SOCIO-CULTURAL CHANGES IN THE FARMING AND USE OF MIRAA
Catha edulis IN IGEMBE, MERU; 1940 -2014

BY
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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT FOR THE DEGREE
OF MASTER OF ARTS (HISTORY) OF KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

NOVEMBER 2017
DECLARATION

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

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To the Almighty God, my parents Ayub Kathata and Maritha Kabuu, my family members Faith Kathambi, Purity Kinya, Evans Munene and Alice Karimi – my children and their mother respectively.
ABSTRACT

The study examined socio-cultural changes in the farming and use of Miraa (*Catha edulis*) in Igembe District of Meru County in Kenya from 1940-2014. The Meru comprises of nine sub-ethnic groups namely Chuka, Muthambi, Mwimbi, Igoji, Miutine, Imenti, Tigania, Igembe and Tharaka. Miraa is grown intensively in Meru by the Igembe and Tigania sub-ethnic groups. It is of prime economic importance for the region as it feeds a growing national and international market. However, it is a controversial substance because whereas the World Health Organisation (WHO) and several western countries have condemned it as a “drug”, the Igembe and Tigania hold it dearly, emphasizing not just its economic role but also its place in the community’s socio-cultural traditions. The literature review was based on the general overview on the importance of Miraa to the socio-cultural life of the Igembe community, the changes in it’s farming and use. The research was based on the socio-conflict and the socio-capital approaches as complementary to each other in order to examine the traditional farming and its use; interrogate the reasons for the changes and assess its effects on these changes. Primary and secondary data were used to demonstrate the role that Miraa played and continues to play in the socio and cultural growth of the Igembe community. The researcher employed questionnaire method, face to face interviews, standardized interviews and observations. This enabled him to assess the possible changes, effects and aspects of transformation over time and space. A study sample from Igembe district comprising of Njuri Ncheke elders, Miraa businessmen, members of the public administration (formerly provincial administration), primary school Headteachers, members of the clergy were interviewed as key informants. The study examined the enormous variety evident in the social life of the Igembe Miraa and the role of Miraa in the creation and manipulation of values. The research distinguished many different types of Miraa and how the users associate themselves with certain varieties suggesting why some varieties are more valued culturally and economically than others. The findings were analyzed using descriptive methods. It was expected that the findings of the study would make the government of Kenya see the need to have policy framework on the farming and use of Miraa. The results of the study were also found to be useful to academics for further research especially to the researchers studying roles of plants on the culture of different communities in Kenya.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Kenyatta University for giving me a chance to realize my academic dream and to under mentioned people who in one way or the other helped me to make the writing of this thesis possible.

First, my special thanks go to my supervisors, Dr. Gimode Edwin and Dr. Susan Mwangi of the Department of History, Archaeology and Political studies of Kenyatta University, for their encouragement, inspiration and for freely and willingly giving me their time and expert knowledge and guiding me to the world of scholarship.

I am also indebted to other staff of the Department of History, Archaeology and Political studies of Kenyatta University and in particular Peter Mbae, Dr. Wafu Wekesa, Dr. Kakai, Dr. Kiruthu, Dr. Kinyanjui, Dr. Kisiangani, Dr. Ndiiri (the chairman of the department) and professor Mwanzi who came in and gave invaluable guidance during the trying periods of this scholarship. Antony Bojana deserves gratitude for editing the final draft.

Special thanks go to Faith Kathambi, Purity Kinya, Evans Munene and Alice Karimi – my children and their mother respectively who inspired me greatly and gave me encouragement and the spirits of competition especially seeing that we were undertaking the masters course together with my two daughters at the same time.

I thank my colleagues Isack Motanya, Robinson Matara and Okeyo Oile. Together we formed an active class and encouraged one another in our academic discussions.

I remain indebted to my parents Ayub Kathata and Maritha Kabuu who denied themselves their basics and spent the little they earned to educate me.

Thanks are also extended to my respondents namely Njuri Ncheke elders and village elders, Miraa traders, household heads, heads of primary schools, former provincial administrators and members of the clergy for their co-operation in face-to-face interviews and filling of the questionnaires and positively responding to my interviews.
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DEFINITION OF TERMS

High life style – practices characterized by changes such as feeding, dressing, leisure, shelter indicating availability of a lot of money.

Household – Is a person or group of persons who reside in the same homestead/compound and are answerable to the same household head.

Household head – This is the most responsible/respectable member of the household who makes key decisions of the household on a day-to-day basis and whose authority is recognized by all members of the household. It could be the father, mother or a child or any other responsible member of the household depending on the status of the household.

Miraa farmer – Is a person who grows Miraa for own consumption or for trade.

Miraa– Is the Meru name taken to mean the *Catha edulis* foliage in form of young tender leafy twigs tweaked off Miraa trees for chewing.

Miraa trader/dealer – Is someone who buys Miraa for resale locally or for export.

Miraa transporter – Is a farmer, trader or dealer who offers his vehicle to transport Miraa.

Njuri Ncheke - Is the Meru traditional supreme council of elders.

Nyambene Miraa Trade Association (NYAMITA) – Is the umbrella body for farmers, dealers and transporters in Kenya. It was registered in 1995 Reg.No 7098 under section 10 of the societies Act.
**Order monies** – Is money given by trade dealers to middlemen who in turn use it to buy Miraa from the farmers and middlemen for onward transmission to the major Miraa traders (merchants) for export.

**Respondent** – Is a person who answers questions during interviews or who responds to questions from a standardized interview or questionnaire.

**Socio-cultural Changes** – For the purpose of the research, shall comprise the changes that have taken place in general relations, traditions, customs and interactions within a community. It shall include the norms and methods of maintaining peace through traditional negotiations or conflict resolutions within a community.

**Tibu** – refers to a long journey usually taking two weeks to one month in search of food or batter trade.
### LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIDS</td>
<td>Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBO</td>
<td>Community Based Organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESRC</td>
<td>Economic and Social Research Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>FDA</td>
<td>Federal Food, Drugs and Cosmetics Act.</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<tr>
<td>HCDA</td>
<td>Horticultural Development Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV</td>
<td>Human Immunodeficiency virus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KARI</td>
<td>Kenya Agricultural Research Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KNBS</td>
<td>Kenya National Bureau of Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>KPPRA</td>
<td>Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KU</td>
<td>Kenyatta University</td>
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<tr>
<td>NACADA</td>
<td>National Authority for Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCST</td>
<td>National Council for Science and Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYAMITA</td>
<td>Nyambene Miraa Traders Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNODC</td>
<td>United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime</td>
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<tr>
<td>UON</td>
<td>University of Nairobi</td>
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<td>USA</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
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<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organization</td>
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Human beings spend much of their time and energy in pursuit of happiness and in moments of crisis look up to the creator for inspiration, through prayers. In pursuance of these goals, plants with psycho-stimulant effects have been used extensively.

According to the National Council for Science and Technology report (Catha edulis ‘Miraa’ 1996), South American Indians used Mexican peyote cactus and psilocybe Mexican mushrooms to evoke divinatory revelations during religio-cultural-religious rituals. The same Indians used cocoa leaves (now source of cocaine) to produce a feeling of detachment and inurement to discomfort (Republic of Kenya, 1996:7).

In the orient, the Chinese used poppy plant Papaver somniferum to “chase the dragon” in cultural ceremonies. They also used cannabis Sativa (hashish, marijuana, bhang) in cultural ceremonies and as medicine as far as 2700BC (Ibid). Other plants which have been used by indigenous people globally to induce mild psycho-stimulant effects include Nutmeg myristic (kukumanga), colanuts and Catha edulis (Miraa), (Ibid).

Miraa biologically known as Catha edulisForsk, is a horticultural crop, legitimately grown, traded in and consumed in several parts of the world mainly in its raw form as a mild stimulant. It is a member of the Celastae family, grown and used by people for various purposes including medicine, leisure, religious and cultural rites such as
marriage, family planning, in routine day chores like to seek audience with elders, and for commercial purposes.

From a historical perspective, while Miraa is indigenous to Eastern and Southern Africa, there is debate as to the origin of its farming and use. (Kennedy 1987:60-62) notes that it is reasonable to assume that it was first introduced to Ethiopia in the 11th century. Though most writers accept that it came to Yemen from Ethiopia, Kennedy proposes that there is evidence that it went into opposite direction. He notes that it was probably used recreationally on a limited basis by the 12th century in both countries becoming widespread by the 14th century. In Yemen, Miraa has been an important social ritual for hundreds of years mostly among men and women and therefore, there is much farming within the country to support demands, (Wegner M, 2005), (Wairs S; 1985:66), (Caton, 1993). These authors report that in the past khat was embraced as a divine gift because it facilitated a sense of union with God.

The controversy surrounding “khat” production and use is both a pharmacological and a social one. The media generally highlights the dangerous health risks (weight loss, lowered immunity, paranoid behaviour, and gum and mouth diseases) and addictive qualities of the substance. Socially, some community based organisations (CBOs) have argued that “khat” chewing leads to broken families, an idle workforce and general social deviance, Anderson, (2007).Carrier, (2008) examines Kenyan Miraa consumers and their styles of consumption as a new way to analyze the creative popular culture of Kenyan entrepreneurial youth. He further looks at both where trust is developed and also where it breaks down, particularly in between the Meru and Somali Cartels.
Much that is published on khat especially that is appearing in the popular press, refers to its production and use as a social problem and completely ignore focus on khat’s social and cultural role in terms of strengthening identity and forging social links. While khat has never been under international control, individual governments since the colonial era have struggled often in vain to prohibit khat production and consumption. The earliest colonial attempts to control khat was effected by the British in the protectorate of Somaliland in 1921, (Kerringant 1959). In Kenya, colonial authorities tried to control khat through a number of ordinances in 1940s and 1950s. These initially introduced permit system for trade and consumption within Kenya, but then later attempted to prohibit it completely in Northern Kenya where it was seen as most problematic, (Colony and protectorate of Kenya 1946, No.LIII) and (Colony and protectorate of Kenya 1951 No. 53).

Other areas with long history of Miraa globally includes: Somalia, Gebissa, (2004:36-37), Gebissa (Ibid: 52, 76); UK and USA, (Anderson 2007), Djibouti, formerly French Somali land, (Gebissa 2004), Madagascar, Clouet, (AG 1972:593), (Weir 1985:19). While in the East African region Miraa has had a substantial history in Uganda Beckerleg (2009) and in South Africa it is found among the Xhosa in the Eastern cape, (Hirst 2003). Consumption also continues in Tanzania despite its illegality there, (Carrier 2007:242). In Kenya, it is of major production and consumption especially in the mountain range to the North Eastern of Mount Kenya, the Nyambene Hills, where it is cultivated by the Bantu speaking Meru especially the Igembe and Tigania sub-ethnic communities of Meru County, (Carrier 2005, 2007), (Goldsmith 1999), (Hgoft, 1974). Written accounts of the late 19th century show that Miraa was already being cultivated and consumed in the Nyambene region during the
pre-colonial times, while Meru oral traditions supported by the extreme age of some of the khat trees depict a long history in the region. The old trees provide symbolic association with ancestors and form an important part of the cultural identity, an identity strengthened by its great economic importance for the Nyambene (Igembe and Tigania sub-ethnic groups of the Meru). In Meru, khat is also used in many ceremonies including marriage negotiations, peace-making, circumcision; (Carrier 2005a:540, 2005b:208-209) a feature noted and tolerated by the colonial authorities despite the disdain with which many officials viewed the substance, (Carrier 2007:199-204). However, there has been a lot of politics that have revolved around the khat production and use.

Miraa farming and use in Igembe sub-ethnic of the Ameru has since changed in its farming and use. The changes are clearly seen in that by 1940s, Miraa farming and consumption was only limited to the old men folk and only on small portions of their plots of land. There were strict controls in its use and not all cadres could chew Miraa. However, from 1960s onwards to present day, plantation of Miraa and use is done by everybody including the young generation and women, (Mwaniki 2006) and (Carrier 2007).

From 140 onwards the use of Miraa tends to be widespread. According to Mwaniki (2006), the Mbeere begun growing Miraa in the mid 1950s while the Tigania neighbouring the Igembe were also not left behind during the same period. Because of the strict traditional controls over the use of Miraa by the youth, the Igembe control over it weakened outside Igembeland. The young generation used to cross over to Tigania and Isiolo where they chewd Miraa unrestricted. In mid 1940s a commercial
trade with Miraa begun taking place within and outside Igembe especially between Igembe and Isiolo. Because of cash income gotten from Miraa, the Igembe started diverting Miraa use not only for social functions but also commercial. From 1950s to 1960s, the Igembe people saw the need increase the Miraa plants in their small gardens hence it started being an economic activity in the wider society. This caught the attention of many other people as the substance came to be a good stimulant (Hjort, 1974). However as the number of chewers increased, the demand to plant more and more trees became inevitable to meet both the emerging consumption and exchange.

In the European countries, London was used as a distribution centre for Miraa within the European Economic Community. However, there was a debate in London where the UK sought to clarify Miraa as a drug and stop its transportation into the country. The Meru community did not take the above UK statement lightly and urged the government to protect the Miraa industry with the Meru Senator (Kiraitu Murungi) seeking a statement from the government on its position on Miraa (khat). Daily Nation (June 19th 2013:12). However, despite this, Miraa was banned in London on 24th, June, 2014. This international prohibition of khat could have significant effect upon the use of the crop locally, nationally and globally. The study examined the traditional farming and use of khat, interrogated the changes in its farming and use and assessed the effects of its farming and use in Igembe district of Meru County Kenya (1940-2014) because this period was long enough to facilitate analysis of change in the socio-cultural life of the Igembe people.
The study sought to interrogate the changes in the farming and use of Miraa from 1940 to 2014 and their effects in order to have a way forward for the Miraa industry in Kenya. This was with a view to making the government of Kenya have a policy framework on the farming and use of Miraa.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Miraa related studies are rich in scientific and economic dimension, but the social and cultural changes are scanty. Negative information on the changes that have taken place in the farming and use of Miraa like misuse by the youth and women have been overpraised and therefore stigmatizing the plant.

The resourcefulness of Miraa in social and cultural dimension has been long understudied. The role of Miraa in strengthening identity and forging social links among producers and consumers in Igembe community has been greatly under-researched.

Therefore limited knowledge on the changes in the farming and use of Miraa has led to the press elevating social problems leading to the categorization of Miraa as a risky drug hence the banning of Miraa in several European countries.

The overall research problem addressed in this study is that despite the World Health Organization (WHO) and several western countries condemning Miraa as ‘drug’, Igembe and Tigania hold it dearly emphasizing not just its economic role but also its place in the communities’ socio-cultural functions. The World Health Organization and the International Council on Alcohol and Addiction (ICAA) have therefore been putting pressure on Kenya to discourage and eventually ban the cultivation and use of
Miraa, (NCST 1996:2). The research therefore sought to establish socio-cultural changes in the farming and use of Miraa in Igembe from 1940 to 2014 with a view to save the Miraa industry in Kenya.

In Kenya, community-based organisations (CBOs) especially women in Isiolo in 1941 petitioned the government leading to an ordinance to control the sale, farming and consumption of Miraa of 1946 and an ordinance to repeal the Miraa control ordinance and prohibit the farming, use and possession of Miraa in certain areas of the colony. (Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, 1946:NoLIII) and (Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, 1951:No. 53). Although such legislations have been passed in the past, the controversy over the farming and use of Miraa continues between the World Health Organisation, some community-based organisations and Igembe community in Meru County. Because of the uncertainty and ambiguity surrounding the legality of Miraa, information on its changes in its farming and use are very scanty. The study therefore examined the socio-cultural changes in the farming and use of Miraa in Igembe District from 1940-2014, interrogated reasons for the changes and assessed the socio-cultural effects of these changes to the Igembe people of Meru County Kenya from an historical perspective. If the reasons for these changes are unrevealed and necessary steps taken to address the abuse of Miraa, there would be a serious social dislocation and breakdown that would make the ban on Miraa farming and use imminent by the government. The study therefore sought to address several research questions.

1.3 Research questions

i. Where did the Igembe Miraa originate from and how was it farmed and used by the Ameru of Igembe during the period 1940 to 1963.
ii. What were the changes in the farming and use of Miraa in Igembe during the period 1963 to 1978?

iii. What were the effects of the changes in the farming and use of Miraa among the Igembe society of Meru County during the period 1978 to 2014?

1.4 Objectives of the study

The study sought to achieve the following objectives;

i. To identify the origin of the Igembe Miraa and examine indigenous farming methods and use of Miraa among the people of Igembe in Meru County during the period 1940 to 1963.

ii. To examine the socio-cultural changes in the farming and use of Miraa among the people of Igembe community in the period 1963 to 1978.

iii. To investigate the effects of the changes in the farming and use of Miraa on the Igembe people of Meru County Kenya, between the period 1978 to 2014.

1.5 Research premises

The study was guided by the following premises:

i. Igembe has a long history of Miraa farming and use and that it played a significant role in the traditional life of the Igembe society in the areas of rites of passage, recreation, reconciliation and marriage in the period 1940 to 1963.
ii. During the period 1963-1978, Miraa underwent social and cultural changes in its farming and use due to compelling economic factors among the Igembe community.

iii. The changes in the farming and use of Miraa among the Igembe community in Meru County, Kenya had led to social dislocation and breakdown.

1.6 Justification and significance

Though several studies have been undertaken in Kenya by scholars in Miraa, none has specifically addressed socio-cultural changes in its farming and use. Most of the studies on Miraa have focused on the economic and scientific effects to the user and thus classification of Miraa as a “hard” drug by the World Health Organization (WHO). There has been limited information on the socio-cultural changes in the farming and use of Miraa (*Catha edulis*) in Igembe District. The study on the Miraa industry in Igembe is particularly pertinent given the role played by Miraa in the region in terms of the economy of the area and educational developments. The sector accounts for over 80% portion of the economy and social rites and therefore needs to be studied. This study is, therefore, urgent given the current international politics on Miraa that have led to Miraa being banned in several European markets.

Secondly, the period between 1940-2014 was justified because it was long enough to facilitate analysis of change in the farming and use of Miraa in the socio-cultural life of the Igembe people. The year 1940 was picked because the period after 1940 Miraa use and farming underwent changes that saw even the community-based organizations and the colonial Government getting concerned and coming up with legislations to
control the farming and use of Miraa. (Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, 1946, No LIII) and (Colony and protectorate of Kenya, 1951, No 53). The year 1940 was also appropriate as most of the informants like the elderly in the villages and the “Njuri Ncheke” elders who were alive then were able to give the life histories of the Miraa culture and got first-hand information from the cultivators and users for the period under study. The year 2014 was appropriate because it gave the current changes in the farming and use of Miraa. Igembe was picked because according to the literature review, it is only among the Igembe in Meru County that Miraa was used for cultural rights and that it has longest history of Miraa farming and use (Mwaniki, 1986:2) and (Carrier 2007).

The study bridged the gap of scanty knowledge on the reasons for the changes in its farming and use, and the effects of such changes to the Igembe community. The findings of the study were meant to make the government of Kenya come up with a policy framework on farming and use of Miraa. The results were also anticipated to be useful to academics for further research especially to those researchers studying the role of plants on the social and culture of different communities in Kenya.

1.7 Scope of the study and limitations

The study was confined to Igembe District (refer to chapter one 1.11.2.2, Area of study Map of Igembe) in Meru County and to a selected few people in the district. Igembe District has nine divisions, namely; Igembe Central, Igembe East, Igembe North, Igembe South, Igembe South East, Igembe South West, Laare, Mutuati and Ndoleli. Igembe district further refers to the area covered by the three constituencies of igembe namely Igembe south, Igembe central and Igembe north. According to the
1999 census, the population was 364,174, (Republic of Kenya, 2001) and according to 2009 population census, the total population had risen to 482,756. The study was carried out in nine locations in three divisions of Igembe District (Igembe East, Igembe North and Igembe Central), namely; Kiengu, Ngujuju, Kawiru, Athiru, Akiriang’ondo, Ithima, Njia, Burieruri and Kangeta. The study sampled 94 respondents 10 from each location and two neutral persons not engaged in Miraa industry for objective opinion and two members of the clergy. The outcome was projected to be a true picture of the results of the study of Igembe District and therefore generalized for the farming and use of Miraa in the Miraa producing areas of Kenya.

The study examined the colonial and post-colonial characteristics of the socio-cultural changes in the farming and use of Miraa in Igembe District of Meru County; the study commences in 1940 when Miraa was used purely for cultural rites. The study also ends in 2014 about five decades after Kenya attained political independence when Miraa use became more of an economic enterprise rather than purely social. The study period provided sufficient time for the analysis of the changes that have taken place in the Miraa industry in Igembe District. It is hoped that in this way, it will be possible to embark on the necessary intervention measures in form of policy framework by the government to make the sector viable.

The study was physically limited to 3 divisions of Igembe District because it was not possible to study all the areas where Miraa was grown in Kenya as a two – year period study for a masters course was not enough to cover the whole country where Miraa was cultivated and used in Kenya. The researcher faced problems in making
some respondents give the correct information on Miraa because of the sensitivity of Miraa in the current politics due to the ban on Miraa in the European market and sensitive and personal information like HIV and AIDS. Due to remoteness of some areas of research as a result of lack of good network of transport and communication and weather conditions especially during the rainy days, the researcher was required to make long distances. The researcher also faced problems of non-response in some cases where the questionnaires were not answered and in some other instances, some respondents demanded payments before giving any information.

With logistic constrates such as finance, vastness of the County, terrain and inaccessibility, a selected sample of farmers, traders, primary school Headteachers and Njuri Ncheke elders in Igembe District were taken to represent all the Miraa farmers and users in the district and the County. Other Districts and subcounties where Miraa is grown and used in Kenya need to be investigated to analyze the changes in the Miraa industry in the country. Such studies would be crucial in providing the basis for comparison between the socio-cultural changes in the farming and use of Miraa in Igembe District (Sub-County) to other parts of the country.
1.8 Review of Related Literature

1.8.1 Introduction

This section presents the review of related literature of Miraa farming and use in the greater Meru region from 1940 to 2014. The study focused on the origin of the Igembe Miraa, farming methods and its use during the period 1940 to 1963, examined the socio-cultural changes in its farming and use during the period 1963 to 1978 and the effects of this changes to the Igembe people during the period 1978 to 2014.

1.8.2 Origins of Miraa in Igembe

One of the authoritative and detailed research work currently available on Miraa is by the National Council for Science and Technology (NCST), (Republic of Kenya,1996) *Catha edulis,a detailed review focusing on its chemistry, health implication, economic, legal, social, cultural, religious, moral aspects and its farming.* (NCST, 1996). The preparation and publication of the report was co-ordinated by NCST’s agricultural and allied sciences specialist committee and Mr. Johnson B. Nyangeri, the chief Science Secretary in charge of Agricultural Sciences at the council. This report notes that research on Miraa was first documented in 1887 but its use as early as 1237 AD. Conducted in conjunction with the University of Nairobi (UoN).

