

**CINEMA AS CULTURAL DISCOURSE: A STUDY OF
CULTURAL SYMBOLS IN SELECTED CONTEMPORARY
GÍKŪYŪ COMEDIES**

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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been submitted to any other higher institution of learning for academic credit.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to all cultural enthusiasts dedicated to the growth and promotion of indigenous Kenyan languages through filmic production and other forms of artistic expressions.

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The completion of this PhD Thesis is realisation of a major milestone in my life and that of my immediate family member, mentors and all those who believed in me. It is a testament that all dreams are valid and that vast well of knowledge is available to all those who visit her lair. Today I can validate Chinua Achebe's assertion in his seminal work, *Things Fall Apart*, that, "If a child washes his hands he could eat with kings."

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRYONYMS

ACRI	African Cultural Regeneration Centre
AIPCEA	Africa Independent Pentecostal Church of East Africa
BEKE	Bantu Educational Kinema Experiment
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic acid (a hereditary material in humans)
DVD	Digital Versatile Disk
FESPACO	Festival Panafricaine de Ouagadougou
FGDs	Focused Group Discussions
GNFBT	Ghanaian National Folklore Board of Trustees
ICT	Information Communication Technology
KBC	Kenya Broadcasting Corporation
KCA	Kikuyu Central Association
KCSE	Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education
KFC	Kenya Film Commission
NACOSTI	National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation
PCEA	Presbyterian Church of East Africa
TAG	Theological Advisory Group
TCEs	Traditional Cultural Expressions
TV	Television
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Social and Cultural Organization

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Culture –The study’s working definition relies on UNESCO culture definition, where culture is defined as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, that encompasses, not only art and literature, but lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions, and beliefs (UNESCO, 2009).

Cultural codes – the unconsciously adopted mannerisms associated with a community and manifested especially through the conduct of its members.

Cinematic codes – the messages Message vis a vis film setting, props, costumes, sound, and narrative as advanced through the film’s elements.

Cultural Discourse – used here in the sense defined by Wilkins & Wolf (2013, p. 169); as a systematic approach “to organize ways of understanding how culture is an integral part, and a product of discourse systems.” In this study, it refers to ways of understanding culture shared among members of the Gīkūyū community.

Cultural Impressions – These are cultural innuendos adopted by the populace who share a common cultural orientation. In this study, cultural impressions refer to a phenomenon through which Agīkūyū people interpret, evaluate and measure their experiences within their cultural context.

Cultural Symbols- (especially in semiotics) a word, phrase, image, or the like having a complex of associated meanings and perceived as having inherent value separable from that which is symbolized, as being part of that which is symbolized, and as performing its normal function of standing for or representing that which is symbolized: usually conceived as deriving its meaning chiefly from the structure in which it appears, and generally distinguished from a sign.

Elder - an influential member of a tribe or community, often a chief or ruler; a superior.

Film Elements – in the context of this study, film elements refer to formal and structural elements of film as an art form, including, but not limited to Camera movement (tracking, panning), camera angle, camera distance (far shot, medium shot, close up); "Photography" (lenses, deep focus, filters, film speed, intentional under- or over-exposure); Lighting (artificial or natural, intensity, direction); Framing/composition (shape of objects in the shot and their relation to each other and to the frame). The elements will be viewed in relation to emotional distance between characters expressed through; Sound track (voice-over, noise, music); Editing/montage (length of shots, rhythm, relationship of one shot to the next) and Transitions (dissolve, fade in/out, iris in/out, wipe).

Gĩkũyũ Culture – the cultural practices shared among the Gĩkũyũ community of Kenya.

Gĩkũyũ Vernacular – the language spoken by the Gĩkũyũ community in Kenya.

Gĩkũyũ Vernacular Comedy – those comedy films which use Gĩkũyũ as the primary language of their dialogue.

Mũratina - Gĩkũyũ traditional brew, also called *Njohi* or *Karũbũ*.

Native Vernacular – the local (mother tongue) language spoken by Gĩkũyũ community of Kenya.

Ngai – Name of God

Producer - The producer is the natural person, a company or another legal entity that executes the production of a movie by financing, develop project, shoot, and complete it and by this obtain and control for the rights involved in the film process.

Riverwood – Used to refer to a section of Kenyan film industry christened after other global film hubs including Hollywood, Nollywood, and Bollywood. The term is derived

from River Road, a section in downtown Nairobi considered to be the main hub of Kenya's local music and film production.

Semiosis – used here to refer to the application of semiotics, a (cinema analyses) method that use (filmic) language as “systems from which we can select and combine elements in order to communicate (Turner, 1988, pp. 42-43).” For this reason, the analysis of films treats the films as products of language and formal conventions based on a discernible system of signs.

Stem - the part of the word-form which remains when all the inflectional affixes are removed.

Traditional Cultural Expressions (TCEs) – TCEs may be construed to mean: verbal expressions, such as folk tales, folk poetry and riddles, signs, words, symbols and indications; musical expressions, such as folk songs and instrumental music and expressions by actions, such as folk dances, plays and artistic forms or rituals; and productions of folk art pottery, woodwork, basket weaving, needlework, textiles, carpets, costumes etc.

ABSTRACT

This study examined how cultural symbols are deployed in selected contemporary Gĩkũyũ vernacular comedies. The study sampled the following comedies; **Mũici na Kĩhũ** (He who steals with uncircumcised man), **Kĩrĩro kĩa Mwana** (A Cry for a Child) by Wandahuhu; **Mũtikũnyarira** (You will not torment me) and **Nganga Mbute** (A featherless guinea fowl) by Kĩhenjo and **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo** (A Voice confers authority to a man) and **Mũthuri nĩ Mĩtugo** (Character makes a man) by Machang’i. The study is conducted through reading and analysing the filmic texts, Focused Group Discussions, detailed content analysis and analysis of both primary and secondary data. This study investigated cultural symbols in Gĩkũyũ vernacular films by using film semiotics that assisted to investigate and explicate the film as cultural narratives, where the dialogue is a site for defining cultural voice, ideology, identity formations and individual sensibilities. The study concludes that emergence of Gĩkũyũ vernacular films is expediting cultural paradigms by documenting and exposing hitherto inert cultural nuances and discourses to light, predominantly among the young urban dwellers and educated Gĩkũyũ speakers. Some of themes that are identified and discussed; rites of passage, gender relations, religion, social stratification, cultural expressions, and material culture. This thesis has also endeavoured to bring out salient observations arising from the study and accompanying recommendations as well as areas of further research in this academic front. Thus, this study contributes, in a modest way, to suggesting a systematic approach to the study of Gĩkũyũ vernacular films to appreciate and evaluate their symbolic and aesthetic impact as a powerful mass medium using semiotic discourse practices.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This chapter gives background information to this study, with a view of creating a comprehensive understanding of the concept of film as a form of cultural expression, thus opening in-depth analysis of film content as a locus of investigation within the artistic disciplines. It locates the ideological diffusion of cultural symbols into a society's prevalent art forms, including such modern arts as film. This section also provides a scholarly panorama of the various thoughts prevalent in the film-culture research niche. It especially traces the pertinent thoughts which have shaped the film-culture discourse, with specific interest to research findings which augment the study's three objectives. It is structured as per the objectives, giving pertinent scholarly view on ongoing research debates on the field of cinema, and its use in social spaces. The main argument advanced in this section is that cinema is an important tool of cultural dissemination, given that finds its manifestation in, among other socio-realistic art forms, cinema.

The underlying argument here is that a community's cinematic works encapsulate their socio-ideological stance. For instance, Gĩkũyũ cultural impressions may be preserved through use of native vernacular in the films' elements. In this chapter, the background of Kenyan film production, statement of the problem, objectives, research questions, significances, methods, scope, analytical framework, and limitations of the study will be presented.

1.2 Culture: Facets and Discourse

In the context of growing globalization process, culture has become an increasingly important niche of investigation for a vast array of scholars. This interest partly arises from the acknowledgement of the vital role that culture plays in understanding any given society, as well as the specific strength of the language-culture nexus as a node of investigation. Among some of the submissions offered by prominent cultural and media scholars include Douglas Kellner's counsel that study of a society's culture, especially that which is mediated through media artforms, should encompass *inter alia*, reductive conceptualisation of the symbols and codes. Within the African context, some

of the most vocal scholars include Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, and Wole Soyinka who have strongly focused on the deficits of cultural studies within the African continent and the overbearing spectre of cultural imperialism. Other scholars, including Wangari Maathai have advocated for increased effort in re-establishing the already soiled African culture, through, among other efforts, re-education of the African and empowerment for those involved in cultural re-creation through representational art forms, for instance. With this view, this study proposes a duo approach to the analysis of selected filmic texts in order to investigate the cultural awakening invoked through the film texts: an analysis of cultural elements and the use of native language as a social interchange between Gĩkũyũ culture and modern technology-buoyed artistic expressions. To ground further arguments in this discussion, it is important to provide a brief overview of cultural studies and expressive cultural artforms.

Towards the turn of the twentieth century, cultural studies, including the deployment of cultural symbols in popular arts, has drawn the attention of various scholars: Fiske (1989), Agger (1992), Kellner D. (1995) and Durham and Kellner (2001). However, it is the later scholars who have paved way for more incisive and multiperspective approach to the subject of culture, including the various artforms in which it is encapsulated. As quoted by Amponsah (2010, p. 597), American Sociologist Charles A. Ellwood believes that culture is:

a collective name for all behaviour patterns socially acquired and socially transmitted by means of symbols...including not only such items as language...but also the material instruments ... in which cultural achievements [sic] are embodied and by which intellectual cultural features are given practical effect, such as buildings, tools, machines, communication devices, art objects, etc. (Ellwood, 1921 p.34)

This view embodies the various facets through which culture is manifested in any given society, and especially highlighting the significance of language and other culture-specific material embodiments in recasting socio-cultural ideals. To understand the language symbols of a society, therefore, can be said to provide an important entry point towards an understanding of that society. As a preliminary concern, it is prudent to ask at this point; which is the best way to read and understand the culture of a given society? Kellner observes:

Cultural studies insist that culture must be studied within the social relations and system through which it is produced and consumed and thus study of culture is intimately bound up with the study of society, politics, and economics. Cultural studies show how media culture articulates the dominant values, political ideologies, and social developments and novelties of the era. (Kellner 2011, p. 10)

This observation simply advocates for a non-obtrusive approach to the interpretation of culture, a possibility which has persuaded this study that it is possible to understand the framework of native Gīkūyū culture as offered by the films under study as they have been produced from within the Gīkūyū cultural setup, and packaged to address the native Gīkūyū in a language that he understands, using familiar symbols which he can interpret, and with narratives drawn from his own social realities. Furthermore, Barker (2012, p. 28) has also pointed out that:

In so far as culture is a common whole way of life, its boundaries are largely locked into those of nationality and ethnicity, that is, the culture of, for example, the English or perhaps the British. However, globalization has made the idea of culture as a whole way of life located within definite boundaries increasingly problematic.

So then, these two scholars seem to agree, and even suggest that cultural study should be more about evaluation of the subject's way of life, as an entry point into the vast stratum within which other socio-cultural aspects of a community exist. Indeed, Kellner's (2011) allusion to media usefully connects some of the major cultural systems to modern forms of expression, including film.

Some of the other established thoughts on the significance of cultural values in cultural analysis have elaborated on the nature of human culture as an aggregate of various values which can be studied and discussed from several fronts. These views, especially those advanced by Rokeach (1968 and 1973), serve as crucial indexes of reference in the analytical work in regard to the concept of cultural values. Other pertinent elements of culture, especially beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours, have also been widely theorized by several contemporary cultural scholars (Leung & Bond (2009); Andreatta & Ferraro, 2013). Kellner (2011) on his part has especially funneled an ideological-based cultural debate, arguing that:

For cultural studies, the concept of ideology is of central importance, for dominant ideologies serve to reproduce social relations of domination and subordination. Ideologies of class, for instance, celebrate upper-class life and denigrate the working class. Ideologies of gender promote sexist representations of women and ideologies of race utilize racist representations of people of colour and various minority groups. Ideologies make inequalities and subordination appear natural and just, and thus induce consent to relations of domination. (Kellner, 2011, p. 11)

This stream of thought thus alludes to the potency of culture as a source of behavioural conditioning, thus offering a justification or investigation of cultural discourses, including those which touch on sexism, gender, and other nodes of cultural representations. In fact, what Kellner (ibid) conceives as ideology can be better understood as a collection of those intrinsic aspects of culture which symbolise a set of identity, and which can be understood through both literary and filmic texts of a society (Tsikhungu (2014) and Makokha (2011)). To add on to these growing studies on cultural dimensions of African subjects, this study seeks to engage with Gĩkũyũ filmic texts within which it investigated the various cultural expressions. It especially leans on the impressions articulated through film characters in their diegetic spaces, in regard to Rokeach's (1968, p. 16) argument that "to say that a person "has a value" is to say that he has an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally and socially preferable to alternative modes of conduct or end-states of existence." To gain a localised view of this study, the next section highlights some of the common thoughts on the explicit approaches of conduct of the African – or the African cultural expressiveness.

1.2.1 African Cultural Ambiance

Culture manifests itself in several social embedment and can thus be sufficiently understood within the framework of the manifestation of these axillaries. In postcolonial Africa, the idea of culture has been heavily emphasised by several notable leaders. Some of their sentiment hinges on the need to re-culture Africa in the light of the postcolonial de-Africanisation of the black person in the continent. Some of the most vocal voices have been those of Soyinka (1996), Nussbaum (2003), Prah (2006 and 2009) and Maathai (2009) who have voiced their concern over the erosion of

Africa's cultural values through colonialism, and presently, cultural hegemony. Scholars such as Austen and Saul (2010) and Genova, (2013) are of the view that film is yet to find a nestling ground in the African continent, although Ukadike (2002) is of the contrary view. So far, there is a growing awareness of how African cinema encapsulates and communicates African culture, a view adopted by several contemporary culture and film scholars who have highlighted the necessarily redemptive role of African cinema to the highly cannibalised African culture. Bakari and Cham (1996) have re-linked African cinema to the discourse of Africa's cultural practice, saying that:

The early practice of cinema in Africa is posited as a crucial site of the battle to decolonise minds, to develop radical consciousness, to reflect and engage critically with African cultures and traditions, and to make desirable, the meaningful transformation of society for the benefit of the majority. (Bakari & Cham , 1996, p. 2)

In tune with this pursuit, Uwah (2012) concludes that “what all this means is that the idea of cinema in Africa has followed the trajectories of pan-Africanism, to explore questions of the identity and personhood of Africans (Uwah, 2012, p. 188).” To appreciate the role of film in mediating the discourse of African culture, therefore, it is imperative to shift the locus of investigation from a blanket view of culture-ideology framework per se, to an engagement with the infinitesimal hints embodied within the film's diegetic setup, and which are the bedrocks of the collective cultural expression of the African (Gĩkũyũ) society. These clues - what Sage Inc.,(2015, pp. 40-46) brands as ‘universal cultural elements’ - include such aspects as values, norms and ideologies, values for children, beliefs, behavioural intentions, self-reported behaviours, attitudes, and self-descriptions. This proposition about the question of values is of utmost importance in the analysis of the selected contemporary Gĩkũyũ comedy films, especially regarding the first and third objectives. This is because the objectives seek to engage with the metatextual aspects of the films, including those situated at thematic and language levels, a confluence already highlighted across the past two successive centuries by especially media and culture scholars including those within the vast scholarship explosion on the subject in the last two decades ranging from Turner (1988) to Tsikhungu (2014). This crossover from Western to African epistemology is a necessary leap for this study as it seeks to conjure up authentic impressions of the notion of African culture from an African-media perspective. To engage with the various

epistemologies of the meaning of culture in the African context – and hence foster a more useful interpretation with the representations of that same culture within the selected films – the following views of the various African scholars within this research area serve as a good beginning.

