

**EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL ORDER AMONG THE TIGANIA OF MERU,
KENYA 1910-1957**

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

CHUKA UNIVERSITY

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DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Declaration

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for an award of a diploma or conferment of degree in any University or Institution.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to all Pan Africanists

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I thank God Almighty for the gift of life, health and peace throughout the writing process.

Why on earth are you interested in the voting patterns and rethinking Parliamentary elections in Tigania? You can only rethink something that has been rewritten about!!! My interest in historical research was aroused by the unique configuration of political activity in Tigania and the larger Kenyan Republic. The aforementioned concerns were out of my observation of the apparent failure of the democratic experiment especially in Africa. Pan Africanists have suggested the reconstitution and reconstruction of African postcolonial states on the basis of African history, African knowledge and African positive values, if these states are to be considered legitimate and to serve their African constituency fully. My critiques led me to think that these unique elections have a background, a long history. Dr Eliud Biegon introduced me to cultural-political studies as a way of enabling me grapple with the needed conceptualization of the African agency. He assisted me identify this initial gap.

My sincere thanks go to Dr. Eliud for the proposal that I undertake the theoretical discourse of political-historical analysis in the endeavor to understand my community and society. Dr Eliud generously provided useful materials including books from his library. His comprehensive and useful comments helped me strengthen and consolidate the central arguments, context and structural organization of my thesis. My heartfelt appreciation go to, Mr Muiro who buttressed my understanding by introducing me to postcolonial studies as a pathway to understanding the contemporary political behavior of Tigania community. I received numerous relevant books some of which were expensively acquired to aid my writing from him. He directed me to a vast literature that helped unlock this study at a very critical moment. Not forgetting that he took his precious time to read my work and offer critique to ensure I remained on course. My thanks go to my able supervisors, Dr. Eliud Biegon, Prof. Kabeca Mwaniki and Dr. Martha Muraya. Am eternally grateful and highly commend them for their invaluable and insightful guidance throughout the writing process. More so their availability made it possible to work under timelines. I highly appreciate and thank my father Amos Baariu who paid my fees and all the expenses incurred in the writing process. He played a critical role in helping me identify respondents for the interviews. My mother Rose Baariu and my siblings are great friends who morally encouraged me throughout even when things got difficult. To the focused team of my Faculty led by Prof. Stephen Wambugu, the Dean, Department chairperson Dr. Christine Atieno, Dr. Caroline Mucece, Mr. Job Mulati, Chuka University Librarians, thank you for the support. I am indebted to the participants, led by Ruth Thurwa who generously gave their time for my research, for, without their valuable stories provided in the interviews I would not have been able to complete my thesis. Peterson from the Kenya-National Archives in Nairobi ensured that all available archival sources were at my disposal and my great friend Mike Mutiga who aided my long stay in Nairobi, my gratitude go to them. To my many friends, thanks for pushing me to work hard. Know that I would have required many pages to put in writing what each of you did for me than this space allows.

ABSTRACT

This study examined the indigenous pre-colonial Tigania political order upto 1910, traced the imposition and consolidation of colonial order among the Tigania and last examined how the interaction of the pre-colonial Tigania political order and British colonial order resulted in the emergence of a unique political order among the Tigania by 1957. Through this study, the evolution of political order up to the late colonial period among the Tigania was analyzed. More specifically, the study contributes to the literature on the mechanisms by which colonialism affected African communities with reference to political order. The assumptions guiding this study were that; the pre-colonial Tigania had a political order based on Tigania cultural values. The imposition of colonialism among the Tigania affected their political order, and, as a result of colonization there emerged a unique political order among the Tigania by 1957. The study utilized tenets from four theories to explain the evolution of political order in Tigania society. They included, social systems theory by Francis Abraham, instrumentalist paradigm by Thomas Spear, masculinity theorization as understood by Paul Ocobock and Peter Eke theory of Colonialism and the two publics in Africa. The study utilized descriptive research design. Data was collected from oral, archival and secondary sources. A total of 80 interviews were done. The instruments for data collection were mainly open-ended interviews. Primary data from oral sources was triangulated with data from archival and secondary sources. The archival sources that were consulted included; Kenya National Archives (KNA) in Nairobi, National Museums of Kenya (NMK) in Nairobi and Meru, and, finally, Personal Collections from individuals. Through descriptive design, data was analyzed qualitatively. Guided by the objectives of the research, data was presented through thematic description. The study found out that, the process of in-scribing pre-colonial Tigania people into communal social and economic system began at age seven. This system produced a highly inclusive political order. Established cultural standards were key in producing the desired communal order. Change in the political order of the Tigania people occurred between 1910 and 1957. This was as a result of conquest and interaction between Tigania political order and British colonial administrative structures. The study noted that, as colonialism wore on, lack of certainty due to change and culture clash resulted into hybridity among the Tigania in the sunset days of the British Empire in Kenya. Hybridity represents on one hand the impossibility of a complete break with the past and on the other achieving full identification with the western form of governance in the state. Separation from culture and essences represents a chronic subjectivity that constantly and ambivalently negotiates between cultural imperatives.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

DC:	District Commissioner
DO:	District Officer
IEBC:	Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission
KAU:	Kenya African Union
KNA:	Kenya National Archives
KNBS:	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
LegCo:	Legislative Council
LNC:	Local Native Council
LNT:	Local Native Tribunal
MP:	Member of Parliament
MRU:	Meru
NMK:	National Museums of Kenya
PC:	Provincial Commissioner
SWW:	Second World War
WW:	World War
OI:	Oral Interview

GLOSSARY

- Agambi:*** Wise elders
- Antubaita:*** Clan residing in Tigania, Mikinduri ward
- Garu:*** A traditional military barrack where warriors gathered for their activities
- Gichiaro:*** A binding blood brotherhood existing among clans with any form of alliance especially bonding and military alliances.
- Kagairo:*** A term that is used by elders to describe the period of Meru fragmentation in Tharaka.
- Kenda ya Mutani:*** Nine of the circumciser –The first group of male initiates to undergo the cut to mark the opening of the circumcision season
- Kiama:*** Kimeru name for a council or gathering of a specific group e.g. ruling elders
- Kiyyi:*** Uncircumcised boy
- Kirare:*** Songs composed and sung by warriors
- Kiruu:*** Songs sung by uncircumcised boys
- Kitharene:*** Clan residing in Tigania, Kiguchwa ward.
- Kithiri/ Kuringa Thenge*** - A process used to resolve difficult cases that involved killing a he goat by conflicting parties in the presence of all Njuri Ncheke members.
- Kuroromeria*** - An act where a party can call the Njuri or a mugichiaro to institute a curse on whoever inflicted an injustice on them.
- Kuriria:*** A process of reaching out to relatives for help
- Lamala*** A kiama/council of retired warriors
- Maitii:*** Lower region
- Meru Njuri Ncheke*** - An organization that brought together the highest ruling councils from each Meru sub-ethnic group e.g Igembe, Imenti, Tigania
- Micii Mikuru:*** Ngaa clans that arrived earlier in the Meru region
- Miraa:*** A stimulant which is usually chewed, used for marriage proposals and administration of oath in Tigania and Igembe
- Miriga mieru:*** Clans that arrived later in the Meru region
- Mpithio:*** A ritual that initiates go through after healing to consecrate them as proper men of Tigania
- Mucii:*** Home composed of father, mother and children

- Mugaa:** Refers to medicine man with ability to read omens, treat illnesses and remove the effects of witch craft
- Mugichiaro:** Person with whom blood brotherhood exists
- Muiro:** Physical manifestation of uncleanliness as a result of contamination.
- Mukiama:** The name given to a lower ranking spiritual leader by some Tigania clans
- Muma:** Oath administered by a mugichiaro to determine innocence or guilt between or among conflicting parties
- Muoko:** A Tigania clan known for animal keeping
- Muwati:** A guardian and care giver of initiates in seclusion
- Muwee:** The title given to the Tigania high priest
- Mwiria/mwiriga:** Clan, members claiming descent from the same ancestor
- Nгаа:** The term used to refer to the pre-Meru before they were called Meru
- Ngai:** Implies rain, the name by which the Tigania use to refer to God
- Njuri:** A word used by the Tigania to refer to gatherings of various councils which culminated into Tigania Njuri Ncheke.
- Nkibata:** Covers all genres of songs sung by women
- Ntoonkuri:** A man of warrior age who leads the procession of Mpithio
- Ntuura:** A settlement composed of many homes/village
- Rwaanda:** A dry place
- Tigania Njuri Ncheke-** Refers to the highest elder ruling council among the Tigania clans.
- Ukura Aaru/Garu:** The process of power handover from one age group to another in Tigania
- Ukuru:** A type of informed knowledge acquired from those who hold knowledge and know how about certain processes, procedures or an issue.
- Umotho:** Left
- Urio:** Right
- Wüyi:** Behaviors associated with uncircumcised men

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

A great deal of progress has been achieved world over in terms of electoral processes. Political participation among the citizenry worldwide has improved though trust in the electoral processes and outcomes remains low especially in the post-colonial African states. Liberal democratic elections are ideal for many, especially in the west for they provide everyone a chance to determine their political destiny. Advanced democracies like United States of America, France and Britain have greatly contributed to the spread of ideals of liberal democracy, especially party systems and democratic elections in the former colonies (Nkrumah, 1970).

Democracy is not a new concept and can be dated to antiquity in Greece (Odhiambo, 1998). Africans were first introduced to elections during the colonial period and the concept of democracy though alien to Africans was from 1960s utilized to elect African representatives. For example, in Kenya, 1957 elections for Legislative Council members were done democratically through universal suffrage (Oginga, 1967). Though representative democracy at the time was a new ideology in Africa, the practice was imposed by the West citing the lack of an equivalent local alternative system.

Voting is a legitimizing activity that occurs regularly in all representative democracies across the globe. Citizens of democracies give legitimacy to the government by periodically replacing individuals who occupy various political positions through the voting exercise. Presidents, members of parliament, ward representatives are all supposed to seek public approval through secret ballot or its equivalent after a fixed regular interval (United Nations Charter, 1945).

Voting is a privileged moment of political interaction between the rulers and the ruled in any democracy and reveals a lot about a country's political culture (Grignon *et al*, 2003). In Africa, liberal democracy has been marred by political domination by a few individuals, families, parties, ethnicities, bribery, violence, vote buying, lack of secret

ballot, religious affiliations and clannism (ibid)¹. These issues have led some critics of democracy to refer to it as a process ill-suited for Africa.

Hempstone (1997) observed that most regimes in Africa were arm-twisted to embrace liberal democracy by the donor community. This view is buttressed by Murunga and Nasongo (2007) who emphasize that multiparty politics in Africa was introduced into the continent through coercion. It was not in the visible interests of African elites who occupied positions of influence after independence to embrace and nurture multiparty politics and regular elections especially those on the ultimate prize, the presidency. In many African states some heads of state have not been in hurry to relinquish power even under international pressure. Many incumbents lost elections during the pro-democracy transition due to reforms and protests. However, by the time second and third multiparty elections came in the late 1990s, a malaise had crept in. Few incumbents lost elections. Regular, free and fair presidential elections threatened the incumbent president who only allowed some degree of freedom to the electorate to elect leaders at the grass root level in what was referred to as a culture of ‘accountable authoritarianism’ (McOnyango, 1996) and to some others the democratic space had taken the meaning of a choice-less democracy (Mkandawire, 1999). Why is this state of affairs especially peculiar in Africa?

Those who supported the introduction of liberal democracy in Africa argued that the continent and majority of its regions seldom had any native tradition of a unified government that could be revived. Thus, it was in order for the western liberal democracy to be adopted by Africans despite Africa’s lack of prior knowledge in such type of governance. According to Mackenzie (1960) Africa had no choice; he said ‘What ideological basis is available except that of free elections under a wide franchise? This is the principle accepted by the west as the true pattern of sovereignty within the state, those seeking independence aspire to it; western opinion thought of new states as legitimate only if they were framed in this western image...’. Are elections the “only” accepted, means that can facilitate transfer of power? He concluded that, election

¹ On how such factors play in elections in Kenya, see, Biegon, E. (2008). A History of Voting Patterns in Kenya’s Elections in Aldai Constituency of South-Nandi District, Rift-Valley Province, 1963-2002.

studies were ‘an important entry into an extremely diverse subject, that of political development in non-western countries under western influence’.

Writing in the same period Frantz Fanon, an Africanist political theorist rejected the constitution of western political and economic practices in the newly independent African states. He wrote that “Comrades the game of the West is ended, let us leave this Europe alone... Europe is busy talking about democracy and human rights but what they do on a daily basis is a negation of man... Africa must chart a new path for humanity” (Fanon, 2008). Ludeki Chweya buttressed Fanon's claims by observing that for stability in Africa a re-democratization formula must be prescribed for the continent. This formula, according to Chweya (2002, p. 4), must be more Afro-centric. Otherwise the democratic experiment in Africa would be a chimera. African Historians have unanimously called for the reconstitution and reconstruction of African postcolonial states on the basis of African history, African knowledge and African positive values if these states are to be considered legitimate and to serve their African constituency fully (Gatsheni, 2013).

Their main argument was that western models could not be the panacea to African problems. Incidentally for a quarter century (up to 1990) western democracies supported authoritarian regimes in many developing countries. In Africa, we can cite the example of Togo, Malawi, Zaire, Zambia and Kenya. These nations were forced to accept multipartism in the 1990s. Kenya held her first multiparty election in 1992; in the subsequent twenty-five years, seven elections and a referendum in between have been conducted, the result? New challenges have emerged. The hopes of independence and the optimism of the 1990s have subsided, we now hear of Kenya being categorized not as a democracy but a democratizing nation (Nyanhoga, 2014). We hear of electing a coalition of the accused (in regard to the 2013 victory of Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto, ICC inductees), we hear of winning election, losing legitimacy (Lynch, 2018). How do we make sense of such realities? How do we account for such backsliding in Kenya's political processes? Or is there no back sliding at all? Was this phenomenon of democratic transition a facade? Is there something more ancient, more enduring within Kenyan communities that became a graveyard for the much hyped liberal democracy?

Achille Mbembe in his work, *On the Postcolony* (2001) hints on such a possibility in his idea of the *long duree* (before European invasion of the continent). On this basis, the present research sought to examine Tigania people, a sub-group of the Ameru.

Tigania people constitute one of the major subgroups of the Ameru, who are Bantu speakers. They occupy the area around Nyambene hills. According to Mwaniki (2010) the Meru-speaking people live on and adjacent to the northeast slope of Mt. Kenya. The Meru migrated to their current settlements in two waves. The earliest settlements in the current region of Meru are estimated to have occurred in the 15th century. The earliest groups being the Igembe, Tigania, Chuka and Tharaka (Mwaniki, 2010). The second wave involved the Bwaa group of the Meru who first settled in the coast and later migrated to their current settlements. The Bwaa group began their escape in the 17th century after a series of disagreements with their neighbors in Bwaa Island. Chapter four of the present research further investigated the process of this balkanization of the Meru sub-groups and the reasons for sub-group peculiarities. This established the basis upon which the Tigania are considered part of the Meru but also unique owing to the differentiation that occurred. Among the Tigania, factors differentiating families and individuals was the line of descent, where the clan was the basic political unit.

A clan among the Tigania was formed by families claiming descent from a common ancestor. The formation of clans in this fashion was classical and was fundamental in the political functionality of this community². Conflicts were common and a *Kiama*/council of clan ruling elders resolved disputes. Tentatively, the formation of the council was a cultural and a structural factor, a task undertaken through the creation of age-groups. Among the Tigania men from all the clans are categorized according to generational sets which are age groups formed according to one's circumcision period. Women belonged to the age groups of their spouse's. These age groups commanded respect and were crucial for decision making and implementation especially among people of the same age-group and the larger community. Age groups transcended clans. Through age-group patterning, a rationale of how communal secrets were passed down by ritual and retired elders to the younger age-groups was perpetuated. Cultural studies are crucial in providing the necessary link needed for systematic analysis of the creation

² Recently ecology has been shown to have influenced the formation of ethnicities (Lonsdale, 2019).

and evolution of the African state from the pre-colonial indigenous roots right to the present; explaining how internal and external events and actors shaped the African state (Gatsheni, 2013). This study employed a long-term historical perspective in interrogating Tigania society.

Many traces of the African past practices still exist but not unchallenged. Coming to terms with what happened under colonialism is not only a diverse discourse but one that would speak volumes to the current dilemmas facing the Tigania people and Africans in general. This research by identifying the binary distinctions of the pre-colonial Tigania political order and the machinations of the Jembe-na-kalamu revolution problematized their intermingling. This interactive process that occurred in Tigania since 1908 produced a long standing difficulty in the postcolony. The impasse revolved around the anchoring of the emerging Tigania society. According to Gatsheni, this dichotomy involved unrelated spheres which he described as follows,

...a question that has revolved around which relevant socio-historical entity the African nation-state should be anchored on among three equally problematic alternatives, namely: the pre-colonial ethnic nation whose construction and full realization was disrupted by colonialism; the colonially-crafted territorial nation born out of the contradictions of the colonial situation; or the imagined pan-African nation that was envisaged by Kwame Nkrumah (Gatsheni, 2013, p. ix).

The colonial interaction between the Tigania people and the colonial institutions inevitably affected the Tigania. Leela Gandhi views this as the dilemma of the once colonized subject where on one hand there exist an impossibility of a complete break with the language, culture, practices and political institutions of the colonial regime and on the other the impossibility of ever achieving full identification with it (Gandhi, 1998). This construct emanates from the nature of European imperialism in Tigania, a situation described by Spear as, 'colonialism changed the concepts of cultural interaction' (Spear, 2003). The study by using social systems theory, instrumentalist theory, masculinity theory and two publics moved beyond the local to a more in-depth understanding of the historical action on a multiplicity of sites.

Seeking to understand the ordering of the precolonial Tigania society as an historian was a move informed by the view that the present and the future cannot be fully understood without a clear knowledge of the past. Political ordering began to shrink as

the primordial importance of age-group and clan subsistence receded in the colonial era. It became hard to organize individuals in the two lines. Varying levels of colonial education, ideologies, Christianity and increasing poverty delineated the frontiers of consciousness among the people. The process of modernization did not follow African patterns of authority and power. 'Modernization' ended up as westernization. Gatsheni (2013) views the so called modernization as an experience of 'darker' manifestations of modernity which included such processes as the slave trade, mercantilism, imperialism, colonialism and apartheid. Through these processes patriotism to indigenous patterns withered as capitalism brutalized economic ordering by which men achieved masculinity. Capitalism subverted the legitimate leadership patterns as competition raged. The concept of getting power developed against the previous system of asserting recognition and right as discussed in chapter six of this research.

By exploring a range of Tigania institutions the researcher was able to trace evolution of political order. The moment of change was convoluted as it involved many contradictory processes. Interpreting the process of change is therefore historicized. For example, how did the dichotomy between Tigania traditions and European 'modernity' transform the Tigania when forces of deployment were both localized and external and seemed to be above the control of the two partners of colonialism? The broad social-economic changes caused by colonialism in Tigania are interpreted in the context of response through generational contest that had little understanding of what the outcome would be for age groups and the larger population. Here, as shown by the study, Tigania politics, often expressed in intense disputes over custom and tradition is neglected through generational rift in the period leading to independence. According to Spear tradition constitutes a discourse by which people assert present interests in terms of the past (Spear, 2003, p. 6). By 1950 competition for power among generations in Tigania saw transmission of custom challenged. According to Jan Vansina as contextualized by Thomas Spear, traditions do not last forever. This is because its premises can be challenged by alternative paradigm where its carriers abandon its principles to adopt those of the other (Spear, 2003).

Invention of tradition was critical if colonial rule in Tigania was going to last. Resistance since the early colonial period had ensued due to illegitimacy of chieftainship. According to Mamdani the institutional context in which this took place can be traced in the functionary duty of chiefs (Mamdani, 1996). This according to Spear was because chiefs represented a consolidation of judicial, legislative and executive authority. In a bid for elder relevance, Tigania local native tribunal largely remained dysfunctional. In 1940 colonial officials sought ways of how the matrix of power involving illegitimate chiefs and legitimate Njuri Ncheke elders would work together. By reinventing how various highest elder council's in Meru worked, through an expanded Meru Njuri Ncheke, the British were able to appropriate legitimacy. Spear described this move as a situation where colonial power was limited and became subject to local discourse of power, i.e. 'achieving hegemony on a shoe string' (Spear, 2003). The incorporation of the elder's council's especially divisional *ciama*³, in colonial rule, opened another front of masculine confrontation over power, meaning and coming of age. Colonial state therefore became a consumer of power generated within customary order (Spear, 2003).

However, a contradiction had earlier emerged before it was sorted. In Tigania, colonial state could not consume customary power up to 1938. Chapter six opens by showing how in the early colonial period, colonial officials fought Tigania indigenous institutions. The Njuri Ncheke of Tigania and other smaller *Njuri* went underground due to the onslaught by colonial government. They were labelled as enemies of British 'progressive order'. Christian missions depended on established colonial order and peace to thrive but challenged the religious foundation of traditional authority which generated the order. These contradictions in many ways shaped the complexes of the emerging Tigania society.

The generational rift occurring in colonial Tigania disorganized gender relations. Social-political disordering generated by colonial edifice pitied genders. Women in Tigania sided with the younger generation of males. Authority that lay in gendered relations had shrank. Women as custodians of morality found themselves in a tight fix. Cash crop farming by 1955 provided the necessary cushion of earning livelihood as

³ Singular Kimeru name for a council is *kiama*, plural is *ciama*

changes in law reshaped local economy and articulated it in world capitalist economy. The younger generations by 1952 had reached a breaking point and grew tired of colonialism. Capitalism had proved unviable and a return to Tigania indigenous economic and political order was what many termed as people's state. With increased liminal age between childhood and adult hood and the inability to achieve manhood, colonialism was seen as an obstacle that had to be removed. Juvenile politicking and Mau Mau movement provided the forum to defeat the colonial government.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The imposition of colonial rule on Kenyan communities' unleashed forces that were said to have far reaching changes in the social, political and economic organization of the colonized. Using Tigania as a case study, this research sought to investigate the interplay between Tigania people's indigenous political order and the imposed British colonial order in Tigania society from 1910 to 1957. The study endeavored to understand how Tigania customary institutions interacted with colonial administrative system, how they contributed in strengthening the colonial edifice, how they were transformed, and the impact of the interaction on Tigania political order in the late colonial period.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 Broad Objective

The overall purpose of this research was to study the impact of colonialism on Tigania political order. More specifically it sought to reveal the process of change of indigenous African political order during the colonial period.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

The study was guided by the following specific objectives.

- i. To enquire into the precolonial Tigania political order up to 1910.
- ii. To examine the imposition and consolidation of British colonial order in Tigania from 1910-1957.
- iii. To analyze the resultant political order among the Tigania by 1957.

1.4 Research Questions

Questions guiding the study were.

- i. How was political order attained in the pre-colonial Tigania society upto 1910?
- ii. How was the colonial order imposed and consolidated among the Tigania from 1910-1957?
- iii. What was the resultant political order by 1957?

1.5 Assumptions

The assumptions of this study were:

- i. The precolonial Tigania had a political order based on Tigania cultural values.
- ii. The imposition of colonialism among the Tigania affected their political order.
- iii. As a result of colonization, there emerged a unique political order among the Tigania.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study contributes to knowledge on the political history of the Tigania people. More specifically, the study contributed to literature on the mechanisms by which colonialism affected African communities with reference to political order. To that extent, the study shed light on the colonial legacy on African ethnic communities unveiling both the visible apparatus of political order and the concealed workings of political disorder in Tigania community.

1.7 Scope of the Study

In terms of periodization, the study laid ground using the concept of *longue duree* up to 1910 and covered the period beginning 1910-1957 to analyze the process of political change. 1910 was the year Tigania people came into contact with colonial rule. On the other hand, 1957 is important because it marks the last election under the colonial rule to elect African representatives in the Legislative Council (Legco).

1.8 Limitations of the Study

The study faced the following limitations. There were limited number of informants who experienced Tigania political life in the precolonial period. However, evidence from those born in the early colonial period was highly insightful. The accuracy of

information from the oral sources was highly dependent on the beliefs, feelings, and memory of the informant. This implied there can be instances of omission or exaggeration. Old age proved to be a big challenge as it denied some informants coherency and consistency. Specific dates for various events proved difficult to remember and the researcher relied on age group reckoning to ensure chronology for the pre-colonial period. There were highly informed informants who refused to be interviewed due to oaths of secrecy they swore to. This field encounter in itself, was testament to the persistence of some aspects of pre-colonial Tigania political order. A significant number of elders detested the presence of technology especially recording devices. This group insisted that, the researcher being in a warrior stage must follow tradition in acquiring and storing the knowledge. The researcher faced challenges with some information provided but which due to communal morals could not be straight forwardly stated in the writing. The researcher makes the disclosure, where this is so, and provides the various possible interpretations. Information that is highly confidential or that could expose the respondent to danger or ridicule was kept confidential. Some archival records were not available due to displacement. Some of the secondary sources were highly Eurocentric hence contained biased information. The researcher triangulated oral sources, archival sources and secondary sources to ensure that the limitations of each source were overcome.

1.9 Operational Definition of Terms

Age group: A group of individuals based on generational grouping called *nthuki* formed about every fifteen years and who are circumcised in three intervals of 4-6 years.

Age-set: A sub-set within an age group.

Civic public: Civil structures which deliver government mandate.

Colonial Administrative system- The structure of administration set up by the British government to oversee governance in the Kenyan colony.

Indigenous: Original customs, values and practices handed over from a generation to another in a certain society.

Political: Activities of individuals that impinge on the public realm made up of the collective interests of the people (Key conceptual definition).

Postcolonial: A long history of colonial consequences after the independence.

Political Order: Implies the way a certain society organizes its political ideals including procedures of getting into and out of political roles, offices, hierarchies, public order and morality.

Pre-colonial Political Order- Implies the way a certain society before interference organized its political ideals including procedures of getting into and out of political roles, offices, hierarchies, public order and morality.

Primordial public: These are ethnic, sub-ethnic, inter-ethnic, clan and family identities

Private realm: Individual affairs.

Public realm: Public sphere

Tradition: Custom passed down a group of people with a special significance and with origins in the distant past and is believed or at least has some influence in the present.

Two publics: A rift occurring in the manner an individual operates in the civic public vis-à-vis the manner the same individual operates while in a primordial public or in a private realm.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The gist of this literature review was to provide an overview of the nature of political developments in the course of evolution of African communities since the onset of colonialism. It will distinguish the academic gaps that exist between the acts of creation by individuals or their nonexistence on one hand and on the other hand indicate why social formations which had a political impact emerged from the colonial interstices by their own force.

2.2 Indigenous Tigania Political Order.

Pioneer studies of African political organizations provided a glimpse into the nature of African political history in the pre-colonial period. The time period between 1940 and early 1960s, was characterized by a great deal of traditional political arrangements, and many studies on the traditional African societal systems were published. For instance, scholars like Evans Pritchard (1940), Wagner (1956), Schapera (1956), Mair (1962), Tait and Middleton (1968), presented very rich historical background of the societal arrangements within African traditional societies, in terms of socio-economic organizations as well as cultural leaderships. However, these studies were largely anthropological. They gave descriptions but largely evaded elaborating internal dynamisms and processes of change, for example in the political order.

Written records on the Meru pre-colonial history are scanty and the picture is more wanting with regard to literature on political organization. Some of the early writers who documented the Meru history produced ethnographic descriptions of the Meru customs. The most comprehensive of these were done by Lambert (1947) and 'Orde-Brown (1916). Lambert, for instance carried out research on a vast geographical area which covered Kikuyu areas of Ndia and Gichugu, Embu and the Meru ethnic subdivisions. One of the major weaknesses of Lambert's study is that he considered these societies as one; yet linguistically and culturally, these groups differ. Similarly, he discussed all the central Kenya groups like Mbeere, Kikuyu and Meru as being the same. This tended to create a false universal cultural whole comprising of different people. This approach made it difficult to identify and distinguish characteristics specific to Tigania political order. However, his contribution cannot be ignored. For

this study, Lambert's analysis of the age-set systems and '*Kiama*' are significant when looking at the political arrangements within different ethnic groups and how they emerged and also differed in the course of their historical development.

There are few studies committed specifically to different aspects of Meru political organization. These include Kinyua (1970), Mboroki (1972) and Muthamia (1974)⁴. These are unpublished B.A. dissertations. Their work revolves around different aspects of Meru political history and the scope varies from one text to the next. Muthamia's work attempts to show that the Meru evolved political institutions over several years. The treatment of pre-colonial history in Muthamia's dissertation is wide in scope. Only a small portion of his dissertation deals with the pre-colonial period while the remaining larger portion discusses the colonial impact on the Meru as a whole. Muthamia made little effort to identify the functionaries behind the internal dynamics during the colonial era with regard to Tigania sub-ethnic group of the Meru. This was a major historical gap which allowed for a focused study on the process of political bargain between indigenous systems, the functionaries and imperial systems in Tigania society.

The Tigania Njuri Ncheke did not operate in isolation from other smaller councils. This organization was culmination of political order and authority among the Tigania age groups. The council operated in collaboration with other councils and institutions to make the structural whole. The other major office apart from that of the Njuri included the office of the Tigania *Muwee*. However, among the Tigania the religious office was divide into two, thus it constituted the office of the *Muwee* among the Tigania on the right and that of the *Mukiama* among the Tigania on the left. The dual nature of the sovereignty ensured complimentary functioning of the priest and the elder's council. This ordering of social life by dualistic notions of religious authority and secular power of which these figures were exemplar provide notion of political power which was complimented by religious authority. The active role played by these and other smaller institutions within the various men and women councils were key in political evolution, and to some extent evaded the attention of various scholars of Meru society. Kinyua (1970), Mboroki (1972), and Muthamia (1974) give us a traditional picture of the

⁴ The studies by Kinyua, Mboroki and Muthamia have not been put in the bibliography due to some hitch. Once the full details are re-accessed they will be listed.

council of council's however, their works reflect inadequacies that this study seeks to rectify in terms of defining the relations among all the councils using social systems theory. The relevance of their study is that they touch on the nature of this political organization on a wide cross-section of the Meru society. This study paints a more elaborate picture on the process of change of Tigania councils on a generational front.

Historical studies conducted among the Meru gave the political systems of Meru society limited attention with the bulk of the literature discussing the aspect of history under the joint heading of social, economic and political organization. The implication of this, is that, social and political functions are absolutely intertwined without elaborating points of convergence, divergence and change. While one acknowledges the inter-relationship between several institutions, it is possible to distinguish specific features which could allow for a focused study of a people's political organization. Other studies conducted gave the impression that African political systems like other aspects of African history had diffused from other parts of the world. The infamous diffusionist phenomenon made generalized conclusions regarding the study of African history. Although focusing mainly on political developments during the colonial period, the study also illustrated the relationship between social and political systems among the Tigania.

Focusing on studies that exclusively looked into the descriptions of Meru people traditions, the most detailed accounts are those by Fadiman (2012/1993) and Nyaga (1997). The account by Fadiman told of Meru history from oral accounts of the oldest informants, from across all sub-ethnic groups spanning from migration tales, to traditions to the colonial experience. However, when it comes to processes of change (processes of change in political order), Fadiman's account is generalized and does not account for the events in particular sub-ethnic groups like the Tigania. This is an area the current study, especially, makes a contribution since events differed given inherent sub-group differences and the level of their effects also varied.

The account by Nyaga narrates various traditions as lived by the Meru peoples. In his literature, Nyaga presents a general history of Meru traditions covering aspects of practices in the social, economic and political organization. For example, Nyaga has

discussed the idea of having a ruling council in Meru ethnic group and has also given a brief analysis of its functions. However, he failed to adopt a representative approach with regard to distinguishing the nature of hierarchy and functionality of this council among the Tigania. The accounts by Fadiman and Nyaga discussed the overall aspects of Meru community. While this research appreciated this, it intended to contribute on the specific process of political evolution among the Tigania people as triggered by British colonialism.

2.3 Imposition and consolidation of British Colonial Order

The arrival of Edward Horne in Meru in 1908 marked the beginning of colonial control. The extension of franchise in 1910 among the Tigania seemed like a fulfillment of the prophecies that the people would be conquered and subdued (Fadiman, 1993, p. 49, 100). The colonial conquest was an event of great consequence which many were not prepared for Berman (1990), Berman and Lonsdale (1992), Fadiman (1993), Mamdani (1996), Mamdani (2012). The change of face of the colonial institution had major political implications in the development of the colonized groups (Mamdani, 2012). This study examined how these implications affected Tigania society in terms of political order.

Existing studies have taken various positions with regard to the concept of emergence of tribes. Some of these studies includes those by Carola Lentz (2000) who argues that ethnic identities and boundaries were created by the colonialists. Her study which portrays theme use of creationism was based in Ghana. This contrasts the study by Thomas spear (2003) whose findings showed that the ‘invention of tradition’, the making of customary law and the creation of tribalism was a complex discourse in which both partners of colonialism had some roles. Theories such as creationism, inventionism, and instrumentalism have been utilized to this end. In the present case of Tigania sub-ethnic group, the study explored the path adopted by Spear (2003) in order to comprehend their role in the process of colonialism; a major gap that this study intended to fill in relation to the emergence of Tigania sub-ethnic consciousness.

Colonialism previously put into use methods of direct rule before mid-19th century, French assimilation before the early 20th century and later association. These

approaches were unique in two major ways, first they focused on elites rather than the mass of the colonized. Second, they aimed to eradicate difference through a policy of cultural and sometimes political assimilation of the colonized elites (Mamdani, 2012). Colonialism as Practiced in Kenya adopted a unique approach which combined direct and indirect rule. Indirect rule as understood by Mamdani was a system which not only claimed to acknowledge difference but also to shape it. According to Fadiman (2012) Meru society and all its institutions underwent various experiences in the hands of various district commissioners. Some sought without mercy to bring to an end or completely neutralize the existing organizations and practices like *Njuri*, the religious authority of the *Muwee*, feasting of the elders who were seen as lazy, raiding activities and initiation procedures. Trying to change the traditions and customs as practiced for centuries by the Tigania through colonization entailed deep interference hitherto unimaginable to the people. This study analyzed the process of change during the colonial period among the Tigania, who tried countering British colonial activities through silence and defiance but time had caught up with them (ibid).

The stages which the Tigania people underwent in their political development, was a reflection of the impact of internal and external forces in a multiplicity of sites. This research shows why British colonialism had great impact as an external agent. Rodney (1960) has shown that the interaction of internal and external forces transforms a society. However, it was possible to show that factors within and without were responsible for the origin and development of unique and abnormal political order among the Tigania during the colonial period.

To-date, the reconstruction of the pre-colonial and even postcolonial political history of Tigania society remains sketchy and disjointed. The literature review showed that there exists fragmentary information produced by a number of people ranging from trained professional anthropologies, historians, the clergy and colonial administrators. I therefore, built on where they left to reflect on the Tigania condition with emphasis on the entanglement the people found themselves in, between opposing cultural and economic imperatives. The major gap existed on the lack of properly documented literature on the political trends among the Tigania under two major historical epochs

that the Tigania society underwent which included (1) The late precolonial era to early colonial era, and (2) during the colonial era proper.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

The study utilized four theories to explain the evolution and the emergence of the post emergency Tigania society. They include social system theory by Francis Abraham', instrumentalist theory by Thomas Spear, masculinity theorization as understood by Paul Ocobock and Peter Ekeh's theory of Colonialism and the two publics in Africa. The social systems theory by Francis Abraham enabled the study describe institutional order within the precolonial Tigania society. According to Abraham, a social system, is system of action which may be delineated as follows: (1) Individuals in their roles are organized to form what is called (2) collectivities. Both roles and collectivities however, are subject to ordering and control by (3) norms which are differentiated according to the functions of these units and to their situations, and by (4) values which define the desirable kind of systems relations. It is appreciated that systems are prone to change, as individuals or collectivities come under varied social, political or environmental pressures. The analysis of Tigania social order as provided in this research only provided a tentative understanding of this group as understood (remembered) by elders in the present and as gleaned from the key historical texts on the Meru, namely; Lambert (1947), Bernadi (1959) Fadiman (1993), Nyaga (1994). Even though Francis Abraham theory was sufficient to explain 'the political order among the precolonial Tigania' his theory suffered limitations in helping the study cater for the dynamism of changing conditions such as those brought by, migration and settlement, trade, conflicts, clan fluidity and colonisation. This weakness was mitigated for by instrumentalist theory of ethnicity which was employed to explain the exigencies of change in Tigania political order under the setting of colonialism.

Ethnic groups are said to form in various fashions and also change over time. One school of thought that explains ethnic formation is the instrumentalist theory of ethnicity. According to instrumentalists, ethnicity is a device used by individuals and groups to unify, organize and mobilize populations to achieve larger goals. These goals could be of political nature and often included demands of self-governance, autonomy, access to resources and power and respect to group's identity and culture (Spear, 2003,

p. 24). In his formulation Spear viewed ethnic concepts in Africa as discourses which had been evolving from the pre-colonial period to the colonial times and further into the post-colonial era. These changes which were largely skewed towards adaptation depended on causality. Some of the causal conditions were regional exchange, wars and conflicts, dispersion, migration settlement, clan networks which were largely fluid, colonization and its forms. The development of Tigania sub-ethnic group in the three epochs therefore had its integrity, structural principles, transformative processes and a history. But colonial rule often had the effects of transforming preexisting concepts of relations. Ethnicity both, in its conception primordial and instrumental has continually been reinterpreted and reconstructed over time in such a way to appear timeless and legitimate. Contending parties applied ethnicity in complex processes of selection and representation that lay at the core of people's collective historical consciousness and struggles for power, meaning and access to resources (Spear, 2003).

How did the Tigania emerge in the period after their settlement in the area identified as Tigania? How did the migration and settlement of the other Meru groups transform the original Tigania migrant group? How did the Tigania forge their identity in the 20th century to become distinct and autonomous in comparison to the fluidity of the previous era? In other words, what did it mean to be a Tigania? The instrumentalist theory enabled the study figure out possible hints on these intricate processes. The study, by taking both the Tigania traditional order and British imperialism as male centered edifices, used the concept of masculinity as a theoretical tool to interrogate the nature of system relations and interactions occasioned by *jembe na kalamu* revolution. Many studies, while acknowledging that there exists a plurality of masculinities, have appropriated its promise. This study employed the concept of masculinity as understood by Paul Ocobock (2017). Colonialism introduced many contradictions to the social, economic and political spheres of colonized people. According to Ocobock these contradictions were dynamic, multifaceted and largely uncontrolled. They strained generational relations especially among males and led to confrontations which upset existing communal relations. This created new frontiers of conflict which pitted the existing communal organization like age-groups, with new external forces like colonial institutions, officials, economy and religious missions. The nature of the conflict in

Tigania took a generational dimension. Generational conflict was the face of the conflict and force of political change.

The Tigania society was entangled in an ending conflict in two frontiers. The first involved generational confrontations. The second front involved Tigania men against the external forces. The conflict was on how the age-groups could retain and sustain the communal benefits. In the emerging, society how the young would come of age and achieve manhood. The source of the conflict was colonial edifice which upset Tigania social and political organization. Colonialism in the endeavor to extract from the colonized opened new frontiers of conflict which involved redirecting production and general social and political organization. Reinvention redirected the society in ways hitherto unimagined and which toppled the pre-colonial order. The struggle raged leading to the expulsion of the colonizer but his institutions and systems remained.

These frontiers of conflict were new to the people and dynamic, touching the core of the previous order. Since its onset, colonialism had implications on individuals and larger communal systems of organization and control. But how order in the Tigania would be retained proved most challenging. The ensuing conflict was male dominated with the effects percolating the various cadres of social and politic systems in an (un)conscious manner. This created a phenomenon of new (dis)order and unpredictability in individual and group actions and conduct. The theory of two publics enabled the study elaborate the emerging society.

The theory of two publics contends that the colonial experience and its aftermath led to the emergence of a unique historical configuration in modern postcolonial Africa. Precisely colonialism brought into existence two publics in Africa instead of one public which, this study argues existed. This can also be in comparison to the western countries which are largely consolidated democracies of one public, where the private realm and public realm have a common moral foundation. This study agrees with peter ekeh's assertion that, many of Africa's political problems are due to the dialectical relationships between the two publics which have different moral linkages in their primordial and public spheres (Ekeh, 1975). He continues to postulate that in the postcolonial Africa the private and the primordial public sphere share a morality that

do not extend to the state realm. This study employed these theoretical tools using the strength of each in order to understand how colonialism triggered the process of political and moral change in Tigania society.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the location of study, research design, population, sampling procedure and sample size, instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis and ethical considerations are discussed.

3.2 Location of the Study

This study was carried out in Tigania East and Tigania West constituencies which are located within Meru County. These areas are occupied by Tigania people who speak Tigania dialect of Kimeru language. Tigania East and west have an approximated total population of 317250 people occupying an area of 1030 square kilometers (KNBS, 2019). Tigania society borders Igembe to the North, Imenti to the West and Tharaka to the south. Tigania constituency was created in 1986 after an Act of Parliament Number 14 of 1986 amended the constitution and allowed a minimum of 168 constituencies and a maximum of 188. Tigania East constituency was created in 1996 after another act of parliament of 1990 allowed a minimum of 188 constituencies and a maximum of 210. According to IEBC records the constituencies were in line due to a corresponding increase in population and the need to bring government services closer to the people. Figure 1 identifies the study area.

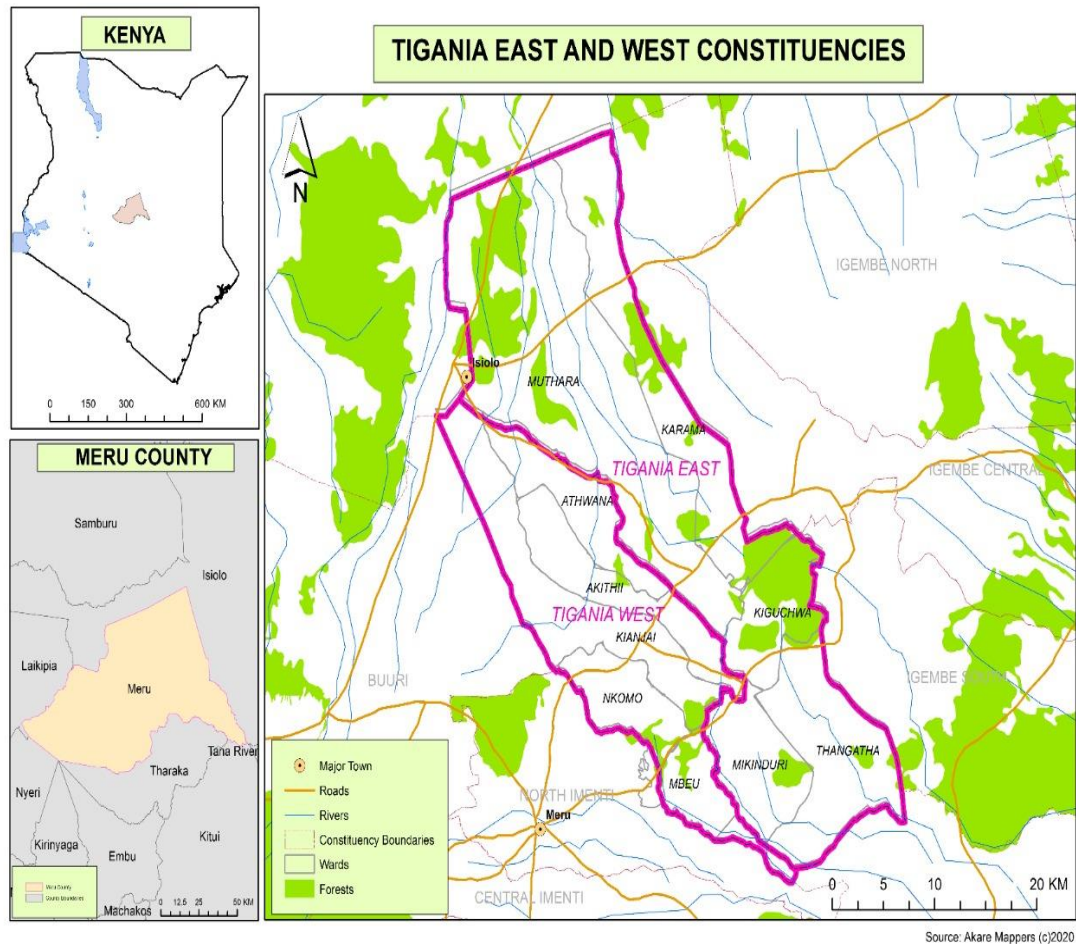


Figure 1: Map Showing the study area

Source: Akare Mappers

3.3 Research Design

The study adopted the use of descriptive research design. Through this design the study analyzed data qualitatively through description (ibid). Kathuri and Pals (1993) concluded that descriptive design is scientific and when systematically utilized gives highly reliable results. This design was applied in this study as the researcher intended to collect, analyze and describe the evolution of political order among the Tigania.

3.4 Population

The target population for this study was the elders above the age of 75 years. This was not a strict categorization as the informants were principally arrived at through snowballing. For example, where an informant of a younger age-group benefited in obtaining information relevant to the present research due to some circumstances for example being an offspring of an important informant who had since departed or was

indisposed or incapable of being interviewed for whatever reason) such an informant, even though younger was interviewed. It is expected, though, that such cases (of informants younger than 75years) were not significant in number.

3.5 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

This research was qualitative hence was interview based. The concept of data saturation was used to purposively pick the respondents who had the most relevant information to the study. The sample size therefore to achieve data saturation is arrived at when all major themes and feelings have been exploited in the oral interviews (Donna, 2013). Information at the point of data saturation begin to become repetitive, therefore more interviews cannot yield any new information. The researcher managed to interview 80 persons on the bases of the concept of data saturation.

The study gathered data from individuals who were above 75 years of age. Individuals in this subgroup were believed to hold information relevant to the study for they are well versed with the history of Tigania society as they witnessed or were told by their grandparents.

The researcher used two sampling techniques, purposive and snowballing/chain sampling to select various individuals like former MPs, offspring of colonial chiefs, retired government officers, Njuri elders, individuals from special clans and families and the eldest to respond to the various questions of the study. Kombo and Tromp (2006) contend that these methods are decisive in getting information rich sources. Due to the varied nature of individuals who the study intended to interview purposive sampling was best suited for such variations. The criteria for choosing the respondents were gender, education, and experience in local issues, age group and clan. The few who went to school in the colonial period and were initiated into Tigania customs proved most reliable to the researcher. The use of snowballing came against a backdrop where few individuals identified via purposive sampling mentioned new contacts which were spread all over Tigania.

3.6 Research Instruments

The study mainly utilized open ended interviews guided by interview schedule for primary data collection. An interview schedule was used to conduct interviews which were both formal and informal. The interview schedule contained open-ended and closed questions. Oso and Onen (2013) observe that interview guides are prepared especially where the study is concerned with views, perceptions or feelings and when variables cannot be directly observed. The use of interview schedule that is formal, open-ended and closed-ended enables the researcher to get a complete and detailed understanding of the issue under research. Closed-ended interviews were used to obtain specific information for example biographical information i.e. age, number of children, clan, age group etc. The open-ended interview schedule was used to explore the questions on political organization of the Tigania and their transformation. Where allowed by the informant, the interview was recorded using phone voice recorder and stored in a memory card.

3.7 Data Collection Procedures

The researcher obtained an introduction letter from the university which was used to obtain a research permit from National Council for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). Data for this study was obtained from three major sources, oral, archival and secondary sources.

3.7.1 Oral Sources

Oral data was collected from the chosen respondents. The researcher notified the area chiefs of the visits and the purpose of the research was fully explained. The respondents were also notified of the intended interview a day earlier to avoid inconveniences. Chapter four of this research mainly depended on information based on oral interviews. Oral interviews were especially critical to the researcher as they aided identify contradictions of the colonial era.

3.7.2 Archival Sources

Data was also collected from archival sources. A research permit was acquired from the Kenya National Archives in Nairobi. The researcher visited the Archives to read documents related to Tigania people's leadership traditions and culture as recorded by

the colonial agents, their assistants, missions, and pioneers of African sponsored institutions like schools and churches. Membership to the Kenya National Archives (KNA) Nairobi, Kenya National Library Services (Meru and Nairobi) University of Nairobi Library Depository, Kenya Methodist University Library Kaaga Meru (The Meru Cultural Archives/Depository in this Library), Meru Museum, Equator Museum in Meru and The Nairobi Museum. Permission to access private papers and documents by former chiefs and administrators assisted the researcher in the collaborative effort. Archival data was mainly used in the writing of chapter five and six.

3.7.3 Secondary Sources

Secondary data was obtained from various sources including E-books found in the internet, Published books in libraries, newspaper articles, documentaries, journals, unpublished theses and papers.

3.8 Data Analysis

Data for this study was majorly, qualitatively sourced from oral interviews and archival sources. The analysis was an ongoing process even as data was being collected in terms of grouping it into themes, further readings, re-interviewees, in-depth-analysis and content and context analysis. Data informing this study took a historical trajectory thus interpretive analysis and thematic description were the main modules of analysis. According to (Kombo & Tromp, 2006) interpretive analysis relates one event to another. The event is studied and described within a broader context to add meaning and credibility to the data. Findings from the study were therefore thematically presented after all interpretation and corroboration had been done.

3.9 Logistics and Ethical Consideration

A research permit was also acquired from the National Council for Science, Technology and Innovation. An introduction letter was availed to the respondents before the interview and focus group discussion.

Ethical consideration in research gives researcher's guidelines to ensure that research is carried out in the best interest of the respondents (Stewart, 1990). Informed consent is an ethical requirement which demands that respondents in a research be allowed the

choice to participate or not participate in a research after receiving full information about the possible risks and benefits of their participation (Stewart, 1990). To get the consent of the respondents the researcher; gave a clarification that the study involved a research, gave an explanation of the purpose of the research, gave a description of the foreseeable risks and discomforts, followed Tigania cultural code of approaching the elderly where gifts of food and firewood were presented, explained to the respondents the extent to which the records would be kept confidential including a description of which information would be diverged according to ethics of Tigania custom, description of who would be able to access the research findings and last the respondents were given freedom to choose whether to participate or not to participate in the study.