This report notes that Miraa is thought to have originated in Harare area in Ethiopia. It was also grown in different regions of East, central and southern parts of Africa at the same time. (Ibid: 45) until the beginning of the 20th century, use of Miraa was localised in areas where it grew wild. This is because, unlike cereals it could not be
harvested, stored or transported to distant places as it had to be used while fresh, 
(Ibid).

This work on the history of Miraa in the world and Kenya and especially Igembe in 
Meru County was very important to this study. Although Maitai has explained the 
origins of Miraa in the world, the origins of the Igembe Miraa has not been addressed
which this study sought to address. Mwaniki (1986:2) argues that the culture of Miraa 
in Igembe is as old as the Igembe community because oral traditions cannot pinpoint 
when the first Miraa plants were grown in Igembe. However, his work on the origin 
of Miraa was very important to this study although it failed to explain how Miraa was 
cultivated in terms of gender, age and the percentage of ones piece of land that was 
dedicated to its farming as compared to other cultivated plants was left out which the 
study sought to address.

1.8.3 Miraa legislation

The year 1972 is considered a watershed in the history of Miraa in Kenya. In that 
year, a group of prominent African and Somalia businessmen and politicians 
registered a company under the name East African Miraa Growers. The company 
sought and was granted permission by horticultural crop development authority 
(HCDA) to be the sole exporters of Miraa to Somalia, the most important export 
market for the Kenyan Miraa. This was resented by Miraa growers and traders in 
Nyambene area. In 1974, several Meru farmers and businessmen formed NYAMITA 
as a counterweight to East African Miraa growers. In 1974, a delegation of its 
members petitioned the late president Mzee Jomo Kenyatta to have Miraa removed 
from the schedule of crops under HCDA. The president granted the request and
simultaneously decreed that Miraa prohibitive ordinance (1951) be repealed. Nyambene Miraa Traders association (NYAMITA) was officially registered on March 10 1975 (Certificate of Registration No. 7098) and by a letter dated August 14, 1976 from the permanent secretary, Ministry of Agriculture removed from export control and regulation by HCDA (Republic of Kenya 1996:1).

Although the reports outline some of the administrative changes done on Miraa organisations and legislations, it fails to demonstrate the socio-cultural changes in the farming and use of Miraa as a social phenomenon was not addressed but only emphasized on economic aspects, an issue this study sought to address. The report further notes that in 1944, Isiolo local native council prohibited possession of any portion of Miraa plant after Somali women in Isiolo petitioned the District Commissioner to ban Miraa because it was contributing to break-up of families. Following this in 1945, control measures against Miraa were enacted following alarming and subjective reports about Miraa as a course of insanity while for unexplained reasons, USA, Denmark, Norway and Italy banned Miraa Farming and chewing. The UN and WHO followed suit. The report further failed to interrogate the socio-cultural changes and their effects to the Igembe community on the farming and use of Miraa that led to prohibitive ordinances and subsequent ban in some countries and WHO which this study sought to address.

1.8.4 Social and cultural roles of Miraa

In Kenya, Miraa is grown intensively by the Igembe and Tigania sub-ethnic groups of the Meru in Meru County. The monetary value of the crop gives the Meru inhabitants good economic reasons to approve of it and yet there are more to their approval than
this: khat, known in Kenya as “Miraa” is incorporated into their cultural heritage. Discourse concerning Miraa cultural importance is well formed in Nyambene’s and especially emphasized khat’s use within certain ceremonial contexts. (Carrier 2007:199-204). These include the preliminaries to circumcision where boys took khat along to the elders to let them know that they were ready for the rite of passage, and the preliminary to marriage, where a prospective son-in-law takes khat along to his prospective bride’s parents to request permission to marry her. In both contexts, khat must be of the highest quality from the oldest trees known as Mbaine after an ancient Meru age set and tied in a special bundle known as Nchoolo that is prepared differently to marketed khat. Bundles are tied up in banana leaves with yam runners and are invested with various symbolic meanings depending on how the yam runners are knit (Carrier 2007:202). In all such usage, nchoolo bundles are offered by junior men to their seniors, suggesting a gerontocratic hierarchy maintaining elders as welders of power in theory, if not in practice.

Mwaniki (1986:3) further argues that Miraa was extremely essential in the lives of Igembe people. Traditional uses of Miraa are still current in many parts of Igembe with conviction that Miraa makes the society. It was used during naming ceremonies, circumcision for boys, ear piercing, marriage negotiations, initiations to all socio-political groups and trade.

Carrier and Mwaniki’s works contributed significantly to this study since they helped us understand the role of Miraa in the traditional life of the Igembe community. However, their works did not address the changes that had taken place in the use of Miraa and the challenges that have faced the community due to such changes which
the study sought to address. Carrier (2007) on Miraa production, inheritance, marketing and consumption, highlights the role of women traders in “khat commodity chain in Kenya”, where women have joined in the Miraa business unlike the past when it was a male folk affair. Although Carrier explains the role of women in Miraa business currently, he does not explain the reasons that made women to get engaged in Miraa business was not addressed as traditionally it was only a male affair, and from what period women started getting involved in the business which the study sought to investigate.

1.8.5 Politics revolving around Miraa farming and use

The controversy over Miraa has remained in Kenyan politics from pre-independence in 1940s during the times of Governor Sir Philip Mitchell. (Colony and Protectorate of Kenya 1946 No.LIII) and (Colony and Protectorate of Kenya 1951 No. 53), up to the post independent Kenya in 1990s. During the period 1994-96, Miraa almost phased the ban during the motion “The narcotic drugs and phsycotropic substances control bill”, (Republic of Kenya 1994-96). In the parliamentary debate on whether Miraa was a “hard drug”, the Meru members of parliament (mps) who included Hon. Kalweo (Minister for state in the office of the president and MP for Igembe), Hon Maoka Maore (MP for Ntonyiri) and Kiraitu Murungi (MP for Imenti south), argued that Miraa promoted social relations and gave examples of the Meru and Somali interacting in Maua, Meru as well as its place in marriage negotiations, (Republic of Kenya 1994:317, 328-331, 373, 381, 399-400) and (Republic of Kenya 1996:354-369).
1.8.6 Cultural roles of other plants among the Ameru community

The use of plants in the Ameru traditions in promoting, maintaining and building peace was conspicuous as plants constituted a major aspect of the Meru culture, both as religious heritage and as living things endowed with certain attributes and unique vital forces that impacted on human life. It was for these reasons that as in many other aspects of their lives, they invoked the power of plants in peace making, reconciliation and healing. For example in the Tigania and Igembe sub-ethnic groups of the Meru, a bunch of Miraa twigs given to a friend with whom one has had a sour relationship could heal the rift, Thuku (2008:177), and Kiruthu Kapiyo and Muma (1996:67). Other functions of plants included sacred trees of worship such as the Mugumo (*Ficus thaningii*), Mukuu (*Ficus cycomorus*) used in curse and oath rituals, Mutunguu (*Commiphora zimermanii*) used as a boundary plant, Mwariki (*Ricinus communis*) whose seeds are used as a source of ritual oil, Muoru (*Pycnostachys Umbrosa*) used in making a ritual bowl during expulsion of a habitual criminal, Kairunjwe (*Rytigynia uhligii*) used in blessing rituals to symbolize fertility and good will, Ntima (*Pennisetum Clandestinum*) whose leaves are held during prayers, Marigu (*Musa sapientum*) ritual food plant. Traditional court houses built with its dry leaves and muthigii (cordial oralis) used as a sacred staff of elder hood, Thuku, (2008:175). This is illustrated in the table below:
### Table 1.1: Cultural roles of other plants among the Ameru community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Name</th>
<th>Botanical Name</th>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Uses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mugumo</td>
<td><em>Ficus thoningii/F. natalensis</em></td>
<td>Calm and peaceful</td>
<td>Used as a prayer tree. Leaves used in blessing ceremonies. Used by elders as a meeting place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mukuu</td>
<td><em>Ficus sycomorus</em></td>
<td>Calm and peaceful</td>
<td>A sacred prayer tree. Leaves used in blessing ceremonies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mukenia</td>
<td><em>Lantana trifolia</em></td>
<td>Calm and peaceful</td>
<td>Used in blessing rituals to signify peace, health and happiness. Its name means ‘a thing that makes happiness’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mwaariki</td>
<td><em>Ricinus communis</em></td>
<td>Calm and peaceful</td>
<td>Seeds are a source of ritual oil.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mwaaraka</td>
<td><em>Iboza multiflora</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>Boundary plant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mukuuu</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hot and angry</td>
<td>Used in curse and oath rituals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muooru</td>
<td><em>Psycnostachys umbrosa</em></td>
<td>Hot and angry</td>
<td>Used in making of a ritual bow during expulsion of a habitual criminal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muthande</td>
<td><em>Bersama abyssinica</em></td>
<td>Hot and angry</td>
<td>Used in various hot rituals such as oath and cursing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Species</td>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>Uses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muiru</td>
<td>Vangueria volkensii</td>
<td>Hot and angry</td>
<td>Used in curse and oath rituals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muthuuri</td>
<td>Euphobia friesorium</td>
<td>Hot and angry</td>
<td>Used in curse rituals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muraa</td>
<td>Catha edulis</td>
<td>Calm and peaceful</td>
<td>Bunch of twigs given to a friend to heal a broken relationship. Bunch given for betrothal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muroo</td>
<td>Doyvalis abyssinica</td>
<td>Calm and peaceful</td>
<td>Used in various rituals such as blessings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murao</td>
<td>Cassia didymobotrya</td>
<td>Calm and peaceful</td>
<td>Sacred shrub. Leaves used during prayers and in blessing ceremonies. A green branch used for betrothal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutunguu</td>
<td>Commiphora zimermanii</td>
<td>Calm and peaceful</td>
<td>Boundary plant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutorombo</td>
<td>Solanecio manii</td>
<td>Calm and peaceful</td>
<td>Boundary plant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muthiigi</td>
<td>Cordia ovalis</td>
<td>Calm and peaceful</td>
<td>Sacred staff of elderhood delivered from its wood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marigu</strong></td>
<td><em>Musa sapientum</em></td>
<td>Calm and peaceful</td>
<td>Ritual food plant. Traditional courthouses built with its dry leaves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kamama</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Calm and peaceful</td>
<td>Used in various rituals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kigoka</strong></td>
<td><em>Cynodon dactylon</em></td>
<td>Calm and peaceful</td>
<td>Used in various rituals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gitima</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Calm and peaceful</td>
<td>Used in various rituals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ntima</strong></td>
<td><em>Pennisetum clandestinum</em></td>
<td>Calm and peaceful</td>
<td>Leaves held during prayers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kairunjwe</strong></td>
<td><em>Rytigynia uhligii</em></td>
<td>Calm and peaceful</td>
<td>Used in blessing rituals to symbolise fertility and good luck.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Thuku’s work contributed significantly to this study since it helped us understand how plants were used as symbols of seeking cessation of violence and reconciliation, rituals and performing certain other duties and functions as complements to one another religiously within the society. This study, therefore, sought to examine the traditional use of Miraa toward complementing other plants.

**1.8.7 Economic effects on the use of Miraa**

Miraa provides greater rewards than non-indigenous crops such as tea, coffee and cotton, Goldsmith (1994). Farmers get better prices in general and obtain more
frequent payments unlike formal cash crops for which payments are received in lump sums at certain times of the year. Profits potentially made from the crop have led to tension, most notably in 1999 when conflict erupted between some Meru and Somali over perceived exploitation of producers by the latter, Goldsmith(1999); Carrier, (2007). Despite such tension and other concerns such as the use of child labour in its harvesting, Carrier, (2007: chapter one); Mutuma (2010:56), khat has been an economic lifeline for Igembe District in the last several decades.

Goldsmith and Carrier assess the economic effects of the use of Miraa but very scanty socio-cultural effects which the study sought to address.

1.8.8 Other effects on the use of Miraa

Guantai (1982), isolated *ephedrine, cathinone and DNE* from fresh Miraa twigs that had been bought from river-road Nairobi. The research analysed them from their effects on blood pressure, heart pulse, nervous tissue, smooth muscle, oartic strip, illium and metabolism and DNE. The research found no significant difference in chemical constituents of Miraa from different localities and that DNE was spread in the twigs, leaves, branches and stems. The report calls for conclusive research on chemistry, pharmacology, social, economic, and legal issues on Miraa (pg 167).Guantai focussed more on the scientific effects of Miraa to the chewers but does not address the socio-cultural effects on the users which the study aimed at assessing and address.
1.9 Theoretical framework

Since the colonial experience in various underdeveloped countries, many theories have been used to study the socio-cultural changes and their effects to societies. Several theories could apply to the study on socio-cultural changes in the farming and use of Miraa in Igembe District of Meru County Kenya 1940-2014. For instance in the structural-functionalism approach, August Comte, Emile Durkheim, Herbert Spencer and Talcott Persons, see society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability. The approach asserts that our lives are guided by social structures and each social structure having a social function. Thompson (2006). Although this theory would be used in the study of Miraa use in the role that Miraa plays among other plants in the socio-cultural life of the Igembe community, the theory ignores inequalities of social class and gender in society.

The symbolic interaction approach is a framework for building theory that sees society as the product of the everyday interaction of individuals. Key figures in the development of this approach include Max Weber, George Herbert Mead, Erving Golf man, George Homans and Peter Blau. This theory focuses on patterns of social interaction in specific settings. Miraa was used by the Ameru to facilitate social interactions in the manner in which it symbolized activities and depending on the way it was used carried different meanings. However, the theory does not fit into the whole study of the socio-cultural changes in the farming and use of Miraa in Igembe District of Meru County in Kenya between 1940-2014 because its micro-orientation sometimes results into the error of ignoring the influence of larger social structures and second by emphasizing what is unique, it risks overloading the effects of culture, class and gender. Thompson (2008).
The proponents of the social conflict approach see society as an arena of inequality generating conflict and change. Thompson (2006:6). Key figures in this tradition include Karl Marx and WEB Du Bois. This theory emerged as an alternative intellectual framework to structural-functionalism, Achola, (1990:13) in Gimode, (1993:13). According to Gimode, the conflict theory concerned itself with antecedents, history and competition and change in society. He argues that Lewis Cosers perspective of conflict functionalism is more meaningful in the study of social change. In this view, there are imbalances, tensions and conflicts in society. Taken from the standpoint of conflict and harmony therefore, this perspective of conflict functionalism seems to be the most appropriate within which to conceive this study.

In the study of the social-cultural changes in the farming and use of Miraa in Igembe therefore, the structural functionalism and the social-conflict approaches share a macro-level orientation focusing on broad social structures that shape the society as a whole.

According to an annual report of the world Geopolitics of drugs O.G.D, (2000:189) use of Miraa did not only bring about mutual dependence but also ethnic conflict was observed in the Miraa industry as it argued “The mysterious death of opposition activist “Nkuraru”, in London in January 1999, and the skirmishes it caused in Kenya between Meru and Somali traders on the Nyambene Hills made it seem, for a few days, that supply route of Kenyan “khat” (Miraa) to Somali and Europe had been totally paralyzed. Meru transporters and small sale dealers (most of who belong to Tigania sub-ethnic group, whereas the producers are mainly members of the Igembe sub-ethnic group) accused their Somali rivals of having Ntai wa Nkuraru poisoned. He had gone to England with the specific intention of opening up the legal market
there for them and developing European (particularly Swedish) and North American contraband Networks *The world* geopolitics of drugs annual report (1998/1999) at http://research.bbcnews.net .

The above is just an example of the many conflicts witnessed in the Miraa industry that are experienced locally, nationally and internationally, while Harmoniously, Miraa is thought to be indispensable for educating children, paying hospital bills and in any case for securing their source of income (Shin-Ichiro, 2008:143). The social conflict theory, therefore, was appropriate as it integrated both the role of Miraa in securing harmony in the society and its effects resulting to conflict within the society.

The social capital theory was in occasional use from about 1890, but became widely used in the 1990s. Social-capital refers to the institutions, relationships and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society’s social interactions. Social capital, therefore, is not just the sum of the institutions which underpin a society but glue that holds them. Key figures in the development of this theory include Platteau, Woolcock, Bourdieu, Coleman, Granovetter and Putman. Social capital is a broad term that encompasses the “norms and networks facilitating collective actions for mutual benefits. Woolcock (1998:155). It is, therefore, a context dependent and takes many different interrelated forms including obligations (within a group), trust, intergenerational closure, norms and sanctions with underlying assumptions that relationships between individuals are durable and subjectively felt. Bourdieu (1983:249).
Social capital theory facilitates the communication in the community across ethnic lines and helps the administration carry out its job in particular peace, security and justice.

Putman suggested that social capital would facilitate co-operation and mutually supportive relations in communities and nations and would therefore be a valuable means of combating many of the social disorders inherent in modern societies, for example crime.

Pierre Bourdieu defines social capital as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possessions of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition”.

James Coleman defined social capital functionally as “a variety of entities with two elements in common: they all consist of some social structure and they facilitate certain actions of actors within the structure”. Therefore social capital in this study would mean anything that facilitates individual or collective action, generated by networks of relationships, reciprocity, trust and social norms.

Without social capital in the area of education, teachers and parents that play a responsibility in a student’s learning, the significant impact on their child’s academic learning can rely on this factors. With focus on parents contributing to their child’s progress as well as being influenced by social capital in education without the contribution by the parents less opportunity and participation that makes the school sustainable and easy to run in the community, a factor that would not be realistic or achievable in Igembe without Miraa which is the main source of income for the Igembe community.
Social capital theory was therefore appropriate to the study as it was used to explain the use of Miraa among the Igembe as agent of peace in building bridges and management of tensions, facilitating communication and helping the administration carry out its job and in particular peace, security and justice. The theory was also used to explain the role of women in the farming of Miraa and use. Prior to 1940 and up to 1960s women were non-participants in the Miraa industry and their participation in the farming and use of Miraa was almost minimal. Social capital would be appropriate in assessing the role of Miraa in education with focus on parents contributing to their child’s academic progress as well as being influenced by social capital in education.

The social capital and the social conflict approaches were merged in order to have a holistic study on the changes in the farming and use of Miraa in Igembe District of Meru County. While the social conflict approach was appropriate in determining both conflict and harmony within the society, the social capital approach assessed the impact of these changes and further recommended the best approach to be taken to safeguard the Miraa industry.
1.10 Research Methodology

1.10.1 Introduction

This section covers research design, target population, sample size and sampling technique, research instruments; validity and reliability of research instruments, procedure of data collection and data analysis techniques and ethical considerations.

1.10.2 Design and methodology

The study used ex-post fecto research design. Ex-post fecto research design is defined by Wiersman (1995) as research in which action has already occurred and the researcher studies the independent variables. This was appropriate for this study because the socio-cultural changes in the farming and use of Miraa are investigated after they have already taken place. Tuckman (1978) and Wiersman (1995) have explained that in ex-post fecto research, the investigator examines variables without chang them. This justified the choice of the design because the researchers were trying to establish the possible changes in the farming and use of Miraa and their effect to the Igembe society, thus possible relationship between dependent and independent variables. The socio-cultural changes in the farming and use of Miraa between 1940 and 2014 were independent variables which could not be manipulated by the researcher.

1.10.3 Area of the study

The study was carried out in the Igembe District of Meru County-Kenya. Igembe is both an ethnic group (one of the nine major Meru sub-ethnic groups) and a geographical administrative area (Mwaniki, 1986:1). These districts also form the
three constituencies of Igembe. The study focussed on the three districts that form the greater Igembe. Maua town is the headquarters of Igembe south, Kangeta town is the headquarters of Igembe central while Laare town is the headquarters of Igembe north. Igembe is separated from Tigania by the famous Nyambene range that hosts the historic Micii Mikuru (Deserted ancient homesteads of first Bantu migrations in Mt. Kenya zone, (Mwaniki 1986). To the East Igembe contains a section of the Meru National park and finally shares a common border with Boran (Isiolo). To the South East and section of South West, the Igembe border the Tharaka rather indistinctly.

According to the 2009 census, the total population of Igembe was 482,756. Agriculture forms the main economic activity in the area with Miraa production taking the lead, other crops include Tea, coffee, millet, sorghum, pigeon peace, maize and beans. Livestock keeping is also practiced. The research focused on Miraa commodity and particularly the socio-cultural changes in its farming and use from 1940 to 2014. From observations it was noted that in all the Miraa farming regions, Miraa took 80% and above of all the land that belonged to any farmer where for foodcrops intercropping with Miraa was done.

Figure 1.1: Map of Meru County
Figure 1.2: Map of Igembe

1.10.4 Target Population

The target population consisted of Njuri Ncheke elders, public administrators, primary school Headteachers, village elders, Miraa businessmen and women, Miraa farmers and members the clergy. In addition some civil servants who were not involved with the Miraa industry were interviewed as neutral persons in order to set an adjective opinion on the role of Miraa in the region.
Table 1.2: The population per division was as follows in table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIVISION</th>
<th>POPULATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Igembe Central</td>
<td>41,944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Igembe East</td>
<td>28,575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Igembe North</td>
<td>58,046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Igembe South</td>
<td>18,209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Igembe South East</td>
<td>18,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Igembe South West</td>
<td>21,791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laare</td>
<td>65,428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutuati</td>
<td>56,730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ndoleli</td>
<td>54,730</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 1999 Population and Housing census vol. 1 Central Bureau of Statistics

NB: according to the 2009 population census, the total population had risen to 238,958 males and 243,798 females totalling to 482,756.

1.10.5 Sampling techniques and sample size

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) a sample size of between 10 and 30 percent is a good representation of the target population.

A sample size of 94 persons was sampled for the interview. The collection of primary evidence involved using purposive sampling. Those identified for oral interviews
included 16 both men and women who had knowledge on Miraa farming and use. They were selected on the basis of their knowledge on Miraa farming and use. They were selected on the basis of their knowledge on Miraa. 78 Knowledgable informants were interviewed through questionnaires or standardized interviews. A total of 94 informants were therefore interviewed. The researcher identified the informants in two ways. First, the researcher used information from NYAMITA. Those who did not give information on Miraa but also helped identify knowledgable informants and sometimes assisted the researcher to reach some of them.

Those already interviewed helped the researcher to contact other informants.

1.10.6 Research instruments
The data for research was collected using questionnaires and observation schedule. The questionnaires were selected on the strength that they are more commonly used in quantitative research as their standardized, highly structured design was compatible with that design. Questionnaires were appropriate as they collected information that was not directly observable as they inquired about the traditional farming and use of Miraa and the changes on the same, and the socio-cultural effects to the people of Igembe district on the same during the past period.