According to Sesanti (2010), various scholars have defined culture in the African sense differently. On one hand, it is “the means by which a people express itself through language, traditional wisdom, politics, religion, architecture, music, tools, greetings, symbols, festivals, ethics, values, and collective identity (Maathai, 2009, p. 161).” Other scholars consider it as a “product of people's history ‘embodying’ a whole set of values by which people view themselves and their place in time and space Thiong'o, 1993, p. 42”); as “the totalization of the historical, artistic, economic, and spiritual aspects of a people's lifestyle (Asante, 2003, p. 134).” However, despite the diversity of these views, it is apparent reference of cultural norms should be drawn from their traditional history, a fact attested by Sesanti (2010, p. 346) who points out that “in order to understand a people's present, reference must be made to their history and what they believed in, that is, traditional wisdom... whether or not people cling to traditional ways or adopt new ways.” Analysis of culturally potent materials like film, therefore, should similarly highlight those traditional aspects that denigrate the society's way of life, or as it were, socio-historical perspectives. As suggested in the methodological section, this study would actively pursue this engagement with the traditional symbols displayed within the film narratives as a connective space between the people and their beliefs. Such a pursuit is pegged on the analysis of characters and their symbolic spaces, what Barsam (2004) and Monaco (2009) identify as narrative elements and what Abrams, Bell, & Udris (2001) have termed as aspects of film language, respectively. This prance would not only make it possible to discuss various aspects of African culture, including its elements, but would also be generally useful in engaging with the various cultural gradations implied within the film narratives.

One more line of enquiry about African culture is the practice of the Ubuntu as “a pan-African and multidimensional concept which represents the core values of African ontologies, an African consciousness, a way of being, a code of ethics and behaviour deeply embedded in African culture (Sesanti, 2010, p. 348).” This concept coalesces

the various epistemological appellations of the discourse of African culture as a rigidly defined system of ‘African-ness’ as revisited by several scholars (Blankenberg (1999), Kamwangamalu (1999), and Christians (2004)). For this study, the important tangent of investigation would be the diffusion of cultural innuendos across the films under investigation, especially the premises they advance about the concept of Gĩkũyũ-ness as an identifiable, distinct form of African culture.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The growing forces of globalization have birthed steady encroachment into various spaces of the society, including social art forms like cinema. Many societies use cinema as a conduit for discussing the emerging hybrid cultural identities, or for sustenance of severely shaky old forms of the native culture. Given the crucial role that culture plays in defining societies, and the fundamental role that socio-realistic art forms play in dispersing culture, it is justifiably important to understand these new art forms as alternative avenues of understanding societies. So far, this field has attracted many scholars in the Western and Northern academic spheres, while Africa is still grappling with lack of incisive cultural studies that hinge on the diffusion of African cultural expressions through modern technology-buoyed arts like cinema. By engaging with the Gĩkũyũ culture through an in-depth analysis of Gĩkũyũ vernacular comedies produced in Riverwood film industry, this study seeks to address this very gap.

In the case of Kenya, Riverwood, the focus of this research, is an extremely important and iconic hub. Calvin (2014, p. 22) suggests that filmmakers in Kenya have embraced Riverwood tradition, an argument that positions the industry on the forefront of cultural-dispersion. This assertion affirms South’s view (2008, para 8) that Riverwood films tell stories of the lives of people which is reflective of Kenyan way of life. However, the study has noted increasing lack of scholarly attention to the emerging cinema hubs like Riverwood, and its new genres, especially local vernacular comedies, sought to document the correspondence between the films and their source culture, and how they perform as conduits of Gĩkũyũ cultural processes. Understanding the usage of film as a cultural outlet within the Gĩkũyũ community is the specific academic gap that this study addressed. Jiwaji (2012) intimates that over the last ten years, Riverwood’s low-cost amateur nonlinear editing solutions have enabled entrepreneurial

Kenyan to release films on video compact disc though the quality of these productions is poor. Jiwaji notes:

Riverwood productions fit within the light entertainment genre and are screened in cafes, pubs and public transport vehicles across the country, and are produced in vernacular languages including Kikuyu, Kikamba, Dholuo, Kisii or in Kiswahili / Sheng. Despite their mediocre equipment, poor visual quality and small budgets, it has come to represent a commercial aspect of the Kenyan film industry, which the mainstream sector has been unable to replicate. (Jiwaji, 2012, p.73)

Other scholars say as much, repeatedly portraying Riverwood as a cultural art hub. Bisschoff (2015, p.26) links Riverwood film productions to Nollywood model which has been exported and adopted across African continent and has mutated into localized film brand. Overbergh (2014) describes Riverwood as a movie industry that is mostly shot in vernacular languages, and produced and consumed along language and, closely related, ethnicity lines. Kwani (2007, p.22) believes that this local film genre has established its own niche in Kenya.

Basing its discussions on this widely recognized role of Riverwood in cultural dispersion, this study seeks to offer an alternative entry point for understanding the essence of Gĩkũyũ culture in the modern times, by analysing the contemporary culture-specific films produced from within the community. The main question that it seeks to answer is, *in what ways do Gĩkũyũ comedy films convey Gĩkũyũ culture?* This is a two-forked inquiry hinged on, one, the interstice of film and culture, and the nuances of Gĩkũyũ cultural expression as mediated through cinema and two, interpretation of how cinematic symbols code Gĩkũyũ cultural systems and thus advance various cultural arguments.

1.3.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to analyse representations of Gĩkũyũ cultural aspects in selected Gĩkũyũ comedy films. This was achieved by fulfilling various specific research objectives as stated below.

1.3.2 Research Objectives

This study had the following objectives:

- i. To identify the intersection of technical filmic codes deployed in contemporary Gĩkũyũ vernacular comedies and Gĩkũyũ cultural nuances.
- ii. To establish the use of vernacular language as a discourse to engage with paradigms of Gĩkũyũ culture in contemporary Gĩkũyũ vernacular comedies.
- iii. To investigate the thematic coding of cultural discourses in the selected films.

1.3.3 Research Questions

To meet the above objectives, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

- i. How do the technical filmic codes deployed in contemporary Gĩkũyũ vernacular comedies intersect with Gĩkũyũ cultural paradigms?
- ii. What is the role of native vernacular language within contemporary Gĩkũyũ Comedies in expressing paradigms of Gĩkũyũ culture?
- iii. Which Gĩkũyũ cultural discourses are coded within the themes of the selected films?

1.3.4 The Study Assumptions

The study assumed that there is a positive role played using native symbols within Gĩkũyũ comedies, including language, and that such a role involved significant revelation of the Gĩkũyũ cultural milieu.

1.3.5 Significance of the study

The discourse of film and culture is a growing critical niche, especially in the face of social changes occasioned by the various forces of globalization. Some of the most vocal scholars who have focused on this growing impact of globalization on the various aspects of African culture include Kasongo (2010) who has narrated especially the religious fusions. Another African scholar who has researched on the apparent effects of this cultural encroachment of the African from the Western is Arowolo who asserts:

The trend of cultural westernisation of Africa has become very pervasive and prevalent, such that Western civilisation has taken precedence over African values and culture and the latter is regarded as inferior to the former. As with other societies and cultures in the so-called Third World,

the impact of Western civilization on Africa has occasioned a discontinuity in forms of life throughout the continent. This has led to a cultural dualism that often presents itself as a real dilemma in concrete, real-life situations. In other words, the African experience of modernity is fraught with tensions at every level of the communal and social settings. (Arowolo,2010, p. 11)

One way of understanding this cultural dualism is through a reading of the cultural symbols, especially those mediated through such socio-realistic arts as film (Tsikhungu, 2014). Therefore, through the analysis of film language as an interface of various socio-cultural trajectories existing in contemporary-traditional African setup, it is possible to recognize, document and explain various facets of Africanism, including culture. This study aims at highlighting the various nuances of Gĩkũyũ culture as mediated through the various symbols of cinema, to elicit the various facets of the tradition, identity, and evolving contexts in which the modern Gĩkũyũ person finds self-expression. This focus on the tradition of the Gĩkũyũ as a cultural platform of the study's enquiry leans on the sociological view that "the culture of the human group is summed up in its traditions and customs; but tradition, as the subjective side of culture is the essential core (Amponsah, 2010, pp. 597)." Other cultural scholars such as Kellner argue that:

Cultural studies are valuable because it provides some tools that enable one to read and interpret one's culture critically. It also subverts distinctions between "high" and "low" culture by considering a wide continuum of cultural artefacts ranging from novels to television and by refusing to erect any specific cultural hierarchies or canons. (Kellner (2011, p. 10)

In this light, this academic enterprise provided an alternative cultural optic to understand the Gĩkũyũ culture in the globalization context, also yield crucial information which can anchor further engagement with cultural studies, culture, and cinema, as well as Kenya's contemporary comedy film niche. After all, culture is, generally, an important economic and development factor in various global fronts (Thomasian, 2014).

1.3.6 Scope of the study

The study focused on contemporary comedies which use Gĩkũyũ vernacular as their primary language. It drew its population from Kenya's film industry, christened Riverwood. The study analysed six purposively sampled films drawn from different prominent Gĩkũyũ film comedy producers, which helped capture different perceptions of the Gĩkũyũ culture thus enriching the study's primary data. This decision supports the in-depth analytical nature of the research, specifically focused on the investigation and analysis of the relationship between Gĩkũyũ comedies and their modes of engaging with Gĩkũyũ culture. Consequently, the analysis is confined to the filmic language and cultural themes through which it examines the cultural statements advanced by the films, and ultimately shows how the film's narratives function as cultural conduits.

1.4 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

In this section, the study explores and tries to understand who are Agĩkũyũ people, their belief systems, their cultural practices, and performances and how the community has adopted cinematic tool to express their rich cultural milieu. The study also looks at Agĩkũyũ way of life and discusses how this may have helped to define the rise of nascent Gĩkũyũ comedy films from early 2000. This may assist to decipher stance taken in depiction of cultural symbols in selected Gĩkũyũ vernacular films. The chapter also discusses context of the study in relation to the research questions and tentative assumptions of the study as stated in chapter one. Major discussions in this chapter focus on Gĩkũyũ historical background, Gĩkũyũ vernaculars, language, linguistic elements and how various Gĩkũyũ linguistic elements interface with the selected films under the study.

This section describes Agĩkũyũ, their origin, the language and culture. The section also provides a scholarly panorama of the various thoughts prevalent in the film-culture research niche. It especially traces the pertinent thoughts, which have shaped the film-culture discourse, with specific interest to research findings, which strengthen the study's three objectives. It is structured as per the objectives, giving pertinent scholarly view on ongoing research debates on the field of cinema, and its use in social spaces.

1.4.1 The Gĩkũyũ People, Language and Cultural Symbols

Agĩkũyũ people are an ethnic Bantu group living in Central part of Kenya. Wa Mutonya (2000), observes that Gĩkũyũ is the language spoken by the Agĩkũyũ people who number about seven and a half million and make up the largest ethnic group in Kenya. Recent figures indicate that the population of Kenya is at 40,046,566. The Gĩkũyũ constitute about 22% of this population. They are also generally referred to as Kĩkũyũ. As stated by Wanjohi (1997, p.33) the term Gĩkũyũ can mean either the language or the people.

On the authority of Cristiana Pugliese (1993) the proper spelling of Gĩkũyũ speakers should be Mũgĩkũyũ (singular), Agĩkũyũ (plural for the people), and Gĩkũyũ for their country and Gĩgĩkũyũ for the language. The term also features here as an adjective. However, foreigners and users of English language invariably employ the term Kikuyu whether they mean the people, language, or when they use it adjectively. This study has employed the term Kikuyu and Gĩkũyũ interchangeably to denote both the language and the people. Traditional cultural expressions and Gĩkũyũ society are intricately intertwined in a complex maze that is difficult to separate. Agĩkũyũ value their culture, as expressed through their material culture, expressive art forms, legends, myths, and epics, which help to give them a common identity and thereby hold their community together.

Jomo Kenyatta (1965) describes these cultural expressions and values. Notable cultural expressions that Kenyatta mentions include; Gĩkũyũ creation myths, legends, epics, rites of passage, Gĩkũyũ material culture (basketry, pottery, architecture, music instruments) traditional dances, social events among others. Renown Gĩkũyũ authors, such as (Gathigira, 1934) and Kabetu (1946) give a synopsis of Agĩkũyũ culture. L.S.B Leakey's book, *the Southern Kikuyu Before 1903 Vols I II & III* can be considered as most comprehensive account of Gĩkũyũ people culture before their interaction with Europeans. Cagnolo also tries to give an account of Gĩkũyũ although unlike Kenyatta who is native Gĩkũyũ, his account is largely through observations.

The Gĩkũyũ people traditionally inhabit the region which prior to the passage of 2010 Constitution was referred to as Central Province. Agĩkũyũ are Bantu speaking. The Bantu of Kenya fall into three geographical divisions, the Lake based, coastal and central Bantus. Agĩkũyũ belongs to Central Bantu. Gĩkũyũland is defined by settlement of the Gĩkũyũ before 1900 and is roughly defined by four mountains; Kĩrĩnyaga (Mt Kenya) to the North, Nyandarwa (the Aberdares Mountain ranges) to the west, Kĩrĩma kĩa Mbirũirũ (Ngong Hills) to the South and Kĩrĩma kĩa Njahĩ (the Ol Donyo Sabuk) to the South East (Mũriũki, 1974).

Because Gĩkũyũ community believe that traditional gods resided in the mountains, specifically Kĩrĩnyaga (Mt Kenya). These four mountainous ranges formed eco-spiritual markers indelibly fixed in the Gĩkũyũ psyche (Huxley, 1960, p.77). Traditional Gĩkũyũ ritual prayer is always directed at these shrines in turn although Kĩrĩnyaga is revered as gods' main abode (Kenyatta, 1965, p.132). As of 2009 Kenya's national census, the community has about seven million speakers scattered all over Kenya.

Kenyatta (1965, p.134) notes that when humanity begun to multiply in the begging of time, Gĩkũyũ, the founder of Gĩkũyũ tribe is summoned by Mũgai (the Divider of the Universe) and is given as his share the land with ravines, the rivers, the forests, the game and all the gifts that the Lord of Nature bestowed on the mankind. Wanjohi (1997, p.25) observes that Mũgai took Gĩkũyũ to the top of Kĩrĩnyaga Mountain (Mt Kenya) and pointed out to the Gĩkũyũ a spot full of Mĩkũyũ (fig trees) right in the centre of the land. After Gĩkũyũ had a panoramic view of the land given to him, Mũgai commanded him to go and establish his homestead at the very spot pointed out to him in a place he named Mũkũrwe wa Nyagathanga.

