to imagine, but when a woman covers half of her breasts or thighs with European clothes someone is curious to see the rest. He further

observed that some of the Aembu dressing like *Kîgoori* was a decent wear. From the above divergent opinions, it can be argued that some of the Aembu attire were considered to be decent and promoted the cherished value of decency. Likewise, some attire brought by the Europeans promoted decency while others did not.

The Europeans also brought western education that improved the family values in terms of understanding the different better ways of family life. People were enlightened and able to manage their family affairs better. KNA/DCEMB/1/14 notes that through the Agricultural Department in Embu District there was introduction of village agricultural education. In this project there was better care and improvement of stock, production and use of manure, increased crop populations and introduction of vegetables as food and cash crops. By the end of 1956, it was further noted that over 2,500 standard pattern cattle sheds had been built, representing a manure production of at least 152,000 tonnes per year; 2,000 calves, sheep and goat sheds had been constructed. Most villages had nappier grass plots for supplementary fodder and swamps around villages were successfully converted into healthy vegetable gardens. 12 villages had cut all their male stock and introduced Sahiwa/Boran bulls in their place.

These measures improved food security and provided families with a stable agricultural based economy that improved the Aembu family life. The British also introduced new food crops like rice, maize, pineapples, groundnuts, wattle and sunflower which supplemented the Aembu traditional foods. Coffee and tea were also introduced and earned the people some income that in later years of colonialism improved family economic and social status.

Kiambati (O I, 2021) notes that Christianity advocated for monogamy. Many people in Embu North attended the mission church at Kigari and since there were requirements for continued membership those in family life had to act in certain ways like exempt their daughters from clitoridectomy, marry one wife and abandon traditional religion and practices that the missionaries were against. Christianity improved family life by preaching peace and harmony in marriage, equality between men and women and mutual concern for married partners. It also outlawed degrading practices like clitoridectomy. Wife battering which was a very common practice also



got minimised as family members were taught on the need to treat each other with respect and utmost love. Due to emphasis on monogamy, domestic violence meted on women reduced as fights in a monogamous family were fewer with less conflicts.

#### **5.4 Impact of the Implementation of Victorian Ideal to the African Situation**

With the execution of colonial land policies the Aembu no longer had the luxury of communal land ownership. The British colonial masters recommended and executed policies that ensured land was divided among the people according to their villages and current locations that they occupied, a process that was carried out through the imposed colonial chiefs and headmen. After the division, each person was expected to put a clear demarcation, *Mûkûmbû*. The people did this by planting live or dry fences on their portions of land. This in itself broke the communalism that previously existed as people helped each other to plant, weed and harvest when there was no individually owned land (Kivogo O I, 2021).

An 81 years old male respondent, Kamunjiga (O I, 2021) stated that the Europeans forced the Aembu into forced labor that was done in different parts of the country. The Aembu were taken to work in European farms in Murang'a, Juja and other places so as to raise money to pay taxes, (*Kûthûkûma*). The men were the ones recruited into forced labour and the women were left taking care of the homes. As they marched to Kikuyuland on foot to the European plantations, they carried *Kîmere*, porridge, to drink on the way and went as far as the coast. When these men were released from European labor, they returned to their homes to resume normal family lives.

This practice was an extension of the Victorian ideal that was propagated by the British where men tackled hard jobs and provided for the family as the female folk did house chores and took care of the children. The ideal was productively executed in Europe but the Kenyan model only served to preserve women and girls from the harshness of forced manual labor while exposing them to psychological and emotional trauma when their menfolk went away only to return several months later or never to return at all. The women became burdened with bringing up families under scarce resources alongside persevering the brutality that colonial officers meted on subject people. The family value of communalism was destroyed as every family now had other civic and family responsibilities to execute like some members going

to far off land to get money for taxes and upkeep. Communalism was also destroyed as many members would be away from the village life serving European interests.

### **5.5 Evolution of the Marriage Process in the Preservation of Traditional Family Values**

Family values were a product of a successfully planned and executed marriage union. Among the Aembu the foundation of family values, the marriage was not a process taken lightly. It was systematic and involved three phases through which a solid union would be built between different people involved as elaborated in detail by a 82 year old male respondent, (Mutwiri (O.I, 2021). The first phase was to request for friendship, (*kûria ûthoni*). When a man had identified his bride, he would inform his parents. They would thereafter organise a visit to the girl's parents. Five to ten trusted and close relatives would attend. The agenda was to report the love relationship. With the coming of colonialism young men and women were no longer restricted by the strict traditional laws of paying bride price before marrying and some would agree and move in together. This was known as *gûkîria* and the young man intending to legalise the marriage, would go to officially report. Among the gifts brought, *mûratina* wine had to be present. The young man could be accepted or rejected. Rejection would usually be due to family ties or mere unwillingness of the girl's parents to get associated with the family because of a previous incident of blood spilling, *Njaviû*, incidences of premature death, stealing, abnormal diseases or genetically related conditions.

If accepted, the following was requested for:

*Nthenge ya Ngusu-* a He-goat to be eaten by the girl's brothers and friends to appease them. Going forward, they would provide the man somewhere to sit when he visited. *Nthenge ya Mûvîrîga*, a He-goat to be eaten by the clan. *Mvarika ya gûtongoreria nthenge-* A she goat to lead the he-goats. This remains in the homestead. *Ndûrûme*, a male sheep. Only if the girl had a baby prior to this negotiation.

This phase ended there with the man's family having now been accepted as *kanyanya*, in-law and they set a date for the next phase. The second phase is known as slaughtering, *kûthînja*. On this day, the man brings the aforementioned items. On this

occasion, he had to take with him enough *mûratina* wine alongside the men to slaughter the animals.

The meat was divided as follows:

One front leg is taken to the girl's first born uncle on the mother's side.

The man getting a wife is given one front leg, *gûcokerua guoko*, for appreciation. The woman getting married is also given some meat, *nthio*, the buttocks. Hide legs and *ngunguro* are eaten by women. Skinners leave generous flesh on the skin to be extracted and eaten by village uncircumcised boys. Old men, *athuri* eat the liver, lungs, spleen, all the soft parts and the ribs. Cooks may taste the kidneys for salt as they cook. Young men, *anake* eat the neck. Intestines are shared. The slaughter men take an unnoticeable piece from every part. This is cooked as *ûthînji*. There's a special way the chest is skinned so as to leave a small skin. The chest is eaten by the girl's father. He's also given the testicles and the penis, *mûraagi*. The man intending to marry only took the best, fattest, castrated he-goat to his in-laws. Otherwise, he could be fined. The *ndûrûme*, male sheep is eaten later by the mother and father of the girl. At this point *ûthoni* or a marriage relationship was officially initiated.

The third phase of dowry negotiations, *kwarîrîria rûraio*. This could be done on the day of slaughtering. A team of select men from both sides enter into a prepared room for the negotiations. The following compulsory items were requested:

Fifteen goats, two cows, two bulls, a huge he-goat for lowering the bushes for the goats to eat, *Kîthembe kîa ûkî*, twenty liters of honey, *Mvuva inyanya cia mûratina*, to mean eight twenty-litre Jerry cans of *mûratina* wine, The girl's father coat, walking stick and a hat, mother's dress, head scarf, two lessos and pullover and two blankets.

In addition to the items requested above, a huge water tank and a *thavuria*, aluminium cooking pot would be asked for. Since these changes in dowry payment and wedding were part of the evolution after the coming of Christianity, it was noted that those interested in a church wedding were to buy full wedding suit for the parents. The man would also cater for other costs associated with church wedding. He however was not expected to pay everything in full at once. When he eventually finished paying, his

first born son is entitled to a cow from his mother's parents or their representatives, *Ng'ombe ya ndumbutho*, and he should carry a goat as he goes to receive his cow.

A female respondent, Wanginda (O I, 2021) fully agreed with the sentiments of Mutwiri and further adds that all the above occasions were accompanied by *ûcûrû wa mûkio*, gruel, potatoes mashed with cereals and vegetables, *nyenyi cia njûgû* among other Embian assorted delicacies. *Mûratina* wine is only served to responsible adults in the evening where the more the supply the merrier the party was. Song and dance could erupt at any instance. Everybody would go home happy and arrangements to come and pick the daughter unceremoniously through waylaying, capture and delivery to the groom's house would be executed. This communal involvement in marriage ensured few instances of divorce as it was seen to be embarrassing to break a marriage after taking the entire community through the rigorous process.

### **5.6 Disruption of Traditional Family Values during Colonialism**

Ubani (2007) observes that among the Igbo of Nigeria it was the parent's duty to get a marriage partner for their son or daughter and do all marriage preparations. The sons and daughter getting married were only supposed to be present and obey the decisions of their parents. Founding a family was therefore a communal responsibility where all members living or dead were involved. This made the couple to avoid all collisions that could lead to the end of their marriage and the community too offered support in terms of marital guidance to sustain family units from breaking down. This situation changed due to cultural evolution, men started being responsible for finding their spouses in which case there were mistakes witnessed when the enormous responsibility got bestowed upon the young inexperienced youths.

This in Ubani's opinion has led to high rates of divorce and single parenthood in Africa, a situation that was rare in the traditional African families. Sykinner (2015) supports this assertion by noting that the western culture brought a change on dressing that leaves women half naked in many African towns exposing them to male lust, rape and exposure to diseases. Under such circumstances when a woman falls pregnant, the man responsible known or unknown is likely not to take care of the resultant child and the woman ends up a single parent for the child. The two authors observe that these two changes have brought family dynamics of divorce and single parenthood among

the Africans. This similar state of affairs was recorded as present in Embu North and increased immensely during the colonial period and even after as observed by a female respondent Wanginda (O I, 2021).

Though the taking of local brew, *tembo* was a common social activity among the Aembu prior to colonialism, during the colonial period it became the most abused drink. KNA/DC/EBU/3/4 records that there was a directive given to chief Mbogori and chief Kiambati to ensure control of the vice in their locations of Ngandoni and Njuri since it was noted that even on early mornings it was possible to find even women hopelessly intoxicated with the excuse that life was difficult with the new colonial order. Some of the stressed out puppet chiefs had also become addicted to the drink and it was difficult for them to govern. D.R Crampton the District Commissioner of Embu in 1925 noted that at a Local Native Council meeting a resolution was passed that forbid women and members of certain “Rikas” from drinking the fermented liquor and prescribed penalties for the breach of the law. This was arrived at because both the young and old, men and women were finding solace in alcoholic intoxication due to the nature of the things that were happening around them with colonialism. This shift in behaviour largely affected the traditional family values as family members became reckless and morality was especially difficult to uphold with the new changes in the African social, economic and political ways of doing things. The culture was evolving into a situation of disorder and the Europeans had to work very hard and quickly to stabilize the family set up and salvage the African family values of the Aembu.