There were six sets of questionnaires. One for the Njuri Ncheke elders and village elders, the second for the Miraa traders, third for house hold heads whose spouses were Miraa business men or women, the fourth for heads of primary schools, fifth for public administrators or formally provincial administration prefereably chiefs/assistant chiefs and finally for members of the clergy.
1.10.7 Observation schedule

During visits to the selected areas the researcher made observations on the situation in the sampled locations and paid particular attention to areas allocated to Miraa farming and people engaged in the Miraa industry in terms of age and gender; alongside the process of Miraa harvesting, sorting and transport. This assisted in comparing and contrasting data obtained from other sources. The purpose of making personal observation was to obtain additional and collaborative data which enhanced the data gathered through questionnaire. Personal observation enabled the researcher to take note of socio-cultural activities associated with Miraa in the community.

Data was also obtained from secondary sources. This included books, farmers, thesis and dissertation, seminars and conference papers, newspapers as well as the internet. General information about Miraa in the world, Africa and Kenya were collected from Kenyatta university’s post-modern library, Jomo Kenyatta memorial library of the university of Nairobi and Chuka university library.

Another primary source involved archival literature. The documents in the Kenya national archives provided the relevant data obtained from political records, annual colonial reports on Miraa, memorandam of understanding letters and other information on Miraa in Kenya.

1.10.8 Instruments Validity

A research instrument is valid depending on how the data collected is related in terms of how effective the items have sampled significant aspects of the purpose of the study (Orodho, 2005). Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) define instrument validity as
the accuracy, meaningfulness and technical soundness of the instruments. It is the degree to which a test measures what it purports to measure. It is also the extent to which the instrument is capable of extracting information desired by the researcher. Borg and Gall (1989) points out the four main types of validity mainly: Content validity, predictive validity, concurrent validity and construct validity. For this study content validity was established. Content validity is defined as the degree to which the sample of an instrument item represents the content that the instrument is designed to measure.

All data was subjected to quantative analysis and all data obtained from various sources was categorized according to sources and the historical period.

The data were presented in descriptive form by use of statistics to identify the percentage of school dropouts as a result of Miraa economy. The qualitative measurements were also used to measure the group cohesion on the impact of Miraa on conflict resolutions or societal norms. On school dropouts, the quantitative measurements were used to distinguish the percentage of dropout rates between girls and boys.

In addition, the secondary data obtained from various sources were subjected to historical criticism in order to verify their validity. Data from various sources were corroborated by comparing it to other sources of information and where oral data conflicted from one informant to another, the secondary sources were referred for clarity.
1.10.9 Reliability

Thorndike and Hege (1961) points out that for an instrument to be valid it must be reliable. In testing the reliability of an instrument, test re-test technique was used. The researcher prepared the instruments and administered them to respective respondents. The instruments were administered to the same people a second time after one week. The responses got from the first and second time were correlated mathematically to establish the reliability of the instrument. To do this the Spearman’s Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (r) was used.

To obtain (r) the following formula was used.

\[
    r = \frac{N\sum XY - (\sum X)(\sum Y)}{\sqrt{(\sum X^2 - (\sum X)^2)(\sum Y^2 - (\sum Y)^2)}}
\]

Where X = Scores on test 1

Y = Scores on test 2

\(\sum X\) = Sum of X scores

\(\sum Y\) = Sum of Y scores

\(\sum X^2\) = Sum of squares of X scores

\(\sum Y^2\) = Sum of squares of Y scores.

\(\sum XY\) = Sum or product of X and Y scores.

N = Sum of paired scores

\(r = \text{Correlation Coefficient}\)

In this calculation the correlation coefficient was found out to be 0.869 for Njuri Ncheke elders and village elders questionnaire, 0.834 for Head teachers of primary
schools questionnaire, 0.792 for public administrators, 0.782 of the clergy and 0.781 for business men and women questionnaire.

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (1999), a correlation coefficient of 0.7 and above is required in order to conclude that the instruments are reliable. The acquired data by the researchers was both quantitative and qualitative and was analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 18, a popular software program used by social and behavioral scientists. Descriptive statistics was used in analyzing data. The researcher therefore asked the same question to several informants especially when two informants gave contradictory information that required clarity. In this way the researcher was able to acquire data that were reliable.

1.10.10 Data collection procedures.

In order to carry out the study, a research permit was obtained from the Kenya commission for science, technology and innovation. The notification of the study was obtained from the office of the county commission and that of the director of education Meru County for the purpose of the primary schools visited. The names of the respondents and the Headteachers of the primary schools were acquired through random sampling. The content addresses and the locations of the schools to be visited were got from the offices of the D.E.Os Igembe south and Igembe north. Schools in Igembe central that was curved from north and Igembe south had their records in the their mother districts. For other respondents, chiefs were contacted for further direction. The instruments were left with the respondents for one week as they required time to respond to the questions but as for oral interviews, the respondents responded immediately although to some revisits were made as time for them was not
available on first appointments. During the visits the researcher made observations on the land allocated to the farming of Miraa by a particular farmer, harvesting, sorting, and transporting according to age and gender.

1.10.11 Data analysis techniques

The data acquired by the researcher was both quantitative and qualitative and was analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 18, a popular software program utilized by social and behavioral scientists. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically by classifying it into major themes from which opinions from respondents were coded and put into frequency tables. Quantitative data was analyzed by use of descriptive statistics supported by tables, frequency distribution and percentages the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS), a computer software that generates frequencies (f) and percentage (%).

Data collected went through the processes of organization, clustering, interpreting and conclusion. Data was therefore organized by selecting, simplifying and reduction from the form of written field notes to ensure that the data was manageable and comprehensive and can be used to give preliminary conclusions. Before processing data was coded to enable responses to be grouped in categories. Finally descriptive statistics was used to summarize the data to allow the researcher to meaningfully describe the distribution of scores or measurements using few statistics.

1.10.12 Data management and ethical considerations

Sommer, R and Sommer B. (2004) argue that ethical considerations such as confidenciality, anonymity and avoidance of deception are very important issues in
social research. The researcher explained the purpose of the study to the respondents and assured them of confidentiality of their responses and identities. Research ethics is therefore an appropriateness of the researcher’s behavior in relation to the rights of those who become the subject of the research project and those who are affected by it. Therefore;

a) The researcher maintained a high degree of confidentiality at all times. Only the people conducting the survey knew the identity of the participants. Otherwise the question guide did not require respondents to give their names.

b) The researcher accepted the responsibility for his work and for the contribution to the whole study.

c) Integrity was maintained in data analysis and presentation. In doing this, the researcher; presented his findings and interpretations honestly and objectively. Avoided untrue/deceptive or doctored results. Provided data for analysis by other responsible parties with appropriate safeguards for privacy concerns. this directed any criticism of a statistical inquiry to the inquiry itself and not to the individuals conducting it.

1.10.13 Challenges experienced during fieldwork

A number of problems were experienced during the fieldwork. For instance, many of the potential informants were initially unwilling to divulge information concerning Miraa either due to ignorance or due to the fear that Miraa was a sensitive issue in the current politics. They felt that if they exposed the negative effects of Miraa, the information would make the government of Kenya follow European countries and ban Miraa too. Others did not want their sensitive issues like the effects of Miraa on the
spread of HIV and AIDS. Their efforts to conceal information meant that many were not prepared to reveal all the relevant details that were of great interest. Due to the frequency of visits, rapport was created and confidence was established and that eased flow of information.
CHAPTER TWO

THE GENESIS OF MIRAA AND ITS TRADITIONAL FARMING AND USE AMONG THE MERU OF KENYA; 1940 – 1963

2.1 Introduction

This section presents the traditional farming and use of Miraa in the greater Meru region of Kenya during the period 1940-1963. The study focused on the period between 1940 and 1963 in order to examine the indigenous methods of Miraa farming and interrogate its use by the Igembe people during the colonial period. Farming of the Miraa commodity has existed for a long time. It is hard to state exactly when the farming and use of this commodity started. It is even hard to find documented literature that can highlight the discovery and origin of this substance. Oral sources say that the discovery of Miraa was accidental. The shepherds noted their goats feeding on the Miraa leaves and getting euphoria and when they tasted they felt some workfulness. It was a tradition for shepherds to taste what their flocks were feeding on because they believed what their flocks ate could not harm humans. The shepherds then got accustomed to chewing the leaves but all oral accounts never mention the dates and period when this took place. This caught the attention of many people as the substance came to be a good stimulant (Hjort, 1974).

Mwaniki (1986) and Carrier (2003) argue that Miraa trees grew wild in the forest originally. However, it is in Nyambene Hills in Meru County that Miraa has the longest history of its farming and use. Nyambene mountain range lies to the North east of Mount Kenya and includes Igembe and Tigania subcommunities. Today, Miraa in
Kenya which also known as Khat is found in large quantities in Igembe and Tigania regions. This areas produce the largest quantity as well as the best quality world wide. Most of the population living in this regions of the country major in growing and trading in this commodity which does well compared with most other cash crops due to lack of natural waters or rainfall for agricultural production, Bururia D.N and Nyagha J.N (2014).

Miraa, the leaf *Catha edulis* forsk is chewed by millions of men and women primarily in Eastern and Northeastern Africa and Yemen among others. When chewed, it enhances wakefulness, lessens hunger and increases physical energy and mental concentration. In regard to its effects on sexual desire and performance, testimonies and claims vary widely because whereas some communities like the Somali women in Isiolo (Republic of Kenya, 1996), argue that Miraa demands their male folk, the Igembe argue of improved libido as a result of Miraa use. Often labelled as narcotic, *khat* (Miraa) is classified as a controlled substance in at least Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Spain, and Sweden. It is illegal in at least Canada, Eritrea, Saudi Arabia, Tanzania, United States and lastly Britain where it is classified as a schedule drug alongside heroin LSD and Marijuana; (Carmichael Tim at http://escholarship.org/UC/Item/8249f4j2).

There is much growing and chewing of Miraa. Much relates to how *khat* was diffused throughout the region especially the influence of Yemen migrants who settled in East Africa and Madagascar. The Yemen influence on *khat* culture is still felt linguistically, most obviously in the word takssin – used in Kenya for the plug of *khat* stored in the cheek while chewing – and Yazzina – a word used in Madagascar for
khat. Both words are derived from the Arabic word for “to store”, in reference to the plug.

In Ethiopia khat farming and consumption have a long tradition. It is mainly produced in the Hererge highlands in Eastern Ethiopia, which borders Northern Somalia formerly the British Protectorate of Somaliland. (Gebissa 2004:36-37). Gebissa (ibid:76) quotes Richard Burton on khat in Ethiopia among the Harari in 1853. Khat use in Ethiopia increased as Oromo pastoralists became sedentary farmers and began converting to Islam (Gebissa 2004:52. Gebissa (ibid: 52) writes: by 1910, khat chewing had become a widespread practice among the Islamized Oromo, among whom the leaf quickly attained social, cultural and religious importance. Non-Muslims however, considered khat chewing to be a sign of conversion to the Islamic faith. Khat has become one of the nation’s major cash crop, where it is sold nationally, regionally and globally reaching as far as the UK and USA (Anderson, 2007) although currently not anymore.

The use of khat in Somalia especially in regions close to Ethiopia apart from Southern Somalia which is more recent has a long tradition. The British government was concerned with consumption in the Somaliland protectorate that led them to attempt one of the earliest pieces of legislations against khat in 1921 (The laws of Somaliland Protectorate, London, 1923:291-292). As for Southern Somalia, Cassanelli writes that while southerners once viewed khat chewing as the somewhat eccentric and amusing habit of the Northern Nomads and traders, the idea spread into Mogadishu and elsewhere in the late 1960s and early 70s that the substance offered protection against
Cholera and Dysentry (Cassanelli, 1986: 240); According to Cassanelli, this helped boost its popularity.

In Djibouti, formerly French Somaliland, *khat* is incredibly popular too (Gebissa 2004). Throughout much of the world, there is now an association of *khat* with the Somali people. When Somalia disintegrated as a nation state in the early 1990s, the Somali community, with its Miraa chewing demands, was scattered across the globe; *khat* has, therefore, become widely known in the west recently due to the great increase in number of Somali people living in Europe, North America and Australia.

In Madagascar, the history of *Khat* farming and consumption dates back to the early 20th century (Clouet, 1972: 593). Throughout the North of Madagascar, people have associated *khat* with people of Yemen descent referred to locally as ‘Arabou’. The migration of Yemenis to Madagascar probably coincides with the development of the port in the city of Aden in Yemen after the 1st World War (Weir 1985:19). These Yemenis brought khat with them and planted it on a small scale in kitchen gardens. The first people to grow it commercially were the Creoles – white farmers of French descent. When the French were forced to leave the country in the mid 1970s amidst a socialist’s revolution, others took over the farms. The oldest and most productive establishment on Amber Mountain is owned by a family that bought land from the Creoles family of mixed Yemen, Malagasy and Creole descent. According to Minquoy, farmers in the area once survived while growing vegetables, after the French departed and many took to growing *khat* instead and supporting this growth of production has been growth and consumption. In the past twenty or so years, *khat*
chewing has gained significant popularity among the broader Malagasy population particularly among those identified as coastal peoples or cotiers.

According to Turnell, *(Standard, August 24, 2005:4)*, *khat* is a flowering narcotic shrub that grows in the Middle East and East Africa and predates the use of tobacco and coffee. In Britain, by 2005, *khat* was imported from Kenya via Heathrow airport on daily basis. Turnell argues that in the same period (2005) in Leicester and Britain in general, people who chewed *khat* did it socially, like the traditional British ‘legal drugs’ (cigarettes and alcohol).

Khat is not restricted to the above countries, however, Beckerleg’s research reveals its substantial history in Uganda (Beckerleg, 2009), while Hirst documents the usage of wild *khat* by Xhosa in the Eastern cape (Hirst, 2003). Consumption also continues in Tanzania despite its illegality there (Carrier, 2007:242). And as mentioned above, *khat* has diffused throughout the western world, where it is consumed in its leafy form often by immigrants from Somalia, Yemen or Kenya.

Another consensus derives from *khas* incorporation into the global rhetoric of the “war on drugs”. In this rhetoric, *khat* is conflated with other – usually prohibited substances, and subject to campaigns to have it prohibited in turn. This forms the context in which proliferate polarized debates where *khat* is praised as a socially – cohesive marker of cultural identity, economic miracle and harmless stimulant, while on the other hand it is demonized as an impediment to development and as a social menace as evidenced in the study. (Shin – Ichiro, 2008:142). It is difficult to evaluate the fluctuations of *khat* farming. It is however, interesting to note that a document submitted to the sixth session of the Eastern Mediterranean Region Bureau of the
World Health Organization (document EM/RC 6/5, 9th July, 1956) stated that its use was spreading so rapidly that cultivators grew *khat* instead of food and other cash crops.

The farming of *khat* became the more and more important and the government of the different areas in which it was grown took measures to control it by way of taxation and registration of the users. The first attempt seems to have been made in Britain Somaliland, where in 1921 the farming of khat was prohibited, as was its sale, except by licenced vendors who were permitted to sell it only to properly registered consumers. Owing to difficulties of application that measure was subsequently withdrawn (Commission on Narcotic Drugs document E/2891 E/CN. 7/315).

In Kenya, it is of major production and consumption in the mountain range to the North Eastern of Mt Kenya of Nyambene Hills where it is cultivated by the Bantu speaking Meru especially the Igembe and Tigania sub-ethnic communities of the Meru County (Carrier, 2007, 2005, Goldsmith 1999, Hgvt, 1974). Written accounts of the late 19th century show that *khat* was already being cultivated and consumed in the Nyambene region during the pre-colonial times, while Meru oral traditions supported by the extreme age of *khat* trees depict a long history in the region. These old trees provided a symbolic association with ancestors and formed an important part of the cultural identity, an identity strengthened by its economic income to the Nyambenes (Igembe and Tigania sub-ethnic groups of the Meru). *Khat* is also used in many ceremonies, including marriage negotiations and circumcision (Carrier 2005a:540, 2005b:208-209), a feature noted and tolerated by the colonial authorities despite the
disdain with which many officials viewed the substance (Anderson and Carrier, 2007).

In the 1940s, there were a lot of politics that revolved around the *khat* production and use. Much that was published on *khat* appeared in the popular press, refer to its production and use as a social problem and completely ignored focus on *khat* positive social and cultural role in terms of strengthening identity and forging social links. While *khat* has never been under international control, individual governments since the colonial era often struggled in vain to prohibit *khat* production and consumption. The earliest colonial attempt to control *khat* was effected by the British in the protectorate of Somaliland in 1921. They banned farming of *khat* within the territory and those willing to consume legally had to possess a licence. The substance was seen by many as having serious negative health and social effects. Kerringant (1959) writing about the French Somaliland (later Djibouti) for the united nations office on drugs and crime claimed that it caused increased susceptibility to diseases, numbered mental faculties, and family breakdown as members could turn to begging, theft or prostitution to satisfy their cravings. Gebissa (2004) reports that the French government in Djibouti first implemented policies to curb *khat* imports and consumption in 1952, but that consumption actually tripled in three years.

In the British protectorate and colony of Aden, which later became south Yemen, people consumed imported *khat* in great quantities. A ban on *khat* imports to Aden (but not Aden protectorate) in 1957 caused a flurry of reactions not only in Aden but also in Ethiopia, Aden’s major supplier. Over a year later, the ban was lifted because
it had failed to prohibit consumption and caused the government to lose much revenue (Brooke, 1960).

In Kenya, colonial authorities tried to control *khat* through number ordinances in the 1940s and 1950s. They initially introduced a permit system for trade and consumption within Kenya, but then later attempted to prohibit it completely in northern Kenya where it was seen as most problematic (Kenya colony 1946, 1951).

In certain districts in Kenya, the possession of *khat* was made an offence, the council of Isiolo took that decision in 1934 and 1935. The native council of the Meru district adopted a resolution prohibiting the use of *khat* by those who were not registered consumers. The annual report of the Kenya Department of Agriculture for 1947 noted that after *khat* (Miraa) had been controlled, a quantity of £92,793 was exported from Meru District of the Central Province, NCST (1996). From viewpoint, *khat* was the second important item (this sum apparently refers to the period beginning of April to the end of 1947).

Meru emphasized *khat* role in inducing social interaction, and contrast this with other fraught sociability induced by alcohol. This comes out strongly in the Yemen literature, notably in the work of Shelagh Weir (1985). She describes Yemeni *khat* parties as rather formal affairs with “a structural identity and name of their own (1985: 144). At such parties even seating positions have social significance, “the seating order reflects and affirms to a greater or lesser degree, the ranking of participants, “(Ibid: 133). And such parties are not merely recreational and relaxation but also one attends to strike business deals, expands one’s social networks, and even to meet local politicians. In short, the party is an important social institution.
2.2 The genesis of Miraa farming in Meru

Miraa differs from area to area. There are mainly many Miraa varieties. Ethiopian Miraa is long and the consumers chew only the freshly tip throwing away the rest. It is similar to the Kenyan Miraa found in the Chyulu Hills and Mt. Elgon area which is very bulky to transport. It is very wasteful because it is only the fleshy tip that is chewed. Yemen Miraa is similar to the Miraa grown in Embu called “Muguka”, which is very leafy with no twigs. The varieties are apparently dictated by soil types and the climate in which the Miraa is grown and at times the tastes and quality of Miraa desired by the particular chewers. The other Miraa variety grows in Nyambene area (Igembe and Tigania) of Meru County, which has a number of brands, namely; Kangeta, Kisa, Kata, Marutubu, SS, AA, Alele and Liboi among others. This Nyambene Miraa is rated to be of the best quality by consumers due to its portability, minimal waste, potency and ease of transportation which is due to the soil type and climate of the area. Baariu & Kimathi, (2004:2)

Twig length and palatability both of which depend on the age of Miraa, determine Igembe Miraa brands. The desired brand in turn determines harvesting time and is mainly dependent on market demands. As noted, Miraa from this area is rated the best quality Miraa by consumers because of its palatability, minimal wastes, potency and ease of transportation. It is among this community that the Miraa crop has acquired the greatest value, (Ibid).

According to Mwaniki, one does not find Miraa in many parts of the Republic of Kenya although the eating or chewing of the same is done in major urban areas like Nairobi, Mombasa, Kisumu, Marsabit, Wajir, Isiolo and Garisa. He argues that even
in Meru which is the most famous district (presently Meru County) in Miraa production, it is only Igembe which produces it. But from the mid, 1950s a few Mbeere began growing a little Miraa for “home consumption” around Siakago market, on Makunguru Hill. About 1970s or there about, the Mwimbi of Meru introduced Miraa plants by the Kiera or Kiamwimbi Hill zone spreading to Igoji area. It was at the same time some Imenti tried some Miraa on some type of ornamental basis. The Chuka were not also left behind. It appears as if the Tigania neighbouring the Igembe by the Nyambene range had begun trying the planting of Miraa before all the above, perhaps in early 1950s. However, one can safely conclude that only the Igembe grow Miraa on large and commercial scale while all others are either beginning to take part in the lucrative Miraa enterprise or merely growing domestic or even ornamental Miraa.

An analysis of the data yielded from the informants and questionnaires revealed findings within areas of the research questions. This corresponded with the existing literature which were categorized to form major patterns. Research questions asked included when the first Miraa was planted in Igembe and from where it came from. The data revealed that Miraa was not a newly introduced plant in Igembe District of Meru County. It was consumed even before the British colonial rule. A white explorer who visited the area in the late 19th century wrote that “they are much addicted to the habit of chewing the leaves of a certain shrub, indigenous to the country, but which they also cultivate for convenience. Some of the old men are never without their mouths full of this green stuff” (Neumann, 1898:32-33).
The Igembe informants have varied answers on the origins of the Igembe Miraa. James Murungi argued that Miraa is a traditional plant in Igembe and it was a natural plant found in the forest within the region. According to Zakaria M’thirari, Miraa grew wild and that the Igembe people met them as they migrated from “Mboa”, their mythical place of origin.

M’thirari from Athiru Ruujine argued that it is not possible for anyone to pinpoint when the first Miraa was planted in Igembe because most of the owners of the very old Miraa plants inherited them from those who had also inherited them. Thus a Miraa plantation could have been inherited by several generations. He said that Miraa outlived the owner and even tens of generations.

Joseph Mwibua also from Athiru Ruujine argued that Miraa was in Meru even before the Meru arrived in the area around 1750. He argued that before the Meru settled in the area the Cushites who preceded the Meru, used it and therefore, the Meru adapted to the culture. Therefore, one point that is clear about the origin of Miraa in Igembe and from oral traditions is that in Igembe, Miraa seems to be a natural plant, that once planted, Miraa survived there to the present and that it is as old as Igembe society or even older, and that Igembe seems to have had a long history of the Miraa culture than any other part of the Meru County and its environs.