Before they parted ways, Mũgai told Gĩkũyũ that whenever he is in need, he could pray and make a sacrifice to the Mũgai, and he would come to his assistance. On reaching the spot Gĩkũyũ found waiting a beautiful woman whom he took as his wife, naming her Mũmbi (creator/moulder). In the opinion of Bahemuka (1982) God or *Mũgai* gave Gĩkũyũ commandment about how to offer sacrifice to him. He was supposed to kill a lamb and pour its blood on a trunk of a Mũgumo tree. The tree functions as a sanctuary and a sacred tree by Ngai himself. This legend is also supported by Leakey (1977,

p.1076) who points out that Mūmbi is the wife of Gīkūyū and together as a couple beget nine daughters, but no sons. These nine daughters are the ancestors of the main nine Gīkūyū clans, which are still named after them. The eldest daughter is Wanjikū, the Second Wambūi, the third Njeri, the fourth Wanjikū, the fifth Nyambura, the sixth Wairimū, the seventh Waithera, the eighth Wangarī and ninth and last Wangūi. These daughters each bore children (there are various versions of how they obtained husbands) and their children intermarried, gradually populating and developing the tribe.

The nine clans formed by Gīkūyū daughters are known by the following names. The clan founded by Wanjikū, the eldest is Anjirū; Wambūi-Ambūi; Njeri-Aceera; Wanjikū -Agachīkū; Nyambura-Ambura or Eethega; Wairimū -Airimū or Agathigia or Aicakamūyū; Waithera-Aitherandū; Wangarī - Angarī or Aithe-Kahunu and that founded by Wangūi-Angui or Aithiegeni. Each of these nine Gīkūyū clans is a *Mūhīrīga*, and each of them has, over time, become divided into vast number of sub-clans (*mbarī*). Indeed, these clans gave rise to *mbarī* or ridges. As Mūriūki (1974, p.113) observes, each *mbarī* traced its origin to one of the ten Gīkūyū clans and hence regarded itself as a direct descendant of the mythical ancestors of the Gīkūyū people, Gīkūyū and his wife Mūmbi.”

1.4.1.1 Migration, Confluence and Influence

Soja (1968, p.11) speculates that the Bantu entered Kenya in two waves. He notes that the lake-based or lacustrine Bantus settled along North and west of Lake Victoria. This group include, Abagusii, Kuria, Abasuba and Luhyia. The Second wave including Gīkūyū tribe spread out from the temporarily settled area of Mt. Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, Voi and Taita and proceeded along the Coast. Oral tradition among the Gīkūyū, Kamba and Taita support this account. The same lore suggests that this Bantu group finally assembled and dispersed to their present location from a place somewhere between Juba and Tana rivers. Mūriūki (1974) avers that Gīkūyū tribe moved west towards their final resting place area about 1200-1300 AD although several scholars have disputed this.

Leakey (1977), Kenyatta (1965), and Mūriūki (1974) give a detailed account on the experience of Gīkūyū pioneers in Central Kenya. Leakey (1977) avers that Gīkūyū tribe is preceded by Wandorobo and Agumba or *Maitho a Ciana* (Children's Eyes) and Athi. As maintained by Leakey, Agumba lived in holes dug in ground rooted over with sods and other vegetation. Kenyatta (1965) corroborates this account, further agreeing that the original inhabitants of Gīkūyūland were Gumba and Athi people. Mūriūki (1974, p.38) says that the county now inhabited by Gīkūyū is originally covered by a vast primeval forest, which is sparsely inhabited by the Gumba and Athi hunters and berry gatherers.

The Gīkūyū migration resulted in interaction with different linguistic and cultural groups. Due to these interactions, which I hereby refer to as confluence, there are notable influences on Agīkūyū people by their neighbours. These influences have permeated and are expressed through Gīkūyū cultural practices, language, material culture, enterprise, and general way of life.

Mūriūki (ibid), cites Northcote's (1918) observation that "Gīkūyū were taught the art of iron working by the Gumba... it appears that it is from them that the Gīkūyū borrowed the rituals of circumcision, clitoridectomy and some features of age set system. Clearly, this observation discredits some scholars' accounts that suggest Gīkūyū borrowed circumcision rituals, age set system and other attributes from the Maasai and Galla communities given that even before encountered these tribes they were already practicing these rites.

Other scholars hold contrary view that the Gīkūyū show in their initiation customs and age classes as well as in their appearance and adornment the clearest signs of influence from the Nilo-Hamitic and Hamitic source. As Wawerū, (2011, p.27) opines the stature of the Mūgīkūyū depends on varied origins and the incorporation of many different refugees or migrant groups; hence Agīkūyū people exhibit a wide range of height, physical build, and skin tone and facial features. Kenyatta (1966, p.22), holds that the interactions and struggle between Galla, Somalis, and Kikuyu has left some living evidence among the Agīkūyū. It is common to find a mixture of blood between Kikuyu and Hamitic and Cushitic people. This is because when the Kikuyu defeated the

invaders, they naturally took the women from their enemies 'camps and looked after them, not as prisoners but as wives. They did this because it was considered a great disgrace for a warrior to kill a woman. During my field work, an 86-year-old respondent claimed that the existence of some Agĩkũyũ with *njuĩrĩ ya kĩmira* (curly hair texture) is a clear indication that there is intermarriage between Gĩkũyũ and Cushitic tribes such as Galla, at some point during their migration and dispersal. Given their cultural altruism that abhors killing their opponents and rivals, Agĩkũyũ resorted to amalgamation, assimilation, and absorption of minority tribes such as Gumba and Athi.

Ogot (1976, p.118) supports this claim by noting that numerous physical types seen among Agĩkũyũ bear testimony that the Agĩkũyũ represent fusion of many different ethnic elements. This fusion is also manifested in the Gĩkũyũ language. The loanwords include the names of wild animals, trees, three generations sets-that is Cuma, Maina and Mwangi-and ceremonial dances for circumcision. He concluded by saying that this influence came from Eastern Cushitic people, Maasai, Il Tikirri, Dorobo and Akamba. Other scholars have made similar observations:

The Kikuyu found a small group of people called Gumba occupying the Mount Kĩrĩnyaga area with which they had a military conflict with and defeated them. The Gumba were allied with the Athi and the Maasai in the early 1800's. The Kikuyu people did not believe in killing one that is weaker than you but believed in assimilation, hence they assimilated both the Gumba and Athi and a large settlement of the Maasai through marriage. A small group of the remains of these smaller tribes called Dorobos are currently found in Kihara-Gachie area of Kiambu County and are the founders of St. James Anglican Church Gachie, which is consecrated on 19th January 2011 by the Rt. Rev. Timothy Ranji, Bishop of Mt. Kenya South. (Waweru, 2011, p.25)

As claimed by Leakey and Mũriũki, the Gĩkũyũ contact with their immediate neighbours such as Maasai, Kamba and their close cousins Embu and Meru had tremendous influence on their, lineage, language, culture, religion, and way of life. It is recorded that these inter-tribal interactions were because of communal raids or natural disasters such as famine. White (2009, p.33) professes that in the days of yore Women used to travel in search of food, shelter, and protection. Consequently, they journeyed

to new areas and married among other peoples and took on the ethnicity of their spouses, sometimes several times over.

She gives an example of woman who is born in Meru, journeyed to Ukambani, where she is married and widowed; then she went to Kikuyu, married, and became a Kikuyu. White further notes that in those days pawning of women and children is commonplace, in which Maasai and after 1898 Kamba “loaned” women and children to Kikuyu and Embu households in exchange for grain. This seems to have increased steadily after the rinderpest epidemics. Writing about his observation on Gĩkũyũ and Maasai relationship, Eliot (1966) makes a thought-provoking reflection on the level of interaction between the two communities:

Kikuyu a physical type they are probably hybrids between Maasai and a Bantu race, but their resemblance to Maasai is largely the result of direct imitations... In the famine of 1882 Maasai settled among the Kikuyu tribes and took Kikuyu wives, and in some cases, they entered the service of Kikuyu Chieftains as a sort of mercenaries. The fertile geographical position of Kikuyu, as fertile strip on the borders of the plains frequented by Maasai make it eminently probable that from one cause or another Maasai would settle from time to time in the district where life is much easier, adopt the Bantu language and introduce Maasai blood. (Eliot, 1966, p.127)

During the field work, two informants informed the researcher namely; Ndũng’ũ wa Kĩambicho and Mwaũra Kagiki that his own clan, Mbarĩ ya Wawerũ, and which inhabits a village called Rũkoroĩ, Gatanga constituency in Mũrang’a county, traces its ancestry from a Maasai man called Ole Nkoroĩ. The village derives its name from this great patriarch. Ole Nkoroĩ is believed to have settled in the area about circa 1710. In agreement with oral accounts, Ole Nkoroĩ had a son called Robi who later sired two sons namely, Wawerũ and Wakĩrome. It is said that Wakĩrome migrated to Embu district, leaving Wawerũ in Rũkoroĩ Village. Not much is known of his family lineage after his migration to Embu. His brother Wawerũ, who opted to remain in Rũkoroĩ, Waweru had three sons namely: Kĩng’a, Hunja and Thinwa. The researcher happens to be a direct descendant of Kĩng’a lineage. His great-great grandfather, Kĩng’a is blessed with three sons namely; Kamũkwa, Mũkũĩ and Kĩhanya. Kamũkwa sired researcher’s paternal grandfather Mũngai who in turn sired Njenga or Kamũkwa and Kĩng’a or Njoroge. The latter happens to be researcher’s father. The researcher also learnt that his

great grandfather Kamũkwa and his other relatives ascribed their Mbarĩ to Robi, but later adopted Mbarĩ ya Wawerũ in sixties or thereabout.

This gives credence to earlier claim by Mũriũki (1974 p. 87) that there is a deep and extensive cultural fusion between Gĩkũyũ and Maasai, especially along the Northern and Southern frontiers of Gĩkũyũland. Mũriũki (ibid) notes that linguistically for example Gĩkũyũ language is heavily indebted to Maasai from which it borrowed the word *Ũkabi/Ugabi*, a word used by Agĩkũyũ to refer to Maasai people and to some extent to refer to their enemy. Ũkabi is derived from a Maasai name *Wakuavi/Iloikop*. I learnt during my field work that Gĩkũyũ girls named Nyokabi indicate that relatives after them hailed from Ũkabi/Maasai land. Additionally, certain religious concepts, such as name Ngai (God; Maasai *E'Ngai*) were borrowed from Maasai.

Gregory (1968) makes an interesting observation about Agĩkũyũ people during one of his earliest pioneering expeditions in Gĩkũyũ country way back in 1896. He describes Gĩkũyũ physical features as being a hybrid between the Maasai and Bantu. For instance, he noted that the chin, for example, is less prognathic than in the latter. In the mode of life, he explains that Agĩkũyũ resembled the Bantus, as they were mainly agriculturists.

He noted that they have some food plants, which Scheweinfurth (1874) earlier on identified as *Panicum Italicum*, and which he thought must have been introduced from India before the time of Mohamed. He continued to note that Gĩkũyũ dressing also resembled that of Maasai and that the method of circumcision-a point of great systematic importance among the Agĩkũyũ is the same as that of Maasai. Regarding the warfare, he noted that Gĩkũyũ spear differed in shape from that of Maasai although their shields, swords and trinkets were almost the same as those of Maasai. His conclusion on preferred mode of warfare during their numerous skirmishes with neighbouring tribes is well documented in his work, *The Great Rift Valley* where he writes thus:

In their arm and equipment, they resemble the Maasai more than Wakamba. In fighting they trust more to the spear and shield than the bow and arrow, though these are used by natives of the southern part of their country, who have more intercourse with Wakamba. (Gregory, 1968, p. 352)

Gregory observation is reinforced by Cagnolo (2006) assessment which held similar views to his. He notes that that Gĩkũyũ and Maasai weapon and clothes were identical. Importantly, Cagnolo writes that the Gĩkũyũ warriors, fresh from their conquests and exploits sung Maasai war songs in Maasai language, blow by blow and word for word.

Gĩkũyũ also interacted with Kamba people. Ng'ang'a (2006, p.119) points out that the social and political relations between Akamba and Agĩkũyũ is ambivalent. It is worth noting that although these communities had mutual mistrust amongst themselves, a few Gĩkũyũ trading colonies thrived in the Northern and Southern regions of Kamba nation. Many accounts indicate that when drought and famine ravaged Ukambani, many Kamba people sought refuge in the Gĩkũyũland. In addition, some of the Agĩkũyũ especially those at the border areas had relatives among Kamba through the marriage. Mũriũki elaborates on this ambivalence relationship between Gĩkũyũ and Kamba when he writes:

The alleged bad reputation between the Maasai and Gĩkũyũ can be attributed to the stories spread by the Kamba traders about them (Gĩkũyũ). These traders, anxious to retain their monopoly of the interior trade, were quick in spreading weird stories not only of the fierceness of the Maasai, but also of the "thievish and treacherous "nature of the Gĩkũyũ. They similarly dissuaded their cousins from trading directly with the coastal peoples thereby spreading negative stories about the Arabs, the Swahili and Nyika people. (Mũriũki,1974, p. 96)

Gĩkũyũ cultural set up is largely defined by initiation, social relationships, property ownership and cultural symbolisms. In fact, initiation is highly regarded in Gĩkũyũ community. Leakey (1974) and Kenyatta (1965) agree with this proposition given that circumcision is more than mere ceremonial activity. It carried symbolic value which embodied age-class system with attendant characteristics such as education, social, moral, religious, and cultural inclinations. As Leakey orates, it is the beginning of a series of *rites de passage* through which each Gĩkũyũ would pass.

Kenyatta is more emphatic when he referred to this rite as the *condition sine qua non* of the whole teaching of tribal law, religion, and morality. This single activity heralded to the new initiate a world of possibilities which is hitherto closed to such individual. Cagnolo observes that Gĩkũyũ observed two types of circumcision, Gĩkũyũ fashion or Maasai fashion. He argued that although the two were quite similar in technique; the

significance of whether one or the other method is used determined all subsequent initiation rites. The presence of Maasai circumcision fashion among the Agĩkũyũ, gives credence to the assertion that Gĩkũyũ were culturally influenced by Maasai people. Although it is not as elaborate as in the pre-colonial era, the practice is widely referred practice. This explains why reading of filmic texts under study reveals some nuances about the practice in a few films.

1.4.1.2 Colonization and Christianity and their Impact on Agĩkũyũ

The start of colonialism in Kenya begun in earliest in 1890 when some British explores formed amorphous British East Africa Protectorate as a vehicle for exploiting hitherto virgin land of Kenya. The territory is administered via the Imperial British East Africa Company, which carried out all the obligations undertaken by the British Government under any treaty or agreement made with another State. In 1896, the territory became known as the East African Protectorate. It is then renamed Kenya Colony and Protectorate in 1920 and remained so until 1963 when Kenya became an independent state.

Nearly all early explorers, and colonial avant-garde had unique opinions on the Gĩkũyũ tribe. They seem to agree that Gĩkũyũ were quite jittery and unwelcoming for what they considered to be unfair treatment extended to them by foreigners (Europeans) in their own country. Perhaps, the early settlers failed to heed the words of Routledge who had documented his experience with Agĩkũyũ people in early 1900. In his book *With a Prehistoric People: The Akikuyu of British Africa*, Routledge & Routledge (1968) describes a Mkikuyu as being extra ordinary honest. He also concluded that they were bright, intelligent, trustful, and truthful whenever they contact strangers and foreigners.

He warned that they become stupid, unreliable, tricky, and treacherous whenever in contact with a European. This he noted is however dependent on how he is treated. Routledge & Routledge (1968, p.23) concludes by describing a Kikuyu ‘as being exceptionally good native material, but of so plastic a character that if badly handled at the onset it is spoiled permanently.’