Ngari and Mbuko (O I, 2021) note that the Aembu abhorred sexual relationships outside of marriage. An adulterous person, *Kîthûngîrîri* was considered not to have a conscience as he deliberately hurt others, hence the saying, *Kîthûngîrîri gîtiicî nguû ya mwana*. Missionarism started the gospel of salvation where a priest, a pastor or a male clergy in the process of evangelization would listen to people’s wives’ marital distresses in the guise of religious consultation and prayer to solve their problems and would end up having sexual relations with them. One woman from Ruguru-Ngandori was said to have gone through this and even sired a daughter out of such a situation, with a white clergy man from a mission church. Another Embu man married his sister, a *mûgiro* previously unheard of in Embu land, and since the colonial power did

not incorporate disciplinary structures that would cater for such misconduct, the elders had to let the matter go as the only thing they could do was to chase the two out of Embu land. The couple was accommodated by missionaries in Kikuyu land where they received shelter and managed to live. Were it in the olden days, the two were ripe for the punishment of being stuffed in a *Mwatû* and rolled off a cliff to drown in River Ruringazi.

These two instances show that colonialism served to disrupt traditional family values that the Aembu had held on for centuries and replaced them with their own systems that did little to shield family values from erosion and negative interference.

The Europeans disrupted the Aembu economic life that shaped the values of hard work, resilience and ensured families thrived. The Aembu previously undertook several economic activities like agriculture, animal husbandry, fishing, bee keeping and barter trade. The colonialists brought land adjudication, meaning there was no more communal hunting, fishing, farming or cattle keeping with land being made individual or state property. Thumi, (O I, 2021) contends that the Aembu men started participating in trade like the Akamba neighbours with some going as far as the Kenyan Indian Ocean Coast where they bought beads, porcelain and other commodities as they sold those from Embu land like honey, columbus monkey skins, ivory and tanned leather from animals. This was also due to the money economy without which family life was difficult to sustain. This new way of earning a livelihood disrupted the family value of oneness and communalism and replaced it with individualism and self-centeredness that was beforehand not witnessed in family set ups in Embu North.

The colonial forms of administration of justice neutralised and slowly replaced the Embu system of councils of elders and organised social groupings like *Mîvîrîga*. Ngige (O I, 2021) posited that during the colonial period *Mîvîrîga* persisted to handle matters like coming together for rites of passage, but the more important and weightier matters were only handled by European established judicial system through the law courts. This increased social crimes since it took time for some heinous crimes to be investigated and justice served. Cases of child negligence by parents,

abandonment of own family, violence, stealing, rape and murder became commonplace among the Aembu which had not been witnessed before.

Imprisonment of offenders was also a new scenario that robbed the families of their members. This was not welcomed as a means of punishment because the elders' argued, if an offender is a man who killed a brother and got jailed for a lifetime, it is to mean, the family loses two brothers at a go, one to death and the other to jail. The man who had killed was not to benefit anyone by being jailed, but if he had been allowed to give two bulls as blood wealth to the family of the deceased, then some loss would have been recompensed. KNA/DC/EBU/3/2 in support of this assertion records that in 1912 the old Kiamas' were reconstituted and given a certain measure of power by the government. The principal role of the Kiamas was to hear and adjudicate on civil claims among the natives. They were also granted criminal powers but not easily exercised. There was no doubt that the Kiamas were unprogressively corrupt and lacking in the essentials of justice as it is understood by Europeans.

The Embu Kiama was disbanded in 1923 and a new one was constituted to sit for litigation once in a month. It was further noted from the archival sources that the Kiamas frequency of meeting was reduced to once in a month as the European court system took root. The District Magistrate Court recorded the number of civil cases to have increased from eight to twenty-one from 1923 to 1926. The judicial system of the Europeans was therefore seen to impair administration of justice, and was inferior to the structures previously put up by the Aembu councils. This is because the Aembu elders felt that the Kiama was being disabled cunningly over false allegations by Europeans, with the motive of making them lose credibility and thereby pave way for the "more just and efficient" European judicial system. It was however evident that civil cases were going up in the absence of the Aembu judicial structures.

### **5.7 Colonialism on Kinship Ties and Promotion of Individualism**

With the coming of westernization, family life among the Aembu became an individual affair. During the colonial period every man stood for himself and his immediate family. This was because of the disintegration of the social-economic, political and religious structures and practices that brought people together. Nyakio (O I, 2021) observes that the rites of passage like the elaborate circumcision

ceremonies for girls were threatened and this meant people would not meet often unless under very special circumstances during the colonial period. With scarce resources, sharing became difficult.

Divisions started among the people due to the new ways of life like change in religion and introduction of education. There are those who followed the missionary and colonial recommendations and took their children to receive western education, others became Christians and abandoned traditional religion, did not subject their daughters to clitoridectomy, used western medicine, food and clothing and were consequently shunned by those who decided to stick with their traditional ways of family life. This divide made the Aembu to be individualistic in the sense that when a given family became westernized and their neighbour traditional, there was little commonality that would bring them together. Again with individual land ownership a person would fence their land with a hedge and this isolation further fuelled individualism. One was able to plant what they wished and use their land as they decided without communal involvement that existed there before.

Kiverege (O I, 2021) asserts that some of the Aembu were deployed by the British to other places as workers or administrators. This scenario led to the growth of small towns. There were some people who went and established residences in towns and left the rural areas and their relatives. In these new settlements in where the Aembu stayed, they lived with people from other neighboring areas which further isolated them from the communalism with fellow Aembu. In the towns every person was concerned with their immediate family and personal issues and this further made them individualistic.

KNA/DC/EBU/3/2 indicated that the Kigari Mission Station was occupied by Dr. and Mrs Crawford in September 1910. Dr. Crawford retired in 1913 and the mission was closed until Rev. J. Comely and Mrs Comely arrived in 1915. The mission school had an attendance averaging around 50. Teachers were also being trained at Kigari as there were few educators. Elementary medical services were also rendered but there was not a qualified medical practitioner there.



By 1927 only Rev. J. Comely and Miss Wyat carried out all the work at the center. But Rev. J. Comely' uncompromising attitude about female circumcision had made many to desert studies and religion by 1936. A teacher, Ndegwa son of Njigoya had been sentenced to two years with hard labour under the penal code for his name was found to be in records indicating that he was part of the Executive Committee of the Kikuyu Central Association. This did not go well with the local people who felt the punishment was too punitive. These events added to shortage of personnel in the mission schools, mismanagement and very limited finances meant that many of the Aembu children who went to acquire western education ended up dropping out and going back to their homes.

Kiverege (O I, 2021) further notes that missionary education further widened the gap between the literate and illiterate among the Aembu. Education served to create separate social classes of the learned who felt more superior to the majority uneducated masses. Parents with mission educated children encouraged them to mingle with those of their own kind. This broke the oneness previously existing among the people. Westernization led to permissiveness in society and this ultimately destroyed family values. With the responsibility of guiding the youth being left to the parents and no longer a communal affair, the young educated youth were free to exercise sexual vices without abandon because they were mostly out of their parent's surveillance. They aped what they saw on television and from their peers. The advices and moral guidance given by the old grandparents and elder members in the society lost its space in the new social order. Even after the achievement of independence in 1963 and the consequent departure of the British, society was already too set in the new ways to go back to traditional moral values. Western education exposed the ones who received it to cultural vices and sexual impurity through engagement in homosexuality, prostitution, premarital sex and adultery which were previously unheard of among the Aembu community.

Inversely, western education also empowered the Aembu into better ways of life with more enlightenment. The age at which girls were traditionally married went up as more women pursued education and delayed the age at which they got into marriage or child bearing. Family life was therefore thrown into disarray as the colonial situation was quite unstable. This situation did not however change even with Kenya

achieving independence and people became more individualistic. As such, family matters became a more private affair with only the concerned persons participating and executing family values that they deemed okay with their set of beliefs.

### **5.8 Care and Concern for the Aged and Vulnerable During the Colonial Period**

Mutitu (O I, 2021) asserts that during the early years of colonialism and missionary establishment the Aembu families and relatives supported each other and especially the old people. In the fear of curses, relatives supported the elderly who were unable to support themselves and in turn the caregivers got blessed by the old. If the old were neglected or abandoned they would utter curses to the family members and this resulted to death or madness. Since the old people held wealth which was accumulated from their youthful days, they would leave word upon their death on inheritance of this property. This is to mean the young people or the able bodied members would be careful not to mistreat the elderly lest they got denied the inheritance.

When an elder became too old to perform normal house chores their children who were in most cases grownups would make a wooden *Njaga* (plural) or *Rwaga* (singular) which was a portable wooden bed. On it they would lay soft animal skins and use this makeshift bed to bring their old parent or relative to sunbathe then later in the day when the sun went down get them inside the hut where the elder would be bathed, oiled, warmly dressed and well fed, that is *kûvirwa gwota riûa, kûvirwa kîrururî, gûthambua, kûvakwa maguta, gwîkîrwa kigoorî na kûvewa îrio*. This would be done until the elderly died in dignity. If for instance this was the case of an elderly woman, her daughters or sons would not execute some of these duties and they would identify a neighbour of the same *mûvîrîga* who would especially bathe, oil and dress her, so that her nakedness is not seen by their child, *atîkoonwe njaga kana ndûûrû ni ciana ciake*. Food given to such people was supposed to be nutritious and easy to eat, commonly known as *mûcûûi*.