Zakaria M’thirari told the researcher that the discovery of stimulating effects of Miraa is attributed to an unnamed pastoralist (herder) who noticed that his goats were underly stimulated positively after eating Miraa leaves. The hearder confirmed his suspicion when he chewed fresh Miraa shoots and experienced euphoria and wakefulness and thus the start of domestication of Miraa about 300 years ago.
It is not clear the exact period when the domestication of Miraa was done in the region. The first accounts on Miraa in Nyambene was written during the 1890s by European explorers and hunters who visited the Nyambene Hills in the Meru area. Arthur Newmann reported that no meeting with the elders of Meru’s Igembe community was complete without the chewing of khat stems, A. Newmann (1982). The American hunter W.H Chanler passed through Igembe a little later commenting on the cultural aspect of khat “The young men among natives are not allowed to eat it, the reason assigned for this restriction being that if the young were allowed freely to indulge in this plant, they would be apt to stay awake at night, and be tempted under the cover of darkness, to gratify desires which the light of the day forces them to curb”. W.A Chanler (1896).

Meru oral sources confirm that khat farming was once subject to restrictions being regulated through counsils of elders whose permission was to be obtained before one could plant a Miraa plant. They emphasize that khat was an essential element in the transaction of bride price payments and was important in dispute resolution Carrier (2006). The age of many Miraa trees in Igembe and Tigania areas of Meru gives a testimony to the long standing farming of the plant by farmers in this areas. Goldsmith states that there are trees that can accurately be dated over 200 years in the heart of traditional cultivation. Goldsmith (1985).

2.3 The traditional farming of Miraa in Igembe District between 1940 - 1963
Questions asked in the research were on how Miraa was grown, who planted Miraa and the proportion of one’s piece of land occupiedby Miraa plants.According to Misheck M’mwereria a Njuri Ncheke elder, the farming and chewing of Miraa was a
preserve of the old men in Igembe. Miraa was only meant for cultural rites and that there was no commercialization of Miraa up to 1940s. Trade would only take place incase one required some Miraa for a certain ceremony and did not have it. In such instances, he could exchange grains or a goat with a person who had Miraa so that he could perform the function. The old men only planted Miraa on a small portion of their land leaving the rest for subsistence farming.

All the informants agree that seedlings were planted. Some of the seedlings were stimulated to grow by exposing roots of mature Miraa plants and letting the shoots develop their roots. The shoots were then carried to new grounds and planted. The majority of Miraa trees under appropriate management did not reach more than six metres in height, simply because people trimmed the upper branches and encouraged their lateral growth. These grew rather reluctantly and took tens of years to become a large shrub forming a crude umbrella like shape for easy harvesting. Weeding, mulching, fertilization and pest control were done in the advanced stages. Well-managed crops could be harvested four to five years after planting. Twigs were the main parts harvested. It is said that the quality of the twig decreases as the fibre content increases. M’mutiria Kiambati explained that there were two sub-genericies of the Igembe Miraa.

a) Miraa “Imieru” from (Kilaa Ikieru) – white/bright Miraa from a white or bright Miraa plant.

b) Miraa “Imiiru” from (kilaa Ikiiru) – black Miraa from a black Miraa plant.

Twigs of the “black” Miraa were and are currently thought to be much more desirable. In order to control fungal infections, other diseases and pests on Miraa, he
argued that the Ameru smoked a certain kind of a bird (a dove) and certain leaves of trees like “Mutombolo” (Salanecio manii), “muooru” (Prenostachys umbrosa). Mexican manigold, Mexican sunflower and biden pilosa.

Determination of Miraa planted depended on seedlings available but still some Miraa varieties did not do well in some areas in terms of output, maturity period and harvesting intervals. All the informants agree that the suitability of a given variety was dictated by soils, climate, altitude and local people’s preferences because sometimes they choose to plant a variety that was not suitable for their area just to achieve better quality Miraa. The farming of Miraa was therefore traditional. It was 100% organic. According to Misheck M’mwereria and M’mutiria Kiambati, the Njuri Ncheke elders interviewed, application of anything alien to Miraa plants for whatever purpose was a taboo. Pruning, pegging (gukuma ntane) and smoking the Miraa plants was done constantly to spread out the branches to increase the surface area, strengthen and expose them to sunlight and thus increase output and control insect pests respectively.

It is therefore believed that in Igembe Miraa has been grown from as early as the 19th century. It was cultivated during the heavy rainy season through vegetative propegation by circus with three to four meter spacing. The crop took four to six years to give its first yield with full production after eight to ten years. NCST (1996). To improve fertility, farm yard manure was spread. Pests and diseases were controlled by burning Miraa leaves and other wild vegetation in the farm.
2.4 Changes in the use of Miraa and the reaction of the colonial administration as a result of this changes between the period 1940-1963.

Initially Miraa was not traded but was a highly valued tree among the Ameru people especially those living in Igembe and Tigania regions. Large scale trading is supposed to have been started by few locals after realizing the increasing demand of the substance. The transaction was first to the fellow locals and eventually to the outsiders such as people of Somali origin and the Arabs. Kangeta market in Igembe central which was already serving as a center for batter trade among the people of Meru North and the Agikuyu who traded in sheep, goats and cattle became the first focal point. People of Somali origin also visited the market for business. This means there was a ready market to which the substance was introduced. Bururia D.N and Nyaga J.N (2014). The use of khat then became widespread and therefore more concern to the communities neighbouring Meru especially Isiolo community where women were concerned with the behavior of their men on social roles as result of continuous chewing of Miraa. The community agitation on the ban of Miraa and the colonial authority’s concern over social deviance led to prohibition being introduced in the 1940s after an advocacy campaign by prominent colonial officials. The legislation imposed a ratiolized view of the effects of khat seeking to protect an allegedly “vulnerable” community in the north of the country while allowing khat to be consumed and traded in other areas including Meru where “traditional” production and consumption was permitted. Anderson and Carrier N (2009). Controls were therefore imposed over trade and consumption in the 1940s and an outright ban in northern Kenya in the 1950s. Ibid. Kenya’s colonial authorities sort to preserve the interests of traditional growers and consumers of khat in the Meru district of the
country who were exempted from the ban while protecting groups in the north of the country notably the Somali whom they felt to be especially vulnerable to the effects of consumption.

Therefore in Kenya, colonial authorities tried to control *khat* through a number of ordinances in the 1940s and 1950s: these initially introduced a permit system for trade and consumption within Kenya, but then later attempted to prohibit it completely in Northern Kenya where it was seen as most problematic. While such measure proved ineffective, other colonial officials, notably in Meru, pushed for an export drive to Aden to cash in on the crop Anderson and Carrier, (2009): *khat* was caught between the aim of suppressing consumption, and that of promoting trade. From all this, it is clear that the legality of *khat* is shaped not only by social concerns, but also by economic concerns that are quite independent of khat drug effects.

Miraa in Kenya is a scheduled crop under the Agricultural Act, Cap 318, of the laws of Kenya. The informants told the researcher that when the widespread consumption of Miraa took root outside Igembe land and also among the Igembe community especially by the warriors, the Igembe control over it weakened. Everybody chewed Miraa at will and societal norms seemed to disappear. According to the elderly men and Njuri Ncheke elders interviewed by the researcher, the young people were subjected to laziness and idleness that resulted to unbecoming behaviour. Matters tended to get out of hand and the effects were not only felt in Igembe but also their neighbours in Isiolo. Protests were raised with climax, to one that got to the then governor of the Kenya colony, Sir Philip Mitchell, with Miraa being equated to bhang or marijuana. It is said that the issue was driven by Isiolo women who complained
that Miraa had “de-manned” their male folks. The male would chew Miraa all day sitting down on mats and forgetting going home until after two or more days. When they got home, they were accused of simply sleeping and having no interest in their women, only to wake up the next day to go to the Miraa chewing groups (Mwaniki 1986:6) following this, the colonial government in 1946 banned the use of Miraa when they passed “an ordinance to control the sale, farming and consumption of Miraa”. Colony and protectorate of Kenya, No. L111, (1946). This ordinance stated that in article 3 subsection (1) “Any person, other than a native who has been granted a written permit under the provisions of sub-section (2) of this section, who;

a) Cultivates or plants Miraa, or being the occupier of any land allows any Miraa tree or plant to grow or to be upon such land, and any person other than a person who has been granted a written permit under the provisions of sub-section (2) of this section, who;

b) Purchases, sells or otherwise deals in Miraa

c) Consumes, or is in possession of any Miraa, shall be guilty of an offence and shall on conviction therefore, by a subordinate court of the first or second class, be liable to a fine not exceeding twelve months or to both such fine and imprisonment, and the court may order that any Miraa which is found in the possession of such person shall be destroyed; and if any Miraa trees or plants are growing upon any land in the occupation of such person, the court may order that they be destroyed.

Following this, the Igembe sent a delegation to defend the industry. In the delegation were “toothless” elders who carried small traditional mortals used for pounding Miraa
by the toothless. The governor was told that those elders had chewed Miraa since their “lamale” stage, (about 35-40 years of age) and were still chewing even when they were over 80 years old. That they were successful people in their society. They were sober and still contributive into their ethnic lives. It was, therefore, concluded that Miraa was not to blame and so the industry was allowed to forge ahead. (Mwaniki, 1986).

Following this, the colonial government passed another ordinance colony and protectorate of Kenya No 53, (1951). An ordinance to repeal the Miraa control ordinance and to prohibit the sale, farming, use and possession of Miraa in certain areas of the colony. Under repeal cap 204 in the schedule, Miraa was banned in the rest of the country except in section 1.

The Northern Province is an area situated within a radius of ten miles of the office of the District commissioner, Isiolo. This was a portion of the Meru native land unit lying to the North of Isiolo – Garba – tulla road and that portion therefore lying within one mile of such road to the south thereof.

Miraa during the colonial government was banned in Kenya colony except for the Ameru, among whom the colonial government said it had special value. Most of the Miraa in these areas was thus uprooted from the shambas and only left in a few water catchment areas and forests of public lands where it is found up to today. It is, therefore, important to note that the colonial government in Kenya accepted the invaluable importance of the Miraa crop among the Ameru and the reverence with which Miraa is held among this community.
Elsewhere in other countries the legality of Miraa is controversial. Miraa is classified as a hard drug in a number of countries with the UN doing extensive studies on it. Because of this stigma, banning of Miraa is purely a unitary decision by countries and mostly is because of social implications associated with Miraa chewing especially man-hours lost, image of people doing the Miraa business and as a result of domino effects.

According to NCST, No 40 (1996: 28-31), the legal aspects of Miraa chewing can be discussed under sub-endings.

(i) Legislation at international level
(ii) Legislation in Kenya
(iii) Legislation and prohibition measures in other countries

(i) Legislation at international level

1935 – Advisory Committee of the League of Nations on the traffic of opium and other dangerous drugs discussed Miraa. (League of Nations Doc 1617 of February 3, 1936)

1956 – Miraa discussed during a session of United Nations Commission on Narcotic drugs at request of the Arab league.

1957 – UN commission on narcotic drugs recommended that UN economic and social council invited WHO to study Miraa (UN Economic and Social Council Resolution 167 Doocv/D.DoCE/3084 1958).

1958 – WHO began to collect relevant information on Miraa while in Kenya,
1934 – Meru local Native council prohibited use of Miraa by people other than those traditionally permitted (Meru elders and Somalis).

1939 – Limited control measures introduced by British colonial government but not enforced.

1944 – Isiolo local native council prohibited possession of any portion of Miraa plant. Somali women in Isiolo petitioned district commissioner to ban Miraa because it was contributing to breakup of families.

1945 – Control measures against Miraa were enacted following alarming and subjective reports about Miraa as a course of insanity (carothers – E. Afr. Med. J.22:4-6, 1945).

1951 – Miraa prohibitive ordinance (cap 339, laws of Kenya introduced). Prohibition applied to sale, farming use and possession of Miraa in the following areas:

(i) The Northern Province

(ii) Areas situated within a radius of 10 miles of the office of the District Commissioner, Isiolo.

(iii) That portion of Meruland unit lying to the North of Isiolo-Garba_Tulla road and that portion lying within one mile of such road to the south thereof.

1962 – Miraa prohibitive ordinance reviewed along other acts prior to Kenya independence but no significant changes.
2.5 Significance of Miraa to the Igembe people

Miraa is highly valued for its economic benefits to its producers as well as its ability to increase alertness and sociability for its consumers. Miraa is believed to have economic, health, legal, social, moral and cultural implications on peoples’ lives. According to Sabina N Baariu and Galcano C Mulaku (2015), traditionally, a man intending to marry offers his prospective father inlaw a bunch of Miraa, *gitundu* during his first visit as a gift, while a lady wishing to inform her father of her marriage intentions offers him a Miraa twig which if accepted means his approval; also, offering an aggrieved party Miraa is a way of seeking reconciliation.

Miraa trade in Meru began as early as 1847 when it was used to pay dowery and other fines by the native communities. Later, when cash crops such as tea and coffee were introduced, it became clear that farming and sale of Miraa was far more lucrative due to much less labour cost and also the fact that payments from Miraa sales were generally available every two weeks during the harvest season compared to the others which were paid for only once a year. Baariu and Mulaku argue that over 70000ha of Miraa plantation were to be found in Igembe sub-County of Meru County alone. This represented a high potential per capita income of about USD 2345 for the area, which was far much higher than the average Kenyan per capita income. This plus the significant revenue that the County government stood to make from Miraa marketing activities, were clear indicators of the importance of this crop to the area economy, despite its classification as a mild drug in some countries.

Bururia and Nyaga (2014) conted that the trade in Miraa had created many jobs not only for local people leaving in the growing area but also others who had migrated to
the area due to its potentiality in business. By extension, the trade also earned the country revenue. The income from Miraa was used basically for the construction of schools, churches and other community projects. Thus, the people of Igembe referred to Miraa as the Green Gold of Nyambene (Igembe and Tigania sub-ethnic communities).

Riak (2014) argues that, “Miraa is certainly the primary source of income for the Meru of Nyambene Hills. Over the years, the trade of the crop has evolved into a commercialized commodity, around the time when coffee was one of the main crops grown by Kenyan farmers”. In a United Nations office on drugs and crime (UNODC) report, one farmer proudly stated that for every shilling invested in tea, there was a return of two shillings and for a shilling invested in Miraa, there was a return of four shillings. Miraa also offered the young men and women the opportunity to earn money as agents supplying retailers or as retailers themselves.

Apart from being a successful commodity for Igembe and Tigania, Miraa carried a tangible link to the ancestors who first cultivated it. The Meru had a strong cultural link with Miraa. Mckeag, a British district commissioner of Meru at the colonial period, noted that Meru were the only people for whose tribal customs; Miraa had a place. Therefore, due to the importance of Miraa to the Meru people a restriction on the sale of Miraa had long been resisted. As evidenced by a letter written by three Meru men to the Hon. Chief of the native commissioner on the 25th of April 1947, the men adequately complained of the injustices of the ordinance which was imposed by the British administration prohibiting the farming and sale of Miraa. The three men vehemently stated the importance of Miraa in times of circumcision when young boys
were initiated into adulthood; the use of Miraa to pay dowery and its vital role during rituals.

2.6 Traditional uses of Miraa among the Igembe community of Meru County

The research questions addressed were the reasons for the farming of Miraa in Igembe District and its traditional functions. The data collected revealed that under normal circumstances in the traditional Meru society and Igembe in particular, Miraa chewing was a preserve of elderly men who used it to enhance social interaction. However, according to Ntarangwi Kararu and Kaberia Mberia, Miraa was a symbol of being and pride for the Meru community. It was viewed as a sacred crop applied in religions, medicinal and cultural rites.

2.6.1 Marriage

According to Mwibua M’mungania, no marriage was and in some areas today is possible among the Ameru without giving a bunch of Miraa twigs to his bride to chew first and take some to her father. When the lady presents some to her father, the father knows automatically that the daughter is seeking approval for her chosen suitor. If the father accepts the twigs and chews them, the groom is acceptable to the bride’s parents and introductions to the in-laws and dowry negotiations can begin.

M’thirari noted that in other instances, in this social routine, marriage was impossible before the bride’s father accepted a bunch of the twigs from the bridegroom through the bride. It was through this phenomenon that among the Igembe, the common belief was that “Miraa” built marriages. Thus, Miraa was used to initiate marriages and could be sent to the girl’s father through his daughter having been given by the bride,
through the bride directly to the bridegroom’s father or by the bride’s father even before the man knew the would-be-bridegroom himself.

According to Thuku, Miraa was highly regarded in Ameru traditions and was used during marriage and peacemaking among the Tigania and Igembe sub-groups. (Thuku, 2008: 82). Several elders also argued that the elder would have been friends with the girl’s father and would have wished this friendship to spread to the institution of marriage, or would have an eye on the girl as a suitable wife for his son and since traditions allowed elders to”break ground” for their son’s sake, then they initiated the marriage negotiations by presenting a bunch of “Miraa” to the girl’s father.

Murungi, M’thirari, M’mwereria and M’mutiria Kiambati all agree that the Miraa for initiating marriage was tied technically such that only a few elders were capable of tying this Miraa. Once the father of the girl opened the bundle of “Miraa”, he automatically understood the message conveyed. Not all Miraa could initiate marriage. It used to be plucked from the oldest Miraa plants (Mbaine) and the black Miraa (Miraa Imiiru) usually 6-8 inches long. About 40 to 50 twigs (strands of Miraa) were tied together with a single knot at the neck. Then four strands of Miraa were tied technically together as one small bundle and placed on one side of the 40-50 strand bundle. A second bunch of some other four strands was tied and placed on the opposite direction letting the 40-50 strands in-between. A banana leaf of a particular type (kiriu kia murio) was finally placed around the final bundle and secured with a particular yam creeper (Dioscorea minutiflora) that was smooth. The yams with such creepers included (thaara, twambo and mbithi) one could not know the beginning or
ending of the yam creeper as the beginning and ending were hidden. The creeper had 8 knots representative of the 8 straps of Miraa.

On the receipt the girl’s father would untie and give the girl one bundle of the four which she was supposed to chew sharing with her lover. In case the girl refused to chew, it was enough communication that she did not love the warrior and therefore, the matter ended there although the Miraa could now be eaten like any other Miraa. If the girl chewed the Miraa, and the girl’s father also chewed a twig from the bunch of the other four strands, the girl was instantly betrothed to the young man and could not be married off to another man. The bunch was then shared among relatives of the girl to signify their common origin and symbolize collective acceptance of the proposal.

The person taking this Miraa to the girl’s father was not supposed to hide it but went carrying it openly. Whenever he met with other members of the Ameru on his way to the girl’s father’s home, he presented the bunch of Miraa and without saying a word, people knew the Miraa was for initiating marriage and pulled one strand leaving the base of the strand inside the rest of the bundle. Once the girl’s father untied the bunch, he would count the lower tips that had remained and know how many had been eaten on the way. However, nobody could pull out the four special strands because culturally people knew their purpose. This was supposed to symbolize the generosity of the warrior or the young man. If most of the twigs of that bunch of Miraa (gitundu) had not been pulled out and eaten by other old people of Ameru community on his way to the house of his prospective father-in-law, the relationship was said to have had no blessings. And in that case, the father of the girl could not accept the bunch of “Miraa” neither could he sanction their relationship.
Source: Own photo
Fig 2.1: Miraa for betrothal tied with a banana leaf and a yam creeper (ncoolo)

Source: Own photo

Fig 2.2: Bunch of Miraa for betrothal
2.6.2 Circumcision and other Initiational rites

All initiational rites of passage were preceded by presentation of Miraa to the seniors. Most of the informants argued that during circumcision, the candidates to be circumcised took four bundles of Miraa to the warriors through their leaders to break the news that they were mature enough and were therefore seeking permission for the initiation ritual. When the permission was finally granted, each boy sent Miraa to whoever he chose as his circumciser and god-father (caretaker).

After boys were circumcised, they were initiated into adulthood of warriors popularly known as lamale. This was a council of military warriors of the military wing. Each of the warriors had to pay a fee of “Miraa” to their seniors (lamale) and elders for admission into the council. This council was in two sets. There was the young council popularly referred in general as (kiama) “council of warriors” and a senior council known as (kiama kinene) “senior council of warriors”. From one stage of the kiama to the other, one needed to give a bundle of Miraa before getting initiated into it.

These contentions strongly agree with that of Kobia, (2014), that miraa creates a contextual foundation for communication. However, the negative implications of Miraa and which greatly affect the individual user, the institution of marriage, school and church cannot be ignored. The study concluded that, Miraa has diverse negative effects, but it could also serve a better purpose and value if handled properly since it has certain social-cultural values especially among the community where is grown.

From the council of warriors, one entered another senior council of “Njuri Ncheke”. This was a council of elders who were the custodians of the Ameru law. From the council of warriors to the council of elders (Njuri Ncheke) which was equivalent to a
cabinet, one had to pay a fee of Miraa. The last social-political group was the elders usually above 70 years who formed a class of their own known as *Aariki*. This category allowed only those extremely gifted of the Ameru traditions. At this stage, ear piercing was done before plenty of Miraa was given out.

### 2.6.3 Medicinal use

M’thirari, Mwibua, Kiambati and Kararu, all had consensus that Miraa among the Ameru had medicinal applications. The elders chewed Miraa as they took cattle for grazing. For the period they were away sometimes for six months, Miraa was used to remove their sexual prowess to avoid the temptation of other women when they were away from their wives. In this way, it was applied for family planning as men were busy chewing Miraa and concentrated on grazing which they had gone out to do.

Elders also gave some concoctions of Miraa to warrior when they went to raid other communities for livestock and in times inter tribal wars. It had the same effect of enabling them to be very alert, free of fatigue and sleep to avoid the temptations of foreign women. They were thus able to carry out successful raids, which materialized even in human captives some of whom included young beautiful women but they brought them all back without sexually abusing them.

Mwaniki (2006) findings of the research showed that there are both positive and negative contributions brought about by Miraa farming and trade upon the families, schools and churches within Meru North region. Nonetheless, although the negatives outweigh the positives in terms of both short and long term intangible damages to individuals, family and society, there are strong social, religious and economic
attachments to this product. In fact for the last few decades, the product has assumed political dimension. Exclusive focuses on negativisms only, have overshadowed the potential financial, social, educational and religious gains associated with the product. This is because apart from the economic contribution, Miraa is also alleged to have cultural, religious as well as medicinal values

2.6.4 Trade

M’mwereria and Kiambati argued that Miraa was used to get goats from those who had them. People who needed Miraa either for social relationships like marriage or to perform rituals where Miraa was required and they did not have Miraa of their own; they exchanged goats for such Miraa. Miraa could also be exchanged for grains, axes, weapons.

2.6.5 Other uses of Miraa

According to the Njuri Ncheke elders interviewed, Miraa was used to seek audience from the elders. An elder automatically knew that a person offering him Miraa twigs was seeking his audience and he immediately prepared to sit and talk with him.