Writing on the experience of early settlers in Gĩkũyũ land, Sorrenson (1968) postulates that there were signs, even by early 1900 that Agĩkũyũ were going to be first Africans to use education to challenge Europeans. He observed that when Europeans spoke despairingly of a “half educated native” being ‘cheeky’, they were invariably referring to a Gĩkũyũ. Eliot (1966) the first Commissioner for British East Africa expressed his distaste for Agĩkũyũ people as quoted in Sorrenson work, *Origins of European Settlement in Kenya* when he writes:

The average Englishman tolerates a Blackman who admits his inferiority, and even those who show a good fight and give in; but he cannot tolerate dark colour combined with intelligence in any way equal to his own. It is unacceptable. (Sorrenson, 1968, p. 240)

It is in this respect that the Agĩkũyũ people came under suspicion in their first encounter with Europeans took their land without recourse creating a deep mistrust between the two strangers. In April 1941, G.A.S Northcote attributed restiveness to the loss of their land which is an open sore for loss of what they consider much of their land (Northcote, 1941, p. 283).

Leakey (1974) observes that this is precipitated partly because they were first Africans to go out and work for settlers. Kapila (2009) writing on how Gĩkũyũ resisted colonialism in its infant stages, he quotes a ruling made by Commission of East Africa Protectorate after they were asked to take steps to prevent any armed Gĩkũyũ or Maasai from coming within a fixed distance of White highlands:

If the male population do nothing but stalk about covered with grease and ochre, and, in a fit of state of disgusting nudity, brandishing spears and doing no work, any improvement from the animal stage in which they present exist is hopeless. Gĩkũyũ have a magnificent country; they have for the past year had the opportunity of seeing what civilization is, and it is time they were made to understand that murder and robbery will no longer be tolerated. (Kapila, 2009, p.65)

Frost (1978) and Thiong’o (1993) describe the extent to which Agĩkũyũ people were impacted by colonialism. Colonialists detested and looked down upon colonized cultural life in its content and form. They started by degrading not only their way of life but interfering with their language. As Schroder (1993, p.993) asserts, humankind’s activities, good or bad, are always intimately bound up in language, including development and use of traditional cultural expressions. Language provides a point of

identification, a bridge to the collective consciousness; getting it right means giving off the right scent and being welcomed into the fold. Schroder laments that to deprive people of their language is one of the worst punishments there is, precisely because ensuing withdrawal systems are so painful. This appears to be what early colonizers sought to do when they arrived in Gĩkũyũland. Writing in *Moving the Center*, Thiong'o says:

The infamous Berlin conference of 1884 saw the beginning of formal British influence in Kenya, but the country is not really colonized until 1895. Of course, it isn't given to them. The British colonized Kenya by force. But right from the start, military and subsequently political domination went hand in hand with cultural dominance. The route to effective control lay through cultural national festivals, which of course meant a gathering of peoples, these were stopped. A good example is the *Itũĩka* ceremony in central Kenya which is banned by the British colonial authorities in 1925. ...Under the colonial rule, then, native cultures were repressed while, through the school system, other imported traditions were encouraged. (Thiong'o, 1993, p. 88)

In support of Thiong'o's assertion, Frost (1978) makes a startling observation by attributing the breakdown of tribal customs to colonialist attitudes which produced a moral vacuum in which perverted values thrived. He observed that Gĩkũyũ tribe is more open than any other tribe to this disruption. This is a result of the fact that Nairobi, the capital of the colony is established at Nairobi on the southern edge of Gĩkũyũ country and the disruptive influence of urban life exacted a lot of influence on Gĩkũyũ cultural landscape. The colonialists looked down upon Gĩkũyũ culture, a position that is recorded by Wawerũ (2011):

When European missionaries arrived in Africa, they did not in any way try to understand or appreciate the African culture. They were taken aback by practices like traditional circumcision, praying facing Mount Kenya, mode of dressing and pouring libation. To the missionaries, who had just witnessed developments in Europe. (Wawerũ, 2011, p.9)

As Wakuraya, 2010, p.40) submits this attitude to Gĩkũyũ culture and the belief that colonialists and missionaries' role is to evangelise and civilise, the missionaries set to work, commending the gospel and western civilization to their converts and subjects. They also taught actively against such Gĩkũyũ customs as *karũbũ* (traditional liquor), polygamy and *nguĩko* (sanctioned fondling among the circumcised young men and women). Ketebul Music (2010) concurs with this view point by noting that from 1890s,

the oral traditions of the Gĩkũyũ were greatly disrupted and eroded by their protracted encounters with British colonialism. While they were displaced from their ancestral lands, they were forced to provide labour on these farms. These acts of physical displacement and colonial rule.

This status is eventually used to promote Christian evangelism and western education distorted Gĩkũyũ oral heritage and scattered many of their ethnic beliefs, rites, and rituals. Many performances - including song and dance that were an intrinsic part of ritual ceremonies - were wiped out. Colonialism came along with Christian religion. In his seminal work entitled, *The Agĩkũyũ: Their Customs Traditions and Folklore*, Father Cagnolo provides a snapshot of life of the Gĩkũyũ before the coming of the British to Kenya and their subsequent transformation through Christianization. Over time, the number of Christians among Agĩkũyũ people has risen to all time high obliterate most of Gĩkũyũ cultural performances in the process. It details the efforts of the Missionaries to win over the Gĩkũyũ to Christianity.

Kamenju (2013) refers to other works that documented Gĩkũyũ's experience at the time including *Conquest for Christ in Kenya*, Mathew (1952). *Conquest for Christ* as the name infers, is the transformation of Agĩkũyũ from their traditional set up to a new world order defined by Christianity precepts. He observes that this resorted in, "a revolution in conception and things." These 'things' included the treatment and attitude towards traditional cultural expressions. Ngũgĩ agrees with these affirmations by observing that this disruption involved destruction or the deliberate undervaluing of a people's culture, their art, dances, religions, history, geography, orature and literature, and the conscious elevation of the language of the colonizer.

As the protagonist in Chinua Achebe's celebrated novel *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo says; "the white man has put a knife on the things that held us together. The centre cannot hold. Things fall apart..." Kaspin & Lindau (2002) capture Gĩkũyũ general psyche in regard colonialism when they note that when the public transcripts of authenticity intersected with Africans' genuine politics, the results could be disastrous. The Kenyan government's draconian response to the Mau uprisings is conditioned by

the idea that the Kikuyu were exhibiting a kind of pathology resulting from their collective, tribal nature, in its encounter with modernity.

1.4.1.3 Precursors of Gikūyū Film

The advent of mass media such as cinema has had tremendous impact on people cultures around the world. A study by Dulac, Gaudreault and Hidalgo (2012) observes that, the French word *cinéma*, derived from *cinématographe*, began to enter public discourse around 1910 (although it was used on occasion before this). Wright (2006) claims that the cinema meaning extends beyond films, but also the institutions that produce and distribute them, this view is supported by Carroll (2003). Electronic media opened spaces in which new categories of performer could come to the fore as represented in popular performances, comedies, skits, and other public performances. Njogu & Middleton (2009) subscribes to the idea that the effects of media technology and representations can only be understood in relation to live, home-grown popular traditions and the long history of local appropriations, invasions, and adaptations of imported media genres. He holds that this history began with print – newspapers in African languages, written and in some cases owned by Africans and having existed since the mid-nineteenth century. He points out that:

From the late 1950s, television began to provide a space in which new, local genres of drama took shape. Cassette recordings in the 1970s, video in the 1980s, and most recently the internet have successively stimulated new local genres and been absorbed into local popular culture. In short, media in much of Africa are not experienced as a recent and external force, but as a constitutive element in the formation of African popular culture from the early twentieth century onwards. What we think of as live, local popular culture in Africa is often inspired by new media technologies. Examples include popular print which combines the conventions of the thriller, the romance and the folktale; music shaped by the possibilities of electronic amplification; popular art shaped by posters and book or magazine illustrations; new forms of popular theatre which were stimulated by a two-way relationship with radio, television, and video. flourishes, fiction film media interacting with oral traditions Across Africa, a few ‘media interventions’ can be pinpointed. First, even when existing oral genres are simply broadcast ‘as is’, without any intentional modification, the media frame subtly transforms them. The text becomes a sign of something else – ‘our tradition’, conceptualized perhaps for the time as a boundary entity that can be described, documented and exemplified by selected public demonstrations. (Njogu & Middleton, 2009, p. 4)

Diawara (1997) and Durán (1995) underscore how women griots in the Mande culture area could become soloists and superstars in the media, whereas formerly they had been accompanists to their husbands, the kora players, and reciters of epic narratives. Because modern popular media favoured melodious sung lyrics over instrumental music and narrative, stars such as Ami Koita and Fanta Damba were born. Not only this, but categories of people who would formerly have been excluded from performance altogether now entered the new, mediatized sphere. Because cultural performances purveyed by the electronic media is easily absorbed into global popular culture these new categories of performer can gain international flows, fame. Additionally, the electronic media has brought texts and performances to new audiences, within Kenya, Africa as well as beyond the continent.

Njogu & Middleton (2009) aver that genres which had previously been the preserve of specific segments of society are exposed to all and sundry. In western Uganda, for example, aristocratic Bahima men had traditionally composed and performed *ebyevugo* poetry as an expansion of the self: each man composed his own, as part of the process of creating his own adulthood. Allusions to his own cattle, and to memorable events he had personally participated in, consolidated, and enhanced his social presence in appropriate circumstances – receiving honoured guests, competing with his peers for prestige.

It is unthinkable that his *ebyevugo* should be performed by anyone else, or that it should be performed in front of people unversed in the genre's specialized, allusive poetic form. In the context of an ongoing transformation of social hierarchy in modern Uganda, however, those long-established relations between text, performer and audience were overturned. Traditional masters of the genre were horrified to see 'agriculturalists' – the peasant majority – tuning in to performances of *ebyevugo* on the radio as they cultivated their Not only this, non-aristocratic enthusiasts could learn the poems themselves, and perform them at weddings, for money, to audiences 'from different walks of life', or play recordings of their performances in commercial centres in an ambience far removed from that of aristocratic pastoralists who had originally created and owned the poems (Kiguli, 2004, p. 87– 102).

The electronic media has brought disparate traditions into conjunction with each other, whether in the chaotic situation of commercial dissemination or in the orchestrated mosaic promoted by national cultural policy. Performers became aware not only of the other ethnic-cultural traditions that existed, but also that they were parallel and comparable to their own – potential candidates' fields.

1.4.1.4 Gĩkũyũ Cultural and Artistic Performances

Recording about Gĩkũyũ people artistic performances, (Leakey 1977) notes that among the Agĩkũyũ dancing and singing were so closely linked together that they may almost be described as inseparable. He observed that from an early age to old age, each rite of passage had its own special dances. Fr Cagnolo (2006) makes salient observations on Agĩkũyũ people. Being one of the earliest missionaries in Gĩkũyũ land, his observations can be termed as being authentic given that that Gĩkũyũ culture at the time had not been infiltrated by Western way of life. Regarding their cultural performances, Fr Cagnolo notes that Agĩkũyũ community is one of singers' par excellence. He says that they took great delight in their songs and were often completely carried away by them:

The Gĩkũyũ man began to sing as soon as he could form articulate sounds and sung all through life until old age stopped him with its piping treble. His training school is no musical academy, instead the public road, the village square, the open fields were his every day training ground. (Cagnolo, 2006, p.173)

1.4.1.5 The Gĩkũyũ Oral Artistic Performances

Gĩkũyũ were not passive recipients of Colonialism. It is no secret that Gĩkũyũ endured the most of colonialism more than any other community in Kenya. With such a brutal force exacted on them by the colonialists, one of the greatest casualties is their Traditional Knowledge and Traditional Cultural Expressions. Ketebul Music (2010) concurs with this view point in that from the 1890s, the oral traditions of the Gĩkũyũ are greatly disrupted and eroded by their protracted encounters with British colonialism.

While they were displaced from their ancestral lands, they were forced to provide labour on these farms. These acts of physical displacement and colonial rule that were used to promote Christian evangelism and western education distorted Gĩkũyũ oral heritage and scattered many of their ethnic beliefs, rites, and rituals. As early as 1900

the British colonialists had embarked on a mission of annihilating Gĩkũyũ cultural expressions. For instance, *Gĩcandĩ*, a dialogue poem that is publicly performed is proscribed. As stated by Valentino Ghilardi:

The Gĩcandĩ is a kind of Gĩkũyũ universal poem of the highest poetry in which the performer paces freely, passing from one field to another. He touches on all the leitmotifs at length. He passes from feasting merriment to the darkest sadness, from the comical to the tragic and from lyrical to gruesome or even apocalyptical expressions. He disdains vulgar themes. (Ghilardi, 1966, p.184)

In *Moving the Center* (1993), Thiong'o, asserts that the British colonial government destroyed the Gĩkũyũ's pre-colonial Gĩkũyũ poetry festival because the colonial administrators did not want to see the continuation of a festival whose content they did not understand:

Among the Agĩkũyũ of Kenya there used to be a Gĩkũyũ poetry festival, or shall I say, competition, which drew large crowds. The best poets of the various regions would meet in the arena, like in battle, and compete with words and instant compositions. These poets had even developed a form of hierograhics, which they kept to themselves. The British killed this kind of festival. (Thiong'o, 1993, p.19)

The term *Gĩcandĩ* refers to the dialogic poetry and the musical instrument that accompanies the performer. The term is a “nominalization of the verb *gũcanda* which means to dance (Kabira and Karega (1988, p.28).” Cantalupo (1995, p.119) theorizes that this powerful performance is banned owing to its potency to call audiences to resistance against colonial rule. The colonialists were mortally afraid and had to discontinue its performances. Closely related to this is *Ituĩka* ceremony. Castro (1995, p. 121) refers to *Ituĩka* as a great moment that marked the official transfer of ritual power between Mwangi and Irungu what Ayithey (2006, p. 125) terms as Gĩkũyũ rotational succession of power between the two age sets. He observes that the community is divided into two categories with Mwangi on one hand and Irungu or Maina being on the other hand:

Membership is determined by birth. If one generation is Mwangi, their sons would be Maina and their generations would be Mwangi and so on. One generation would hold office for a period of thirty-four years, at the end of which the *Itwika* ceremony is performed for the young generation to replace the old. (Ayithey, 2006, p. 125)

The study observed that the researcher great-great grandfather Ole Koroi is of Mwangi age set. His son Robi belonged to Irungu or Maina age set while his two sons Waweru and Wakirome belonged to Mwangi age set. Waweru beget Kĩng'a who by default belonged to Irungu/Maina age set, his son Kamũkwa is therefore of Mwangi age set. Mũngai/Ruo is of Irungu/Maina age set. The researcher father belongs to Mwangi age set while the researcher by default belongs to Irungu/Maina age set.