Sgd. I. R. Gillespie, the District Commissioner of Embu in 1938 in his report indicated that Mrs and Ms Comely had opened an orphanage at Kigari in 1925. The Local Native Council voted money for the erection of the building to house this orphanage in 1931 and later grants were made to assist with the running of the

orphanage. In 1937 Rev. J. Comely and Mrs and Miss Comely went on a holiday and the orphanage had to be closed down. The natives of the district were very appreciative of the work done and hoped that it would be possible to reopen the orphanage at a later date. Towards the end of 1937 Miss H. Comely opened a small Maternity Home in the orphanage building with assistance from the Local Native Council. A small grant was made in 1938 to assist the working of the Maternity Home (KNA/DC/EBU/9/1). The emergence of an orphanage among the Aembu meant that orphaned children were vulnerable and not taken good care of by relatives a situation that the British missionaries tried unsuccessfully to address.

Before the British came to Embu vulnerable groups of people like these were communally cared for, but with the new colonial order and individualism, it was hard for many people to burden themselves with care for the aged, orphaned, disabled and other such people. Availing maternity services was a very productive move by the missionaries, but it was short-lived thereby unreliable as European personnel was inadequate and not fully present at the station.

Gitonga (O I, 2021) observes that during the later years of colonialism people started moving to work in far off places and sometimes if a family had an elderly relative, they would hire someone to be left taking care of the old. With more entrenchment of western family values the initial care and concern given to the old became diluted as grown children dispersed to different areas and left their old parents with fewer people to take care of them. There was also improved medical care and social facilities accorded to the old from the mission stations which made the old enjoy a fulfilling life. Some mission stations in Embu North like the Catholic Mission station created homes for the aged after the colonial period where the neglected old people or the old people whose children were busy and away from home would take their parents to avoid the burden of neglecting them in the rural village alone. Many of the families however took care of their old relatives either before, during and after the colonial period.

Munyi, (O I, 2021) pinpointed that adult children who worked far away like in Nairobi would send money to their parents for upkeep due to the necessities brought by the money economy. It was however noted throughout the oral interviews that best

care and concern for the aged was accorded depending on the amount of property the elderly persons had and how well they had conducted themselves and the care they had accorded their family members when they were young and able-bodied. The elderly people especially men who had been negligent and violent in their adult life and had unleashed terror on the family members faced much ridicule in old age and would be neglected, abandoned, denied food or given too little or unpalatable and generally treated with contempt until they died. This too went for women who ran away from their matrimonial homes and left young children with their husbands. In old age the adult children and relatives would repay them with little or no care and concern. Since everyone knew old age was inevitable, there was deliberate effort to do good, be hardworking, treat other family members honourably to avoid a miserable old age.

Since some rich elderly people had properties like goats, sheep and farmlands their children and relatives would take the responsibility of maintaining the property upon themselves. Gitonga (O I, 2021) confessed that his grandsons used to clean his house, clothes, cook for him and take care of his coffee and tea farms on his behalf because his health and strength had deteriorated due to old age. This assertion was supported by another male respondent, Munyi (O I, 2021) who affirmed to having helped his father when his health had failed till he died.

## **5.9 Conclusion**

This chapter has the persuasion that the British missionaries and colonialists greatly altered the traditional family values of the Aembu progressively and retrogressively. The early years of missionary work and colonialism were used in establishment of physical structures for the mission centres and administrative forts that were to be used by the British. There was also laying down of a framework on which missionary work and administration was to be executed. There was appointment of local chiefs who would be used to implement colonial policies in the different locations that became their areas of jurisdiction. The local chiefs were in charge of organizing people who would participate in manual labour like building roads and bridges, clearing marshy areas and vegetation to create space for government work, go to war or conquests in other parts of the country. Missionary work was begun from 1909 in Embu North after the first missionaries arrived in 1906. Services like education,

religion and health were made available to the people and the missionaries together with the local chiefs ensured the Aembu attended the mission to receive the services. This new order changed family life among the Aembu as the people had to change many of their age old customs and adopt western culture.

With the money economy and introduction of taxes, communalism disintegrated with mass movement of people from the villages to search for employment and some income. This situation destabilized family values, especially the male patriarchy on which most of the family code of conduct and values were anchored. The forceful abandonment of traditional family practices also negatively impacted family values as it took time for the Africans to abandon their values and adopt new ones that were mainly found detrimental to the growth and sustenance of families.

It was also concluded that there was positive impact as the African family values evolved to ape those of the British. New changes were introduced that greatly improved family life in the colony. In the quest of the British to change some social, economic and religious aspects of the African culture, it became quite difficult to adopt to the new order of life and the Africans ended up with a merger of the two cultures. They adopted the good in the western culture and merged it with that which rhymed from the African side. This is why some families who became Christianised still incorporated aspects of African religion in their worship. They would practice polygamy alongside Christianity, as much as the missionaries expected them to be monogamous. The Africans on this note resulted to forming their own churches where they were free to merge African and Western values.

Some Africans who received western education also changed their ways of life and spoke a new language, English, knew how read and write, adopted European dressing, eating habits and social values. This group was distinct from the rest of the Africans who held on to traditional African ways of life. With time, the Africans managed to also abandon retrogressive cultural practices like female circumcision, oppression of women and twin murder which served to improve family life greatly. This evolution in values also improved the quality of life among the Aembu of Embu North.

## CHAPTER SIX

### ASPECTS OF PRESERVED FAMILY VALUE SYSTEMS 1920-1965

This chapter examines the family values that passed the test of time and were preserved from 1920 to 1965. The Aembu people maintained these family values before and during colonialism. For the Aembu, these family values that are evident in their cultural traditions and practices, serve to explain their unique African identity and were held in high regard from 1920-1965. They include circumcision (especially female circumcision), the culture of dowry payment, naming system, hospitality, and polygamy among others.

#### 6.1 Circumcision

Aembu boys and girls were culturally mandated to be circumcised. Boys were circumcised to graduate from boyhood to manhood and demonstrate their readiness for marriage. Mucangi (O I, 2021) points out the fact that the Aembu circumcised both boys and girls to usher them into marriage which every person had to undergo so as to ensure both familial and community continuity. Circumcision would be held any time in the year except two months before the long rains.

Traditionally, boys were circumcised between the ages of 18 and 22 years. When it was time for the boy to be circumcised he would show his readiness by paying a goat called *mbûri ya nduo*, the goat of circumcision. The boys would be taken to Rupingazi River on a cold morning and dipped in the water to ensure pain reduction during the cut. Gicovi (O I, 2021) posits that the circumcisor, *mûtani*, would pull the initiates' foreskin and cut it off with a *kaviû*, a sharp knife after which the organ would be wrapped in banana leaves and fiber to stop bleeding and heal. After that the initiate would be led back to his parents' compound and live there as he heals in a specially built hut under the care of a specially appointed sponsor or supporter. In seclusion the initiate got education on family and community secrets and general conduct and expectations as a grown up.

Missionaries were able to increasingly oppose the traditional initiation ceremonies. Various aspects of the ceremonies were seen as obscene and degrading. Young male converts were encouraged to have the operation carried out in mission hospitals and dispensaries. This was not fought to a large scale by the Aembu who felt

that it was not a total overhaul of their traditional practice. In as much as having their specialists conduct the operation on the streams of *kavingaci* was their best practice, they were glad that male circumcision was to continue, albeit in a hospital setup with European medics. During colonial period the rite of male circumcision became increasingly westernized as the Christianized families took their sons to hospital and dispensaries for the operation. The non-Christian families continued with their traditional rites with little interruption from colonial administrators. This situation did not change after 1963 when Kenya gained independence. It was noted that the Aembu were comfortable with the fact that male circumcision progressed and the accompanying rites were not greatly tampered with by the Europeans. Though there could be variations in the way of initiation after 1965, male initiation is still a preserved culture valued by the Aembu families.

Besides, among the Aembu, female circumcision was preserved as a critical component of initiating young women. Werimba (O I, 2021), a female respondent from Nginda, asserts that girls underwent clitoridectomy between the ages of 14 and 18 years before the first menstruation. Those who failed to be initiated could only be married as a second wife, a less prestigious position. During the initiation ceremony both boys and girls were expected to prove their courage and thereby their readiness to accept adult responsibilities, by persevering extreme physical pain without crying or flinching. After the cut the initiate would heal in a hut under the supervision of supporter or sponsor. Parents whose sons and or daughters were circumcised were held in high regard and felt prestigious.

In 1925, the British colonial administration and the Church Missionary Society (CMS) congregation representative found it hard to forbid FGM operations (Ambler, 1989). Due to the extent of resistance from the Africans, some missionaries suggested that girls could also undergo the operation in mission hospitals which involved the surgical removal of the clitoris and some portions of labia (KNA DC/EBU/1/2). However, after one brief experiment carried out by Anglican missionaries in Kabare of Gichugu, it became apparent that the operation was a brutal bodily mutilation and as such it became totally condemned. From then onwards the Protestant missionaries were unable to accept a hospital operation for girls. Murray (1976) also observes that this issue came to a heated climax in what came to be known as the "female

circumcision controversy". The C M S and the Anglican Church stood rather apart from the other missions who partly accepted it. They made it a condition that for one to achieve church membership they were to reject female circumcision.

The District Local Councils consisting of chiefs and prominent local men came up with by-laws regulating female initiation. They established regulations which demanded that only one operation by a trained and registered woman was permitted per girl. In addition, the initiators were supposed to be licensed and go through regular refresher courses. Failure to adhere to the new rules attracted fines and withdrawal of license. However, the restrictions on acceptable extent of incisions on female were openly defied. Colonial chiefs admitted that it was impossible to outlaw female circumcision practice owing to its strong Embu cultural roots (Embu District, LNC Minutes, 17.7.1925). The admission by colonial chiefs implied that FGM was a practice deeply rooted among the Aembu who were determined to preserve it.

Due to the desire to defend their custom, the Aembu people embraced the support of Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) leaders. KCA leaders were advocating for rejection of missionary teachings, specifically those against abandonment of African customs such as the female circumcision practice (KNA DC/EBU/1/2). Muriuki (1974) similarly observes that KCA leaders denounced elders and senior chiefs who did not support initiation and in retaliation, British officials curtailed the activities of KCA and Christian separatists because of their dangerous implications.