Reconciliation process was often preceded by an offer of Miraa and therefore, acceptance of Miraa by the aggrieved party was a positive signal to continue with reconciliation.

Miraa was always chewed by old men as they went to “Igombe” towards Isiolo to get soda ash and salt also as they went to “Tibu” (long journey that would take several days in search of food and goats). This assisted them from falling asleep on the way
and getting fatigued so that they could always remain alert of wild animals and other enemies in the course of their journey.

Miraa was used to warn people of certain behaviours. For example, a bunch of Miraa tied on a stick and placed along a certain route was meant to signify road closed or path closed or no trespassing. In case one happened to violate and trespass the result could even lead to death of the trespasser and there would be no case to answer. This was because the cultural aspects of the use of Miraa were closely intertwined with social and religious aspects. The plant was revered among the Ameru to the point considered sacred and any communication through Miraa was highly honored and traditionally ignoring the message could not be thought of.

2.7 The farming and use of Miraa in Igembe region of Kenya; 1964-1978

Despite the prestigious status that the Nyambene Miraa is enjoying in the markets, locally and internationally, there is no organization to regulate the farming, processing, trading and consumption of Miraa. In Ethiopia, Djibout and Yemen, there are fully pledged Miraa industries purposely created to streamline and promote Miraa farming, processing, marketing/trading and consumption and to have the industry protected and overseen by specified government organs.

The Miraa industry in Kenya was a source of great fortunes for the people engaged in its industry in Kenya although the farmers and local traders languished in poverty, illiteracy and disease especially HIV and AIDS that had been accelerated by the current setup in the industry. Khat farming, trade and use differed markedly in Kenya as opposed to Madagascar and Yemen. Each region had its own localized relationship
with the crop. For example, in Kenya, it was grown as a large tree while in Madagascar, it was more of a shrub. When it was consumed in Kenya, it appeared there was no particular pattern, while in Madagascar, consumption tended to take place between lunch and supper.

While khat was a culturally integrated indigenous crop on the one hand, it had also become increasingly popular beyond Meru, in rural areas as well as urban centres. It was an economically important international cash crop. Several aircrafts took supplies from Nairobi to Mogadishu and elsewhere in Somalia each day (Carrier, 2005a).

In Kenya, Miraa was grown intensively by the Igembe and Tigania sub-ethnic groups of the Meru in Meru County. The monetary value of the crop gave the Meru inhabitants good economic reasons to approve of it and yet there was more to their approval than this: khat, known in Kenya as “Miraa” was incorporated into their cultural heritage. Discourse concerning Miraa’s cultural importance was well-formed in Nyambenes, and especially emphasised khat used within certain ceremonial contexts (Carrier 2007:199-204). These included: the preliminaries to circumcision, where boys took khat along to elders to let them know that they were ready for the rite of passage, and the preliminaries to marriage, where a prospective son-in-law took khat along to his prospective bride’s parents to request permission to marry her. In both contexts, the khat must have been of the highest quality from the oldest trees – known as mbaine after an ancient Meru age-set and tied in a special bundle known as nchoolo that was prepared differently to marketed khat. Instead of being tied up with banana leaves and fibre as in marketed khat, bundles were tied up in banana leaves with yam runners, and were invested with various symbolic meanings depending on
how the yam runners were knotted (Carrier 2007: 202). In all such usage, nchoolobundles were offered by junior men to the senior, suggestive of a gerontocratic hierarchy maintaining elders as wielders of power in theory, if not in practice.

Miraa farming was no longer a picturesque local custom of the Igembe sub-ethnic tribe of the Ameru. It had since changed in its farming and use. The changes were clearly seen in that by 1940s, Miraa farming and consumption was only limited to the old men folk and only a small portion of their plots of land would be planted with Miraa. There were strict controls in its use and not all codres could chew Miraa (Mwaniki, 2006). However, from 1960s, onwards plantation of Miraa almost became the preserve of everybody including the young and the women. With Miraa spreading outside Igembe to other areas like Tigania 1950s, Mwimbi, Embu, Isiolo the Igembe traditional controls over its production and use were not observed any longer. (ibid: 3). The practice decimated the economic capacity of the area as all the plots of land that could have been used for subsistence farming are planted with Miraa for cash economy. There were also cases of moral decadence witnessed due to the abuse of Miraa use.

2.8 The period 1964 to 1978

It was not in the traditional zones of consumption where khat prohibition had been enshrined in law: khat was illegal in the US, (since early 1990s), Canada (since late 1990s) and much of Europe (with the exemption of the UK and Holland). In the US khat became illegal because it contains cathine and cathonine which had been added to the UN convention on psychotropic substances in 1988: the US as a signatory,
scheduled the substance (cathinone as schedule the most restrictive category), and clarified on the federal register that by scheduling khat constituent alkaloids, khat itself was being so scheduled (BBC report of September, 2006).

There was thus much suspicion of khat in western countries: it was a drug associated with immigrants and was either banned or regarded with such journaustic eyes that the threat of prohibition was ever present. This was so in the UK where a number of campaigns to ban khat had been launched, and where newspapers often conflated it with stronger substances: The Guardian ran a piece on khat with the headline “This has the same effects as ecstasy and cocaine... and it is illegal” above a photograph of a bundle. Such campaigns resulted in the government conducting research into whether khat should be prohibited, and one such piece of research led the government in 2006 to conclude that a ban would not be appropriate.

Another key issue concerned economic development as khat production and trade was now a booming industry and many relied on the commodity for their livelihood. Khat production had been in competition with coffee and farmers often preferred khat because it required less work and yielded a much higher profit than coffee (Carrier 2001; Weir 1985; Kennedy 1987; Gebissa, 2004: 73).During this period, Miraa provided greater rewards than non-indigenous crops such as tea, coffee and cotton. (Goldsmith 1994). Farmers got better prices in general and obtained more frequent payments unlike formal cash crops, for which payments were received in lump sums at certain times of the year.
2.9 Legal issues

According to the National Council for Science and Technology (NCST), during the period 1980 to 1983, WHO advisory groups continued to review pharmacology of Miraa while in 1986 cathone listed under scheduled (i) and cathine under scheduled (ii) in the convention on psychotropic substances under international control drugs covered by the convention are listed in schedules (i) (ii) (iii) and (iv) according to “psychotropic potency” schedule (i) drugs (cathinone, LSD, Psilocybe) are most potent while schedule (iv) (bericodiazpines etc) are the least potent. Miraa initially the concern of WHO and UN commission on narcotic drugs, is not covered by the convention or any other international legislation. Republic of Kenya (1996). However in 1994, the narcotic drugs and psychotropic substance (control act 1994) enacted through Kenya gazette supplement. No. 41, Act no 41 of 1994. Cathinone and Cathine included in the list of psychotropic substances but Miraa not included. (Ibid)

Despite the prestigious status that the Igembe Miraa is enjoying in the market to date, locally, regionally and internationally, there is no formal industry organization or policy to regulate the farming, transport, processing, trading or consumption of Miraa. The UN and WHO have complained about Miraa packaging and unhygienic handling, the traditional controls that governed Miraa farming and use are no longer practised and therefore, the Miraa industry has greatly been abused such that some western countries have classified Miraa as a drug that must be controlled or banned completely.

To safeguard the Miraa industry from negative legislations that might end up banning Miraa farming and use, Nyamita has been holding numerous meetings to discuss these
issues with farmers, leaders of Meru County, the National and County administrators (formerly provincial administration), the Njuri Ncheke council of elders (custodians of the Meru culture and traditions) and other relevant Government of Kenya authorities to address these concerns.

The main objectives of Nyamita at the time of registration in 1975 were to;

a) Promote, protect and further the interests of those connected with, or interested in growing, trading, exporting and importing of Miraa to and from Africa, Middle East, Europe and the rest of the world and to afford to members of the association facilities for co-operation in all matters affecting the marketing and shipment of Miraa.

b) To deal with matters concerning sorting, grading, packing and classification of Miraa and to take necessary steps to encourage and promote improvement in the natural organic growth, preparation, packing, marketing, transport, grading and description of Miraa and to promote uniformity in the same. (Republic of Kenya, 1968).

During such meetings held at Maua Polytechnic on 17th Sep 2004, on 8th October 2004, it was resolved and noted that; many farmers had leased out their farms for long periods at unfavourable terms making themselves squatters. Due to such leasing, most of the farmers had become poor that they were unable to provide the basics of education, shelter, clothing, medicare and leisure for their families. Miraa growers had no control at all levels of Miraa production or distribution as this was falling in the hands of the Somalis. Numerous meetings under the auspices of NYAMITA had been held with the Somali traders, with a view to charting in the Miraa trade. Agreements
reached that the Somalis limit themselves to trading without getting into the Miraa farms to source for Miraa. Children were not in school as a result of Miraa. Miraa was to be handled in an hygienic manner, Miraa trade was accused of being used as conduit for illegal firearms. All the gains that accrued due to these efforts were wasted as a few foreigners especially of Somali origin invaded and took over the Miraa trade internationally. These Somali hailed from war backgrounds, perpetrate war motives, disguise banned drugs, small arms and cargo of opportunity as Miraa. This statement has been supported by NCST (1996), Kagwiria (2011) who also reviewed data on miraa which was scanty hence their research was one process of generating this much needed knowledge to inform both programming and advocacy.

It was noted that Miraa spraying continued due to lack of commitment. It was recommended that civic education on not spraying was vital. Immigrants who had settled in Nyambene and had Miraa farms must adhere to the “Non-spraying” directive by the Njuri Ncheke council of elders. The meeting recognized the government’s efforts in protecting the children by passing the Children’s Act 2001. That engagement of underage persons was banned and anyone caught in the Act was to be arrested and subjected to appropriate laws.

2.10 Conclusion
The chapter examined the traditional farming and use of Miraa from 1940-1963. Miraa farming and use was critically examined and its impact on the socio-cultural changes that took place on the same. The researcher emphasized the importance and side effects of the commodity by looking into its contribution on the positive and negative perspectives. The study revealed that Miraa had great cultural value as far as
tradional marriage and male circumcision rites were concerned. During marriages, a prospective bride groom would take a bundle of Miraa called *nchoolo* in Kimeru language to the prospective bride who in turn would give to her mother to give to the father. This served as a marriage proposal and engagement. In preparation for circumcision, Miraa was valued because the candidate of initiation would give the bundle to the man of his choice who would serve as his guardian during seclusion period. Miraa was also applied for medicinal use as the young men went on grazing and raiding missions as well as its use during reconcilliations.

However it was the old men and shephards and not young people who generally chewed Miraa originally. Gradually, chewing of the twigs attracted the attention of young people and some few women also chewed the twigs. At the same time initially old men could plant a few trees of Miraa for the purposes mentioned above and so no trade was done. However as the number of chewers increased, the demand to plant more and more trees became inevitable to meet both the emerging consumption and exchange, Bururia D.N and Nyaga J.N (2014). With this explosive usage of Miraa as it spread beyond Igembe following commercial trade with the commodity, controls were imposed on trade in 1940s and an outright ban in northern Kenya but save the Meru region where the colonial government felt Miraa had special cultural value.
CHAPTER THREE

SOCIO-CULTURAL CHANGES IN THE FARMING AND USE OF MIRAA IN IGEMBE 1963 TO 1978

3.1 Introduction

The chapter focuses on the socio-cultural changes in the farming and use of Miraa in Igembe district from 1963-1978. Miraa as commodity in Igembe was only used for cultural purposes, grown in small plots of land and only old men and warriors while grazing chewed the commodity. It is hard to say exactly when youth consumption and trade in Miraa started. Initially Miraa was not traded but was a highly valued tree among the Ameru people especially in Igembe and Tigania for whom it had great cultural value as far as traditional marriage, male circumcision, peace and reconciliation and seeking the attention of elders by the youth were concerned. Gradually chewing of the twigs attracted the attention of the young people and somehow a few women. Initially old men could plant a few trees of Miraa for the purposes mentioned above and so no trade was done. Between 1963 and 1978 the number of chewers increased, the demand to plant more and more trees became inevitable to meet both emerging consumption and trade.

3.2 Changes in Miraa farming

The question addressed was what changes had taken place in the farming of Miraa in Igembe District during the period 1963 to 1978. The data from the questionnaire and oral interviews revealed that the farming of Miraa during the colonial period was a
preserve of old men in the villages. James Murungi argued that Miraa was a sacred crop among the Igembe community and was needed to be produced in all social gatherings and activities. That is religiously considered sacred because of the position it held in the community, and that it preceded all social norms meaning that only the old men could chew and plant. Therefore, since it was ceremonial, only a few plants were planted by the very old men folk in the society.

The plots of land with such Miraa were not mixed with any other crops traditionally and that only the old men visited such areas to pluck Miraa that was required for any purpose. The traditional farming of Miraa was 100% organic. The “Njuri Ncheke” elders interviewed argued that application of anything alien to Miraa plants for whatever purpose was a taboo, meaning Miraa did not require much care. The Miraa plants could withstand weeds and thus the land tillage was almost unnecessary.

The farming of Miraa changed from 1960s whereas before 1940s and up to 1960, Miraa farming was only limited to the old men folk and only on small plots or potions of their land due to the strict controls that existed, the period 1940s saw Miraa use extending beyond Meru region and therefore, the traditional controls became irrelevant. Thus, the youth from Meru crossed the borders, chewed Miraa and came back which was soon followed by some commercial aspects. From 1940s therefore, farming of Miraa became an activity done by others including the youth plantation (Mwaniki, 2006). It is clearly noted that the young started growing Miraa even without authority from the elders. This findings are supported by Mwaniki (1986) and Carrier (2003) who asserted that miraa trees grew wild in forests originally. However it is in Nyambene hills in Meru County that commercially oriented miraa have been
grown for several decades. Nyambene mountain range lies to the northeast of Mount Kenya and includes Igembe and Tigania sub communities. According to Kabeca (1986), miraa trade in Kenya could have started in the 1960s when people in Nyambene traded with the neighbouring Somaliland

This idea of an earlier restriction of *khat* to Meru elders became key during colonial times. For some colonial officers, the traditional use of khat by elders was acceptable; it was its increasing use by Meru youth and by anyone elsewhere that alarmed them. Various measures to shore up a restriction of *khat* to Meru elders were attempted, none of which proved successful: instead, khat’s popularity throughout the colony increased. Nowadays, while Meru often still speak of khat once being the preserve of elders, for many — predominantly male — youth, khat has become *poa*, the Kiswahili word for ‘cool’ (Carrier 2005b).

The research revealed that with Miraa use extending to beyond Igembe land, the crop became commercial and therefore scarce. The economy demanded money either for tax or education which was not being realized through coffee due to price fluctuations. From as early as 1960s therefore, the commercial production of Miraa no doubt claimed a large quantity of land resources. Igembe turned into a beehive of Miraa activity, this time more commercial rather than earlier, almost whole traditional. Most land had been taken by the Miraa industry at the expense of subsistence crops and therefore the famines that hit Igembe in 1981 and 1984 respectively as the elders lamented. M’Mutiria Kiambati lamented “Miraa growing turned to be a vigorous activity in Igembe. All available land was turned into Miraa farms such that from 1990s, most of the coffee was uprooted and replaced with Miraa.
Currently, there is almost no piece of land (farm) that does not have Miraa plants. In some instances people have planted Miraa more for commercial use than cultural.”

It is apparent that Miraa industry developed not only in production but also in the marketing sector. The farmers had Miraa as a primary source of monetary income. There was no farmer who did not have a Miraa plantation not only in the Ridgeland but also the plains that held potential for Miraa production and thus farmers cultivated the crop everywhere.

3.3 Changes in Miraa chewing
The research question asked was what changes had taken place in the chewing of Miraa in Igembe District from the colonial period to post-colonial period. An analysis of data yielded from Njuri Ncheke elders, the County administrators and former provincial administrators and members of the clergy, revealed findings within the area of the research question. Mwibua M’mungania revealed that there were stringent traditional controls on Miraa farming and use. However, when the worldwide consumption of Miraa took root outside Igembe, the Igembe control over it weakened or was non-existent outside Igembe land. The warriors who used to chew Miraa secretively and sparingly when looking after cattle in the wilderness now chewed openly and excessively. Mwaniki (2006)

With Miraa now being found in many other places, the youth chewed Miraa in unrestricted manner. Other people like the Borana, Somali and the rest of the Meru-sub ethnic groups also chewed Miraa widely with various repercussions leading to disintegration of families. Not everyone saw khat as culturally and socially valuable.
Many saw khat as a source of social discord and something that should have been culturally disdained and politically discouraged. (Carrier, 2008).

The social aspects of Miraa chewing were closely intertwined with economic aspects. In traditional Meru society, Miraa chewing was a preserve of elderly men who used it to enhance social interactions. Young men and women could only chew it in privacy. However, urbanization and breakdown of the extended family system had made Miraa chewing a free for all pass time. This concern especially focused on a perceived rise in consumption amongst those viewed as vulnerable or for whom it may be culturally inappropriate: the youth and women.

According to Mwaniki, (2006) after 1910, the Miraa took part in what could be termed as external trade by taking advantage of the forced union of many ethnic groups after “Pacification”. Consequently, the other parts of Meru including Imenti and Mwimbi/Muthambi took to much chewing of Miraa. One of the early administrators in 1920s known simply as “Kaumbuthu” ordered the uprooting of Miraa to stop the laziness and “drug effects” he had observed. There was much opposition and one friend of his, a builder from Igembe called M’Munki convinced him to withdraw the directive. Miraa chewing seemed to have bothered the British government for three decades before they put it in a scientific test. Put to this test – apparently in the then Corrydon Memorial Museum (Present day National museum), Miraa was condemned as “harmful and dangerous”, and producing grave symptoms to an addict. The “harmful” effects were due to alkaloids like cathine, cathinine and cathidine. Also, large quantities of tannin plus other “uninvestigated chemicals”. Cathine was said to have stimulant-narcotic action similar to that of cocaine and no
analgesic or anesthetic properties. It also had cardio-toxic effect similar to caffeine. The test concluded:

Although scientific investigations on *Catha edulis* have not yet proved conclusively to which of the many constituents of the drug its deteriorating effect on the human organism can be traced, there seems sufficient evidence to show its continued ingestion is harmful. Republic of Kenya Ref. MDA/43.

3.4 Impacts of the changes in the farming of Miraa on the subsistence economy of Igembe District between the period 1978 to 2014

The researcher wanted to know if Miraa had any effects on subsistence economy. From the data collected through questionnaires and oral interviews, it was revealed that; From 1940s when Miraa farming and use became commercial, most land in Igembe was taken by Miraa industry at the expense of subsistence crops. Most of the Igembe land is covered with fertile loam soil and hence has great potential for farming of various crops, but farmers heavily relied on the lower plains near the Meru National park and the Northern grazing area towards Isiolo in terms of food supply. This was because arable land resources adjacent to their homes were very limited due to demographic pressure and intense farming of Miraa both in the range tops and also in the plains. This had decimated the Igembe economy as elders were lamenting that the famines experienced in Igembe in 1981 and 1984 were as a result of Miraa taking up all the land that used to be a granary of cereals.

Kobia an elder from Burieruri location lamented that soon Igembe might borrow food from the very people it used to supply to. In Igembe, it seemed that 90% of all the men were engaged in the Miraa business and these subsistence farms which were located 5-15 kilometres away were only attended by women. As a result of this, the
money that was earned from Miraa became the lifelong of the Igembe community because all foodstuffs including vegetables were bought from outside Igembe. He added that Miraa had far-reaching effects on education and that there was need for a separate curriculum for those engaged in Miraa business where classes would start late and end late.

Kubai a senior chief argued that even the basics were to be bought far away. For example, the Igembe had to buy potatoes and cabbages from Imenti (another sub-ethnic group in Meru County), onions, bread and for meat they had to buy goats and cows from the Borans who came to sell them from Kinnah and Garbatulla (all in Isiolo County). Therefore, the Miraa industry in the local communities of Igembe District was a significant source of cash income but this cash left the District as it came.

Goldsmith, (1998) the people of Meru North refer to miraa as the Green Gold of Nyambene. The trade has created many jobs not only for local people living in the growing area but also others who have migrated to the area due to its potentiality in business. By extension, the trade also earns the country revenue. The income from miraa trade is used basically for construction of schools, churches and other community projects. In away therefore, this trade is the major economic contributor to the development of the region.

3.5 Conclusion

The chapter critically examined the changes of Miraa farming and use in Igembe district between 1963 and 1978. During this period most of the population living in
Igembe majored in the growing of Miraa which did well compared with most other cash crops like coffee and tea due to lack of natural waters and adequate rainfall for agricultural production. Miraa consumption was on the rise which was met with great concern by the elders as it became more popular among the youth and a few women. Over the years, trade of Miraa turned into a commercialized commodity around the time when coffee was the main cash crop grown by Kenyan farmers. Although Miraa trade had started in the 1940s, during the period 1963 to 1978 its trade became more vigorous and a larger portion of the community chewed the substance.
CHAPTER FOUR

SOCIO-CULTURAL CHANGES IN THE FARMING AND USE OF MIRAA IN
IGEMBE COUNTY KENYA; 1978 – 2014

4.1 Introduction
The chapter focuses on the socio-cultural changes in the farming and use of Miraa in Igembe during the period 1978 to 2014. The chapter critically examines the current changes in the farming and use of Miraa in Igembe. As opposed to the period 1963-1978 when changes in the farming of Miraa seemed to be gradual, the period 1978-2014 saw more vibrant changes that made almost everybody engage in the Miraa industry including women and school age children. Miraa during this period becomes the primary source of income for the Igembe people where the Igembe grown Miraa feeds both national and international markets. During this period Miraa is consumed by all and sundry; becoming the epitome of the Igembe culture and livelihood. However, although more stress is on the economy as a cash crop, it is still a valued commodity and forms part of many traditional ceremonies and a source of great pride.

4.2 Miraa farming
The research question addressed was what changes had taken place in the farming of Miraa in Igembe District during the period 1978 to 2014. The data from the questionnaire and oral interviews revealed that from as early as 1990s the farming of Miraa and its use was an activity for all cadres in the society. While warriors engaged
in Miraa business from 1960s, women were also not left behind because from 1990s, they also started engaging in the farming, chewing and trading in Miraa. The researcher also noted that whereas traditionally Miraa used to be planted alone in small plots of land, from 1980s, in most cases it was intertwined with other crops to enhance the productivity of the land and yield of the arable crops formed therein. According to M’Mwereria, this was mainly because the Miraa trees acted as wind breakers and thus minimized soil erosion, and provided shade and foliage. The foliage acted as food for livestock especially goats.