Confidentiality denotes the researcher's ethical obligation to keep the respondents' identity and responses private (Stewart, 1990). In this study the respondents were assured of confidentiality of the information they gave. To maintain this confidentiality, anonymity of the respondents was maintained by giving them an option to indicate their names or not in the interview schedule and by grouping the data rather than presenting individual responses. About thirty interviewees who due to their allegiance to tradition gave interviews but refused their details to be divulged in any way. Information related to custom especially Njuri practices, special clans, initiation procedures and consequences of breaking blood ties remains secretive. Njuri conduct and activities in Tigania have always been guarded and limited to its members since its conception.

To observe the ethical issues around plagiarism the researcher practiced proper citation of sources and giving credit to the original author.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRE-COLONIAL POLITICAL ORDER AMONG THE TIGANIA UP TO 1910

4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the social-political system of the Tigania community before colonization. According to Mwaniki, this community has been living in the area designated as Tigania roughly since migration and settlement in the fifteenth century (Mwaniki, 2010). The chapter will address fundamental questions of governance such as what were the key political groups and how they are conceptualized in social systems theory as collectivities. What accounts for their size and cohesiveness? How are power and authority distributed and exercised, curbed or resisted according to the ‘principle of values’ which in social systems theory defines the desirable kind of system relations? How are disputes which would distract communal peace settled and order restored? How effectively and in whose interest? And how are the institutions, principles, rules and procedures for maintaining law and order sustained, reproduced or changed according to norms of situational dictates but which must maintain values? These issues are especially compelling when a political system exhibits as does that of precolonial Tigania remarkable structural and cultural continuities, and apparently, a binding concern for containing and resolving conflicts and minimizing violence.

The entities usually referred to as clans found throughout Tigania were homogenous polities. This chapter also considered the sociological phenomenon of how individuals in the community shared a common allegiance and achieved group solidarity. My general formulation deliberately invited the description of age group ties which varied and influenced economic and social ties among generations. Interference with these as will be shown in subsequent chapter’s precipitated contradictions to social order in the colonial era. Clans varied in their criteria of membership and idioms of identity. Many of them in this area were conceptualized as large descent groups bound by blood relations. If one therefore, wishes to understand political action in this area one must think of clans as large kin groups, organized and regulated according to ties of blood and family lineage. As in other parts of the world, topography, climate, flora and fauna influenced economic activities and ultimately impacted on inter-clan relations (Goldschmidt & Davidson, 2010, p. 6).

Becoming a Tigania was a complex process. Thus, my approach in this chapter utilized social systems theory to explain the process in a way that the whole is visualized. The tenets of the theory are (1) individuals are organized (2) to form collectivities. Both roles and collectivities are however subject to ordering and control by (3) norms which are differentiated according to functions of these units and their situations (4) by values which define the desirable kind of systems relations (Abraham, 1981).

4.2 Environment and Economy among the Pre-colonial Tigania

Tigania is made up of two constituencies- Tigania East and Tigania West. The area has small flatland, sharply rising hills and valleys that are spread throughout the area. Nyambene Ranges ascend from across the wards of Kianjai, Kiguchwa, Karama, Thangatha and Muthara. These mountain Ranges have steep valleys which stretch to Igembe in the North. According to Benard (1972, p. 17, 18) the Nyambene Range is an elongated volcanic feature, which rises sharply above the surrounding plateau surface to a height of about 8200 feet. These Ranges have thick forests which provide the vast forest cover in the area. Sizable forests include Ithungu, Keiga and Kianjai. Smaller hills are numerous and most have little or no forest cover. Nyambene forest is the main water catchment area and acts as the source of almost all the rivers and springs known in the region. This culture of the highland gives way to the very different culture in the plains which the residents refer to as *rwaanda*/dry place. Most people in the highland area are farmers while those in the plains practice (d) mixed agriculture. In the drier parts that border Isiolo and Imenti North, such as Muthara and Kianjai, pastoralism has remained an important economic activity.

Depending on the respondents stand point the referencing of peoples was either right or left. At any point in time, any group within this area referred to itself as the 'right' and referred to the others as people of the 'left'. The pre-colonial Tigania used the right or left connotations in reference to their distant neighbors. Those in today's Kiguchwa, Thangatha, Muthara wards referred to those in the current Mikinduri, Mbeu, Akithii, Kianjai and Nkomo ward as the people of the left or *umotho* (Thurwa, O.I., 2019). The people in Kianjai and Akithii referred to people of Muthara, kiguchwa, Mikinduri, Athwana and Karama as the people of the left while regarding themselves as the right, *urio* (Kaunyangi, O.I., 2019). Those in Muthara referred the people in the lower zones

of Kiguchwa, Athwana and Mikinduri as people of *maitii*/lower region where the rains are plenty (Mutabari, O.I., 2019). According to Domiciano (O.I., 2019) the terms left and right are discriminative terms used for identification and directional purposes. Moreover, right is associated with power, authority and dominance.⁵ However, it should be noted that the current boundaries were unknown and clan land transcended the current boundaries. This referencing system therefore was in terms of the geographical location of the clan, either in ‘our left hand or on our right hand’. Many clans therefore regarded themselves as the people in the right (ibid).

The rains are not equally distributed in these wards. Kiguchwa and Thangatha wards receive the highest amount and Muthara and Kianjai receiving the lowest. Traditional crops like millet, cowpeas, yams, black beans, beans, sorghum, and wild fruits formed the main staples among pre-colonial Tigania.⁶ Millet was an important subsistence crop for it was used to make beer and gruel. Its flour was mixed with black peas to make a healthy meal, known for giving strength and medicinal properties. Indeed, millet, sorghum and black peas were so important that elders could postpone circumcision in seasons of dearth. They were also a significant dietary requirement for women in the post-natal period. Obviously then, they performed an important role in the social reproduction of the clan.⁷ Milk from cows also provided vital nutrition. The long-horned cattle known as *zebus* as well as sheep and goats were also kept. Sheep and goats were used for sacrificial purposes such as invoking blessings and curses, reading omens, cleansing, in rituals of adoption into blood-brotherhood and peace making. Payment of dowry and fines was also executed by use of sheep and goats. They therefore played a central role in family and clan affairs. Not to possess them in reasonable numbers spelt doom for families. Animals also provided the basic means of exchange. Due to the value attached to these animals, they were coveted by many and majorly used as a measure of the wealth one owned. Indeed, their presence dictated an

⁵ Oral Tradition indicates that children born left-handed were beaten, left-handed warriors were never appointed as commanders of fighting units (Alumina, O.I., 2019).

⁶ Wild bananas, reddish in color, were also widely consumed. However, bananas were not indigenous to Kenya. It is probable that the crop was introduced to Central Kenya by either the Arabs or the Kamba engaged in the Long-distance trade between the coast and the interior (Kaunyangi & Thurwa, O.I., 2019).

⁷ By providing nutrition to initiates and breastfeeding mothers.

individual's or family or clan upward mobility. It can be legitimately argued that social and economic progression/ stagnation was dependent on sheep and goats.⁸

Miraa which is a stimulant was also grown in some parts of Igembe and Tigania and was only chewed by the elders (Miller, 1995, Neil, 2005, p. 1, Mwirabua, O.I., 2019). Miraa was used for cultural practices⁹, for instance, it was given as a gift to elders by visiting elders, it was used for marriage proposals and was also used in administering oaths, its value among the Tigania and Igembe to the present day cannot be over-emphasized (ibid). Population estimates for 1910 show that Tigania people were less than 30000. Figures from district report of 1925 indicate that the total population of Tigania division as was then known was 27,437 (DC/MRU/1925). This implies that land was in plenty and forest cover widespread. Traditional methods of farming like leaving land to fallow and regain its fertility could have only worked with such low population figures. Land and family property were inherited by firstborn sons and also sometimes shared between the sons. Land was a precious resource- it was fundamental for the survival and a marker of family and clan territory and history (Domiciano, O.I., 2019). It belonged to the clan and was never owned individually. It was by all intent and purposes indivisible.¹⁰

4.3 The Migration and Settlement of the Ngaa People

The migration and settlement of Kenyan communities in their current locations was largely dependent on two major developments in the course of history of these communities. First, the evolution of food-producing societies and second the introduction of metal working technology and especially iron working (Ochieng, 1990, p. 1). These two factors enabled varied migration patterns to thrive under the conditions prevailing during these eras. According to Ochieng (1990, p. 1) and Ogot (1976), archaeologists in colonial Kenya, such as Dr. Louis Leakey, did important studies on Stone Age races of Kenya and Africa. These studies which focused on the Origin of Man and Stone Age Cultures had little to tell us about Iron Age in Kenya. Hence threw

⁸ See Paul Ocobock, *An Uncertain Age: The Politics of Manhood in Kenya*. Athens, Ohio University Press, 2017.

⁹ On the uses of Miraa, see, Mwaniki Henry: *Traditional functions of the controversial miraa among the Igembe of Meru, Kenya*. Unpublished seminar paper, Kenyatta University, October (1986)

¹⁰On the indivisibility of land, see Monica Duffy Toft, *the Geography of Ethnic Violence: Identity, Interests, and the indivisibility of Territory*. Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2003.

little light on the early history of the present inhabitants of Kenya. These studies also did not provide evidence that can enable historians reconstruct the migratory path of Kenyan peoples in the period after 1200 AD. This era is often associated with movement of these peoples from their points of dispersal and the available history that concerns their migration is mainly oral and therefore contestable.

The migration of Ngaa to their present locations is a complex dichotomy. It is generally accepted that the Bantu dispersed from West Africa in several waves of dispersal and migration. The exact geographical position therefore as pertains where the Ngaa ancestors migrated from after the initial Bantu expansion in West Africa is uncertain (Shillington, 2005). The drying of Sahara and ensuing pressure from the immigration of the people from Sahara into the adjacent region of West Africa, may have forced people to move into the rainforests of Central Africa (Schapera, 1959). The probability therefore that the Ngaa ancestors moved from West Africa, to Central Africa through Ethiopia in the second phase of migration then into Kenya, into Eastern Mt Kenya is a highly probable scenario but historians are yet to ascertain this theory. The central Kenya communities that is Kikuyu, Meru, Embu, Mbeere, Tharaka and Chuka according to their settlement pattern in the Eastern Mount Kenya region and also their lingual similarities indicate a people with a striking resemblance in their place of origin (Mwaniki, 2010, p. 110). The period of arrival of these groups in Mt Kenya region varied depending on the route groups took but is also a strong indicator of shared history (Ibid).

During the Ngaa migration from Ethiopia, it is acknowledged that there occurred a split within the Ngaa clans. The cause of the split is said to be the routes taken to the present destinations. The pre-Tigania, pre-chuka, pre-Tharaka and the pre-Igembe are said to have moved from Lorian swamp in Ethiopia and settled in their current locations by taking a shorter route to East of Mt Kenya (Mwaniki, 2010). Other Ngaa clans followed the longer route to the Kenyan coast up the Manda Island where they settled and were later enslaved by the *Nguo Ntune*.¹¹ Due to this enslavement this group had to move in order to escape the torture they were experiencing under the *Nguo Ntune* hegemony. Led by a wise man often remembered as Koome Njoe, the group decided to move up

¹¹ Arabs in Meru Traditions.

from the coast following the source of River Tana (Equator Museum, Meru). The movement of these Ngaa clans led them to pass through Ukambani, Mbeere, Embu, Tharaka and Chuka (Ibid). The subsequent activities in this region had a lot of influence on the Ngaa:

As the Ngaa moved, they impinged upon a territory then inhabited by two other peoples, subsequently to be known as the Cuka (or Chuka) and Tharaka. These groups had migrated and settled in Mt Kenya earlier than the Meru who arrived in the region in the period between 1500 and 1700 AD. Initially, the Ngaa appear to have been drawn towards the shelter of Mount Kenya's forest. Tradition states that they first settled at a point along the lower forest fringes, where they encountered the already resident Cuka. After a severe clash, the Cuka drove the migrants off; the Ngaa fled downhill into the plain, then north into the area now known as Tharaka. Traditions from both societies confirm they lived in harmony and that considerable intermarriage occurred. Perhaps, for this reason and many others, the earlier unity of the Ngaa gradually dissolved, and they entered an era recalled in both Meru and Tharaka traditions as 'the time of dividing' (Meru: *kagairo*; Tharaka; *igaironi*). (Fadiman, in ogot 1976, p. 151; Fadiman, 1993, p. 63).

According to Ochieng (1990) the split that occurred among the ngaa as they stayed in Tharaka was probably caused by overcrowding as people sought new spaces and better economic opportunities elsewhere. It is also probable that the disunity might have been as a result of inability by groups to withstand the harsh weather (Mwongo, O.I., 2018). Thurwa, Kaunyangi and Mbabu (O.I., 2019) explained that an internal feud not necessarily war among young men in a feast caused a bloody fight that unsettled the existing communal harmony among the Ngaa clans in Tharaka. The fight greatly annoyed the elders who were shocked by the turn of events and bloodshed experienced among the people.

The institution of *gichiaro* or blood brotherhood to curb such incidences was what the elders thought would ensure future discipline amongst the young men. With wide differences in play and also clear from the bloodshed, thoughts of fragmentation preoccupied elders who thought of future alliances and dignified, orderly migrations (Kaunyangi, O.I., 2019). However, how such a dignified spread would occur was a major concern that preoccupied the thoughts of leaders of the Bwaa group. The respondents agree that the long stay in Tharaka must have exposed the leaders of the Bwaa group to how the Tharaka people were able to maintain group solidarity and also relate peacefully with the neighbors who are the Tigania, Mbeere and the Chuka.

Informed men wisdom according to the respondents to the present and past researches was learned and acquired from a special clan residing in Tigania. This wisdom, learnt from men of experience, was known as *ukuru* (Thurwa, O.I., 2019).

The institution of *gichiaro* and military alliances as *ukuru* therefore provided the leaders of this group with the remedy they needed to ensure peaceful separation, co-existence in the future and also the much-needed assurance of security. According to Kaunyangi (O.I., 2019) the need for security was what necessitated many other military alliances between the Bwaa group and the already resident groups. New military alliances among various clans began from this period and were binding because of the bonding rituals undertaken. The explanation therefore as to what triggered the fragmentation is twofold; scarcity of supplies occasioned by the long stay in Tharaka which is dry and second, simply, the various components of the migrant group were faced with the lure of a wholly new type of topography (Fadiman, 1993, p. 65).

During the era of *kagairo/separation* the Bwaa group is said to have crossed to Tigania from Tharaka (Kaunyangi, O.I., 2019). The movement from Tharaka to Tigania is said to have reunited the Ngaa clans but not as strongly as intended. The separation period up to the reunion time is estimated to be between 200-250 years. This re-union is what gave Tigania the famous name of *micii mikuru* or old families. The incoming clans were referred to as *miiriga mieru* or new clans (Kaunyangi, O.I., 2019). The varied migration between the two groups is often cited as having created ‘major’ differences between the Ngaa clans.

Evidence from the chronological arrangement of the Meru age groups done by Lambert points out that the migration processes for the Bwaa clans began in the period 1500AD. By this period of time the pre¹²-Tigania, pre-Igembe, pre-Chuka and the pre-Tharaka were already settled in their current locations. Previous studies indicate that the Bwaa group fought the Chuka and were welcomed by the Tharaka indicating that the Chuka and the Tharaka were already settled before the arrival of the Bwaa group of the Ngaa. Chuka and Mbeere informants to earlier researches record long periods of interaction

¹² Pre as been used to imply, before various groups began to refer to themselves by the current names. Eg Tigania were –Igania, Chuka were-Cuka. This was before 1900

through *gichiaro*, trade, cooperation and military alliances with the Tigania and the Igembe. This gives a strong backing that the Bwaa group of the Ngaa arrived later (Muru, Njeru, Mbungu, Mutua, Kithinji, O.I., 1981- in Mwaniki, 2004). The settlement pattern of the Bwaa clans is also a strong indicator of the migration pattern among the pre-Meru. Among the original settler clans in Tigania and Igembe, the Bwaa story of origin is unrecognized. These clans point to the area around Kianjai ward, in today's Tigania West as the place where they entered Nyambene forests from (Ikiugu, Mwirabua, Ciakwalu, O.I., 2019). Through adoption, settlement and marriage of a few Bwaa clans into the original Igembe and Tigania clans is what makes the Bwaa migration narrative popular among the current Meru (Thurwa & Kaunyangi, O.I., 2019).

According to Kaunyangi, Ciakwalu, Chunkubitu, Ratanya, Alumina and Mwongo (O.I., 2019) the final official separation/spread of the Bwaa group of the Ngaa happened in Tigania in a forest named *Ithu*. The Meru DC, Mr. Mckeag buttresses this, he stated

The Ameru claim in their legend that they originated from the island of Mbwa on the coast. However, it is unlikely that the various Meru groups came from Mbwa. The Mbwa tradition probably refers to a small group which has since been absorbed into the main Meru stream. The mostly likely situation is that the Ameru evolved in the Igembe/Tigania area (DC/MRU/1939).

The existence of *gichiaro* bond among the pre-Tigania, pre-Igembe, pre-Tharaka and Pre-Chuka as a way of maintaining military alliances and peace might have forced the leaders of the Bwaa group to adopt the same concept when they crossed to Tigania. Deep consultations between elders from both sides resulted in what became a reunion through peace rituals. Ritual elders who had deep knowledge of how *gichiaro*/blood oaths operated are said to have officiated over the process of instituting *gichiaro* bond among the various clans. The reason why the oaths were not administered after the first fragmentation in Tharaka lay in the fluid nature of clans in this period. Procedures of clan differentiation and how oaths involving new and fluid allies, must have been a difficulty dichotomy.¹³ Also, deep knowledge of the clans' relations was believed to be held by the *micii mikuru* clans. Due caution was to be observed in the whole process in order to safeguard the special clans from taking any form of oath (Mbaabu, O.I., 2019).

¹³ On formation of new societies in central Kenya, see Charles Ambler, Kenya Communities in the Age of Imperialism. The Central Region in the Late Nineteenth Century (1988).

There were clans known for producing special personalities within these clans and hence had to be carefully distinguished through thorough understanding of their genealogies before committing any into rituals.

The feud among the young men highly necessitated the adoption of blood brotherhood as a way of maintaining peace among the Bwaa clans. According to respondents, the practice of *gichiaro* among the Tigania clans was strong due to the many wars they had to endure, and especially from the Maasai. These adapting procedures were important. They were aimed at promoting internal unity and group solidarity for survival. It should however be noted that the Ngaa in general were mainly composed of clans and if there were cultural differences existing among them, then they must have been occasioned by contacts made in the course of the migration and also in the processes of adoption and settlement.

The adoption and settlement of newcomer clans into *micii mikuru* was because old clans held huge tracks of land in comparison to their population. After the Bwaa group of the Ngaa fragmented to form more Pre-Meru groups some clans were left without land. Some of these clans settled in today's Tigania and others in Igembe. These landless clans according to Thurwa (O.I., 2019) had to be accommodated by *micii mikuru* after wandering for long without a place to settle after the official fragmentation in *Ithu* forest. It should however be noted that land was in plenty. Temporary landlessness was experienced because available land on the upper parts near the forest fringes was already occupied by the first groups to arrive hence the later groups had to contend with settlement on the lower regions. This land problem can be associated with the past habit among the pre-Meru of settling near forest fridges for enhanced security. The *Antubaita* clan for example was said to have wandered for some time without land of their own. The *gichiaro* that exist between the clans of *Antubaita* and *Kitharene* in today's Kiguchwa and Mikinduri wards was instituted to ensure that the land given to the *Antubaita* by the ruling elders then remained theirs and there was to be no future squabbles over the same (Thurwa, O.I., 2019). These new clans were peacefully incorporated into the older, already settled clans. This type of *gichiaro* was said not to have been so complex so as to prevent intermarriages amongst the two groups (ibid).

According to Mwongo (O.I., 2018) the reason why the Tigania presided over major functions among the pre-colonial Meru is because the former were regarded by the rest of the sub-groups to have preserved most of the communal customs and invented others. The respondents also reckoned that the majority of the special Ngaa clans moved with the *micii mikuru*. The Bwaa clans of the Ngaa in the course of their migration were ‘thought’ to have lost some elements of the original cultural practices because many instances of deviancy were recorded. It should be noted that the new comer clans were not able to adopt deeply and seriously into customs. Purity was a crucial part of the living then, and may have been taken lightly by the newcomer clans. Among the pre-Meru, the precolonial ‘Cuka’ were thought to borrow a lot from Pre-colonial Tigania. Many respondents to the present study and previous studies observe that the precolonial ‘Cuka’ were always in consultation with the pre-colonial Tigania over various communal functions. The precolonial Chuka muwee, circumcisers and other leaders had to confirm for example what names to give to the various age-groups only after consulting the pre-colonial Tigania muwee who weighed on these and other various issues as brought to him by the pre-colonial Chuka leaders.

The constant threats the pre-colonial Chuka faced from the Embu might have forced them into an alliance with the Tigania (Mwaniki, 2010, p. 66). The seniority of the pre-Tigania muwee and other ritual leaders was said to be as a result of deep knowledge they held about various issues, innovativeness and also the intactness of the preservation of cultural values (Mbaabu, O.I., 2019). Colonial records indicated that the system of government as practiced in pre-Tigania and Pre-Igembe was very different from the system in the other parts of pre-Meru. Up to date the Chuka have their portion of Land in Mikinduri, in Kiriene where these meetings were held. Among the pre-Meru for example circumcision began in Tigania among the *Antuanyaga* clan (Nyaga, 1997). After this clan had circumcised, the circumcision season would be allowed to proceed in other clans including pre-Igembe and the pre-Chuka which had relations with the Tigania. The place/role of the Tigania clans among the pre-Meru should be further investigated. This is necessary due to the complex nature of relations existing then partially occasioned by the migration process and settlement patterns.

Mahner (1975) observed that the composition of the Tigania was and remains controversial. The migration of the Tigania and Igembe was much more complex than is often narrated through the Bwaa and Lorian swamp narratives. The elements of the insider and the outsider among the pre-Tigania¹⁴ complicates the migration story and also the clan composition among the first pre-Tigania settlers. The fragmentation of the Bwaa group of the Ngaa happened while the first pre-Tigania clans were already settled in their current location. The composition of the pre-Tigania clans is also further complicated by the migratory pattern of the proto Gikuyu, Embu, Mbeere, Tharaka and the Chuka. This is because all these groups are said to first have momentarily settled in Kiguchwa ward in today's location named *Micii Mikuru* before proceeding with their journey to their current locations (Mwaniki, 2010). From this relationship that is traced back in Ethiopia, it is historically possible that the central Kenya communities were once one group but fragmented to be what they are today.

A question still remains, however, as to the reason for this Ngaa fragmentation. Why would migrants, sharing language, culture, and a common past trek for many years through what must have seemed an arid wilderness only to break apart upon reaching more promising land? Neither the Meru nor Tharaka chronicles provide reasons for such fragmentation, other than to confirm it was not caused by a major war. Mwongo (O.I., 2018) explained that the topography which was rugged and vast provided the separating groups with limited opportunities for regrouping. Also, the lack of geographical knowledge of the area and thickly bushes implies that it took long to establish proper communication routes for re-unification purposes. By the time proper modules of communication adaptable to all the separating groups and suitable to the topography were established implies that each sub group had already settled and reinvention within the group was already taking place cementing the fate of the pre-Meru (ibid). Second, it is possible that, since the advent of the migration of the Mbwaa group, under the council of elders and guardianship of Koome Njoe did not anticipate the possibility of a fragmentation due to the existing group unity. The customs and the tradition hence did not put a precedent which would bind the Ngaa people moving forward into the future. The lack of a preceding custom which would bind the group during the migration thus enhanced the power of the future challenges such as those

¹⁴ Pre-Tigania implies before the name Tigania was adopted.

posed by the topography to speed up further disintegration of the Ngaa. The largely peaceful migration from the coast must have blurred the leadership.

The pattern of the movement of the Bwaa group of the Ngaa indicates a people who moved up the springs and rivers. The culture of farming which was a major way of food production must have been a key factor in determining the course of the migration. After the settlement of the various migrating groups the movement up the mountains and upstream continued to break the Meru into distinct groups. The first groups to enter primarily came as hunters armed with bows, arrows and knives since at the time they neither had war clubs, spears or shields. According to (Fadiman, in Ogot 1976, p. 152) customs of the Ngaa dictated that each family within a migrant group, camp first along the forest edge. Each male on entering the forest would then mark out a hunting area with an axe and fire stick, the fringe of which would be cultivated by his wives. This way, the exploitation of land would follow a predictable pattern.

Hunters within each group and area would push steadily deeper into the forest. The agriculturalists would eventually follow, clearing new land when that previously cultivated became exhausted. Fadiman is of the view that by following this pattern of settlement, bands of migrants became increasingly isolated from one another losing contact with all but those adjacent to themselves. The sequence of settling in the forest followed a pattern where one group kept on moving to give space to another group between the hunters and the farmers. This buttresses the observation by Ochieng (1990) that continued fragmentation among the migrating was due to pressure. Therefore, in order to ease pressure on the available land and resources groups kept on moving.

According to (Fadiman, in Ogot 1976, p. 153) the topography of Mt Kenya which is divided into steep, precipitous ridges separated by swift moving rivers enabled the continued fragmentation of the Ngaa families and clans. Various traditions invariably declare that their ancestors settled in their respective sections by moving up along rivers. This seem consistent with their behavior throughout the migration and helps answer the harder question as to why the pre-Meru leadership was not able to hold the group together and why fragmentation was unstoppable. It is not hard to imagine fragmentation occurring when faced with many smaller water systems from a single

water system (ibid). The new environment separated the migrants who slowly but surely drifted out of contact with one another. This is how the common identity disappeared and each group gradually become distinct.

4.4 The System of Government among the Pre-colonial Tigania (18th century)

The discussion on the system of government among the precolonial Tigania was according to the oral testimonies of the following elders who are fit to be referred as ritual elders, they included Chunkubitu Kanake, Ciakwalu Baimunya, Domiciano Ratanya, Kaunyangi Thimangu, Joshua Ikiugu and Jacob Mwongo. Among the Tigania, change of government or leadership happened about every 15 years or there about through a ceremony referred to as *Ukura Aaru* (Ikiugu, O.I., 2019, Mahner, 1975). A lot of jubilation accompanied the process where there was dancing, feasting and drinking. Change of government began with successful circumcision of three sub sets of a certain age group (Ibid¹⁵). Men who were circumcised had to have numbers able to fill a regiment in every clan and a warrior band in the whole community. The combined numbers of newly circumcised men from all over the community enabled transition in government. The new initiates were supposed to gather sufficient number of men to dislodge the existing warriors out of power (Kaunyangi, O.I, 2019).

The ritual elders were key in this transition. They were supposed to advice the new warriors on the process to be undertaken in order to successfully launch a successful attack against ruling warriors. The dislodged warriors would burn there base signifying their exit from office. After exit, they were expected to settle down and become family heads (Nyaga, 1997). Officially out of power these former warriors were now expected to marry and become family heads (Laughton, 1944, p. 3). All their efforts were to be concentrated in making wealth for themselves by cultivating more land and providing for their young families (ibid). Acquiring wealth would enable them to acquire more wives. Being at the prime age of their lives, they were now expected to advance economically (Thurwa, O.I., 2019). As junior elders and men who would become the ruling elders in about fifteen years, they were expected to also begin learning how matters of leadership and secrets therein operate amongst the ranks of the ruling elders. While attending meetings of the ruling elders, this group was just supposed to learn for

¹⁵ Has been used in this thesis to refer to the latter reference including oral and archival sources.

it was their time to learn and not to talk. Sons were expected to learn from their fathers (Mahner, 1975).

The smallest unit of organization of the society was the family or *mucii*. The father was the family head assisted by the first wife in case the man was polygamous. He was expected to provide the necessary guidance to the family (Thurwa, O.I., 2019). If a man failed to show leadership at the family level he could not be allowed to lead at any other level especially in various councils (ibid). Many families which were related by blood in a patrilineal descent formed a clan or *mwiria*. The clan was the basic unit of the government (Mwongo, O.I., 2019, Bernardi, 1959, p. 11, Laughton, 1944, p. 3). According to the respondents, the members of a clan among the precolonial Tigania lived together and separating them was difficult even during the colonial period. A clan would have between 500-2500 members. If a man left his mother clan and went to a far land, he would retain his clan name and the new clan he formed would just be an extension of the clan he descended from (Mbabu, O.I., 2019). The clan was headed by ruling elders that is men between the ages of 45-60. Land administration, subdivision and adjudication was done by the ruling elders (Mwongo, O.I., 2018). The eldest members had the final say on issues which the ruling elders could not resolve or agree on for age among the Tigania was equated with wisdom, having seen it all (Thurwa, O.I., 2019,). Many responsibilities like marriage ceremonies, building huts for newly wedded couples, circumcision and other events were all made possible at the clan level (Thurwa, O.I., 2019). The various clans formed villages and these villages amalgamated together formed a community which was not originally known as Tigania. It is reckoned that the Meru had complex relations and this can often be established through scrutinizing clan relations (ibid).

Among the precolonial Tigania eight key 'offices' ran parallel to each other to ensure success in the system of communal governance. The work of these offices was to ensure peace and perpetuation of the community. The eight offices included the office of the ruling elders, the office of the spiritual leader or *Muwee or Mukiama*, the warriors, the office of the *agambi*/wise men, the diviners/*iroria*, the office of the *agaa or* medicine men, the ancestors (precedent) and last the office of the *Njuri Ncheke* which was an advanced council of the eldest (Ikiugu, Thurwa, Kaunyangi and Baariu O.I., 2019). The

office of the ruling elders and that of the *muwee* were interdependent in all ways while the rest worked with the two on a consultation basis. The rest were specialized offices working to strengthen the work of the ruling elders (Ibid). The elders were therefore the denominator for they acted as custodians of customs and procedures and guardians of ancestral will.

The system of administration began at family level. All forms of disputes were first handled at family level by family heads. Failure to resolve the conflict would make the family head to ask elders from his clan to meet so as to resolve the matter. Once the elders met and still could not resolve the conflict, wise elders or *agambi* would be called from various clans by the elders in order to retreat and try to resolve the conflict at hand. The decision of the *agambi* was supposed to help resolve the conflict. But sometimes the warring parties could refuse to agree with the decision of the wise elders. According to the respondents there came many instances where cases ended in indecision because; one party refused to acknowledge the decision of ruling elders or a select council referred to as *agambi*, Second, some warring parties would be doubtful of the rituals performed by the *agaa* to resolve a case or and still would demand many rituals and procedures due to unbelief.

Informants claimed that an innovation was made from the existing framework of clans to come up with an effective way of dispute resolution among the people. Informants claim that a wise elder or *mugambi* named Kaura O Bechau pioneered an ideology among Tigania clans to form a kind of grand jury, named Njuri Ncheke which would effectively resolve conflicts among people or clans. The original Tigania clans seemed to have strong relations which enhanced cooperation and secrecy. Respondents to the present research claimed that few among these original Tigania clans had blood bonds/*gichiaro*.

The idea by Kaura O Benchau proved efficient in conflict resolution for it functioned in and out of the already existing framework of Tigania clans. This implied, Njuri Ncheke as a council of the eldest could resolve conflicts among, one; Tigania clans or

parties with no existing blood bonds and second those with blood bonds¹⁶. This eliminated the possibility of doubts and circumstances where individuals hid their criminal tendencies. It however should be noted that despite the formation of Njuri Ncheke which usurped some roles from the elders' *kiama*, the existing hierarchy of political leadership remained in place. Because Njuri Ncheke was majorly a justice system and had the recognition of all clans, it took over dispute resolution where cases proved difficult for the existing framework of communal law. Njuri Ncheke advanced to become a grand jury to encompass both Tigania and Igembe clans. Instead of the council or *kiama* that was dissolved after matters at hand were settled, Njuri Ncheke was now a permanent organization always ready at call (Mwongo, O.I., 2018).

During the various stages of the Bwaa group fragmentation, it was apparently clear among the ruling elders that, there were clans stronger than others. This made the weak clans feel left out in the general welfare. As earlier observed, the experience gained from the long stay in Tharaka had made the leaders of this group discover the practice of *gichiaro*. The binding oath of *gichiaro* worked among *agichiaro* and had to be instituted among various clans in accordance with its procedures if discipline was to be instilled. This oath would cause severe suffering to any clan that would harm or not come to the rescue of the sister clan if they needed their help. Sister clans went further to make the oaths more dangerous by refining them to become military alliances which exist up to date. For example, Muthambi clans took an oath of military alliance with Tigania clans. Up to date, women from most of Muthambi clans cannot be married in Tigania and vice versa (Thurwa, O.I, 2019). Individuals from these two communities also cannot fight nor hurt each other, for that would be spilling the blood of a brother and the consequence is severe. The details of the oath and how the binding rituals were made effective and unbreakable remains a mystery. This is because the elders involved in instituting the oaths vowed not to reveal the details in order to ensure that the oath remains in place eternally. Oaths were traditionally used to ensure strict compliance (Mwongo, O.I., 2019).

¹⁶ Blood bonds eliminated the possibility of criminal acts or injustice among clans with shared bonds referred to as *gichiaro*. But few of the original Tigania clans had these bonds. Trial by ordeal was thought to permeate injustice which the formation of Njuri Ncheke and its secrets successfully helped eliminate.

Kaura O Bechau, must have been a careful observer of the Tigania customs. His discovery must have emanated from careful observation of relations among the Tigania clans. These observations as narrated by the eldest respondents included; blood bonds which deterred injustice or criminal acts among the original Tigania clans were few and could be weakened through intermarriages. This implied individual could exploit these gaps to escape justice. Second, trial by ordeal, which involved leaking a hot iron rod was highly doubted by many, and last, members of the clans with no existing blood bonds and which were the majority faced difficulties in getting satisfactory solutions in case of feuds or injustice occurring amongst themselves.

Kaura O Benchau came up with the idea of a jury, which he named Njuri Ncheke. Njuri Ncheke according to Kaura O Benchau was to act as the Supreme Court among the Tigania clans. The respondents reckon that there arose many instances where cases went unresolved due to lack of evidence or individuals hiding behind the loop holes found in the community law and clan relations. Other times the wise elders/*agambi* failed to agree on the decision or and sometimes instances of bias arose (Baariu, O.I., 2019). Njuri Ncheke therefore was a combined force of the eldest members from all Tigania clans. Respondents were of the view that Njuri Ncheke initially depended on cursing to deal with injustice. This was mainly because strong *giachiaro* blood bonds could not exist in a common group. Instituting new *gichiaro* between some newcomer clans with some original Tigania clans made alliance ties strong.

Bonding precipitated by clan or communal military alliances strengthened the justice system among the Tigania and Igembe and a few Chuka clans. Further alliances occurred during Bwaa group migration and disintegration. The *gichiaro* blood bonds which were entered between Tigania clans and migrating Bwaa clans were numerous and are most conspicuous up to date. The bonds seemed to have been strengthened based on existing knowledge and were made uncompromisable. This can be deduced from their effectiveness in dealing with injustice and also because marriages between these clans is impossible. For Example, the *gichiaro* between Antuamakia clan of Tigania and Igoki clan of the Imenti. They combined abilities of elders from various clans which were bound by alternating blood oaths made the Njuri Ncheke curse effective and everyone feared getting on their way. Once a case reached Njuri Ncheke,

the die was cast, for it was believed that, justice would be served, the period of time notwithstanding.

The efficiency of Njuri 'system' in conflict resolution made it an attractive institution to some other pre-Meru clans. It spread to pre-Igembe, and later to a few Imenti clans, especially those bordering Tigania West. The headquarters of Njuri Ncheke where justice procedures were done in Tigania Njuri Ncheke are/were located in Akaiya, in an open area within the Rwerea forest. The ability of the Njuri Ncheke 'system' to resolve difficult conflicts necessitated that a second headquarters be expanded, this brought Njuri closer to the other pre-Meru clans though not centrally. The Urru headquarters in Nchiru in today's Tigania West was therefore the most preferred. Availability of enough land within the chosen location suited the needs of the expansion of Njuri-Ncheke. The chosen location of Nchiru was also more easily accessible to the other sub-groups through the traditional routes. The road leading to Maua town from Chuka existed as a pathway. Visitations to today's Tigania East by the pre-colonial Chuka and pre-Muthambi followed that route (Kaunyangi, O.I., 2019). Either homage paid to Tigania East by the pre-Meru clans followed the route through today's Tigania West. Nchiru, Njuri Ncheke headquarters provided efficiency. It was greatly utilized during the colonial era.

The power of the Njuri Ncheke was further strengthened by clan alliances, especially through blood bonding. The need to have the Njuri Ncheke concept serve member clans was the reason why the second headquarters was greatly expanded (Mwongo, O.I., 2018). The operating principle being the same, the meeting of eldest from involved clans would ensure Njuri Ncheke was effective in deciding on all issues brought before it (Mwongo, O.I., 2018). The spread of Njuri Ncheke concept to the other Ngaa clans, especially during colonial era implied that the system of governance within the various Meru sub-groups differed and relations were complex. Moreover, Njuri system has lived by the Tigania was much more complicated than is discussed in this study¹⁷. The Njuri Ncheke system was weakly adopted by the other Meru sub-groups who struggled

¹⁷ "The indigenous government, the Njuri Ncheke, was, as in previous years most helpful to government. Its high prestige and authority was maintained in Igembe and Tigania and on the increase in Imenti." (DC/MRU/ 1950, p. 6).

in living and sustaining its standards¹⁸. These unique differences in the view of Charles Ambler were not easy to diminish but did not constrain proper relations. He pointed that out that,

Despite their strong affinities of language and culture, the people of nineteenth-century central Kenya lived out their lives in worlds dominated by numerous distinctive small societies. Within any area, complexes of kinship and territorial relationship bound people into amorphous and highly autonomous localities. Few of these societies were precisely bounded, however, and none possessed a unified political structure. But if communities were overwhelmingly local in outlook, they were not exclusively so. People identified with others beyond their lineages, neighborhoods and sections (Ambler, 1988, p. 156).

Since its inception, Njuri Ncheke, was never meant to be an organization for everybody. It was an apex for the various Njuris a man went through to become an accomplished person among the Tigania (Mwongo, O.I., 2018). Misconduct could render a person disqualified from gaining admission into this apex body. The eldest, the wise, properly behaved male members of the various clans formed core of Njuri Ncheke. One must also have gathered the necessary wealth to pay admission fees. The initiation fees to be paid in Tigania was high ranging from, several bulls, a ram, goats and a feast which women prepared but was paid for by the new initiate (Njara, O.I, 2019). The initiation process was done to each member individually. A few could afford the cost. This made it to be known as Njuri Ncheke or ‘thin council’ (Ibid). Those capable of meeting the admission criteria were initiated into the secrets of the organization. Due to its prestige, many elders looked forward to retiring as they awaited death being members of this institution. The admission into Njuri Ncheke was also a long process of in-scribing one into becoming a complete Tigania man (Kaunyangi, O.I., 2019). This formed the key difference between Tigania Njuri Ncheke and other highest ruling councils among the Meru sub-groups.¹⁹ Njara (O.I., 2019) equivocally stated that the Tigania Njuri Ncheke was the government of Tigania People. The view taken by this study is that, it would be fair to conclude that Tigania Njuri Ncheke was a centralizing force. Respondents noted that Tigania Njuri Ncheke high standards deterred many from joining it especially those considered to be from outside of Tigania and Igembe.

¹⁸ See, Lambert papers No 1: 4

¹⁹ See, Fadiman (1993)

The formation of Njuri Ncheke was evolutionary and Kaura O Bechau must have been a careful observer of events within the clans. According to Fadiman (1993, p. 27) before the formation of Njuri Ncheke, matters involving many clans or the whole of the Ngaa were dealt with by a *kiama of kiamas* which later would dissolve, he wrote,

Conflicts between two or more clans were resolved by spokesmen drawn from each of the contenders. In questions involving the entire tribe, spokesmen could come from every clan to form a council-of-councils, empowered to resolve issues of significance to them all. The Kiama, however, was geared to intermittent functions. In times of crisis, whether among individuals or clans, a council of sufficient size and scope was formed to resolve it. Thereafter, however, the group would dissolve, and whatever knowledge had been gained would be dispersed (Fadiman, 1993).

Tigania Njuri Ncheke became a permanent jury and was highly recognized by involved clans. All knowledge gained in its meetings was made precedent for use in future proceedings (Kaunyangi, O.I., 2019. Mwongo, O.I., 2018). But what made Njuri so dangerous was its use of a new method of settling injustice referred to as *Kithiri/ kuringa thenge/ kuroromeria/* killing a he goat. This was a form of a curse which was the last resort after all peaceful methods of conflict resolution failed. This method replaced trial by ordeal²⁰, previously used to resolve hardest cases but was deemed unsatisfactory by many. The use of *kithiri* was elaborate and required a lot of resources but it was largely observed that those who dared it served as an example on the ferocity of Njuri Ncheke.²¹ The effects of the Njuri Ncheke curse, *kithiri* humbled the arrogant and the effects spread to the future generations of the accused. It was not until the accused paid the requisite fine to the accuser and the accompanying cost of gathering Njuri Ncheke members that the curse was lifted by Njuri Ncheke who were the custodians of paraphernalia used in the whole process.

Cases that required Njuri attention were mostly those involving land and murder²². The details of the Njuri Ncheke processes like *kithiri* did not form core of the present study. However, it should be noted that all members of Njuri Ncheke from all the member clans especially those from Igembe, Tigania and some parts of Imenti, particularly

²⁰ Trial by ordeal was also common among the Gikuyu and Kamba

²¹ Njuri and Njuri ncheke were different: the former was for smaller jurisdiction like clan or location while the latter's jurisdiction was the entire Tigania which expanded to Igembe and later to the entire Meru region.

²² This came especially during the colonial era and after independence according to the respondents. A view buttressed by colonial records especially from 1941.

North Imenti were always involved in instances where the party suspected of inflicting injustice was difficult to trace, or was deemed contemptuous of the justice processes. Among the pre-Tigania and Pre-Igembe, Njuri Ncheke worked to resolve all difficult and complex cases that were beyond the existing framework of trial (Baariu, O.I., 2019).

Besides Njuri Ncheke being a justice system its character in terms of functionality improved over time since its inception. The character of Njuri was to have its membership formed by reputable elders from all member clans. The idea of the eldest from member clans forming its ranks, lay the crux of the power of Njuri Ncheke. The fact that Njuri involved all these men some of whom were known to have unique characteristics had implications within the Njuri as the organization advanced (Mbaabu, O.I., 2019). Whereas the procedures for resolving conflicts and maintaining outward character of Njuri Ncheke were rigid and not subject to influence or change, the internal character was dynamic and progressive thus making the organization more than just a justice body (Mbaabu, O.I., 2019). Lambert admitted to the complexity and fairness of Njuri Ncheke in all matters brought before it. Now that Njuri Ncheke was not to be dissolved after performing its roles, it played an important role among its members who were old and ritual elders. The permanency of the Njuri Ncheke offered these old men peace and emotional stability in their last days.

Members of this organization often met every day at 4pm to talk and discuss their lives as well as community welfare. This took away loneliness and in their meetings, they would roast bananas and drink millet beer. Beer drinking was only allowed among the elders for they could afford the luxury of being drunk while the younger men remained alert for the purposes of defending the community. The animals paid as fees for initiation into Njuri Ncheke were the wealth of the Njuri Ncheke. One of the many reasons why many elders looked forward to joining this organization was this decent retirement prospect. Though elders were well taken care of by their sons, they needed to meet their age mates who they could easily interact and identify, 'age group matters' (Thurwa, O.I., 2019; Mbaabu, O.I., 2019). Under the clan Njuri/kiama the contending parties facilitated kiama sessions by giving a goat or a sheep for feast. The fee in the form of beer or animal was consumed by the clan kiama elders as they tried to resolve

the conflict. This fee was consumed by all to signify that the warring parties were willing to reconcile.

With the formation of Njuri Ncheke, which was a bigger organization than the clan *njuri*, fee and fines paid in terms of animals and other materials became the exclusive property of the Njuri Ncheke (Kaunyangi, Ikiugu. O.I., 2019). Stray animals whose owners could not be traced also became the wealth of Njuri (Laughton, 1944, p. 18). This was in addition to the admission fees paid by new members. To ensure justice was served to all indiscriminately, the requirement by the *kiama* that warring parties must appear with a goat to be eaten by the *kiama* during the “court” sessions was not always requirement by Njuri Ncheke court. The wealth amassed by Njuri Ncheke from fines, fees and economic prosperity in Tigania cushioned poor members of the community from giving their animals for feast. Njuri Ncheke was evolving into a rigid institution that any would undergo as its usefulness became apparent to all. Among the pre-Tigania, the herds gained from successful raids were shared between warriors and the Njuri Ncheke elders were major beneficiaries. The success of Tigania warriors lay in Njuri Ncheke secrets. According to Fadiman (1993), in the 1880s the Tigania had a lot of wealth amassed from successful raids and the elders more so the Njuri Ncheke, were some of the biggest beneficiaries of this economic prosperity. This made Tigania Njuri Ncheke an organization of high standards. Later, as it will be seen in the subsequent chapters, the meeting of these elders every day was one thing Edward Butler Horne (the colonial DC for Meru) disliked most and termed the elders as lazy. The evolution of Njuri will be discussed in chapter 6.

Among the pre-colonial Tigania, the ruling elders were the guardians of custom and community law. They also officiated over all community functions (Ratanya, O.I., 2019). To be part of the ruling elder’s council, one must not have been involved in behaviors that embarrassed or jeopardized their age group; one must not be a witch, a murderer or a failed family head among other requirements. The young could not trust the council decisions if failed personalities formed part of its ranks. Credibility of the members of ruling elders’ council made its decisions respected and binding.

The spokesmen of the elder's council or gathering were the elders who were gifted in various ways like good oratorical skills, wisdom, more informed ones or the appointed ones (ibid). A *mugambi* represented his clan in elders meetings, as the anointed clan spokesperson. The sub-set within the age-group determined respect and the place of each individual within the elder's council. The oldest however, were not always part of the decision making. This is because they had already exited office but the ruling elders could always invite them to aid in resolving issues which required proper and thorough understanding of precedent (Mahner, 1975). Reference to the oldest cases was crucial in the reinterpretation of law depending on circumstances. In order to easily identify the ruling elders, they applied white ochre on their faces a practice adopted by Njuri elders in the post-colonial era (Mbaabu, O.I., 2019). Some of the duties of the elders included, requesting or negotiating for peace in cases where there occurred instances of transgression of a blood oath among clans, ensuring custom is observed, overseeing community events like circumcision, marriage ceremonies, controlled grazing on clan land, soil conservation, deciding planting time, solving cases and authorizing war, raids and counter raids (Thurwa, O.I., 2019).

The elders' decisions were implemented at clan and family level. Songs called *kiruu*, *kirarire* and *nkibata* were composed to help in processing of the decisions and also to embed them in the collective memory of the people.²³ Warriors had their barracks built within the clan land. The ruling elders' council which was the administrative body had its decisions implemented by the warriors especially the decisions in regard to the security of the community. Runners who were clan or community messengers were used by the ruling council to convey messages that required quick action across clans in a fast way. The council would sometimes be in a dilemma over issues which required understanding of ancestral will; diviners were crucial at such points. Through their capabilities, diviners could contact the spirits through special means like dreams or the old system of prophesying (*uringia*) which did not rely on any written text (Mbiti, 1979). The diviners would then convey the ancestral will back to the elders' council which would then make a decision. In some instances, decisions could not be made because of fear of the unknown.

²³ *Kiruu* were sung by uncircumcised boys, *kirarire* by circumcised/ warriors while *nkibata* were women's songs. Also see Daniel Nyagah, Customs of the Ameru, Nairobi, 1997.

A specialist referred to as *mugaa* had to be contacted by the elders in order to help them in confirming their fear. A *mugaa* was partially a healer and partially a witch (Kayaru, O.I., 2019). But this name, *mugaa* was only given to the specialist who knew how to read omens, heal and also remove the effects of witch-craft. Simply he had to know how witches practice their magic in order to remove or deal with the power of their magic. In reference to community affairs; the *mugaa* would ask elders to bring a he goat, of a certain plain color, kill it and use its lungs to read omens (ibid). If the omens read were positive the elders would continue with the planned communal events. If the omens showed signs of negativity the events would be postponed until the *mugaa* could read positive omens. A *mugaa* among the precolonial Tigania was a specialist in omen reading, removing witchcraft, he could treat individuals who fell ill from suspected sorcery and was relied upon by elders to do cleansing responsibilities on individuals deemed unclean (Mbaabu, Thurwa, O.I., 2019).

Cleansing allowed an individual to be reintegrated back to the community. A *mugaa* charged fees in terms of animals for his services. To ensure success in the community events, a *mugaa* had to be regularly contacted. This process of events planning by contacting *agaa* was mostly applied before raiding activities, before the circumcision period and any other activity that required participation of all clans. *Agambi* were consulted by the elders before a decision could be made. Their wisdom helped the community to take wise steps. The offices of *agambi*, *agaa*, elder's council, diviners and ancestors always worked together to make major decisions that affected the people. The institution of *gichiaro*/brotherhood blood bond among clans was the idea of the *agambi*/wise elders who realized the need to protect the weak and tame the strong. According to the respondents, the delaying in undertaking some community events which was decided by the prediction of omen reading by *agaa*, caused instances of deviancy and de-scribing of the political order among the precolonial Tigania youths. Deviancy, will be covered at the end of this chapter.