In 1926 the new Embu Local Native Council had passed a by-law limiting the extent of the operation and making registration of the operators compulsory. In 1931, the CMS representative, J. Comely, enforced a pastoral letter from the Anglican bishop advocating for outlawing of the practice of female initiation. The letter required disciplining of parents who allowed their female children to be initiated (Murray, 1978). In January 1931 Reverend Comely got the full support of the Kigari Pastorate Committee and a resolution was passed and read out in Kigari and at the outreach churches; that any communicant allowing female circumcision should be put under discipline; that candidates for baptism and confirmation should agree to put away female circumcision. In response to the CMS forbidding female initiation, the school went on strike. There was a drop in enrolment of students at Kigari mission station



from 1551 in 1930 to 289 in 1931, and the numbers kept on declining every month (KNA DC/EBU/1/2). The church emptied and within a short time the dissidents were establishing independent schools and conducting prayers separately. This was followed by conflicts between the mission adherents, independent Christians and non-Christians. Majority of the Africans verbally abused and harassed mission loyalists who, in turn, feared for their lives. In one incident, a mission elder's son recalls being advised by his father to run away from home for fear of attack by angry local people.

At the time when Reverend Comely and the Kigari elders had agreed against female circumcision, the District Commissioner Lambert was making an attempt to further modify the act to make it medically less harmful. He was also seeking to encourage performance of the operation in infancy or early childhood, as was the custom among some other Kenya peoples. Kigari elders were members of the Local Native Council, with one leading chief being an Anglican and they were totally against any form of female circumssion and very loyal supporters of Reverend Comely. There were angry clashes between Reverend Comely and District Commissioner Lambert, and between Lambert and one of the Kigari elders who was an LNC member. Arthur, the Christian chief, was put under church discipline for having followed Lambert's directives on supporting female circumcision in his area of jurisdiction (KNA DC/EBU/1/2).

The female circumcision conflict granted chiefs an opportunity to be hostile and aggressive to mission followers who were reluctant to be submissive to their authority. For instance, chiefs begun to prosecute CMS adherents on the grounds of desecrating local sacred groves. Later, the colonial administration discovered that the charges were fabricated. After futile attempts of fighting against female initiation, the Anglican hierarchy allowed the Embu Mission to compromise on the practice (Murray, 1978). The compromise allowed the CMS to enjoy its stay in Embu, the privilege of rebuilding an outstation and mission schools which started to compete favorably with African Independent Schools

With the Africans forbidden from the practice, several left the mission church and this ushered in the birth of the Independent Church and Schools Movement. Near Kigari came up the headquarters of the National Independent Church of Africa under Bishop Willie Nyagah, whose father left the Anglican Church during the controversy in 1936.

Other churches in the area were the Salvation Army which was introduced by migrant workers returning from Nairobi in the late 1920's. Polygamists and those who continued to circumcise were able to become members.

The dispute mostly affected the daughters of Christian families. When all these conflicting controversies surrounding female circumcision erupted, most of the Christian elders at Kigari Mission were young married men with young children. Those who stood with Comely remained firm, sometimes under severe attack from the community, which caused them to form a rather closed Christian settlement near the mission. The wives supported the decision of their husbands and from the date of the decree onward no daughters of this group were circumcised. The first girl to marry uncircumcised was one born in 1925 although another report mentioned a girl born as early as 1914 (Murray, 1978). He further observed that circumcision continued strong in the area as a whole, and in 1972 a survey made showed that 60% of Embu girls at secondary school had undergone circumcision.

## **6.2 System of Naming**

Besides, the Aembu retained their family tradition of naming. Ndwiga (O.I, 2021) explains that the Aembu social life is seen in the way they name children. Many Aembu named their newborn children after relatives who were either alive or long dead to create continuity in the culture and behavior. Even with the coming of the British, majority of the Aembu retained their traditional names in total disregard of the Christian names. The missionaries put up spirited effort to ensure that during church rituals like baptism one was given a Christian name. the local people would receive the names publicly, but the name would be rarely used and so it lost the relevance. The Aembu would also have several Kiembu names for each person to deliberately ensure that the Christian names were not relevant in daily usage. Ndwiga observes that he was given a Christian name Geoffrey when he underwent baptism at Kigari mission station, but the family members preferred calling him Ndwiga wa Muthathai and not George. The only time he would have the name used was while at the mission school or church, or when his nonchristian peers were mocking him for joining the missionary church.

This practice made the Aembu have their cultural aspect of retaining Kiembu names in a period when their indigenous names were faced with erosion from the western culture. The reason for this resistance was also because the Kiembu names resonated better with character of the local people and the circumstances and occasions under which one was named were authentically important to them. Even after Kenya gained independence from the British, the Aembu who had converted into Christianity persisted in giving their young children more of the Kiembu names than the European names.

### **6.3 Dowry Payment and Marriage Process**

Furthermore, the Aembu managed to preserve, to a large extent, the traditional family value of dowry payment. Marriage was perceived as incomplete and illegal if the prerequisite of dowry is not met. Mutwiri (O I, 2021), discussed the marriage process and dowry negotiations in detail and observes that there were three mandatory phases through which a Kiembu marriage union would go through. There was requesting for friendship, (*kûria ûthoni*) where a man accompanied by his relatives would inform the girls family of his intention to marry their daughter. If consent was granted he would be asked to give out a number of items that served as bride price, after which he would take the girl to his home and start family life. This process took several weeks and there was a lot of communal involvement to establish a marriage. There would be learning to be undertaken by the engaged couple which was facilitated by the more experienced members of the community in marital matters. The Aembu held onto these practices since they believed that the deep communal involvement would ensure the family unit would survive any marital distress and life events flowed from the stable family unit seamlessly. With the coming of the missionaries, the marriage process took a different direction where the most necessary part of a marriage was the church wedding. The Aembu albeit converting to christianity, persisted in their cultural method of establishing a family. Some would execute all the prerequisites of the traditional marriage process and after this, inform the church of their willingness to hold a church wedding.

Wanginda (O I, 2021), similarly observes that under no circumstances would young Aembu intending to marry would launch their desire with the missionary church first. They first followed the established traditional structures and after bride price was paid

and all marital advice dispensed, the church would be involved to conduct a wedding ceremony for the couple. Wanginda also noted that so long as the two parties involved in a marriage had been okeyed by their parents through payment of bridewealth, they could live as husband and wife without a church wedding. When the couple was not recognized by church as lawfully wedded, they would not be accorded any leadership roles in the church, a situation that led to many Aembu moving out of missionary churches and either starting or joining independent churches.

The above detailed description underlines the significance of dowry payment. Fortunately, westernization and Christianity did not challenge the payment of bride wealth and accompanying ceremonies. That is why the culture persisted even with the end of colonialism and after.

#### **6.4 Polygamy**

The Aembu did preserve the esteemed concept of polygamy. Chesaina (1997) highlights the significance of patriarchy and justifies polygamy regardless of reaction from women. In one of his proverbs, he explains that there is no cock which serves only one hen. Hence, a man could marry as many women as he could. For instance, Njagi wa Mûthagato had five wives before the arrival of British imperialists while other men had married at least two women.

The idea of polygamy among the Aembu is supported by Njoka (O I, 2021) who asserts that the Embu men were mainly polygamous and married more than one wife. The reasons for polygamy were diverse. Some married the second and subsequent wives to feel prestigious and muscular, to have many children who provided the home with enough labor force, to diversify genes perceived to be superior, to neutralize the losses that would be experienced incase a curse was executed that would kill all the children sired by a particular husband and wife, to have sons born incase one woman only birthed girls who were perceived to be a less prestigious of the two genders, or for a man to have children incase the wife was barren, a witch, lazy, disrespectful or had other socially unacceptable traits. There was a common phrase among the men in support of polygamy, that “*guti njamba ya mwera umwe*” meaning, there is no cock that only relates intimately with one hen, or rather, a male should have many wives as naturally witnessed in other members of the animal kingdom.

Mwinga (O I,2021) agrees with this assertion by noting that the missionaries were very keen to ensure that the members or congregants of the Kigari CMS church did not engage in polygamy. The practice of monogamy was preached and endeared to the local people basing the argument from the biblical teachings of St. Paul and the new testament. As the local people gradually became literate and could read the bible on their own, they realized the missionaries were sharing parts and not the whole of the bible concept on polygamy. This they did by only using the new testament teachings to emphasize on monogamy, while ignoring great men of God like David and Solomon in the old testament who had several wives, but still very close to God. They related very well with biblical polygamous characters as it showed the Aembu men that God was okay with polygamy.

In some instances, the Aembu who persisted in practicing polygamy was excommunicated from the mission church. This did not deter the Aembu men from marrying many wives, a practice that they preserved after colonialism. Some, incensed by the constant verbal attacks by the missionaries regarding their polygamous lives opted out of the missionary church and either formed their own independent churches or joined the existing ones where they would pursue both religion and polygamy without interference.

### **6.5 Education**

The traditional African value system of the Aembu was impacted negatively and positively after the imposition of colonialism and missionary establishment. Education served to improve family life among the Aembu as it was given to children from tender ages of around ten to fifteen years. The parents through policy enforcement by chiefs and headmen ensured children were enrolled for elementary education at Kigari Mission Station, the first establishment in Embu North. Here they were taught basic literacy on reading and writing as well as hygiene, alongside receiving teachings on Christianity. The grading was from standard one to standard four. Those who passed in standard four proceeded to study at Kangaru intermediate school. As much as education after colonialism was made formal, many Aembu parents were in support of children's education whether formal or informal.

Ngembi (O I, 2021) posits that the Aembu did not entirely abandon the traditional education system which was informal in nature. Even as their children attended mission schools, the relatives would still instil values and the expected moral code of conduct. They were also taught about community expectations at all stages of their lives. After school hours, the children sat with their grandparents or parents receiving guidance on all matters pertaining their lives, their environment, how to respond to different circumstances and what not to do. This guidance ensured the young people were thoroughly guided and were able to make informed life choices in a world that presented them with cultural confusion. The departure of colonialists and missionaries did not deter the Aembu families from transmitting informal education to their children and young adults.

## **6.6 Sharing**

The Aembu people believed that sharing was the greatest way of expressing goodwill to other people. Mwinga (O.I, 2021) asserts that the Aembu people shared items as well as physical presence in cases where physical presence and moral support was necessary. The African custom of sharing was upheld and preserved by the Aembu people. Food items were supposed to be shared without much of a discussion and to be accused of being mean (*mûndû mûthunu*) with food would render one undeserving of support when such a person would require other peoples support. Greed for food was highly condemned and people were expected to be moderate with such mannerisms.