In his own account, Castro (1995, p. 121) concedes that this sanctified activity took place between 1931 and 1933. For instance, Castro make a disturbing reference regarding the transfer of power between age-sets at the time:

The transfer of ritual power between Mwangi and Irungu in Kĩrĩnyaga took place between 1931 and 1933. While the ceremony is going on, new challenges arose to the sacred groves, with CMS adherents accused of desecration. Elderly informants in present day Kĩrĩnyaga recalled zealous neophytes who challenges this tradition by cutting down sacred trees and surrounding bush. (Castro, 1995, p. 121)

Kenyatta (1966) says that the last time that *Itwĩka* ceremony was observed was between 1890 and 198. It fell due again in 1925 but was proscribed by the colonial government. This claim is supported by Hopley (1967, p.93) when he notes that the last great *Itwĩka* was at the end of big famine 1898 and that it was held in area between Thika and Chania Rivers. Jones (2001, p. 1326) bemoans the fact that the colonial government issued a banning order against this ceremony in 1923. However, Thiong'o (1993, p.88), Like Kenyatta (1966) gives conflicting dates when he notes that the British government banned *Itwĩka* ceremony in 1925. He claims that the ceremony is a respected cultural practice that facilitated the passing of leadership baton between one generation to the other. The colonial government is joined by its comrade at arms, Christian missions, to fight what they considered to be heathen and pagan practices.

Another cultural conflict that arose at the time and led to the banning of some traditional performances is triggered by the issue of female circumcision. Thomas (2003) and Shell-Duncun & Hernlund (2000, p.132) narrate how the authorities were determined to eradicate the practice of female circumcision among the Agĩkũyũ. By 1925 and 1927, administration in Nairobi encouraged local Native Councils, bodies of elected and

appointed African men presided over by a British District Commissioner with veto powers, to pass a resolution restricting female circumcision. Thus, there is widespread revolt across Gĩkũyũland.

Part of this protest is expressed in form of cultural expression by performance and singing of Mũthĩrĩgũ dance. This dance- song is composed in 1929 and mocked a black church elder by proclaiming that his uninitiated daughter is ill-mannered and incapable of giving birth to a proper human being. Missionaries, colonial government, and their local converts perceived the dance as a direct threat to political stability.

Cloonan & Drewett (2006) observe that the British government invoked the ‘*Public Order Act*,’ and proscribed the ban under seditious provisions in 1930. Those who were found contravening this order were punished. *Mwoboko* is yet another popular Gĩkũyũ cultural expression that emerged during the colonial times. Cloonan & Drewett (2006) point out that soon after returning from First and Second World Wars, African Service Corps members introduced some new musical instruments, including the accordion. Infusing this with traditional folk songs, a new blend of music is born. The content of the new genre hinged on allegorical oral poetic but spiced with love matter although the songs were used as an ethno-poetic weapon for social and political protest. They also manifested a hardline stance assumed by majority Gĩkũyũ in remaining faithful to their traditional African religion.

The colonialists resorted to proscribing the singing and dancing of any song narratives in Gĩkũyũ in early 1950s. Indeed, as Kabira & Karega (1988) observed Gĩkũyũ oral performances reflected community philosophy values. They classified five classes of Gĩkũyũ orature as follows: *ng’ano* (narratives); *Nyimbo* (songs and dances); *marebeta* (poetry); *thimo* (proverbs) and *ndai* (riddles). It is through these forms of orature, as Cagnolo (2006) postulates that community’s wisdom is passed from one generation to the next and is best revealed in their language, proverbs, legends and fables, myths.

Undeniably, the myth of Gĩkũyũ and Mũmbi is well documented by several scholars such as Borra (1939), Wanjohi (2001) Njururi (1983), Mugo (1982) and Kenyatta (1966). Wa Mutonya (2013) writing about Gĩkũyũ performances notes that the traditional forms of the tribe, as with other communities, performed several functions.

They were reflectors of a people's philosophy and aesthetics; a medium of culture; a source of entertainment; a historical record and could be used to castigate wrongdoers and enhance positive behaviour. The conclusion one can draw from the above, therefore, is that, song, dance and music have always been part and parcel of the day-to-day living of most communities, including Agĩkũyũ.

1.4.1.6 Theatre among the Gĩkũyũ

Colonialism greatly impacted on Gĩkũyũ way of life, including their language and cultural performances. Ketebul Music (2010) agrees with this view point in that from 1890s, the oral traditions of the Gĩkũyũ is greatly disrupted and eroded by their protracted encounters with British colonialism. Notwithstanding these developments, there is a notable renaissance of Gĩkũyũ cultural performances in 60s and 70s, courtesy of firebrand scholars like Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Micere Mugo and Ngũgĩ wa Miiri who captured Gĩkũyũ imagination through staging of plays such as Nгахика Ndeenda (I will Marry When I want) (1982), and Maitũ Njũgira (Mother Sing for me) at Kamĩrĩthũ Community Theatre. Although Nгахика Ndeenda is a commercial success, it is shut down by the authoritarian Kenyan regime six weeks after its opening. Ngũgĩ is subsequently imprisoned for over a year.

By early 1990's Gĩkũyũ theatre had gained traction among Agĩkũyũ, especially in Nairobi and other urban areas in Kenya. Unlike most people in Kenya who are shy to be heard conversing in vernacular, the Gĩkũyũ do not appear to have such a problem. In fact, Gĩkũyũ playwright such as Wahome Mũtahi blossomed in early 1990's and early 2000 by performing plays in bars and social places rather than hold them in theatres. Whereas the number of patrons to theatre in English and Kiswahili is declining, it is the opposite for the Gĩkũyũ version. The above view is validated by KFC (2014), which bemoans the sorry state of Kenya's conventional film industry, the report points that most of these cinema halls have been made redundant and have now been transformed into prayer halls, due to the easy availability of video and films in the sitting rooms of most Kenyans. CD, VCD, DVD and other modern forms of recording and carrying film have made transactions cheaper and easier, although this has proven to be problematic for those in the film industry.

Some of the memorable Gĩkũyũ plays in Kenya include the defunct Sarakasi Players' Ciaigana ni Ciaigana (Enough is Enough) that ran for 18 months from 1991; Mũgaathe Mũbogothi (His Excellency the Hallucinator) and Igooti ria Mũingi of Mũtahi and Karengo that went on for nine months in 1995 and 1998, respectively; Profesa Nyoori, also by Mũtahi, that is a hit in 1998; and Nyahoro, a 1999 adaptation of The Government Inspector by Mũtahi and Professor Ngugi Njoroge. This satirical drama readily connected with the audience in Kenya, a country where almost nothing appears to move in public office unless civil servants are bribed by those seeking service. It ran for six months giving way to Makarĩra Kĩoro in 2002. In between Mutahi and Titi Wainaina did Jomo Kenyatta the Man, a play in English that is well received by their loyal audience, Kenyatta having been Kikuyu.

The use of Gĩkũyũ vernacular as means of expression in selected films reflects earlier efforts that ultimately bequeathed to the community dynamic cultural tools that have ensured recording of vernacular not only in filmic texts but also in other literary platforms. Kuria (2002, p.48) admits that vernacular productions especially in Kikuyu dominated performances in and around cities in the late 1980s and early 1990s. He alleges that this is a continuation of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o led Kamĩrĩthũ project. This eventually led to the development of vernacular broadcasting in Kenya, "Kameme FM signalled the birth of vernacular broadcasting using language other than English and Swahili (Gathigi & Brown 2010, p.110)." As fate, would have it, Gĩthingithia audio-cassette series found a nestling ground at Kameme FM. Gĩthingithia and his partner Njaramba became a permanent feature in the new vernacular station.

The period also witnessed the growth of audio cassette production largely because of establishment of extra Gĩkũyũ radio stations namely; KBC's Coro FM and Royal Media's Inoro FM. By 2002, these audio-cassette productions incorporated visual aspects and thereby midwifing Gĩkũyũ vernacular comedies by early 2000. The comedies received great support in that the audience now had an opportunity to watch their favourite comedies, in a language they understood, with characters whose mannerisms, world view and lingo resembled their own.

They found in these characters, their soul mates whom they could relate to as opposed to the foreign cinema that monopolised Western culture and standards. The pioneers of this industry include; Machang’i, Kīhenjo, Kīanangi, Wandahuhu and Kīhoto. It is evident that the emergence of these Gīkūyū vernacular comedies have served to exemplify rich cultural stock including its nuances, imagery, proverbs, riddles, and cultural expressions. This has helped to portray hidden shades and tinges suffused in Gīkūyū vernacular through filmic lens.

1.4.1.7 Gīkūyū in Film

Kerr (1995) attributes underdevelopment of Kenyan film to colonial system employed by the British colonizers. Garritano (2013) concedes that the colonial governments set up film units in Africa, but he argues that these films promoted colonial interests and established colonial mastery of Africa and Africans. In retrospect, French adopted a totally different approach in its colonies, mostly in Western Africa:

In these colonies, Africans were accepted in the cinema on a relatively equal footing with their French colonisers’ counterparts. Unheard-of situation in the British colonies. This indifference may have contributed to the post-independence phenomenon that several Francophone African countries developed struggling but dynamic feature film industries, which they have been almost non-existence in the Anglophone states. (Kerr, 1995, p.25)

Subsequently, Kenya film is still reeling from these effects. Firestone, Butler, Hardy & Karlin (2008) note that although Kenya has served as a location of choice for several films such as **Out of Africa; Born Free; Mountains of the Moon** and **Nowhere in Africa**, the Kenyan local industry has struggled to establish itself,” plagued, as it is, by official lethargy and underfunding.” The first account of Gīkūyū in the film is traced back to the time when Former US President Theodore Roosevelt came for African safari and proceeded to shoot a movie in 1909. Hartley & Leakey (2010, p.19) observes that Theodore Roosevelt’s famous safari began when he arrived in the port of Mombasa in April 1909. He mentions that Cherry Kearton arrived separately a month later, and it is apparently not until August or September of that year when they met in Nyeri, to the west of Mount Kenya. He continues to explain that Roosevelt had just come down the mountain, having ‘collected’ an elephant, and Kearton is asked to film the celebratory Kikuyu and Maasai dance, or *ngoma* that is staged by the then Acting Governor, Sir

Frederick Jackson. However, in the resulting film, the dancers were erroneously identified as Zulus. Hartley apportions blame to presidential party ignorance on people of Kenya, yet their knowledge of wildlife is little better.

The other notable early appearance of Gĩkũyũ in film is during Bantu Educational Kinema Experiment (BEKE) project in 1935. The project is sponsored by International Missionary Council (IMC) based in Geneva, Switzerland. Mbogoni (2013) and Reynolds (2015) reveal that specific objective of the project is to produce ‘instructional films’ for urbanized Africans to arrest the moral corruption of the Africans by western industrial life. The BEKE is implemented at the beginning of the talkie revolution. Accommodating this technological shift required considering the numerous languages spoken in the five target areas, and thus the BEKE made use of the economical sound-on-disc method, first pioneered by Emile Berliner and Léon Gaumont years before.

This allowed for narration of the storylines on phonograph discs produced in English, Swahili, Sukuma, Kikuyu, Luo, Luganda, Nyanja, Bemba, and Tumbuka for screening in different locales. A variety of films would be produced specifically to gauge reaction to different genres: educational films would be sub-classified as instructional, story-instructional, and cultural, while entertainment films would include comedies and farce. Notcutt and Latham (1937) hoped to discover which types of films appealed to the “mentality of different types of African—the educated, the partially detribalized native, and the primitive villager,” and consequently, how cinema could meet Britain’s development needs without fostering resistance.

During the time of Mau Mau rebellion, colonialist screened a few films with Gĩkũyũ as part of film subject but with an open bias towards colonialists’ point of view. Kinyanjui (2014) refers to a documentary produced by BBC in 1965 by the name ‘**The End of an Empire**,’ whose director, Brian Lapping, concentrated on depicting how 30,000 British settlers succeeded, by sheer brute force, to mollify five million Africans by killing off a whole village population, carting away their cows and goats:

They then proceeded to remove the Gĩkũyũ from their land (the so-called White Highlands), forcing them into reserved areas. Gĩkũyũ rebellion is met with extreme measures: all young Gĩkũyũ men were stashed away in concentration camps; their wives were removed from their farms, settled in village camps and forced to dig deep trenches around the village. Spikes were then fitted in the ditches to cut off the forest-based freedom fighters, who had been relying on food supplies from the women. Life for most Gĩkũyũ became a real nightmare and those left behind feared for their survival. (Kinyanjui, 2014, p.67)

This documentary adopts a commentary approach plus interviews with both British colonists and Africans who were spokespeople in the struggle for independence. The BBC used film footage made by the colonial government and still photographs to bring the darkest history of Kenya to life. In her own word, Kinyanjui (2014) mentions that ever since, film students have found this documentary more fascinating than **The Burning Spear** (about Kenyatta) because it tried to analyse the two extreme positions: that of Africans (especially that of the Gĩkũyũ) and that of Whites.

Cowans (2015, p.139) gives examples of other films produced during the time of Mau. They included **Simba** (1955) which served to demonize Mau movement by alluding that the mission of colonialists is to civilize Africans. In 1956 the government produced yet another film called **Safari** (1956) which depicted the conflict and mistrust that existed between whites and their domestic servants. In the same year **Beyond Mombasa** (1956) is produced. The film seeks to justify the whites right to African resources while demonizing African resistance as evil. **Something of Value** (1957) highlights and justifies why whites were entitled to live and stay in Kenya while condemning Mau Mau rebellion which whose genesis is Agĩkũyũ tribe.

Nevertheless, film positioning by the colonialist did not obliterate its role in Africa or in this case Gĩkũyũ collective psyche. Kowuor (2013, p.406) shows that beyond merely being radical instruments for subverting the ideological foundations upon which colonial authority is legitimised, literature and film in Africa are at the same time central to the ascendancy of new dominant discourses which centre and privilege the national and Pan-African idea in the collective imaginary of postcolonial citizens. The art has taken root and is assuming its own identify as a conveyer of social and cultural norms. Mudimbe (2013, p.xiii) summarises this new spirit, when he reminds us that all-over

Africa, an explosion in cultural productions of various genres is in evidence. Whether it be in relation to music, song, dance, drama, play, poetry, film, documentaries, photography, cartoons, fine art, novels (fiction and fact), short stories, essays and (auto)biography; the continent is experiencing a robust outpouring of creative power that is as remarkable for its originality as its all-round diversity.

1.4.1.8 Rise of Gĩkũyũ Comedies

Explosion of mass media in Kenya has also been cited as having advanced Gĩkũyũ oral performances, stand up comedies and theatre a great deal. Njogu & Middleton (2009) posits that the impact of the media on non-Western countries has been baleful, swamping indigenous cultural production, wiping out cherished traditions and force-feeding entire populations with cheap, meretricious American consumer culture. This has certainly been a cause for deep concern among progressive African policy makers and should not be underestimated. Nonetheless, it is important to recognize the extent to which African cultural innovators have seized upon the possibilities of the media to revitalize their traditions and generate new forms. Real loss has gone hand in hand with intriguing gain. The rush to condemn or deny the impact of imported media has stood in the way of an empirically informed understanding of what people have done with these media, in different regions and moments in Africa's history.

Despite his earlier assertion, Njogu & Middleton (2009) argues that Print and electronic media have had profound transformative effects in African culture. He avers that for more than 100 years, techniques and conceptions drawn from the media virtually shape all new popular cultural forms in Africa; while older oral genres have been subtly but definitively recast as they have been drawn into new performance spaces on the film, TV, Radio, or in print. As maintained by the Kenya Film Commission (KFC) Report (2014) the potential of film industry in Kenya has undergone rapid growth. Nyariki et al (2009) records that notable among these is Riverwood - the Kenyan version of Hollywood, Bollywood, or Nollywood. Riverwood emergence coincided with the advent of video technology especially the handheld camcorder which revolutionized film sector in Kenya. As ACRI (2012) opines, as Nigerian videos flooded the market, music producers in Kenya's River road found inspiration to act. Key comedy players unknown in the mainstream theatre or film circles became stars almost overnight!