The pre-colonial Tigania recognized the power and the authority of a supreme being. They referred to this Supreme Being as *Ngai* or *Murungu*. *Ngai* was not regarded similar or equal to the ancestral spirits which could bring calamities to punish the living for their sins. He was powerful, merciful and pure. The Precolonial Tigania associated

God with mountains. While praying, the opening and closing sentence always began with the mention of three mountains which are located within the sight of the people. The leader of the prayer always said, “*Ngai wa Nyambene, Mbokoro na Kirimara tutongeria*” (Chukubitu, O.I., 2019). *Ngai* means rain, *Kirimara* is mountain with many white spots, *tutongerie* implies ‘lead us’. The above prayer therefore indicates that the pre-colonial Tigania associated *Ngai* with rain and Mountains.

The role of ensuring the power and authority of *Ngai* was felt within the community was reserved for the *Muwee* among the Tigania in the ‘right’ and *Mukiama* among the Tigania in the ‘left’. The ‘left’ included the areas of lower Mikinduri and Kianjai. *Mukiama* though recognized by the people, was inferior to the *muwee* and had to regularly seek the guidance of the *muwee* (Kaunyangi, O.I., 2019) (Bernardi, 1959, p. 199). According to the respondents of this research, the major, Meru sub-groups had their own *Agwe*, the smaller groups had to seek the services of the spiritual leaders from the bigger groups. This is further confirmed by Bernardi (1959) who provides the lists of different *agwe* from the various, Meru sub-ethnic groups. The idea by Fadiman (1993, p. 4) that the Meru tribe had one *mugwe* (Imenti) *muwee* (Tigania) is therefore demystified.

These spiritual leaders were supposed to be clean of all impurities and descended from special families. When a new age-group ascended into power as the ruling elders, a new *Muwee* associated with that age group also took the office of the community spiritual leadership (Kaunyangi, O.I., 2019, Mahner, 1975). The *muwee/mukiama* were supposed to observe cleanliness all days of his life from birth to death. Any form of uncleanness was punishable by death or a major catastrophe upon him, his family, clan or whole community. Due to the seriousness associated with this office, all clans were supposed to help protect this institution from uncertainty. The *muwee/mukiama* never worked, he was fed by the community, and his wife was also carefully selected. He could not practice polygamy nor associate with anything unclean. Due to the holy nature of *Ngai*, only the *muwee/mukiama* could lead the community in worshipping him or offering a sacrifice.

When rains failed or calamities like drought or disease came, the *muwee/mukiama* would lead the elders in seeking mercy, forgiveness and intervention of *Ngai*. It was the role of the *muwee* to convene meetings alongside the ruling elders which would help the community out of catastrophes or looming disasters. This position and that of the circumcisers were the only inheritable position in the community, all the others were based on merit. The *Muwee* blessed and okayed community events based on reports given to him by the ruling elders who were supposed to undertake every precaution before approaching the *muwee* for his approval. The *muwee* worked alongside other ‘holy’/spiritually clean individuals who accompanied him in offering sacrifices and blessing the communal events.²⁴ The *muwee* was highly regarded. The decisions he reached were unquestionable, no one including the elders would antagonize them, or argue to the contrary (Ciakwalu and Alumina, O.I., 2019).

All matters that concerned governance of the community required that those in charge follow up the laid procedures in the conduct of public affairs. Individualism was unknown, under all circumstances. Deviation from procedure caused injustice to the system and to the spirit of communality. No one would want to associate with any form of contravention for the fear of *muiro*/contamination (Thurwa & Ciakwalu, O.I., 2019). Personal pronoun, “I” was rarely used as the spirit of collectivism was greatly embedded in the minds of all. Activities such as eating, drinking, singing, farming, building were always collectively done. According to Kenyatta (1938) this is the spirit that gave the people of central Kenya the sense of ownership of the land and community leadership. Failing the community was a cardinal sin that individuals sought to stay clear (Kaunyangi, O.I., 2019).

Under systems theory, value orientation refers to the observance of social norms or standards. The value orientation supplies norms or standards of action. Internalized they need dispositions within actors; institutionalized in the social system they contributed to integration; abstracted from concrete situations, they are cultural value standards. The concept of institutionalization as espoused in social systems theorization is crucial to the conceptualization of pre-colonial Tigania political order. Indeed,

²⁴ Holiness meant being socially consecrated to perform certain tasks. The Gikuyu had a similar requirement, see Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya: The Tribal Life of the Gikuyu*. London. Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd.

institutionalization is a fundamental integrative mechanism of social systems. It is viewed both as a process and a structure. It also refers to stabilized patterns of interaction which are normatively regulated by the cultural system. This involved both structuralization of value orientations in the social system and the internalization of value systems in the individual personality. The actors' internalization of cultural values and beliefs is the primary basis of institutionalization in every case.

The internalization of superego element means motivation to accept the priority of collective over personal interests, within the appropriate limits and on the appropriate occasions (Abraham, 1981). These ideals are what enabled Tigania people to develop strong institutions such as clans, *age-groups* and *njuri* which would bind and guide all to the intended value system. The institutions brought different persons together for different missions at appropriate times. This ordering built a functional yet interrelated system of political leadership. The institutions named above were nurtured by individuals who formed collectivities. Guided by the necessary values, they formed a cycle which would involve all and evolve in response to change and situations. The evolution of this order, a core interest of the present study with respect to the colonial era in Kenya will be analyzed in greater detail in the subsequent chapters. The stages which an individual in the pre-colonial Tigania underwent to become a fully-fledged citizen as prescribed by his/her predecessors is what we analyze next.

4.5 Political Order among the Precolonial Tigania

This discussion will be per the views of the respondents and personal analysis from the stories they narrated as well as the traditional songs they sang. Most informants to the present research, agreed that, the political ordering produced what was considered a legitimate system of governance that was based on custom and tradition. Chweya (2002, p. 2-3), observed that the systems of governance within the African indigenous governments were based on stable constitutional principles, which were legitimate and produced social order. The political system which the pre-colonial Tigania practiced was based on three key pillars which were; governance by consent, popular control of government and smooth political recruitment and succession. This system was hereditary to all males. Women played a key role in ensuring successful and smooth transition from one age-group to another. Among the precolonial Tigania, the system

of governance was through direct representation. That is; all males participated in governance after initiation in an alternating system of in and out from one generation to the next.

The Political system among the precolonial Tigania thus stemmed from lineage²⁵ and hierarchy based on age. All males were recruited into an age-group after circumcision. The hierarchy of the age grades is shown Table 1 according to the generational sets that began approximately in 1900 and will end in the year around 2024 (Ikiugu& Thurwa, O.I., 2018). Table 1 shows various stages through a man’s life among the Tigania. The women were categorized into the same age group as their husband.

Table 1: Tigania Age Grades

Age group	Numerical category	Social Category
Ichunge	15-30 years	Circumcised. Warriors
Guantai	30-45 years	Married, junior elders
Miriti	46—60 years	Ruling elders
Lubetaa	61-74 years	Retired elders, teachers of community ideals, could join Njuri
Ratanya	75-90 years	Experts in community history, ritual elders
Micubu	91-104 years	
Ithalie	105-120 years	

Source: The above categorization was created by the author based on information provided by the interviewees. The names of the age-group were assigned according to how the precolonial Tigania reckoned time.

The system of political leadership was by virtue of age-group which allowed every male to be recruited into the community welfare, tradition and custom after circumcision. Political order and authority were vested in different persons and groups, which was between the spiritual leaders like the *Muwee* and the elders (Mahner, 1975). From the above grading, it is clear that power switched hands between various age groups after about every 15 years. Though sometimes it could be twelve and others seventeen depending on the economic stability of the community or prevailing circumstances.²⁶ It should however be noted that the ability of the clans to fill warrior regiments, negative prophecy concerning circumcision season always influenced circumcision dates and

²⁵ Lineage politics require a closer study.

²⁶ Military considerations such as war, disasters like disease outbreaks and famine could also delay or hasten transfer of power.

power handover. After circumcision, the initiates became warriors who were then charged with the responsibility of defense and implementation of ruling elders decisions. Upon the completion of service as a warrior, the men in that age group were allowed to marry and become family heads (Kaunyangi, O.I., 2019).

The ceremony of transfer of power from one age group to another among the Tigania was called *ukuura aaru*/demolishing the barrack (Mahner, 1975; Thurwa, O.I., 2019).²⁷ Among the pre-Tigania *ukuura aaru* implied that the incoming warriors were to build their own operating base because the previous warriors marked exit out of power by demolishing theirs. Succession among various age groups was vertical. The older the age group the higher the rank in terms of seniority of leadership role and respect. Leadership role implied ability to follow precedence in problem solving and innovation. Exceptional leadership was displayed by ability to showcase wisdom in difficult situations or calamities and was not a preserve of anyone (Mwongo, O.I., 2018).

Becoming a family head meant that the retired warriors entered another cadre of leadership within the community, they became junior elders. This way they could attend meetings to listen how proceedings of various issues was done by the ruling elders and the reference of precedence when making decisions. During these meetings, the junior elders were not allowed to speak, it was their turn to learn (Thurwa, O.I., 2019). They continued to learn the practices and secrets of the community in silence until they were about 45 years. This period allowed the most skilled/talented ones among them to emerge as the spokesmen and ritual experts of their age group and clans (Sabina, O.I., 2019). During these 15 years this group was officially out of power as they were expected to sire about two children before they became the ruling elders. Upon thorough understanding of how council proceedings occur and attaining about 46 years of age, junior elders became the ruling elders and entered community leadership. This was in an official capacity. After about the age of 60, the ruling age group was supposed to retire from active leadership and take lighter duties (Thurwa, O.I., 2019). Here, they became apprentice elders who were supposed to perform rituals and also educate the children on norms and practices of the community (Nyaga, 1997; Fadiman, 1993).

²⁷ Among the Gikuyu, *Itwika*; Embu, *Nduiko*; Imenti, *Ntuiko*. See Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya*; Fadiman, 1993; Kabeca Mwaniki, 2010.

Rituals that required more expertise were performed by the oldest members of the clan. After junior elders graduated to become the ruling elders, a new *Muwee* associated with that age group assumed spiritual leadership of the community (Kaunyangi, O.I., 2019; Ciakwalu, O.I., 2019; Mahner, 1975, p. 402)

4.6 Forces that helped Establish the Political Order

The existing political order among the precolonial Tigania can be said to be an establishment of strict practice and adherence to beliefs, secrets, values, custom and tradition. The system was divided into three major segments which played a crucial role in enhancing communal unity. The first was a system of legal precedents, administered by elders' councils, which governed according to traditions passed down by tribal ancestors. The second was a system of beliefs involving the spirits of these ancestors, which were thought to remain in contact with the living to enforce obedience to the traditions. The final system was one of supernatural rituals, used by a class of specialists believed to be in contact with these spirits to regulate conflict within the tribe (Fadiman, 1993).

Each of the above system operated independently but combined as often as required to guide the society. The socialization through which all individuals underwent from childhood helped to ensure that the political order followed the three systems for peaceful co-existence (Alumina, O.I., 2019). Division of labour, which is economic activities and social activities was also equally shared between the genders and individuals. This brought pride in these defined roles, and greatly minimized social conflict. The institution of age-group ordered citizens of this period into a cycle in which one became an accomplished person once one had faithfully executed their responsibilities to the family, clan and community (Mwongo, O.I., 2018). In theory, individuals were organized into collectivities which acted according to norms which produced a value system with desirable system relations. Legal precedents, beliefs, events and rituals were all norms which shaped and dictated individual and group code of conduct and this produced a culture.

How did individuals and collectivities get to learn all these? The system was designed in such a way that actions were concurrent with what was being “said” i.e. listening and

doing what was instructed happened concurrently thus in-scribing young members to what was required of them in a practical manner and at an early age. Major and minor events, daily activities and routines in-scribed people into the system relations thus a stable political order was achieved. For example, a child was shaved the first hair when it was about 4-7 years. Other children were invited to celebrate the shaving. Feasting accompanied the shaving. Among the celebrating children some were shaved and others were yet to. Shaving was done by another child, considered the brightest among them (Nyaga, 1997). Seemingly, the woman who midwived the birth of the child being shaved was appreciated by other mothers and ladies approaching motherhood. Mothers came to celebrate one of their own for the good motherhood and show their respect for the midwife.²⁸ The mother of the child could only resume sexual activities with the husband after the child was shaved (Nyaga, 1997, p. 31).

As noted from the above example, persons of different ages were brought together by a clan event. The event was a learning experience for all the attendees. Apprenticeship which was the main method of instruction called for the learner to do what the teacher was doing. Young men and women were expected to follow what their parents, seniors or retired elders taught them. The child simply belonged to the community and all members of the community were responsible for the growth and development of the child.²⁹

4.7 How the Political Order in-scribed the Precolonial Tigania

The stability of the precolonial Tigania lay in the ability to get every citizen to be loyal and law abiding. To achieve social control of the population, the leadership established procedures which were to be adhered to by all with minimal deviancy. The wise counsel of the leadership established norms and traditions which in-scribed community members into the desired system order. To in-scribe meant to involve, order and control the civilian population with ease, consent, practice, fear, willingness and predictability.³⁰

²⁸ The midwife was referred to as *Ntau* (Thurwa, O.I., 2019)

²⁹ In an age when there were no formal schools, community events functioned as major educational opportunities.

³⁰ The phrase 'in-scribe' is borrowed from Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson (editors), *De-Scribing Empire. Post- colonialism and Textuality* Taylor & Francis, New York. 2002, pp.115-131.

4.7.1 Circumcision and the ‘Making of Men through Violence’³¹

The impact of the earlier occupants of Tigania land and their incorporation into some segments of Tigania clans had identifiable impact on several sectors of pre-colonial Tigania society. The groups that the Tigania met on the highlands and made contact with include the Cushitic groups, Kalenjin and Maa speaking people. It is often claimed that the pre-Meru in general did not circumcise until this practice was acquired through cultural exchange. This occurred in the course of interaction of ‘pre-Tigania’ with the other groups they met in the Nyambene highlands (Fadiman. 1976, p. 167). Fadiman records that the Meru adopted this practice from Cushitic speaking groups mostly the Borana and Galla speaking people. After the fragmentation and settlement of the various Meru sub-ethnic groups in their current locations, they came into contact individually, with the earlier occupants of these highland areas. The contact was mainly through raids and counter raids. Tradition records that, although expulsion via cattle raids against groups like Borana occurred, small alien groups were absorbed by some Tigania clans. This procedure was achieved through a process of ritual adoption which lay its emphasis on oaths of secrecy and which obliterated much of the original traditions. This implies that those who were incorporated into these clans, were incorporated through secret meetings and rituals in which the elders swore not to reveal the details. Once adopted, these individuals had internal influence within the clans.

The practice of circumcising through the cutting of the foreskin of the male organ is said to be a borrowed custom from the Cushitic –speaking groups. This ritual is said to have begun first among the Tigania, after arrival in the highlands and it spread to the other Ngaa clans (Fadiman, 1976, p. 167). This argument is supported by narratives of where circumcision originated from among the Tigania. According to Mbabu and Thurwa (O.I., 2019) a story is told of a man who was a hunter. He was from the clan of hunters/ *Aathi*. While on a hunting mission in the plains of Tigania, he came across an antelope. The antelope was in labour pain. Instead of showing pity, the hunter decided to point his arrow towards the motionless and helpless animal. It is said that the antelope just stared at the hunter. This man while positioning himself to release the arrow, he heard a voice rebuking him for his lack of mercy. The hunter was shaken by the

³¹ That ‘making men’ was and remains a bloody and painful episode in Central Kenya has been documented by Jomo Kenyatta and more recently, Elizabeth Njoroge in ...A Paper presented during the European Conference of African Studies, University of Edinburgh, Scotland, June 11, 2019.

rebuking voice which said to him, look back, that's a knife, go and become a circumciser and get your thirst for blood and livelihood satisfied by circumcising.³² Up to date, it is the individuals from this clan of hunters who perform the cut in the entire of Tigania and Igembe.

The practice and its powers are inherited in a patrilineal fashion. Female circumcision might also be a borrowed practice having been adopted from the same group. Fadiman's view that circumcision began when the Ngaa arrived in the highland area is valid (Fadiman, 1976, p. 167) on the basis of the interviews conducted for the present research (Thurwa, Mbaabu, Ciakwalu, O.I., 2019). However, how earlier age groups and age sets were ordered without circumcision remains a puzzle. The oldest age-groups among the Tigania were Ntangi and Mbaine which date back to the migration tales. According to the respondents of this study, the pre-fragmentation of the Bwaa group of the Ngaa in Tharaka was caused by failure of various age-sets to maintain group solidarity. The probability therefore that indiscipline was rife is high and the idea of circumcision was perhaps among the best solution to curb this menace in the future. Moreover, the idea of *gaaru* system/military barrack must have assisted the Tigania to instill discipline among its warriors. However, it should be noted that the *gaaru* system developed due to the many attacks the pre-colonial Tigania faced from the groups they met in the highlands, especially raids by the Maasai (Fadiman, 1976, p. 167). The need to invent and also adopt new systems of governance was to ensure survival against these threats. From the foregoing, the actual period of the start of circumcision, therefore, is largely undetermined. However, from the foregoing discussion, the present study views the period after settlement in today's Nyambene region as the most likely.

Circumcision was a norm which, viewed from social system theory perspective, was supposed to help inculcate values into individuals who are both men and women. The individuals involved could not join or form proper collectivities without the values which were key in community survival. Discipline, courage and pride were virtues to be developed by this rite of passage which was an institution fundamental for

³² Why have this founding myth? See Leach, E. (1954) on why myths are crucial in the expression of social contradictions

integration into full citizenship and the associated rights and responsibilities. We now examine how circumcision procedure was done and its accompanying value system.

4.7.2 How was Circumcision done?

Preparations for circumcision season began early by ensuring there was enough food stuff for the whole period that lasted for three months. The duty to ensure plentiful of food was availed for the season was reserved for women. In the event that rains failed, the ‘cutting’ season was postponed until the stocks were enough (Simba, O.I., 2017). Besides ensuring that there was enough food, the offices of diviners and *agaa* were also consulted. They had to confirm that no calamities such as invasions from hostile neighbors were anticipated in the foreseeable future. The date for the circumcision exercise was set first after two boys from the special families had been circumcised and no issue had been reported on their healing progress. With them progressing well, other boys underwent the cut.

Young boys aged 14-19 years began preparing themselves for the day of cutting two months earlier. They visited their relatives and next of kin to do what was traditionally referred to as *kuriria* translated to as ‘reaching out to’. Here the candidates were given gifts in terms of food stuffs; cereals like millet and sorghum were the most common. Goats and sheep were other significant gifts. The former category of items was received from female relatives while the latter were given by male relatives. All this was done in order to earn the blessings and goodwill of as many members of the clan as possible. Like other rituals, circumcision was never an individual family’s affair but a communal one. The journeys made to relatives as well as the receiving of gifts were also meant to enlarge the loyalties of the soon to be men, beyond their boyish and family universe. It was an instance of introducing candidates to the larger commonwealth of the Tigania. In the gifts, an investment was made on the candidate which he was to repay through service to the community in the many years of warriorhood and elderhood that lay ahead. This message was made clear during the many lessons taught to the initiates during the seclusion period.

Kuriria was an important step before circumcision event. Knowledge of what was expected of the initiates was gained through this undertaking. Initiates often visited

uncles and other kins. These individuals imparted wisdom into the initiates by telling them what to expect and what will be expected of them after the ritual. The initiates were also assisted in transiting from a life of irresponsibility to a new universe full of obligations and expectations. The physical pain one would undergo coupled with the emotional burden of getting into new responsibilities was all well internalized through *kuriria*. *Kuriria* often happened after the circumcision date had been declared (Thurwa, O.I., 2019).

The circumcision day, began in the midnight of the same day where parents released their sons officially in order to undergo the rite. After the elders and the Muwee blessed the season and the process, the initiates were gathered together in a field at 5 am. They were taken to the river where they showered and thereafter led to the circumcision field which was a center set aside for that purpose. The washing done early in the morning had a medical purpose of ensuring the skin was numb. This was believed to lessen the pain during the actual cutting. The candidates bathed in a flowing river which was symbolic of three issues; flowing waters signified the presence of life, second, candidates were shedding off boyhood ‘*wiyi*’ which was to be a perpetual separation, in the same way that flowing water does not come back.³³Third, and perhaps most importantly, immersion into water symbolized a rebirth, a second birth that was more important than the first one. It is remarkable that a connection can be made of the use of water in both births. During the biological birth, the child was cleaned using water, just before the ‘cut’, it was necessary for the initiate to be ‘socially’ reborn and consecrated for the procedure and community service that awaited him.

The actual cutting began at six in the morning. The man expected to be the guardian held the initiate arms, women observed to ensure courage was upheld, within seconds the circumciser was done with the cutting of the foreskin. The foreskin was buried symbolizing the burial of former ways of living which were viewed as indecent (Ratanya, O.I., 2018). According to Ciakwalu (O.I., 2019), women sung and danced during the whole process. This was supposed to give courage to the initiates and also

³³ Immersion in water for circumcision candidates was a common practice among the Gikuyu, Embu and Meru of Central Kenya. See, Ngugi wa Thiong’o, *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoirs*, New York. Random House, 2010, pp 88 – 90. The concept of re-birth by immersion in water has a strong Judeo-Christian tradition too, see the Gospel of John 3: 1-5.

mock those who would show signs cowardice. Among the Gikuyu, women also accompanied the initiates for the same purpose of ensuring courage was maintained (Kenyatta, 1938).

According to Nyaga (1997, p. 22), circumcision began with a special group of selected boys totaling to nine in number. This group was referred to as *Kenda ya Mutani* (nine of the circumciser). These nine were from selected special families. They were the first to be cut. They were expected to show courage which the rest of the group was supposed to emulate. The family and clan of *Antu Anyaga* emanating from Mikinduri in Tigania produced the nine of the circumciser (ibid). This family according to Nyaga (1997, p. 22) kept the circumcision knives for the various age groups. These knives were useful in helping count the number of age groups since migration. The cutting was done by a circumciser/*mutani* who was a specialist in this practice. Precision and speed garnered him high reputation (Simba, O.I., 2017). All the respondents were in agreement that the circumcisers came from the clan of *Aathi* and the skill was inherited in a patrilineal system. Due to the powers held by this family through inheritance, they circumcised boys in the whole of Tigania and Igembe. To the present day, in spite of the cultural invasion occasioned by the period of empire, both political/economic and religious (missionary activities), it is individuals from this very family who do traditional circumcision.³⁴

After circumcision, the new initiates were escorted by men and dancing groups of women to special huts built for them far from where the family huts were. Special men were selected by the community to take care of the initiates by dressing their wounds and feeding them. Each family had its own *muwati* (selected guardian to help take care of their initiate). More importantly the huts were special in order to provide the necessary security to the initiates. Visitations to the hut were regulated by the *muwati* whose role was to be a guardian, guide and an instructor into the ways of adulthood and manly responsibilities (Simba, O.I., 2018).

³⁴ Timothy Parsons, *The Rule of Empires: Those who Built them, those who Endured them and Why they Always Fall*, Oxford. Oxford University Press, 2010, intimates that attempts by hegemonic empires to impose new orders on subjugated populations have always been successfully resisted.

The relationship between the two individuals was supposed to last forever such that the initiate would never embarrass his guardian through irresponsible acts. Peace with the surrounding communities was crucial during this period. Any attack on the initiates would destroy a whole generation and the leadership cycle would crumble. Due caution therefore was to be observed in this period. One major factor that enhanced the security of the season was that prior to the coming of the British, circumcision season among all the Ngaa clans happened at a similar time. The major enemies could not therefore be from within but far. These probably could be the Maasai or the Borana (Kaunyangi, O.I., 2019). While in seclusion, the initiates were taught community ideals and secrets.

A few days to the pass out, the initiates having healed their wounds, underwent another ritual which was called *mpithio* (burning). It involved taking an oath of secrecy. It reinforced circumcision by enhancing ability to hold secrets. According to Simba (O.I., 2019) just like the circumciser oversees circumcision, *Ntookuri* was supposed to see the initiates over this process. This ritual was done to unite all the initiates and make them identifiable wherever they went as men from Tigania (Mugambi, O.I., 2019). The secrets of this ritual were known only to those who underwent its procedure. Any Tigania initiate who did not go through this second ritual was considered incomplete. After this, a pass out ceremony organized by the clan and celebrated by the community was to mark the re-integration of the initiates back to the rest of the community. Circumcision involved celebration and teachings into the ways of the community. The Meru DC commented that, “It is impossible to find out exactly what takes place but then is evidently certain amount of feasting mixed with lectures on civics” (DC/MRU/1927). In this ceremony, the initiates were given an age group name, this name was unique to the group and that’s the name they would be identified with and remembered in generations to come. It was the individual’s second name.

They were also given special names to fit their age-set within the age-group. It should be noted that loyalty to one’s age group transcended family, clan and regions. This is because age groups cut across all those boundaries (Simba, O.I., 2017, Thurwa; Ikiugu, O.I., 2019). Months later, these men were trained how to be warriors by learning fighting skills and getting fighting tools. Official service to the community had begun. It is crucial to highlight that circumcision season in the whole of Tigania and Igembe

was done in the same period. After serving for two to three years the initiates were incorporated into warrior secrets. At this point, talent among the junior warriors like ability to run fast, courage and ability to jump five times while holding a spear and a shield, would enable those with such abilities to rise up the ranks within the regiment and also got leadership positions within the defense system (Sabina, O. I., 2019). Joining the Njuri began after about 12 years of military service to the community. The warriors paid a fee of one goat as initiation fees. This initiation was a marker of entry into the junior most rank of the Njuri Ncheke which was *Njuri ya Lamala*. It was a marker of maturity in readiness for transition to becoming family heads or junior elders.

Circumcision among the precolonial Tigania was a crucial rite of passage. Even among other central Kenya communities circumcision marked passage into adulthood. Ngugi wa Thiongo (2011, p. 88) observed that, “In a society where governance, military obligation, law, morality presupposed the succession of generation, this rite was a necessary stage up the ladder of social life for the balance and continuity of the whole. – the preparation, the act and the healing were therefore communal, familial and personal at the same time”. The importance of this rite lay in its ability to transform a boy to a man by giving him rights. The foreskin’s dirt symbolized the uncouth behavior associated with uncircumcised *iyiyi* (boys). Circumcision therefore was meant to symbolize the cleansing, purification of some raw material in preparation for public service. According to Mwongo (O.I., 2018), this ritual did confer full citizenship rights and responsibilities. It was a movement that marked transition from the barbarity of *‘kiyi’* boy, to the “civility” of the circumcised. The many responsibilities awaiting males meant that circumcision was a movement from one universe to another altogether. Among these was the preparation for the rite of marriage (DC/MRU/1925). According to the respondents, an uncircumcised man could not be allowed to copulate. Socially, a *kiiyi* was a suppressed human being for he could not copulate or become a leader. Penetration came with responsibilities. Therefore, circumcision conferred full rights to become a Tigania citizen. Circumcision implied being equipped for “sexual penetration” and thus permission to reproduce ‘proper’ citizens. The many secrets of the community could not be confined to a *kiiyi*. Knowledge of the deep mysteries of the community was undertaken by men who had undergone the rituals of circumcision and *mpithio*/burning. The boys according to the respondents could not be trusted for they

had not endured pain to make them understand the agony involved in creating a society, more so, a strong and a functional one (Ciakwalu, O.I., 2019; Laughton, 1944, p. 3).

A typical woman among the precolonial Tigania could not marry an uncircumcised man. It was against custom and even a taboo, neither could men marry uncircumcised girls. Uncircumcised woman or man was not really a ‘proper’ human being and therefore could not be entrusted with community responsibilities. Lyn Thomas better captures this scenario, she observed, “An uninitiated daughter was viewed as ill-mannered and incapable of giving birth to proper human beings. Girls who had reached puberty but were not initiated represented reproductive aberrations; they were physically able but not socially consecrated to conceive and give birth. Circumcision was a reproductive necessity” (Thomas, 2003, p. 18). Nyaga (1997) emphasized this by observing that, it was a custom which attracted heavy fines and curses if a man engaged in sex with uncircumcised girls and vice versa. The colonial government noted the importance of the rite. The DC in 1925 reported that,

Since 1920 there have been chaos in Meru community. Circumcision could not proceed because there was shortage of the necessary food supplies. After delaying for four years good harvests were noted in 1924. The abnormal state which has existed for the past 4 years of great numbers of adult men and women being unmarried owing to the long postponement of circumcision has now been remedied. Tigania division continued to suffer partial famine and lack of enough grazing space....” (DC/MRU/1925, p. 536).

If a *Kiiyi* impregnated a girl both were declared unclean and their offspring could not be accepted into the community. Thurwa (O.I., 2019) explained that, if unmarried or uncircumcised girl got pregnant, she was banished from the community for her actions were impure and were therefore capable of causing *muir* (contamination) to the whole clan. Deviancy of this kind was judged as capable of angering the ancestors who would punish the clan or whole community by bringing disasters. Consequences for such offences therefore was death, banishment, forced abortion and or marrying an old man. A child born of unrecognized union which is a union of deviants could not be accepted into the community because it was considered a lesser human being (Simba, O.I., 2017).

4.7.3 Direct Representation

After circumcision the initiates became warriors. This way they reigned alongside the ruling elders who were their fathers. They implemented some council decisions. Decisions which required their energy included communal security, raiding, intelligence gathering, revenge or finding kidnapped community members. By working hand in hand with the ruling council, the warriors got to learn about the operations of the council. After settling in Tigania area, Fadiman (1976) records that the Tigania adopted the *garu* system from Cushitic groups. Under this adopted system all initiates after healing were supposed to stay in a special military barrack called *garu*. The many enemies, the Pre-colonial Tigania had to tackle made them adopt the system (ibid). Once in this barrack they could easily be recalled to defend the community from external aggression. The warriors at this stage in their lives, were also full men and therefore were liable to represent themselves in the council meetings and receive punishments meant for mature men for any transgression committed.

Cases of indiscipline were dealt with through thorough beating by members of one's age group (Kaunyangi, O.I., 2019). Though only the oldest and senior elders were allowed to retreat and make final decisions concerning all cases, every mature male was listened to by the jury if they had any concerns. By involving the warriors in the council meetings when necessary, the council managed to indulge the full attention of the young men into community affairs and also into *kiama* proceedings as a way of in-scribing them. The idea of involving all men into community leadership ensured that they became patriots who were ready to sacrifice their lives for the sake of their community and this was often done with pride (Mugambi, O.I., 2019). The process under which all men participated in community leadership and affairs was deeply entrenched by making it mandatory and a custom to be strictly observed (Ciakwalu, O.I., 2019).

4.7.4 Leadership Transition

Leadership transition among the pre-colonial Tigania connotes advance from one cadre of leadership into another. All males by virtue of their age group were destined to achieve a sense of personal service to their community by progressive advance from one level of leadership to a higher one (Laughton, 1944, p. 12). Being old among the precolonial Tigania implied more wisdom and therefore one was destined to a higher

level of respect. According to Fadiman (1993) age was equated with wisdom. Consultations on community affairs began with seeking out wisdom and advice from the oldest living members (ibid). Leadership transition was a process that everyone looked up to. From birth to circumcision, through warriorhood, to a family head, a ruling elder, a Njuri Ncheke member/ ritual elder, all entailed transition from one level of political leadership to another.

The system of political leadership allowed individuals to advance at personal level and also as collectivities (Sabina, O.I., 2019). In both genders growth was envisioned in the system thus, the regulatory code allowed for this growth. Collectivities at each level had different norms which governed their behavior (Ciakwalu, Thurwa, Chiokamuiru, O.I., 2019). Ruling elders and ritual elders as holders of the highest rank in the structure of leadership were expected to be exceptional in their conduct as required of their status and age. This helped set a standard for the next group. By portraying high ethics, they accorded respect to their age group and minimized instances of deviancy among the younger generations. Norms and values held by such a group therefore were a mechanism to stabilize the whole structure of leadership. Transition was therefore gradual and incremental after thorough schooling at each level (Ciakwalu, O.I., 2019).

This system of transition allowed males to learn how to control their anger, impatience and acquire self-control. These were virtues which the elders wanted every male to acquire in order transit to a higher level. All males irrespective of their wealth were allowed to be part of the ruling council by graduating through these stages. Special talents among individuals were highly regarded, a show of wise counsel or oratorical skills was more crucial to the community than wealth (Sabina, O.I. 2019). This does not imply that being wealthy was wrong – the emphasis lay on communality rather than class.

Aspects of leadership among the central Kenya communities were similar in many ways indicating a shared heritage (Kaunyangi, O.I., 2019). Among the precolonial Gikuyu as demonstrated by Jomo Kenyatta (1938), qualification into the tribal membership was based on maturity and not on property. Circumcision for both genders was the only sure way to becoming an adult. Males were initiated when they were

between 14-18 years and girls between 10-14 years of age. These rituals made the two parties equal members of the society, politically and socially. In the Gikuyu system of governance, power lay in the hands of the elders known as *kiama* (Ibid). The position of eldership was determined by a system of age grading. All young men between the ages of 18-40 formed a warrior class and the society was expected to be proud of them. Among the Tigania as shown, warriors were men aged between 15-30 years but in case military support was required, men of up to 40 years of age could be called upon to bear arms. The *ukuura garu* marked exit out of power was maintained through a system of power rotation between two generational sets referred to as *ntiba* and *kiruka*.

4.7.5 The System of Reciprocity

Transition and power handover alternated among various age groups among the precolonial Tigania. About every fifteen years power shifted between two groups or parties then known as *Kiruka* and *Ntiba*. Circumcision played a very crucial role in ensuring this system of power sharing was successful. When the older son circumcised his first-born son, the knife that was used became the knife for that age group. The boys who were circumcised at this period formed one age set. Those who followed after approximately five years formed another age set and those who underwent the ritual after about another five years formed another age set. All these became one age group and they became one “party” referred to as *Kiruka*. All members of that party were regarded as sons of the older son. The three age sets were consecutively called *Ndiguri*, *Kobia* and *Kaberia*. The umbrella names given on the table were the ones used in parallel to the three sets above to determine precisely which category one belonged to. Even the naming system and the names of individuals among the precolonial Tigania were given according to the age group and the age set which one belonged to (Thurwa, O.I., 2019). This implies that there were names set aside for naming individuals in particular age groups in reference to great the grandfather or grandmother.

When the older son had circumcised his third lot the younger son took over the exercise about five years later. He circumcised his sons in a fashion that had been set out by his elder brother. The three lots of the circumcised bearing the same names as the ones of the elder son. This second lot formed another party referred to as *Ntiba*. These were referred to as sons of the younger brother. From there, circumcision formed a circuit

(Nyaga, 1997). The spacing of children in the management of age sets was very crucial. A child was never shaved until it was about 7 years old. All this was to give the mother enough time to heal and prepare for the next child. During this period the wife was expected to get the husband another wife. The spacing of children with as many years as 5-8 was to allow for proper management of age sets and age groups. The firstborn son and the second born son were not expected to marry nor have children at the same time so that the system could work as expected.

The above system was more complicated than it really appears for it was meant to perpetuate a stable political order. The five-year-old difference between age sets could be lowered to four or increased even to ten to cover for periods wrought with disasters like disease outbreak which would kill many women and children (Thurwa, O.I., 2019). Delays in circumcision were also meant to help control the population as a means of family planning (Ibid). It should be noted however that the names, older son and younger son do not literally imply brothers but are meant to cover for all the delays which would occur in the circumcision period. Unit situations in systems theory help define why circumcision was a cycle. The need to propagate the community through individuals who were gathered together into collectivities gave the system better chances of proper management and ability to grow. The management of units was easy given that all males for example in a certain age set were to check mate each other's behavior. Failure of the individual meant failure of the whole group hence, failure of the clan. The quick ability of a certain age set to deal with misconduct within itself gave collectivities power to ensure norms and values were entrenched in individuals and also collectivities. Among new initiates and warriors, expectations were for example, they could not have sex before marriage, they could not drink beer, chew miraa nor rape girls and women. Staying in collectivities until marriage helped the youths endure the challenges of each level of growth. This was designed to make strong personalities who were morally upright.

Political leadership among the precolonial Tigania therefore was a cycle which included all members of the society. This reciprocity ensured that there was no power vacuum and that transition would occur within the designated period. This system immunized

the community against political competition as seniority depended on age and not wealth (Baariu, O.I., 2019).

4.7.6 The Role of Women in the Tigania Precolonial Order

Women were a crucial group in the political order. Besides the women having their own age groups and women councils to manage, they had a considerable bearing in men's lives. They had roles that ranged from being pillars to the family economy to being mothers to the community (Ciakwalu, O.I., 2019). The reproductive power of women was what perpetuated the community. This was a sacred power which involved nurturing future generations and raising them according to custom. A woman gave birth to children both male and females who helped the family to be robust. Males would make the clan strong for they would defend their family and the community against invasion. Girls in the family would help the mother with cultivation which provided the family with food (Chunkubitu, O.I., 2109). Children of both genders were regarded as important though not equal.³⁵ Males were looked upon to perpetuate the family which according to norms was patrilineal. The ancestor's names would be remembered down the generations through this descent (ibid).

Among the pre-colonial Tigania, there would be no home without a wife and polygamy was widely accepted for big families meant greater safety (Ibid). According to Mwongo (I.O., 2019) marriage among the precolonial Tigania entailed a union between a man and a woman. This union happened between those who had reached marriageable age and also had been initiated. Due to the many unknowns surrounding the people, marriage meant continuation and perpetuation of family and clan. The woman was expected to bear children for the clan and care for them. Also, she performed other house hold chores in what was a consequence of clear division of labour.

Among the pre-colonial Tigania marriage was considered a rite of passage that every individual was entitled to. It signified the transformation of the social status of an individual. Thurwa (O.I., 2019) differentiates between the rites of passage that saw one become a fully recognized citizen among the precolonial Tigania. She said, "While

³⁵ The inequality can be deduced from the practice of women shouting three ululations for a girl, five for a boy child at birth.

circumcision guaranteed an individual acceptance into adulthood marriage assured them of the status of a fully-fledged and accomplished humans”. A woman was fully accepted after she gave birth and especially to boys. Although both male and female children were loved and accepted, a family among the precolonial Tigania was incomplete if the couple were not able to get a male child. Males would become heir to the family wealth and name. Though polygamy helped to mitigate this challenge, every woman wanted to honor the husband by getting a boy child. Women after marriage were regarded as mothers not only in the family but also in the clan and surrounding community. Under this arrangement marriage represented a utilitarian union between two unrelated people who were expected to satisfy social obligations and expectations. All members of the community were expected to respect mothers. Anyone who dared insult a mother would face the wrath of the community, for mothers were special to their children and to the community. While their role as mothers was sacred, they were also considered very vulnerable. They therefore had to be protected.³⁶

Among the Pre-colonial Tigania the world was partitioned between community welfare and private sphere although the two categories were not so distinctive. Men occupied the former while women were expected to thrive in the latter (Chunkubitu, O.I., 2018). She further said that emphasizes lay in both wifhood and motherhood for women. Efficient motherhood brought forth good children while wise wifhood brought honor to the husband. Both ideas were embedded in women’s minds and this enabled private sphere to thrive thus bringing stability to political order which was dominated by men. Polygamy was regarded as natural and all women were expected to be well familiarized. Due to the many responsibilities’ women had, the older wife often suggested to the husband to get a second or a third wife in order that they help her to meet communal and conjugal expectations. They also assisted her create more wealth and bear many children for the husband. Many wives and children were part of the man’s wealth and men were inclined to acquire this status. Thriving in the private sphere according to the respondents demanded much labour and it was the duty of the wife to ensure the husband succeeded. Thus, having many wives and children enhanced the prestige of a man (Ciakwalu, O.I., 2019).

³⁶ Men’s belief in the vulnerability of women is shared across many cultures, see, Tomoko Hidaka, *Salaryman Masculinity: Continuity and Change in Hegemonic Masculinity in Japan*, Leiden & Boston, Brill, 2010.

Mothers in the pre-colonial Tigania took the biggest share of the blame if the children behaved contrary to communal expectations for example a girl getting pregnant before marriage. Women in the clan and the larger community also shared in the blame because the responsibility of raising children belonged to them all. The system had defined roles for each unit in the system relations. Good motherhood and prudent wifeness were values each woman looked forward to achieving in her life. It brought honor to the family and also to the clan of the woman. The system among the precolonial Tigania, therefore, could never thrive without these important roles played by women.

Women were looked up to as crucial to the community as they provided the connecting link between one generation and another. They played a significant role in enabling the bonding of various clans through marriage. For example, according to Sabina (O.I., 2019), among the Tigania, *gichiario* existed between the clans of *Antubaita* and *Kitharene*. That *gichiario* (blood brotherhood) though has now been weakened by continued intermarriage between people of the two clans. When a woman is married into a clan where there exists a weak *gichiario*, she adulterates the strength of the bond which weakens further as more women get married and more children are born into the clan. Before the colonial era, to cement unity between rival sub-ethnic groups, clans were required by the council to marry a few daughters from each other who would act as symbols of a rejuvenated relationship. Laws governing the conduct of war forbade the killing of women and children. Their murder was absolutely not excusable (Mwaniki, 2010).

Women councils were crucial in the community. Once a girl was married, she belonged to the age group of her husband. It was the responsibility of all males in that age group to regard her as one of their own even in the case of the husband's demise (Ciakwalu, O.I., 2019). A woman, once married, joined the women council called *Muingo*. *Muingo* provided a forum for women to deliberate on issues affecting them and the community at large. In instances where a woman from a certain family or clan was accused of practicing witchcraft, she was reported to the women guild/ *Muingo*. To prove her innocence, she would take an oath referred as *muma*, administered by a *mugichiario*/ a person from another clan which had a binding oath with the clan of the lady in question.

The items involved in administration of the oath were khat/*miraa*, or some inner parts of a goat. This oath would harm her if she was involved in witchcraft and do her no harm if she was innocent (Kayaru, O.I., 2019).

Muingo had their headquarters known as *koongo ka aka* or valley of women. A man or woman would report a transgressor of taboo to *Muingo* and the transgressor would be disciplined in accordance to custom (Thurwa, O.I., 2019). Cases of girls who got pregnant or engaged in sex before marriage were also dealt with by the *Muingo*.³⁷ Such cases had a predetermined outcome if it was evident that she had willingly consented to sex. Such a girl was considered a bad omen to the community (Simba, O.I., 2017, Thurwa, O.I., 2019).

4.7.7 The Religious Order, Beliefs, Punishment and Catastrophe

The precolonial Tigania were generally a religious people. The form of religion practiced then was largely inclined towards enhancing moral uprightness. It helped control individual actions. A reciprocal relationship between *Ngai*, ancestors and human beings was highly valued. Everyone in the community had a role to play in this relationship. Citizens were supposed to be upright and ensure good relations among themselves. The *Muwee/Mukiama* were supposed to observe holiness. Their high moral conduct greatly impinged on the conduct of the ruling elders and also the warriors. The mediums were supposed to help understand ancestral will and determine when this will had been breached and by who. The ruling elder's council had the role of safeguarding all these relationships for a peaceful living (Thurwa O.I., 2019; Kayaru, O.I., 2019). To maintain these relationships required the indulgence of all. The authors of the system institutionalized mechanisms through a system of social relations. Norms and values at each of the levels governed code of conduct and behavior of each person (Alumina, O.I., 2019).

According to the respondents, the earth was surrounded by mystery and forces of greater might than humans. The people therefore believed in the existence of a higher authority they referred to as *Ngai*. This *Ngai* however did not appear to anyone and

³⁷ Women 'Judges' in the *Muingo* were those who had successfully brought up children and in most cases, who had reached menopause.

therefore the muwee who was clean and free of sin was supposed to lead the community in seeking intervention of *Ngai* in situations wrought with danger and possible disasters. Mediums were also highly regarded among the pre-colonial Tigania. Their institution was believed to be important among the living. By contacting the ancestors, the mediums were able to predict the future and also warn the living of calamities due to deviation from ancestral will. The ancestors were a feared group among the living, they were thought to bring calamities to the living when custom or laws of the community were broken (Kayaru, O.I., 2019).

The elders had the duty to ensure precedent was followed and the ancestors were pleased. Fadiman buttressed these sentiments by observing that

The elders did not work in isolation but regularly consulted the ancestors through the mediums. As with other Bantu peoples, each Meru generation was closely linked to the ancestral dead, not only by bonds of kinship but also constant rituals intended to keep their relationship alive. To its members a clan consisted of the living and their ancestors. It "lived," therefore, within not just the temporal world but an interrelated spiritual sphere as well. Reflecting this duality, the councils also existed within both secular and supernatural contexts. On earth they served as centers for conciliation, adjusting conflicts of human interest as they arose. Because all decisions were ultimately based on ancestral precedent, however, their ultimate task was to determine whether human quarrels had caused disharmony among their ancestors as well. If so, these also had to be resolved. By implication, therefore, human conflict had both secular and supernatural significance. Because all violations of person or property were defined automatically as departures from ancestral tradition, they became the concern not merely of the instigators but also their families, clans, and ultimately the ancestors from whom everyone had descended. (Fadiman, 1993).

Any matter arising among the people that proved difficult to resolve by the ruling council and the eldest, was taken to the spiritual leaders of the clan or community by the elders who required the *mugaa* to perform rituals which would shed light on procedures of resolving the impasse. If further input was required, the medium in consultation with the spirits of the ancestors would help find a solution, which was relayed back to the elders. The elders would now guide the community on what to do concerning an impending calamity based on precedent and guidance of the spiritual leaders (Ratanya, O.I., 2019).

All forms of uncleanness (*Muiro* or *miiro* {plural}) among the people were thought to stir the anger of the ancestors who were the guardians of the living and of custom too (Nyaga, 1997). Observation of community laws and customs therefore among the precolonial Tigania was not a matter of choice but a necessary condition for peaceful living (Ikiugu, O.I., 2019). Observance of developmental stages from birth to circumcision to marriage and eldership were processes that everyone adhered to. All observed precedence related with each stage (Njara, O.I., 2019). In this way, circumstances that would destabilize the cycle of the political order were mitigated. The veneration of the spirits of the ancestors through pouring of libations was a crucial variant in the success of each age group. Among individual age groups, people were expected to observe each other's behavior so as to mitigate personal limitations. This ensured disaster did not befall a family, clan or whole communities because of a few individuals. Anything that was thought to contravene moral uprightness was made a taboo. No one was to touch it lest they became unclean (Thurwa O.I., 2019). This system thrived in belief and custom. It was meant to ensure stability in the social, economic and political systems among the precolonial Tigania.

4.7.8 The making of Leaders among the Tigania. The Place of Honor

Leadership, achievement, pride and service to community made individuals especially men go to great lengths to achieve such status. Actions of heroism brought pride to families, clans and the larger community (Mwongo, O.I., 2018). To achieve some of these ideals' men had to make sacrifices, sometimes even with their own lives. Women composed and sung songs in praise of such men who were remembered for their acts which brought glory to the community. They were made legends who the younger generations were supposed to emulate. Women getting married when one was still a virgin brought honor to her mother, who was regarded as a great woman. Girls who broke such norms were mocked and married off to old men. To avoid such shameful scenes, everyone tried to be a leader at their own level, this was in order to achieve greatness and bring honor to their family. Discipline among the precolonial Tigania was a duty that every clan and community member ensured was adhered to by the young ones.

Respondents to the present research agreed that collective punishment for a clan could be instituted in the case it was a repeat offender. Weighing on the matter of discipline, Fadiman observed common trends in the nature of punishments. He stated,

Other punishments were also intended to reintegrate the offender. Guilt was considered collective, its stigma spreading from a single man to his entire clan. A beating, therefore, if ordered by a *Kiama*, was administered by the offender's closest relations. A livestock fine was intended as an exercise in collective expiation, because the animals were collected equally from the herds of every family in the clan. In contributing, kins people symbolically acknowledged both the offender's guilt and the need for reconciliation (Fadiman, 1993).

The recruitment of all men into a certain age set and age group was meant to instill a high level of responsibility and discipline to help tame deviancy and indiscipline. Members of one's age group, would greatly chastise any individual who dishonored the group by engaging in activities outlawed by custom and which were thought to undermine peace. Councils of various age groups therefore played a critical role in preserving expected orderliness. (Mwongo, O.I, 2019; Thurwa. O.I., 2018).

4.8 How did the Precolonial Tigania De-scribe the Political Order?

To de-scribe political order among the Tigania implied ability by some members of the society to subvert and undermine the established procedures or custom. It happened that there were individuals who chose to privilege their private good above the public one. Such cases among the precolonial Tigania demonstrated the interplay between communality and individuality in the political order. The need to acquire a high sense of group or individual achievement often was said to be the cause of deviancy from custom among the precolonial Tigania. Instances of deviancy were also caused by strict adherence to procedures required for the community to have successful events and seasons (Thurwa, O.I., 2019).

The social and economic systems among the Precolonial Tigania were all meant to ensure a successful political order. Success in the social ordering meant peace and tranquility in the political system. All activities revolved around making it possible for the next generation to survive for the perpetuation of the community. The systems described above were meant to ensure everyone was well integrated into serving his family, clan and then the community. All the precautions from childbirth, to initiation to elder hood in-scribed people into being patriots, men and women who would

courageously choose death in honor of their clan and family. The various groupings and penalties minimized errors among peers.

Though the system was very successful in its endeavor of perpetuating the continuity of the community, deviants never lacked. By taking action contrary to norms and customs these group directly disobeyed their peers, elders and established customs. The respondents claimed that some deviants were natural, these were remembered as *ngitii*.

Deviancy among the precolonial Tigania went against custom and sometimes affected individuals. According to Fadiman (1993, p. 27) the system among the precolonial Meru seems to have operated according to universally accepted principles of thought. The first equated age with wisdom. Informants "pressed this relation in terms of human blood. Youths were described as "hot blooded," and therefore emotional, violent, and selfish. It created conflict within the community, which only the aged could resolve. Aging, in contrast, cooled the blood, thus permitting elders to acquire wisdom. The elders' role, therefore, was to cool (resolve) the conflicts raised by youth and thus restore the harmony required for communal survival. Daniel Nyaga gave an example that involved warrior misconduct. That *Kiramunya* age group among the Tigania was a deviant group for they disobeyed the elders. This group decided to rise against the Katheri of Central Imenti because their leader, the son of Karongo was killed by the people of Kithirune instead of being captured as tradition dictated. However, it is reckoned that pride made this man to be killed because he had been warned by the elders not to go for the raid because the enemies had been pushed by Memeu age group up to Kurii, he ignored them and went all the same (Nyaga, 1997, p. 13). Respondents opined that there is strained relations to date.