Not only did the Aembu share food, but they also shared their material properties like farm implements, cooking utensils, clothes and other household items. Children would be sent to their neighbors to borrow various items by their parents. There was evident generosity as one would rarely be denied access to a neighbor's property when in need.

Werimba (O I, 2021) opines that it's the missionaries who introduced the aspect of individualism among the Aembu. The missionaries discouraged polygamy which brought many people into one homestead. With more people endorsing monogamy, family sizes decreased considerably. There also were those Aembu who did not subscribe to the missionarism and kept off their families off missionary churches and

schools. This created two sets of lifestyles in the Aembu villages where the Christianized families isolated themselves from those who stuck to the traditional ways of life. The cherished value of sharing was tampered with as people pursued different ways of life.

Werimba also observed that this did not completely destroy the aspect of sharing among the Aembu. The people still found time to visit each other during rites of passage like birth of children, initiation ceremonies, dowry negotiations and marriages as well as death and burial of their loved ones. Due to emigration of people due to colonial labor policies people created physical distance from each other but whenever circumstances allowed the Aembu always spared time to share material and non material things.

## **6.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the African traditional family values that the Aembu community held in high regard and preserved. The Aembu traditional religion was an aspect of their family life that the Aembu struggled to preserve and this they did by proceeding with their religious activities and showing disregard to Christianity that was being propagated by the British. Polygamy was highly discouraged by the missionaries and this made some Africans who had more than one wife or intended to marry many wives to avoid the missionary center at Kigari. Despite the strong missionary and colonial pressure, the value of female circumcision remained at the heart of the Aembu. The communalism and sharing that was eminent during the many rites of passage were also being swallowed up as the British social, economic and political structures did not accommodate a communal way of doing things. Taxes for instance were payable by individuals which made the search for means of getting the money also individual with the introduction of money economy. As children were expected to attend school far from their families, men also had to leave their rural homes in search of money and to give labour for public works. Amidst all these changes the Aembu were willing to defend their cultural values with blood and sweat to an extent that the colonizers and missionaries bowed down and accommodated them. The missionaries put in great effort to endear their culture as better than the indigenous one but the more they disregarded the African culture, the more the African saw the need to fight for the survival of their own values.

**CHAPTER SEVEN**  
**SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**  
**FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

**7.1 Summary of the Findings of the Study**

This section presents a summary of the findings following the three objectives of the study. The objectives for this study were: To examine the African family value system in Embu North Sub-County, Kenya 1895 to 1920; to establish the cultural evolutions brought about by colonialism on the African family value system in Embu North Sub-County, Kenya, 1895-1965 and to assess the aspects of Aembu family value system that have been preserved from 1920 to 1965.

From the research conducted, the study established the following; the study's objective one was to examine the African family value system in Embu North Sub-County, Kenya from 1895 to 1920. In this objective, the discussion commenced with findings on the background characteristics of respondents on the context of age in which the youngest respondent was 70 years old while the oldest was 111 years old, gender, where 40 of the 50 respondents were male while 10 were female, level of education where of the 50 respondents none had attained PhD or Masters level, 7 respondents had a Bachelor's degree, 3 had a diploma, 6 had acquired education up to standard seven while 34 had no certificate, 30 of the 50 respondents interviewed hailed from Ruguru-Ngandori ward, 10 from Nginda ward while 10 were from Kirimari ward, 40 respondents were in informal employment while 10 were formerly employed and 50 respondents prescribe to Christianity as their religion. This was followed by a brief history of the Aembu people in terms of their origin, migration and settlement including their linguistic orientation, social, economic and political organization. This objective also presented findings on the African family value system of the Aembu between 1895 and 1920.

The researcher established that Aembu migrated from Ethiopia which in oral history is referred to as Tuku or Uru. From Ethiopia they moved southwards to Lorian Swamp, an area of wetlands on the Ewaso Nyiro River in Wajir, in the North Eastern province of Kenya. From Lorian swamp area the Embu moved further South to the modern areas of Tigania, then to Igembelands. They interacted with the people of Tigania and Igembe who fiercely resisted their arrival and they were once again on the move. On their southward movement they got into the land of Tharaka. The



extremely arid conditions of Tharaka and consequent famine forced them to proceed further south and they finally crossed river Thuci to Igambang'ombe. In this place they fought with the Maasai displacing them and making it their home. Due to population pressure at Igambang'ombe they dispersed once more into their modern day settlements in Embu North.

The Aembu speak the Kiembu language. The Kiembu language spoken by the Aembu is distinct in word pronunciation from other surrounding Bantu languages but it is also closely related with the languages spoken by peoples that neighbor the Aembu. The Embu regard their language as Embu proper or the original language from which their neighbors borrowed to form their languages.

The study established that the Aembu lived among themselves and had neighbors like the Mbeere, Kikuyu, Chuka and Meru neighbors. They were distinguished from these by their language, religious practices, dressing, marital customs and homestead set up. The Aembu also believed in supernatural beings. Apart from being an ancestor venerating people, they also believed in the existent of a supernatural being called *Mwene-Nyaga* (meaning the owner of the white snow of Mount Kirinyaga).

The Aembu also engaged in many rites of passage from the birth of a child, naming, initiation, marriage and death. The final rite of passage of death was not celebrated or elaborated in any way as it brought too much sorrow after the loss of a community member.

The Aembu economy was primarily based on mixed farming. They kept animals as well as cultivating their land for bananas, millet varieties and tubers like yams, cassava and arrowroots. The Aembu domesticated kept included cows, sheep and goats. The research also established that the Aembu had a well-established family value system before the advent of colonialism. Even with the coming of British missionaries and colonialists, the value system did not experience drastic changes. There was a lot of pressure to discard some familial practices like traditional religion and female circumcision, twin murder and polygamy. Despite these pressures by the new social and political order, the family values are seen to have stood the test of time from 1895 to 1920 when Kenya became a British colony.

Objective two was to establish the cultural evolutions brought about by colonialism on the African family value system in Embu North Sub-County, Kenya, 1895-1965. In this objective the process of cultural evolution in Embu North was explored from the onset of colonialism that is from the year 1920 when Kenya became a British colony to 1965, way after the British colonists' relinquished political power to the Africans in the republic. With a new social and political order established, the family set up experienced very many changes. The research found out that the social harmony, organized and competent legal structures of the traditional Aembu were interfered with and the people had to obey the weapon yielding British colonialists. The new western culture was found to have been quite enticing for many Aembu who readily accepted the British ways of life. The ones who held onto their traditional practices, received British brutality in equal measure. With the introduction of money economy, many Aembu men left their homes to search for money for taxes and basic home upkeep. This was found to have severe implications on the traditional African family values as men lost the power they previously yielded as the women now took over leadership in the family. This phenomenon encouraged women to be household heads and consequently, they were so empowered by the struggle of raising children in men's absence that it became acceptable for a woman to bring up children alone as a single parent, a situation that was not in existence before colonialism.

The research also established out that the traditional religion which was the foundation upon which many family values were anchored was tampered with and practices like sacrificing and reverence for ancestors were prohibited. The Aembu had to adopt a new religion Christianity, whose belief system and practices had no similarity with what the Aembu were used to. Women who got converted to Christianity in some instances found it difficult to live with their husbands and consequently, left their matrimonial homes to execute the new religion without interference.

Traditional family values were found to have positively evolved to the benefit of the Aembu. Emergence of western medicine greatly improved on the health of the Aembu. With better medical care infant mortality rate went down and many children born survived unlike before. Retrogressive cultural practices like twin murder were brought down and dressing was greatly improved.

Emergence of formal education also improved the lifestyles of the people where they learned new better ways of life from Western education. The process of marriage evolved significantly from what it was before the arrival of the British. The Aembu were able to carry out marriage the traditional way as well as do church weddings.

Objective three sought to assess the aspects of Aembu family value system that have been preserved from 1920 to 1965. It was noted that some traditional African family practices persisted even with the enormous pressure piled against the Aembu to drop them. The elders who represented the Africans in Local Native Councils fought intrusion against these practices as well as the general populace in Embu. Any European effort to crash the deeply rooted practices was met with utmost hostility and sabotage so severe and persistent that the British colonialists and missionaries were left with no option but to give way to the Aembu. One such practice was circumcision. Male circumcision was not as controversial as female circumcision. The missionaries did not make many amends on how the practice was done, except insisting that the physical operation be done in a health facility by a trained medical officer.

The Africans were against the fact that the traditional specialists charged with the role of circumcising young boys were being undermined and viewed as primitive and unprofessional. It was however noted that it is female circumcision stoppage that attracted so much opposition. Irrespective of how many laws and how severe they were against people caught perpetuating the act of either circumcising or presenting for circumcision girls, the Aembu persisted in defying the laws. The defiance was by boycotting attending mission centers, sometimes physically harming sympathizers of Europeans who were against the practice and going on unperturbed circumcising the girls with impunity. Finally, the missionaries and British administrators gave up the fight and both male and female circumcision continued being practiced.

The other practice that persisted was polygamy. Irrespective of how the white men condemned the practice, African men were not just about to give up. They even went ahead to open their independent African churches where they would be free to worship alongside marrying many wives.

The study also established that the practice of dowry payment and execution of a marriage did not change as much, and what was done before the coming of the white man is what was done even after the colonizers left. This was a big win for the Aembu because marriage was the very fabric on which family values were woven. The Aembu also valued education and whether it came in the form of the traditional informal or Western formal, they supported it and gave their children to the mission centers to receive education.

## **7.2 Conclusions of the Study**

From the study findings the study concludes that the Aembu people were an organized group that had its social economic and political life in order and operated a very harmonious family value system. The coming of British missionaries to Embu North and consequently establishing a mission station at Kigari meant that the Aembu would directly and first hand receive the impact of European imperialism and cultural subjugation. It was however noted that with the few British personnel available to carry out missionary work that ranged from healthcare, education and spread of Christianity, the process of westernization took several years to bear visible fruits. Secondly, the resistance put up by the Aembu in a bid to protect their family and cultural values from erosion meant the British had a difficult time implementing their vision of cultural emancipation of Africans.