Machang'i, Kĩhoto and Kĩhenjo got together with River road producers like Nduti one-stop productions and shalom and others who had formerly been in production business to shoot one-hour comedies straight on video.

From 2004 to 2007, there is a proliferation of comedies that were taped, using the mini DV camcorder in vernacular languages. The actors would translate their stand-up comedies they would perform in bars to a few simple locations. Riverwood film productions have normal grass root content from simple people in the countryside and obviously appeal to people who have been shut out of local highbrow entertainment. They resonate with local masses and hence the term Riverwood whose first usage was by Kenyan journalists. The Gikũyũ film industry brought a new wave of artistic expression hitherto unbeknown to Agikũyũ people. This new form of art has its own characteristic features or artistic culture of which 'comedy' is dominant. Other elements therein include plot, suspense, conflict, characterisation themes and language, just like any other literary genre. Towards the turn of the twentieth century, cultural studies, including the deployment of cultural symbols in popular arts, has drawn the attention of various scholars: Fiske (1989), Agger (1992), Kellner (1995) and Durham & Kellner (2001).

However, it is the later scholars who have paved way for more incisive and multi-perspective approach to the subject of cultural studies. As quoted by Amponsah (2010, p. 597) American Sociologist Charles A. Ellwood believes that culture is a collective name for all behaviour patterns socially acquired and socially transmitted by means of symbols...including not only such items as language...but also the material instruments ... in which cultural achievements [sic] are embodied and by which intellectual cultural features are given practical effect, such as buildings, tools, machines, communication devices, art objects, etc. This view embodies the various facets through which culture is manifested in any given society.

1.4.2 The Agikūyū and their Cultural Symbols

Barker (2012, p.7), in eliciting the deep-rooted connection between especially cultural meaning and various discourses, notes that “culture is concerned with questions of shared social meanings, that is, the various ways we make sense of the world. However, meanings are not simply floating ‘out there’; rather, they are generated through signs, most notably those of language.” Barker (ibid), in one of the cultural discipline’s most categorical decisive assertions, also elevates language to a significant status in the discourse of cultural mediation:

Cultural studies have argued that language is not a neutral medium for the formation of meanings and knowledge about an independent object world ‘existing’ outside of language. Rather, it is constitutive of those very meanings and knowledge. That is, language gives meaning to material objects and social practices that are brought into view by language and made intelligible to us in terms that language delimits. These processes of meaning production are signifying practices. In order to understand culture, we need to explore how meaning is produced symbolically in language as a ‘signifying system.’ (Barker, 2012, p. 7)

By appropriating a constitutive dimension to language, Barker (ibid) suggests the importance of language in any cultural study. It is with this elevated significance in mind that this research seeks to study, among other cinema issues, the use of native vernacular language within contemporary Gikūyū comedies. This approach will be significant in bringing out the contextual basis upon which the various outlooks of Gikūyū culture are modelled, especially through the language system.

Furthermore, language plays a critical role in retaining the authenticity of meaning within any cultural context, as discussed by Williams (1987, p. 169) who points out that “words of another language often fail to translate the people’s concepts or meaning.” In this regard, language can be termed as a central part of any culture, as it helps to articulate the cultural essence of the given society in a manner that would not be otherwise possible. Against this backdrop, the proposition to analyse the use of native vernacular in contemporary Gikūyū comedies is well placed as a scholarly endeavour. Such an investigation stands a significant chance of unravelling the inner workings of the Gikūyū society through a study of the prominent idioms and other verbal symbols.

As argued by Turner (1988, p. 42), “theorists, drawing particularly on semiotics, have argued that language is the major mechanism through which culture produces and reproduces social meanings.” This suggestion puts language at the very core of any form of cultural expression, films included. Turner (ibid) has however also differentiated between language in the sense of vernacular, and in the sense of signs and symbols. In the first approach, he argues that:

we become members of our culture through language, we acquire our sense of personal identity through language, and we internalize the value systems which structure our lives through language. We cannot step ‘outside’ language in order to produce a set of our own meanings which are totally independent of the cultural system. (Turner, 1988, p. 43)

In the second sense, he draws linkage to the works of past century Semioticians including Roland Barthes (1977) who argued that “language includes all those systems from which we can select and combine elements in order to communicate (Turner, 1988, pp. 42-43).” The two discourses however intertwine within the film’s multifarious system of communication which fuses the two at the interstices of dialogue and symbolic aspects of cinematography. For this study, the investigation of language would be engaged from this fusion, but with emphasis of the different aspects of language use. The first mode of language use will be analysed in the second objective, while the first objective dwells on the semiotic use of film language. The following section reviews some of the salient scholarly thoughts on the use of language as a semiotic code of signification.

1.4.3 Bountiful Codes: Representation of Film – Culture Nexus

There are a number of ways in which we can read meaning in film. Some approaches may focus on the form and content, while others pursue the narrative as their primary investigatory site. Abrams, Bell, & Udris (2001, p. 93-112) identified four main elements deployed in cinema through which all the other film components which constitute the labyrinth of film language are quite accessible: *mise en scène*, cinematography, editing, and sound. These encapsulate broader collection of other sub-elements which are interfaces with the film critic in order to convey meaning, for instance, dialogue, lighting, setting, and costume. Bell and Udris (2001) have identified setting, props, costume, lighting and colour, and composition as some of the main areas

of investigation in the investigation of *mise en scène* as potential source of filmic meaning.

Cinematography on the other hand deals with framing, shot size, length of take, camera movements, and camera angle as the most obvious locales of investigation. With regard to editing, the two scholars suggest continuity and discontinuity, movement and speed, shot size and editing, match on action, cutaway shots, crosscutting, 180 degree and 30 degree rules, montage, and insert edits as the major points of inquiry. Finally, Bell, & Udris (2001) have identified various elements which the critic can engage in the analysis of sound within a film. These are diegetic and nondiegetic sound, sound effects, ambient sound, music, voice-overs, parallel and contrapuntal sounds, and sound bridges provide fertile sites for critical engagement with filmic discourses. Besides these formal elements of film, Barsam (2004, p. 80) has identified the various narrative elements which can offer productive engagement in the exercise of film criticism from the form and content perspective. These include story and plot, order, events (hubs and satellites), duration, suspense vs surprise, frequency, characters, setting, point of view and scope.

Given that “film has its own ‘language’ (which is a) range of techniques ... available to a filmmaker (and)... used to present a narrative through the medium of film (Abrams, Bell, & Udris, 2001, p. 92)”, it is important to consider all the above-mentioned sites of enquiry as important locales of especially, the film’s metatextual messages. It is in pursuit of this comprehensive engagement that this study, given the multiplicity of levels at which it engages with the films, uses these two approaches simultaneously. At this point, the question; has film and culture had any instantaneous fusion so far? is important in justifying, at least theoretically, any pursuit of this criticism trajectory. Turner (2008, p. 273) thinks that there is already a handy bridge between the two bridges, since “it is now possible to suggest, film studies has experienced a series of pluralizing shifts that better reflects the social and cultural resonance of the locations of its objects of study.” In a shift of focus from the oriental criticism, this study engaged with the film-cultural nexus from an African point-of-view to generate new insights about the emerging film spaces, the so called Third Cinema.

There are several academic thoughts to support the research approach proposed for this study. One of the most significant view is that held by Tomaselli, Shepperson and Eke (1995, p. 32), that; “filmmakers see their art as commentaries on their societies in order to enlighten people about the contexts of their experiences.” Gĩkũyũ comedy filmmakers can therefore easily fit into this segment, as they utilise the knowledge of their native culture as a source of their narratives to them. In this sense, therefore, film is not just an implosive or restrictive medium, but it is a new way of telling about *themselves* to themselves. This cooperation between the filmmaker and the source culture, Uwah (2012) opines;

is what filmmakers in Africa build on in representing African stories. It is a motif that characterises African cultural films ...indicating by this that, from time immemorial, Africans have cherished their cultural values and carried out their communications based on their culture and identity. (Uwah, 2012, p. 182)

Therefore, contemporary Gĩkũyũ comedy films, especially those which have retained the native language affiliation, can be rightly seen as reliable representations of the Gĩkũyũ culture, which is really the object of investigation for this study. Further, this research will thus acclimatise itself to such postcolonial film-culture thoughts as those advanced by Nwachukwu (1994) who points out that:

contemporary black African film practice emerged out of the excitement of nation building and a quest for the revivification of Africa’s lost cultural heritage and identity; a quest that has inspired innovative and creative diversification in the cinema and throughout the art. Sub-Saharan cinema’s importance can be ascribed to its commitment to the pan-African perspective, which has inspired individuals far beyond the continent’s geographical boundaries. (Nwachukwu, 1994, p. 304)

This justification for the African film enterprise as a vital contribution to the pan-African inspiration partly fuels the justification of this study, which seeks to add on the evolving motions of Africanism (through articulation of Gĩkũyũ-ness) within contemporary films.

1.4.4 Towards and Understanding of Cultural Discourses within Cinema

Several scholars have significantly explored the important subject of culture. The infusion of filmic spaces with cultural discourses has also attracted the attention of many popular film theorists, including the film theory niche heavyweights, Robert Stam and Toby Miller. Hall (2000) summarises the indispensable relationship between film narrative and cultural ideology in his argument that “[t]he practices of representation always implicate the positions from which we speak or write – the positions of enunciation (Hall, 2000, p. 704).”

This statement can be extended to incorporate other representational-based art-forms like cinema, where the auteur seeks to negotiate a specific position of enunciation through the medium, including, cultural diction. This relationship between art and culture, or film and cultural ideology in this case, is further reinforced through the assertion that artists “write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and culture which is specific. What we say is always ‘in context’, *positioned* (Hall, 2000, p. 704).” Hall’s (ibid) view seems to concur with Barker (2012) who has summarised the relationship between film and culture as that of representation:

A good deal of cultural studies is centred on questions of representation; that is, on how the world is socially constructed and represented to and by us in meaningful ways. Indeed, the central strand of cultural studies can be understood as the study of culture as the signifying practices of representation. This requires us to explore the textual generation of meaning. It also demands investigation of the modes by which meaning is produced in a variety of contexts. Further, cultural representations and meanings have a certain materiality. That is, they are embedded in sounds, inscriptions, objects, images, books, magazines and television programmes. They are produced, enacted, used and understood in specific social contexts. (Barker, 2012, p. 8)

In the context of this study, this view is quite important because it supports the notion of textual analysis as a methodological approach, attesting to the certitude of such film scholars as Monaco (2009), and Stam & Miller (2000) whose doxa on filmic representation also reiterate the cultural nodes of intersection. These views are especially relevant because they encompass the post-Derrida and post-Foucault constraints which seek to interrogate the embeddedness of culturally-rich symbols in various artistic discourses.

The foregoing views sufficiently provide a good starting position to interrogate the issue of culture as a social discourse, as it suggests a multifarious view of culture.

Amponsah (2010) points out that besides their language, all other pertinent material embodiments of a society can be rich niches of their culture. This view is quite useful in this study as it investigates not only the use of language to decrypt cultural expressions, but also the use of language within a contemporary artistic embodiment, film. Moreover, Ellwood maintains;

The essential part of culture is to be found in the patterns embodied in the social traditions of group, that is, in knowledge, ideas, beliefs, values, standards, and sentiments prevalent in the group. The overt part of culture is to be found in the actual behaviour of the group, usually in its usages, customs, and institutions... The essential part of culture seems to be an appreciation of values with reference to life conditions (Amponsah, 2010, p. 597).

It is also noteworthy that not all film's cultural symbols are about conformity to uniform cultural prescription, as often "media culture manipulates and indoctrinates us, and thus can empower individuals to resist the dominant meanings in media cultural products and to produce their own meanings. It can also point to moments of resistance and criticism within media culture and thus help promote development of more critical consciousness (Kellner, 2011, p. 12)." Barsam (2004, p. 433) has vividly explained the necessity for cultural engagement with filmic texts, arguing that:

Cultural studies go deep beneath the surface of a movie to explore the implicit and hidden meanings. Furthermore, it analyses the period in which the film is made, especially the dominant social issues - politics, race, ethnicity, class, sexual identity, gender – and their relation to the period in which the analysis is being made.

So far, there is every good reason to engage in film analysis as a form of cultural unravelling, for after all, "cultural studies have (so far) influenced what the study of film now looks like, and it has hastened the modification of the dominant paradigms under which the field is established (Turner, 2008, p. 282)." Moreover, despite the

changing times and forms of cultural expressions, there is still enough evidence suggesting that cultural changes do not necessarily disqualify endurance of the specific social norms within a society (Karenga, 2003 and 2004), and Tomaselli (2003). Finally, the analysis of especially the thematic content of the films as a baseline for establishing the profusion of Gikūyū cultural intimations is fuelled by recent studies which draw an important connection between especially culture and such arts as film, including Kellner (2011) who provides the crucial link between social art forms and cultural representations:

Radio, television, film, and the other products of media culture provide materials out of which we forge our very identities; our sense of selfhood; our notion of what it means to be male or female; our sense of class, of ethnicity and race, of nationality, of sexuality; and of “us” and “them.” Media images help shape our view of the world and our deepest values: what we consider good or bad, positive or negative, moral or evil. Media stories provide the symbols, myths, and resources through which we constitute a common culture and through the appropriation of which we insert ourselves into this culture. Media spectacles demonstrate who has power and who is powerless, who is allowed to exercise force and violence, and who is not. They dramatise and legitimate the power of the forces that be and show the powerless that they must stay in their places or be oppressed. (Kellner D. , 2011, p. 9)

This research, especially the third objective, seeks to establish those cultural motifs implied, developed, negated, or even nurtured through the cinema narratives by a comprehensive analysis of the thematic concerns, noting especially the various aspects of Gikūyū culture authenticated through the cinema space.

1.4.5 Theoretical Framework

This study analyses the various signs and symbols of filmic text using semiotics as its primary theory. Semiotics owes its beginnings to the linguistic research of French linguistic scholars, Ferdinand de Saussure and Claude Lévi-Strauss, who sought to analyse film as a system of language working through sign-code frameworks. The most influential scholar in this regard is Christian Metz, whose 1964 essay, ‘*La ciné ma: langue or langage?*’ (Metz, 1974) sought to compare the ways in which cinema conveys meanings and messages with the ways that written and spoken language does. This is particularly influenced by theories of Ferdinand de Saussure (1966) whose

Course in General Linguistics which is first published in 1916. Metz (1974) refers to film semiotic as consisting of three concepts:

...(a) Filmic texts, which may present different degrees of material scope, the privileged one being the single and entire film. (b) textual filmic systems, i.e., filmic systems which correspond to these different texts; and (c) non-textual filmic system (codes) which themselves present different degrees of generality (the distinction between code and sub-codes) and which per the individual case, may be cinematic or extra cinematic; those which are cinematic constitute, as a block, “cinematic language system. (Metz, 1974, p.150)

Metz’s contribution to filmic research, as exemplified in the above statement, is immense. Building on especially the third concept of filmic codes, and cinematic language system, this study applies the same ideas of Semiosis in the interpretation of cultural codes within Gikūyū comedy films. In this regard, one may also reference Chandler’s (2017) view that semiotics can be applied to anything which signifies something, including television and radio programs, comedies, films, cartoons, newspaper and magazine articles, posters, and other mass media elements.