The creation of Maasai who are Meru was also thought by respondents to be through an act of deviancy. A section of warriors from Tigania decided to steal girls and animals and ran away with them. The elders gave them a grace period to return the animals and also not to marry uncircumcised girls for it was against custom. The warriors heeded the latter warning but pressed on with the former. The elders dispatched group of warriors to recover the stolen animals. Nyaga (1997, p. 14) records that the second group made considerable progress against the deviants and recaptured a good number

of animals. On realizing their possible annihilation, the defectors run away towards Mpaarua in today's Miathene, heading to Kianjai and others to Kaari, Muthara and Mbaranga. They continued to flee moving towards Isiolo where more defectors from Igembe joined them. The deviants pressed through Ng'ombe hills to Ndunyumutunyi until they joined the Maasai in Maasai land. Oral traditions claim that this group of defectors are currently to be found in Laikipia as Maasai Meru (ibid).

According to Ikiugu, Alumina, Thurwa (O.I., 2019) and Simba (O.I., 2017) the creation of Meru who are Turkana was as a result of deviancy. This had resulted from resentment against rigid procedures existing within precolonial Tigania clans³⁸. Among the Tigania the above respondents reckon that it was not until the *mugaa* gave consent that seasonal event could proceed. A specialist like the *mugaa* was supposed to read omens through his powers and signal events like circumcision to proceed. If the omens read showed signs of negativity the events were postponed.

The creation of Turkana Meru, was one such event. Among the Tigania, the respondents above told of a story about the disappearance of a whole age set because their circumcision was delayed as omens predicted a calamity. This particular age-set is said to have begged the elders to let them be circumcised but the elders refused because the *agaa* predicted danger. This group of youths which included both boys and girls decided that they could no longer wait, having attained about 25 years of age. Among the precolonial Tigania if circumcision was delayed by a season it implied that the affected age set would be circumcised after waiting for 5 years because circumcision happened about every five years. Filling a regiment was a must in addition to other necessary conditions like availability of enough food, peace with neighbors and absence of disasters. If any of these conditions was not met, circumcision was postponed regardless of the effects to the individuals. This age set in question refused to wait and ran away reaching as far as Samburu and into Turkana. They ran away because their inferior numbers could not allow them to fight for their rights. More importantly, they knew the procedure of how things were to be done. Strict adherence to precedents was followed and nothing could have been done to convince the elders to act to the contrary.

³⁸ Lambert in his papers (Lambert: 8) discusses the story of Rendille or Turkana who might be the descendants of the rebels.

The fear of a collective curse plus the rigid custom left them with only one safe option, run away. They were to be absorbed into Turkana community and became Turkana-Meru (Ikiugu, Alumina, Thurwa, O.I., 2019).

Deviancy among the Precolonial Tigania was also thought to emanate from economic reasons and also the need to seek for personal or group glory.

Conclusion

The political system among the Pre-colonial Tigania, directly stemmed from clan and age-based hierarchy. Gender relations was an important corollary to this hierarchy. All matters of governance were treated with care so as to preserve harmony with the past, the present and secure the future. The ruling age-groups, that is father and sons had to adhere to custom in conducting public affairs. Adhering to custom did come from a long process of in-scribing, lasting for between 12-17years. This integrating mechanism in social, economic and political life of the community was the single most important factor in ensuring internalization of the Tigania value system. Identity and certainty directly emanated from this cultural system.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE IMPOSITION AND CONSOLIDATION OF COLONIAL RULE AMONG THE TIGANIA, 1910-1957.

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section explores how colonial rule was imposed and the second section analyzes how colonial rule was consolidated in Tigania. The mechanisms applied by the new symbolisms especially the District Commissioners (DC), District Officers (DO), Christian missionaries as they influenced political change in this area are explored. The question of how the existing networks of political, metaphysical and symbolic power among the Tigania were weakened will be analyzed. The pushing of custom into the shadows influenced new social and political networks and alliances. This chapter sought to answer the larger question of how these new interactions and symbolisms cropped and how they (un)consciously led to evolution of political order among colonial Tigania.

It is worth noting that colonial officials were not permanent in their areas of jurisdiction hence, most had a limited understanding of the structural context of their actions. Therefore, any action they took was geared towards maintaining hegemony and directing the development of social forces along desired paths. As Berman (1990) suggests, colonisation was a process where a state was being created. Colonization as contextualized used the archaeology of state working through a succession of historical levels of institutional creation and destruction, continuity and change. A varying succession of outcomes therefore led to a convoluted path taken consciously or otherwise to the present society of Tigania.

The previous chapter indicated that the social system within Tigania was produced through a thorough process of in-scribing, through the use of customs, norms and values which bound individuals together as collectivities. The system created by colonialism and its institutions of power were not organically absorbed in Tigania. Colonialism sought to actively usurp and dominate the existing social networks. Domination was expressed through modes of control whereby agents seek to achieve and maintain the compliance of the dominated. Colonial domination as noted by Berman (1990) and emphasized by respondents to the present research involved spontaneous monitoring of

aspects of reproduction of social systems of the subjects by the ruling power.³⁹ Indigenous systems were therefore subject to powerful and invisible forces of transformation.

This first section, provides an overview of the concept of colonialism, the conquest of the Tigania and thematically analyzes chieftainship in Tigania. The instrumentalist theorization of ethnicity as understood by Thomas Spear (2003) was utilized.

5.2 The Colonial Concept

Before the conquest of Kenya by the British, African people were at different stages of historical and economic development. Their main modes of production were a mixture of communalism and feudalism though traces of slavery could be found in some groups like coastal communities (Kinyatti, 2000). The imposition of colonialism meant that British East Africa was to become part of the economy of European capitalism and political subjugation. Kenya as a state did not exist prior to the British invasion of East Africa. This implies that communities ruled themselves as autonomous groups.

The Precolonial Tigania had many clans which exercised internal self-rule through the ruling age group of clan elders. A *mugambi* was the chosen spokespersons of his clan. The amalgamation of all clans residing within the area defined as Tigania forms the Tigania sub-ethnic group. Characteristics defining this group include, a high level of linguistic and cultural similarity and geographic concentration (Lynch, 2006, p. 50). However just as common language or culture can be used to assert this unity, distinctions of dialect and small variations in custom were used to assert difference between the Tigania and other Meru sub-ethnic groups. The lingual differences among the Meru sub-ethnic groups are minimal and most arise in the usage of certain letters while pronouncing certain words. The use of R and L makes for the most difference especially among the three major groups, which are the Tigania, Igembe and Imenti (Domiciano, O.I., 2019).

Among the precolonial Meru, clans and inter-clan relationships defined political relationships other than conscious sub-ethnic identity. This is explained by the fact of

³⁹ On the dialectic of control see Bruce Berman, Control and Crisis in Colonial Kenya (1990)

existence of *gichiaro* ties between and among many Meru clans from Chuka to Igembe. In the context of define and rule, the elements of direct and indirect rule found that clan rule was untenable due to the small nature of the clans. The changing relationship from popular (clan) rule to administrative (state) under chiefs, headmen and sub headmen was a necessity under the colonial regime. When colonial officers settled in Mutindwa Boma, in today's Meru town, they divided the Meru ethnic group into various sub-ethnic groups for reasons of structured administration. Mamdani elaborated this kind of dividing by observing that it was necessary, he stated

Although tribal identity in many cases coincided with what anthropologists call ethnic identity-by which they usually mean language-based, cultural, identity-this was not always the case. In some cases, the same ethnic group was divided into several tribes administratively (Mamdani, 2012, p. 52).

This fate befell the Meru. Archival records indicate that there were five main administrative jurisdictions within the larger Meru district invented by the colonial government. Tigania, Igembe, Imenti and Tharaka were the pioneer zones. The areas of Mwimbi, Muthambi and Chuka were administered as part of Embu. In June of 1933, however, the three areas were added to Meru District and were now administered together with the Igoji and Miutine (DC/MRU/1933, p. 264).

But we needed to ask, did the concept of tribalism exist in Tigania and the larger pre-Meru community before the advent of colonialism? Mamdani explained this fundamental query which has found its way into the post-colonial Africa's 'democratic states'. He pointed out that,

If we understand by tribe an ethnic group with a common language, it did. But tribe as an administrative entity that distinguishes between natives and non-natives and systematically discriminates in favor of the former against the latter-defining access to land and participation in local governance and rules for settling disputes according to tribal identity- certainly did not exist before colonialism. As a totalizing identity, tribe was a subset of race. Each represented a language of privilege and discrimination...The colonial state was based on a double discrimination, racial and tribal. Racial discrimination was institutionalized in the central state and tribal discrimination in the local sub state. Race was said to be about a hierarchy of civilization whereas tribe was said to reflect cultural ethnic diversity within a race...The local state justified discrimination in favor of the native tribe on grounds of origin and difference. (Mamdani, 2012, p. 73)

Autonomy according to the respondents of this research implied internal communal solidarity. However, this communality was greatly compromised thus destroying internal cohesion and functionality and was re-imagined to solidify tribal consciousness as it shall later be discussed.

The systems of governance among the Bantu were common in many aspects but also varied in some practices and values due to previous interactions in the course of migration (Mwaniki, 2010). These interactions however did not make some groups so exclusive to the point of absolute difference from the others similar to them. For example, the differences that exist(ed) between *Micii Mikuru* (old clans and families among the Ngaa) and *Miriga Mieru* (new clans) resonated from the pattern of migration and interactions as espoused in the previous chapter.

A careful analysis of various aspects of life among the larger Meru sub-ethnic groups, will yield a difference in complexity of traditional institutions and practices but shared beliefs. These differences may maybe the result of contacts and interactions in the process of migration and settlement (Mwongo, O.I., 2018). Mwongo reckons that the colonizer sought to understand these facts about the Meru for many technicalities occurred in trying to administer Tigania, Igembe and Abuthoguchi as discussed in chapter six.

Cultural distinction among human beings is the sole creator of differences that distinguish human beings from animals. This cultural capability is non-biological hence it is possible to modify and introduce new behavior patterns into the personality development (Ayisi, 1991). Jan Vansina holds that tradition cannot be solely framed as continuous or unchanging⁴⁰. Instead history and tradition are continuous and changing, adaptive to the dynamic realities of social change such as migration, religious conversion and colonization (Vansina, 1992). Tigania people were affected by these dynamics in different periods of their historic, economic and political development. Migration can be said to have made the Tigania evolve better mechanisms of survival under different environments. Colonization however did not augur well with these

⁴⁰ Jan Vansina, *Paths in the rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*. London: James curry, 1992.

people because as espoused by Thomas Spear (2003) that colonists “use and appropriation of these people inserted them into dialogues of which they had little knowledge or control.”⁴¹ Colonization according to the views of African historians such as Albert Memmi (1973) and Frantz Fanon (1967) was motivated by cultural differences and the notion of superiority complex of Europeans against people of color like Africans, Arabs, Indians and the Americans (Ayisi, 1991).

5.2.1. What was the Basis of Colonization

The African territory was largely developing along the lines of empires and kingdoms (Ahmed, 1984). The territory named Kenya was occupied by communities that were later bundled together to form a state previously known as British East African protectorate. Most of the African Bantu communities though stateless could quickly mobilize in a state fashion in times of crisis. Special councils consisting of the most influential elders, military leaders and ritual experts gathered and made key decisions. This view is buttressed by Mr. V.M. Mckeag DC Meru who observed that,

To ensure best of solutions to critical issues, the Meru system, has institutions which cut across age-grading. And it had always been recognized that superiority in intelligence and character entitles the individual to take a place in councils to which common ruck of his age-grade could never be admitted” (DC/MRU/1939, p. 346).

About the definition of state, it will be recognized that ‘state’ developed out of European experience and Milieu (Ahmed, 1984). Karl Marx views the state simply as an agency of economic oppression of one class by another and that colonialism was the peak of capitalism. Marx Weber views the state as a creation meant for better management of society. To him, it was a political organization for ensuring proper maintenance of law and order. To sum up, to Karl Marx the state was an apparatus of class rule and to Weber it was an apparatus of general administration. The nature of organization among the Tigania tended towards egalitarianism.

State sovereignty and state economy were non-existence concepts among the Tigania and most of Bantu communities in Kenya. After 1905 the term state was used to refer to Kenya as a whole and was stretched to encompass both the a-cephalous, territorially

⁴¹ Thomas Spear, “Neo traditionalism and the Limits of Invention in British Colonial Africa.” *Journal of African History* vol. 44, No.1 (2003), pp. 3-27

unfocused kinship groups and a formally organized territorially delimited complex society (Ahmed, 1984). Territoriality in turn raises the question of sovereignty. A final authority in charge of decision making. Hence the concept of protectorate in 1905 and the queen's declaration of giving IBEAC power to exploit Kenya and make the territory 'profitable'. The dual Mandate was an expression of the fundamental principles of European imperialism in tropical Africa as theorized by Sir Frederick Lugard (1858-1945). It was a concept whose theoretical construct was to justify the colonial occupation of Africa.

Colonization of Africa was not just a mere process of conquest and subordination but a transcending process of empire building. The benevolent role of 20th century Empire builders had a benign mission attached to it according to the views of white settlers. For example, "The British peer Baron Cranworth claimed that he and his fellow Kenyan settlers brought progress and modernity to the "primitive" peoples of the East African highlands" (Parsons, 2010, p. 1). This benevolent mission therefore had to be carefully planned. According to Mamdani,

Indirect rule differed from the modes of rule in the previous Empires –including Roman and British 'direct' rule before the mid-19th century, and French 'assimilation' before the early 20th century turn to 'association' in two important ways. First, the previous Empires focused on conquered elites rather than the mass of the colonized. Second, they aimed to eradicate difference through the policy of cultural and sometime political assimilation of colonized elites, whereas indirect rule claimed not just to acknowledge difference but also to shape it. (Mamdani, 2012, p. 2)

Under this system the definition and management of difference was developed as the essence of governance. The colonial government therefore institutionalized difference both in the polity and the society. Only the settler in the colonial state had the status of citizenship under combined elements of direct and indirect rule.

The political identity of the indigenous peoples was 'Native'. Native was the creation of the colonial state. The governance of the native was the prerogative of Native Authority. In Meru the local Native Council was in charge. The authority of native administration was supposed to be faithful to tradition and custom. The process of defining the native brought about racial and tribal identities and also defined the

elements of civic law and native law. Sir Henry Maine brought about these reflections that would shape colonisation in Africa (Mamdani, 2012, p. 3).

The value system of the British which laid emphasizes on “individual” merit was what was used to judge between African communality which is seen as backwardness and barbarity in contrast to European progress based on individual merit (Gould, 1961 Ayisi, 1991). This merit which distinguishes the criteria to determine the power binary, bears the ability to tell who is superior and inferior in the world of the ‘civilized’ and ‘the uncivilized’ hence Lugards dual mandate.⁴² This mandate justified intrusion into the lands of backward races.

Trade agreements encouraged further linkages among African ethnic groups and large-scale political organizations and protectionist policies and alliances (Ahmed, 1984). But these trade agreements were basically genuine and did not depict characteristics of greed and subordination between and among trading partners within the African setup. The nature of empire building and linkages within Africa lacked resemblance in character to the nature empire building within Europe and Americas. These hard characteristics of British Empire builders in Kenya made them ruthless in suppressing any forms of local opposition. Cooperation therefore emanated from economic changes and fear of violence (Berman, 1990).

European ‘traders’ who passed through Tigania and took a *gichiaro* oath of peace on every occasion of clash can be depicted as men who were strictly on survey expedition other than business. Survey expedition was used to gauge the organizational levels of the Tigania and other troublesome groups like the Embu, Maasai and Nandi. These survey expeditions increased towards the end of the 19th century. Tigania elders who on many instances brokered peace with these alien ‘traders’ were said to be astonished by the fire power of their weapons. As men who knew their mission, the decision to conquer Africans using a few well-armed Europeans in the company of paid African mercenaries implied weakened military structures within the African defense systems. Parsons observed that, “The most vulnerable societies were those divided sharply along the lines of class, religion, ethnicity, or some other form of identity. These divisions led

⁴² On the portrait of the colonizer, see, Memmi (1974, p. 47-96)

to military weakness, hindered organized resistance, and made it easier for conquering powers to recruit local allies” (Parsons 2010, p. 12-14).

Concurrently, imperial peace agreements which favored European interests depicted the Africans as divided, weak and poorly organized (Domiciano & Kaunyangi, O.I., 2019). These agreements would later be used by European explorers to understand African geography, peoples, and cultures and label them as barbaric and a people in need of enlightenment. The Berlin Agreement of 1885 rotated along these organizational and military weaknesses.

According to Macqueen new imperialism motivated expansion of British overseas dominions. Industrialization altered the economic nature of colonialism. The striking feature of the new imperialism was the extent and rapidity of change across all aspects of colonial venture (Macqueen 2007, p. 23). The need for cheaper raw materials and market for manufactured goods greatly motivated the need for change in the way colonialism happened in Africa. The dynamics involved differed from the previous system of imperial rule. From an economic view point independent development of merchant capital therefore stood in inverse proportion to the general economic development of the African society. As trading capital, merchant capital is not rooted in the sphere of production, rather it is parasitical to it. It does not develop independent economic or political base but instead uses what it finds extant. As trading capital Merchant capital adds nothing of value to the commodities which it helps circulate. To secure profit therefore it must buy cheap and sell dear. This entails controlling the source of commodities and markets to which such commodities are destined to (Ahmed, 1984). This gives merchant capital its monopolistic character. It has a tendency which entails the establishment of social formations with which it trades.

The subversion of traditional social and economic values in Tigania began with colonial conquest. Political and economic corruption began with the dominant groups and individuals within the colonial administrative system, for example chiefs. Robert Tignor noted that “colonial corruption stemmed directly from the functioning of the colonial system and was not a traditional inheritance” (Tignor, 1979). From local alliances the colonial rule advanced the same alliance tendencies to the headquarters.

The independence of the three arms of the colonial government, that is the executive, the judiciary and legislature was non-existent. Separation of powers would have compromised the goals of the colonial mission. The ability to create law and enforce it without consulting pitted the colonized against the colonizer. This way the colonial government was able to introduce the instruments of oppressive primitive accumulation which included taxation, creating markets and financial institutions, appropriating land and livestock, instituting forced labour, building port facilities and railway lines.

The process of capitalist penetration of Kenya was complete. The combination of economic pressure and outright coercion to promote commodity production woke Tigania people to the new reality of colonial rule.

5.2.2 The British Conquest of Tigania

The conquest of Embu who are Meru neighbors to the south paved way for the automatic surrender of all Meru sub-groups though few isolated cases of fighting broke out in the process (DC/MRU/306). The conquest of Embu in a nine-day plunder and massacre was a well calculated military move that opened up colonial rule to the northern region of Mt. Kenya. The Embu according to Mwanki (2010) were viewed by the colonial administrators in Gikuyu land as difficult people who had to be humbled by all means.

The subjugation of Embu neighbors by colonialist was a situation the Embu were not willing to accept. Their previous military losses and victories against the Gikuyu of Ndia and Gichugu, against the Mbeere and the Chuka gave the Embu the confidence that they could win a battle against the British in case of an armed confrontation. The Embu underrated the pink man who they said was uncircumcised (Mwaniki, 2010). Culturally, among the Mount Kenya people, circumcision allowed boys to transit into full adulthood. This way, they were considered mature and could be allowed to sit in the council of men and accorded a hearing. To be uncircumcised or considered so was to consider one uncouth and childish. The conquerors were not accorded any respect and therefore could not be tolerated by Embu men. The Embu boasted of vast herds of cattle, sheep and goat they had accumulated over the years. They needed to conquer the colonialists in order to preserve their pride, wealth, freedom and land. However, the

Embu never realized that their traditional allies like the Mbeere and Kikuyu had turned foes who coveted in equal measure as the colonizer their vast herds and independence (Fadiman, 1993; Mwaniki, 2010). By all means possible therefore the Embu had to be subdued. When the war trumpets sounded, their neighbors who are the Gikuyu and Mbeere turned out to be their conquerors, under the command of Captain Maycock of 3rd King's African Rifles. The Gikuyu of Gichugu volunteered to help the British after they were subdued. The Mbeere followed suit due to the suffering they had persevered under constant raids from Embu (Mwaniki, 2010, p. 262). The conquest ended in disaster for the Embu having begun in June 18, 1906 and concluded in July 19th, 1906 (Mwaniki, 2010, p. 261).

The Embu conquest was largely aided by the superior military tactics and weapons used by the British. The rivalry they had with their neighbors partly contributed to the loss despite the Embu fighters outnumbering the invading forces which were largely composed of men of African origin. This war left Embu men poor, mentally wounded, demoralized and under alien rule. The war spoils did not favor the rise of the Embu moving forward into the future (Mwaniki, 2010). According to the DCs report of 1925, the Embu expedition of 1906 led to the extension northwards of administrative control and a station was accordingly established without military operations, at Meru in 1908. A substation of Embu was opened in Chuka in 1913 (DC/MRU/3/1925).

Intelligence gathering missions from nearby Meru sub tribes reported the Embu plunder. The narrations of what was left of the Embu after the war spread rapidly to the neighboring communities prompting unconditional surrender for most of them. The Chuka, Muthambi, Mwimbi decided not to resist for the elders had concluded it was in vain. The decisive defeat exacted on the vast numbers of Embu warriors by colonial forces demoralized the poorly armed and outnumbered Chuka, Muthambi and Mwimbi warriors. The conquest of the Chuka who were next in the line was easy for Edward Butler Horne. Horne was the colonial officer in charge of the military expeditions and establishment of British colonial rule to the region East of Mount Kenya.

On arrival in the Chuka, Muthambi and Mwimbi land, Horne was peacefully received. He solely appointed chiefs who he would later use to rule these areas (Fadiman, 1993,

p. 132). The appointment of chiefs did not attract attention initially but later caused confusion not only among the elders in Embu but also among the Muthambi, Chuka and Mwimbi. For example, his meeting with Mbogori in July 1906. Mbogori began the conversation by stating that he had come from a region 'far to the north' of Embu, where the warriors were extremely fierce but nonetheless prepared for peace. Horne replied by praising Mbogori's size and then appointed him '*Munene* [chief] of Mwimbi.' The post was formalized by Horne's presentation of a symbol of the office, a *kanga*, or black cotton blanket. As a 'blanket chief' (*Munene ya Kanga*), Mbogori was to return to his people and prepare them for Horne's arrival. In the year 1909 the official establishment of the three chiefs of Mwimbi was accomplished by Horne. Mbogori wa Njeru however was made the paramount Chief over the chiefs of Chuka and Muthambi (DC/MRU/1925, p. 3). These chiefs were given symbols of queen's sovereign authority that is a jack and black cotton blanket. To members of these communities these appointments were just for the purposes of peace and were not taken seriously.

Fadiman, described Butler Horne, he stated,

He had been born in 1881, the youngest of eight brothers, he had come from a family that had offered distinguished service to the empire. After receiving a conventional British education, he had yielded to a sense of adventure. He spent several years in Canada and Wyoming, working as both a lumberjack and ranch hand. In Wyoming he acquired the name 'Shorthorn,' a reflection of his lack of height in contrast to a taller brother, nicknamed 'Longhorn.' Horne was a fanatical hunter, and it was big game that had lured him to Africa. Having entered the colonial service, he discovered in himself an unsuspected capacity for languages. In the course of his career he at least partially mastered Swahili, Gikuyu, Meru, Embu, Maasai, and Nandi. In Embu, Horne was known among Africans as 'Bwana Mdogo' (Mr. Small), again because of his height (Fadiman, 1993).

As a career soldier Horne demonstrated the power of his guns wherever he passed through to instill fear and caution warriors who would dare him (Fadiman, 1993, p. 137). In a recent and interesting interpretation by Muiru the display of rapid fire by Horne was fundamentally an effort to redefine masculinity and morality among African warriors (Muiru, 2019, p. 1).⁴³

⁴³ On masculinity among the Chuka, see "From a Warrior to a Chifoko: Labor, Christianity and being a Chuka Man in Colonial Kenya, 1907– 1953" (Paul Muiru, 2019). Also see, struggling masculinities and Mau Mau revolt in Chuka, 1907-1953. A seminar paper presented in the Department of History, Archaeology and political studies, Kenyatta University on Friday 14th February 2020.

After successfully establishing colonial rule in Chuka, Muthambi and Mwimbi, Horne proceeded to Egoji, Imenti and Miutini. The permanent headquarters where administrative duties for Meru district were undertaken was built in today's North Imenti sub county. The place was named Mutindwa Boma. The centrality of the location was ideal for effective administration and control of all the Meru sub-groups. Horne, by use of dictatorial commands, which disregarded tradition, used Imenti warriors to build and clear bushes around his base. He also forced them to make roads in and out of this operating base. Horne by forcing men to make roads was doing great injustice to the principle of division of labour. In Meru it was the duty of women to 'dig the ground'. Muiru is of the view that by disregarding African ethics on division of labour, Horne was reinventing African men into British order, thoroughness and manliness. In his studies among the Chuka (a sub-group of the larger Meru), he argued that by intentionally (and in some cases unintentionally) suppressing the masculine expression of men, the British colonial enterprise created a crisis of masculinity that, at least in the long run, undermined the colonial legitimacy to rule. This provided ground for various expressions of dissent, one of which was tacit support and participation in Mau Mau by Chuka men (Muiru, 2020).

Having successfully pitched camp in Meru, Horne would proceed with his conquest journey to the North of Mutindwa. He picked a few Imenti warriors who would be his emissaries to the northern lands. He proceeded to Igembe and on his way back he pitched a tent in Muriri, Tigania. The movement of Horne therefore was poised to take the Northern march to Tigania and Igembe (Ntoataya O.I., 2019). Respondents to the present research admit that the first contact between Tigania and Horne first occurred in Northern Tigania in Muriri area and later southwards to Kianjai in today's Tigania west. Maasai men are remembered by the respondents as being key advisors of Tigania elders on the futility of armed resistance against Horne and his entourage (Kaunyangi, O.I., 2019). The Maasai have a long history of interaction with the Tigania especially through adoption, war and shared grazing spaces. Maasai clans like the Muoko, were adopted into the mainstream Tigania. Nchiru, Urru, Lailuba are some of the places in Tigania with Maasai names (Baariu, O.I., 2019).

Edward Butler Horne entered Tigania, through Muriri which is the upper region of Tigania. He pitched a semi-permanent camp which attracted the attention of the warriors. The people of Tigania then thought that Horne was a passing cloud (Kaunyangi, O.I., 2019). They had previously experienced white people enter Tigania though as 'traders' and Horne 'must have been one of them'. This was according to those who had not heard the news about the Embu conquest and the surrender of the other Meru sub-ethnic groups. The warriors from Antuamakia clan which is the major clan occupying Kianjai section of Tigania made military preparations on how they would counter Horne and his activities.

The ruling elders with the advice of a Maasai elder, restrained the warriors for some time but the young men were growing impatient with the continued presence of Butler Horne and his activities that were becoming suspect. Horne learned that warrior military preparations were going on to counter him. He called for the warriors so as to demonstrate to them the effectiveness of his weapons against their 'crude' weapons (ibid). He requested that they bring a bull. He aimed at the bull from far and a single shot instantly killed the bull. The warriors were chilled at the effectiveness of the gun (Kaunyangi & Ntoataya, O.I., 2019). Horne began his mission having succeed in instilling fear among the warriors. According to Muiru (2019) Horne did the same things among the Chuka. This seemed to be Horne's way of asserting his arrival among the so-called 'natives. The elders continued restraining the warriors having realized the futility of fighting against Horne. The elders did not want more bloodshed to occur. However, some warriors insisted on challenging Horne but ended up getting killed (Kaunyangi, Ntoataya O.I., 2019).

The distance between colonized groups especially from the center created different colonial experiences for the various Eastern Bantu groups in the Mount Kenya Region. The Gikuyu were the first to experience colonialism, followed by the Mbeere, Embu, Chuka, Mwimbi, Muthambi, Egoji and Imenti. Traditional rivalry between these communities was evident and can be said to have been a major factor contributing to their quick defeat by the colonial forces. Seeking peace in advance was a move pioneered by Mbogori of Mwimbi, who influenced Muthambi elders to follow his actions. Egoji and Imenti according to Fadiman (1993) followed suit. Fear of losing

lives and properties like animals was a major cause of panic and fear among the communities in the line of conquest.

Among the Tigania this fear was not as strongly felt. The Tigania lived far north hence news about the defeat of the Embu did not have as strong an impact -on them, as it had on Southern Meru groups. Maasai persuasion, however, dissuaded the Tigania from taking arms against Horne. The long period of Maasai interaction with the Tigania is said to have weighed heavily on the decision of the Tigania elders' council to surrender without much resistance (Kaunyangi, Alumina, O.I., 2019). The distance from Mutindwa/Meru town to Igembe and to Tigania, Tharaka and Thaichu was a major contributory factor to the delayed absolute annexation of these areas unlike the Imenti who hosted the colonial officers and felt the impact directly. Despite the surrender of the Tigania, the immediate impact of colonial rule was not felt. Respondents agree that the people of Tigania continued living as if nothing had really happened though raiding activities almost came to an immediate halt because of the newly established offices of colonial chiefs and askaris who were under direct command of Horne popularly remembered as *Kanga'ng'i*. This nickname contains two meanings. The syllable (ka) implies small, hence connotes Horne was medium sized. *Kang'ang'i*, implied that Horne loitered around. He was the little wanderer. Most of colonial laws were ignored until early 1913 when the Edward Butler Horne took interest in Tigania Njuri Ncheke (Chunkubitu, O.I., 2019).

Colonial conquest of Tigania continued until Native Tribunal was established at Miathene, in 1922 (Kaunyangi O.I., 2019). The Meru Local Native Council was opened for business on July 9th 1925 (DC/MRU/1925). This was an outstanding move for ethnic administration as sub-ethnic tribunals had been earlier established to resolve cases but were considered unfit for administrative duties. Miathene was the colonial divisional headquarters for the whole of Tigania division (Kaunyangi, O.I., 2019; Ntoataya, O.I., 2019). A central trade market for Tigania division was identified to be Mikinduri. Mikinduri previously hosted other major events among the precolonial Meru sub-ethnic groups. These events included, first circumcision cases to mark the beginning of initiation season, naming of age groups, meeting point for planned events and hosting base. Mikinduri, due to its central location among the Tigania clans was precolonial

center (Simba, O.I, 2018; Thurwa, O.I., 2018). The activities of Horne were not taken lightly by the elders and other people of Tigania more so creating the office of chiefs, headmen and askaris whose roles were unfathomable to the people (Kaunyangi, O.I., 2019; Damiciano, O.I., 2019).

The earlier mentioned communal rivalry among the Mt. Kenya sub-ethnic group was a major contributing factor to their quick defeat and eventual colonisation. Invading Europeans empire builders and emissaries took advantage of these weaknesses and conquered each tribe at a time. The Embu war was facilitated by the use of Gikuyu guides, warriors and Maasai spearmen. Less than 10 Europeans were commanding these men (Mwaniki, 2010). The Mbeere in need of revenge launched an attack on the Embu to the south. The Chuka who were traditional enemies with the Embu were happy on hearing the fate of their erstwhile tormentors (ibid).

The Embu war was a defining moment for the region East of Mount Kenya. This war exposed the military weakness and divisions existing among communities in this area. The combined abilities of these communities which had vast numbers would probably have held the British for long hence delaying conquest. The spread of British activities and eventual colonisation of these communities was as a result of shrewd tactics applied by well experienced empire builders e.g. divide and rule tactics. The inability of African leaders then to forge unity against the equally important military enemy then is a clear indication of a high sense of self-confidence existing in these communities according to some. The failed tribal alliances also indicate poor knowledge and under estimation of what was happening in Gikuyu land. To some there could be no universal nationalism or solidarity against strangers. The idea of all Mount Kenya groups standing back to back against the British is a backward projection according to the latter line of thought.

The whole colonial mission had laid down its plans and ways of implementing them. After the conquest, the Africans in Tigania did not plan to retaliate through organized resistance. They staged silent revolts. This gave the British an upper hand in entrenching their rule. Respondents agree that colonialism had no place for discussion. Many people did not have an idea what Europeans were up to. The altering of power equation through native ordinances saw European interests quickly spread and the

colonial edifice flourish in the face of the locals. The strategy of wait and see adopted by Africans in central region of the country was later to turn into an expression of frustration with continued subjugation in the hands of the settlers and the colonialist. The idea held by many Africans communities then that the white man would leave was becoming a pipe dream.

5.2.3 Regime Change in Tigania

The key institution for implementation of colonial policies in Kenya was the provincial administration. This institution was answerable to the Governor and reached directly to the people at the village level. The colony was divided into provinces, followed by districts, divisions, locations, sub-locations, and then villages. Colonial experiences differed among communities and in various parts of the Kenya colony due to differences in cultures, beliefs and previous systems of administration. These differences among the various sub tribes for example the Meru impacted on the processes and procedures applied by the DCs on the implementation of colonial policies. This effect spread even within common but differing jurisdictions within the whole of the colony. This affected the reaction amongst the Kenyan communities. According to Ratanya (O.I., 2019) other factors weighing on the implementation of the colonial policies were soil fertility, rainfall distribution and settler interests. Those Africans living within the settler target areas were most severely affected by colonial policies.

The policy for the colony therefore could be one but the implementation of the same on the ground differed. From the colonial secretary, to the governor to the provincial commissioners to the district commissioners. The DCs who were the men on the ground reported to their seniors at the provincial level. Of importance to note is that general policies concerning the colony and emanating from colonial secretary in England were not implemented exactly as they were. Berman and Lonsdale explain that, In the British system of colonial administration the exercise of a high degree of discretion in the formulation and implementation of policy by subordinate officials in the field was accepted as a matter of course. Each of the more than two-score territorial administrators in the colonial empire exercised considerable autonomy in relation to the Colonial Office in London. A similar pattern marked the relationship between outlying

provincial administrations and central administrations in the colonial capitals. While the prefectural structure embodied a formal hierarchic chain of command from the colonial governor to the most junior officer in the field, in practice the relationship between the center and the periphery was governed by the concept of ‘trust the man on the spot’. Field officers were given a wide brief and expected to work out the implementation of any policy in the light of their judgment of local circumstances. In Kenya, communications from the secretariat ‘were guidelines and suggestions, more than definite instructions.’ Unguided by any all-inclusive philosophy, British colonial practice varied widely (Berman & Lonsdale, 1992).

The district officers therefore were expected to understand local issues carefully before embarking on the implementation of any policy. This was thought to minimize conflict and reduce instances of clash between the Africans and colonial administrators. Though British administration in Tigrania was direct, ideals of indirect rule had to be observed as much as possible. The policies that were supposed to guide colonial control can be said to be open to circumstances the DCs found on the ground. This implied DCs had wide discretion in the implementation of policy and this gave them considerable influence in its formulation. Berman and Lonsdale (1992) explain that hallowed traditions that had been developed due to the long history of British imperial experience formed core of guidelines guiding provincial and district administrations. They explain that DCs in particular were able to run their districts in ways that reflected idiosyncrasies of personal style. Each DC had his own way of running his district and the PC did not order or direct them. He came to visit and support them.

Define and rule therefore implied that field officers had to acclimatize themselves with local issues in a district like Meru before the implementation of the policies began. But did the DCs succeed in the endeavor of define and rule? Further they elaborate by stating that “Inevitably, this meant there were significant variations in the patterns of administration from district to district, even in the same province, and within a single district during the tenure of different district commissioners” (Berman & Lonsdale, 1992). What was the effect of these constant changes on administration in Tigrania?

Berman (2010, p. 2) is of the view that the African experience of colonialism was extremely varied across the diversity of indigenous societies, the institutional and cultural variations of the colonial systems of various European powers, the presence or absence of white settlers or immigrants from other parts of European powers, variations in the patterns of development of production markets and the levels of coercion involved in the establishment and maintenance of colonial control.⁴⁴ These factors in addition to others unique to the Meru sub-ethnic groups made colonial experience vary across divisions. Indigenous institutions as it will be seen differed in many aspects and this affected policy implementation. For example, The Njuri Ncheke, the internal government among the Tigania, largely maintained its authority among the people, despite colonial suppression of indigenous governments. This, as subsequently shown in this study, directly interfered with the functionality of colonial institutions such as chieftainship and the Local Native Tribunal.

5.2.4 Chieftaincy.

The previous chapter discussed the system of political administration among the precolonial Tigania. The system of indigenous administration could be said to have been highly egalitarian where every man had a role to play to the family unit and to the larger clan and up to the community. Gold Thorpe (1958) observes that a significant section of Eastern Africa communities had thorough systems of democracy. Among the Tigania, these systems can be defined as being strongly egalitarian for everyone enjoyed some level of opportunity to rise to positions of social standing and political power. Women in Tigania had their own organizations independent of male organizations and this ensured equilibrium of social and political forces. Collective responsibility was the backbone of this system.

The colonial administrators were the foot soldiers of the empire in charge of policy implementation. In the British empire, Frederick Lugard was the chief architect of Indirect Rule. He and other administrators were influential and powerful, their policy motto being, “If empire could not be had on the cheap, it was not worth having at all.”⁴⁵ The policy of indirect rule called for deployment of local administrative structures as

⁴⁴ On Ethnicity and Democracy In Africa, see Bruce Berman 2010 JICA Research Institute No. 22

⁴⁵ See Ronald Robinson 1972

instruments of colonial administration (Rathbone, 2000). Lonsdale (2015) explained why administrative structures had to be created and changed where necessary, he observed that,

While white settlement was being established as the bedrock of the government's plans to make the economy self-sufficient and the railway a paying proposition, the administration was being expanded and taxation introduced. From the earliest years of the protectorate the country had been divided into four provinces under sub-commissioners. The East African Rifles had also been formed and the courts system organized. In 1901 hut tax regulations were issued and nine years later provisions for poll tax were also introduced. The Village Headman Ordinance of 1902 resulted in many prominent Africans being enlisted as government servants, and the Order in Council which came out in the same year gave the commissioner specific authority to make a wide range of appointments. Departments of government were subsequently created and municipalities set up. The executive was further expanded in that the heads of the departments and two nominated non-officials were appointed to the Executive Council, which was, in theory, an advisory body, but in fact served as the chief organ of policy. In 1907 the Legislative Council also came into being with five officials from the Executive Council and three nominated European non-officials. This followed the move in 1905 whereby responsibility for the protectorate passed from the Foreign Office to the Colonial Office⁴⁶ (Fazan, 2015).

Indigenous authorities and intermediaries were coopted in order to help enforce tax collection to generate funds to pay colonial officials and finance colonial projects like roads especially in settler areas. Where traditional leaders like chiefs did not exist they were invented. According to Jallow, "The colonial state in British Africa was a large wobbly structure held in place by equally wobbly substructures of coercion and extraction. Under strict orders to have the empire on the cheap, British colonial administrators relied on local intermediaries and traditional power structures to accomplish their goals. One of these traditional power structures was the chieftaincy institution. Occupied by chiefs who from a leadership studies perspective, might usefully be termed subject leaders." (Jallow, 2014, p. 9). Subject leadership happens under oppressive regimes, environments and situations in which recourse to redress legal or otherwise is fraught with mortal or other danger (ibid).

Upon the arrival of the British in Tigania through the activities of Butler Horne, a change of guard was thought to be an urgent necessity. Reasons being twofold: the

⁴⁶ S.H Fazan Colonial Kenya Observed British Rule, Mau Mau War and the Wind of Change (2015)

native units of administration which were clan based were thought to be small, second, someone had to be held accountable for the actions of others (Enzo *et al*, 2017). This was directly in opposition to the Tigania way of accountability where all clan members bore responsibility for the action(s) of one transgressor of communal custom (Domiciano, O.I., 2019).

The complicated hierarchy of administration in British Empire was setting base. The African units of administration were thought to be too ‘primitive’ and untenable, to fit into the desired order. The British basing their decision on the past colonial experiences, invented the office of chiefs. Historians agree that these offices had to be created for any attempt to rule directly could not work out, hence collaboration with local actors was a must (David, 1991, p. 28). According to Thomas Spear (2003) colonial chiefs were inventions in two senses: First, the men colonial authorities appointed often lacked traditional legitimacy, and second, the positions to which they were appointed were either created by colonial administration or had been so corrupted by its demands to collect tax, raise labour and regulate agriculture that they no longer represented legitimate patterns of authority.

In Tigania, Butler Horne followed the pattern of appointment earlier applied in Mwimbi and Muthambi where leaders of warrior bands were made blanket chiefs. The need to create an aspect of legitimacy in alien system of governance called for changes in the manner in which chiefs and headmen would be later appointed going forward after initial structures had been put. Kipkorir (1980) echoes these sentiments by observing that colonial rule in Kenya was nowhere absolute over lordship of white men over black men. He further observed that the men who manned the colonial system- administrators and missionaries, African chiefs and school teachers wrestled not with distant imperial questions but with local and practical problems. These sets of native collaborators are the key intermediaries or communicators of foreign rule and its ancillaries. According to Jallow (2014:10) the term chief is pregnant with cultural symbolism. For one thing, some chiefs in colonial Africa were not chiefs in the precolonial Africa. Some were kings e.g. Asantehene. In the case of Tigania, those appointed chiefs were initially military commanders.

Later, as changes in the structure of colonial administration occurred, interpreters and home guards who were mission educated were appointed chiefs and headmen. The nature of previous systems of administration in Africa had individuals holding various titles. However, one fine day and by imperial fiat the title for all African leaders was uniformly ordered to be chiefs. This was inspired by unease about the existence of multiple kings within the British Empire (Jallow, 2014). Imperial subjects therefore could not be allowed to hold the title of kings (Ibid). Among the Tigania the term chief was translated to *munene* implying the big man. This translation indicated that a new center of power with new endeavors and demands was now in charge. Chiefs and headmen were the most conspicuous offices but many others existed.

At the individual level the communicators held such roles as chiefs, headmen, mission workers, school teachers, dispensers, askaris, DC cooks and interpreters. Singly they are just functionaries with small jobs in small localities. These according to Kipkorir (1980) are an indispensable channel through which the dictates of imperial rule are handed down and up through them are transmitted the responses and reactions of the governed. These functionaries of the colonial system are collectively referred to as intermediaries. They can also be called collaborators because they aided and abetted the expansion of the colonial state. This group of individuals were important to the white colonial officers (Lawrence *et al.*, 2006).

The office of chief though lowest in the formal hierarchy was very crucial in aiding colonial administration. The chiefs aided to stem the inadequacies of training of white officials and exigencies of the situation the officers found themselves in. The inexperience's, isolation and frequent transfers therefore made many if not all DCs depend heavily on African collaborators (Clough, 1990). Though qualifications like body fitness were necessary, loyalty to carry out colonial interests was the major qualification in getting the appointment as a chief. Those appointed as chiefs had to be loyal to the empire. Appointment of chiefs would later prove to be a daunting task in Tigania as the roles assigned directly conflicted with customs.

Basically, the first colonial officers in Meru district were concerned with establishing colonial rule, that is law and order the western style. Upon arrival in Meru and Tigania

Butler Horne did not seek to understand the existing systems of governance. He created new offices to suit intended imperial organizational order. Part of the explanation being that, if he ruled directly, he would interfere with native authority affairs more frequently than he ideally should. This would arouse dissent and cause suspicion. The office of chief was the first of its kind in all areas that Horne was in charge. The first men to become chiefs among the Tigania were primarily chosen because they were the military leaders of their age groups (Kaunyangi, Thurwa, O.I., 2019).

Again, the choice was partly because elders chose to send a small group of warriors led by their commander to meet Horne who ended up appointing the leader of the delegation as chief. This caught the elders by surprise. From the onset, the elders did not have the knowledge of such an office and did not show interest in it until it dawned on them that some of their authority had been transferred to younger men. According to Berman (1990) the wide discretion enjoyed by provincial administration gave field administrators unusual latitude to determine the structure of the institutions of local co-optation and control. This chieftaincy was misunderstood by the larger community. Even those chosen to occupy it did not know what was really expected of them. Deeper understanding of chieftaincy roles would be a matter of time. Conflict with custom directly evolved out of culture clash (Mwongo, O.I., 2018). Eric Hobsbawm is of the view that, the reason why chieftaincy was obscure was because it was invented and constructed by a single initiator (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983, p. 4). The result of this imperial system was the creation of an 'administrative system' in which power and authority became dissociated (Chabal, 2009, p. 41).

The duties of the chiefs included, heads of Native Administrative Units, presiding over the native courts where they heard the more serious cases, maintaining a small police force and small jails, maintaining and expanding roads, ensure tidiness and sanitary respect of their villages and towns, provide and pay for the labour of these tasks, they acted as the licensing authorities for market traders (Jallow, 2014). Many of these tasks according to the respondents involved coercion in greater and lesser degrees. Many agree that local resentment against chiefs directly emanated from these roles. According to Njara (O.I., 2019), his father hated being forced to dig terraces and young men run away to avoid being involved in such kind of labour (DC/MRU/1950, p. 8). Such

actions gave chiefs great power over people's lives but also created considerable resentment and undermined popular acceptance of the chieftaincy (Clough, 1990). It was the sex specific differentiation of labour that colonialism helped to undermine. Compulsory labour was hated because, "In accordance with the terms of the compulsory Labour Ordinance, the local native council passed a resolution requiring able-bodied male natives to work on the maintenance of feeder roads and on the building and upkeep of camps" (DC/MRU/1934, p. 13).

The white officials though being men of ability, few had any preliminary training for colonial service, any administrative experience or any knowledge of the language customs and ways of life of the people they were sent to administer (Clough, 1990). Besides these challenges, the European officials were few and far between in the vast hinterlands. The 'thin white line' was by necessity supplemented by a vast cohort of African intermediaries (Lawrence *et al.*, 2006). Colonial administration therefore could never have functioned without the intermediaries especially chiefs and interpreters. To the collaborators foreign rule meant opportunity for self-advancement (Kipkorir, 1980, p. 2). The bargain of collaboration as an invented aspect enabled the collaborators to accumulate wealth, power and prestige. The mutual dependency between the imperial power and indigenous rulers gave chiefs power without authority. Chiefs were therefore able to reign with few checks and constraints. These chiefs according to Mamdani became decentralized despots (Mamdani, 1996). How did colonial chiefs in Tigania manage, maneuver and sometimes get off the hook of social ties that ensured proper exercise of power and authority?

As the analysis in chapter four showed, leadership in Tigania was age-group based and clan based at a lower level. Morality was one and was taught during circumcision and initiation. And was adhered to throughout life as the individual advanced through various stages of Njuri. Genders had different roles to play in this system. Men reigned in political leadership and women ensured ethical and moral conduct in both genders through taboos. Separation of power was therefore clear. This system was weakened through colonial activities and 'things in Tigania began to fall apart'⁴⁷. Colonialism was a process prone to contradictions, fragilities and deep structural weaknesses. The 'thin

⁴⁷ Things fall apart is a terminology borrowed from Chinua Achebe.

line of white officials' was checked over time as the bureaucracy of the colonial state solidified through education, Christianity and hospitals introduced by Christian missionaries. The pioneer chiefs therefore were not educated but were men who hailed directly from the warrior military grades. As colonial officials studied the indigenous systems of leadership, men from special families like military commanders and *agambi* would later inherit the chieftainship positions. This was an effort to legitimize foreign rule. However, from the profiles of chiefs who ruled in the 1950s, it is clear that mission educated sons of the previous chiefs and other African colonial officers took over from their fathers, relatives and accomplices. Retainers and askaris also formed key officials who were promoted to chieftainship. Issues of authority have been acute since the colonial period because the imperial powers contrived to rearrange 'native' political structures to their best convenience (Chabal, 1990).

This implies the power enjoyed by African intermediaries withered over time due to restructuring processes. This made it difficult for intermediaries to enjoy their previous privileges like quick rise to positions of influence. Codification of duties, ranks and salaries was by 1940s getting to be better managed. To extract benefits, in the face of changing circumstances, intermediaries came to rely on their understanding and manipulation of the bureaucracy rather than on their relationship to a particular European patron (Lawrence *et al*, 2006). The intermediaries further adjusted their roles and cultural strategies to beat communal social restraints. Clan checks among the Tigania were sometimes impossible to undermine. But chiefs through invention could undermine precedent. However, the limits of invention soon caught up with them. *Gichiaro* which was and is still a major social restraint came to the rescue of many against decentralized despotism.

Colonial chiefs were individuals who came from among the clans. Chiefs in colonial Tigania therefore were well aware of the dangers of breaking the rules of *gichiaro* blood ties existing among clans. To avoid punishment associated with decentralized despotism, cultural strategies were applied by some chiefs to defeat these social ties. Citizens from certain clans, more than others therefore bore the wrath of decentralized despotism. For example, if a chief knew that, there did not exist a *gichiaro* blood tie (sic) between him and a certain clan, he would exploit people from these clans through

acts of corruption. Extortion including sexual harassment. Where the chief did know that *gichiaro* ties would harm him, he would use third party individuals. Court clerks and court elders especially were used to this end. In Tigania, respondents remember that, a significant number of the court clerks from 1940 were men from outside of Tigania, of these, some were of Embu Origin (Thurwa⁴⁸, Chiokamuiru, O.I., 2019). This implied that they were immune of *gichiaro* ties and therefore could be used to exploit the people. The alternating nature of blood ties implied that elders who formed chief's bench were to be carefully chosen so that they are able to circumvent blood ties. Therefore, court elders were used to exploit people from their own clans. Culturally, blood ties did not exist between people of the same clan. The court elders would follow the dictates of the chief in this extractive process.