Studies by UNDCP (1999) and Kabecha (1986) explains that the commodity is sold locally in the local trading centres within the growing areas to prominent business men who in turn transport the substance to major markets where some is even exported to foreign markets. Since there is no airstrip near the growing area, road transport is used. Because the commodity is highly perishable, the vehicles transporting the commodity are driven at very high speed risking the lives of not only those in the respective vehicles but also other road users. International destinations of miraa include Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Somalia. Miraa has been a controversial substance occasionally subjected to legal restrictions. It is currently illegal in Eretria, Tanzania, the US, Canada, New Zealand and until recently in June 2014, Europe.

The traditional farming of Miraa was 100% organic. The Njuri Ncheke elders argue that application of anything alien to Miraa plants for whatever purpose was a taboo. Miraa plants can withstand weeds thus land tillage is almost unnecessary except where intercropping has been done. However, due to commercialization of Miraa, the farmers have, without any professional advice or backing scientific basis, applied
fertilizers and conventional pesticides to increase output and control insect pests both of which have had disastrous results with many plants withering or wilting. The quality of Miraa deteriorating, shedding of leaves and most of the pests have developed resistance.

The farmers had no training on pesticides application since there was no scientifically backed data on Miraa care, soils or altitudes where Miraa could be cultivated optimally. Sporadic applications of these chemicals before harvesting to keep pests away were exposing consumers to untold risks. The farmers pruned their Miraa carelessly mostly with unclean hands/tools infecting Miraa with wood rotting disease. There were no trained agricultural officers involved in supporting the Miraa farmers. However, informal indigenous knowledge was widely used and passed down to generations e.g. identifying the varieties suitable for a particular area, pruning time, propagation materials, harvesting time, pests and disease management.

M’mutiria Kiambati and Misheck M’mwereria told the researcher that in order to safeguard the Miraa industry in the absence of government policy framework, the Njuri Ncheke performed a dreaded Meru curse (slitting a sheep’s throat) while asking God to deal with any contravener, upon anyone seen or unseen spraying his Miraa. They instead advocated the use of traditional means of smoking the Miraa plants by burning a specified type of bird (dove) and specified plants such as, masikisiki (tithonia), muooru (psenostachys umbrosa), mwaraka (iboza multiflora), and mutombolo (solanecio manii), until an applicable pesticide was authorized by the Government.
4.3 Miraa chewing

The research question addressed was what changes had taken place in the chewing of Miraa in Igembe District especially from 1978 to 2014. An analysis of data yielded from “Njuri Ncheke” elders, County administrators, members of the clergy and other key informants not engaged in Miraa business revealed that when the worldwide consumption of Miraa took root outside Igembe, the Igembe control over it weakened and that among the youth, almost 95% of the population took to Miraa chewing.

Among the Ameru during this period, Miraa was being consumed in large quantities by various categories of people pursuing career, religious and cultural obligations and or rites. Long distance drivers, watchmen, people on night duty or those who worked for long hours chewed Miraa to be alert, and not to be fatigued. A Muslim Sheikh told the researcher that Muslims chewed Miraa mainly on Thursdays to enable them to attain the meditation mood in preparation for their praying day Friday, while majority of others chewed Miraa for Leisure. Pastor Murithi of the East African Pentecost Church at Mutuatine in Kiengu location, Amaku sub-location told the researcher that some of the Christian churches had planted the Miraa in their compounds and that proceeds from Miraa were used for church construction.

Reverend Naituli of the Methodist Church of Kenya, who also acted as the education secretary in the Methodist Church, told the researcher that Igembe society could not survive without Miraa because every sector of the economy or social activity depended on Miraa. He said the church was free and did not see the dangers of Miraa to society but rather its advantages. He echoed the words of Pastor Murithi of the East African Pentecostal Church that even the monetary church development was from
Miraa income. He agreed that people were at will to chew Miraa or not. With this usage explosion, Miraa’s traditional roles got diluted. It was now mainly applied in pursuit of benefits especially to suppress hunger, create alertness, prevent fatigue for those working long hours and just leisure/pass time or at times partaken as a disguise for using hard illegal drugs especially when people took alcohol and other drugs under the disguise of chewing Miraa.

4.4 Economic lifestyle

The research question asked the changes that had taken place in the Miraa industry in Igembe as a result of the economy. The data revealed that the economic lifestyles of the people of Igembe changed soon after colonialism.

According to Kanampiu (a former senior chief in the old provincial administration), people were subjected to many taxes, they were attracted to urban life and the mode of dressing was changing. The only area to get money to satisfy their economic needs was either through coffee and casual employment in European farms. Those who interacted with the Boran and Somali realized it was making them be alert and kept them awake for long hours while grazing. same to watchmen who kept vigil at night. Slowly, Miraa trade went beyond Igembe land, while several other informants agreed that the commercial trade with Miraa was necessitated by the poor coffee prices as people were unable to meet their economic needs.

According to M’thirari and M Thangari, this commercial Miraa trade was initiated by the “Lubetaa” age group of the 1940s. This was the period the Igembe warriors started taking Miraa outside Igembe to Isiolo, Imenti and Mwimbi. Miraa prices went up
from little as one shilling a bundle to one shilling and fifty cents to five shillings upwards such that by 1960s it had reached five hundred shillings and at times one thousand. At this stage, the Igembe people realized that with Miraa one could pay tax, buy clothes, educate his children and generally live a better lifestyle than those with coffee.

This agrees with the colonial governments reports in the Kenya National Archives that “Most of the district’s (Meru) production comes from this location. This item is very important revenue earner for the people of Igembi. (Sic) It is estimated that in 1954, they received a return of £40,000 on this crop and in 1955 a return of £136,000”. Republic of Kenya MRU/31, Appendix “A”).

The commercial trade in Miraa led to increase in demand and the production continued to go up. There was hardly any town in Kenya where Miraa was not sold. Kenyan Miraa was being sold outside Kenya like Somalia, Uganda, South Africa, Tanzania though illegally and in the European market, it used to be sold through Britain before it was finally banned on 24/6/2014. This Miraa was transported in pickups, buses and driven at dangerous speeds because they had to catch the flight in time. From Maua to Nairobi a distance of about 300km, when under normal circumstances, vehicles driven at 80km/h would take five hours, a Miraa vehicle took between two hours and two hours fifteen minutes.

In the case for international export, plucking began before six o’clock in the morning and from seven to eight o’clock, the producers brought bunches to the trading centres; where Miraa businessmen gathered to buy Miraa. Each businessman organized his own workshop, in which Miraa twigs were sorted and packed. The workers who were
employed by businessmen on casual basis, removed the bulk of the green leaves from the twigs and made a bunch of about twenty twigs tied up with banana fibers. Every twenty Miraa twigs were packed by “clerks” to make a unit wrapped with banana leaves, called a Gitundu. Ten gitundu units made up the common marketing unit, Kilo, which contained approximately four hundred twigs. Twenty to twenty five bunches of kilo units were placed in a gunny bag, many of which were at around eleven o’clock loaded into Toyota and Nissan pickups and transported direct to Nairobi for onward air transport while that going to Mombasa was put directly into lorries or buses which also travelled at supersonic speed. However, that which went to North Eastern Kenya like Garisa, Mandera, Wajir and some to Somali were transported through Kinna, Garbatula in Isiolo, through Modogash and to their respective destinations in Toyota Land Cruiser Pick-ups.

The cost and benefits that businessmen had on the other hand, was contingent upon the market trend. Needless to say, the price of Miraa varied seasonally. It was in the dry season when prices rose due to shortage of supply. Since the prices in the local markets and the price in the inter-regional market did not always relate as in a free market, businessmen could make huge profits or sometimes face great losses due to wrong estimates. At the same time, since Igembe businessmen and Somali dealers transacted the commodity at credit without a written contract, there was always the risk of cheating and fraud in any transaction.

Grignon (1999) asserts that, As well as benefiting farmers, miraa offers many young men and some young women the chance to earn decent money by trading it, either as agents supplying retailers, or as retailers themselves. Apart from the North and
Northeast of Kenya where Borana, Sakuye and Somali women are the main miraa retailers, Meru traders – mainly men – can be found in most towns retailing the commodity. It is Somalis who control the lucrative export market, however, and this has been the cause of much resentment. This resentment led to a recent ‘trade war’ where Meru miraa farmers went on strike and forced Somalis out of the Nyambenes after a Meru man, who had begun to trade a little miraa in London, died. He was supposedly poisoned by Somalis jealous of their monopoly.

The Miraa industry in local communities of Igembe was a significant source of cash income and at the same time was characterized by its popular accessibility, mostly in the production and processing sections. The production sector did not require a large amount of capital or advanced technology and the processing sector was completely open to the public. There was no official co-operative body that controlled the production and marketing of the crop. While coffee production was promoted positively by the agricultural administration of Meru County, there was neither a government extension programme nor official guidance in the Miraa industry. This was simply because Miraa was thought to be a crop of a narcotic nature, and also because child exploitation in the Miraa industry was considered to be a social problem and a fatal obstacle to educational development in the region.

According to the key informants interviewed who were not engaged in Miraa business, there was a social prejudice against the Miraa business even within local communities. People who pursued social prestige in educational achievement and permanent employment often regarded the Miraa industry as a “fake” business compared with coffee production, which was associated with a formal sector of the
Kenyan economy. In this way, there seemed to be a contrast between the haves and have-nots in their forms of argument in the industry. Generally speaking, the economically weak without arable land resources were involved in the processing sector, while the haves dominated the production. In other words, school dropouts, unmarried young men, and single mothers were the ones who were found as paid workers in the workshops. On the other hand, it was thought to be improper for school pupils, unmarried women and married men and women to be engaged together in the processing workshops, since those workshops were thought to engender moral decadence in the rural community.
Source: own photograph

Fig 4.1: A bunch of Miraa (gitundu)

Source: own photograph

Fig 4.2 Ten bunches (one kilo)
Most of the Miraa transported for the market were of two types, namely; *kangeta* and *kisa*. Miraa twigs of between 20 to 30 centimetres were called *kangeta* and the relatively shorter ones were called *kisa*. Although there was no difference between the two in a botanical sense, the former was thought to be much more marketable than the latter. A bunch of Miraa was tied up with banana fibre, wrapped with banana leaf and
then placed in a gunny sack which was delivered to wholesale dealers just after the packing process. The researcher noted that Miraa was a commodity that required speedy handling at all levels and stages from harvesting to transport. This explained why even transporters who carried Miraa from the farm to the sorting workshops on their heads were always on the run, those carried to the local distribution centres by motorbikes were driven dangerously at high speeds as well as during the final transportation from Meru to Nairobi by the Toyota Landcruisers or the lorries that ferried Miraa to Mombasa from Meru.

4.5 Women and Miraa business

The researcher carried out research on single women and women whose spouses had left home to engage in Miraa business. The question asked was since traditionally the farming and use of Miraa was only a preserve for elderly men, were women engaged in Miraa farming and use. The data revealed that farming, harvesting and selling was not a preserve of any category of people but all.

Asked whether women engaged in Miraa industry, Kathure and M’mauta, argued that due to commercialization of Miraa, fathers and sons left homes for long periods to sell Miraa in major towns of Kenya like Nairobi, Mombasa, Nakuru, Kisumu and many more. Their wives left alone succumbed to economic pressure and seeing the way Somali women and Boran women used to handle money in the Miraa business, also joined the business from as early as 1990s. In many of the Miraa sorting areas visited by the researcher in Igembe, women seemed to be majority most of them middle aged women who had dropped out of school and even school age girls.
According to Beckerleg, an association of khat with youth and women was now widespread and as they were seen as susceptible to such substances, the perception that “even the young were chewing” was the source of moral panic, and was often contrasted with models of restrained ‘traditional’ consumption. Also, in Madagascar, in a survey of people generally sympathetic to khat chewing, a significant number responded that women should not chew, and many were concerned that it took them from their daily homemaking responsibilities; women consumers were often portrayed negatively in Kenya and Uganda too, sometimes being labelled sex workers (Beckerleg 2008).

According Getahun and Krikorian (1973) Miraa is no longer the preserve of elders. In the Igembe region many women – and even some children – chew regularly, as do the majority of young men, who face no risk of undergoing the fierce lashings that their earlier counterparts might have faced if caught. It is said that young men today reckon that circumcision, rather than marriage, is the rite that gives them carte blanche to chew, though even some young boys chew publicly. This purported change occurred over the course of the 20th century, and although it appears dramatic, it is hardly a unique phenomenon. There are reports that miraa was originally used just by elders in Ethiopia too, ‘even then only in connection with religious rites’
Figure 4.4: Mutura’s workshop at Kiengu market where Miraa is being sought, Igembe East Division Meru County. (Personal observation, 21st July 2014)

4.6 Conclusion
Miraa as an industry affected Igembe and most of Meru and the consumers outside Meru region. Igembe turned into a beehive of Miraa activity, this time more of commercial in nature than the earlier which was almost all traditional. Most land was taken by Miraa industry in Igembe at the expense of subsistence crops.

Miraa industry became the main source of cash income and this attracted even women who engaged in the business. School children realized this and lost interest in schooling and even refused to go to school concentrating on Miraa sales. Thus children’s attitude to education was negative when they realized that the educated
were not as rich as the Miraa growers or traders. Chiefs, therefore, used their orders to force the children to go to school but in vain. The Igembe people were forced to move their subsistence farming in the low land areas towards the Meru national park to the south and south east and to the northern grazing area towards Isiolo which were unpredictable in produce due to inadequate rainfall.

Miraa consumption was on the rise in Igembe, from being restricted to certain segments of the society, it was now widespread. This rise in consumption was met with great concern, which focused on perceived rise in consumption amongst those viewed as vulnerable or for whom it was thought culturally inappropriate: the youth and women.

The example of miraa provided in this paper demonstrates the complexity involved in the spread of cultural influence, and accords in this respect with works that criticise the idea of ‘modernisation’ or ‘globalisation’ being homogenising processes Miller, D. 1995. Worlds Apart: Modernity through the Prism of the Local, Edited by: Miller, D. London: Routledge. For example, Beckerleg relates how ‘Swahili youth draw on western and Middle East cultural elements and fashions to develop a “cool” style that is both modern and recognizably Swahili’ (Beckerleg, S. 2004b). How ‘cool’ is heroin injection at the In the case of miraa, an indigenous product has been deemed to fit worthily inside an ethos heavily influenced by external influences: one might say that it has become seen and approved of through the prism of a globalised youth ethos. Of course, miraa is also seen and disapproved of through another globalised prism: the ‘war on drugs’. This is a globalised force that influences the way many Kenyans see miraa. That miraa is labelled a ‘drug’ probably serves to repel
more people than its label of poa attracts. Unsurprisingly the ‘war on drugs’ take on miraa is one highly contested by most Tigania and Igembe.
CHAPTER FIVE


5.1 Introduction

The chapter focuses on the impacts of the changes of the farming and use of Miraa in Igembe district from 1963 to 2014.

The research questions addressed was what were the effects of the changes in the farming and use of Miraa in Igembe society of Meru County, Kenya between the period 1963 to 2014. The data revealed some positive and negative factors in the social life of the Igembe people. The following was clear from the data collected.

Between the period 1963 to 2014, Miraa was the number one income earner in Igembe District sustaining most homesteads for food, education, shelter, clothing, traditional rites and leisure. Thus, it wholly supported individual and family livelihoods economic, social and infrastructure development. With this usage explosion, Miraa’s traditional roles had become diluted. It was mainly applied in pursuit of benefits especially to suppress hunger, create alertness, preventing fatigue for those working long hours and just as leisure and at times as disguise for using hard illegal drugs.

The traditional controls that governed Miraa use were overtaken by time. Now Miraa was widely abused leading to erosion of African cultural values. Young people invaded Miraa chewing heartily, to the annoyance of the elders because they hardly
did any constructive development work. Actually, the industry was known to extensively use child labour, cause high school dropout rates in the farming, trading and consuming areas, insecurity, family breakups, high crime rates, as conduit for drugs and fire arms, evils which were unthinkable to result from Miraa use traditionally as the researcher noted in his research below.

The growing importance of Miraa has been faced with a lot of heated national and local debates on its safety as a consumption product. Those opposed to its human use contend that it is a health hazard and its socio-economic value should be substituted with other products. Therefore, following the threat to Miraa ban in the world market as a result of several countries categorizing Miraa among the prohibited drugs, the government of Kenya took upon itself to seek for ways to protect the Miraa industry by the national assembly having a lengthy debate on the matter on tenth July 2013.

There was an establishment of an Ad-hoc-committee on Miraa. The Motion read: “THAT, aware that Khat (Miraa) is an economic mainstay of many people in Kenya and has led to economic growth and development in the country; noting that the National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse (NACADA) has continued to campaign against consumption of the commodity and classified khat (Miraa) as a drug; concerned that most countries have banned the chewing of Khat (Miraa) and others are in the process of banning the entry of the product into their markets including recommendation of severe penalties against consumers, while others have granted the Government of Kenya a window period to consider the suitability of the product for export; further noting that recent research has established that khat (Miraa) is not a drug and, therefore, appropriate legislation should be put in place to regulate the industry; this House resolves to establish an ad-
hoc committee to comprehensively investigate and inquire into all matters relating to khat (Miraa), consider and review all research findings and make recommendations to the House within 90 days, and that the Committee should comprise the following members:

- 1. The Hon. Florence Kajuju, MP â€“ Chairperson
- 2. The Hon. Franklin Mithika Linturi, MP
- 3. The Hon. Muriuki Njagagua, MP
- 4. The Hon. Gladys Wanga, MP
- 5. The Hon. Daniel Maanzo, MP
- 6. The Hon. Dennitah Ghati, MP
- 7. The Hon. Dr. Susan Musyoka, MP
- 8. The Hon. Fatuma Ibrahim, MP
- 9. The Hon. Cyprian Kubai Iringo, MP
- 10. The Hon. Joseph M’Eruaki, MP
- 11. The Hon. Farah Abdulaziz, MP”

The motion was proposed by the Meru women representative honourable Kajuju. Hon. Kubai Kiringo in support of the motion argued that having been brought up in Meru, he could authoritatively attest that Miraa was not a drug. He argued that if Miraa was demonized in Kenya, then the whole of Meru and their culture was getting demonized. His ideas were strongly supported by Hon. Charles Muriuki who claimed
that not only Meru but also Mbeere used Miraa with no negative impacts but had medicinal value, while Hon. James Nyakio noted that the social importance of Miraa among the Ameru could not be doubted. Mr Mwinga Gunga Chea summed the debate by saying before the authorities like the National Campaign Against Drug Abuse (NACADA) or any other body passing a very harsh sentence against Miraa or other commodities of that nature, it was important that there needed to be conclusive scientific research so that commodities of such nature were not condemned, which were very important particularly when it came to the economic welfare of the individuals.

Retrieved on 31st March 2016 at info.mzalendo.com/hansard/sitting/national_assembly/2013-07-10-09-00

Miraa is cultivated on smallholder plots, and offers farmers a very good return per acre in comparison with crops like coffee and tea. Goldsmith contrasts well the success of miraa – a crop grown with little government help in ‘traditional’ intercropping ways – with the dramatic recent failure of coffee, often grown as a ‘monocrop’ in a very ‘modern’ way. One farmer mentioned in a UNDCP (UN Drug Control Programme) report of 1999 United Nations Drug Control Programme. 1999. *The Drugs Nexus in Africa* 1999 (reckoned that every shilling invested in tea brings a return of two shillings; whereas every shilling invested in miraa gives a return of four shillings. Farmers also appreciate the frequent harvests that miraa trees provide every few weeks or so depending on the season, pointing out that income from crops like coffee is not only depressingly small, but also comes in just one yearly payment, if at all. As well as benefiting farmers, miraa offers many
young men and some young women the chance to earn decent money by trading it, either as agents supplying retailers, or as retailers themselves.

5.2 Impacts of Miraa on education

To realize the effects of Miraa on education, the analysis was presented in form of tables showing frequencies and percentages derived from research questions to the Headteachers of primary schools. These were:

Are there cases of school dropouts in the primary schools in Igembe District?

Among boys and girls, who drop out in large numbers?

Are there cases of absenteeism?

In the last ten years, what was the percentage drop out rate?

Do schools practice the farming of Miraa?

What role does Miraa play in school dropout?

The advantages of Miraa to education

The problems/disadvantages of Miraa to the school administration.

Table 5.1: School dropout rate from 2000 to 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLASS OF DROPOUT</th>
<th>BOYS</th>
<th>GIRLS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency (f)</td>
<td>Percentage (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>37.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-8</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>33.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All classes</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.1 indicated that majority of dropout cases were boys. This findings concur with a survey done by the government’s drug watchdog, National Campaign Against Drug Abuse, NACADA (2007), which found out that cases of boys dropouts were rampant in khat growing areas. The boys used the money got from Miraa to lure girls out of school such that in the end both girls and boys dropout from school although the boy cases are more.

The researcher sought further information on the reasons for dropout and absenteeism.
Table 5.2 Causes of dropouts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLASS OF DROPOUT</th>
<th>HEAD TEACHERS</th>
<th>COUNTY ADMIN</th>
<th>EDUCATION PERSONEL</th>
<th>NJURI CHEKE ELDERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Miraa business</td>
<td>10 100%</td>
<td>5 90%</td>
<td>3 90%</td>
<td>8 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment/</td>
<td>2 20%</td>
<td>3 50%</td>
<td>2 80%</td>
<td>6 80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houseboys/Housegirls</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early marriages</td>
<td>4 40%</td>
<td>3 50%</td>
<td>3 90%</td>
<td>7 90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunger and Starvation</td>
<td>2 20%</td>
<td>5 90%</td>
<td>3 90%</td>
<td>5 70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGM</td>
<td>2 20%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td>1 40%</td>
<td>3 40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuition Money</td>
<td>1 10%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>4 30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Pregnancies</td>
<td>2 20%</td>
<td>3 50%</td>
<td>2 60%</td>
<td>4 30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporal Punishment</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>2 15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not doing well in Exams</td>
<td>3 30%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td>2 60%</td>
<td>3 40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enticement from classmates</td>
<td>4 40%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td>2 60%</td>
<td>1 7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field survey

The answers varied from engagement in Miraa business which was rated the highest by all the Headteachers, employment as house boys and house girls, early marriages while others dropped out during the campaign period in 2002 and 2007 to take advantage of the campaign money in circulation.

The researcher sought information from the Headteachers on the role that was played by Miraa in school dropout and absenteeism to both boys and girls. As noted from Mrs. Kaberia (Headteacher Kathathene Primary School), most of the fathers were rarely found at home and were busy selling Miraa in big towns like Nairobi, Mombasa, Nakuru, Eldoret, Kisumu among others. Such parents were away for
several months and in other cases some years. Mwaniki (2006). They therefore, did not follow the education issues of their children and even when demanded by the Headteacher to come and discuss the discipline and academic factors for their children, only mothers attended such occasions. This affected boys more than girls since boys tended to be keener from fathers’ advice and disciplinary procedures. In other instances, the fathers did not provide the basic necessities at home since once they were away and therefore, the boys opted to picking Miraa to supplement the little their mothers could afford.