The introduction of wage labor and money economy alongside the force that came with the British administrators to ensure Africans participated in public works made many Aembu men detest European labor. They had to be forcefully conscribed into government projects at the expense of being with their families. The introduction of taxation further meant that men had to leave home in search of money. This further served to disrupt and disable the African family structure. Since paying the oppressive hut tax and the poll tax was a very unwelcome practice, the embu men would run away and hide in Njukiri forest and other hideouts whenever they heard that the tax collectors or labor recruiters were coming.

It is also worth noting that the traditional Embu form of administration, the council of elders, the *Kiama* was being disabled by the Europeans slowly under the guise of being corrupt and inefficient. This was to pave way for the British based judicial

system. The Aembu felt that the new justice system was not as efficient as the traditional one that was mostly comprised of instant execution of justice.

Hence the study can conclude that the traditional family value system of the Aembu was indigenous and authentic and was impacted beginning 1895 with the coming of the British in Kenya, and more so with establishment of a mission station at Kigari. The implication of the coming of a new western culture was to be felt way after the British left the colony. The family was never the same as before, after a touch of westernization. The family fabric that closely knit the Aembu society was torn forcefully and as much as they fought to have their indigenous culture remain relevant in such a strong wind of change, it was impossible to win against a people that welded guns and more powerful weapons than theirs. The Aembu were left with no choice than to embrace reluctantly the British culture as they sacrificed several of their age old values.

### **7.3 Recommendations of the Study**

From the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made

- i. The government/legislators should develop policies that promote cultural revival to ensure the survival of family values; for example, marriage should be recognized only after the customary requirements are met to ensure parental involvement.
- ii. Cultural centers offering education on the importance of family values should be set up in rural areas to increase accessibility so that the youth can learn and see the beauty of African culture.
- iii. To provide more knowledge on the family value system, curriculum developers should incorporate this into the curriculum.
- iv. More programs promoting what is African should be introduced in the media to attract the youth to the beauty of being African.
- v. Programs aimed at educating young boys and girls on becoming mature and responsible adults should be initiated and intensified. This is especially on the absence of boys' and girls' circumcision in preparation for marriage, as was the case in traditional African society.

#### **7.4 Suggestions for Further Research**

In the process of research, unexplored areas for further research were uncovered regarding the Aembu people. Researchers can therefore conduct research in the following areas;

- i. The impact of colonialism on the family values in the post-colonial period.
- ii. The implications of the money economy on the family values among the Aembu during the colonial period.
- iii. The impact of westernization on the upbringing of boys among the Aembu people.
- iv. The role of the institution of Kiama in judicial administration among the Aembu.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX I: DATA FROM THE KENYA NATIONAL ARCHIVES

KNA/DC/EBU/3/2/ Annual report on native affairs 1911.

KNA/DC/EBU/3/ 4 political Record, Part II Divisions and locations containing a description of each division. Characteristics of the people, events of importance 1927.

KNA/DC/EBU/13 Annual report, Embu District 1934.

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KNA. PC/CP.8/1/2:DC Embu Lambert to Rev W.J Rampley, July 9, 1931.

KNA: CMS 1/637: CMS Embu logbook, Entry of October 4 1929.

KNA: DC/KBU/7/3 Standard Resolution Number 1, Circumcision of women passed by Embu Local Native Council, March 1926.

KNA: CMS 1/637: CMS Embu logbook, Comelys' entry for July 16, 1931.

KNA/Sd/. N.A. Kenyon Stanley District commissioner Embu 31st /3/1914.

KNA/Sd. D.R. Crompton District Commissioner, 1923.

KNA/DC/EBU/2/8. Mr A. P. Palmer handing over report to Mr P.G. Derrick, 1956.

KNA/DCEMB/1/14 Agricultural Department in Embu District 1956

KNA/DC/EBU/9/1. Sgd. I. R. Gillespie the District Commissioner of Embu on missions and churches, 1938-1956.

KNA DC/EBU/1/2. Embu District, AR, 1932.

KNA DC/EBU/1/2. Embu District, AR, 1933.

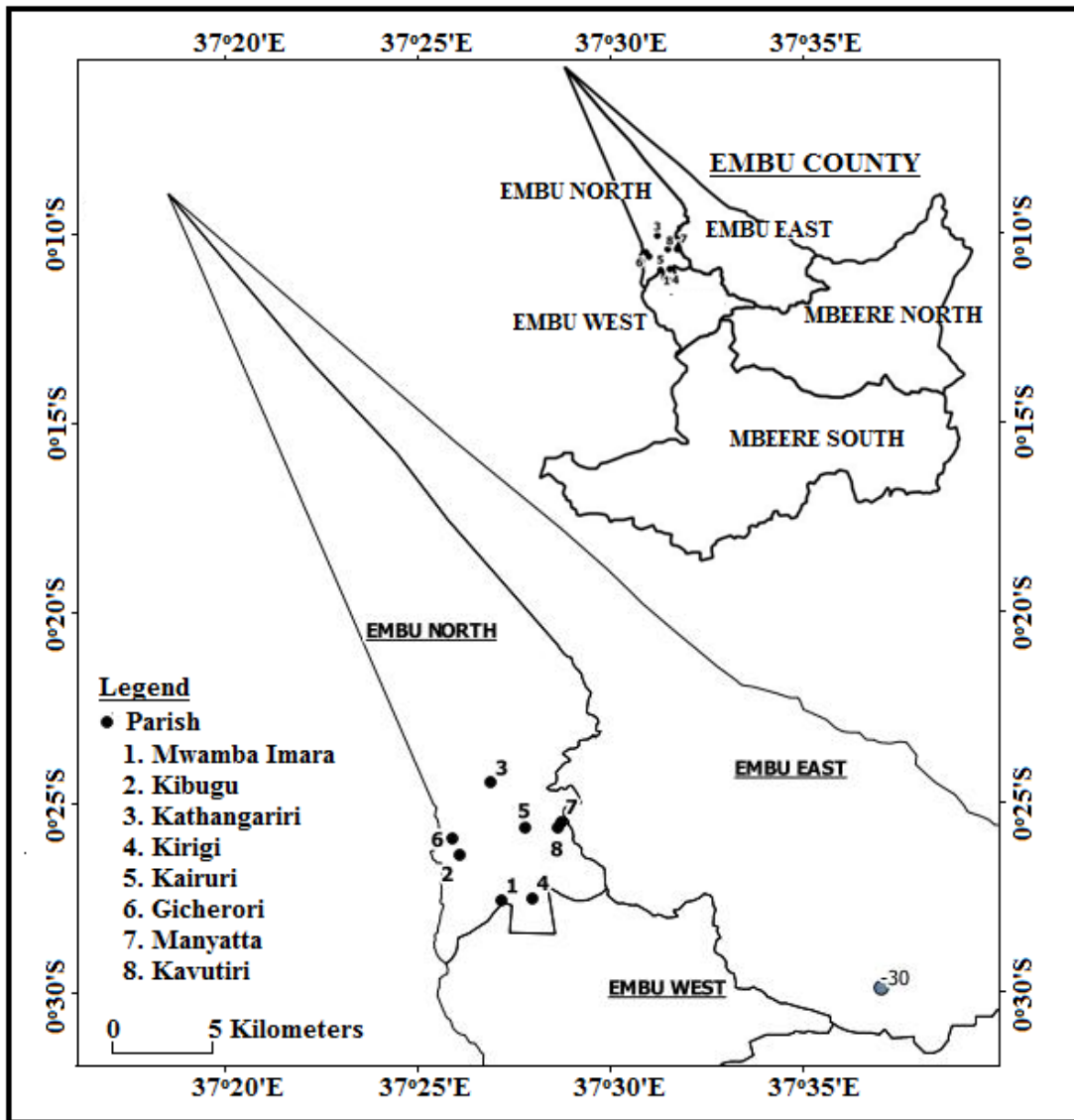
Embu District, Local Native Councils (LNC), Minutes, 17 July 1925.

**APPENDIX II**  
**LIST OF INFORMANTS**

<b>Respondents' Name</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Date Interviewed</b>	<b>Place of Interview</b>
Kiura Kungania	Male	18 <sup>th</sup> April 2021	Nginda
Njoka Kamuti	Male	19 <sup>th</sup> April 2021	Nginda
Julius Mwaniki	Male	20 <sup>th</sup> April 2021	Nginda
Wambeti Runji	Female	21 <sup>st</sup> April 2021	Nginda
Ngembi Gicovi	Female	24 <sup>th</sup> April 2021	Nginda
Joseph Mbogo	Male	26 <sup>th</sup> April 2021	Kirimari
Solomon Njeru	Male	1 <sup>st</sup> May 2021	Ruguru-Ngandori
James Gitonga	Male	2 <sup>nd</sup> May 2021	Nginda
Alex Muturi	Male	4 <sup>th</sup> May 2021	Ruguru-Ngandori
Lewis Ngondi	Male	6 <sup>th</sup> May 2021	Kirimari
Richard Nthiga	Male	7 <sup>th</sup> May 2021	Ruguru-Ngandori
Samuel Kinyua	Male	8 <sup>th</sup> May 2021	Ruguru-Ngandori
Nathan Kivuti	Male	12 <sup>th</sup> May 2021	Ruguru-Ngandori
Moses Munyi	Male	15 <sup>th</sup> May 2021	Ruguru-Ngandori
Jane Werimba	Female	18 <sup>th</sup> May 2021	Nginda
Maitha Weruma	Female	21 <sup>st</sup> May 2021	Ruguru-Ngandori
Esther Marigu	Female	23 <sup>rd</sup> May 2021	Ruguru-Ngandori
Daniel Njiru	Male	24 <sup>th</sup> May 2021	Kirimari
Patrick Njuki	Male	26 <sup>th</sup> May 2021	Ruguru-Ngandori
Job Ngoroi	Male	1 <sup>st</sup> June 2021	Ruguru-Ngandori
Mucangi Nderi	Male	2 <sup>nd</sup> June 2021	Ruguru-Ngandori
Francis Gicovi	Male	4 <sup>th</sup> June 2021	Ruguru-Ngandori
Geoffrey Ndwiga	Male	5 <sup>th</sup> June 2021	Ruguru-Ngandori
John Ileri	Male	7 <sup>th</sup> June 2021	Ruguru-Ngandori
Philip Njogu	Male	9 <sup>th</sup> June 2021	Ruguru-Ngandori
Jeremiah King'ang'i	Male	11 <sup>th</sup> June 2021	Nginda
Maurice Mwinga	Male	12 <sup>th</sup> June 2021	Ruguru-Ngandori
Kenneth Njue	Male	14 <sup>th</sup> June 2021	Ruguru-Ngandori
Titus Muchiri	Male	17 <sup>th</sup> June 2021	Nginda
Duncan Mutugi	Male	19 <sup>th</sup> June 2021	Ruguru-Ngandori
Simeon Mutwiri	Male	21 <sup>st</sup> June 2021	Ruguru-Ngandori
Josiah Munene	Male	23 <sup>rd</sup> June 2021	Ruguru-Ngandori
Sabina Wanginda	Female	25 <sup>th</sup> June 2021	Kirimari
Micah Kariuki	Male	28 <sup>th</sup> June 2021	Ruguru-Ngandori
Reuben Kimani	Male	29 <sup>th</sup> June 2021	Ruguru-Ngandori
Isaac Kimanthi	Male	1 <sup>st</sup> July 2021	Nginda
Zachary Njagi	Male	3 <sup>rd</sup> July 2021	Ruguru-Ngandori
Wilfred Magu	Male	4 <sup>th</sup> July 2021	Kirimari
Peninah Gicuko	Female	6 <sup>th</sup> July 2021	Ruguru-Ngandori