But in Tigania, the invention of tradition hit limits for both the chiefs and the court elders who abused their positions. The limits of invention came in the form of checks existing in the use of *agichiaro* (*Person or a clan with whom a blood tie exist*). According to Thomas Spear, the fact that chiefs were created by colonial authorities did not make them immune to local influence or limits. They were subject to local discourse of tradition (Spear, 2003, p. 10). For example, in Tigania if a party to certain case felt aggrieved by an unreasonable fine or unfair judgment by the elders of the chief's court or the chief himself he or she would seek recourse by sending a *mugichiaro* to each individual who handled his or her case even if, they came from the same clan. This way, the oppressor would be punished. Alternatively, where justice through *gichiaro* proved intricate, the aggrieved party would pay *Mirongo Ithatu* 'thirty' (*a traditional collection of gifts in the form of edibles*) to Njuri elders who in turn, would seek compensation for the afflicted in the traditional fashion (Ntoimaingi, Simba O.I., 2017). Things ended badly for chiefs in Tigania who ignored these traditional justice systems. *Ethics of conduct could not allow demonstration through examples*. However, complex patterns of relations among Tigania clans greatly helped stem the excesses of chiefs. Respondents viewed this pattern of seeking justice as a neo-tradition that went against the precolonial patterns of seeking redress among people of the same clan. African intermediaries faced stress and tension in this fashion for they negotiated

⁴⁸ Ruth Thurwa who was a major respondent to this research was a victim of sexual harassment. Her case is well known to members of her generation.

between European and African social worlds. This was not easy nor without considerable risks. Intermediaries, straddled and negotiated with multiple worlds. Many stories unfolded sadly and some ended rather tragically for many functionaries (Lawrence *et al.*, 2006).

In the early colonial period and up to 1937, getting individuals to be chiefs from among the Tigania was difficult because many feared straddling through the contradictions of the two differing social worlds. The administrative pressure put on chiefs by D.Os and DCs made chiefs to adopt dictatorial tendencies. This was against the spirit of equality of all men and directly interfered with age group checks and balances. The chief would be put in a quagmire on how he would relate for example, with his elders and age mates. Restraint among the Tigania flowed from three separate, though related tendencies that is, peers, women and generally the people. How to behave or conduct oneself actually was most difficult for those appointed chiefs and headmen. Those who became chiefs in the early colonial period in Tigania resigned after serving for short durations out of the dilemmas facing them. The various systems that controlled clan, gender and age group conduct still held authority, this, coupled with the social ties of *gichiaro*, made life difficult for anyone who was made a chief from the Tigania clans (Mwongo, O.I., 2019). Those who became chiefs later from among the Tigania and chose to exploit their positions suffered the effects of *gichiaro* that were considered would devastate their lineages. Social ties through *gichiaro* were meant to protect all against any form of exploitation and injustice (Thurwa, Rose, O.I., 2020). Colonial power did not alter this pattern of authority and those intermediaries who forgot this suffered tragic consequences.

As deduced by this study, colonial administration explicitly kept governance at bay from natives of Tigania but implicitly used local systems and structures to maintain law and order. This arrangement served the purposes of the empire. Accordingly, this is where freedom of the people disappeared. Direct and Indirect rule therefore combined intricate methods of governance at local and national levels. Governance was no longer in the hands of the people but administrative enforcement was. Corruption directly stemmed out of this dialectic. Colonial conquest led to loss of sovereignty as colonial

rulers replaced indigenous leaders. This was one of the ironies of British indirect rule (Ndege, 2009).

5.2.5 The Reign of Chief Anampiu Kaigua5ra 1952-1956

Chief Ntwampiu⁴⁹ Kaiguara was a colonial paramount chief in today's region of Tigania East. He was mission educated. Having served as police officer since 1945, he became the commander of Tribal Police in 1949 (DC/MRU/1950, p. 4). In 1951 he became the DCs interpreter (DC/MRU/ 1951, p. 9). He was promoted to become a paramount chief in 1952 (DC/MRU/1952; Mbaabu. O.I., 2019). By the standards set by the colonial officers leading in the period when Mau Mau oath-taking began, it is apparent as to why a man who was a trained police officer was appointed a head chief.

⁴⁹ Names of those men born in Tigania from 1900 up to 1950 have a pattern of generational naming which begins with syllable 'Nt'. For example, Anampiu is the name used in the colonial records but the generational name is Ntw'anampiu. Proper identification in Tigania therefore will require proper pronunciation of generational names.

The report by the (DC/MRU/1955, p. 8-10) shows that the emergency period brought into office efficient chiefs and headmen since 1951.

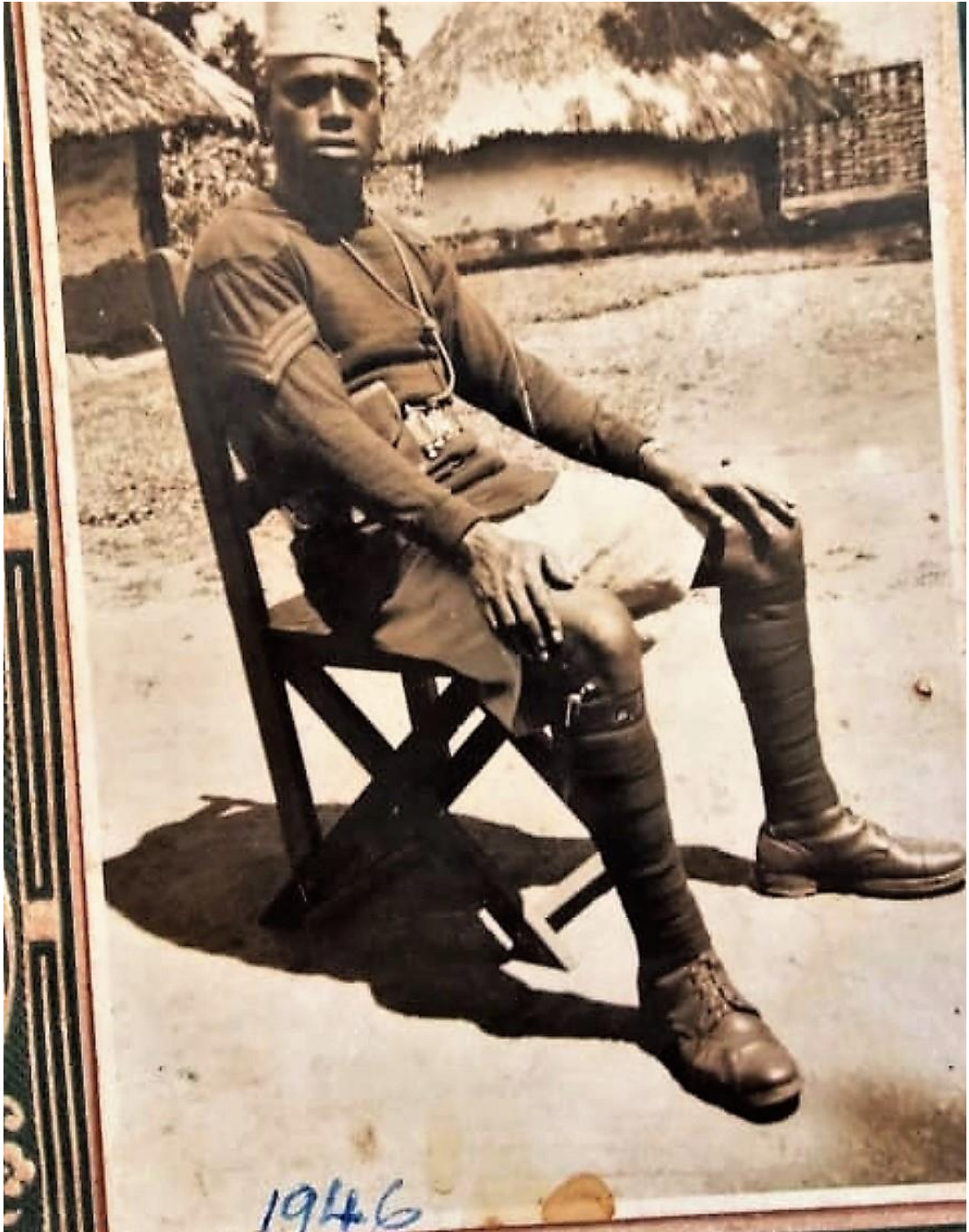


Figure 2: Chief Ntwanampiu Kaiguara when he was a tribal police guard.

Photo source: Family Archives. The photo is dated 1946. It was accessed on 20/4/2020 at the home of his eldest son, Victor Gichunge in Athwana Location, Tigania East.

Chief Anampiu was recognized as one of the most outstanding paramount chiefs for his efficient administration of Mikinduri location.



Figure 3: Chief Anampiu Kaigura when he was paramount chief

Photo source: Family Archives. The above photo is that of Chief Anampiu Kaigura when he was paramount chief, first from right, second row. Photo dated 1957. Photo accessed on 20/4/2020 at the home of his eldest son, Victor Gichunge in Athwana Location, Tigania East.

According to the hierarchy of colonial leadership, a DO was assisted by a chief, and at the lower levels, headman and sub-headmen. A chief was the supervisor of all headmen within his jurisdiction. The chief run an office which men ‘appointed’⁵⁰ to be *agambi* of their clans by the chief formed the bench of judges. They were to hear and determine cases that were brought before them from the clan level or even at inter-clan level. Though more serious cases like murder were taken to the chief or to the Local Native Tribunal. The chief’s courts were officially recognized by the system and even supported (DC/MRU/1955, p. 14). The importance of the chiefs’ courts is emphasized in the DCs report of 1945, 1946, 1947, 1948, and 1949 and became more critical during the Mau Mau era as chiefs were strategic in identifying those who disappeared from their villages to join Mau Mau.

⁵⁰ Appointees of the chiefs did not reflect the anointed representatives of the people but they adopted traditional names to legitimize their illegitimate offices and positions.

The sub-headmen's and the *agambi* were not paid by the colonial office until 1942. According to Mbaabu (1996, p. 33-42) the chiefs and sub headmen's offices were the most corrupt during the colonial era. The corruption stemmed directly from the fact that the services offered by this group on behalf of the administration were unpaid. Compensation for their services through extortion and corruption was rampant. Marshall Clough points out that poor salaries increased the inclination of certain chiefs to turn to corruption which in turn damaged the reputation of chieftaincy (Clough, 1990). The elders and the people were bitterly offended by such violation. Corruption was not a traditional inheritance and stemmed directly from the functioning of the colonial system. This corruption was intense in areas where cultural values and morality had grown extremely weak due to colonial activities. What made these offices even crueler in their extortionist methods was the formation and spread of MauMau in various parts of Meru. The prevalence of corruption reminded the people of the foreign origin of the chieftaincy thus undermining its claim for legitimacy and weakened its prestige and influence (Clough, 1990, p. 88).

The colonial officials moved in to purge corruption and corrupt elements in official and chiefs' courts by looking out for 'the right elders', who were hard to find because they were held in the unofficial courts. Elsewhere in Togo, Emily Osborn has shown that by professionalizing the role of intermediaries the colonial officials hoped to cultivate a modernized and a progressive class of court participants in order to reign in rampant corruption (Lawrance *et al.*, 2006). This position is supported by (Clough, 1990) who observes that this purge in Kikuyu land as in other parts of the colony was designed to bring some degree of efficiency.

Were Tigania chiefs and court elders free of corruption? Bruce Berman opposes any claim that would exonerate intermediaries and their cohorts. Despite the existence of the traditional checks, they could not have been absolutely free of the vice. This is because until the late 1920s the provincial administration made no provision for the salaries for the chiefs' retainers, forcing the chiefs to provide funds out of their own resources and virtually ensuring a search for additional source of income. Corruption and bribery thus became the vital fuel of the local administrative engine (Berman, 1990, p. 212). In addition to that, access to substantial and steady resource flow from the

metropole to the periphery was not guaranteed (Lawrence *et al*, 2006). For maximum extraction, the intermediaries sought to change colonialism from within. The corrupt deals would usually be transacted using traditional items of fine paying i.e. beer and goats. The provincial administration was well aware of this trend which was common in the chiefs' courts. In Tigania extortion was checked by inter-clan *gichiaro as earlier discussed* but bribery was on the rise as the colonial state matured.

Chief Anampiu took over office in an era when political consciousness had gained ground. The hierarchical system he used to serve the people of Mikinduri location during his tenure reflected changes that had been intended since 1927. According to the plans, the whole of Meru district was to be administered by 17 chiefs from the previous 90. These chiefs were to be properly remunerated. Each chief was to be allocated a clerk and two tribal retainers, the position of sub-headmen was to be abolished and have paid *Agambi*, have one DC and one DO. By 1938 the plan had been largely executed, there were 25 chiefs in operation (DC/MRU/1938, p. 415). Chief Anampiu therefore can be said to have had immense powers and the region he administered was equal to the whole of the current Tigania East constituency.

The daunting task that he would face during this period was how to stop the spread of the so-called Mau Mau 'subversive' activities in today's region of Tigania East. Another critical issue besides Mau Mau was on land administration. According to respondents, the above changes on personnel were acceptable to many in Tigania even though they were not directly consulted. This was because those chosen as *agambi* would face direct clan sanctions if they indulged in injustice. The office of *agambi* is remembered by many as the office that was able to solve many land problems in reasonable terms and in accordance with the traditions of the Tigania people. The *agambi* are remembered by men of today's *ratanya*, *lubetaa* and *miriti* age groups as leaders who aided in subdividing Tigania lands in the manner that they are owned today (Rose, O.I., 2020, Mbaabu, O.I., 2019). The recognition of this group of paid *agambi* was praised by several informants. As noted in the colonial records, corruption by chiefs was rampant and the involvement of the clan *agambi* in administration especially on land issues was a major relief to the people.

The *agambi* according to the respondents greatly helped control and resolve land issues which would have metamorphosed into major crises in the post 1957 period. Land consolidation and so-called 'progressive farming' could have had unfortunate social consequences if went uncontrolled (Clough, 1990). *Gichiaro* existing between clans sanctioned the conduct of *agambi* to great levels (Rose, Thurwa, Alumina, O.I., 2020). Any individual who felt aggrieved in any issue would consult the *agambi*. And the conflict would be resolved through the traditional channels which were highly regarded and trusted. Joshua Ikiugu vividly remembers that were it not for the use of traditional channels of justice through *mugambi munene* named Ntonkobitu wa Kauruwo, he never would have gotten land because he was an orphan when individual allocation of land began. The *agambi* of Tigania to a large extent were said to be just and men of high reputation who had peoples' trust. These men through their wise council helped arrest hate against chiefs, and the colonial government. The attitude of the people towards the official court though, largely remained unchanged till the end of the colonial period. The administration of colonial government as will later be seen became efficient when *agambi* were recognized. Hence, the institution of *agambi* showed some continuity with the past even though there were significant changes introduced in Tigania society e.g. creation of chieftaincy and other administrative offices. Also, the fact that, ultimately, real political power laid with the colonial officials and government.

Chief Anampiu deeply delved in matters that concerned land demarcation, because it was during his tenure that clan ownership of land was in the process of being scrapped in favor of individual ownership. He is credited for having constructed many feeder roads in Tigania such as Kaliene-Micii Mikuru-Muthara road (Mbaabu, Thurwa, Chunkubitu O.I., 2019). Chief Anampiu according to the respondents survived MauMau onslaught because he did not try to fight Mau Mau nor betray its adherents at a personal level. While he assisted the people to escape Mau Mau 'brutality', he called upon the Mau Mau adherents not to be to cruel on their own people. Though serving the colonial government, chief Anampiu had to balance his benevolence between his call for duty as a colonial chief and to his people. However, Mau Mau period according to the respondents put chief Anampiu in the most difficult period of his life. Instances remain in the memories of men and women who remember getting tortured and coerced by chief Anampiu Askaris to give information about Mau Mau adherents. Some claim

that he jailed innocent people during Mau Mau era while others from Muthara ward lay claims of cattle that they hid from Mau Mau in Kiguchwa ward but disappeared under the watch of chief Anampiu. Ntomukidia Simba and Ntoithuta Baituru are victims of colonial torture during the Mau Mau era.

According to Mbaabu (O.I., 2019) any intelligent colonial chief ‘must sit on the fence’ to ensure he does his work and also remains loyal to his community. He must not let his people suffer the wrath of colonial forces and askaris at any time as a group. This is the spirit exhibited by chief Anampiu. He advised the Mau Mau and never directly reported the followers of the movement to the colonial forces patrolling Tigania. He never restricted the movement of Tigania people including the Mau Mau followers during the emergency era thus helping families survive the cruelties of this period. This sitting on the fence was a must for chief Anampiu. This was partly because he acquired leadership blessings after circumcision during the pass out ceremony. His imposing physical posture made him stand out as the leader of his age-set (Thurwa, Chunkubitu O.I., 2020). The communal blessing he received would haunt him if he were to forget his rise. He risked suffering Njuri wrath if he carelessly reported his people to the DO or the DC who would then order punitive expeditions. According to Marshall Clough, some chiefs tended to use force or threat of force to get their way but successful chiefs usually combined strong leadership qualities with a keen diplomatic sense (Clough, 1990, p. 86).

Chief M’Ngaruthi of Karama was portrayed as disappointing for he was not able to please the colonial officers in the way he handled local matters (DC/MRU/195, p. 8). According to Jallow (2014) Chief Anampiu actions were an expression of a chief who suffered the syndrome of a ‘subject leader’. This is because subject leaders according to Jallow exhibit a ‘split leadership personality’ deriving from and manifested through a set of opposite and contradictory roles they play in their field of leadership. The two roles that chief Anampiu played in serving the empire and remaining loyal to his people and customs required distinct sets of behavior and attitudes and this in many ways affected his performance in both roles. Chief Anampiu therefore could be said to be a bricoleur in the Levi-Straussian tradition. A bricoleur in the colonial context was a native who pieced together his or her persona from an assemblage of precolonial

patterns of accumulation and social status (Lawrance, *et al* 2006). The intertwined colonial world posed danger to those who would navigate them. Among the Egoji and the Chuka, their colonial chiefs were said to be men loyal to the union Jack. They were in many ways not able to balance between the two worlds they found themselves. It is recorded that they exploited their people with impunity.⁵¹ Fines, jailing's, beatings, exploitation and corruption were said to be the order of the day (Mbaabu, 1996). In Egoji for example, the court elders and the headmen were said to be men who exploited their people mercilessly. These contradictory behaviors' exhibited by chiefs in various parts of colonial Meru depicted varying strengths of indigenous institutions. Elisha Mbaabu through the narration of his life history as a homeguard and later Mau Mau adherent, observed that in areas where subversion of indigenous law by the intermediaries was high, Mau Mau killings and oathing were very intense as a reaction (Ibid).

Among the Tigania such indiscipline among the colonial chiefs and other colonial agents was to an extent checked and punished through *gichiaro*. According to Kipkorir (1980, p. 2) chiefs could not dictate what was not ordained from above, especially by the DO. However, the conduct and differences in conduct of intermediaries is explainable given the strength of indigenous authorities and clan relations. Timothy Parsons is of the view that most of the district administrators especially DOs were aware of these differences among communities. He observed,

The pioneer administrator St John Orde- Browne acknowledged the inherent ambiguities of the native reserve system when he characterized the region between the Meru and the Embu heartlands as a debatable space 'inhabited by a group of small tribes possessing many characteristics of their neighbors, but also retaining numerous local peculiarities (Parsons, 2012, p. 72).

The Meru district report of 1950, 1951 and 1952 asserted this observation. DCs report of 1950 read, "The indigenous government, the Njuri Ncheke was, as in the previous years' most helpful to the government. Its high prestige and authority was maintained

⁵¹ British Imperial code required that chiefs were never allowed to go too far- too far being as far as the imperial code allowed or the political officer permitted. However some of the officers allowed chiefs to evolve into petty tyrants over their people so long as they paid unquestioning homage to the Empire (Jallow, 2014).

Michael Crowder 1964, Rathbone 2000

in Igembe and Tigania and on the increase in Imenti” (DC/MRU/1950). The DCs report of 1951 buttressed the above observation, it read,

The Njuri Ncheke, indigenous government of the Meru in most cases rendered invaluable assistance to the government. The trouble in Chuka and the start of Ntwiko makes it possible to assess the influence of this body in various parts of the District. In Igembe and in Tigania it is still immensely strong as witness the fact that the chief of Njea location has had to change twice within two years owing to the opposition from the local *agambi*. In Imenti its influence varies directly in proportion to the distance from Meru Township and the settled areas being weakest in Miiriga Mieru location. In Mwimbi it is almost non-existent while in Chuka once the chief and the elders had got a grip on the location again the influence of the ‘Njuri Mugongo’ became stronger than ever before (DC/MRU/1951, p. 12).

From the above we can see that colonial experience for various Meru sub-groups was largely different depending on the strength and seriousness of local indigenous authorities. This implied that behaviors exhibited by chiefs were different. According to Berman (1990, p. 209) because the position of chief was the creation of colonial government, many contradictions emerged. The demands made upon the chiefs by the state and the indigenous population put many chiefs in awkward positions. They acted as spokesmen of their people but also acted as the primary source of information to the government. Fear of dismissal due to insubordination or curse by the population on the other hand usually left chiefs in Tigania in a conflicted position, many opting to try a balance. A withdrawal into apathy and alcoholism was not an uncommon reaction to the contradictions of their position on the part of many chiefs. The number of intermediaries who were killed and those who committed suicide during this era is indicative of the power and powerlessness of chiefs during the colonial era (DC/MRU/1952, p. 7). It also indicates the personified dilemma of those who, for whatever reason, willfully succumb to unjust regimes of any kind (Jallow, 2014). Having received communal blessing and acceptance at an early age, enabled Chief Anampiu to maneuver with a measure of success between the two antagonistic roles.

Chief Anampiu was versed with the ways of the white man having been mission educated and also having worked as an interpreter for the Meru DC and a police officer. The western influence really made him seek to ‘change’ the lives of his people. Having realized that colonisation had affected local lineage politics by which men of Tigania gained access to resources and economic security. He thought it wise that the people

must be made to realize the economic structures and benefits of the new era (Chunkubitu, O.I, 2019). Chief Anampiu, according to Mbaabu (O.I., 2019), saw his role culturally, socially and economically as that of a modernizer. Chiefs could be agents of transition and adaptation (Clough, 1990). To co-opt families into the colonial economic model, he moved families and individuals to settlement schemes. These schemes were unoccupied lands, though far from clans' lands. This, according to the respondents, would give young men a second chance in life for they could engage in large numbers, in cash crop farming. He set an example by letting his family be moved from Athwana, their traditional home, to KK Mwehe settlement scheme in Kiguchwa. This area was heavily forested and was very fertile for tea farming. This way, chief Anampiu convinced individuals to settle in this area against their wish. According to Kipkorir (1980) explaining imperial decrees was a must for intelligibility to the people. Next, he had to demonstrate the usefulness of these decrees.

Chief Anampiu collaborated with many individuals to achieve colonial goals and policies. These included Jacob Mwongo who was an agricultural officer in Tigania and Meru, NtotuaMwari wa Mukabua, Ntonkubitu wa Kauruwo and Ntoimpui wa Bere who were *agambi* and a powerful chief named Imathio Athinya who ruled Tigania West. Mwongo aided in this resettlement by giving people tea cuttings to plant, he brought coffee and high breed cattle⁵². Mwongo himself would be allocated land within the same scheme. He immigrated from Tigania west to Tigania East. He became a colonial Chief of Kianjai location in 1960 (Mwongo, O.I., 2018). Many respondents attested that, chiefs from Tigania who worked in consultation with indigenous systems of authority succeeded. It was easier for a Tigania man or woman to accept government orders if they were mediated by those in traditional positions of authority and power. For a chief therefore, it was wise to take a middle position, in balancing the demands of the DC and the wishes of the people (Clough, 1990).

Jacob Mwongo and chief Anampiu were two powerful individuals who did a lot to transform the lives of Tigania people. By introducing new economic activities in the

⁵² See, Meru DCs reports of 1949, 1950, 1951, 1952, 1953, 1954 and 1955 on cash crops. Coffee according to the listed reports was one of the major profit making cash crops after Miraa.

lifeline of the Tigania people in the 1950s, the duo was able to change the mindset of the people. According to Berman

Central departments of the colonial state provided scant assistance. The development of peasant production was promoted by field officers of the provincial administration. Administrative encouragement of the spread of Indian traders into African areas began to breach the cycle of simple production in local domestic economies and articulate them into the circuits of capital and commodities centered on the metropole. This process was intimately linked with the creation of a class of collaborating chiefs who were key agents of local control and principal early beneficiaries of the new opportunities for the accumulation wealth and power (Berman, 1990, p. 66).

As earlier stated, chiefs in Tigania were sworn members of the Njuri ranks, the trusted judicial institution of Tigania people. As colonial agents and men on the ground, chiefs in Tigania had a difficult time balancing between the two roles of serving the two masters.

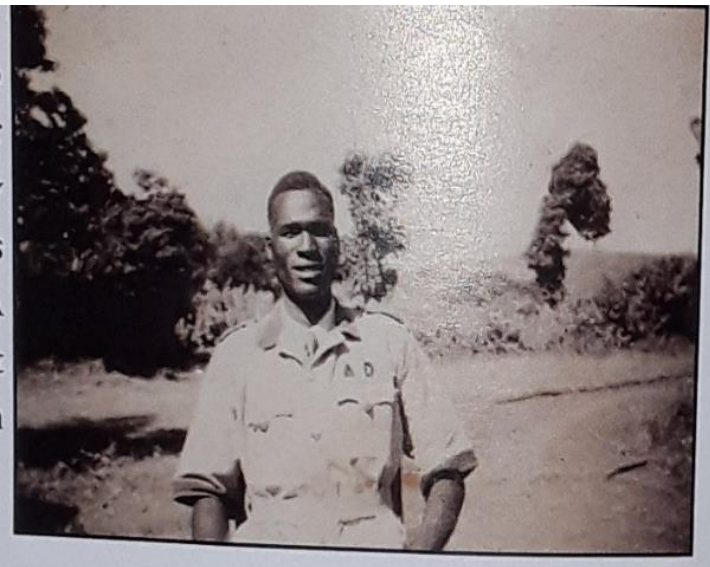


Figure 4: Chief/Hon: Jacob Ebae Nto'mwongo.

Photo Source: Family Archives. The above photo is that of Chief/Hon: Jacob Ebae Nto'mwongo. Retrieved on 13/08/2018 at his home in Kiguchwa ward.

Micii Mikuru tea factory was the first tea factory in the whole of Meru. This factory was built because chief Anampiu and Jacob Mwongo convinced people that by giving out their clan land for tea growing, they could face the unknown economic future with confidence.⁵³ Convincing people to move out of their clan land and that cash crops

⁵³ Kipkorir (1960) explains that a functionary like chief had to work hard to co-opt people into the system and collect more taxes. Subject people were expected to carve themselves niches into the colonial

were good for their future was, for some informants, a show of how visionary Chief Anampiu was. Marea location, Kagaene location in Tigania west among other locations were some of the areas that chief Anampiu forced people to immigrate. These locations were dreaded by people because of tsetse flies, cold and wild animals. Today's Kiguchwa and Mikinduri wards were densely populated because of their favorable conditions.

By convincing the people to immigrate, section of informants to the present study believe, Chief Anampiu saved most of the Tigania land from being grabbed. The issue of Kikuyu resettlement was becoming a serious concern in Kikuyu districts and these Tigania lands would have been possible targets (Mbaabu, O.I., 2019). Respondents attested that chief Anampiu did a lot to convince people to immigrate to the former locations despite them being considered by the people as no go zones. From 1930s, land consciousness was getting to be a major concern in Meru district. Chiefs did a lot to keep off the kikuyu from settling in Meru district (DC/MRU/ 1937, p. 2). Kikuyu elders wanted Meru to be included in the larger central Kenya by claiming *gichiaro* ties but chiefs and the Meru Njuri Ncheke refused to have Meru demarcated as part of the larger Kikuyu District (Ibid). Resettlement was one of his major achievements because Tigania people were not as alert as required to matters happening outside the district (Mbaabu, O.I., 2019; Mwongo, O.I, 2019). The DCs report of 1950 buttressed this view (DC/MRU/ 1950, p. 1)⁵⁴. It will be important to note that by forcing people to immigrate to other parts of the division a lot of injustice was done to generations especially the old and the unmarried young men (Ntoataya, O.I., 2020). Many families were broken up by having kins moved to distant places. It is also during this period that many clans were fragmented thus disorganizing age groups activities, *muingo* activities and communal ceremonies. Berman observed that,

At the same time, however, the chiefs and their allies were themselves a contradictory element in the structure, very quickly becoming a source of internal conflict since they were the cutting edge of a process of class formation undermining both indigenous institutions and the legitimacy of the colonial administration (Berman, 1990, p. 66).

system for the purposes of self-advancement spiritually and materially. The role of regulating these colonial privileges fell directly on the chief.

⁵⁴It has been observed that Jomo Kenyatta's claim that Meru was part of Gikuyu country was an attempt to re-invent ethnicity in colonial Kenya to serve a political end (Muiru, 2019). Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya: The Tribal Life of the Gikuyu*. London, Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd. 1938, xv

Chief Anampiu, despite his understanding of Njuri standards in matters concerning Tigania land, went against the culture in order to ‘enlighten’ Tigania people in the era of advent of industrial capitalism. Communalism which was strong according to the respondents went against the resettlement plan of chief Anampiu. Among the clans, people were hesitant to depart from one another. According to Mbaabu (O.I., 2019) households up to the early 1950s shared gates and compelling them to move out to individually own parcels of land conflicted directly with the spirit of egalitarianism. Ntotua Mwari wa Mukabua who was a land officer was allocating individuals large parcels of land, some measuring as up to 50 hectares to act as an incentive to move but he still faced opposition. Clan organization in Tigania tried to fight administrative authority of chiefs by refusing to disperse. Force was applied to break the clan settlement (Mbaabu, O.I., 2019). Chiefs attempted to perform their duties using the combination of both coercion, compromise and incorporation (Clough, 1990). By using force to disperse clans for resettlement, according to Mamdani both popular checks on state power and the traditional constraints as embodied in the traditions were undermined (Mamdani, 1996). Some of the respondents to the present study saw this use of force as a way ‘saving’ people who were refusing to accept the new dawn. The future of morality lay on a surgical bed. Traditional checks on patterned systems of relations in Tigania limited the above functionaries from excessive vagaries of power. This coheres with Jallow’s observation that not all African colonial chiefs willingly subjected themselves to colonial injustice or rampantly oppressed their people in pursuit of colonial objectives (Jallow, 2014, p. 13).

The first decade of colonial administration according to Berman (1990) was when the principal structures of the political economy and state in the colonial Kenya were laid down. In this process contradictions were established that determined the internal dynamics of development and political struggles in the succeeding decades. From the start, the Tigania indigenous social forces were linked with the colonial state through taxation. Structures of accumulation and state legitimation were then laid. The people of this area were not aware of the implications of these contradictions in the coming decades. Chief Anampiu had a difficult time in the last decade of colonialism directing and shaping the dialectic of the emerging Tigania society because, the indigenous integrating mechanisms were quickly disintegrating. Besides this, Clough (1990)

asserts that, the major socioeconomic changes that were transforming African life were beyond chief's control.

Chief Anampiu after retirement from the government in 1968, went back to communal life and became the chairman of Njuri Ncheke in Tigania. His work as a chief which transformed the Tigania from peasant farmers to cash crop producers seemed to have undermined traditional farming. Jacob Mwongo died while still a sworn believer in the indigenous systems of the Tigania. He believed that no government will ever replace the Njuri Ncheke of Tigania. As far as he was concerned, government service to the people who are disconnected from managing themselves in the ways and morals of their ancestors, will never become easy (Mwongo, O.I., 2019)

5.3 Consolidation of Colonial Rule.

In this section, two key themes that enabled the consolidation of colonial state are discussed. They include Tigania age groups and the Tigania Njuri Ncheke. The study, by taking both the Tigania traditional order and British imperialism as male centered edifices, used the concept of masculinity as a theoretical tool to interrogate its data. Many studies, while acknowledging that there exists a plurality of masculinities, have appropriated its promise since Raewyn Connell path breaking work in 1995 (Muiru, 2019). Specifically, this research utilized the concept of masculinity as understood by Paul Ocobock in his work, "An Uncertain Age" (2017).

5.3.1 Tigania Age Groups Dethroned. The Jembe na Kalamu Revolution⁵⁵.

Among the pre-colonial Tigania, age groups as previously espoused formed the core in the transition of power in the political leadership cycle. Age dictated the status and the stage of life an individual was in at any particular time. This ordering gave meaning to life, ordered economic advancement, enhanced cooperation and social bonding among age mates, instilled values among men and women and gave them identity and recognition in the larger community.

⁵⁵ The terms 'Jembe na Kalamu' revolution were recently invented by John Lonsdale. They were used in periodizing the writing of Kenyan history. He used them to describe the changes, the defining processes, continuities, and ruptures occurring in the Kenyan society during the colonial period (Lonsdale, 2019).

Colonialism could unmake men and societies. British colonial system according to Ocobock (2017, p. 3) relied on violence of British troops, East African Rifles and local auxiliaries. The coming of colonialism disrupted, dislodged and later disenfranchised the life management system which created men and their society. Colonialism just like any other kind of a system had its own motives which were non-philanthropist. The key elements of bureaucratic 'work' largely consisted of, the collection and analysis of information leading to the selection and implementation of programmes of action or 'policies (Berman, 1990, p. 87-89). These policies largely targeted indigenous economic management systems and systems of authority. Colonialism could not gain ground in Africa unless through systems substitution or what Mamdani calls recognition and creation of difference. Law was used to this end. This view is buttressed by Katherine Luongo who observed that the colonial administration endeavored through the development of a power-knowledge complex rooted in anthropology and via the elaboration of law, to extend its coercive capacities over local cultural and juridical forms related to 'witchcraft' (Luongo, 2011, p. 11). Among the majority of African societies colonial conquest marked the beginning of the end of everything including warriorhood activities. The conquest of Tigania though largely peaceful had lasting consequences and enduring legacies.

Warriorhood involved young men who formed the military wing for communal and clan defense. The Meru DC's annual report of 1933 acknowledged this usurpation,

The duties of warriors were entirely military, they were never expected to engage in agricultural work of any kind nor were they responsible for their own food or firewood supplies. The only notable change since the advent has been that the warriors have lost their share in the tribal division of labour. They are no longer responsible for the tribal defense. In general, they have not assumed any other duty in compensation for this loss (DC/MRU/1933, p. 21).

Colonialism through what Mamdani (2012, p. 46-50) refers to as tribe and race differentiation through custom and civil law remarkably had no place for maintaining warriorhood activities. The precolonial Tigania warrior life cycle and colonialism were mismatch which could never be merged hence one had to give way to the other. This is where according to the findings in the present research the technology of (in) direct rule proved effective. Majorly because of political and technological reasons Britain had its

way in this conflict. The consolidation of colonial rule gained momentum after these indigenous militaries were crushed.

Young men in Tigania like their counter parts in the Kenya colony, were never free from elder authority (Ocobock, 2017). Colonial officers had prior warning not to interfere with male elder authority, but could this warning stand in the light of what warriors were undergoing under the colonial system. When Horne first pitched tent in Tigania having built an administrative center in Meru town, he began by stopping all forms of warrior activity such as raiding and dances among the Tigania (Kaunyangi, O.I., 2019). Raiding activities happened with every Tigania age group and was a mark that the men in that age group were men enough, men who the community could pride itself in⁵⁶ (Alumina, O.I., 2019). When raiding activities were brought to a halt the young men and the community did not show signs of over-anxiousness because raiding was seasonal (Kaunyangi, O.I., 2019). However, the halting of warrior activities had serious consequences to all social and economic activities that encompassed formation of proper men. What the young did not recognize yet was that the stopping of raiding by Horne, was an indicator that a new center of power was in the offing. The delay and weaknesses inherent in the newly established offices of chiefs within Tigania saw close administration and supervision of the Tigania compromised hence the colonial government power was not immediately felt. When enough colonial manpower took over Tigania, then, it was clear that the world of meaning was under attack (Kaunyangi, O.I., 2019).

Warriorhood in the pre-colonial Tigania concerned itself with two major issues, the life cycle of a man and advancement into the political system. It set men into motion of what was expected of them by the society. Warrior tradition besides its role of recruiting, training and organizing men into defense units had a broader meaning and significance; the main concern being with relationships and meaning. Colonial activities in many ways neutralized and sought to remake these relationships and meanings⁵⁷. Ntoimaingi (O.I., 2018) paints an idealized picture of pre-colonial Tigania.

⁵⁶ *Laing'o* is the word used to describe men who had proven themselves to be men, they brought glory to their family and community.

⁵⁷ Bruce Berman, *Control and Crisis in Colonial Kenya* (1990) elaborated how colonial government policies would redefine local economies.

He stated that in a clan or communal meeting an elder brother could be represented by his junior brother. That the elder brother could go to distant places and leave his family under the care of the brother. Colonial concept of individualism through cash economy and erosion of meaning and relationships had implications on such idealized precolonial Tigania virtues and patterns of life. The strain which indigenous institutions underwent during the colonial period had great ramifications. Most of the colonial officers possessed little or no knowledge about the patterns of life of Tigania as can be noted from this extract of DCs report.

Disintegration is to a certain extent inevitable whenever one race takes upon itself the government of another with a different economy. Local institutions are usually incapable of adapting themselves to the new conditions without assistance. And that assistance is not forth coming because the alien government is generally unaware of the strain to which the indigenous institutions are subjected and indeed frequently unaware of their very existence. Yet those institutions are a function of the principles on which the integrity of the tribe depends...The mental process is generally unconscious but none the less real (KNA/GP 301 LAM, p. 1).

Warriors were fed by the community, they left warrior barracks, in the morning, went to a selected home, got fed and back to the barracks (Kaunyangi, O.I., 2019). This was a system that all community members were used to. Women were in charge of such domestic issues (Ciakwalu, O.I., 2019). This feeding came at a cost, the warriors were expected to be brave and ready to die standing for those feeding them. Songs of praise and pride in the warrior activity emboldened these young men and gave them a sense of belonging. Women were the key figures who composed the songs of praise (Thurwa, Chunkubitu, O.I., 2019). The women also mocked cowardice amongst warriors through songs. Association with such 'cowardly' men attracted the wrath of women guild. Meaning and relationships were things to be acquired through the spirit of communal cooperation. Colonial activities interfered with the communality of the Tigania for colonial activities were individual centered as noted in this extract by a colonial official.

We who introduced individualism to the African as a substitute for his own principle of mutuality, our principle has amended his. We introduced wages for individuals, we remove him for long periods from his home. In his tribe identity is based on clan and age grade and his brother can represent him, outside it is based on whorls and loops and his brother will go to gaol if tries to...we base our system of wages and subsistence on the immediate needs of the individual not his relatives. We even have introduced an individual identification of him by system which in our own homeland, we only find necessary for our warriors,

our criminals and those and those of us addicted to foreign travel. Our system makes him feel lonely (KNA/GP 301 LAM, p. 4-7).

Colonial power justified itself by its gifts of ‘progress and order’. While to the Tigania people, colonialism eroded relationships that made a man to his family, clan and community.

The concept of individualism brought about by colonialism had immediate effects on environment, warrior grades and physical fitness of men. It will be apt to note that among the precolonial Tigania, animals especially goats, sheep and cows had extensive use and meaning. Many clan and communal functions could not proceed without slaughtering an animal. Any function held called for major feasting. These feasts involved beer drinking among the old and meat eating. Warriors enjoyed a great share of the meat in these functions. Some of the functions that called for slaughtering of animals included; child birth, naming, circumcision, pass out ceremonies, recruitment into various women and men age grades, marriage, litigation and fines, sacrifices and power transfer. These feasts had a major impact in maintaining and keeping ecological balance. This culture of feasting according to the Meru DCs annual report, in many ways checked soil erosion and ensured a balance in the use of grazing fields. V.M. Mckeag was the Meru DC in 1938, he observed that

The extent to which stock is compulsorily slaughtered varies as between tribe and tribe and appears to depend on the nature and state of development of tribal organization rather than on the stock wealth of the tribe. Thus the more highly developed semi pastoral tribes such as the Meru, have a much more complete system of compulsory slaughter than the more primitive purely pastoral tribes such as Maasai and Turkana (DC/MRU/1938, p. 420).

Besides these functions these animals ensured availability of essential food supplies. Blood and milk in their raw forms formed key nutrition for the warriors. The DC’s report read, “They had first call on all the best of the food in the country. Milk and blood were their special prerequisite but, quite apart from their share in the compulsory slaughtered stock aforementioned, beasts were frequently provided- in order to keep their strength up” (DC/MRU/1938, p. 387).

The breaking of warrior cycle by the colonial government contributed to the problem of environmental degradation. Indigenous mechanisms like compulsory slaughter

largely enhanced maintenance of the ecological balance. The question of poor physical development and warrior weakness occasioned by poor nutrition due to breaking of warrior cycle could not escape the attention of the Meru DC⁵⁸. The safaris he made brought him to notice that,

...Less than 14 years – but the change in the physique and appearance of the young men in particular which has taken place in the half generation can only be described as striking. Then the Moran were remarkable for their physical development- now they are no better than their neighbors (DC/MRU/1938, p. 415).

Cash fines, imprisonment, reduction in meat eating, breaking down of customs such as removal of necessity to keep up warrior class had an adverse effect not only on warriors but to the general health of the tribe. The link between masculinity and society was fading. The status of the Tigania society was in an uncertain state because of the breach in the wholesome nature of the previous system of interdependence. Unlike the current police and military systems, African warriors were always inseparable members of their societies.⁵⁹ Warriorhood suffered these deforming effects since 1910 and by 1938, what had remained of warriorhood was a mere skeleton of former self; that is, just mere transfer of power from one age group to another but without the warrior's proper initiation, benefits, responsibilities and prestige that enhanced relationships and meanings.

Warriors in pre-colonial Tigania drew their strength from the nature of their political integration into the social system. The system which alternated between the sons and the fathers sharing political space and authority, ensured proper cooptation into the power echelons. The authority of the *Muwee* and *Mukiama* brought about further consolidation of authority such that there was political cooperation between the warriors and the leading age group of elders. Dent Lakidi is of the view that the socialization of children into the desired system was key to bringing forth mature and respectful warriors. He observed that, "When sons were mature to recognize their place in the pattern of roles and functions within the social system and learn to respect the socially sanctioned frontiers of authority formed the first step into full integration into

⁵⁸ On the African nutrition see, Martha Muraya, *Colonialism and the Agikuyu Women Indigenous Knowledge systems* (2019).

⁵⁹ Reforms within the African militaries and the police should tend towards instilling a sense of communality.

warrior hood” (Lakidi, undated). The disfranchisement through colonial activities of the stages an individual went through meant that the Tigania social system was highly compromised of its abilities to produce the calibre of warriors deserving of communal honor.

To succeed in this disfranchising process, the colonial officials targeted the generation of individuals born from 1910, for their parents were said to be deeply rooted in custom and no amount of persuasion would make them compromise on the Tigania norms and values. The cash economy through taxation directly contradicted custom and was key in bringing the desired change amongst the target group. For example, in relation to various new inventions like in agricultural practices for example cash crop farming, the colonial government could only succeed by having those born from 1910s do the farming. There was, apparently, also, a gender dimension in that women were the predominant farmers. The DC’s annual report of 1934 expressed this apprehension,

Agriculture is still largely a woman’s affair and women still think in terms of food rather than cash. Food crops were taken with rapidity but a crop that cannot be eaten or otherwise used immediately by the grower is regarded with disfavor...all this however will be changed in time. Propaganda is continuous and as shifting cultivation becomes more and more difficult manuring, rotation and better farming will be adopted. The desire for ready money for purchase of luxuries will increase, particularly among the younger generation, and this will turn the people to increased production and cash crops (DC/MRU/1934, p. 202).

The chiefs and the educated intelligentsia as historians agree were key in the introduction of the moral economy. Moral economy can be defined as empirically that part of culture that legitimates the inequalities in the distribution of values that mark almost all human communities primarily through the principles of redistribution and reciprocity of obligations between the rulers and the ruled, rich and poor in specific social contexts (Berman, 2010, p. 4).The nature of this causality is intricate and depended on patterns of relationships that defined and shaped new relationships among the older and younger generations. The complex web of new needs developed by the colonial state brought forth contradictions in the system of relations thus compromising the previous social and economic order.

The effect of this on the Tigania people was that the previous system of knowledge was found inefficient and thus younger generations were forced to acquire both ‘tribal’ and

European knowledge if they really were to survive. For example, Ebae Mwongo who was born in 1929, found it wise to acquire indigenous knowledge from his father. But he also, attended formal school to learn the white man's wisdom which according to his father was magical and would provide the new sense of pride and competition. But when he got white man's education, he found many inconsistencies in it. He found himself forced to choose what to keep from it and what to discard. Morality, religion and justice of the white man was something he sought to never emulate nor enforce even when he was in a position of authority. In his words, it was great to work hard and show the white man that an African can also be progressive and own master. This gave him reasons to study agriculture and land issues for these two would help him impact the lives of his people (Mwongo, O.I., 2019). Yet, his (colonial) education gave him the new status in the community. And the kind of agriculture he advocated for and practiced was mainly the new rather than the old. The contradictions and inconsistencies were seared within the colonial dispensation. Though continuous attendance of school was loathed by many parents it was a necessity in the colonial era among curious parents (Simba, O.I., 2018).

The colonial experiences though varying from tribe to tribe made Tigania people active participants of external domination and not its passive recipients as confessed by Mwongo, sentiments buttressed by the eldest respondents. According to Berman (2010) the concept of moral economy is crucial to understanding the process of hegemony. It forms the central subject of contestation and also the political dynamic of change from one form of social order to another. The colonial intrusion into the nature of state and market in Meru sub-groups can be said to be the creator of present day Meru ethnicity.

According to Berman the African states encountered by Europeans in the 19th century were largely of relatively recent historical origin and by contemporary conceptions multi-ethnic in composition (Berman, 2010). The same can be argued about the Tigania, according to the respondents to the present research. The pre-Tigania clans could be said to be complex in composition. Actually, in the view of many eldest interviewees there existed 'nothing' like a 'Mutigania' and or a 'Muigembe'.⁶⁰ The two are recent

⁶⁰ Possible lines of interpretation are suggested by Jurg Mahner, *The outsider and the Insider in Tigania Meru*, 1975.

creations and a careful analysis of the nature of the clans residing in the two areas will yield no difference. Thurwa & Alumina (O.I., 2020) argued that no clear land boundaries existed between the various groups and constant movement of clan members from both areas was natural and unlimited. To a large extent the same relations applied to the Mwimbi, Muthambi and Chuka clans with the Tigania.⁶¹ Though adoption of Maasai and Samburu people was common into the Tigania clans, it was also encouraged and also a move that complicated ethnic composition in some Tigania clans. The clan relations were more pronounced and most critical. Respondents agreed that, in their era, if relations were to be enhanced and created, the priority question was, with which clan. For, example marrying and blood brotherhood/gichiario were majorly inter-clan.

Due to established relationships with outsiders, any individual from clans outside Tigania could migrate to Tigania and vice versa and be accepted and adopted into a Tigania clan and even get married. Charles Ambler contends that, across the larger central region including Ukambani, Embu, Mbeere, Meru, Chuka, and Kikuyu communities were not defined in neat territorial terms, but as aggregates of relationships. The movement of the people continually recast the patterns of these relationships. Particular circumstances shifted the local political balance by drawing or excluding groups (Ambler, 1988). The heterogeneity and fluidity of the previous clan relations silenced the concept of modern-day tribalism as a difference amongst pre-colonial Meru groups (Kaunyangi, O.I., 2019).

Karauri, Thurwa and Kaunyangi (O.I., 2019) explained the history of clans' relations among the Igembe, Tigania and Abothuguchi. According to them, clans' relations among the Tigania and the Igembe were fluid. Abothuguchi clan is of recent origin emerging from the Tigania. According to them, though Igembe clans residing in Tigania are known, it is complex to explain the history of their relations with the Tigania clans. This is because of the absence and presence of blood ties between the two groups.

⁶¹ Charles Ambler is of the view that, societies in the late 19th century were independent and insular, but by no means isolated from one another or from larger forces of change (Ambler, 1988, p. 7). The structure of migration, environment, economy and culture imposed certain necessary relations amongst some Meru clans in the view of this research. John Lonsdale emphasizes the newness of Kenyan societies, *Kenya Historical Review* 5 (Lonsdale, 1977).

The nature of these blood ties is also different from the nature of blood ties existing between some Mwimbi clans, some Chuka clans, and the Muthambi group with some Tigania clans. The latter according to all respondents are complex and cause severe harm if not guarded. These complex blood ties also exist between the clans of Antubaita of Tigania and Igoki of Imenti, Antuamakia of Tigania and Igoki of Imenti. Complex blood ties ensured maximum cooperation between tied groups in every front. A breach of the relationship is/was believed to cause calamity and sometimes death.

Thurwa (O.I., 2020) narrated the history of her clan origin. In Igembe, a bully once killed five of his age mates while in seclusion during initiation after a quarrel. After realizing his actions were detrimental to the peace of his clan, he ran to Tigania and hid in the home of a *mugambi*. His clansmen came looking and traced his whereabouts to the said *mugambi*. After feeding the angry and hungry men, women and warriors the *mugambi* explained that there was no need to kill the bully. In their return journey to Igembe, the warriors cursed the bully. The bully could not return to his clans men, so, he married in Tigania and began his life. But the curse would not let the sons of the man in question grow to reach puberty. Even the sons of his daughters could not reach puberty. Respondents agreed that this curse was lifted in the mid-19th century and the first sons of this new, now Tigania clan who grew to maturity were born around 1880s.⁶² Ethnic identities are best understood as complex and contested social constructs perpetually in the process of creation (Berman, 1988). Ethnicities therefore are in an endless process of transformation (Lynch, 2006). Three major inferences can be deduced from the above story. Firstly, there existed numerous complex clan relations amongst the people of Tigania. Second, it is difficult to fathom the nature and the extent of *gichiaro* blood ties that are also numerous and complex among the Meru clans. What can be reliably surmised, however, as attempted earlier in the present study is the philosophy and function of *gichiaro*. Third, the notion of sub-ethnic or ethnic group is impossible to tie down or clearly define. No clear formula exists on what constitute such a group or what delimits membership or non-membership. However, factors such as a level of linguistic and cultural similarity and geographic concentration are common features (Lynch, 2006). This research found out that, the nature, the origin and

⁶² Such migration rarely involved large number of people, but involved gradual filtering of individuals, families or small groups of kinsmen into new areas. Over generations, the accumulation of short movements left patterns corresponding to traditions of migration (Ambler, 1988).

complexity of formation-weak or strong, and the geographical spread of these blood ties is too intricate to fully detail (sic). An explanation of its philosophy and role should suffice.