All the Headteachers interviewed said that boys who dropped out of school acquired money from Miraa which they used to lure girls in primary schools to marry them leading to girls dropping out. The boys also used the money earned from Miraa to lure girls into sex which led to pregnancy and early marriages of age mates. This point was supported by Kanampiu, former senior chief of Athiru Ruujine Location and Baariu, a former Headteacher of a primary school and an inspector of schools who said that a lot of money from Miraa was used by boys and other young men to buy presents to school girls like mobile phones in exchange for sex which led to pregnancy and dropout. It was also noted that some other girls like mobile phones in exchange for sex which led to pregnancy and drop out. It was also noted that some other girls who lacked basic needs opted to borrow money from classmates who had dropped out of school and in such instances boys were rewarded with sex which led to pregnancy and subsequent dropout.

The researcher sought to know the classes which had the highest number of drop out. 99% of the Headteachers interviewed agreed that most dropout occurred between
classes 6-8. Most of the students had reached adolescent and were sexually active at this stage. Further, the researcher then sought to know the impact of Miraa on the school administration.

All the Headteachers interviewed by the researcher agreed that Miraa was indispensable for educating children. They were all in agreement that in Igembe, any work that was done in primary school that required money was dependent on Miraa. This included construction of classrooms, school uniforms and anything else that the school needed to do or to be done by the parents, 98% of the money came from Miraa. Some argued that without Miraa, there would be no education in Igembe District. Out of the eighteen primary schools visited, thirteen had even planted Miraa in their lots of land.

The researcher then sought to know if there was any indiscipline problems realized in schools arising from the use of Miraa. Eighty per cent of the respondents said that majority of the students chewed Miraa and most of them spent sleepless nights in Miraa chewing dens. These made them to dose or feel sleepy most of the day even when the teacher was in class. Some of the students could be absent occasionally and got involved in Miraa business. According to the Headteachers, it was easy to find students with several thousand shillings in their pockets and some felt they were even richer than their teachers. Such students seemed not to be attentive to their teachers and even when teachers administered punishment to them as corrective measures, they usually refused and opted to drop out of school to continue in the Miraa business.

In the educational sphere, the Miraa industry had both advantages because it had positively contributed to the education of children and putting up the educational
physical structures while on the other hand the view that the Miraa industry had bred school drop outs was widely found in local narratives as well as in official reports. Therefore, child exploitation in the Miraa industry was considered to be a social problem and a fatal obstacle to educational development in Igembe District.

### 5.3 Impact of the use of Miraa on social and cultural status of the Igembe people

The researcher wanted to know the general social effects on the farming and use of Miraa in Igembe.

**Table 5.3 Effects of the use of Miraa on the social and cultural status of the Igembe people.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EFFECTS</th>
<th>COUNTY ADMIN</th>
<th>NJURI NCHEKE ELDERS</th>
<th>VILLAGE ELDERS</th>
<th>WOMEN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building Marriages</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience from elders</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Planning</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chewed Miraa to be alert</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social disobedience</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Break ups</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Crime rate</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huge number of school dropouts</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol consumption</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overreliance on one cash crop</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immorality</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV Prevalence</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: field Survey*
The researcher noted that there were both positive and negative effects due to the use of Miraa in Igembe. According to Baariu and Kimathi Munjuri, Miraa had the following advantages: Among the Ameru, Miraa is a sacred crop applied in religious, medicinal and cultural rites. In olden times, no marriage was and in some areas today is possible in this community without giving a bunch of Miraa twigs to his bride to chew first and take some to her father. When the lady presents the twigs to her father the father knows automatically that the daughter is seeking his approval for her chosen suiter. If the father accepts the twigs and chews them, the groom is acceptable to the bride’s parents and introductions to the inlaws and dowry negotiations can begin.

Miraa was/is used by the younger people to request the audience of the elders. When a young Mumeru offers Miraa twigs to an elder Mumeru, the elder one knows automatically that the younger one is requesting for audience.

Miraa among the Ameru had medicinal applications. The elders chewed Miraa made into concoctions in preparation to take cattle to graze several months away from home. This removed the sexual prowess completely over the period they were away from their wives. In this way, Miraa was also applied for family planning.

Elders gave the same concoctions of Miraa to warriors when they went to raid other communities for livestock and in times of inter tribal wars. It had the same effects of enabling them to be alert, free of fatigue and sleep to avoid temptations of the enemy women. They were thus able to carry out successful raids, which materialized in women captives some of whom included young beautiful women but they brought them back home without even abusing them.
Among the Ameru, Miraa was consumed in large quantities by people pursuing career, religious and cultural applications and/or rites. Long distance drivers, watchmen, people on night duty or those who work for long hours chewed Miraa to be alert and not to be fatigued. Miraa was now a capable industry on its own merit employing over a million people directly and supporting millions of people indirectly, also noting that the Kenyan exchequer earned billions in foreign exchange from Miraa export.

On its contribution to the ecosystem, Miraa was intercropped with other crops to enhance productivity of the land and yield of the arable crops farmed therein. This was mainly because the Miraa trees acted as wind breakers thus minimizing soil erosion, providing shade and foliage. The foliage acted as food for livestock especially goats. After harvesting, packaging and sale, Miraa leaves became manure together with backs of banana leaves that were used for wrapping the Miraa. It was thus environmental friendly.

From the data collected, it was evident that despite the great economic value and potential of the Miraa crop, the social cost of its farming, trading and consumption was so high all because of lack of direction by the Government of Kenya, lack of regulation and a responsible body. Murungi kathure, Kanampiu, M’thirari and Kiambati argued that with the commercialization of Miraa, fathers and sons left their homes for long periods of time sometimes six months or even an year. Due to this, family ties loosened. Somali traders had immigrated into the area to fill in the vacuum left by males with a result of several children born of Somali blood, children were not in school. Violence, crime, insecurity, drug abuse and immorality had sky rocketed as
every local spent most of his time around urban centres waiting for Somalis to give the “Miraa order monies” which was done at wee hours of the night. This made Miraa sellers vulnerable to the risks of urban night life. There was very high prostitution around Miraa trading centres in major urban centres. Sometimes Miraa arrived much later in the night especially in Nairobi, Mombasa, Nakuru, Kisumu and in North Eastern counties. Young Meru selling Miraa, living in kiosks and lodgings indulged in alcohol and sex as they awaited either money to buy some more Miraa.

When especially young people combined Miraa with social drugs like alcohol, reckless sexual behaviour resulted as elders lamented. After all this and long periods away from their young wives and homes these traders went back home without knowing their HIV status and having a little money to show off. While there, they still spent time around urban areas around their homes again chewing Miraa and drinking alcohol into the night depicting high lifestyle.

The women and children were left in rural areas to fend for themselves while awaiting the next visit by their husbands and elder siblings. These women sometimes engaged in sex outside marriage to satisfy their conjugal rights leading to further spread of HIV and AIDS. According to a 2001, 6th Edition report by the Ministry of Health, titled: “Aids in Kenya”, 26% of the Meru North (Nyambene) population had HIV and AIDS and 36% were infected in the urban centres.

Murungi argued that there had been conflicts at family levels as a result of Miraa industry. Usually in the absence of husbands for long periods of time, the women were left as household heads. All the roles that were meant to be performed by men were done by women. Sometimes they were forced to pluck Miraa for their basic
needs. When their husbands returned to find their Miraa had been picked by their wives, a conflict arose that sometimes led to women running away from their matrimonial homes. Elders were called upon to settle these domestic problems who sometimes ended up setting a few Miraa plants in the farm for the women to control.

According to Kanampiu and Baariu, the economic factors contributed to overreliance on Miraa as the Igembe people’s main source of livelihood. Due to this aspect guarding of mature Miraa plants was much required; otherwise thieves stole the mature Miraa. Miraa was usually guarded by warriors and people who had hired Miraa farms from the farmers. M’thirari and Mwibualamented that this Miraa culture had bred disability in the District. Miraa was guarded 24 hours and once a thief was caught with stolen Miraa or in a Miraa farm, their hands were usually chopped off, sometimes both hands and legs were chopped off apart from the thorough beating that one received. This led to several people disguised as thieves being maimed. Kanampiu and Kubai, both chiefs interviewed told the researcher that 90% of the cases they settled and those that appeared in Maua law courts were Miraa related cases. However, the chiefs argued that currently they were carrying out civic education to the people through public barazas educating them on the importance of not taking the law into their own hands but handing over the criminals to the police for the law to take its own course.

5.4 Social effects on the livelihood of the Igembe people following the ban of Miraa in Britain and other European markets to the Igembe society; 2014

The UK ban on Miraa came into effect on 24th June 2014 following British Parliaments approval of the Government decision to reclassify Miraa as a class C
drug. (The Standard June 26th 2014: 27). According to the British High Commission Nairobi published on 12th June 2014 and posted by Nation reporter on Thursday June 12, 2014, the decision to control Miraa in UK was taken to address a number of issues. That UK legislation was out of step with many of their key international partners. The UK was one of the last countries to reclassify Miraa, with the majority of other EU member states having done so, as well as most of the G8 countries including Canada and the USA. That the UK was a serious risk to becoming a regional hub – with evidence already suggesting that the UK was being used as a transit hub for onward illegal Miraa trafficking to the Netherlands (where Miraa was banned in January).

The planning permanent secretary Eng O. Mangiti, who was accompanied by Dr. Omiti, KIPPRA’s (Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis) executive Director, made a presentation on socio-economic impact of Miraa in Kenya to the Parliament and HOC Committee on Miraa industry. The presentation which was made on September 16, 2013 at parliament buildings in Nairobi was prepared by Ministry of Devolution and planning in collaboration with KIPPRA and Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS).

Miraa was one of the economic mainstay of many people that had led to economic growth and development in the country. Organizations such as National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse (NACADA) had campaigned against its consumption and classified it as a drug. Following this, hopes for Kenya to resume selling Miraa (khat) in the United Kingdom dimmed after the British High Commission insisted that the ban was not to be reviewed. In a statement, the Head of
Communications at the British High Commission in Nairobi Stephen Burns said the ban came into effect on June 24, 2014. The statement read, Mr Burns said the British Government was aware of the Economic impact the ban would have in Kenya. He said the UK government would give Kenya aid to support economic growth, adding that the ban followed the British parliament’s approval of the Government’s decision to reclassify Miraa as a class C drug. He said the UK was one of the last countries to reclassify Miraa with the majority of other EU (European Union) member states having done so, as well as most of the G8 countries including Canada and USA. That the UK was at serious risk of becoming a regional hub-with evidence already suggesting that the UK was being used as a transit hub for onward illegal Miraa trafficking to the Netherlands (where Miraa was banned in January), Mr Burns further said that the stand by the British Government came days after president Uhuru Kenyatta pledged to intervene to have the ban reviewed, while the former prime minister Raila Odinga also petitioned the British Government to review the ban on Miraa after he wrote to the British prime minister David Cameron asking him to extend the deadline.

This decision by the UK government to ban Miraa on 24/6/2014 faced fierce resistance from Kenyan farmers, traders and politicians especially from the Meru region. Kubai Kiringo, the MP for Igembe central had this to say, “We feel bitter and short changed. We want the home secretary to revise her decision”. Gatehouse (2014) at www.talktofrank.com, Kubai argued that chewing khat in Meru region had a long and vulnerable tradition. “Warriors used to chew it to keep the enemies at bay, and also to take care of the cows in the jungle. The elders used to chew it as they deliberated on community issues.”…” when they were in their traditional parliament,
one ingredient which kept them going was the Miraa.”..”This shamba (farm) brings a turnover of about 200,000 Kenya shillings per month (about $2,300, £1,500)”…”This is the money that is used to build churches, take children to school, build infrastructure, do everything.” “Basically the livelihood of the people here depends on these trees.”

According to Kubai, Kenya could reconsider its ties with Britain if the UK does not drop the ban. “We feel bitter and short-changed. We want the home Secretary to revise her decision,” he says “if she doesn’t, then we shall look for other avenues to show that we are not happy. “Riple Effect”, “The UK maintains a large military base in Central Kenya, where thousands of British soldiers train every year before deploying to Afghanistan and other countries.”

For Meru’s khat growers, exports to the UK are worth an estimated $7.5m annually. “Meru County residents won’t be happy to see the people who banned their Miraa coming to train in their area.” Mr Kiringo warned “British tourists come for recreation and we have British farmers here,” he continues “Meru people will not be happy to see them reap from our soil when they have already banned our commodity. So we beg them to reconsider their decision because it will have ripple effects at the end of the day.”

With the ban on Miraa in the European market, traders were now looking to the East. Muunjuri, (2014), the Nyamita spokes person argued that there was need for the producers to be allowed to export the stimulant to China after it was banned in Britain. He said China was the hub of herbal medicine and Miraa had many medicinal values. Although, he lamented that attempts to have the Kenyan Embassy in Beijing
and Chinese Embassy in Nairobi to help open the market for the stimulant had not borne fruits five years since a request was made. According to Munjuri, only khat from Ethiopia was allowed in China while that from Kenya was considered a hard drug.

The other Meru members of parliament were also not left behind in their agitation to have the UK rescind Miraa ban. Ayaga and JThiong’o (2014). The Members of the national assembly introduced a motion to compel the state to repossess land acquired by British farmers in Kenya. In a press statement at parliament buildings, the lawmakers from Meru called on the government to compulsorily repossess farms occupied by the British farmers countrywide if the UK government did not rescind a ban on Miraa exports into its markets. The legislators led by Mithika Linturi (MP Igembe South) introduced a motion in the house that would compel the Government to invoke sections of the supreme law that allowed such acquisitions. The motion read, “the House resolves that the Government invokes article 40 and 65 of the constitution by budgeting for and compulsorily acquiring land owned or acquired by the British. Others who addressed the press conference were Kubai Kiringo (Mp Igembe Central) and the Meru women representative Florence Kajuju. The motion by the law makers cited the British army training camps in Isiolo, wheat and barley farms in Timau, Meru and ranches owned by British nationals in and around Laikipia and Samburu, as some of the land that should belong to indigenous Kenyans.

In general, the Meru society was in fear that the ban on Miraa would be followed by a drop of the economy since 90% of the society depended on the Miraa income. Kaberia Maeria told the researcher that once the Miraa ban was effected, the whole
Meru society would crumble. He noted that there was no one from Meru who did not depend on Miraa. He gave example of potatoes and cabbage farmers from Imenti, Meru whose products found market in Igembe, several bakeries in the region as well as herdsmen in North Eastern Province who provide cattle and goats for meat in Igembe. His fears were in agreement with those of Kennedy Kimanthi and Dickson Mwiti who argued that 80% of the region’s residents faced poverty if they failed to find other means of survival. Daily Nation Friday June 27th 2014:17. They argued that every aspect of life in the region especially in Igembe and Tigania revolved around Miraa and things could soon be different for 80% of the County’s population which earned their living from the crop

The residents felt their leaders and the Government had not fought enough to convince the UK to lift the ban. The Nyambene Miraa Traders Association chairman Edward Mutura said the dealers felt completely neglected. “We anticipate huge losses. Parents are also so anxious about school dropouts due to lack of fees and reduced County revenue as long term effect.” (Ibid). He noted that business in Maua and other towns would be crippled as they attracted investors and financial institutions due to cash that changed hands there. He said, “Residents will soon be beggars if they do not find other methods of survival.”

Mutembei (ibid) noted that hundreds of farmers and pickers, those who supplied banana leaves for wrapping, truck drivers and loaders would all lose their jobs as well as the government losing revenue because Miraa was one of the largest foreign exchange earners. An informant told the researcher at a Miraa sorting base that the government should have gotten ready to employ more policemen in the area because
of hundreds of youth who were to be rendered jobless as they were likely to engage in
criminal activities to earn a living.

5.5 Effects of Miraa on religion

**Table 5.4 Effects of miraa on growth of the church**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>STRONGLY AGREE</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>STRONGLY DISAGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The church has grown its own Miraa</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Members chew Miraa</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The church has been able to put up</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>permanent structures due to money</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gotten from Miraa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The church is able to maintain</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ministers, pastors and bishops</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churches are financially stable as</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>result of miraa income</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Field study*

The research established that Miraa farming and use led to the growth of the religious
sector. It was established that some churches grew their own Miraa or had some
Miraa in their compounds. Through the capital raised from Miraa, churches have been
able to put up permanent structures, maintain their spiritual leaders such as ministers,
pastors, bishops and other members of the clergy as well as aquasation of worship
instruments as the churches seemed to be financially stable. The research further established that in Igembe Christians chew Miraa at will.

5.6 Conclusion

Miraa was now an industry of its own merit employing over one million people directly and indirectly. It contributed to the revenue of Meru County in areas where it was grown, traded as a locomotive agent for other industries like the motor industry, soft drinks industry, milk industry, bottled water, petroleum, tobacco, sweets and alcohol all of which sold their products to Miraa chewers.

People had become money-minded such that even the traditional functions that used to be done through presentation of Miraa were equated to money. In most cases, the Miraa was valued and money given instead especially with the young generation. The dowry was paid in terms of money. If one sought reconciliation, one could be fined a bundle of Miraa but this could be valued at several thousand shillings, although there were those who still stuck to the culture and traditions where Miraa must be Miraa.

On consumption, the rate was rising from being restricted to certain geographical areas and to certain segments of society, that travelled far and wide geographically and society. This rise in consumption was met with great concern locally and globally. This concern especially focused on a perceived rise in consumption amongst those viewed as vulnerable or for whom it may be culturally inappropriate: the youth and women. An emaciation of khat with youth was now widespread, as they were seen as moral panic, and often contrasted with models of restrained “traditional” consumption.
The concern over youthful consumption was evident from the earliest written accounts of consumption in the Nyambene (Igembe and Tigania of Meru County). These accounts are written by explorers and hunters, Chanler (1896) and Neumann, (1982 [1898]), who visited the area at different times during the 1890s. Chanler (1896:190) mentioned that Nyambene elders saw khat as something to be withheld from the young. “The young men among the natives are not allowed to eat it, the reason assigned for this restriction being that if the young men were allowed freely to indulge in this plant, they would be forced to stay awake at night, and be tempted, under the cover of darkness, to gratify desires which the light of day forces them to curb”.

This idea of an earlier restriction of khat to Meru elders became key during colonial times. For some colonial officers, the traditional use of khat by elders was acceptable; it was its increasing use by Meru youth and by anyone else that alarmed them. Various measures to curb a restriction of khat to Meru elders were attempted, none of which, proved successful: instead, khat’s popularity throughout the colony increased. Nowadays, while Meru often still speak of khat once being the preserve of elders for many – predominantly make youth, khat has become POA, - the Swahili word for “cool” (Carrier, 2005b).

According to the observations carried out by the researcher, the chewing of Miraa took place in informal settings, often watching football or relaxing in a café. For those with work, chewing tended to fit around work hours, and was often limited to the weekend: Employment seemed to be a major factor in when and how often people chewed while for others, chewing could fill any time they were free provided they
could afford some *khat* or obtains some from friends. At weekends, sessions often lasted into the night, sometimes accompanied by alcoholic drinks.

The growing importance of Miraa has been faced with a lot of heated local and national debates on its safety as a consumption product. Thosed opposed to its human use centered that it is a health hazard with, and its socio-economic value should be substituted with other products. However the proponents of the farming and use of Miraa emphasize more on the cultural role and strongly defend the industry. Farming conflicts are also not uncommon as most men spend long periods away engaged in Miraa businesses that led to some of them engage in prostitution and drug abuse as men seemed to have a lot of money from the Miraa business. The Miraa farmers are very impatient and intolerant with those who steal Miraa from their shambas. Normally those caught stealing Miraa are either beaten mercilessly or slashed with pangas to the extent of some being maimed. The chiefs interviewed told the researcher that many of the cases that appear at Maua law courts are Miraa related crime cases while at the same time Maua Methodist hospital and Nyambene general hospital received many patients with injuries associated with Miraa controversies.

School dropout is another negative consequence of Miraa trade. Young school aged kids prefer to venture into the trade to going to school due to the presumed easy money, where school age children feel that they can make money by plucking Miraa and become rich easily. Majority of the school dropouts are boys. This situation is alarming considering the resources invested in education. This findings concur with a survey done by the governmet’s drug watchdog, National Campaign Against Drug Abuse, NACADA (2007), which found out that cases of boys dropouts were rampant in khat growing areas. The boys used the money got from Miraa to lure girls out of
school such that in the end both girls and boys dropout from school although the boy cases are more.
CHAPTER SIX
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction
This chapter presents the summary and conclusions of the study. The findings are summarized under the areas that collectively correspond to the main research questions and objectives. Suggestions for further research are also given in this chapter.

6.2 Summary of the findings
The results of the study centered on three areas namely changes in the farming and use of Miraa from 1940 to 2014 and the effects of this changes to the Igembe people of Meru County. The results reveal that although Miraa was traditionally grown for cultural purposes its farming and use have changed drastically such that currently its used more for economic purposes. The study reveal that initially Miraa was grown on small plots of land and by the old men whose purpose was for the performance of cultural rites. Among the Ameru it was and is still a sacred crop applied in religious, medicinal and cultural rites. In the social routine, Marriage was impossible before a girl’s father accepted a bunch from the bride-groom throught the bride or the bridegrooms father. Meru warriors chewed the twigs when they went on raiding missions to get cattle from other communities, so didi the old men when they went for missions that sometimes took more than six months. The Miraa twigs enabled them to endure fatigue, stay alert and when Mixed with other concoctions to avoid temotions of foreign women. For Ameru people, an elder would automatically know
that a person offering him Miraa was seeking his audience and prepared immediately
to sit and talk. It was noted that Meru people used Miraa as a cultural plant but with
the coming of the Somali ita became a cash crop. There were strict traditional rules on
the use of Miraa where the young and women were not allowed to chew the
substance.

The study noted that Miraa was discovered as a usefull substance by shephards while
out with their flocks. It was a custom for the shephards to taste what their flocks ate
since they assumed that whatever the flocks fed on was not harmful to people. The
taste of the substance triggered the interest of the shephards and they gradually started
chewing the Miraa twigs. Because of the traditional restrictions that forbid the youth
from chewing Miraa, the youth used to cross borders to Isiolo and Embu to chew the
substance. Initialy Miraa was not traded but was a highly valued tree among the
Ameru especially those living in Igembe and Tigania regions of Meru County.
Gradually chewing of the twigs attracted the attention of young people and somehow
few women. Initially old men could plant a few trees of Miraa for the purposes
mentioned above and so no trade was done. However as the number of chewers
increased the demand to plant more trees became inevitable to meet the emerging
consumption. Large scale trading is supposed to have been strated by the Lubetaa age
group of the 1940s realizing the increasing demand of the substance. With this usage
explosion, Miraa’s traditional rules were diluted. The industry was known to
extensively use child labour, cause high school dropout rates in the farming, trading
and consuming areas evils which were unthinkable to resort from Miraa use
traditionaly.
The growing importance of Miraa has been faced with a lot of local, national and international debates and its safety as a consumer product. Those opposed to its human use contend that it is a health harzard and its socio-econimic value should be substituted with other products. There has been family conflicts, as well as people taking the law into their hands once they catch disguised thieves in they shambas. Thus the crime rate becomes very high. School dropout is another negative consequence of Miraa use as young school going age prefer to venture into the use of Miraa and trade for quick money.