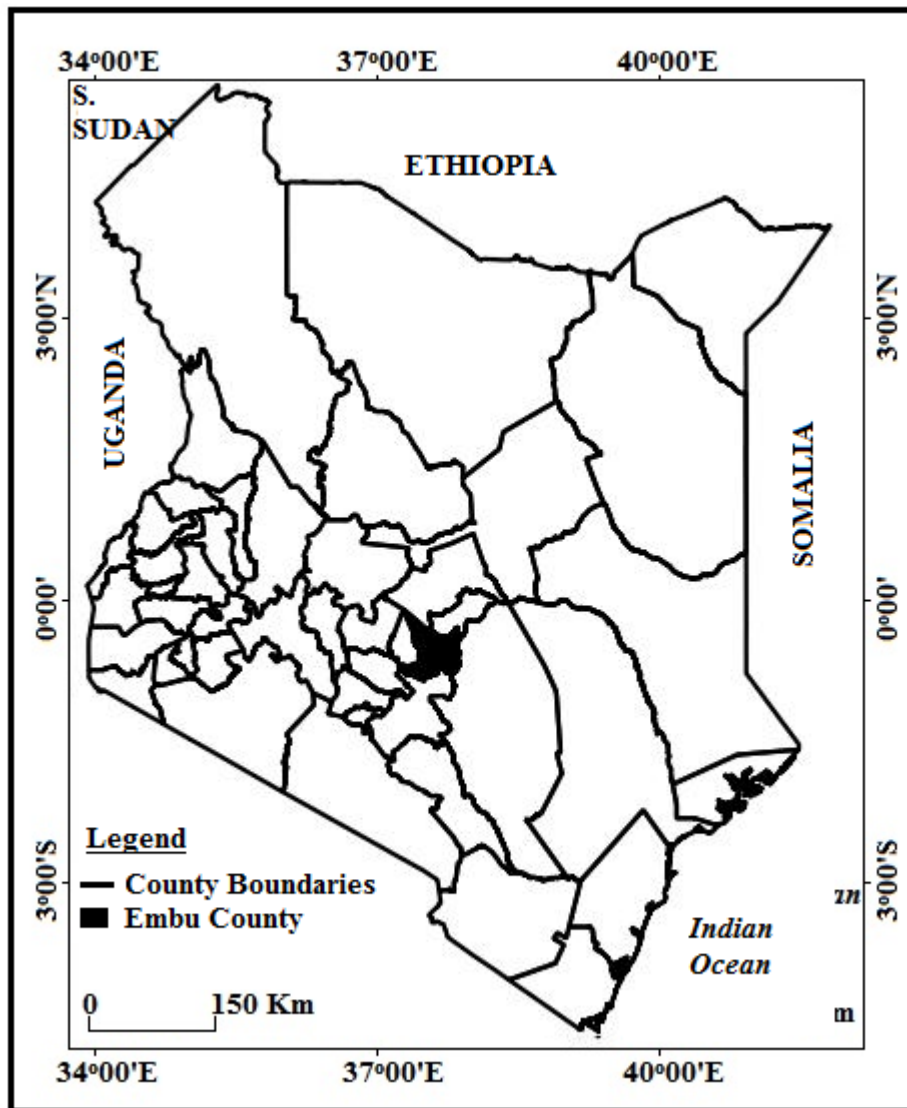
Ephantus Ngari	Male	7 <sup>th</sup> July 2021	Kirimari
Veronica Mutitu	Female	9 <sup>th</sup> July 2021	Ruguru-Ngandori
Zakayo Mbuko	Male	12 <sup>th</sup> July 2021	Ruguru-Ngandori
Dedan Thumi	Male	14 <sup>th</sup> July 2021	Kirimari
David Kivogo	Male	16 <sup>th</sup> July 2021	Ruguru-Ngandori
Leah Marigu	Female	17 <sup>th</sup> July 2021	Ruguru-Ngandori
Cindillopa Nyakio	Female	19 <sup>th</sup> July 2021	Kirimari
Ambrose Kamunjiga	Male	20 <sup>th</sup> July 2021	Kirimari
Ezekiel Kaumbuthu	Male	22 <sup>nd</sup> July 2021	Ruguru-Ngandori
Atanasio Kiamati	Male	24 <sup>th</sup> July 2021	Ruguru-Ngandori
Silas Kiverenge	Male	25 <sup>th</sup> July 2021	Kirimari

**APPENDIX III:  
MAP OF EMBU COUNTY**



Source: Embu County Integrated Development Plan

APPENDIX IV  
MAP OF KENYA SHOWING THE LOCATION OF EMBU COUNTY



source

**APPENDIX V**  
**RESEARCHER'S SELF-INTRODUCTORY LETTER**  
LIZZA NKIROTE KAARIA

DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES

CHUKA UNIVERSITY

P.O. BOX 12-60100

EMBU, KENYA

Dear Respondent,

**RE: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR DATA COLLECTION**

I am Lizza Nkirote Kaaria of Registration Number AM14/14065/13, a Master of Arts in History student at Chuka University. I am conducting a research on Colonialism and its implication on the African Family Stability in Embu North Sub-County, Kenya, 1895-1965.

Kindly assist me with the information. The information given will be used for research purposes only and where possible, confidentiality will be maintained.

Yours Sincerely,

---

Lizza Nkirote Kaaria.

Chuka University.



**APPENDIX VI**  
**INTERVIEW SCHEDULES ON COLONIALISM AND ITS IMPLICATION**  
**ON THE AFRICAN FAMILY STABILITY**

The following interview schedule will be used to generate data on African family value system among the Aembu in Embu North Sub-County between 1895 and 1920, Cultural Evolution brought about by Colonialism on the African Family 1920 to 1965 and Aspects of the African Family Value System that were preserved between 1920 to 1965.

**Section A. Background of the Respondent.**

1. Indicate your age (in years)
- v. Indicate your gender. (please tick ( ) appropriately in the box provided)
- i. Male
- ii. Female
- vi. What is your level of education? (please tick ( ) appropriately in the box provided)
- i. PhD
- ii. Masters
- iii. Bachelor
- iv. Diploma
- v. Certificate
- vi. Any other \_\_\_\_\_
- Specify** \_\_\_\_\_
- vii. What is your residence \_\_\_\_\_
- viii. What is your occupation \_\_\_\_\_

**Section B. The African Family Value System among the Aembu in Embu North Sub-County, Kenya, 1895 to 1920.**

1. What were some of the traditional African family values among the Aembu of Embu North Sub-County Embu County, Kenya from 1895 to 1920?
- a) Describe the origin, migration and settlement of the Aembu.
- b) How was the Aembu social economic and political organization.

**Section C: Cultural Evolution brought about by Colonialism on the African Family 1920 to 1965**

1. In your opinion, did the colonialists contribute to disruption of some African family values among the Aembu?
2. What was the impact of migrant labor system on the Aembu family value of communalism?
3. How did colonization affect the traditional family value among the Aembu?
4. How have the families in Embu North Sub-County shifted to individualism?
5. To what extent did the Traditional families provide economic and moral support to the needy?

**Section D: Aspects of the African Family Value System that were preserved between 1920 and 1965.**

1. What were some of the Traditional African Family Values that were preserved between during the colonial period and shortly after Independence?
2. How did the Africans maintain family values in a period of uncertainty occasioned by missionarism and colonialism?
3. How did the Aembu merge the indigenous family values and the western values.
4. Did the western values impact negatively on the indigenous family values?
5. Did the western values positively impact on the indigenous family values?

**APPENDIX VII**  
**GLOSSARY OF EMBU WORDS**

*Aririritii, Wambeti ûgaakua ûkîrua*: Wambeti you will die undergoing the cut.

*Athamaki*: Rulers.

*Athuuri a mûvîrîga*: Village council of elders.

*Gaarû*: A man's hut.

*Gûcokerua Guoko*: To be appreciated.

*Gûcûna îkama*: Licking a red hot knife rapidly.

*Gûkîria*: A traditionally unmarried man and woman living together illegally.

*Îgiri rîa gûtiira mûciî*: A son as an anchor to the home.

*Irûgu itîkaarua*: Uncircumcised would no longer be circumcised,

*Îthîgî*: A green tree branch that warns against trespass.

*Îtûûra*: A village comprising unrelated members.

*Kanyanya*: In-law

*Kavici*: Young uncircumcised boy

*Kavingacî*: Stream

*Kaviû*: Sharp knife

*Kiama Kia Ngome/ Athuri a Ngome*: Highest council of elders

*Kigoori* : Long heavy cloak worn by old women.

Kikuyu Central Association

*Kîmere*: Porridge

*Kînya*: Guard of traditional brew

*Kîrîmaari gîa kîrînyaga*: Mount Kenya.

*Kîritîro*: Exit gate from homestead.

*Kîrûgûrû*: Languages spoken by Embu neighbors.

*Kîthembe kîa ûkî*: 20 litres drum of honey

*Kithiri*: Long heavy cloak worn by old men.

*Kîthûngîrîri*: An adulterous person

*Kîûga/ ciûga*: Calabashes

*Kivenia* : Two pieces of cloth only joined with a string to hide the private parts.