The popular histories of present ethnic groupings open only a narrow view of the past. Ethnic traditions portray the distant past as the story of movement of groups of outsiders into central region. These traditions of migration in Charles Ambler's view are typically self-contained; they obscure the contribution of earlier inhabitants, exclude the evidence of interaction and generally avoid inconsistencies (Ambler 1988, p. 10). According to the present study, the not so complex blood ties between Igembe and Tigania clans can be traced to a common point of origin. This study deduced that, the Tigania and the Igembe groups might have migrated as a single group. This explains the bonds that allowed free movement of populations between the two. This also explains the not so complex blood ties between the two groups. The uncomplicated blood ties are indicative of natural relationships. Thus, where a *gichiaro* bond occurred between clans originating from the two, it must be between clans which had some form of cooperation that was non-military (Thurwa, O.I., 2020). Rarely did the respondents to the present study mention cattle raids occurring between the Tigania and the Igembe clans.

The complex blood ties (*Gichiaro* ties that easily cause death) between majority of the Tigania clans and a majority of Muthambi clans can be explained as bonds that were established to obligate each to military cooperation with the other. Another example of a complex blood tie, is that existing between the Antubaita of Tigania and Igoki of Imenti. The Antubaita clan, are said to have settled in Tigania during migration and therefore are not part of the original Tigania clans but have since been absorbed into the larger Tigania group.⁶³ In an effort either to reunite or ignite a strong bond between the Antubaita and the Igoki, a complex blood tie was established. The blood ties existing between the two easily causes death when breached or when unsettled concerns are ignored (Rose, O.I., 2020). A complex blood bonding eliminates differences between two groups thus making them one with the impossibility of reversing the

⁶³ Thomas Spear pointed out at dangers of the literal reading of Meru oral traditions especially those by Jeffrey Fadiman a view supported by this research in relation to Fadimans work on the, "*An Oral History from Mount Kenya*" (1993) especially the chapter on the Migration pattern of the Meru peoples.

bond.⁶⁴ The inconsistencies in these clan interactions and efforts to bonding can be explained as attempts to come to grips with diverse roots and a complex past (Ambler, 1988, p. 11).⁶⁵

Tribalism as a difference among the Meru sub-ethnic groups according to the findings of this research is therefore a generational construct. While precolonial ethnicities were fluid and negotiable, ethnic identities became increasingly rigid and singular during the colonial period. Academics argue that as a result of colonial administrative and economic practice ethnic groups, categorized and labelled, and a colonial view of a 'tribal Africa' was imposed, invented (Ranger, 1983) or imagined (Ranger, 1993) (Lynch, 2006, p. 49). Rigid ethnicity therefore depended on new modes of social interactions developed in the 19th and 20th century through European philosophy of define and rule. Though Berman (2010) is of the view that African tribalism was and is the outcome of contributions from many hands, European and African, rather than the deliberate creation of any single individual or group and a matter of controversy. This study is of the view that British colonialism played a significant role in regard to 'tribal' consciousness and rigidity in Tigania and the larger Meru.

Colonial records are indicative of ways and means which can be said to have laid ground for tribal consciousness. All the Meru DCs records are divided into sections indicating activities in various divisions of the district. Berman (2010) refers to these as instruments of modern state power and from the Meru colonial records they include, Local Native Council, local native tribunals, native and non-native groupings, tribal police, maps and census that assigned individuals to what were believed, often erroneously to be ancient primordial identities. European missionaries weighed in the process by producing grammars and dictionaries that turned local dialects into standardized written languages of whole ethnic group, who promptly began to produce texts of their own articulating their history and culture and professional anthropologists

⁶⁴The complex and not so complex *gichiaro* blood ties can be delineated as follows. The not so complex blood ties are non-military and the bond established did not completely make the parties one. For example, this bond does not completely prohibit marriage as a formula of circumventing the tie exist. Complex blood ties eradicate difference between groups, hence those entering this relationship become one. This form of bonding prohibits any form of marriage and causing any form of harm against tied clans.

⁶⁵ Respondents to this research strongly emphasized the need of tracing clans of origin before marriage partnerships are established among couples of Tigania and larger Meru origin.

who conveyed the concept of culture as distinct. But Berman (1998) is careful to absolve the European from total blame because the issue of conscious ethnicity has been controversial, he stated that, "...the European provided cultural resources and political contexts that Africans, particularly the class of collaborators and educated intelligentsia could deploy in the internal conflicts that resulted from the unequal and divisive impact of colonial modernity."⁶⁶

The role played by generational conflict in the unmaking of men according to Ocobock (2017) is crucial to understanding why warriorhood stood in the frontline in creating many concrete conflicts in the colonial period including ethnic and sub-ethnic consciousness. Charles Ambler described the role of various groups within African societies, he said, "Male elder controlled political direction of communities and the processes of reproduction and accumulation, although women and youths could wield substantial influence in family, lineage and community affairs" (Ambler, 1988, p. 24). Reinvention and the struggle for meaning amongst the warriors and unmarried girls forced many into unconventional behaviors. Of these were possibilities brought about by the new era. Age and gender according to Ocobock drove the young men into new areas such as migrant labour, town life, crime, prostitution, hawking, anticolonial violence and nationalism. The tension over promising new paths and disappointing dead ends heavily weighed on the political exigencies of the 1930s. This era is associated with political consciousness, cash crop farming, generational redefinition and uncertainty over what the future held for the young.

The most notable problem occasioned by usurpation of warriors' duties was the problem of abortion. Abortion among the precolonial Tigania according to Thurwa (O.I., 2019) was a known practice but occurred only on instances where communal custom/law had been breached. The activities undertaken by the British in Tigania and the larger Meru rendered warriors jobless and therefore all their energies were channeled to women, drunkenness and chewing of miraa/khat. A Tigania warrior was traditionally forbidden from impregnating a girl before marriage. However, in the mid colonial era, abortion became the greatest problem colonial officers had to deal with.

⁶⁶ On how ethnicity has been politicized, see, Gabrielle Lynch, *Negotiating Ethnicity: Identity politics in Contemporary Kenya* (2006).

Chewing of miraa as earlier noted was restricted to elders, but because of idleness, warriors began chewing miraa. This was against Tigania and Igembe customs. Towards the end of 1934 the council passed a resolution restricting the use of miraa to persons of the grade of *akuru ba mambura*, that is, elders whose firstborn sons have been initiated (DC/MRU/1934, p. 222).

Colonial policy of 1928 was keen to address the issue of idling amongst warriors, the DC reported,

In Igembe and Tigania it is contrary to native custom for the '*ndaka*' or young men of the warrior age, to engage in any form of labour. This custom is due to the obligation which formerly existed, of every young man to be in readiness to engage in raids or repel raiders. As the '*Ndaka*' were also invested with other privileges they are naturally not in favor of any alteration in the custom which enables them to lead so pleasant an existence and one which now entails no responsibilities (DC/MRU/1928, p. 423).

Could the void left in the world of warriors be filled by colonial goodies like education, cash crops, cash economy and Christianity? The policies that the government adopted in many ways contradicted custom and also were unfathomable to many.

The colonial government policy was to explain to the elders of the community that every native must take part in the development of his reserve or any other part of the colony. Again, time in this respect was expected to be the antidote in this generational conflict. The 1933 DCs report is indicative of how the economic changes brought by colonialism would alter warrior mentality and fix them into the new society of handwork. It stated,

The internal economy of the tribe is affected to the extent that it is burdened with a non-productive group who expect to be maintained by the older generation. Undoubtedly this would change in time; the warriors, as their economic needs become greater, would assume duties they now despise (DC/MRU/1933, p. 300).

The generational change expected by the DCs in regard to female genital mutilation and idleness of warriors was shaped to take evolutionary but not revolutionary means. The policy of gradualness, both numerical, chronological and historical was thought to be an effective repudiate to any particular custom.

Since 1928 the problem of abortion was evolving into a crisis. Examination of campaigns to regulate clitoridectomy and eradicate abortion in Meru, however, illuminates the contradictory and gendered nature of the colonial state's efforts to fulfill the 'moral obligations' of imperial rule and secure local political control (Lynn Thomas, 1998, p. 122). The problem of this era was compounded by administrative challenges headmen faced due to gendered relationships. More critical were economic challenges occasioned and exacerbated by colonial intrusion. Dealing with an idol group of energetic young men proved most difficult even for gendered controls. Administrative measures taken by colonial DCs were therefore bound to fail in dealing with the controversies surrounding female excision. The colonial government tried propaganda and jailing's to no avail (DC/MRU/1929, p. 359). Modification in the manner in which circumcision of girls was to be done and who was to be circumcised were seen as probable channels to contain the menace of abortion (DC/MRU/1931, p. 311-312). In introspection, failure by the colonial government to engage the warriors in constructive activities lay the crux of the mayhem and not abortion or circumcision itself.

The policy demanding that young men work and the refusal of young men to do what was referred as women duties should have been the key concern but which the government was keen to evade altogether. The powerlessness of the ruling elders in confronting the colonial government in regard to warrior duties and privileges resulted in disrespect for the elders by the young warriors who now channeled their energies to sex and beer. According to the DCs report of 1933, the continued prosecution and propaganda against the female excision had borne no fruit for abortion occurred on a tremendous scale and several disturbing innovations had complicated the matter (DC/MRU/1931, p. 284 & 1933, p. 265). Those responsible for the pregnancies became chief abortionists. The illegitimacy of the children born was one of the major drivers of abortion. Traditionally, if a girl needed an abortion, she was taken to a professional abortionist who carried out the process (Thurwa, O.I., 2019). But in the colonial era the disturbing innovations surprised many. Uncircumcised girls and unmarried warriors were involved in this illegitimate affair due to idling and demotion of warriorhood status. Child murder through strangulation was also a common practice in case the girl succeeded in carrying the illegitimate pregnancy ((DC/MRU/1933, p. 3/265). Modification of custom by having girls circumcised early before the onset of puberty

was said to be the only remedy to female excision. This was also thought to arrest the problem of child murder for early excision would consecrate the mother and child. Figure 5 is an excerpt from the Annual Report of the DC, Meru District expressing concern on abortion.

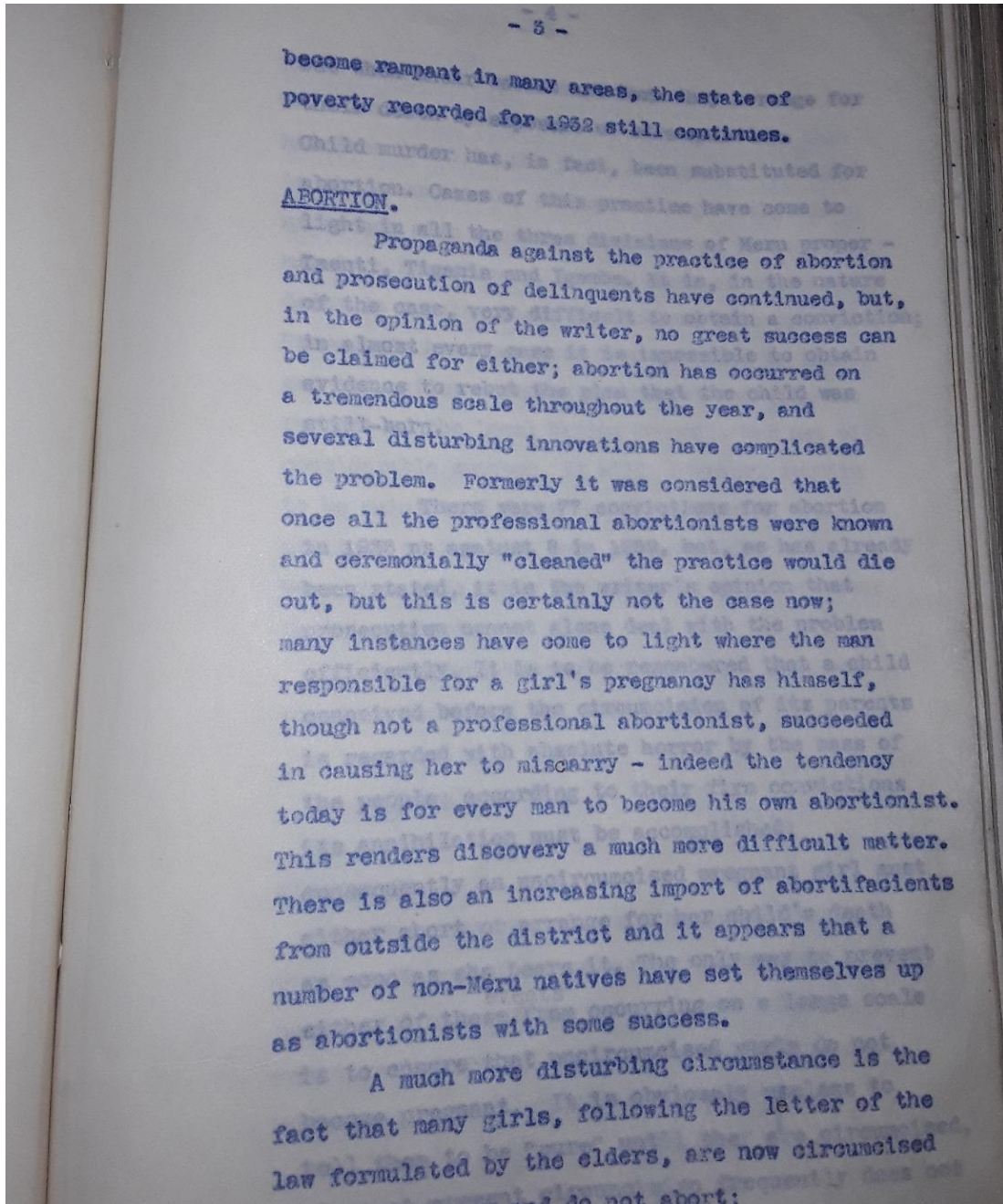


Figure 5: DCs report expressing concern over increased cases of abortion
Source: Kenya National Archives, Nairobi. (DC/MRU/1933, p.3)

The colonial government was keen to avoid the elephant in the room in regard to the problem of female circumcision and abortion. Lynn Thomas (2003, p. 53) observed that, "...The dispatch concluded by suggesting a possible panacea for the problems of

female genital cutting, demographic decline, and women's low status. It encouraged governors to provide training for native women in maternity work and to promote "infant and child welfare work. The Colonial Office reasoned that through the agency of state-trained African nurses, midwives, and welfare workers, reproductive crises could be abated and degrading customs curbed." These suggestions created contradictions with Tigania culture which the colonial government either chose to ignore or was unaware of. These crises were also about political struggles that encompassed gender roles and generational relations. It is good to note that up to 1937 the government had locked Tigania elders out of its activities over suspicion and was also unaware of the power of women councils, hence the inability of government to deal with abortion and female excision⁶⁷. To the colonial officials in London, "The need to free African women from this predicament had been part of the moral justification of late-nineteenth-century European imperialism" (Ibid).

Women in Tigania possessed immense powers in the control of their families in areas such as child birth, sexuality and midwifery. The British activities that had no place for Tigania and Meru customs in relation to gender relations escalated a crisis which most district commissioners had little power to control. Thomas weighs on this matter, she observed that,

Officials from African territories, however, strongly disagreed with such characterizations (of slavery). In their responses to the Colonial Office dispatch, they explained that women exerted a 'considerable,' if 'frequently baneful,' influence within their communities. Just as H. E. Lambert had concluded after years of trying to alter the severity and timing of excision in Meru, these officials argued that African women possessed powers that could neither be simply dismissed nor controlled⁶⁸. A few even insisted that colonialism had made matters worse (Thomas, 2003, p. 70-89).

Among the Bantu according to Lakidi (undated) women significantly were the most effective amplifiers and therefore popularizers of values in a practical sense. Women born in the mid and late 1930s had an element of Christian view of female excision by 1950. However, most still clung to traditions for the purposes of legitimacy. The legitimacy and acceptance they needed could only be acquired in the traditional fashion,

⁶⁷ On the contradictions of female excision, see, Lynn Thomas (1998) Imperial concerns and 'Women Affairs' State efforts to regulate clitoridectomy and eradicate abortion in Meru, Kenya, 1910-1950.

⁶⁸ On the role of women in procreation and midwifery see, Lynn Thomas , Politics of the Womb (2003, p. 70-85)

which is through proper initiation into Tigania customs (Thurwa, Alumina, O.I, 2019). The need to assert their place in this moral debate came with a clarion call to circumcise themselves (Ibid). *Ngaitana* (I will circumcise myself) among the concerned women was a way of defying the war waged against female circumcision (Thomas, 2003). This generation was torn between strict Meru customs, colonial law and Christian ethics.⁶⁹ Sections of women from this generation chose to circumcise themselves but using modern tools and also avoided the traditional procedures like dances and sacrifices that entailed what was considered proper Tigania initiation procedure.

A careful look into the *ngaitana* generation indicated serious departures from Tigania custom and rituals. The generational rift was huge. Lynn Thomas observed that, “These departures caused some from Meru, then, to doubt the legitimacy of these initiations. The song was, in part, an appeal by these girls to older age-grades those of the “iron-wedge knife”—to stop abusing them and to recognize their initiation as proper” (Thomas, 2003, p. 79).

Ruth Thurwa who is a major respondent to this research on the issues of abortion and female excision belonged to this generation of women. She agrees with observations made by Lynn Thomas on the political crisis of female excision. Thurwa (O.I, 2019) observed that generational relations in this period were highly severed. In 1956, the colonial government managed to convince the Meru Njuri Ncheke to ban female excision in its entirety in the whole district. However, the ban could not be practically possible in the villages due to Tigania traditional laws of gender differentiation (Alumina, O.I., 2019). As earlier stated, the colonial government was well established by 1957 having emerged victorious in the Mau Mau war. The fact that they had to consult and convince the Meru Njuri, on the issue of female excision indicates the seriousness the colonial government placed on male elder authority. The colonial D.C, Mr. H.E. Lambert, developed interest in understanding the customs of the Meru since 1933. The issue of women institutions and authority especially had baffled him since 1933. The previous administrators undermined or had a shallow perception of the

⁶⁹ Meru, Annual Reports, I 920-24, KNA/DC/MRU. Abortion was an offense against the Indian Penal Code, Section 312.16, while infanticide was an offense under Section 302. C. M. Dobbs, 'Memorandum on infanticide', 12 Jan. 1930.

institutions, customs and practices that they found.⁷⁰ The move by women to circumcise themselves was an indictment on colonial officials who thought that women were circumcised by force or that excision was sheer slavery.⁷¹

The DCs report of 1939 indicated that it was an error on the part of the colonial government to consider that women in Tigania and other parts of Meru were slaves of men. According to the report the DC noted that women institutions existed and were as powerful as men institutions only that women concentrated in moral and domestic affairs and the men political affairs. The DC wrote,

Practically nothing is known of women's institutions even by husbands who belong to them. The men talk of the '*kiama kia aka*' (*council of women*) but they do not even know its name...The African women's defense against superior physical strength has for generations been the power of the taboo. And taboo involves a procedure outside the ordinary individual - he obeys but does not know why. Women are the guardian of the taboo and it is the function of the women institutions not merely to preserve it but to enforce obedience. And the women's institutions are sacrosanct and secret societies, secured not only from the enquiries of administrative officers and missionaries but against the inquisition of male Africans too...what looked like a cruel inequality of status but in fact it wasn't (DC/MRU/1939, p. 293).

Female circumcision could only be stopped or modified by women because it fell within their sphere. Neither colonial law nor the Meru or Tigania Njuri Ncheke had power over the same. Customary authority protected women over any breach.⁷²

The gist of the matter in the whole question of female excision, abortion and colonial concern over the same lay in imperial interests. This study agrees with the view that that colonial edifice was not benevolent after all. As Ocobock has argued, the principal directive of the colonial state in Kenya was to ensure the profitability of the settler economy and produce goods that nourished Britons and their empire (Ocobock, 2017).

⁷⁰ For example, Some DCs thought that Headmen were unwilling to co-operate with officials in 'putting down abominable practices such as abortion'. The officials did not understand limits of gender relations

⁷¹ The *Njuri Ncheke* of Meru, the men's council that H. E. Lambert had co-opted into colonial administration in the late 1930s, unanimously banned excision in April 1956. When interviewed in the 1990, people in Meru recounted how news and defiance of the ban spread quickly and widely. Ex-Headman M'Anampiu of Mikinduri remembered returning in the evening from the *Njuri Ncheke* council meeting at Nchiru only to find that "all the girls had been circumcised" (Thomas, 2003, p. 96). The sanction by the Meru Njuri Ncheke could not hold in the individual Meru divisions especially those of Tigania and Igembe where custom was strong.

⁷² The intricacies of English law and ideas could not be comprehended by African structures of social order.

Power inherent in age-relations was highly disrupted and compromised and therefore was becoming difficult to be tapped in the period leading to 1957. By ignoring and disrupting male elder relations and authority among the Tigania in colonial era proper, colonization jeopardized the political organization of the Tigania which controlled the social relations of all Tigania citizens. The generational relations though at this point in time still holding little power could be the panacea to the question of abortion and warrior conduct and behavior. The strain caused by colonialism to women and men institutions upset the balance in gender and age relations (Thurwa, O.I., 2020). Female initiation was a key institution through which gender relations and generational hierarchies were constituted (Thomas, 2003). The DC in 1939 actually feared the effects and noted that,

So far, the women institutions appear to be interested in domestic affairs only...and are so far obedient to the decrees of men's institutions. But if the latter lose their power while the former remain organized and functional the administration will be subjected to a most unpleasant strain if ever the women are stirred by the mechanism of the 'masculine protest' to take matters into their own hands (DC/MRU/1939, p. 211).

The quick mobilization of women was feared even by the government for it was apparent that their ability lay in secrecy. It later will be seen that women assisted young men in protests against the generational strain. Shadle notices that this generational strain was effected even in law. He observed that, colonial officials codified the law based on information provided by the elders, thus instituting rules that permanently favored them to the disadvantage of women and junior men (Shadle, 1999, p. 413). This claim is also backed by Charles Ambler in his research on the Embu.

Colonial records are indicative of concerted effort by the colonial government to return to what they considered an ideal past where clan elders were in charge over the behavior of the young, control of communal work and activities. The colonialists were always anxious that detribalized 'natives may pose a serious challenge of control Lonsdale (undated). Lonsdale's view is buttressed by Ocobock who observed that

In coalition with local elders, the British sought to exert authority over young men through the process of initiation. The provincial administration adapted male initiation to push newly made young men into the labor market and control their behavior. They manipulated and regulated coming-of-age by changing the timing and length of initiation, seclusion, and warrior-ship. (Ocobock, 2017, p. 52)

The DCs report of 1939 is indicative of concerted effort by the colonial government to first of all, have all by-laws passed by the elders in their respective divisions before the Local Native Council ratify the same to become law of the land (DC/MRU/1939, p. 124). Up to 1937, the colonial government had sought to keep the Tigania elders, especially Tigania Njuri Ncheke off the government for they were said to be opposed to government policies (DC/MRU/1933). But this undermined administration by the colonial government. Therefore, the relations had to be revised to ease the administrative burden in Tigania division. To succeed in issues of codifying some laws and ratifying others the elders were a critical group.

The idea of using codified customary law to some extent, to shape society and market was practiced among some colonial officials though was uncommon (Shadle, 1999). For example, Laws relating to the practice of abortion and initiation were formulated by a few select elders in the Meru 'Njuri Ncheke'. This move directly went against the autonomy of the Tigania people and the spirit of communality. For example, a law was passed allowing girls to be circumcised during pregnancy so as to minimize abortion. Another law concerned the extent of operation of female circumcision.⁷³ This allowed the removal of clitoris only and in this case the number of second circumcisions sharply rose in demand by elder women to have proper circumcision done. Again the laws made required that girls be circumcised at age 10 or before the onset of puberty for this would minimize illegitimacy of children born out of wed lock. This law is said for example to have saved 300 girls in Tigania from the evil of abortion in the period leading to 1937. Though successes of these by-laws were recorded, the DC noted lack of keen interest in consistent implementation of such by-laws by the citizens of various clans and divisions and even chiefs limited themselves to the prosecution of an unauthorized operators (DC/MRU/1933, p. 6).

⁷³ During the colonial period, European officers undertook a series of campaigns in conjunction with African officials to regulate the severity of clitoridectomy and to alter the timing of female initiation in Meru. Efforts were also geared towards enforcing female initiation at an earlier age in order to combat abortion (Thomas, 1998, p. 121).

Evidence obtained indicated that operations continued with impunity. Reason, the laws concerning female circumcision were made by men and not women.⁷⁴ In some cases girls refused to be circumcised twice and their fiancés who were men of warrior age warned operators against excess cutting (ibid). According to Brett Shadle, making of law in this manner could not make sense. This was because law and social orderliness were evolving hence codification of such laws became a tall order as the difficulties of implementation experienced by chief Anampiu and other colonial officials portrays (Shadle, 1999, p. 415).⁷⁵ The above examples are indicative of numerous generational conflicts occurring in Tigania society. British Law and Tigania custom and norms clashed and this somewhat limited the successes of the colonial government in Kenya. Colonial officials in Tigania, underestimated the customary law and generational relations. In this conflict, senior officials held that, it was hard to do without customary law. Though, officers in the field opined that some of these laws were retrogressive, their seniors held that letting custom evolve on its own account would be more suitable to the changing conditions of tribal life. Crystallization of law thus was conceived as a potential road block to modernity; keeping customary law fluid allowed officers to alter or invent law to retard, redirect or reinvigorate social change (Shadle, 1999).

Generational conflict is also evident from the above given examples. People in Tigania, observed laws, respected custom and norm and feared taboos (Chunkubitu, O.I., 2020). Colonial by-laws did not invoke fears hence the prospects of being obeyed and implemented consistently were very low. In Brett Shadle's view, the state tried to extend its control over African conduct and so ultimately exert its hegemony over African life, but these attempts often ended in failure (Shadle, 1999, p. 413).

Underlying warrior behavior and conduct in relation to political power and authority was the matrix of religious belief. Religious beliefs in Tigania could be said to be the chain that held in place taboos, norms and values. What the ancestors of the living

⁷⁴In formulating measures through discussion at all-male Local Native Council meetings and enlisting headmen and police to enforce them, colonial officers crafted a relationship between themselves and a group of local men which enabled them to intervene in 'women's affairs'. These interventions challenged the social processes through which girls became women, and older women exerted authority within their communities (Thomas, 1998, p. 122)

⁷⁵ Codification- Writing a single version of customary laws into a legal code, definition adopted by Brett Shadle from, Martin Chanock Law, Custom and Social Order, 1985.

decided was to be done must be done and what was not ordained was highly detested and avoided by all. This fear controlled generational relations and ensured continuity of tribal law and custom (Kayaru, O.I., 2019). According to Busia (1967) and Mbiti (1997) the place of super natural in the maintenance of warrior conduct was key in the political and social stability of African Bantu communities. Religion besides proper socialization was the ultimate internal control in the behavior of the warrior. Dent Lakidi (undated) emphasizes that religion sanctioned both traditional values and traditional distribution of power. Tambull argued that,

The greatest force towards law and order came from inside of each individual. The strength of this force is such that even when a minor disaster occurs an individual or his or her family will go at once to the diviner and confess all the things, he has done that might possibly have brought disaster to him as a punishment. This is done in the belief that the ancestor will punish any transgression directly without any trial or chance to plead excuses. The punishment may come at ones or years later. One can never be sure (Tambull, 1966, p. 22).

Tambull further emphasized that this force compelled individuals to live proper lives. The real driving force was internal, for knowledge of right or wrong was properly taught. The elders therefore were immune from those warriors who were over ambitious in their society. The integration mechanism among the Tigania also added to this internal individual control. All war spoils were shared between warriors, Njuri Ncheke and the ruling elders. The share for the warriors was meant to enable them pay dowry when time came. The system further co-opted the warriors by letting them know they were the champions of their family, clan and the larger society (Ikiugu, O.I., 2019).

5.3.2 Things Fall Apart: Njuri Ncheke and the End of an Era

About the Tigania society prevailing before colonialism, it will be crucial to recognize the extent and the nature of age groups and institutional control. Each higher level of the two of course representing advanced forms of secrecy, knowledge and authority. This chain of authority lay in various organized groups that allowed individuals to draw social and economic benefits. Before a boy was circumcised and having reached the age of 14 and above, he belonged to a group known as Njuri ya Nchibi (Thurwa, O.I., 2020). Any boy belonging to this group must exhibit mature behavior so that his father does not delay or postpone his circumcision when the ‘horn’ blew (Ikiugu, Mugambi O.I., 2020). Boys therefore had their own leadership and had their own secret practices

that identified and gave them a sense of belonging and instilled discipline until circumcision (Ibid).

In precolonial Tigania, circumcision and initiation of both boys and girls ushered them into adulthood responsibilities (Ratanya, O.I., 2019). The two practices gave the young adults legitimacy and recognition in their families, genders, generation and in the whole community. The two rituals opened progression doors for the initiates into various councils. For men, as previously discussed, full initiation into Tigania customs allowed them to join Njuri ya Lamala. This was the first Njuri a young warrior yet to marry would be initiated into after undergoing all the necessary warrior tests and rituals (Simba, O.I., 2018). The major reason for being initiated into this council was for control purposes. The prestige earned in this council conditioned behavior for any conduct deemed unacceptable would be punished by this group through physical chastening or a fine. Ruling elders in consultation with members of Njuri ya Lamala were always able to control the behavior of the ambitious younger cadre of warriors.

After marriage the individuals in Njuri ya Lamala advanced to Njuri ya Waariki. This level of Njuri brought together those newly married men and who are out of official political authority together. It conferred them rights to be listened and also helped them negotiate for a fair share of communal resources (Ratanya, Kirea, O.I., 2019). Njuri Ncheke was the highest council in formal ranking. And as previously discussed, it was the main justice body transcending in both Tigania and Igembe clans. Njuri Impingire was a specialized unit of Njuri Ncheke and was tasked with getting specialized solutions for special cases or tasks (Kaunyangi, O.I., 2019). This gave this select group veto powers over any other indigenous body. It was however, never in any contradiction with Njuri Ncheke for it emanated directly from Njuri Ncheke ranks and file.

Resources formed key mobilization factors in the pre-colonial Tigania clans. This competition though controlled led to emergence of two organized groups. These groups protected their spaces, for in many ways they were different from the rest of the clans which obtained subsistence from mixed farming. These two gave themselves the title of Njuri. They include the Njuri ya Aathi and Njuri ya Kaita. In many ways these two acted like secret societies but were not in their initial years harmful until colonization

touched on their core. They were involved in hunting and blacksmithing. To protect their space they adopted many protectionist ideologies which many agree involved the use of certain charms. The two societies were found in Igembe and Tigania clans. Other informants agreed that these groups existed all over Meru but the differing Kimeru dialects concealed their similarities yet in essence their practices were similar (Mukaria, Thurwa O.I., 2019).

The Meru DCs annual report of 1927 noted the need to suppress these two groups and others thought to be like them for the purposes of proper administration. The report read

The smooth working of native authorities will not be possible till the secret societies and the practice of witch craft have been suppressed. Only a slight knowledge exists on the organization of secret societies. Practically no records exist here concerning them. Information recently acquired is that they are two:- Kagitha or Kaitha and (2) Athi. Both contain two degrees or grades. The senior grade of the kaitha is the kaundu and its members are known as Njure a Kaundu. The senior grade of the Athi is Mbuju...Both are peculiar to Tigania and Igembe clans but have lately got a footing in Thura and Munithu. The Kagitha are vegetarians and the Athi are meat eaters and originally lived on game. This society at one time was harmless, it is now merely a company of extortionist. Formerly, its powers consisted in reserving certain areas for hunting purposes... Since the introduction of the game laws the Athi have become more dangerous to the society... The Kagitha are said to be experts in vegetable poisons. No one can refuse to comply with a demand for food or toddy from a member. Fines to its members are now paid in terms of money formerly beer and foodstuffs were used. Most of the members of these two groups are also members of four indigenous tribunals or Kiamas which include Njure ya Katha kakai, Njure a mbere, Njuri a Mpingire and Njure Ncheke. The elders of these bodies have supernatural powers and are empowered to lay curses on people and things. Their meetings are held in two places and are attended by both Igembe and Tigania clans... People are outlawed under the penalty of being cursed to give information to government or bring their cases to be heard by government...it is therefore necessary to break the power of these societies and organizations. In Imenti these difficulties have not yet arisen. The Imenti kiama had only one degree until recently when a few elders became Njure a Ncheke (DC/MRU/1927, p. 463-458).

The above example introduces us to the murky waters on the dynamics of traditions, and customs, on the contradictions of colonial rule and on the shifting resource endowments and access. In this respect other clans according to the respondents highly feared individuals who were members of the Kaita and Aathi with the advent of colonialism. This was mainly because of the nature of the colonial needs which interfered with social relations between clans and their means of livelihood. Changing

social order to meet government expectations created chaos (Shadle, 1999). Informants to this study express the difficulties experienced by other clans in dealing with the two i.e. kaita and Aathi. The government through home guards and the chiefs could not help. The limits of invention through the inability to reform some of these clans lay exposed. The government in this case could not provide alternatives of eking out a living thus social disorder crept in. Thomas Spear explains that, what gives tradition and custom their coherence and power is the fact that they lay deep in people's popular consciousness, informing them of who they are and how they should act (Spear, 2003, p. 26). Hence, the conduct of the Aathi and the Kaita and even other Njuris were an expression of frustration.

Young people in the precolonial Tigania, drawn from both genders were always part of these organizations. Respect and fear were mutual and were to be earned when one's time came after circumcision and initiation. Initiation entailed knowledge of these individual clan organizations and practices relating to each. The elders could not recognize anyone who had not been initiated in terms of understanding his clan. When colonization came it introduced new ways of doing things, new demands and this directly compromised and contradicted initiation practices. By speeding up circumcision and lowering the age when circumcision for boys was to be done to below 14 instead of when fully prepared, colonialism greatly infringed into the sphere of making of men among the Tigania (Mwongo, O.I., 2019). This interference redefined manhood and was done in order to provide the white settlers with enough cheap labour (Ocobock, 2017). Indian Penal code provided the empire with the necessary law to draw what Ocobock (2017) refers to as arbitrary line. According to Ocobock some commissioners argued that young East Africans were never free from the power of the old. To carve out a moment of independence, the colonial state would have to draw an arbitrary, entirely novel line, one with untold repercussions.

Among the Tigania colonial administration was not immediately felt except that warriors could not go raiding. State power did not circulate evenly to every corner of the colonial society and periodically required a little defibrillation to keep it going. African communities living closest to the heart of state authority felt the steady, rapid pulse of rule. Further away its effects could be but a murmur (Ocobock, 2017). This

state of affairs was so real with the Tharaka who were furthest from Meru Town, the district administrative headquarters but also to some extent affected the Igembe and Tigania divisions. In Tharaka, colonial rule under headmen could not gain ground for those appointed feared witch craft (DC/MRU/1927, p. 458). This state of affairs provided some continuity for customs (Mwongo, O.I., 2019). In Tigania indigenous bodies like Njuri Ncheke staged silences about their operations up to 1927 (DC/MRU/1932/1933). Most others went underground such that even those born from 1920s did not possess adequate knowledge about their existence except scanty pieces through rumors (Thurwa, O.I., 2019). Whatever memories exist about Horne's activities indicate that he was the force behind going underground for the Njuri Ncheke from the year 1918-1925 (Mwongo, O.I., 2019).

Beginning around, 1909 he decided to penetrate Meru Kiamas, by attending their gatherings to learn their operations or what he believed to be their 'secrets'. On inquiry he focused his attention on Tigania's Njuri Ncheke, which his informants had reported as the most powerful of these organizations (Fadiman, 1993). He tried changing Njuri from within something that the elders could not acquiesce. The Tigania Njuri Ncheke soul lay in its use of secrecy. Ancestral traditions emphasized it as central to survival of the Tigania. Each age-set, throughout Tigania history, had contributed its wealth of stories in which only the use of secrecy (e.g., secret language, concealed weapons) had been able to preserve its warriors from defeat in war. The need for secrecy, as exemplified by the secrets kept by each gender from the other and within every age-group permeated the society (Fadiman, 1993, p. 183). Mwongo describes how Horne tried changing the standards of Njuri Ncheke of Tigania by demanding that he and other young men be part of its meetings which was utterly unethical (Mwongo, Kaunyangi, O.I., 2019). Respondents agreed that it was against custom for a person the age of Horne first of all to attend Njuri Ncheke meetings *let alone* directing elders on what to do. The

initial demoralization of warriorhood in Tigania can be traced from Horne's activities.⁷⁶ Morality was the first casualty.⁷⁷

This going underground had repercussions for these institutions in the face of colonial and missionary bombardment. The demoralization of elders in the face of the colonial 'authorities' affected the warriors and the women alike. The young doubted the ability of the elders to reinstate themselves as the authorities and this compromised the respect the elders obtained from the young. The young men and women also began to doubt the authority of these traditional institutions and organized societies. Majority of Tigania peoples had initially believed that the *mucunku*/white man would very soon leave and the previous systems would fall back in place (Ntoataya, O.I., 2019). By around the year 1925 it dawned to those holding this view that their expectations were wrong. Adjusting to the reality was necessary.

In the face of this realization elders tried to assert their authority indirectly through the indigenous institutions like Njuris of various clans, *gichiaro* and age groups relation. For example, Horne was baffled by the refusal of both chiefs and headmen to venture willingly into selected localities that lay formally under their administrative control while displaying perfect willingness to enter others. Efforts to make a chief enforce (or even transmit) orders to 'his' headmen were met by evasion and delay (Fadiman, 1993). Direct control would put the elders on the cross road with the colonial government. By asserting their place, the elders hoped to control and also earn respect of the youths who had begun to misbehave by 1927. The authority of headmen and sub-headmen was highly compromised by the powers of the Njuri Ncheke and other communal structures which competed for control but in secrecy as noted in the above example. Silence and curses were used as instruments against the colonial administrators especially collaborators (DC/MRU/1927, p. 455). The elders feared the real possibility of losing their authority to the young given the manner in which the colonial state was run.

⁷⁶ Horne intrusion into the nature of how elders conducted issues of justice severely violated the economic and social organization of the people of Tigania and Meru peoples. He tried codification of law and altering conditions to meet British standards. Significant change of communal structures of collectivity began with Horne's reforms.

⁷⁷ Dismembering and reforming the justice system occurred in a convoluted path plagued with many contradictions since 1913. Indigenous bodies were allowed to fall into disuse but this made administration difficult.

According to DCs report of 1929, men who served the government as tribal retainers made better chiefs and headmen for they were fearless and were unlikely to misuse their authority (DC/MRU/1927). The difficulty in finding good headmen lay in the fact that those eligible, feared witchcraft and certain customs (DC/MRU/1930, p. 333). While these officials discounted the ability of witches to actually do magic, they recognized the power of the *beliefs* in the efficacy of supernatural practitioners and their concomitant powers to challenge the authority of the state. According to Luongo claims of witchcraft thus offered intelligibility, form, and articulation to what might be termed “official misfortune” the inability to establish order and implement policy occasioned by “living in a world with witches” (Luongo, 2011, p. 9). The battle to have Tigania men ignore colonial offices and power was so intense that at times it was difficult to have a ‘proper’ Tigania man accept appointment as a colonial chief. For example, chief Imathiu was not initiated into the ranks of any Tigania njuri, he ruled in the mid colonial era of the 1927-1935 (DC/MRU/1933, p. 258).

The annual Meru DCs report of 1928 showed that it became a government policy to fight and eradicate these witchcraft ‘institutions’ so that governance through selected native administrators could gain ground. The report read,

The huts in which members of the two secret societies, Athi and Kagita met were burnt but it is impossible to say if they do not take place in secluded places. The difficulty in the total eradication of the secret societies lies in secrecy (DC/MRU/1928, p. 4).⁷⁸ The extract of this report is shown in Figure 6

⁷⁸ Colonial actors also frequently employed the term “magic” when describing and analyzing local beliefs and practices or when characterizing local people whom they had difficulty disciplining and whose powers they aimed to ultimately deny (Luongo, 2011).

The campaign against witchcraft was carried on up to the middle of the year with good results and although it cannot be said to be entirely suppressed there is no doubt that it has been largely checked. The huts in which members of the two secret societies, Athi and Kagitha met were burnt, but it is impossible to say if meetings do not take place in secluded places. The difficulty in the total eradication of the societies lies in the secrecy. The informer from whom information was received regarding them became unsatisfactory and his services were dispensed with, with the result that no further information has been received by Administrative Officers. As a result of the campaign however 61 persons were convicted of witchcraft and were sentenced to terms of imprisonment varying from six months to ten years. Five persons were ordered under Section 9 of the witchcraft Ordinance to leave their villages and reside elsewhere in the district. The names of five others were submitted to the Governor for deportation.

Figure 6: DCs report showing progress on eradicating witchcraft societies in Tigania
Source: Kenya National Archives, Nairobi (DC/MRU/1928, p. 4).

According to this report the campaign was able to yield jailing of up to 61 members, five were deported and others were expelled from Tigania and Igembe divisions. With this came deposition of all the headmen for being members of these organizations while other headmen did not betray these organizations and resigned from their positions (DC/MRU/1928, p. 420). Fadiman buttresses this observation, he stated that, “obviously those blanket chiefs who saw themselves as spokesmen for these Kiamas soon found their positions untenable and swiftly resigned” (Fadiman, 1993). Catherine Luongo opines that, virulent debates in Kenya and the metropole over what constituted justice, law, and order in the African societies ensued in the wake of such circumstances that caused agitations, unrest, trial, deportation and sentencing (Luongo, 2011)⁷⁹. Among the Tigania members of these institutions believed that they had done nothing

⁷⁹ On Witchcraft and Colonial Rule in Kenya, 1900–1955, see, Katherine Luongo, 2011.

wrong. They held that, they were acting within the indigenous systems of authority. British colonial officials and the courts proved unable to understand. This was because,

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, ‘witchcraft,’ the “supernatural,” and “magic” were key terms in the lexicon that colonial actors employed in describing and analyzing sociopolitical situations in Kenya and across the British African Empire more generally. “Supernatural,” widely conceptualized as unseen power, offered the colonial authorities a broad rubric under which to lump a range of “local” attitudes, actions, and actors that they could not otherwise effectively manage or efficiently explain away. And within the African imperial context, colonial characterizations of someone or something as supernatural” did a dismissive work as well, distinguishing the supernatural person, practice, or object from the nexus of the normal/natural/visible valorized by a colonial power-knowledge complex centered on “reason” and ‘science (Luongo, 2011, p. 8).

Native tribunals especially those of Igembe and Tigania were said to be inefficient and unreliable. In essence this resistance scuttled colonial government’s efforts to impose itself on the people. In 1928, tribunals saw the inclusion of young men to solve cases with old in the local native councils (DC/MRU/1928, p. 418). The move was prompted by the colonial government believe that the young were more tolerant of white men. The move, they believed would also help expedite cases. Fadiman captured the initial reaction of the Njuri in 1913 with regard to have young men becoming part of Njuri. He states, “They told us that our places should be taken by younger men who had been trained in the laws, by which he meant not ours but his (Horne). Thereafter, of course, it was not our Njuri, but his” (Fadiman, 1993).

In the year, 1928, it was made illegal for the unofficial tribunals to administer justice in Tigania division (DC/MRU/1928, p. 418). This step was in a bid to make these unofficial *kiamas* extinct just like Horne and other DCs had done up to 1920. What was unknown to the colonial government was that they were fighting a system which many swore allegiance to through irreversible oaths. The nature of masculinity among the Tigania imbued a strong sense of belonging. Age group patterns and structures were meant to advance these relationships. Because of these bonds even those in the official Tigania tribunal were members of these indigenous institutions.

The government reported that in 1929 the Tigania Tribunal did perform dismally in dispute adjudication (DC/MRU/1929, p. 354). Its judgments were said to be deplorable

and not related to facts (DC/MRU/1930). The Meru DC, Mr. J.G. Hopkins in his report of 1931 came to the conclusion that, “the natives of this division unlike those of the remainder of the district, appear to enjoy intrigue and I would fear question the integrity of any body of natives appointed to settle their disputes” (DC/MRU/1931, p. 309). This state of affairs was reported up to 1938 and little improvement had been realized by 1950 as annual DC report indicated. Masculinity in Tigania was patterned through social practices ordered through time and space. The nature of this patterning was neither individual nor simply voluntary. It linked the micro and macro within the society of Tigania as much as it inspired. The manner of conduct appeared intriguing to the colonialist but was a show of continuity among the people.

The 1929 Meru DCs report noted something unusual among the colonial Meru. The report read,

Early in the year it was evident that the district was not in an altogether normal state. Disobedience to Tribal and Government authority was rife amongst the younger men and the old system of tribal administration through the ‘*agambi*’ or heads of sub-clans had completely ceased. Moran in defiance of their customs were indulging freely in drinking bouts instead of working and the elders and headmen were doing nothing to stop this... Old men were doing very little to assist their women to cultivate and the young men nothing at all (DC/MRU/1929, p. 361).

The government attributed this state of affairs to delay in transfer of power between age groups which is not entirely true for previously unethical conduct was coordinated among the age groups. In the last 10 years up to 1929 the *agambi* had fallen into disuse and the government reported re-instituting tribal administration through *agambi* or clan heads in the same year (DC/MRU/1929). However, the government did seem not to grasp that the *agambi* were not the ultimate authority but anointed clans’ spokesmen.⁸⁰ Constant changes of DCs made government lose focus on nature of Tigania customs, especially patterned structures of male authority. The suppression of the authority of the elders and the various levels of Njuri would provide the ultimate explanation of the deviant behavior of the young.

⁸⁰According to Fadiman, the work of a headman would have been easier if he worked with a clan spokesperson. But the nature of Tigania tradition could not allow *agambi* to betray their people. *Agambi* who perceived themselves as spokesmen for local Kiamas refused to perform the white man's work. This left both chiefs and headmen without means to enforce their orders (Fadiman 1993, p. 197).

From the report of 1931 the government noticed that the work of chiefs and headmen was difficult because the elders who are the real wielders of power and authority were not enthusiastic in assisting the government (DC/MRU/1930). The DC in 1929 noted that the natives in positions of authority were handicapped in implementing their mandate due to threats. This coupled with difficulties in getting sound, energetic and acceptable chiefs and headmen made administration extremely difficult (DC/MRU/1931, p. 282). The power of Njuri Ncheke elders could be undermined by government but the effects were visible for this vicious war was slowly upsetting the moral fabric that held groups together. Morally, the youths were most affected by this contestation. Witchcraft' societies according to this report had largely abated. The problem for this period as earlier discussed was abortion and female excision. The Tigania and Igembe chiefs according to this report,

Could not be said to have achieved highly for they are very seriously handicapped by the suspicious and distrustful attitude of their elders who by means of potent curses associated with indigenous kiamas can generally ensure that chiefs do nothing without their consent. This robs the chiefs of any power of initiative and practically puts a right of veto into the hands of the most influential of indigenous Kiama, the Njuri Ncheke (DC/MRU/1933, p. 259).

From this observation, it may be argued that colonial order faced resistance to its imposition among the Tigania. Where imposition was successful, resistance ensued in different forms. Hence, the notion of define and rule was challenged. Instead, there existed tension, at least in some parts of Tigania between the colonial political order and the indigenous order.

The Meru DC, Mr. H.E. Lambert in the annual report of 1933 noted that it would be apt for the government to recognize the power of Tigania Njuri Ncheke for no amount of ignorance will stop or alter its power and influence. Chief Imathiu unlike his predecessors used intrigue to rule for he was not a sworn member of any Tigania clan or age group Njuri. He was said to have made positive strides. This report urged the government to remove suspicion with which Njuri regards the government so that chiefs could perform (DC/MRU/1933, p. 258). Among the Tigania again, chief Minuki is said to have been an outsider. He was a Daicho, this is a small community residing in the edges of Tharaka but bordering the Tigania and the Imenti. He was appointed to chieftainship in Tigania, Muthara Location. The reason for his appointment was

because the pattern of masculinity in Tigania had complicated hierarchies in the form of initiation into various Njuris. Hence, up to 1935, few among the Tigania would have willingly accepted appointment into this colonial position. This made it difficult for many among the Tigania men to accept white man's burden (sic). Gradually, as realization grew as to what becoming chief would really mean, the posts grew harder to fill. The administration therefore was forced to fill the places of the earliest appointees with whoever they could get (Fadiman 1993).

Mwongo, who later administered this location admits hearing stories of how chief Minuki resorted to drunkenness and evasion of duty (Mwongo, O.I., 2019). Drunkenness was used by chiefs to express frustration and fear. Mwongo who also became a colonial chief remembers the difficulties associated with filling the position. He remembers that, he held dual chieftainship positions, that is Chief Kianjai Location and a vice chief –under Chief Benson Nguthuri for Muthara Location from 30th May 1960 (Mwongo, O.I, 2019). The moral debacle associated with this position threw many who filled it into a life of quagmire. The elder authority, the various levels of Njuri, and the *gichiario* blood ties deterred many who would have wanted this position. Whether these kinds of challenges were experienced by those who became chiefs in other Meru divisions especially in regard to the patterns of masculinity and *gichiario* blood ties is beyond the scope of the present study.