In Kenya, colonial authorities tried to control khat through a number of ordinances in the 1940’s and 50s. This initially introduced a permit for trade and consumption within Kenya but then later attempted to prohibate it completely in northern Kenya where it was seen as most problematic, NCST (1996). It was found that the HIV prevalence was rising in the district where the Miraa traders engaged in sex outside marriage or had mistresses in town as the waited for ‘order moneys’. With this the STDs including HIV/AIDS were on the increase as a lot of money generated from the trade in Miraa tempted people to get involved in immorality. This easy money led to the involvement of women in Miraa business which was not the case traditionaly. The study also established that the trade in Miraa led to the growth of physical structures in churches. As far as education is concerned the study revealed that people utilized money from Miraa to pay school fees for their children and also educational physical facilities which have been established using the same source.

The study tried to create awareness on the changes in the farming and use of Miraa in Igembe from 1940-2014. This study revealed that the farming Miraa changed
gradually from Miraa being grown in small scale to large scale and its use from cultural rites alone to economic use which currently is the main cash crop for the people of Igembe district. The study has therefore noted both positive and negative effects of the farming and use over space and time. Wherease Miraa has been embraced by the church, having acquired plots and built churches, buy worship instruments and support the clergy Miraa has been found to contribute to many family conflicts including querels, alcoholism, prostitution, separation and divorce and the spread of STDs such as HIV/AIDS. The study suggested various ways that the government can use to curb the problems associated with the farming and use of Miraa in the form of policy framework in its conclusion. This policy framework would also safeguard the Miraa industry in Kenya.

6.3 Conclusion

This study established that the use of Miraa (Catha edulis) was first documented in 1237 AD. Various communities worldwide grew their own varieties of Miraa and had different names for it. Somalis/Arabs call it khat, Ethiopians – Abyssia tea, Yemen – Qhat, Chinese – Oljoumung, Ameru – muraa, Agikuyu – Mairungi, Akamba – Mulaa, Maasai – Olmuraa and many more. It was also noted that Miraa differed from area to area. There were certainly Miraa varieties. Ethiopian Miraa was long and the consumer chewed only the fleshly tip throwing away the rest. It was similar to the Kenyan Miraa found in the Chyulu Hills and Mt Elgon. It was very wasteful and very bulky to carry or transport. Yemen Miraa was similar to the Miraa grown in Embu called Muguka, which was very leafy with no twig. The varieties were dictated by soil types and the climate in which the Miraa was grown and at times the tastes and quality of
Miraa desired by the particular villagers. The other Miraa variety grew in the Igembe and Tigania area which were of two sub-generies (black and white Miraa). These had a number of brands, namely; Kangeta, kisa, kata, marutubu, liboi, kulumbo, ss, AA and many others.

Twig length and palatability, both of which depended on the age of Miraa, determined the Igembe and Tigania Miraa brands. The desired brand in turn determined harvesting time and was mainly on market demands. Miraa from Igembe was rated the best quality by consumers because of its palatability, minimal waste, potency and the ease of transportation and therefore, it was among the Igembe that Miraa acquired the greatest value.

Miraa made numerous other salient contributions to the economy. It employed over one million people, contributed to the revenue of Meru County and acted as the locomotive agent for other industries like the motor industry, soft drinks industry, milk, bottled water, petroleum, tobacco, sweets and alcohol industries, all of which sold their products to Miraa chewers.

Miraa was also embraced by the main religious sector in the district where the Muslims were known to chew Miraa prior to their prayer day while the Christian churches had even grown Miraa in their compounds and much used as offerings, tithes usually generating income whenever churches have “Harambees” (collection of money for certain projects).

The study also established that in Igembe, the society had already developed a sophisticated farming technique for the Miraa plant (Catha edulis); trimming the trees to grow into a shape that provided plenty of easily harvestable stems.
establishment was through suckers that developed from the base of the Miraa plant. The suckers were let to grow until they have roots which are uprooted for planting.

The study further revealed that Meru had already developed a sophisticated farming technique for Miraa, *Catha edulis* – training the trees to grow into a shape that provided plenty of easily harvestable stems – by the time the British first arrived. Meru had a virtual monopoly although it grew in other parts of Kenya. In colonial times, the British also consolidated this monopoly by seeking to legally restrict farming to Meru, Carrier, (2007). They also attempted to control and formalize the trade in the 1950s through taxation and cooperative style marketing: but the latter proved a highly ineffective mechanism for trading such a perishable commodity, and the flexible networks of farmers and traders that had emerged before the British became involved proved much more effective, and continued to do so. It had also been established that khat generated much revenue, both for Igembe society and for Kenya as a whole. It was a thriving national market that was exported far afield. In the district, many other crops were grown including formal cash crops such as tea coffee and cotton but these crops could not compete with khat, a crop that receives little direct government involvement.

The study also established that intercropping was done alongside Miraa plants. The khat trees provided protective shade for both cash and subsistence crops. The varieties differed much in taste and effect, and fetched varied prices, Carrier (2007). In fact, a sophisticated industry emerged in the district, aided by an equally sophisticated transport system and provided greater rewards than non-indigenous crops such as tea, coffee and cotton (Goldsmith 1994). Farmers got better prices in general, and
obtained more frequent payments unlike formal cash crops, for which payments were received in lumpsums at certain times of the year. The research further established that profits potentially made from the crop have led to tension, most notably in 1999 when conflict erupted between some Meru and Somali over perceived exploitation of producers by the latter Goldsmith (1999), Carrier (2007). Despite such tension and other concerns such as the use of child labour in its harvesting (Carrier (2007): Chapter one; and personal observation), khat had been an economic baseline for the district in the last hundred years or so, one that developed almost in spite of government measures rather than because of them.

The study also established that Miraa farmers and local traders had become victims of a tyranny of cartels especially of Somali origin which led to the farmers living in abject poverty. Worse of all was the insecurity that the current mode of operating in the industry posed not only to the international and national but also at the grassroots among impoverished Miraa farmers and traders as illegal arms are transported from Somalia to the region in disguise of transporting Miraa not to mention the many conflicts arising from farming and its use. With the above, unless the government established a policy on Miraa, the Miraa industry would come to an end.

From the foregoing issues, the Ministry of Agriculture must lead the way by formulating the Miraa agricultural policy. This was what crippled all efforts by other complimenting ministries like health, education, trade and environment to have their policies relative to Miraa in place. It also kept all would-be investors away and opened the Miraa industry to the current cartels that it was experiencing.
The study critically examined the socio-cultural changes in the farming and use of Miraa from 1940-2014. The research identified the socio-cultural importance of Miraa to the Igembe people, the changes in its farming and use and the effects of this changes to the people of Igembe. The study revealed that the changes on the farming and use of Miraa had both positive and negative impacts. Positively it was very instrumental in the maintenance of peace and reconciliation, marriage, rites of passage as well as for medicinal use. As the use of Miraa became more of an economic enterprise it earned money that helped families in terms of food, medical education, job creation and construction of church and school infrastructure.

On the other hand, changes in the use of Miraa by both youth and women led to negative impacts such as family conflicts, exposure to prostitution, HIV/AIDS prevalence and school dropouts. Although Miraa was identified as the sole cash crop by 2014 and with great social, economic and cultural contribution, it nevertheless affected the social growth of the area as there was social relocation and disorder leading to criminal activities especial when people thought to be or disguised as thieves were caught in Miraa plantations. This were often slashed with Pangas rather than being handed over to the police. The research information that has been determined by this study would also enrich the existing body of knowledge specifically on the socio-cultural roles of plants to the society. In view of the findings of the research, strict rules should be put in place by the government to safeguard the Miraa industry noting that several European and African governments have banned the use of Miraa in their regions. These measures would be in form of a policy framework which would formulate a realistic and appropriate preventive programmes to help curb the problem of Miraa chewing especially among the youth, school going children, hygienic
ways of handling the substance with a view that the socio-cultural use of Miraa were important to the society and should not be undermined.

6.4 Policy framework

A policy is the general overall guide to conduct and practice in a specific area of political/economic/social activity. It actually defines the government position on that specific item and thus dictates the importance attached to that particular activity. It is the referral point for anyone wishing to invest or carry out whatever activity relative to the specific item. Overall, it is the absence of a Government of Kenya policy on Miraa that have resulted in the problems in the Miraa industry described in various parts of this study. It is the sole source of the misery currently being endured by Miraa farmers and local traders. Singularly, the lack of policy on Miraa by the Ministry of Agriculture has blocked any input at all by anyone towards Miraa industry modernization. Nobody wants to be involved in an industry where the position of Kenya government is not clear.

Further, the absence of the Ministry of Agriculture policy on Miraa had made all other Government of Kenya ministries and agencies to shy away from the industry contending that since Miraa is a crop, appreciated as such in agriculture must lead the way by charting the basic framework from which everyone can work on their relevant areas.

Currently, the Miraa industry has no restrictions. Farmers apply chemicals without professional guidance, traders’ package Miraa in unhygienic places using archaic materials and the vendors are horrific to the sight.
The government policy should therefore address the issues affecting Miraa now and formulate an all-inclusive way forward. The policy paper by the Ministry of Agriculture, being the core Ministry, will open the gate for all other ministries to do their part. It will define the regulations and responsible authorities which will in turn design and implement a development streamlining and promotion framework for the Miraa industry through locally adaptable approaches.

The Miraa industry should be modelled as the coffee industry which has the Coffee Board of Kenya or the tea industry with the Kenya Tea development Authority (KTDA). This body shall be responsible for the overall regulation and provision of conducive environment for investors. The government of Kenya ministries of agriculture and trade should be responsible for overall industry promotion, trade development and research development.

6.5 Suggestions for further research

Based on the findings of the current study, the researcher made the following suggestions or further research:

(i) The impact of Miraa farming on education in Igembe District showing the rate of retention, repetition and completion.
(ii) The impact of Miraa trade on farmers and consumers.
(iii) The contribution of Miraa into the economies at the national level, district, family and personal level of both producers and consumers.
(iv) The position of Kenyan law on Miraa
(v) The role played by Miraa in the political network. Otherwise some countries have banned Miraa while others have promoted its farming and consumption for political expediency.
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Nyambene Miraa Trade Association (Nyamita) farmers, Dealers/Traders and District Leaders 2nd consultative meeting held at Maua Polytechnic on Friday 8th October 2004.


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retrieved on 31st March 2016

[http://Meru.go.ke/image/maps/constituencies%20with%20wards.png](http://Meru.go.ke/image/maps/constituencies%20with%20wards.png) map of Meru County with existing wards.


**ONLINE JOURNAL ARTICLE**

ORAL INFORMANTS

Baariu David – (72 years old) retired primary school Headteacher and zonal education officer Athiru Ruujine Village, Thitha Sub-location, Athiru Location, Igembe Central Division. Interviewed on Tuesday 8th July 2014.

Godfrey Kanampiu – (72 years old) Ex-Senior chief Athiru Location Kilaine Village Thitha Sub Location, Athiru Location Igembe Central Division. Interviewed on 7th June 2014.

Kaberia Jackline – Headteacher Kathathene Primary school Kiengu Education zone Igembe Division of Igembe Central District. Interviewed on Thursday 31st July 2014.

Kararu Ntarangwi – (72 years old) Miraa farmer Kip-Kona village, Kawiru Location, Igembe Central Division. Interviewed on Saturday 7th June 2014.

Kathure Beatrice – (66 years old) single mother Mpinda Village, Nthambiro Sub-location, Ngujuju Location, Igembe East division. Interviewed on Sunday 13th July 2014.

Kiambati M’mutiria – (86 years old) Chairman Njuri Ncheke council of Elders Igembe Division. Njoune Village, Antubetwe Njoune Sub-location, Kiengu Location Igembe East Division. Interviewed on Saturday 19th April 2014.

Kobia Gabriel – (73 year old) retired District Education Officer Burieruri Sub-location, Njia Location, Igembe North Division. Interviewed on 26th July
2014. He told the researcher there was need to establish parallel curriculum for Miraa dealers where classes began later in the day and extended to evening.

Kubai Adam – (55 years old) senior chief Kiengu location Igembe East Division. Interviewed on Thursday 31st July 2014.

M: Mwereria Misheck – (97 years old) Njuri Ncheke, Elder Amaku Village, Amaku Sub-location, Kiengu Location, Igembe East Division. Interviewed on Saturday 19th April 2014.


M’mauta Kainda – (54 years old) household head Kangeta location, Igembe North Division. Interviewed on Sunday 20th July 2014.


Thangari Joseph Mwibua M’mungania – (96 years old) Village Elder Amwathi, Thitha Sub-Location, Athiru Ruujine Location, Igembe Central Division. Interviewed on Sunday 23rd February 2014.

APPENDICES

A1. Tentative chapterization

Chapter

I) Introduction, literature review, theoretical framework and research methodology
II) Traditional farming and use of Miraa 1940 to 1963
III) Changing in the farming and use of Miraa in Igembe 1963 to 1978
IV) Changes in the farming and use of Miraa in Igembe 1978 to 2014
V) Impacts on the social, economic and political status of the Igembe society due to the changes in the farming and use of Miraa in Igembe District of Meru County during the period 1963 to 2014.
VI) Summary and conclusion
A2: QUESTIONNAIRE TO NJURI NCHEKE AND VILLAGE ELDERS

1. Date of birth.................................................................
2. Place of birth.................................................................
3. Occupation........................................................................
4. Have you planted Miraa? ..............................................
5. If yes, where did you get the Miraa that you planted?
6. When was the first Miraa planted in Igembe?
7. Where did the Igembe Miraa come from?
8. What proportion of your “Shamba” is occupied by Miraa plants?
9. What were the traditional uses of Miraa in Igembe community?
10. Who consumed Miraa and for what purpose in the traditional Igembe customs?
11. What were the problems of Miraa to the society? State as many as possible.
12. What were the effects of Miraa to the chewers?
13. What is the community doing to solve the problems associated with Miraa growing, trading and consumption?

14. Briefly comment on the relationship between Miraa traders and farmers.

15. Why did the Igembe people change from the traditional use of Miraa to the current usage? For example a) Commercial aspects...
b) Category of chewers...

16. How was Miraa planted in Igembe and what proportion of the piece of land was planted with Miraa?
A3: QUESTIONNAIRE TO MIRAA TRADERS.

1. Date of birth..........................................................
2. Nationality..............................................................
3. When did you begin trading in Miraa?......................
4. From where do you get the Miraa that you sell? ..........
5. Where do you sell your Miraa?..............................
6. Where else is Miraa sold outside Kenya?............... 
7. For how long do you stay away from home on Miraa selling mission? ......................................
8. Who takes care of your family in your absence? ....
9. What is the income from Miraa used for? ..............
10. How do you spend your leisure time when not in business? ......................................................
11. Are there middle men in Miraa business? .............
12. In case the answer in 11 is yes, How does Miraa change hands until it reaches the consumer? ...........
13. Who transports your Miraa from the farm to collection point and from collection point to the market? ....
14. Briefly comment on the problems you encounter as a Miraa businessman
...........................................................................................................................
...........................................................................................................................
...........................................................................................................................
...........................................................................................................................
A4: QUESTIONNAIRE TO HOUSE HOLD HEADS WHO’S SPOUSES ARE MIRAA BUSINESSMEN/BUSINESSWOMEN

1. Date of birth .................................................................
2. Place of birth .................................................................
3. Occupation ........................................................................
4. Does your spouse involve himself/herself in Miraa trade?

5. Where does he/she sell his/her Miraa?

6. How often does he/she visit home?

7. Who takes care of the house hold in the absence of the husband/wife?

8. What problems do you encounter during his/her absence? Briefly comment

9. How do you solve those problems? Briefly comment

10. Have you planted Miraa in your piece of land?

11. If Yes, what proportion of land is occupied by Miraa?
15: QUESTIONNAIRE TO THE HEADS OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS

1. Date posted in your current school...........................................

2. What is the school enrolment?
   Boys...........................................
   Girls...........................................

3. Have there been cases of school dropouts in your school?..........................

4. For the last ten years preferably from the year 2000, among boys and girls, who dropped out in large numbers?
   Boys
   Girls
   Tick one.

5. Were there cases of absenteeism during that period?.................................

6. If the answer to the question 3 and 5 is yes, briefly state the causes of dropouts and absenteeism...........................................................

7. What was the yearly percentage of school dropout rate?
   2000
   2001
   2002
   2003
   2004
   2005
   2006
   2007
   2008
   2009
   2010

8. Does your school posses a Miraa farm?.....................................................

9. Do students in your school chew Miraa?.....................................................

10. If the answer to question 9 is yes, what are the effects of chewing Miraa to students? Briefly comment.................................................................
11. During the period that you have been in your school, did Miraa economy have any impact on your school in terms of:
   a) School dropout?..................... if yes, briefly comment.................................................................
   b) Absenteeism..............................if yes, why? Briefly comment.............................................................
   c) Fees and other financial obligations. Briefly comment........................................................................
   d) Students discipline..........................comment........................................................................................
   e) Uniforms and other school requirements. E.g. construction.................................................................
A6: QUESTIONNAIRE TO THE PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION

PREFERABLY CHIEF/ASSISTANT CHIEF

1. Date of birth

2. Place of birth

3. Is Miraa grown in your location?

4. How old is the Miraa culture in your location?

5. Who grows Miraa in your location?

6. What is the Miraa used for in your location in terms of
   a) Culture, please comment briefly
   b) Economic, please comment briefly

7. Who engages in Miraa business in your location?

8. Is there child labour in the Miraa industry?

9. If yes to question 8, how do you deal with child labour?

10. What are the general problems associated with child labour in your location?

11. Are there any conflicts resulting from the Miraa industry especially from;
   a) Family level? Briefly comment giving reasons
   b) Between businessmen especially Miraa traders and middlemen
   c) Between business men and farmers
d) What are the effects of such conflicts? Briefly comment
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
e) What is the government doing to avoid the conflicts? ..................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
f) Briefly comment on the positive role that you think Miraa played in your location on socio-cultural effect to the people
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
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........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
g) In your own opinion state what the government should do to improve the Miraa industry in your location and if possible giving reasons
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A 7: QUESTINNAIRE TO MEMBERS OF THE CLERGY

1. Which is your denomination?
   ........................................................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................................................How long have you been a
Pastor/Revered/Bishop/Overseer?
   ........................................................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................................................

2. Are there members of your church who have planted Miraa?
   ........................................................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................................................

3. Does the church grow its own Miraa?
   ........................................................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................................................

4. Members of your church give Miraa as offerings and tithes in the church?
   ........................................................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................................................

5. If the answer to number 5 is Yes, how are the proceeds from Miraa used in the
church?
   ........................................................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................................................

6. Does the church solve any conflicts arising from Miraa farming and use?
   ........................................................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................................................

7. Does Miraa assist the church in solving disputes among members of the
church?
8. What is the church’s stand/opinion on Miraa farming and use?

9. What in your personal opinion on the farming and use of Miraa by members of the church?
A8: LETTER FROM GRADUATE SCHOOL

KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

E-mail: dean-graduate@ku.ac.ke
Website: www.ku.ac.ke

P.O. Box 43544, 00100
NAIROBI, KENYA
Tel. 810901 Ext. 57580

FROM: Dean, Graduate School
DATE: 14th April, 2014

TO: Bernard Kianga Kahiata
C/o History, Archaeology & Political Studies Dept.

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL

This is to inform you that Graduate School Board at its meeting of 27th March, 2014 approved your Research Proposal for the M.A. Degree, subject to removing the brackets on the title.

Thank you.

JOSEPHINE K. NJAGI
FOR: DEAN, GRADUATE SCHOOL

C.C. Chairman, History, Archaeology & Political Studies Dept.

Supervisors:

1. Dr. Edwin Gitome
   C/o History, Archaeology & Political Studies Dept.
   Kenyatta University

2. Dr. Susan Mwangi
   C/o History, Archaeology & Political Studies Dept.
   Kenyatta University
A9: AUTHORIZATION LETTER

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

Telephone: +254-20-2313471, 2341469, 315571, 2214420
Fax: +254-20-318245, 318249
Email: secretary@nacosti.go.ke
Website: www.nacosti.go.ke
When replying please quote

Ref: No.

NACOSTI/P/14/7765/1565

Bernard Kiunga Kathata
Kenya University
P.O.Box 43844-00100
NAIROBI

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to carry out research on “Socio-cultural trends in the cultivation and use of miraa Catha Edulis” in Igembe District of Meru County – Kenya from 1940 to 2014,” I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in Meru County for a period ending 31st July, 2014.

You are advised to report to the County Commissioner and the County Director of Education, Meru County before embarking on the research project.

On completion of the research, you are expected to submit two hard copies and one soft copy in pdf of the research report/thesis to our office.

Said Hussein
For Secretary/CEO

Copy to:

The County Commissioner
The County Director of Education
Meru County.
A10: LETTER FROM THE COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

REPUBLIC OF KENYA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Telegram: “ELIMU”
Telephone: Meru
When Replying please quote

- COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION OFFICE
MERU COUNTY
P.O. Box 61
MERU

June 13, 2014

MRU/C/EDU/11/1/64

District Education Officer
IGEMBE SOUTH

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Reference is made to the letter Ref.NACOST1/P/14/7765/1565 dated 7th May 2014

Authority is hereby granted to Bernard Kiunga Kathata from Kenyatta university
to carry out research on “social-cultural trends in the cultivation and use of
miraa “Catha Edulis”, in igembe District – Kenya from 1940 to 2014,” for a
period ending 31st July 2014.
The authorities concerned are requested to give you maximum support.

WILLIE MACHOCHO
COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
MERU COUNTY
Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I am a post-graduate student at the school of humanities and social sciences department of History, Archaeology and Political studies of Kenyatta University. I am conducting a research to investigate the socio-cultural changing changes and effects of Miraa to the society in Igembe District of Meru County. This is in fulfilment of Degree of Masters of arts of Kenyatta University. You have been selected to take part in this study. I would be grateful to you if you would assist me by responding to all items in the attached questionnaire. Your name is not required to appear in the questionnaire. The information is confidential and will be used for academic research purposes only. Your co-operation will be greatly appreciated. Kindly give sincere answers and the answers shall be summarised statistically so that individual persons shall not be identified.

Thank you.

Yours Bernard K. Kathata.