*Kûmwînûkia*: A boy seeing off a girl to her home after a night dance.

*Kûnyua kaurugo*: Ceremony to punish a wrong doer

*Kûraia*: Paying bride price.

*Kûria ûthoni*: Request for friendship intended for marriage.

*Kûthamara/kwîthegema*: Grooms' groaning at marriage consummation.

*Kûthingwa*: To be sealed

*Kûthûkûma*: working to raise money to pay taxes.

*Kuumagarua*: A ceremony held a few days after birth to introduce the baby to the outside world.

*Kwarîrîria rûraio*: Dowry negotiations

*Kwînûka*: A married woman running back to her parents' home

*Maambura*: Celebrations

*Magiri ma Mûtare*: Branches from *Mûtare* tree for fencing.

*Maria ringa, aca, Maria cooka*: Maria cross, no, Maria do not cross.

*Mariika*: Age sets.

*Matîri*: Sacred grooves

*Mbarika*: Young Female Goat

*Mbûri ya Nduo*: The goat of circumcision

*Mbûri ya Nhûmbû*: Goat of the cap, given out by a man to acquire the status of a junior elder.

*Mbûri/Ng'ondu ee Nthingo*: A sheep or a goat for compensation

*Miarîro*: Makeshift beds with crisscrossing tree branches

*Mûcii*: Homestead

*Mûcûûi*: Nutritious and easy to eat food

*Mûgiro*: Bad omen/ Taboo

*Mûkomaanthî*: A girl who begun her menstruation before being circumcised.

*Mûkûmbû*: A clear demarcation as land boundary.

*Mûndû Mûgo/Andû ago*: Medicineman/Medicine men/Diviner

*Mûndû Mûthunu*: Selfish/Mean person

*Mûndû nwareenderwe ii mbiti*: The dead person was devoured by scavengers.

*Mûraagi*: A cane

*Mûraagi*: Penis

*Mûratina*: Locally made wine

*Mûrîgu*: Uncircumcised grown girl

*Mûrogi/Arogi*: Witch(s)

*Mûtani*: Circumcisor

*Mûthingi arîe nthingo mûtumia acooke akime njoovi na mvûva ya kînya*: The wronged party to be compensated and the wrong doer to prepare a guard of local brew as compensation.

*Mûthuuri kîvîcî*: Uncircumcised grown man, an insult to a misbehaved man.

*Mûthuuri*: Grown responsible man

*Mûû, Mûkwego and Mûthaite*: Insect resistant trees.

*Mûvîrîga/ Mîvîrîga*: Village(s) made of related families.

*Mûvîrîga*: Also means a door or an entrance to a homestead.

*Mvarika ya gûtongoreria nthenge*: A she goat to lead the he-goats.

*Mvuva inyanya cia mûratina*: Eight twenty-litre guards of mûratina wine.

*Mwana tî wa mûndû ûmwe*: A child does not belong to one person alone.

*Mwanake*: Warrior

*Mwatî*: Young Female Sheep

*Mwatû/ mâtû*: Beehive(s)

*Mwatû*: Beehive

*Mwene Nyaga/Mwene Njerû*: Owner of the white snow.

*Mwere/ Mûvea*: Millet.

*Naakorwa na mavîtia, nîrorîwa nî kagoondu gaaka*: If I am guilty as alleged, may this sheep kill me/May I die like this sheep.

*Ndegwa e ngaramba*: Castrated Bull

*Ndegwa ya îvîcî*: Uncastrated Bull

*Ngai*: God

*Ngemi*: Ululations

*Ngoma*: Ancestral spirits:

*Ngoma*: Evil spirits and good ancestral spirits.

*Ngome*: Rings worn by moieties as a mark of identity.

*Ng'ondu e Nthigo*: Sheep used in a ritual ceremony to identify a wrong doer.

*Ngucu/ Kîrûru*: Woman's' house.

*Njama ya Mbaara*: War council

*Njama*: Council of elders

*Njaviû*: Incident of blood spilling

*Njere/Kînya*: A guard

*Njiniki*: A young boys' goat skin for covering the front private part.

*Njuri*: A small piece of goat skin used to cover the back side only.

*Ntemi*: Proverbs

*Nthenge ya gûcookia athuurirî*: Goat paid as penalty by a man to be reinstated after being cut off from men over wrong doing.

*Nthenge ya Mûvîrîga*: A he-goat to be eaten by the clan.

*Nthenge ya Ngusu*- a He-goat to be eaten by the girl's brothers and friends to appease them.

*Nthenge*: A he-goat

*Nthio*: Buttocks

*Nthithiarî*: A place with many Mîthithia trees.

*Nthuke* : Age sets

*Nvaraganu*: Famine

*Nyangi and Kimanthi*: Moieties

*Nyenyi cia njûgû*: Potatoes mashed with cereals and vegetables

*Nyomba*: Hut

*Oona tî mûtigu mbeeû*: The dead has left no offspring.

paid as a penalty for wrong doing.

*Rûraio*: Bride price

*Rwaga/Njaga*: A portable wooden bed.

*Tembo*: Local brew

*Thavuria*: Aluminium cooking pot

*Ûcûrû wa mûkio*: gruel

*Ûgîmbî*: Black Millet

*Ûkavi*: Maasai

*Ûrîngu*: Female circumcision/ clitoridectomy

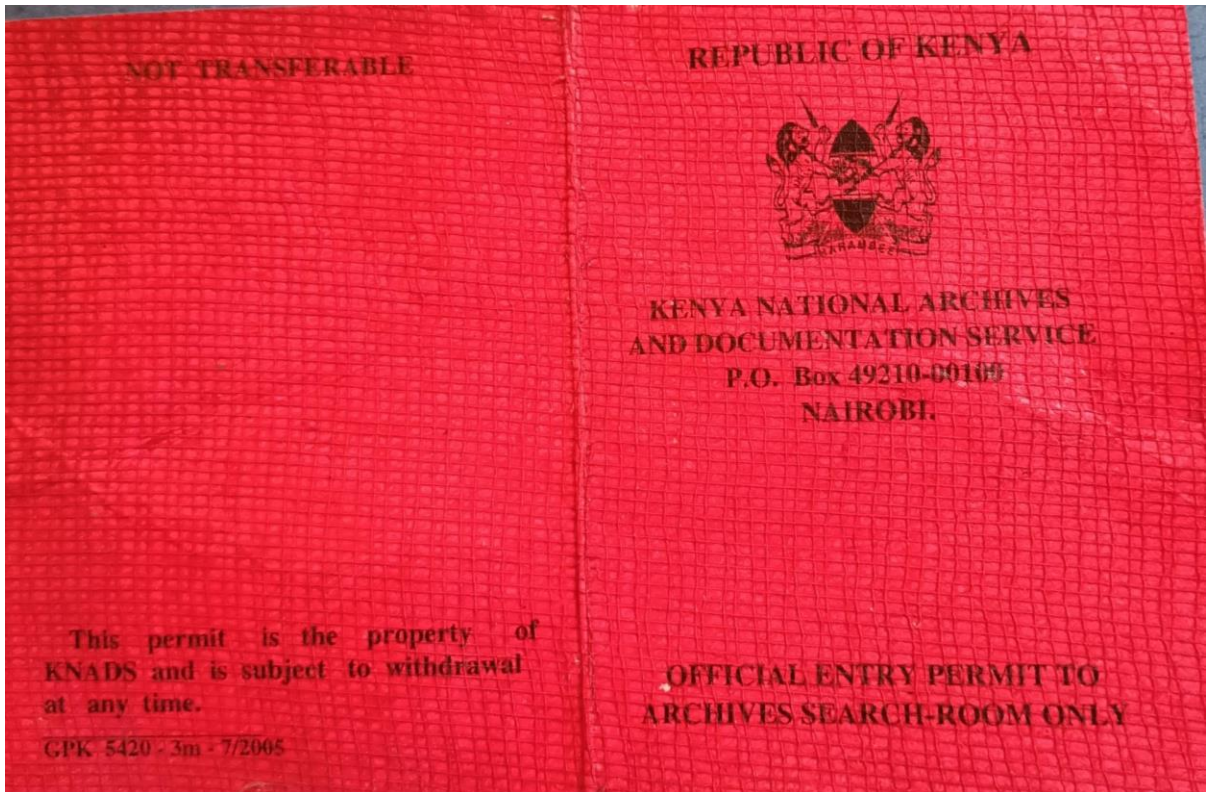
*Ûthînji*: meat taken away by slaughter men

*Ûthoni*: A marriage relationship

*Vaava*: Father

*Wî mwaaro?*: How are you faring?

**APPENDIX VIII  
RESEARCHER'S KENYA NATIONAL ARCHIVES OFFICIAL ENTRY  
PERMIT TO SEARCH ROOM**



Permit No. 30863 Valid from 16/12/19 to 16/12/20

Name: LIZZA NKIROTE  
K'ARIA


Address:.....  
P.O. BOX 12  
EMBU

KENYA NATIONAL ARCHIVES  
P. O. Box 49210  
NAIROBI

Issued by [Signature]  
to Director

RENEW

1 .....  
2 .....  
3 .....



[Signature]  
PRINCIPAL

**APPENDIX IX  
RESEARCH PERMIT FROM NACOSTI**

 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>REPUBLIC OF KENYA</b></p> <p>Ref No: <b>480915</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>RESEARCH LICENSE</b></p> <div style="text-align: center;"></div> <p><b>This is to Certify that Ms. Lizza Nkirote Kaaria of Chuka University, has been licensed to conduct research in Embu on the topic: COLONIALISM AND ITS IMPLICATION ON THE AFRICAN FAMILY STABILITY IN EMBU NORTH SUB-COUNTY, KENYA, 1895-1965. for the period ending : 28/October/2022.</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">License No: <b>NACOSTI/P/21/13657</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>480915</b> Applicant Identification Number</p> <p><b>NOTE: This is a computer generated License. To verify the authenticity of this document, Scan the QR Code using QR scanner application.</b></p>	 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY &amp; INNOVATION</b></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Date of Issue: <b>28/October/2021</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>W. W. W. W.</i> Director General <b>NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY &amp; INNOVATION</b></p> <div style="text-align: center;"></div>
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