Among the colonial Tigania most cases were heard by the unofficial tribunals. This is because Njuri did reconcile cases amicably and the traditional items of fine paying were used. In addition, litigants in both sides felt free to express themselves before their elders (Ntoimaingi, O.I, 2018)⁸¹. No lies could penetrate this justice system unlike the new European system applied in the official tribunals.⁸² Many debates ensued between colonial administrators and the judicial officers over who was most suited to oversee the administration of justice among Africans in the Kenyan colony. The contention was that, according to the nature of colonial administration, the DOs was better placed in judicial control in Divisions over the local European Resident Magistrate. DOs as

⁸¹ On the procedures of how court proceedings occurred in Tigania and how they were subverted, see Fadiman 1993:188.

⁸² On how justice was subverted in official tribunals, see, Lawrence et al (2006) Intermediaries, Interpreters and clerks. African Employees in the making of the colonial state.

administrative officers were of opinion that African courts were more likely to deliver justice than European magistrates untrained in native law and custom (Shadle, 1999, p. 417).

An interesting development was occurring in the wake of colonial subversion of tribal authority. New frontiers of conflicts to an extent of some being boundary related had begun to emerge. In such cases official tribunals heard and redrew clan boundaries. For example, it was uncommon before 1910 to have boundary related conflicts, but individualism was upsetting this custom. In 1934, an inter clan boundary dispute was reported in Tigania. A dispute between the Akiuna and Antu(bothaja) clans over clan land boundary was resolved through demarcation of the boundary by the official Tigania Division Tribunal (DC/MRU/1934, p. 227). Land consciousness was now part of the new developments occurring in Tigania. Communal use of land and forests remained until late 1950s when subdivision and individual allocation was done.

Something must be said about the role of missionaries in the whole of this struggle between the elders and the colonial government. Christian missions had opened new alternative spaces for the young (Ocobock, 2017). Deviants and breakers of customary law had found new spaces to hide from communal authority. The young especially joined Methodist mission for no better reason than escape from their elders. This generation involved those approximately born in the years around 1910s. The missionaries cast tribal customs in a bad light among this generation of men and women. As previously stated those born earlier seemed not easy to persuade at least partly owing to their initiation into Tigania society through the stricter older form. Christian missionaries many a times did not see anything positive about Tigania and Meru customs. Hence missions encouraged the young to adopt Christianity and keep off their elders who were considered pagans.

Most of educational institutions fell under their jurisdiction and control and therefore exercised a high degree of autonomy in relation to their activities and teachings. These educational institutions, in some cases, also deliberately provided boarding facilities in order to separate these young converts from their older conservative parents. This highly compromised customs for the youths were shown as being the 'light'

(Chunkubitu, O.I., 2019). In 1928 the missions recorded an increase in the number of students citing an increase in interest and demand for education (DC/MRU/1928, p. 383). The clash between missions and customs especially the issue of female excision in the early 1930s rescinded gains made by missions in terms of membership, education and religious conversion (Alumina, O.I., 2019). This is where the power and ability of women councils was first revealed (DC/MRU/ 1930, p. 333).

Those who were shown 'light' gained jobs in the colonial government as agricultural officers, tribal retainers, school teachers, interpreters, ministers of the word and as midwives. Many among these also embraced the Christian religion. From 1945 those who worked with the various missions or were mission educated found themselves better placed to do business, became police officers and occupied other positions created by colonial government. Those who refused western influence found themselves in a subservient position to this new group of young men and women in the many sectors of colonial economy. The contradictions of moral economy found footing in this group which was emerging as the 'most suitable' to lead the rest (Berman, 2010).

Njuri Ncheke was recognized by the colonial government in 1938 and co-opted into the administration though distrust was still rife. The colonial records from 1925 are indicative of unending complaints about the inefficiency of sub headmen and drunkenness among chiefs. Coupled with the inefficiency of sub headmen who were principal assistants to chiefs, administration was becoming difficult (DC/MRU/1936, p. 70). The recognition and inclusion of Njuri Ncheke and the *agambi* into the government was thought to be the remedy and the only way efficiency in administration would be achieved (DC/MRU/1935, p. 159). These are some of the realizations that made colonial government adapt a positive regard towards Njuri elders (DC/MRU/1938, p. 384).⁸³

The inefficiency of chiefs and sub headmen according to the respondents besides being stifled by Njuri also emanated from the nature of duties they were assigned. These duties over and above everything, were alien and largely contradicted the traditionally

⁸³ This realization came after it was noted that chiefs who got assistance of clan *agambi* were doing better.

sanctioned level of their age and grade of socialization in the Tigania male rankings (Njara, O.I., 2019). This realization was something the colonial government had ignored. Whether this was out of omission or commission, is not clear.⁸⁴ The political authority of the various levels of Njuri up to this point in time had been highly compromised due to a myriad of factors including; many young people had outside exposure due to migrant labour, the age of circumcision had been lowered and proper initiation into manhood was not being followed due to demands of colonial economy.

The various Njuris that socialized the young had withered hence moral decadence had set in. Christian values and the God of Christianity introduced by missionaries pushed aside the Tigania Traditional belief system which was the major controlling force (Mwongo, O.I., 2019). But the force of the Njuri elders, paralysis of chiefs in performing their functions is evidence that traditional belief system still lingered in some form. Even though it was no longer the sole predominant force among the Tigania. The institution of Tigania *Muwee* which was the symbol of purity and morality had gone underground. According to the respondents, the Tigania elders decided to hide the institution of Tigania *muwee* and other religious figures from the colonial government. The young men of this era who displayed tendencies of indifference to custom and Tigania beliefs knew little about the Tigania *Muwee* as Mwongo, Chunkubitu, Alumina and Kaunyangi who were the eldest respondents to the present study admitted. Actually, all respondents agreed that they heard about but never saw the Tigania *muwee*. Only the elders then knew the whereabouts of the existence and the presence of these religious men. These elders were the men and women born in 1860s, 1870s, 1880s and 1890s. This hiding of the *muwee* can be said to have been very detrimental to the Tigania religious practice, way of worship and the nature of political authority exercised by the ruling elders of the new era under colonialism. In the same way that it can be argued as being an attempt to maintain spiritual purity.

Mr. V.M Mckeag was the DC for Meru throughout the year 1938. In his report he noted that the advent of ‘government’ and superimposition of an alien system of chiefs and headmen over tribal organization has weakened the power of elders who however still

⁸⁴ White administrators, unaware of the complexities stifling operation of chiefs and headmen found this behavior incomprehensible, usually dismissing it as symptomatic of the native mind (Fadiman, 1993)

retained power over the use of clan land but had ignored soil conservation (DC/MRU/1938, p. 419). In consultation with the elders and by strengthening the existing tribal organization and in particular that of *mwiriga* elders there was renewed attitude among people of cooperating with the government. This incident marks the first of its kind in trying to bring onboard the clan elders into government affairs.

Chiefs according to Mr. V.M. Mckeag must work through *agambi*, elders and Njuri Ncheke or else they accomplish little. In this report he regrets many aspects that have been introduced into the tribe and thinks that the former system of administration had not conflicted with modern developments and it was wrong to push it aside. He further wonders if it would be possible to 'put back the clock' and start the administration of the various tribes 'de novo' with the accumulated knowledge the government now possesses.

From this realization a renewed effort was put to build on the existing tribal order (DC/MRU/1938, p. 382). Factors both environmental and human pushed the colonial government to re-examine its position. The former included issues such as little effort in soil conservation, poor use of grazing land, soil erosion and overstocking. While the latter entailed concerns such as poor health and poor physical development of men colonial officers met in 1908, disobedience of elder authority and government laws, failure to get men who could lead, drunken and disorganized chiefs and sub-headmen and small size of poorly paid police force which can hardly enforce all laws. These factors led the colonial government to re-examine its position and authority in Tigania and larger Meru.

According to the DCs annual report of 1939, the government was keen to have tribal institutions work with the colonial government. These reforms were important in helping the government revamp administration. The full integration of *agambi* into leadership was what was thought will make the work of chiefs possible and also ease the burden of their previous reduction. Chiefs had been reduced to 25 in the whole district (DC/MRU/1939, p. 358). Huge administrative jurisdictions posed serious challenges of effective administration for chiefs and their assistants.

The effects of interfering with the power of traditional authorities in Meru including men and women councils began to be felt from 1939. Control over the young seemed difficult for the government. According to the respondents redefined ways of achieving manhood were blame. Up to this point in time the government had tried to get young men into agriculture but had hardly succeeded. For example, the DC reported that,

A Local native council resolution passed some years ago forbidding the chewing of Miraa by the younger people appears to have had no effect. This state of affairs was blamed on lackadaisical attitude to life of the Igembe and Tigania. According to the government this could succeed only if, "We must also try to get the indigenous institutions intelligently interested in agricultural policy (DC/MRU/1939, p. 309).

An aspect that added to the woes and contradictions of this period concerned the place of Tigania Njuri Ncheke as the supreme body in terms of justice. Ultimately, British colonial authorities had veto powers over Njuri Ncheke decisions and Tigania indigenous laws. To confirm this contestation, in 1939 the chief Justice Joseph Sheridan held Supreme Court sessions in Meru on the 29th June and 27th, 28th 29th August. With the British government ruling, the people of Tigania were under three types of law during the colonial era proper. These included (1) The laws of Kenya (2) Local Native Council Resolutions and (3) Native Law and Custom. The first is based on the common law of England added to and amended by statutes, the second is statutory and the third was usually referred by the colonialists as the common law of the tribe concerned, which in practice could be overruled and amended by the other two (DC/MRU/1939, p. 290). These realizations among members of Njuri Ncheke and the larger society further weakened the privileges enjoyed by Njuri elders for these laws provided recourse for anyone who sought justice.

The veto powers of the Supreme Court were binding and its judgments had lasting effects on various cases brought before this court. And while many Tigania people doubted but also still believed in Njuri Ncheke as the true justice body, those in the neighborhood and converts in the same society had a second avenue for recourse. This not only divided people but provided new space for recourse especially among those from outside and also among Meru clans which had no existing and binding *gichiaro* oath. Those who came through migrant labour to work in various factories like ghee factory in Akithii in Tigania were never bound by customary law and therefore were

not subject to indigenous Tigania law. This way they could breach communal law or subvert the morals especially among the youths. Butler Horne for example is said to have been a bad influence. He is said to have shown neither remorse nor respect for customs.⁸⁵ He is said to have slept with so many women from various divisions of Meru especially when on Safari and his body guards embraced the same habits. No wonder gonorrhoea was most prevalent ailment among tribal retainers and home guards. Most of the women who slept with Horne were said to have become barren. He was a bad influence to our society (Kaunyangi, O.I., 2019).

The idea to have all ruling Kiamas/councils from the larger Meru to be consolidated together was an idea whose time had come. This seemed fashionable to the government as well as to the Christian missions. This idea was well-choreographed, and which was supposedly intended to reinvent and achieve better administration of the district given the bad blood previously existing between indigenous institutions and the colonial government. The 1939 DCs report indicated that the government was consulting the 'Njuri' elders from all Meru divisions on policy issues before implementing them (DC/MRU/1939). The issues of female circumcision, individualism, disregard of communal law, soil conservation and lack of morals by the youths were some of the concerns. The 1940 annual DCs report showed renewed cooperation between the 'Njuri', the internal government of the Meru and the colonial government.

The World War Two (WWII) seemed to have reinvigorated a reunion that was began in the year 1937 (DC/MRU/1939, p. 360) The Tigania Njuri Ncheke due to its standards and secrecy had not grown to annihilate elders' councils outside Tigania and Igembe. But because of its powers and high prestige the colonial government eventually recognized it and coopted its influence to other Meru divisions' elders' councils. This recognition went along to have it embraced as the umbrella internal government of Meru people though with expanded membership from other Meru divisions. To some missionaries the Njuri of Tigania was even thought to be a religion (DC/MRU/1939). Yet, going by its nature it was a structured system of a series of age group hierarchies.

⁸⁵ Horne was superficially initiated into the Tigania Njuri Ncheke because the elders refused to fully integrate him into their ranks. He and many other non-Tigania thus had a window to subvert customs they did not fully belong to.

Lambert in 1940 succeeded in reinventing the elders' councils by bringing together elders from the various ruling councils. This larger body of elders in the name of unity amended their sub-ethnic customs slowly, allowing for the formation of one elders' council representing the whole of Meru. This move was intended to create a more efficient indigenous system administration which would support the colonial government policies. This new formation though, was not an end in its self, but a beginning, a means of changing traditions to meet current altering conditions (Shadle, 1999).

The first sub-ethnic council to be penetrated by Lambert was the Imenti Kiama (DC/MRU/1940). Lambert since 1933 had struggled to have these indigenous governing bodies officially recognized. He initially tried to understand the functionality of these indigenous bodies. Penetration of Christian ideology into indigenous Meru institutions first began in Mutindwa Boma among the Miriga Mieru of North Imenti and then spread to other divisions. This implied that the Imenti elders were more approachable with regard to Lambert's intentions. Among the Imenti for example, their original Kiama according to the DCs report of 1921 fell into disuse in 1918 (DC/MRU/1921). This view is held by Fadiman too,

By 1917, the final year of Horne's administration, the higher elders' councils of Igoji and Imenti had stopped functioning entirely. By 1919 administrative reports referred to all of these bodies in the past tense. By 1920 the system was described as "having been allowed to fall into disuse." In 1921 the ranking district officer admitted he knew nothing of them, their "having been closed down" before his tenure (Fadiman, 1993, p. 193).

A minority of elders from Imenti division were therefore largely detached from their original institutions by 1937. Many had been Christianized and westernized. Previously, Lambert tried to test whether, it would have been possible for a Christian convert to be initiated in the Imenti Kiama. They succeeded in this portraying of Imenti indigenous institutions as weak. For example, the oaths were first administered to the elder converts so that they join the Imenti *Kiama*. This success motivated Mr. Lambert and the Methodist missionaries to have this ideology absorbed for better administration of the district where the government and the missions would acquire a certain amount of influence in a larger council of elders. Mr. A. J. Hopkins of Methodist Mission Society and Mr. Laughton of the same held that, "Our purpose entailed the actual

admission of Christians into the Njuri so that instead of a disintegration of the tribe through Christianity there would on the contrary be a gradual Christianizing of its institutions while the tribe remained intact” (DC/MRU/1940, p. 254).⁸⁶

The reference of Njuri members as pagan indicated the hard stance the missions held against tribal customs and institutions. Religion according to the report was said to be the most striking and formidable indeed menacing result of culture clash with the African. The DC warned that, “get on with it and I won’t interfere unless I have to” (ibid).

Membership from all Imenti clans *Kiamas* was drawn, *agambi* from Tigania and Igembe clans were added. The need to authenticate this council of councils saw it named the Meru Njuri Ncheke in reference to the Tigania Njuri Ncheke⁸⁷. The traditional meeting point of Meru clans which was Urru, Nchiru in Tigania West had the influence of this traditional meeting point recognized as the Meru Njuri Ncheke headquarters (DC/MRU/1940). It is important to note that this larger organization embraced the new developments in Meru but seemed to adopt Tigania Njuri Ncheke practices in regard to administering justice⁸⁸. This enlarged Njuri Ncheke operated in a more open way because of vested government interests in it, Christian bombardment and the inclusion of young men into its ranks. To accommodate the interests of all these groups, it will be fair to argue that this Meru Njuri Ncheke innovated and adjusted. However, the present study did not delve into the details of how this expanded Njuri Ncheke operated.

The elders who had converted to Christianity still wanted to be part of their communities (DC/MRU/1940, p. 254). This was in the aim to avoid stigma from there clans. This way there was a demand by leading missions to have their members initiated into ‘Njuri’ but not in the traditional method (DC/MRU/1938/1940). The DCs report of 1940 indicates a compromise in the manner of oathing to accommodate Christian

⁸⁶ On the procedure of initiating a Christian into the Njuri see the Meru DC report of 1940, page 253.

⁸⁷ Highest councils in various Meru sub-groups had their councils use tag, *kiama* and Tigania councils used the term *njuri*. Imenti council was called *kiama kia nkomango*.

⁸⁸ The practice of *kuringa thenge* which is the Njuri Ncheke way of administering justice is common with Tigania and Igembe clans.

converts into Meru Njuri Ncheke while avoiding initiation into divisional councils (DC/MRU/1939, 268, 1940, p. 253). The Meru who had embraced Christianity were now oathed using the bible into Meru Njuri Ncheke instead of a goat (DC/MRU/1940, p. 255). The Meru Njuri Ncheke invented for Imenti, Tigania and Igembe divisions therefore allowed entry of Christian converts into its ranks. This reflected the wishes of the missions and the government for it was this enlarged body that the government used to strengthen its administration in the interwar era and the period leading to the 1950s.

The Meru Njuri Ncheke however still did not reflect the idiosyncrasies of the indigenous institutions of the various sub-groups involved. For example, according to the respondents, the entry and admission into Tigania Njuris and the highest council Njuri Ncheke, was a long process which began after circumcision.

Education which was mostly mission controlled up to 1940 tended to be also a dividing factor. According S.H Fazan education in Kenya, up to 1939 was still at elementary stage though remarkable changes were made later. He observed that,

Mission schools, with government grants to help them, were still the most numerous, but there were now a few schools run by the government directly. The Africans themselves showed great enthusiasm, being just as keen for their girls to be educated as their boys. The result was that their district councils voted more money for the purposes of education than they really could afford. Despite these advances, however, neither the quality nor the quantity of education for Africans was anywhere near the demand. There were a few good schools at the top of the pyramid and the quality of the missionary teachers was high, but the spread of education to the generality of the population was still, by 1939, at an elementary stage (Fazan, 2015, p. 94).

Elders, both genders and the young were in many ways divided on the issue of schooling. Those parents born in 1910 and by 1940 were married found it fashionable to take their children to school. Learning how to read and write, was found interesting. According to Kaunyangi (O.I., 2019), his father wanted him educated so that he could cope with the dynamics of the new society. There were major differences between the colonial and the Tigania systems of education. One is that, the colonial education owing to the fact of Industrial Revolution in Europe was now very scientific and therefore marked a great departure from the religious dogma of the previous era. The DC in his report of 1939 provided a uniquely perceptive explanation of this divide in the aims of education,

The indigenous Meru educational system is intended to fit the individual to become a worthy member of his group, his clan and his age-group. The European system applied to Meru, is to train the individual to climb out of his class and this means out of his age grade, out of his tribal environment and so out of his tribe. So that every academic success is a tribal failure. We must somehow find a middle course (DC/MRU/1939, p. 346).

The nature of challenges facing the Tigania people in the 1940s according to the respondents was how to cope with the onslaught of traditions in the face of new knowledge brought about by Christianity, new cultural contacts, European education and the demands of the new economy. Though purity and fear still remained fashionable among the old the same could not be said of the youths of this era. The DCs report of 1941 notes that there was a change of internal government in Meru that year. In the Previous chapter it was noted that, the handover of government from one age grade to another was controlled by elders. The exiting age group usually marked exit out of power by burning their barrack. On the warrior section, this research found out that among the pre-colonial Tigania there did not exist a concerted effort by the young to gain power just for its benefits, because of proper socialization they underwent and also because the system did not provide for power just for its sake (Karauri, O.I., 2019). A generational rift was occurring in this regard. The annual DCs report of 1941 reported a break from the norm between the youths and the elders concerning who had more say in regard to the new offices created by colonial government. The report read,

Active quarrels ceased when the ceremonies came to end in August, but the rivalry remained a powerful force for some time and could not be said to have died down altogether by the end of the year, and constructive work by the government or the missions was rendered much more difficult than usual. Unobtrusive insistence that the change of internal government would entail no corresponding change in the personnel of government institutions tended to reduce misgivings in the older grade and overweening ambition in the young (DC/MRU/1941, p. 199).

To contain the two groups, the custom which requires fair representation of the two power divisions that is *Kiruka* and *Ntiba* was applied.⁸⁹ The elders in their own making had the right to lay claims of absolute control which the young opposed using the idea

⁸⁹ The extent to which intent and plans by age divisions went in order to dethrone each other from being appointed chief or subhead men in Meru by the colonial government can be traced to the early colonial period. The Igembe age division of Ntiba were pioneers of these chaos in the quest to increase the power of their own age division. On the procedures undertaken see the Meru Dc report of 1941 (p. 197).

of coming of an age in a different era. The two moments which had justifiable explanations created an awareness of time, a sense of disorder, and changed perceptions of masculinity and maturity within the Tigania community. Circumcision without initiation (which trained boys on reciprocal obligations) seemed to contribute to the chaos then visible in Tigania society. Change was becoming visible.

In 1942 the colonial government in Meru had adjusted itself accordingly to accommodate indigenous governments from Tigania, Igembe and Imenti. The SWW seemed to persuade the colonial government to cooperate further with these bodies. According to the report, recruiting whether for military or civil purposes and the provisions for meat supplies, for instance would not have been so simple were it not for the Meru Njuri Ncheke. Still more importantly, the public opinion could not have been so satisfactorily educated. Administration through Njuri ya Kiama and Njuri Ncheke according to the report proved itself most satisfying (DC/MRU/1942, p. 173).

The colonial government was keenly fast-tracking the unification of certain laws and customs which tended to be diverse in the different divisions and also the adaptation of old laws to 'modern' conditions. The meeting for this purpose was held on the boundary of Tigania and Imenti on the 28th, 29th and 30th June 1942. The DC recorded the meeting decisions (DC/MRU/1942). A high court judge in Kenya had earlier supposedly agreed that law and society evolved together. Economic and social standards related directly to law, so that if the laws are stationary progress in the other matters of life is most difficult (Shadle, 1999).⁹⁰ This meeting also would mark the birth of a new Meru Njuri Ncheke. Penetrating the Njuri was now a complete mission. This new Meru Njuri Ncheke could be said to be cooperative. This is mainly because its decisions were informed or contained executive guidelines. Given that its membership was drawn from members of all divisional 'Njuris' including the formerly uncooperative Tigania Njuri Ncheke, the colonial government had an easy time governing Meru District. For example, to mark renewed cooperation a revision of personnel of all tribunals was ordered. In this process people were given a chance to air their views and the Njuri of each division was asked to nominate some 50% more members. The various Njuris

⁹⁰ According to Brett Shadle, contentions within the judiciary over custom laws bred arguments over codification of customary law in Kenya , KNA: Jud 1/975 as quoted by (Shadle, 1999).

were advised by colonial officials to nominate a certain number of educated and progressive men (DC/MRU/1942, P. 171). These developments within the Meru elders' council were not without a purpose. Shadle is of the view that, there was an ongoing debate then where, Arthur Philips in his Report on Native Tribunals in 1944, required action to be taken towards professionalization of native tribunals. In his report to the chief secretary, Philips stressed the need, for greater certainty in native law and for closer control over its development (Shadle, 1999, p. 422)

Changing the functionality of highest ruling councils was a major endeavor that Lambert undertook but in a more reasonable and nuanced attitude. The approach undertaken by the younger generation as shown by the 1941 DCs report lacked customary input, was outright usurpation for ulterior motives and which the elders were bound to resist. According to Ocobock age could shift depending on the ideas and eloquence with which a generation argued, with whom a generation argued, and the wider socioeconomic and political settings in which the argument occurred. As a result, "seniority was not calculated simply on the basis of age but by means of a complex, multilayered assessment" of a range of criteria, including wealth in material goods, kinship, or knowledge (Ocobock, 2017). The young men of this period forgot to play by the rules in their endeavor to come of age and ended up failing.

The annual Meru DCs reports from 1942 up to 1960 indicate maximum cooperation between colonial authorities and Njuri Ncheke of Meru. Actually, Njuri proved to be the most reliable body for the campaign against Mau Mau. Chiefs and *agambi* worked well and achieved a lot owing to the fact of them working through their elders. The 1943 DCs report read,

...the value of administration though the Njuri has been inestimable despite staff shortages...The work of chiefs on the whole has been very good." In the year 1943, 'It was decided therefore to take advantage of the existence here of a strong tribal organization- and to ask Njuri to nominate the new council. The result were excellent and interesting considering that Njuri was given a free hand in the election'The work of the chiefs on the whole had been very good. They work through the Njuri of their locations. They no longer surround themselves with the usual little 'courts' of favorites and hangers on who while undoubtedly pleasant to the chief is not conducive to the most desirable results (DC/MRU/1943, p. 155, 156).

The colonial administration with its many new opportunities in all sectors of the economy had managed to arouse interest for cash money and education. In Tigania many respondents agree that people took keen interest in cash crop farming than in schooling (DC/MRU/1943, p. 153) sentiments held by Mwongo. (O.I., 2019). In Meru Boma, many schools were established by the Methodist Mission which was supported by the colonial government. This enabled many people from North Imenti to acquire literacy skills. In Igembe where Miraa crop was doing well, commercialization of the same against the norm was taking root. Though mission schools in Tigania were available, they were poorly built and staffed than those in Imenti and Mwimbi. This can be deduced from the DCs reports since 1930. A view supported by the respondents to the present research who attended school (Kaunyangi, Domiciano, Mwongo, O.I., 2019).

Money, because of its power did attract many even those who had chosen to stick to Tigania traditions. In 1944 the DCs report indicates that the year had been remarkable and definite 'signs of an urge' to progress had shown up. The relationship between education and cash produced a demand for both. In this year the attitude of young men towards agriculture had really changed for the cash consciousness had produced a desire to farm amongst this group for purposes of making money (DC/MRU/1944, p. 139).

Money appeared to be a common denominator between conservatives and the new elites. Market and economy redefined ways of maintaining and acquiring masculinity much than schooling would have done. This is because both genders and members of indigenous institutions competed for available opportunities. The DC notes that the nature of leaders/*agambi* of this era had really changed, they are open minded, intelligent and well balanced. The desire for education brought with it a higher need for land control amongst the young and the old alike. That is both generations had a preview that individual land ownership would come soon just like it had happened in Kikuyu and Embu areas. The elders knew the value of land and therefore keen interest was shown in the use and protection of land. The signs of change in land tenure, at least in terms of perception and attitude, were already becoming apparent.

The Tigania tribunal up to this point in time had not improved and the blame was shouldered by the people and not the tribunal itself (DC/MRU/1944, p. 137). Keeping of large herds of cattle had now been shunned and the practice only remained in semi-arid areas of Tigania (DC/MRU/ 1944, p. 134). Cultivation of large areas had this impact. This according to the respondents was the mark of absolute economic break from the past. All the institutions of Tigania in the words of the respondents depended on cattle for feast and sacrifice but unavailability of the same marked their silent death (Mwongo, Domiciano, Kirea, Mbaabu, O.I., 2019). This view is buttressed by the DCs report of 1933 on the importance of cattle among the Meru. Up to this point in time maximum cooperation of the people, Njuri and the colonial government was reported. The changes occurring on the economic front made people depend on the outcome of good policies. These policies could only positively impact the lives of Tigania people only if they cooperated in their implementation. This is how economic shift from self-sufficiency to dependency occurred.⁹¹ This had a spiral effect on the political organization of the Tigania which used to govern the traditional economy. It was no longer feasible for Njuri to exercise wide discretion on the economic policies which were now national, international and contained elements of capitalist subversion. The discrepancies occurring between the two models was way beyond the knowledge of Tigania people who found themselves forced to seek paid labour in and outside Meru district.⁹²

Yet residual resistance remained. The 1945 DC report noted challenges of cooperation between chiefs and the divisional Njuris concerning some issues. For instance, the Njuri of Tigania was said to be uncooperative. These instances of clash directly emanated from the demands of colonial government like public works which touched on division of labour and time⁹³. It may be argued that, in such a case, even though things were changing, something's proved less amenable to change. The respondents agreed that majority of Europeans administrators did not understand how Tigania people were carrying on with their daily duties yet the government had a schedule. The European

⁹¹ The shift in economy was not in line with the African systems of thought and production. On income inequality in former British African colonies see WIDER Working Paper 2014/45 by A.B Atkinson or visit Wider.Unu.Edu

⁹² On colonial labour see David M. Anderson "Master and Servant in Colonial Kenya" *Journal of African History*, vol. 41, No. 3(2000), pp. 459-485

⁹³ On the concept of Time in Africa see John. s. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 1969.

reckoning of time largely differed from the Tigania peoples and this was treated as Africans ignorance. Such differences were not by any means minor and affected the larger Tigania population where individuals found themselves arrested and taken to court. Instances of clash between Tigania Njuri and chiefs were therefore bound to happen.

The DCs 1946 report noted that the Meru generally speaking did not suffer a feeling of political frustration. And though they are charming and readily assent to proposals they do not commit themselves too deeply to the same. The respondents were of the view that they could not commit to things they did not possess adequate knowledge on. The European was thought to be cunning yet life for many was at cross roads. In an example of aspects less amenable to change, the Tigania traditions demanded that everything had to have ancestral backing for it to find a place in the customs. It must also get the approval of the ruling age group. The elders who were the guardians of the custom therefore could not bend people to follow government policies without question (Thurwa, O.I., 2020). In this juncture, Tigania chiefs experienced difficulties and therefore collided with the Njuri Ncheke of Tigania. Penetrating and expanding the ruling councils was therefore absolutely necessary if government policies were to be successfully implemented.

In the year 1946 a conflict of interest was reported in Tigania between *Kiramunya* and *Ithalie* age groups. A group feeling, among the *Kiramunya* age group in a bid to acquire necessary numbers to dislodge *Ithalie* age- group made *Kiramunya* age group act contrary to norm to achieve the desired new status. The subversion involved, *Kiramunya* members courting men of younger age groups to boost their numbers to dislodge the *Ithalie* out of leadership. The nature of this contestation was unseen and in reference to this matter the *Ithalie* won the case as the elders noted machinations of corruption (DC/MRU/1946, p. 109). In 1947 political competition of who was to have the say among various age groups was causing political tension in Meru. It is reported that certain members of the *Kiruja* age grade were actively seeking to upset the authority of the Njuri and the ruling age grade of *Miriti*. The cause of all this according to the government report was, “When it became government policy several years ago to resuscitate the authority of the indigenous Njuri organization a serious departure

from the original basic system was allowed to creep in. Whereas originally only a carefully selected few were admitted to the Njuri it has become the practice to admit any person who applies- to the obvious detriment to the prestige of the organization” (DC/MRU/1947, p. 82).

Those interested in usurping elder authority and creating a new center of power according to the report, wanted the Njuri Ncheke elders limited only to traditional matters (DC/MRU/1947, p. 82). In the view of Ocobock this contestation was justified because, “The exposure the young had garnered brought them not only new sources of wealth and authority but also inevitable conflict with their elders and age-mates. As Gary Burgess argues, colonial rule gave the young ‘analytical distance to question the validity and universality of gerontocratic discourse.’ As they did, conflict often ensued” (Ocobock, 2017).

The election of councilors for example was one issue causing this contestation. The young wanted councilors to be elected at divisional level and not by Njuri elders at Njuri headquarters at Nchiru. Anger among the younger generations for perceiving themselves as bereft of power aroused indecent dancing of ‘*Kamanda*’ dance. The elders and chiefs were unable to deal with this prohibited dance and the tribal police set in to enforce the ban. Excessive drinking among young men, women and girls was reported as a result of this contestation. Young men were reported to be holding political gatherings after these misunderstandings (DC/MRU/1947, p. 81).

On tribal matters it was apparent that resolutions by LNC council were not being respected nor did they gain ground. For example, the LNC decided to set dates pertains for girls’ circumcision. This was because the previous resolution to have all girls circumcised before puberty was largely ignored (DC/MRU/1947, p. 80). The gist of the matter here is that the colonial government to a large extent had ignored the women institutions which were equally affected by the colonial activities. An emerging cooperation between women, girls and young men seemed to be brewing (Alumina, O.I., 2019). Deviant actions by young men seemed to have the support and the blessings of women. This simply was because women thought that young men could be bequeathed customary knowledge and could still take advantage of the new

opportunities hence Meru Njuri Ncheke should not have been too much of a limiting factor (Ibid).

The women's role in this particular conflict between the Njuri Ncheke and the young cannot be ignored. Many a times' the colonial government and the Meru Njuri Ncheke elders disenfranchised and segregated women in issues of law and custom, thus interfering much with affairs that fell into the sphere of women. According to Shadle colonial officials codified law based on information provided by elders, thus instituting rules that permanently favored them to the disadvantage of women and junior men (Shadle, 1999, p. 413). Subversion of custom rendered women more powerless in this struggle. And that probably, women saw the chance to get back at men through supporting the rebellion of their young sons.

The Kenya African Union (KAU) was a political movement which also largely contributed to the age grade rivalry in Meru (DC/MRU/1948). According to this report, KAU wanted the younger generation to demand that, Meru Njuri Ncheke be abolished. The youths felt that Njuri Ncheke elders were illiterate and were not suited to resolve the problems of the new era. The DC noted that, "It is regrettable that the majority of the young men are more conscious of a desire to fill their pockets with money from trade rather than to join a form of government which asks them to sacrifice a portion of their time in furthering the peace and prosperity of their tribe as a whole" (DC/MRU/1948, p. 49).

The reason why many young men believed in the ideals of KAU was because there were many disruptions occasioned by various developments in the world which impacted them. The effects of the economic depression of the 1930s, low demand for labour in settler farms and the SWW had profound impact on the economy. The consequences of all these to the African were understated than could easily be apparent because the African still possessed little knowledge of these confrontations and his place in them. Coming of age in the period leading to 1950 therefore further stalled. According to Ocobock,

Changes that might have once been imperceptible to young men were now painfully clear: many felt trapped in a prolonged age between childhood and adulthood. None of their strategies—going to school, picking tea, or fighting in

a world war—provided them material wealth or moral standing. To escape, young men sought out alternative paths. They moved to towns in greater numbers to eke out a living as casual laborers and black marketeers. They joined the militant wings of political associations like the Kenya African Union and the Kikuyu Central Association (Ocobo, 2017).

These sentiments are supported by Clough who stated that, “Towns and cities offered freedom particularly to the young. In the reserves, elders, chiefs and DCs dominated their lives, demanding obedience, labour and taxes” (Clough, 1990, p. 40).

A number of associations and societies were reported to be growing. The Meru Teachers Union and Kianjai connection Traders Association. The former while ostensibly an association of all teachers in the district was undoubtedly flavored with politics and provides a cloak for such activities; the latter, an Association of petty traders in Tigania had similar motives. This group mentioned as one of its aims to eradicate and suppress prostitution in Tigania. According to the DC this theme occurs at all Kenya African Union meetings and is analogous to the Marxist favorite opening gambit of ‘fascist Jackals Capitalistic Hyenas’ (DC/MRU/1948, p. 49). Defending customs though still embracing modernity still founding footing among the young in these organizations. According to this report there was emerging, “Wide gulf between the educated and the brother who has not gone to school and this attitude is shown by the attitude with which the uneducated old men listen to the half-baked opinion of a young star straight from form I” (DC/MRU/1948, p. 48).

Adult literacy campaign especially among the old and Njuri members had been given priority by the Methodist mission. Educating this group was thought to be important because missions were keenly interested in their local custodians modernizing through burying the old beliefs. Despite the order and progress brought so far, some Tigania warriors still pressed on with cattle raids (DC/MRU/1948, p. 46). The conflicts that caused this group to break the law were numerous and justifiable given the uncertainty of the new era. In this case fathers were incapable of providing sons with animals for bride wealth.

Despite the onslaught against Njuri by the young the DC in 1948 reported that, “The Meru indigenous government regained a lot of its authority and prestige during the

closing months of 1947. It is strong in Igembe and Tigania but weak in Mwiriga Mieru location of Imenti and practically nonexistent in Chuka-Mwimbe” (DC/MRU/ 1948, p. 45).

According to the respondents, the Tigania Njuri Ncheke cooperated with the colonial government at the district level but rarely compromised its standards at the divisional level despite the pressure of the new developments. To the Igembe and the Tigania, having Njuri Ncheke become the supreme body all over Meru was a great honor. The maintaining of prestige in this period was by no means an easy task but rode on the contradictions brought about by Christianity and the British law. Low uptake of education and scattered government institutions in Tigania still gave Tigania Njuri some wiggle room when it came to issues of justice and land control (Thurwa, O.I., 2020). Njuri under these circumstances in Tigania and Igembe areas remained the most preferred and respected body for administering justice despite the introduction of modern courts. But an increase in the misuse of njuri procedures was worrying.

In 1950 the Tigania tribunal did not work well and internal dissension was rife among the elders (DC/MRU/1950, p. 19). Raids although subsiding were still reported in this division. The prestige of Tigania and Igembe Njuri was maintained and on the increase in Imenti. The Meru Njuri Ncheke was most helpful to the colonial government and did well in the election of councilors. A resolution against Mau Mau was also passed. Kikuyu settlement in this District was discouraged as much as possible (DC/MRU/1950, p.18, 24). In 1951 the DC reported that, “The handover of power from the Miriti to the Kiruja age grade has only been partially accomplished. In Igembe and Tigania where indigenous customs survive most strongly it is complete but in Imenti and lower areas it has only occurred in certain clans/mwirigas” (DC/MRU/1951, p. 36). Modern influence was to blame for this delay in other areas of Meru. There was a decrease in crime both raiding and against property due to supervision by Kenya police. Official policing of Meru Divisions was thought necessary from the year 1950. In 1952, the Meru Njuri Ncheke, resolved that all associations and societies were banned from holding meetings in the district. Police were expected to enforce all bans. The use of force was thought to be necessary.

Chiefs received threatening messages as evidence of Mau Mau oathing in 1952 (DC/MRU/1952, p. 32). Mau Mau activities in Meru were generally pleasing to the young men. According to the DCs report those who were arrested and prosecuted were men of age 40 and below (DC/MRU/1952, p. 29). The rise of Mau Mau and the support it received from the young cannot be blamed on the barbarity of tradition but the anxieties brought about by transition. Hatred and despair woke many to supporting Mau Mau (Lonsdale, 1992). The government confrontation with Mau Mau and the hard stance taken by Njuri elders against Mau Mau seemed to pit the young against the old (Ibid, p. 29).

The political competition between Mathu and Bernard Mate ensued and although Mate, the Meru candidate won, only the educated and prosperous sections of the population paid some heed to the ensuing political developments in the colony. Widening social stratification lay exposed.

The events taking place in Tigania division since 1937 marked the beginning of the end of fairly stable past. By 1942 Njuri Ncheke elders and the *agambi* of each clan/mwiriga were properly co-opted into the colonial government as the centers of authority. Age was a major factor of gaining the privilege of serving in elder authorities or being a *head mugambi* recognized and paid by the colonial government. During this period the colonial government was keen to follow traditions in terms of who was getting into any privileged office. This renewed cooperation between the government and the indigenous authorities negated the possibility of appointing anyone without the approval of the communal elders. Explaining this new found relationship between the government and the indigenous authorities, Ocobock observed that,

British officials came to view relationships among male generations as a potent source of power. To craft and exert their authority, the British became very willing, very active participants in age-relations. In doing so, the elder state institutionalized age and masculinity as inseparable components of statecraft. Making and unmaking mature men became a means for the British to reconcile the incongruities of nurturing a settler economy while fulfilling the lofty goals of the civilizing mission (Ocobock, 2017).

The cooperation between elders and the colonial government, affected the educated young men who expected that their education would give them an upper hand in gaining entry into big offices like becoming a chief or a head *mugambi*. In Tigania where, as

has been shown, customs were still strong, age was still the defining factor and the young educated men had to contend with being the labour force in jobs like teaching, assistant agricultural officers, tribal police and clerks after the British tapped elder authority. Simply, political power that controlled and gave direction to the community largely remained under the control of the old. Many arguments ensued between the genders, young and the old about coming of age. Critical questions emerged but complete answers were hard to get if not impossible. According to Ocobock (2017) the outcomes of these arguments were as complex as the conflicting views that ignited them. Debate could lead to irreconcilable conflict between young men proud of their new ways to perform masculinity and elders disgusted what they considered to be unseemly displays of disrespect and delinquency. The elders postured as protectors of tradition. The very tradition that was in flux. The contradictions and anxieties spawned in this era was not to escape the youth, and the women.

The colonial government in Meru had realized that it was possible for the young to rebel just like it happened in their own country (Britain) before industrialization and had opened new avenues for the young men to achieve adulthood. The obvious reason for the rebellion being that the warriors had lost their place and share in the community. They were now required to serve the government in various capacities through opportunities created by the colonial economy. As shown by the colonial DCs records, most of young men took lengthy periods of time to adapt to the new economic model, where profit would be obtained after adopting good business practice. The elders did not take any measures to caution the younger generations against the annihilation of their place in the community. Perhaps the elders themselves bewildered by the change taking place were more concerned with maintaining their authority. This largely explains why all manner of disorder was inevitable. Raiding activities although illegal were still witnessed in this division. Drinking, chewing of miraa, abortion, disrespect for customs and elders were on the rise. As shown, the chiefs and the elders lacked the ability to deter the young from criminal behavior and acts. The youths by undertaking these outlawed activities were venting their frustrations. The elders understood that criminal tendencies among the young were a creation of the new regime and as such the energies of the youth had to be vented. The racial and economic inequalities of the

settler society frustrated young men's ambitions, especially during and after the depression.

The suspicion with which the Tigania Njuri previously treated the government subsided as the government recognized their authority. Accepting recognition by those who usurped their authority according to the Njuri Ncheke was a way of carving a place for the elders in the wake of new era. Njuri elders realized that the young were physically strong and it would be possible that, as the new society was emerging, they would lose their authority to the young sooner than was customary. Education which was possessed by the young men was the tool, and the elders viewed this with forlorn. It was still clear to the elders that during the early colonial period, the colonial government had chosen the young men with little education from missions to be chiefs and headmen. This contestation for power eventually tore the strong generational relationships existing among the Tigania people.

The office of the chief with its many powers and privileges was what the young men eyed the most while the elders (especially those in Njuri and other indigenous councils) hated this office passionately. Chiefs, many a times were on the receiving end from the elders. In attempting to explain this onslaught, two reasons were discernable. Firstly, the chieftaincy was alien and as such remained illegitimate. Secondly, this office usurped their authority. To the young men, the benefits one could accrue from this office were many ranging from getting access to many women, money and authority just like the chiefs did. The powers that came with this office made one popular and feared if not obeyed (Lakidi, undated). The role of a chief as a patron after all had more to do with position and power than with popularity (Clough, 1990). Among the pre-colonial Tigania the social system was more pronounced than the political system. Therefore, the social system did not concentrate on any one person such power or even status as to make them the envy of the other male members. The office of the chief and the DC did the exact opposite of what the social system intended to avoid. Competition among the age groups including those of the older and the younger generations as to who should bear more power was therefore a natural reaction. The need to preserve and pursue the lost economic benefits for both generations was a major driving force behind this rivalry.

Njuri Ncheke of Tigania though appearing like it gained through recognition by the colonial government really had lost. All its ranks and levels had disappeared by the year 1950 due to colonial economic structures. Male respondents agreed that they were never properly initiated as the previous generations had always done. The loss of the various ranks which culminated into Tigania Njuri Ncheke made Njuri lose its influence among the people especially the young. Njuri had sensed its extinction and had to fight to survive by all means. As shown by the DC reports, Njuri Ncheke by 1950 was larger than it previously was because of careless admissions and which did not follow the traditional protocol. Though Tigania and Igembe Njuri Ncheke fought hard to preserve their prestige and dignity, they cannot be said to have remained clear of external influence. The shrinking grazing space, the end of raiding activities, the loss of constant case flow and judicial power to the European Judiciary greatly made them lose their share of prestigious communal feasts which they enjoyed before. This loss in one way or another had to be compensated for. This compensation in an era of scarcity could only happen through new and (ir) regular admissions. The compromise on the age of who was to be admitted into Tigania Njuri Ncheke showed that internal wrangles were now admissible. Though justice through the normal Njuri Ncheke procedures remained almost intact, compromise for the sake of getting the supposed benefits was now a possibility.

The endless debate of the 1950s between fathers and sons and among age groups did not happen in isolation. To the old men in Tigania, colonial rule ruined everything their grandfathers and the ancestors had fought hard to acquire. These elders to a big extent refused to accept that the society they knew as reflecting the true Tigania was now vanishing to an unknown horizon. Could the power of the old, through threats of curses hold together some elements of the past in the era of science and advancing technology? An era of many gods and believes, an era of cultural diffusion and exchange? These and many other questions made these old men fear for the younger generations were now entangled in many struggles and never appeared in the traditional bands of young men to seek knowledge from the old. According to Ocobock the fears that engulfed the last generation of the elders born in the 1870s, 1880s and 1890s and were surviving in the 1950s were justified,

Colonial rule introduced new actors into the conversation such as employers, missionaries, schoolmasters, police officers, and magistrates. Age and

masculinity mattered a great deal to them, too, and they brought their own notions to Kenya. Africans included them in their arguments, borrowing, rejecting, and appropriating these globally circulating, though sometimes very familiar, ideas. These new actors also sought to control the behavior of young men, to make them hardworking employees, God-fearing parishioners, and law-abiding subjects. Along with African parents and elder kin, they formed an ever-expanding network of competing yet complementary adult authority figures (Ocobock, 2017).

Which way for the young and the old?

Uncertainty of how to go about life amongst the young men after Mau Mau activities in all Meru divisions seemed clearest to the government. The Meru DC reflected on this state of affairs. This reflection indicated previous lack of political will by the colonial government.

Some post-emergency reaction in this district was inevitable in 1957. That it first became apparent ‘rebellion’ amongst young men was not unforeseen and as a result of this appreciation the Meru Youth Character Training Centre was opened in 1956. Since then over 300 young men have received a minimum of four months training in leadership, character building agriculture and public service. Regrettably the output of this center is small in relation to the number of idle young men whose bore down and physical indifference to progressive measures leads to often through frustration to a premature awakening of interest in political affairs (DC/MRU/1957, p. 86).

To the interviewees of this research who joined Mau Mau, they claimed a moral justification for their actions.⁹⁴ To such respondents, dignified and predictable communal channels of achieving proper manhood lay on their death bed. Hence, laying off their lives through the bullet would, perhaps, provide the necessary redemption back to the good old days or probably open new paths where they could achieve manhood. Ocobock echoes these sentiments by observing that,

“As they struggled with stagnating wages and rising costs of living, as well as dwindling jobs and places at school, they endured rather than enjoyed an increasingly prolonged liminal age between childhood and adulthood. Feeling trapped, men saw colonialism as an obstacle that must be removed if they were to ever achieve adulthood...” (Ocobock, 2017, p. 3).

⁹⁴ The ex Maumau adherents include Ntoataya, Simba, Chunkubitu, Ntoithuta, Chiokamuiru, Alumina, Ntoimaingi among others whose names are withheld.

Political feeling, in the above case referred by the DC as immature one, ensued out of cumulative pressures of unprecedented moment of socio-economic change. The politics of recruitment, the conflicts, and the course of the all-important Mau Mau movement among the Tigania will, however, not be pursued in detail in the present study. It is hoped that the environment under which sections of the Tigania (especially section of the youth) felt sympathetic to the Mau Mau slogans and aims has been sufficiently shown. Further, extensive transformations arose not only from the colonial situation but also from the response of the Tigania to the exigencies of the situation. This would in turn have important political and moral consequences, some of which we now turn to in the final chapter of the present study.

5.4 Conclusion

The evolution of political order in Tigania in the colonial era therefore followed many unclear paths which neither the old nor the younger generations at the time would easily fathom. A preview of the future destination of the Tigania clans, age groups and the Njuri Ncheke lay most uncertain. The battle field among interest laden groups that is, the elders who wanted preservation of culture, the church, the emerging national elite, the young who their destinies were now compromised; severed any possibility of a compromise in the politics of what proper manhood or society should entail.

CHAPTER SIX

THE RESULTING POLITICAL ORDER BY 1957

6.1 Introduction

This study endeavored to show how colonialism led to evolution of political order among the Tigania. Guiding the study were the following theories. Social systems theory by Francis Abraham', instrumentalist theory by Thomas Spear, masculinity theorization as understood by Paul Ocobock and Peter Ekeh theory of Colonialism and the two publics in Africa. Studies on colonial governmentality in Africa and elsewhere have demonstrated that, administrative control was often contradictory, tenuous, and ad hoc. The objects, technologies, applications, effects, and appropriateness of administrative control were sites of struggle (Luongo, 2011, p. 10). Actually, new frontiers of struggle were opened on a multiplicity of sites in the social, economic and political systems of the Tigania people since the advent of Mau Mau activities in 1952.

6.2 Disharmony in the House: Emergence of Two Publics in Late Colonial Tigania

Colonial conquest was a political move meant to expand the hegemony of western empire. The methods used in the subjugation and rule of Africa were engineered by Henry Maine and actualized by Fredrick Lugard and other administrators (Mamdani, 2012, p. 6). When the British arrived in Kenya, they found that, most of the communities were governed by elders' councils. The Wanga of Western Kenya were an exception for Britain applied indirect rule due to the existence of a centralized system of administration. Combined elements of direct and indirect rule were therefore applied in the administration of most Kenyan communities which were largely decentralized. This research endeavored to understand the effects of British colonial rule among the Tigania of Meru with specific regard to political order. This concluding chapter shows how a unique political order emerged in Tigania as a result of colonial activities. Eke (1975) argued that any valid conceptualization of the unique African politics must look at the colonial experience. This conclusion limits itself to events studied in the previous six chapters ending in 1957 in Tigania.

The reflections and provisions of Peter Eke's theory mainly find their comprehensive application in the post-colonial Africa; but which mainly sprout and found roots in the era of colonial rule just as envisioned in his theory. He was of the view that, "the two publics are amenable to observation. But they gain their full meaning in the context of

a theory of African politics. Having identified the two publics, there are two lines of theoretical approach that one can attempt. *The first is politico-historical: how did this unique political configuration emerge in Africa?* (Italics mine). The second is sociological: how does the operation of the public's affect African politics?" (Eke, 1975, p. 93). Patrick Chabal observed that, the idea of a single concept of identity is misleading and it would be more critical to conceive of that notion in terms of overlapping circles of identity (Chabal, 2009, p. 31). He, just Like Eke, proposes an analytical line that follows historical and local context within which it would be possible to identify those markers of distinctiveness that are more salient. This research adopted the historical-local line of approach in elaborating its three objectives.