It is plausible that this is what Monaco (2009, p. 468) infers in the suggestion that semiotics is a “general term that covers many specific approaches to the study of culture as a language... (and) uses language as a general model for a variety of phenomena.” The approach used here is Barker’s (2012, p. 35) concept that semiotics “explores how the meanings generated by texts have been achieved through a particular arrangement of signs and cultural codes.” Such an arrangement could be temporal, as is the case with sequences and montage; or symbolic, as is the case with signifier-signified relationship between codes. In this sense, therefore, semiotics as a film theory lends an interpretative arc to the film-reading exercise by interpolating the various filmic perspectives: the film medium itself, and the context in which the medium expresses itself. Why Semiotics? Kellner (2011, p. 14) notes that semiotics is useful in analysing how both “linguistic and nonlinguistic cultural “signs” form systems of meanings, as when giving someone a rose is interpreted as a sign of love, or getting an A on a college paper is a sign of mastery of the rules of the specific assignment.”

The study largely uses semiotics as an applied method (Fiske 1982, pp. 103-117) to analyse the film discourse, that is, it uses the signifier-signified binary to position its arguments about Gīkūyū cultural paradigms within filmic language. The researcher has employed three analytical elements of study: signs, signified and significations of film discourse to situate cultural symbols within the diegesis of contemporary Gīkūyū comedy films.

Pursuant to this scholarly enterprise, this study used semiotics theory in two main ways. First, it analyses filmic images to explicate the ways in which various film elements work as cultural text and consequently achieve symbolism of the Gīkūyū culture. These elements include dialogue, costume and make-up, setting, themes and narrative spines. Second, the theory was used to analyse what Monaco (2009, p. 178) calls the “denotative and connotative meaning”, the level at which the various cultural discourses are mediated within the filmic discourses. Through this analytical approach, the study will facilitate an understanding of emergent facets of Gīkūyū-ism as a contemporary cultural identity. This is facilitated by the use of textual analysis as the primary method, in the sense accentuated by Monaco (2009 p. 176) who suggests that the work of the semiotician in film reading is to understand the connection between the ‘signified’ and the ‘signifier’, which are the foundation nodes of comprehending film as a “language.” Furthermore, it is widely acknowledged that film should be read as a language and perceived as a definite set of pre-packaged meanings whose full realisation requires some form of literacy about the “syntax” and “semantics” of film (Monaco (ibid, p. 170). Whereas the exact application of these concepts will become evident in subsequent chapters, other general aspects of the research method are discussed hereunder.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.5.1 Introduction

This section discusses the methodology used in this study. It is divided into various subsections including research design, population and sampling, data collection techniques, and analysis method used in interpreting the data within the study.

1.5.2 Research Design

Because the data analysed is in the form of film content, this study adopted qualitative analysis as the most suitable research design. Qualitative research is well discussed by various scholars such as Patton (2002), Hawking & Mlodinow (2010) and Denzin & Lincoln (2011). It “locates the observer in the world... (which means) that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).” Qualitative researchers are “interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world (Merriam (2009, p. 13).” Per this argument, qualitative research design suits this study in the sense that it aids in explicating the way filmic characters in the sampled films generate socio-cultural codes about Gikūyū community, and how the characters’ interaction with their environment signify specific ways of life for the Gikūyū society. Due to this cross-cutting approach, this was an inter-disciplinary research situated between filmic language (semiosis of the filmic images) and cultural study of the Gikūyū community. Of necessity, the data collected from the filmic texts was descriptive, derived from textual reading (observation), the primary data collection approach.

1.5.3 Population

It is noteworthy that cultural identity is not necessarily homogenous within any given society, but attuned to various differences as well, or in Hall’s (2000, p. 707) words, culture “is not once-and-for-all”, but is otherwise open to versions of historical, globalization and personal forces. For this reason, this research considers different viewpoints of various directors sampled from Riverwood films to allow for this fluidity in cultural discussions. This study specifically focused on contemporary Gikūyū

comedies using Gĩkũyũ vernacular language as their main dialogue language. In this sense, the population of the study is specifically Riverwood Gĩkũyũ comedies. Further, because part of primary data collection for the study entails interviews with members of FGDs, the researcher randomly sampled Kĩkũyũ elders to participate in these groups.

1.5.4 Sample Size: Selection Criteria of Sampled Films

The study purposively sampled six Gĩkũyũ comedies from Riverwood as the sources of primary data for the research. This sample is mainly derived from active Gĩkũyũ comedy actors and producers, whose films draw their themes from cultural settings, and which use Gĩkũyũ vernacular as the primary language of their dialogue. These include Wandahuhu's *Kĩrĩro Kia Mwana* and *Mũici na Kĩhĩĩ*; Machang'i's *Mũthuri ni Mĩtugo* and *Mũndũrũme ni Mũgambo*; Kihenjo's *Mũtikũnyarira* and *Nganga Mbute*. For this selection, each individual film was treated as a sampling unit, so that various characters appearing in various films are considered as belonging to different sampling units.

The study also engaged with key informants comprised of randomly sampled members of the Gĩkũyũ society. In total, fifty respondents were interviewed during the study, a sample population deemed enough to offer insights into the cultural prescriptions of the Kĩkũyũ community. As Gilbert and Miles (2005) suggest, Focus Group research involves organizing and running a series of small, FGDs, and analysing the resultant data using a range of conventional qualitative methods. In this case, each member of the FGD comprised one sampling unit. In practice, for this study, data was collected from these members through interviews to elicit interpretations of the various aspects of Gĩkũyũ culture already inscribed in the selected films. Byrne (2004, p.180) postulates that interviews are not only a form of communication but also a means of extracting different forms of information from individuals and groups. Atkinson and Silverman (1997, p.309) observe that interview with its face-to-face character is able 'to reveal the personal, the private self of the subject.'

1.5.5 Sampling Techniques

Since this study is about the mediation of cultural discourses through cinema, it sought to gather a vast array of perspectives on not only the various nuances of Gĩkũyũ culture within the various cinema narratives, but also to gather a wider view of the multi-dimensionality of Gĩkũyũ-ness as presented through various filmmakers, actors, and settings. To this end, the study purposively sampled films by three of the most popular Gĩkũyũ comedy filmmakers and actors namely: Wandahuhu, Kĩhenjo, and Machang’i. The sampling of the directors, together with their films, sought to reflect the diversity of filmic aesthetics and their correspondence with Gĩkũyũ cultural norms. Using this approach, the sampling enabled a wider critical pursuit of the various objectives of the study, which in turn enabled the researcher to engage with the Gĩkũyũ vernacular language and other cultural elements used in the films. The key informants were also purposively sampled, with preference for their accessibility and ability to offer reliable interpretation of the Gĩkũyũ culture. In this regard, elderly members of the Gĩkũyũ society were preferred. This choice is conducted randomly, with preference for diversity and balance across the Gĩkũyũ community.

1.5.6 Data Collection Techniques

To achieve its objectives, this study used both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary sources included the actual data derived from reading the films under investigation. Secondary sources of data included journals articles, books, chapters, websites, and theses. This data was gathered from several access points including Kenyatta University’s Post-Modern Library, and University of Nairobi’s Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library, among others. Both primary and secondary data was collected thematically according to the various objectives for ease of analysis and interpretation. Consequently, for each objective, corresponding appropriate data is collected and analysed as part of the discursive arguments for each objective.

For the first objective, to identify the intersection of technical filmic codes deployed in contemporary Gĩkũyũ vernacular comedies and Gĩkũyũ cultural nuances, the study used secondary data, especially scholarly works about film language, to critically discuss the use of native language discourse within contemporary Gĩkũyũ comedies as a filmic strategy to express essential cultural symbols. It also used key informants from

the Gīkūyū society to provide relevant interpretations of the cultural texts as expressed through the films. This information is collected from both the films (primary data) and various scholarly sources including journals and books (secondary data).

The second objective, which sought to establish the use of vernacular language as a discourse to engage with paradigms of Gīkūyū culture in contemporary Gīkūyū vernacular comedies, analysed the use of language discourses and how they engage with paradigms of Gīkūyū culture in contemporary Gīkūyū vernacular comedies using semiotics film theory. Specifically, discussions for this objective focus on the use of dialogue, costumes, music, setting, mise-en-scène, and various aspects of cinematography to render various aspects of Gīkūyū culture.

The third and final objective aimed to investigate the thematic coding of cultural discourses in the selected films. It investigated the various Gīkūyū cultural discourses mediated in the selected films through thematic, stylistics and dramatic analysis of the films. This analysis sought to elicit specific subtleties of Gīkūyū cultural identities proposed through the cinema narratives.

1.5.7 Data Analysis

The quest to find an appropriate approach to interpret film is the subject of Kellner's (2011, pp. 13-14) work which sought to provide a framework for the interpretation of media (film) images as culturally potent tools, arguing that; "the products of media culture require multidimensional close textual readings to analyse their various forms of discourses, ideological positions, narrative strategies, image construction, and effects." This statement anchors this study's framework for data interpretation as it offers a comprehensive trajectory of engagement with the filmic text. Such an analysis offered not just superficial distinctions of the texts, but also allows more informed critical analysis of the film's metatext. This is made possible through the application of semiotic theory.

CHAPTER TWO: FILMIC SYMBOLS AND CULTURAL NUANCES

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed various scholarly views on cultural symbols which take place within a world (Carwood (2013)). Specifically, the point of focus has been the analysis of filmic enunciation of cultural symbols through cinema codes. Building on this already established argument, this chapter shall further analyze deployment of film's symbols in contemporary Gĩkũyũ comedies as a creative strategy to capture the community's history of orality and thus expedite cultural paradigms.

Devoid of any orthography and written word, Agĩkũyũ people have since time immemorial cherished oral performances. They relied on this hallowed mode of expression to recall heroics of their legends, to remember their histories and create and recreate myths that held the community together. They also cherished their orality which is expressed through a vast repertoire of music, dances, oral poetry, proverbs, riddles among other aspects.

However, the encounter with white settlers, colonialists and Christian missionaries has had a profound effect on Gĩkũyũ orality. Most of their oral performances were banned during the colonial period or they were demonized by missionaries thereby obliterating critical aspects of this genre. Nevertheless, the advancement in film technology has allowed Gĩkũyũ orality to have a second bite at the cherry. Amidou (2007, p.39) maintains that African cinema is indispensable since its aesthetic, its themes and its symbols are like an influx of new blood. He believes that African cinema brings to light its civilization and heritage which has now been fused and weaved in the language of film. This chapter looks at how cinematography rhymes with traditional Gĩkũyũ orality and how the technique is used to appeal to audiences and to relive cultural heritage imbued in Gĩkũyũ language. The cinematic art and science provide a platform for fusing and portraying deeply engrained cultural nuances within Gĩkũyũ culture.

The central argument here is that selected comedies potentially expose recognizable cultural schemas of the Gĩkũyũ community. The chapter broadly narrows down to how such comedies use cinema's formal elements such as titling, plot, stylistic devices,

mise-en-scène, and comic devices; and symbolic codes embedded within a variety of cinematographic elements such as editing, use of props, sound, lighting, and special effects to achieve specific cultural expressions.

Culture is dynamic in its form. McNaughton (2013, p. 12) clearly suggests that people are remarkably complex beings, effectively suggesting that their way of life is constantly adapting to an ever-changing social eco-system. It is equally noteworthy that such dynamism sustains people's hopes, aspirations, perceptions, and points of view, knowledge, and abilities. For this reason, in the course of my analysis of Gīkūyū comedy films, this argument will become an essential reference point in making meaning of the way these artists of Gīkūyū language comedies deploy filmic symbols to express Gīkūyū cultural essence in the sense of dynamism anticipated by McNaughton (2013). Their approach to cinema as an art, I argue, must also be seen as a science that enables them to express embedded cultural nuances of Gīkūyū culture.

2.2 Cultural Symbols in Diegesis of Gīkūyū Vernacular Language Comedies

Any film can be read as either a culturally derived code being reproduced or a set of unique codes unique to the cinema (Monaco, 2009, p. 197). However, to study language's capability to express culture within cinema poses a significant challenge. Various scholars demonstrate this. They suggest that language is the most unique of abilities and the most complex, effectively laying ground to see language as a useful target in cultural analysis. Definitions of language by various linguists clearly acknowledge this complexity. Sapir (1921, p.8) sees language as a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotion, and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols. In this outline of linguistic analysis, Bloch and Trager (1942, p.5) writes: "a language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group cooperates." Silverman (1983, p.6) adds that language, and by extension, any other object of semiotic inquiry is a "system of signs that express ideas," a network of elements that signify only in relation to each other. Indeed, the sign itself is a relational entity, a composite of two parts that signify not only through those features that make each of them slightly different from any other two parts, but through their association with each other. Chomsky (1957, p.13) in his *Syntactic Structures* defines a language to be "a set of finite or infinite sentences, each finite in length and

constructed out of finite elements.” In an *Essay on Language*, Hall (1968, p. 158) notes that language is an institution whereby humans communicate and interact with each other by means of habitually used oral or auditory symbols. Language expresses identity; enables cooperation and converse freedom and creates a symbolic model of the world in which past and present are carried forward to the future.

Consequently, the study of cultural symbols in Gīkūyū vernacular language comedy films is an attempt to make sense of the way language is used in these films to express discernible cultural nuances. From a hermeneutic standpoint, one would argue that such an interpretation is always complex and subject to cultural-historical perspectives. Eco (1990, 21) suggest as much in the definition of a text as a place where the irreducible polysemy of symbols is reduced because, in a text, symbols are anchored to their context. He further adds that texts are the human way to reduce the world to a manageable format, open to intersubjective interpretation. In the case of film, such interpretation, also referred to as analysis, it is the diegetic narrative which bears these symbols (Janney, 2010). The task of investigating cultural symbols in Gīkūyū vernacular language comedies is thus comparable to textual interpretation of these comic films as cultural text in which cultural messages are encoded. Fantin (2017, p.201) contemplates analyzing to mean the same as ‘to dissolve’ its complexity and decompose it into simpler elements, followed by re-composition, a deductive process that is generally understood as interpretation.

In the context of cinema, interpretation takes place when the denotation meaning, whether obvious as contemplated by Ellis (1981) or complex, is decrypted. For the remainder of this chapter, the study follows this scholarly tradition of filmic interpretation as a process of rendering conspicuousness to intrinsic filmic messages through semiotic analysis. Metz (1974) refers to film semiotic as consisting of three concepts:

...(a) Filmic texts, which may present different degrees of material scope, the privileged one being the single and entire film. (b) textual filmic systems, i.e., filmic systems which correspond to these different texts; and (c) non-textual filmic system (codes) which themselves present different degrees of generality (the distinction between code and sub-codes) and which per the individual case, may be cinematic or extra

cinematic; those which are cinematic constitute, as a block, “cinematic language system. (Metz, 1974, p.150)

The take home from this definition is that semiotics as a critical approach to filmic analysis incorporates film form and narrative structure, technical aspects such as editing, and creative use of verisimilitude, among other filmic devices. The filmic text ought thus to be seen as a composite of the narrative, the filmic conventions, and the meta-textual capabilities such as symbolism used to achieve filmic meaning. To analyze a filmic text is thus to deal with the question of how the detailed analysis of the meaning-making structures in filmic codes can help us learn more about its actual recipient/viewers (Bateman & Wildfeuer 2017, p.20). MacMahon & Quin (1986, p.64) classify filmic codes into four categories namely; film conventions, symbolic, technical, and written codes. The remainder of this section discusses how these elements; filmic conventions, symbolic codes, technical codes, and written codes, have been used in Gīkūyū vernacular language comedies.