According to Eke (1975) there exists two publics in the post-colonial Africa. Namely, the civic public and the primordial public. The two publics are guided by different sets of morals in their daily activities i.e. in their public and private spheres. The moral imperatives guiding and associated with the application of the two are different. Thus, the civic public in the post-colonial Africa is said to be amoral while the primordial public is moral (Eke, 1975). These moral sets, developed through a historical process of culture contact. This distinctiveness makes daily actions of individuals and communities in Africa distinct and unique especially in their civic roles and duties.

According to Eke (1975), in western countries, predominantly there exist one public, the civic public. This public operates from a common moral imperative. This implies that, the actions of individuals and communities in these countries whether in a public realm and or in a private realm are backed by a common moral foundation. As deduced by this research, it is not complex to explain this state of affairs. The modernization process in western countries was through innovation. Their cultural development was also through cultural evolution. This implies that, the impact of cultural contact from non-western people to westerners was less drastic and the vice-versa is true. Also, the agents and channels with which cultural contact occurred have not been the same everywhere. Christianity, world economy and commerce, industrialization and urbanization drastically accelerated cultural diffusion on Africans in the 19th and 20th centuries. It will be crucial to note that, not all traditional cultures were equally affected by contact nor have cultural responses been identical. Absolute disintegration, and in

some cases, revitalization have occurred. Some communities have been able to synthesize new elements with the indigenous and thus have minimized personal and cultural disorganization.

The precolonial Tigania society as understood by this research was moral. This morality impinged on the individual's conduct whether in public (communal affairs) or private business (Private sphere). The conduct of the individual at all times therefore had a common moral basis. This morality was based on Tigania cultural values and customs. Like the western system where Christianity (largely) orders both the public and private realms, the precolonial Tigania moral system can also be said to have served both these realms. It is the view of the present research, as outlined in chapters 4 to 6, that this largely consensual precolonial Tigania moral system formed the basis for social order. Eke explained that,

The distinction between the public and private realms as used over the centuries has acquired a peculiar Western connotation, which may be identified as follows: the private realm and the public realm have a common *moral* foundation. Generalized morality in society informs both the private realm and the public realm. That is, what is considered morally wrong in the private realm is also considered morally wrong in the public realm. Similarly, what is considered morally right in the private realm is also considered morally right in the public realm. For centuries, generalized Christian beliefs have provided a common moral fountain for the private and the public realms in Western society (Eke, 1975).

The application of the theoretical construct of the two publics in this study also includes abstractions deduced from Achille Mbembes work, "On the postcolony" (2001) as well as Michela Wrong's, "Its Our Turn to Eat" (2009). The dialectical relationship between the two publics foments the unique political issues and crises that have come to characterize post-colonial African politics. This is because same political actors simultaneously operate in the primordial and the civic publics (Eke, 1975). Eke concluded that, the post-colonial civic public in Africa is amoral and lacks the generalized moral imperatives operative in the private realm and in the primordial public. This conclusion in following politico-historical events occurring during the colonial era will show how the two publics developed in Tigania. The key terms used in this section include;

Key words two publics⁹⁵, primordial public⁹⁶, civic public⁹⁷, public realm⁹⁸ and private realm⁹⁹

“We the Tigania had a political system but the colonialists set up an administrative system which corroded our order leaving us exposed” (Mwongo, O.I., 2018). David Ndi in an interview on KTN Television (Kenya’s second largest media house) on 4th May 2019 explained that the emic crisis facing the larger Kenyan society politically, economically and socially lay in the fact that the pre-colonial systems of governance in the larger Eastern Africa were well organized politically but colonization set up administrative systems. This realization was a major concern that could not escape, even, the attention of the colonial government officials. The reason being, in precolonial Tigania society for example, the emergence of Njuri Ncheke in the 18th century was through cultural evolution which is a process where newer cultural forms emerge organically out of the older ones. The process can be said to have been generally gradual, systematic and inclusive as outlined in chapter 4 of the present study. Modernization initiatives in Europe and America followed a linear pattern. Thus, question of how human societies develop particular patterns can best be approached by viewing culture as a system that serves to connect human communities to their ecological settings. The emphasis here is on culture as a behavior system that includes technology, ways of economic and political organization, settlement patterns, social groupings, religious beliefs and practices, values and so on (Serena Nanda, 1997).

Patrick Chabal reinforces the above observation by observing that, until the question of land, beliefs and ancestors is addressed, there is no other means of determining the key reciprocal influences between the local and the national which impinge on every aspect of political life amongst Africans. He stated that,

Historically, the colonial mindset subsumed virtually all issues of identity under the vague rubric of tribalism. This did not just influence how colonial governments behaved, it also had a profound impact on the ways in which

⁹⁵ **Two publics** -A rift occurring in the manner an individual operates in the civic public vis-à-vis the manner the same individual operates while in a primordial public or in a private realm (Ekeh, 1975, p. 92)

⁹⁶ **Primordial public**-These are ethnic, sub-ethnic, inter-ethnic, clan and family identities (ibid)

⁹⁷ **Civic public** –Civil and public structures which deliver governments mandate (ibid)

⁹⁸ **Public realm**- public sphere (ibid)

⁹⁹ **Private realm**- Individual affairs (ibid)

Africans instrumentalized their identity in the colonial and postcolonial context (Chabal, 2009, p. 30).

Going by the above observation it is clear why modernization initiatives failed in Africa. Why dependency syndrome set in. Why Christian virtues have failed to guide behavioral change among Africans leading to the entrenchment of the characteristics of the two publics. A colonial officer in Meru observed that

Perhaps to the administrative officer the most disturbing symptom of the effect of the European occupation of East Africa is the evident disunity which it has induced to the native tribes, the weakening of the integrating forces, the loss of the typically African theory of communal responsibility and mutual help and the spiritual principle of continuity of past, present and the future (MRU/GP 301 LAM, p. 3).

As implied in the above observations, colonial events that took place in Tigania community beginning from 1908 played a crucial role in the making of the Tigania society that emerged in the fifth decade of the 20th century. The process that changed the pre-colonial Tigania society that the colonial officers found in 1908, lay in a series of policies that set the foundation for state formation. The precolonial Tigania society was typically small and largely consensual. Though free and independent in many ways, continuous external interaction was guided thus minimizing internal contradictions. This ensured a guided process of cultural evolution. The economy was politically tailored to suit the needs of all people in a manner that limited competition especially among age sets. Every society has 'competition' which is a facet of the nature of man. The difference is that some societies' exercise more regulation for the common good (terms like socialist/communalist being used for these), and on the other end of the spectrum, emphasis on the individual, (terms like liberty, individualist, capitalist freedom being used to describe these). Sharing the economic resources equitably was not by default but through careful ordering of the social life. Influence and interactions from and with the surrounding communities was hardly a threat to the law and custom. The consistency found in this community therefore provided the people with certainty and continuity. New political structures and technology in the various sectors were slowly and gradually fitted into this communalist custom.

Law and order was the responsibility of all. Thus, there was minimal internal fear that individuals or groups from within the community of Tigania were a threat to peace and

communal harmony. Deviants known as *Nkurii/Ngiti* existed but operated within known and set limits of communal law (Thurwa, O. I., 2020). According to Lakidi¹⁰⁰ (undated) the nature of law applied in the precolonial Eastern Africa communities called for observance in practice. This produced the general norms of conduct whether operating in or outside of communal boundaries.

The social provisions, clearly defined systems of emphasizing equality and justice. Therefore, from the nature of the organization peaceful balance of the customs, precedents of the living and the dead was observed. Any breach of custom called for cleansing. Otherwise disaster would strike. Fear and willingness to remain within the norm produced a society in which collective beliefs controlled human life and activity without the need for a complicated bureaucracy. Internal solidarity at the clan level and the spirit of communality defined how relations would occur between genders, age groups and generations. Furthermore, the political system in Tigania did not provide for political positions attributed to individual persons which would create envy among the males (Njara, O.I., 2019). Though the age set system as well as the clan structures naturally had their envy-inducing logic, there existed regulatory mechanisms as discussed in chapter four. The colonial administrative system sought to replace this order.

Therefore, in the Precolonial Tigania there was a communal character visible in the manner key aspects of relationships interacted. These aspects were age group, gender and authority¹⁰¹. The three aspects determined the convergence and divergence point between the individual and the community. The political order among the pre-colonial Tigania ran under shared values and common beliefs. This gave power, authority and legitimacy amongst age groups and genders. This was how the order, managed to incorporate the young. Ability to contain the energies of the young was prioritized in the social ordering where men and women according to gender had defined roles in shared responsibilities. The quantity and quality of wealth in a community, the manner

¹⁰⁰Dent Lakidi, Manhood, warriorhood and sex in Eastern Africa, perspectives from the 19th and 20th centuries, *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, Vol XII, 1-4.

¹⁰¹ Authority implies a position of trust, competence and wisdom that confers upon those who are endowed with it the force of persuasion, rather than coercion. Power entails the ability to force others to comply by coercion if necessary. Age groups in Tigania had to be chronological in order that these two remained stable.

of its organization from production to the sharing out, affect, and are affected by the way in which power is organized and distributed. These in turn affect and are affected by the values of that society as embodied and expressed in the culture of that society (Ngugi Wa Thiongo, 1993, p. 15). Within such a context therefore, the ways in which one behaved in relation to the three as a man or a woman was in-scribed in a long history. Respect between genders was highly guarded and interactions defined. This ordering enabled men and women to live dignified lives.

The result of all this orderliness was the creation of identity from roughly age seven. This construction can be said to have been a consequence of guarded interactions between people, institutions, and precedents. The precolonial Tigania society can therefore be said to have had strong internal agency. Though modifications occurred due to interactions, culture was able to contain any drastic shift in order to preserve harmony with the past, present and secure the future.

As shown in chapter 4, Tigania elders through various age group councils and Njuri Ncheke, the supreme council controlled political authority. From around the year 1913 the Meru DC Mr. Edward Butler Horne, tried to reorganize the internal government of the Tigania. As has already been discussed in this thesis, first, he 'requested' to be initiated into Njuri Ncheke of Tigania. After getting admitted, albeit not in the complete Tigania method, he began to learn how Njuri Ncheke operated. He seems to have detested how laws were applied and how judgments on various cases were reached. Respondents who narrated stories about Horne's activities point out that he was disconcerted by; why, the offenders were not jailed, why Njuri Ncheke was made up of only the oldest men, why people shared food in the Njuri court, why all the clans men of the offender shared in the punishment of the accused and why evidence was not important before the Njuri court.

Horne continued attending Njuri sittings. He was determined to change Njuri from within. He began by demanding that all proceedings be written. The Njuri elders never objected to this demand (Domiciano, O.I., 2019). Butler Horne came with the demand, that, young men be allowed to attend the Njuri court and solve cases with the elders. Later, he demanded that those who had knowledge of issues brought before Njuri, to

disqualify themselves from the case. Last, he demanded that the eldest should not be involved in conflict resolution for they were too old. The young and the old alike, were amused by Horne's carelessness (Alumina, Njara, Mwongo, & Ntoimaingi O.I, 2019). The Njuri Ncheke elders on realizing this threat on custom, went underground from around 1916. They continued operating under the oath that Njuri activities remain secret. Njuri Ncheke began to reappear in the year 1926 and entered colonial records in 1927.

The DCs in Meru from the year 1919 are said to have had no knowledge about the Tigania Njuri Ncheke (DC/MRU/1927). Butler Horne left office in the year 1917. The respondents were of the view that, Butler Horne must have applied the use of force against the various Njuris. And this explains why Njuri Ncheke elders went underground in carrying on with their communal obligations.

The above case, indicates the level of narrow-mindedness particularly of Edward Butler Horne but more generally of the colonial project. The narrow-mindedness of the colonial project is more than just the bias of perception. It is also the practice of judging other cultures by the narrow lens of one's culture, social position or ones standards (Nandas, 1997). Butler Horne as did most of the colonial officials looked down on the idea of cultural relativity. Culture can be defined as learned and shared kinds of behavior that make the major instrument of human adaption. Other Tigania beliefs equally went through change under various European district officers as outlined.

Culture in itself has ability to change. This ability is only found in human cultures (Ayisi, 1991). The Human brain is the single most important aspect of human plasticity. Colonialism in Tigania depended on this human flexibility and plasticity. The relatively short period of interaction between the Tigania people and the European had outcomes. The outcomes were as a result of the influence during social interactions and relations especially with the European system of administration since this was (among few others) the closest to Tigania peoples' daily activities.

The nature of colonial interaction was between races that had no shared history hence an aspect of dominant culture set in from notions of racial superiority as espoused by

Neo Darwinists (Ngugi Wa Thiongo, 1993, p. 14-18). The assumed location of the centre of the universe in the West developed with the domination of the world by a handful of Western nations (ibid). In Tigania, the moment of change and adaptation in the colonial era was evolutionary but picked revolutionary pace from the year 1927. This eliminated the possibility of organic development of Tigania culture. Cultures that change to reflect the ever-changing dynamics of internal relations and which maintain a balanced give and take with external relations are the ones that are healthy (Ibid). Globalization which was spread through colonialism was the ravaging force on social, economic and political spheres of the world whose effects whether positive or negative are universally undeniable (Shadrack, 2016). The historical circumstances that led to the spread of western civilization have yielded strong beliefs in its rightness and superiority among its proponents (Nandas, 1997).

The Europeans in the course of their administration in Meru introduced elements of their culture to the Tigania people including administrative systems, christianity, education, food, mannerisms, dressing, language, law, order, values and trade. All these aspects had a moment of interaction and clash with what they found in Tigania. According to Bruce Berman elements of European culture were introduced in a bid to facilitate political control and institutional integration into the colonial state (Berman, 2010, p. 7). The effect of the forced institutional integration emanated from the supposed superiority of European culture over African culture. This kind of interaction produced hybridity among the Tigania. This hybridity was a result of negotiation of identity in relation to social and economic change and dominant cultural element inherent in the nature of the relations. Colonialism in Tigania therefore generated its own ontology. In the sunset days of colonial rule there emerged a third hybrid in Tigania described in this research as the two publics. This was directly as a result of social, cultural and economic interaction between the two unequal partners of colonialism. The two publics run under different types of moral linkages in the course of their daily actions. But how did the creation of hybridity occur.

Tigania cultural heritage, made Tigania clans distinguishable from the overarching Meru in terms of language, history, ideology and values. This heritage was a source of identity that set apart pre-colonial Tigania clans from other Meru clans. Ratanya (O.I.,

2019) explained that the varied migration of the Meru sub-ethnic groups created many differences among them. The introduction of western culture from around 1910 somewhat interfered with the Tigania cultural identity that began at clan level. Clan identity as an intangible culture involved clans' relations, patterns of building, eating habits, jurisprudence, songs, marriage procedures, conflict resolution mechanisms, dressing, institutions and rituals. Though intangible, the style used in all the above aspects created an identity among the Tigania. The introduction of other cultures from 1910 provided a major shift that led to change of the intangible culture. Aspects of the tangible culture adapted in various ways to this external pressure¹⁰². Change of intangible culture according to Shadrach (2016) is likely to have direct negative impact not only on a people's history, culture and identity, but also on their methods of food production, their culinary habit as well as on their environmental conservation methods. After 1950s the intangible culture was severely impacted and this directly led to the loss of a sense of belonging thus producing what Homi Bhabha referred to as hybridity.¹⁰³

In the precolonial Tigania, social norms determined an individual's morals, whether in public realm (collectivity) or in private. Individual conduct was rooted in gender relations, generational expectations and age group. This culminated in collective responsibility. A person's conduct therefore fell largely within the three provisions. The resulting moral code therefore produced cultural standards of ethics. This morality was the pride of individuals for it had a strong cultural backing. The systematic ordering of individuals through a predictable pattern was what in this study has been described as political order. Generational relations and age groups were therefore about hierarchy of leadership, that is, who is to govern when and what the limits of their authority and power were. Coming of age into a fulfilled human being, therefore, found its roots in this political order.

¹⁰² On the concept of intangible cultural heritage in Kenya, see Orinda Shadrack, Conservation of Natural and Cultural Heritage in Kenya (2016).

¹⁰³ The core to the concept of hybridity is that, during this interaction between the colonizer and the colonized, the colonized does not necessarily lose his or her culture. Rather, a third unique hybrid emerges. More on this concept, follow link <https://www.slideshare.net/AnisZulaikha1/hybridity-in-postcolonialism-29464478>

Morality and ethics were guided through cultural norms and patterns of authority that found power and practicability in collectivity. Religious power of the Tigania Muwee did not influence moral conduct for it was common parlance that individual behavior must be free of impurity and contamination whether in the presence or absence of the religious authorities or any other authority. Religious authority of the Muwee majorly sanctioned group conduct of the ruling elders and of the warriors. The point of departure between the pre-colonial Tigania religious beliefs and practices and Christianity lay in their observation in the daily individual conduct, behavior and actions. The individual conduct did not depict anything political as there was a period of overt politics every 12 to 15 years. Hence the political was not highly pronounced in daily routine. The European administrative structure as introduced in the colonial period had no social or religious basis with regard to the Tigania and so did their economic and political institutions and hierarchy. The crisis that emerged in the 1950s was as a result of direct incompatibility of European and African systems of governance and resource management. The Europeans had no time nor desire to fit their ideas within the Tigania social structure. The first casualty of this European imperialism was moral and character crisis through subverting moral basis for daily individual conduct and actions.

Politically in this community the order involved the ruling elders (45-60 years) and their warriors' sons (15-29 years) exercising political leadership of the community. Njuri Ncheke was the highest elder's council made up of the finest of the retired elders. The veto power of Tigania Njuri Ncheke over all other junior male authorities is what has been referred to as elder authority in this study. The power of Tigania Njuri Ncheke lay in secrecy and this gave Tigania community a lot of influence in the larger Meru as earlier discussed. The three groups formed the public realm in the pre-colonial Tigania. The women guilds/*muingo* involved themselves in food production and self-administration, also forming another public service, due to the spirit of collectivity. The above men and women groups, collectively in this study formed the civic public among the precolonial Tigania. And, the activities of the two impinged on the public realm. Individual space also existed. An individual formed what I refer to as a private realm. In this society therefore, the civic public and the private realm had a common moral linkage. What was considered immoral in the private realm was also considered immoral in the public realm. This explains why cleansing was a must for those

considered to have broken communal law. Neighbors shunned such individuals out of fear of contamination.

The above implies that, moral conduct had clear communal and cultural logic. Guided by common beliefs in God (*Ngai*), taboos, values and norms, there was a robust social order. Hence, political and economic activities were guided by similar principles of moral and ethical conduct.

Peter Eke concluded that the post-colonial African politics have their primordial and civic ideologies guided by different moral linkages in their expression, and that emergence of this phenomenon can be traced to the colonial era. The pre-colonial Tigania society did not have a political or an economic system that run under different moral linkages hence did not depict elements or characteristics of the two publics.

Human identity is fragile especially when individual conduct is liberated of moral basis. This is because human identity is built on social situations where one has no affirmative knowledge about the ideas, emotions and thoughts of his or her counterparts. The environment under which the Tigania people lived before 1908 shielded them from external cultural agents as extensive and intensive as colonialism that would cause reinvention in group or individual identity.

Fragility in identity occurs while participating in an ever-evolving network of activities, practices, where ‘sociality’ is not only ‘comprised of normative order, rational agents, discourses, inter subjectivity or material structures’ but evolving patterns of doings, ‘which carry their agents and are at the same time carried (out) by them (Erkkilä, 2015, p. 605).

So, the slow erosion of the belief system and its replacement with another worldview, not only revealed possibilities, but also horrors and threats to individual identity, which were later not dealt with in a context that would retain structures though adopting ‘modernity’ (Erkkilä, 2015, p. 606). Split personality in Tigania developed among the individuals after the ‘collective’ failed to hold. This was a creation of constant interaction with powerful external agents. Therefore, change from collective to ‘individual’ remolded to fit a changing social and economic environment. If surety of its continuity for some reason ceases to exist, the identity of a person is felt to dissolve, since each and every new event will appear to be a challenge to one’s identity (Erkkilä,

2015, p. 607). In the colonial Tigania these events included the introduction of chieftainship, paying hut and poll tax, Christianity, the cash economy, trade, cash crop farming, love for luxuries and the growing lust for power and popularity among others.

Colonialism was a demoralizing and traumatic experience for most Tigania people. Many tried to stick to an idealized Tigania identity in a different environment while others, especially the young faced difficulties in coming of age hence opted to fight in order to adapt. According to Yehuda (2002) & LaCapra (2001) a breach or a blow to a person ability to create temporal order can be called a trauma. They further explain that,

A trauma challenges the presumption of the stability and continuity of one's identity. It shatters the predictable and secure cultural norms of behavior. Thus, it paralyzes the individual skill to bind and divide things into past, present, and future. One starts to see its echoes in upcoming events and in interactions, and it corrupts the new phenomena with a feeling of strangeness or uncategorized anxiety.

The strange behavior exhibited by the Tigania elders and the warriors as shown in the previous chapter was as a result of the unpredictability of the unknown for the known was shattering. By 1950 colonialism had significantly damaged intangible culture hence it would be accurate to say that there was a break of continuity in Tigania. The effect was that the younger generations born from 1910 had to re-imagine themselves even if chaotically in order to fit into the new environment. The possibility of an all-shattering trauma is, however, perceptible with respect to the collective life as well. To avoid or control trauma, both collective and personal, at all cost, is a human way to enable basic social life (Giddens, 1991). This form of reaction is perceptible in the splitting of the public into two in Tigania, that is, the civic public and the primordial public both anchored and guided by different sets of morals. For example, the Njuri Ncheke of Tigania before colonization was a strong civic body. But during the colonial period, it served both the emerging civic and primordial groupings. Internally it attempted to stick to its 'civic' past in order to retain its value and relevance among the Tigania people.

The process of the development of the two publics was strongly anchored in the manner in which colonial rule was implemented. Elements of direct and indirect rule called forth for conservation and order (Mamdani, 2012). Both processes as witnessed from

the previous chapter occurred but in an inorganic manner in Tigania subspace. This occurred due to the failure of the white colonial officials to understand the peculiarities of the people of this and (every Meru) Division. Suppression of religious beliefs and practices and other social practices does not entirely mean their extinction. The going underground of cultural practices breeds rebellion and adaption. In the processes of adaptation of Tigania indigenous institutions, values and culture, primordial public emerged in order to retain and preserve the Tigania identity. This, in fact, was a direct counteraction to the bewildering change that was taking place as a result of colonialism.

How did this sub-ethnic reinvention occur? The Tigania culture which obligated individuals to their age group, elders, clan and to their community was the culture that converted the pre-colonial Tigania civic public into a primordial public in 1950s. The philosophy that guided this conversion is the, communal principle of a collective heritage without which an individual could undertake nothing.¹⁰⁴ This public is concerned first with the individual's point of origin and is the source of poor regional and national psyche as witnessed in the 1957 legislative Council (LegCo) elections where only the educated in Meru were concerned with the victory of Bernard Mate, the Meru region's candidate for LegCo. This was the first political election in then Kenya colony where Africans were allowed to elect their representatives at the regional level to the national legislative organ (LegCo). This research concluded that the civic public, which was carelessly expanded to create the state in the colonial era give birth to the primordial public in Tigania through reinvention of its indigenous social ties.¹⁰⁵ The nature of power relations in the 1950s Tigania society enhanced the conversion of economic things into social and political things for individual and primordial benefit hence eroding social ties and morals that would obligate ethical conduct in the expanded civic responsibilities. Because of the strong kinship bonds existing among the Tigania people, the birth of a primordial public which did not share the same moral foundation as the expanded civic public can according to this research be viewed as a natural reaction to a cultural and a collective trauma.

¹⁰⁴ Collectivity was a strategy that asserted value and colonialism dismantled it to subvert unity, see Chris Tiffin on *The Myth of Authenticity in De-scribing the Empire* (1994).

¹⁰⁵ The careless amalgamation of different communities together to form the Kenyan state is to blame for poor patriotism.

The two publics that is the primordial and civic, which developed in the Tigania of 1950s can be explained within the context of negotiation of communal social ties. According to Mbembe (2001) this was a complex system of reciprocity and obligations binding members of a single household even a single community. These interactions with their multiple ramifications affected areas as diverse as reciprocal transfers of time, property and labour. In Pre-colonial Tigania it has been shown that there existed one public that is, the civic public. The development of the primordial public in the Tigania of the 1950s resulted directly from the culture of the Tigania which obligated individuals first to their family, age group, clan and their community.

The British officials in Tigania witnessed rebellion against their rule and as earlier noted began to reorganize their system of administration. The change of attitude towards especially the Njuri Ncheke of Tigania was motivated by the need to avoid errors made in India and Jamaica (Mamdani, 2012). The unique processes occurring in the whole issue of trying to undermine and resuscitate indigenous institutions in Tigania held in them contradictions that would later shape the ideologies of the emerging bodies and individuals in charge of the reengineered indigenous institutions. The change of religious beliefs and institutions that supported social order and produced a political order in Tigania as understood by this research did not follow an evolutionary course.

Economic and generational disordering through colonialism which was the external agent of change produced a shock that put the masses in a state of dilemma. In 1940s colonialism was properly anchored having managed to establish its mechanism of rule. Respondents were of the view that British rule to them was without their (colonized) consent, opinion nor with the support of a habit. Sovereignty and law therefore were both external and coercive.¹⁰⁶ But then, various generations had to adjust themselves to this reality in order to survive. The process of adjustment tended to defy control and therefore there emerged wide cracks among various age groups, for example the *ngaitana* (I will circumcise myself) generation.

¹⁰⁶ One can exercise power without authority but one cannot have authority without being acknowledged by others to be worthy of it (Chabal, 2009, p. 40).

The generational rift enlarged from failure by the Tigania people to master the environment surrounding them during and after the MauMau war. The biggest challenge being in the mechanisms of co-optation of various age groups into Kenyan and world economy of capitalism. The methods introduced by the colonialists to achieve this end directly conflicted with the existing mechanisms of social, economic and political order. This is because the existing structures of social-economy and political order within Tigania were egalitarian. British officers in Tigania understood this rift but chose to ignore for colonialism had to westernize if not civilize. To make the matters worse the local administrative systems did nothing to alter the British imposed systems. In the process of trying to fit in, much had to be gained and lost simultaneously but with considerable consequences.

The warriors lost their place in the community. The elders lacking in knowledge of the new economy could not provide a proper mechanism of coopting them. The adaption to new beliefs caused by Christianity gave these warriors the moral courage to try new things in order to survive and come of age. The elders not only lost substantial moral and political authority over the young but also over land. It was therefore clear that going back to the roots was now a tall order. Individualism occasioned by cash crop farming and land ownership set in motion the need for individuals to adapt. Women were not spared of these developments either, they were no longer restricted to feminine duties. They also had to adapt to the new economy. The processes involved in trying to fit in, saw differences occur in all spheres of life of the Tigania reinforcing both primordial and civic differences.¹⁰⁷

The new generation of Tigania people emerging from 1950s had a third identity triggered by the knowledge of sub-ethnic consciousness. This generation had to fit within the boundaries of law, they needed to fight for economic space within the larger Meru economy and the entire Kenyan colony. Retaining sub-ethnic identity as well as gaining a national identity for primordial and civic interests was now an endeavor embedded within the cognitive memories of the young. It has been stated in the earlier chapters that the British tried merging Meru cultures in a bid to unite the differences of

¹⁰⁷ Colonialism in separating civil and tribal society ignored the gendered linkages which reinforced Tigania moral code among generations and genders.

the various Meru sub-ethnic groups. The need to reorganize the Meru subspace was a response to a central and overriding dilemma of the native question. This dilemma later would form the core to sub-ethnic consciousness which forms the first public, the primordial public among the hybrid Tigania. Other small publics can be found within this first domain but all of them impinging negatively on the reformed or enlarged civic public as elaborated by Eke (1975). This primordial public, held Tigania's perceived timeless cultural values as dear, and therefore fought to preserve them for continued sub-ethnic identity.

The emergence of the primordial public among the Tigania was in an endeavor to serve the Tigania people through their original systems, for example *kuringa thenge or Njuri justice system* and *gichiario or clan relations*. The emerging Kenyan state from 1950 was served by individuals recruited from the primordial groups. The morals applied in the service of the sub-ethnic group in communal affairs were not equally applied in serving the larger entity called the state. The second public emerging in the 1950s among the Tigania therefore, is the civic public. This public metamorphosed as a result of colonial western institutions like the colonial administrative structures, the church, formal schooling institutions, hospitals, hotels, police and the military (Eke 1975).¹⁰⁸

The explanation to the above change of order is that, colonialism turned African society upside down and inside out and marked a re-invention of its social formations. This dialectic led to the contested question of citizenship which is the essence of national question, the disconnection between communities and the incoming state, which manifests in endemic crisis of state ownership (Osoghae, 2006).

According to Mamdani (1996) the predicament that befell Africa revolved around preservation or modernity. Hybridity directly emerged from this dilemma.¹⁰⁹ To the cultural conservatives in Tigania, cultural loss was viewed as mass suicide.

¹⁰⁸Hobsbawn and Ranger (1983, p. 11) are of the view that in spite of much invention of new traditions, they have not filled more than a small part of the space left by the secular decline of both old tradition and custom. This study explained this state of affairs by observing that old traditions and customs were embedded in the memories of all through culture and its accompanying precedents.

¹⁰⁹According to Ngugi Wa Thiongo (1993) the prevailing dilemma was out of coercion, he observed "But under conditions of external domination, conquest for instance, the changes are not as a result of the working out of the conflicts and tensions within, and do not arise out of the organic development of that society, but are forced upon it externally."

Respondents of this research took sides on which way out. To some, returning to the old good days was the only way proper reinvention and reorganization in terms political, economic and social order would have succeeded without having polarizing factions in Tigania.¹¹⁰ There were other respondents who were torn between retaining cultural aspects of the past but then also valued technological aspects learnt from the British. The latter category, claimed that their inspiration was drawn from the belief that, although colonization was evil, there was something gained. Majority of the men respondents agreed that colonization took away their manliness. From this debate it is clear that power in the manner it was introduced by the colonialists tends to disorganize and attract resistance. Mamdani (1996) is of the view that the impasse in Africa is not only at the level of practical politics but also a paralysis of perspective.¹¹¹ According to Ngugi wa Thiongo (1993), pulling towards the center among African communities like the Tigania was the biggest challenge for values among individuals no longer held the center. The impact of the external factor was too strong. Ngugi wa Thiongo explained,

Culture gives that society its self-image as it sorts itself out in the economic and political fields. It therefore tends to appear as both neutral, (equally expressive of all and accessible to all) and unchanging, a stable resting place for all its members. Hence the talk of 'our values' by different societies. However, changes whether evolutionary or revolutionary can occur as result of the internal working out of the contradictions in that society in a delicate or even turbulent relationship to the external environment.¹¹²

This legacy of African dilemma was forged though the colonial experience (Mamdani, 1996).

In Tigania the mechanisms used to introduce Christianity and politics were a major contributory factor in the emergence of the two publics. The destruction and the proscription of indigenous Tigania institutions which conferred the highest good

¹¹⁰ Chris Tiffin in his work on De-scribing the Empire (1994) offers an interesting perspective why it was difficult for recuperative strategies by primordial citizens to work. Their efforts should have been focused on disrupting the dominant discourse that makes public arena have what Mamdani identifies as a paralysis of opinion.

¹¹¹ On how the African dilemma was forged, see Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject, contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late colonialism* (1996).

¹¹² Ngugi Wa Thiongo (1993) explained that in relating a society to human body, that for proper functioning of human body biological processes like food digestion must occur internally and appropriately to become an integral part of the body. But it may happen that the impact of the external factor is too strong such that food is not taken in organically due to pollution or contamination and therefore the body might die. This was the fate that befell Africa, He argues.

destroyed the primary modes of control. The nature of administration introduced from 1910 to 1957 and beyond lacked input from the previous indigenous institutions implying disunity between the past and the present. Without an African foundation the power and the political structure introduced in Tigania tended to fragment opinion because it was racist and therefore regarded as illegitimate. With the natural controls subjugated, the populace was entangled with how each individual will fit in the center of the emerging Tigania society, how the hierarchy will look like in the civic public and how stability would be acquired.

Achille Mbembe (2001) observed that market and capitalism with their contingent and violence highly contributed to the political disorder emerging in Africa during the colonial era. The idea by J. F Bayart that African societies are incapable of relating with nothing other than themselves is misleading in the context of this research findings. Given the nature of relations occurring among the pre-colonial Tigania and other Meru clans and surrounding communities, the nature of reinvention adopted by the British including identity, trade and power structure lay at the crux of the ambiguities occurring in the Tigania society. Mbembe (2001, p. 4) observed that, “More than any other region, Africa thus stands out as the supreme receptacle of the West’s obsession with, and circular discourse about, the facts of ‘absence’, ‘lack’, and ‘non-being’, of identity and difference, of negativeness, in short, of ‘nothingness’”. This pioneering ideology of western imperialism in Africa where nothing African was of value, could never allow realistic relations between Africa and Europe and chaos was the aftermath.

The discourse of civil society which greatly emerged in the post-SWW era called forth for ending of colonialism in Africa. Under this quest of civil society the political and which was more critical was forgotten and replaced with a renewed call for social re-engineering within Africa. Mbembe observed that,

Mired in the demands of what is immediately useful, enclosed in the narrow horizon of “good governance” and the neo-liberal catechism about the market economy, torn by the current fads for “civil society,” “conflict resolution,” and alleged “transitions to democracy,” the discussion, as habitually engaged, is primarily concerned, not with comprehending the political in Africa or with producing knowledge in general, but with social engineering (Mbembe 2001, p. 6).

This juncture full of humanitarianism aided in further entrenchment of the conditions shaping the civic and primordial differences in Tigania as people now shifted focus to the question of rights within the civic public under a state.

Two major events happened in 1948 in colonial Tigania as remembered by a some respondents. A missionary from the Roman society is reported to have sent goons to plant *changaa* in the home of one of its adherents. The reason being, the accused had deserted the Roman mission and joined the Methodist society. This false accusation saw the man get arrested and charged with possession of outlawed liquor (Chunkubitu, Kathawe O.I., 2019). The victim of this competition between missions ended up not trusting christians. Up to date he believes that Tigania religious beliefs were the best for they ‘were never unjust’. The injustice meted on this man affected all his clans’ men who stood to challenge the practice of Christianity.

A Roman Catholic Father again is said to have demanded that a man who had hunted an antelope which belonged to him, pay a compensation fine. When the man in question told the Father that he would report him to the Divisional Officer, the Father scorned him by asking whether he, the Father, had applied white charcoal dust. Simply the Roman Catholic Father was telling the man to go and report and wait to see who mattered before the D.O, the white or the black face. This case ended with the Tigania man compensating the white man with a mature he goat (Mbaabu, Kirea O.I., 2019). These two cases happened in today’s Mikinduri and Kiguchwa wards respectively. The nature of relations occurring between the two races in Tigania did cast Christianity in a bad light. These two occasions and numerous others created ardent primordial¹¹³ Tigania citizens who by no means liked or trusted anything European. Those who benefitted from the missions and the colonial administration had their own positive perceptions of colonialist and colonial institutions.

In some cases, the contradictions of the conduct of the Christian clergy versus the message they preached compromised the possibility of successful conversions. Christianity was adopted in some cases just as means of filling the gap left by the void of communal and clan meetings. Becoming a Christian for the sake of acquiring

¹¹³ Primordial has been used to describe Tigania cultural conservation and conservatives.

benefits like education was what drove many to the missions¹¹⁴. Ratanya (O.I, 2019) observed that the competition between missions got Africans divided to an extent that the baptismal names reflected the individual's domination. In contrast to the Tigania concept of religion where, there is no existing name that refers to their religion except the principles of purity, fairness and justice. These being seen as the qualities that Ngai (God) of Tigania possessed.

The role played by Christianity and state formation in the creation of the two publics is significant. To the converts, Christianity was good for public appearances. However, when faced by challenges, individuals seemed to cling to indigenous solutions. To the conservatives and Christians converts alike Tigania tradition was the place of security given the bewildering nature of state economy and provincial administration. Among the Tigania in the 1950s, people feared and respected each other based on clan *gichiaro*. The introduction of Christian ethics did not change this. Christianity therefore, at least in these initial years, was superficial and could not provide moral bases for clan nor individual conduct. With the previous beliefs weakened standards of ethics were compromised. Some of the actions of the missionary and government administrators in the eyes of the Tigania people displayed arrogance and lack of respect to the sanctity of human life. This sanctity had not been entirely lost, it was still available but within the primordial group.

6.3 Conclusion

This chapter concludes that there exist a phenomenon of two publics among the Tigania. The manner of operation of the two publics is such that the morals applied in the primordial and private spheres are not extend to the civic public or state sphere. The reason is that, the state was a colonial creation. Morals do not apply in the sphere of oppression.

¹¹⁴ Domiciano Ratanya who is a lawyer by profession and a major respondent to this research benefitted from mission education.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION.

7.1 Introduction

This section presents the summary of the findings and the conclusion reached in accordance with the objectives the study set out to achieve. The basic argument and theory in this thesis will also be reiterated. And finally, the opportunities for further research that were identified in the course of doing this research will be presented.

7.2 Summary of the Study Findings

The political system among the Pre-colonial Tigania, directly stemmed from age-based hierarchy. Gender relations was an important corollary to this hierarchy. All matters of governance were treated with care so as to preserve harmony with the past, the present and secure the future. The ruling age-groups, that is father and sons had to adhere to custom in conducting public affairs. Adhering to custom did come from a long process of in-scribing, lasting for between 12-17years. The study found that, effective socialization coupled with appropriate structure of political authority meant that, Tigania warriors were never a threat to the political stability of their society. In many generations' transgressions were largely manageable. Military and socio-economic co-optation ensured that they were fully integrated in the communal structure. This integrating mechanism in social and economic life of the community was the single most important factor in ensuring internalization of the Tigania value system which ensured proper ideals in political order. Identity and certainty directly emanated from this cultural system.

To ensure control in Tigania, the colonial government established a system of administration. It was composed of an executive, a legislature referred to as local Native Council (LNC) and Judiciary named Local Native Tribunal (LNT). The executive hierarchy involved DC, DOs and other functionaries in the name of chiefs and headmen who were in charge of locations, sub-locations and villages. The functionaries, the LNC and the LNT were primarily used by colonial government to appropriate legitimacy. Conflict between the imposed European system of administration and indigenous Tigania political order ensued in various forms. British colonial activities were in many ways incompatible with the customs and practices of the Tigania and therefore sought to change these customs unilaterally.

The making of men as earlier discussed assured all genders and generations of their social security and economic prosperity. Morality and ethics were guided through cultural norms and patterns of authority that found power and practicability in collectivity. The social-political order that entailed the making of men in the precolonial Tigania had now largely vanished. Age and gender relations were strained and generational control was an impossibility in 20th century Tigania. The new generation of Tigania citizens emerging from 1950s had a third identity triggered by colonialism. The explanation to the above change of order is that, colonialism turned African society upside down and inside out and marked a re-invention of its social formations.

Besides the two publics emanating directly from the sub-ethnic consciousness and lack of moral basis; the role of market and economy in creating other small publics cannot be overlooked. The role played by capitalism in creating a social construct of us versus them binary in relation to power structure and social stratification is crucial in understanding other small publics that exist within the two publics. The state of abnormal relations occurring between individuals and clans who belong to the same sub-ethnic group of Tigania of 1950s can be understood by analyzing social classes occasioned by capitalist economy. Colonial state through its functionaries shaped criteria of access to resources and this resulted in differentiation between individuals for example within the same clan or sub-ethnic group. According to Berman this scenario was occasioned through market forces, he opined that,

The most important consequence of the colonial political economy was the creation of horizontal inequalities between ethnic communities in the manner and degree of their involvement in cash crop and labour markets, access to education and to a higher levels of employment in public institutions; and growing internal inequalities between the local collaborators and intelligentsia and their poor clients and dependents (Berman, 2010, p. 7).

Christianity as introduced by the missionaries contained many contradictions in its moral obligations and therefore failed to successfully guide moral code of the emerging civic public. Economic and political structures in Europe largely depended on Christian virtues and values to guide their moral obligation whether in public or private. British rulers thought that the same western principles could morally guide the emerging civic public. Christianity largely failed in this obligation in Tigania for people reinvented

Christianity and God to fit the colonial situation. The two, that is the African moral code of ethical conduct and the Christian code of conduct clashed on every point due to horizontal inequalities occurring among the people. For example, Christian converts often viewed non-Christians as pagans who will burn in hell.

The primordial public in the post-colonial Africa is moral while the civic public is amoral. The citizens emerging out of the post emergency Tigania were people who wore masks of acquiesce or resistance, love and identification or hatred and resistance. This dilemma according to Leela Gandhi (1998) represents on one hand the impossibility of a complete break with the past and on the other achieving full identification with the western form of governance in the state¹¹⁵. Separation from culture and essences rendered Tigania people hybrid, a chronic subjectivity that constantly and ambivalently negotiates between cultural imperatives.

7.3 Conclusion

Historians of the earlier decades examined how class, ethnicity and religion influenced the crafting of the modern Kenya especially among the big ethnic groups like the Kikuyu and the Luo. This study in recognition of the power inherent in age groups among the Tigania endeavored to show how conflict and uncertainty triggered by colonialism upset generational relations thus affecting the making of men. This was an upset that strained age group relations and eventually tore the moral fabric that held the previous Tigania society and which in the 1950s was overthrown by globalization through British imperial activities. The failure to hold together of the previous systems in the face of modernization led to the emergence of a hybrid political order among the Tigania.

7.4 Recommendations

- i. Tigania cultural heritage resources face a challenge of being roped into the various sectors in an unplanned, reactive and/or haphazard manner. There is a limited theoretical and practical approach to guide the use of cultural resources

¹¹⁵ Authority and power as seen emerging in the post emergency era were conceptualized separately. Comparative politics say little about the two, save for the trivial, though not wholly untrue, remark that the former belongs to the realm of 'tradition' whereas the latter is of the 'modern'. It would be more accurate to observe that the two overlap though are dissociated, hence hybridity (Chabal, 2009 , p. 41)

and cushion against unsustainable use. There is therefore, a great need, to place Tigania cultural heritage in a modern context for contemporary use.

- ii. Culture gives progression maybe technological, economic, political and social, ability to contain uncertainty especially of the future. The reason why culture is critical to any human society is, new aspects in life can drastically alter certainty. This throws everything into provisional, implying people have no idea of what the future holds. What we are witnessing in the Tigania society of today, is a situation where the dynamics and the workings of the economic and political fronts are isolated and disarticulated from indigenous Tigania culture. This causes human uncertainty. This raises questions of adequacy of the existing normative order, fragmentation of identity and rapturing of known values of sociality and civility. A collective debate to re-imagine cultural standards is one way (out of many other possibilities) therefore to re-order development in the economy, communication, politics and administration of Tigania people and the larger Kenyan society.
- iii. The structure of the Kenyan government is still largely crafted out of the colonial model. There is therefore, a great urgency to re-imagine governance and structure of government so that it is anchored in African needs, ideals and realities. Hybridity increases uncertainty. The Kenyan dream that is the imagined destiny generally remains unreachable because of separation from culture and essences. Trying to cope with uncertainty saw deployment of western democracy which has assumed an umbrella meaning and forms covering various human demands articulated in the language of freedom, reform, equality, good governance, social justice and human security. All these have remained elusive in the post-colonial Kenya and Africa. Pre-colonial governments of various Kenyan communities may have something to say in this debate. They represented the ‘a reality or some organic evolution of that reality before colonial rapture’.
- iv. The economy of Kenya does not equally represent the aspirations of the people. The larger population especially the young have faced great difficulties in trying

to come of age and achieve manhood. Restructuring the law and the economic model of the state to represent the collective dreams of all communities and the people would be the best way to contain economic uncertainty and inequalities. The social evils facing the country can be contained by having an economic model that allows achievement by all.

7.5 Suggestions for Further Research

- i. The present-day Meru Nchuri Ncheke is a classic case of colonial construction. No wonder, every time of political controversy, they always open their statement/intervention by saying: "...The Njuri Ncheke always supports the government of the day..." This body can be studied as a colonial legacy (by tapping into deep Meru customary institutions). This way, the changes happening in Njuri Ncheke today can be understood better.
- ii. Many conflicts that touched on women power and institutions occurred during the colonial period. This in turn led women to significantly participate in the conflict between male elders and the young. The role of women in this conflict can be studied.
- iii. The role of KAU in the generational conflict, between, the young men, many of whom joined Mau Mau and the elders during the colonial period can be studied to shed further light on colonial struggles.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Interview Schedule on the Tigania Political Order

Dear Respondent,

The aim of this interview schedule is to help generate data on political order among the Tigania. The information provided is for academic purpose with the practical aim of analyzing the evolution of Tigania political order from 1910-1957. Information provided will be strictly confidential.

SECTION A. Demographic Information

Name..... Age.....

Occupation: Farmer [] Teacher [] Leader [] others []

Marital Status: Married [] widowed [] Single []

Education Level: Degree [] Diploma [] Certificate [] Other []

Ward.....Clan..... Thuki/Age group.....

SECTION B. Objective 1. Precolonial Tigania political order

1. Who are the Tigania?
2. Do you know any other name you were referred by before you became the Tigania?
3. When did you become the Tigania?
4. What makes the Tigania People different?
5. Mention the political offices in the Tigania community
6. What was their role?
7. Was there an office of a military leader?
8. Tell me your clan
9. How did your clan come to be?
10. For your subsistence, what did your grandparents grow?
11. Before the office of the chief was created, how did you handle your issues?
12. How were your procedures different from the other Meru sub -groups?
13. How did women participate in the community affairs?
14. How would describe the bond between Igembe and Tigania
15. Have you participated in an oathing procedure?

Objective 2. To examine the imposition and consolidation of colonial order among the Tigania

1. When did the first white people appear in Tigania?
2. How was the initial reaction of the people about the foreigners?
3. Do you remember the names of the first Europeans to arrive in your area, what did they come to do, teach, preach, recruit labour...?
4. How did the elders handle the arrival of these new people?
5. Were there people in your clan or community who become hostile to these foreigners?
6. Were there people from your clan or community who were friendly to the new faces?
7. From your own recollection how did the activities of the white people affect you or your family?
8. How did Njuri react to the issues of chieftaincy? Who was the most memorable chief in your view? How did the people react to the introduction of chieftaincy?
9. How did your life change as an individual, family, clan and community?
10. What did these people do that affected you?
11. Tell me, when did money first come to this your area. How was the reaction of the people to the use of currency?
12. How were your clan farming activities and practices affected?

Objective 3. To Examine the Resulting Political Order

1. In your assessment, in what ways were British colonial activities positive or negative
2. How did colonialism affect relations among the Tigania people?
3. What would say about the operation of authorities in Tigania society before independence?

Appendix II: List of Interviewees

About thirty interviewees who due to their allegiance to tradition gave interviews but refused their details to be divulged in any way.

	Name	Age-group	Age
1.	ChunkubituNtokanake	Micubu	95
2.	Ruth Thurwa	Ratanya	80
3.	Kaunyangi Thimangu	Ratanya	85
4.	Joshua Ntoikiugu	Ratanya	83
5.	Jacob Ntomwongo	Micubu	96
6.	Domiciano Ratanya	Ratanya	77
7.	Geoge Mwirabua	Ratanya	77
8.	Amos Baariu	Miriti	55
9.	Chiokamuiria irii	Ratanya	80
10.	Ciakwalu Baimunya	Ratanya	85
11.	Morris Mbaabu	Miriti	57
12.	Stanely Njara	Ratanya	81
13.	Alumina Matuu	Micubu	98
14.	Magdalene Kayaru	Ratanya	76
15.	Ngituyu Stanely	Miriti	57
16.	Adams Karauri	Lubetaa	68
17.	Stephen Kinyua	Miriti	50
18.	Henry Gitila	Miriti	49
19.	Mutabari Joram	Miriti	47
20.	Simba Ngatunyi	Ratanya	87
21.	Sammy Thiaru	Lubetaa	66
22.	Ntomungania Kimbirii	Ratanya	87
23.	Ntomuketha Kauruwo	Micubu	94
24.	Karuu Angelica	Ratanya	81
25.	Ntoarianga Kirombi	Micubu	90
26.	Maorwe Kaibii	Ratanya	76
27.	Nchiochebere Jennifer	Ratanya	76
28.	Ntomakero Chiolingo	Ratanya	87
29.	Kathure Kainyu	Ratanya	83
30.	Jacubu Limberia	Ratanya	87
31.	Geofrey Muthoi	Ratanya	79
32.	Karwamba Ntonchene	Micubu	92
33.	Ngorwe Ntoinanga	Ratanya	77
34.	Josiah Kirea	Ratanya	79
35.	George Kanamba	Ratanya	87
36.	Ntoembe Ntoilibwa	Ratanya	81
37.	Ntoimaingi Karissa	Ratanya	88
38.	Joanina Nkio	Lubetaa	70
39.	Ntoataya kilemi	Micubu	91
40.	Daniel Mukaria	Micubu	98
41.	Ntoangaruthi kirea	Micubu	94
42.	Ratanya muriuki	Ratanya	78
43.	Jimmy Ntomuketha	Lubetaa	68
44.	Kailikia wa Bere	Ratanya	81
45.	Godfrey Kaberia	Lubetaa	69
46.	Gichunge Ntwanampiu	Lubetaa	69
47.	Montune wa Maingi	Micibu	92
48.	Kainyu Christina	Ratanya	76
49.	Victor Gichunge	Lubetaa	68
50.	Stanley Thiaru	Ratanya	76

Appendix III: NACOSTI Permit

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT:
MR. BAARIU MICKY MUTWIRI
of **CHUKA UNIVERSITY, 109-60400**
CHUKA,has been permitted to conduct
research in **Meru County**

Permit No : **NACOSTI/P/19/97359/29612**
Date Of Issue : **12th April,2019**
Fee Received :**Ksh 1000**

on the topic: **EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL
ORDER AMONG THE TIGANIA OF MERU
1910-1957**

for the period ending:
12th April,2020



.....
Applicant's
Signature

.....
Palen
Director General
**National Commission for Science,
Technology & Innovation**