2.3 Filmic Conventions and Cultural Rendering in Gīkūyū Vernacular Comedies

As argued by Chandler (2017), just like language, photographs and films are built on conventions. He also suggests that we must learn to 'read' such conventions since they are an important social dimension of semiotics. It is an idea that Sikov (2010) emphasizes the assertion that conventions are closely connected to the audience expectations of a media product, including films. In the study of filmic conventions, I follow the argument made by Abell (2012, p. 78), that different types of conventions may develop as a means of addressing interpretative and evaluative concerns. These include form conventions, narrative or story convention as well as genre conventions, all of which help in revealing and ‘examining the most fundamental cultural assumptions’ (Loukides, 1991, p.2) encoded within Gīkūyū vernacular language comedies.

2.3.1 Formal Conventions

Formal conventions are the certain ways we expect types of media codes to be structured. For instance, an audience expects to have a title of the film at the beginning and then credits at the end. Newspapers will have a masthead, the most important news on the front page and sports news on the back page. Video games usually start with a

tutorial to explain the mechanics of how the game works. This then constitutes the structure or formula of a film through which it communicates with its audience. The next section analyses how titles and credits have been used in the selected comedies as conventional devices, and to demonstrate how they function to express cultural narratives within the films.

2.3.1.1 Titles as Cultural Expressions

There are various approaches to titling strategies in film. Boggs & Petrie (2004) note titles are often ironic, expressing an idea exactly the opposite of the meaning of intended and many titles allude to idiomatic expressions, mythology, Biblical passage, and several other literary works. Their function in film is considerably the same. Krasner (2008 p.18) compares the title of a film with the frame of a painting and avers that it ought to enhance and comment on what is ‘inside’ and at the same time alert and sensitize the viewer to the emotional tones, the story ideas and visual styles found in the film corpus. This view may be interpreted in relation to Staub & Hillyard (1984) who acknowledge that in films, ‘the narrative begins with the credits or “titles”, a listing of the names of those people who helped create the film, with the name of film and any written expository material.’ They term these conventions as being integral part of the entertainment event and that any filmmaker or a playwright can only ignore these maxims at his own peril. The above examples support Rifkin’s (1994, p.34) postulation that contemporary films convey semiotic meaning through, among others, the title and soundtrack. From the foregoing, it is apparent that one can, deduce important aspects of a film’s meaning through the director’s use of titles.

In five of the selected comedies, their titles borrow from Gĩkũyũ proverbs and idiomatic expressions originating from the Gĩkũyũ culture. *Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo*, for instance, is a Gĩkũyũ idiomatic expressions which loosely translates, ‘The voice of man equals to his authority.’ As demonstrated in subsequent arguments, this call to self-assertion as a critical identity of being a man is intrinsic to constructing gender identities and formulating cultural discourses within these films. *Nganga Mbute*, still the title of another comedy film, is an idiomatic expression that loosely translates, “a feather-less guinea fowl.” This idiomatic expression is used to warn someone to mind his or her own business. This title’s meaning is well inculcating within the film narrative where

Wakarĩndĩ's relationship with Kĩmenyi backfires even after killing her own daughter, Mũkindũri. In 'Mũici na Kĩhĩ', the title is borrowed from a proverb that goes, "Mũici na Kĩhĩ akenaga kĩaru." (Whoever commits a crime with uncircumcised boy is only relieved when that boy is circumcised.) This helps to explain why Agĩkũyũ despise uncircumcised men within their ranks as they are seen to be incomplete, unreliable, immature, and therefore unfit to lead in communal affairs. Other titles allude to Gĩkũyũ proverbs and idioms, including Mũthuri nĩ Mĩtugo (Character maketh a man) which chastises Machang'i for betraying the trust of his bosom friend Kĩhoto by befriending his daughter and impregnating her in the process; and **Kĩrĩro Kia Mwana - Mũcinga ũtarĩ bũrũbũrũ**, (The Cry for a Child - A rifle without ammunition), which recounts the travails of Wandahuhu separate with his wife, Wahĩto after accusing her of failing to bear him an heir. Ironically learns later that it is his rifle that is unable to fire live ammunitions.

From the above use of titles as communicative elements within the selected comedy films, one can deduce that the filmmakers' use titles as narrative tools to tease out their intentions and enhance their narratives by invoking popular Gĩkũyũ cultural idioms. In this sense, this study posits the argument that among the directors of these Gĩkũyũ comedy films, this allusion to well-understood cultural idioms is not accidental nor trivial but is built on well-developed strategy to tap cultural idioms as a way of orientating the film viewers about the cultural potency of their films. This of course works in tandem with their use of comedy genre conventions as a tool to enable their messages which would otherwise be offensive if not toned down with comical devices.

2.3.1.2 Comedy Genre Conventions and Cultural Coding

Genre, as used here, refers to the *kind* of narrative being told, that is, the specific category in which one may place such a narrative. These categories include detective, sci-fi, horror, or comedy. In the sense of films as texts, genre defines similarities between texts based on pre-existing conventions of the category to which such a film seems to belong. This points to the common use of tropes, characters, settings, or themes in a medium, and thus determines the expectations of the types of characters, settings, and events we expect to see. Genre conventions are an important way a director can achieve verisimilitude hence influence perception based on conventions associated

with that *kind* of film. To speak of genre conventions, whether formal or thematic, is to invoke these audience expectations, so that in relation to the comedy films which are discussed here, one necessarily treads along established conventions whether the discipline of investigation is film, theatre, literature, or stand-up. Since these categories are also subsets of other wider disciplines, then one may only speak of comedy as a genre only in a restricted sense as comedy is easily synchronized with and inserted in most genre contexts without disturbing their conventions (Neale & Krutnik, 1990, p.10-25).

Even as this study attempts to discuss comedy genre conventions as potentially culturally coded, it is aware of this fluidity in definition as well as application of the term comedy. It is however based on previous attempts to pin down comedy as a genre as seen in the works of King (2002) who defines comedy as a work that is designed in some way to provoke laughter or humour on the part of the viewer, and Grant (2007) who describes comedy as that which is conceived with the intention of eliciting emotional affect upon the viewer through presentation of form and content. In this presentation, the key features and conventions include humour, caricature, story-like narration, and a joking mode of presentation that does not invoke serious emotional distress. The key mode of a comic narrative can be reduced to its coherence or incoherence to normal life. For this reason, use of comedy as the primary genre in Gikūyū comedy films presents several options for decoding the cultural symbols inherent within these films, the most prominent of which is the use of the coherence – incoherence binary.

For simplicity, this study uses Jenkins' (1992, p.3) criterion for analysing coherence in narrative comedy. Jenkin's criterion focuses on narrative integration (is the emphasis on narrative or gags?), character integration (how well do character roles fit the star personae?), expressive coherence (how coherent is the actor's individual performances?), ensemble consistency (is there a homogeneity of performance style among the performers or not?), and consciousness of audience (do performers work as though there is a fourth wall between them and the camera or they play to the audience?). In Jenkins' criterion, one notices an established opposition between anarchistic comedy devoid of coherent performances and do not have homogeneity in

style (where the emphasis is on gags rather than narrative, star persona rather than their characterization); and affirmative (romantic) comedy which emphasises narrative, characters, homogeneity and strives to maintain the fourth wall. The latter is seen as being subversive in the way it questions language, social and cultural norms through a “sense of laughter and anarchy and disruption and harmony, and . . . movement towards harmony, integration and happy ending.” As demonstrated in the following subsections, it is precisely this capability to invoke cultural codes through which makes comedy an effective tool in explicating cultural norms and social conventions in Gīkūyū comedy films.

2.3.1.3 Humour as Cultural Communication

Humour is an exclusively human activity spanning roughly 50,000 years now (McDonald 2012). It is a global human and social phenomenon, usually coded within linguistic communities irrespective of their level of development (Apte 1985). Humour categorized into linguistic and non-linguistic (Goatly 2012, p.193), is an important linguistic tool deployed in these comedies is often used to refer collectively to jokes, witticism funny anecdotes and the like (Latta 1999). It is dependent on a language and cannot be translated, puns for instance, which are dependent on situation and inferencing. Humour stimulates the laughter reflex which is stereotyped, predictable physiological reaction to a stimulus that has activated the mind (Nazareth 2013). It relies on competence in linguistic and cultural nuances. For this reason, it unites people who can understand it while often remaining a challenge in the context of cross-cultural communication. Within any given group, humour can be schematically be represented in relationship to society, culture, situation, type and grammatically (Alexander (1997). This can be represented in a diagram as shown below:

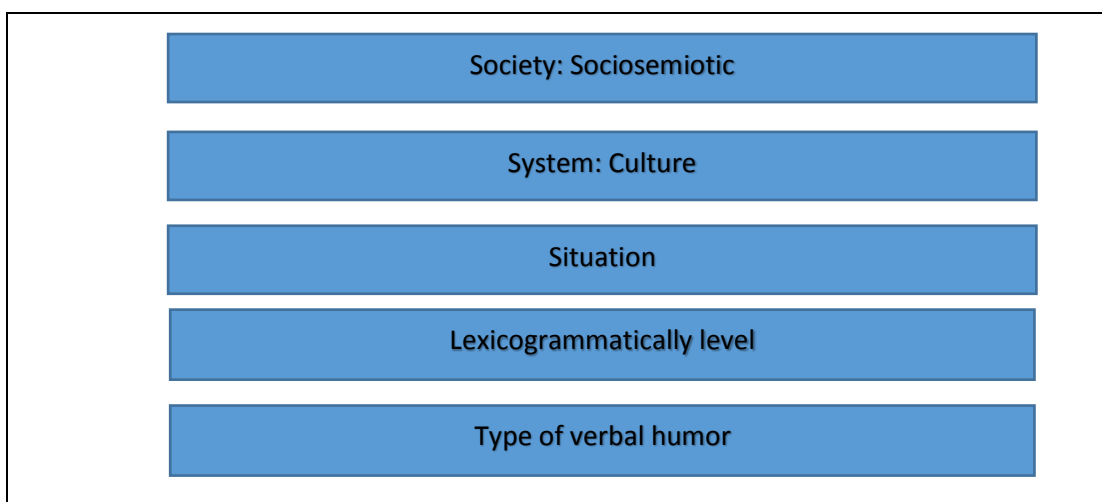


Figure 1. Analysis of verbal Humour in society

From the diagram above, it is noticeable that humour is intrinsically embedded in any cultural group at both macro and micro levels. It functions not only through established socio-semiotic codes in the form of idioms or proverbs, it also relies on well-established cultural contexts, history, situations, figures, and other signifiers appropriated as part of that culture’s social grammar. Irrespective of how one encounters the deployment of such elements to generate humour, the idea of ‘cultural systems’ as the basic building blocks of humorous acts cannot be overstated as it is within this very framework where humour achieves most of its functions. Ross argues that:

It's possible to laugh and admit that, in a sense, it's not funny. There may be a target for the humour - a person, an institution or a set of beliefs - where the purpose is deadly serious. Humour can occur in surprisingly serious contexts, as in sick jokes about death. So, although laughter is not a necessary or enough condition of humour, from a common-sense point of view it's a useful starting point for a definition. Humour may be thought of as a peripheral, leisure activity which lacks the more obvious significance of literature, advertising and the media. Having a good time with friends usually involves having a laugh. (Ross, 1998, p.4)

This argument puts into perspective the ways in which humour circulates within cultures, and the roles it plays during this circulation. The main take home is however to be found in Ross’ (1998, p.4) subsequent question: “But what makes us laugh and why?” This question effectively invites a philosophical answer about why people understand humour the way they do. This can also be rephrased thus: how does humour enter circulation as a discourse with its own fully functional conventions and get

understood as a form of message. The answer is conceivable when we think of humour as a communication activity, a kind of a (cultural) catalyst which is what this study does. Such a view thus steers us to invoke the place of culture in accentuating humour and deploying it to communicate to members of that culture. In discussing humour as a communication tool in Gĩkũyũ comedy cinema, this study examines the process in which the characters elicit the audience's laughter and illustrates the place of such humour not only in aiding conversation between the characters by virtue of its capacity to generate pleasure (Robinson 1981) but more importantly as a vehicle of elucidating Gĩkũyũ cultural norms as it bears the capacity to portray social, psychological, cognitive processes, cultural norms and value judgment. Indeed, what is considered humorous in one context, heavily relies on these mechanisms of decoding language contextually, which is the task undertaken in the analysis of the various comedy films.

For instance, when Kĩhoto informs Machang'i in **Mũthuri nĩ Mĩtugo** that he intends to jump-start his pork business in Gĩthũrai suburban area of Nairobi, this prompts Machang'i to enquire how the business is fairing, to which he responds that it is yet to pick up. Machang'i wants to know his strategies, including communication methods he uses to woo customers. He informs Machang'i that he uses the phrase Nguruwe...nyama ya nguruwe iliyo fresh. Which translates "fresh pork." Machang'i informs him that although it may sound funny, this may be considered offensive, especially by potential customers belonging to Islamic faith. He is advised to use the euphemistic term, Mbuzi Ulaya, which means a European goat. He later admits that the use of the term European goat had tremendous result for his business.

In **Mũici na Kĩhĩ**, Gĩthendũ makes a startling statement when he asks Wandahuhu, Nduiguaga minoga? (Don't you feel tired?) In this context, Gĩthendũ is asking Wandahuhu if his foreskin does not tire him as if it is such a big (cultural) load that he must carry around. He makes these remarks when Wandahuhu confides in him that he is yet to be circumcised. In this case, humor is tactfully deployed to express the cultural valence of (lack of) initiation to a person of Wandahuhu's stature (an elderly man) and how 'heavily' this is taken by society.

In the same comedy, Wandahuhu unwittingly tells his wife *Niaramenyaga ningurwara* (He knew that I will fall sick) after Gathoroko asks him who told Gĩthendũ that Wandahuhu is sick. Of course, this is a lie tactfully used to bait Gathoroko who hastily concedes thus conferring upon the (rather serious situation of sickness) an ambience of humour. In **Mũici na Kĩhũ II** Chief Kanyũtũ refers to *Nyama ino ya thirikari* – when referring to the buttocks as government’s flesh. The Chief, a representative of government authority, evokes the memories Gĩkũyũ community suffered at the hands of colonialists when the phrase *Nyama ya thirikari* is used whenever settlers wanted to justify their cruel battering of the Africans. This is particularly the case with Africans who worked in the vast plantations, the so-called White Highlands in Central Kenya. This usage of the phrase and its connotation of exploitative and or cruel authority among the Agĩkũyũ is confirmed during the FGDs by elders.

In **Mũici na kĩhũ II**, Wandahuhu uses humour to repel his wives, Ebethi and Nyakĩrata, when they stumble on him in the bush. “*Nikii inyue.... kai mutarona ni ndirathie kahinda*” (‘Can’t you see I am relieving myself,’) In actual sense, Wandahuhu pretends to be relieving himself to hide the bag which he believes contains two million shillings. When he gets home, he digs a small hole in his garden and buries the bag inside the hole and when the chickens start scratching the ground near the spot where he has hidden his ‘loot’ he chases them away saying “*Ici nguku ni ikuhumburia muhuko wakwa*” (‘These chickens will expose my bag (of goodies).’)

In **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo**, Machang’i shows reservation towards polygamy immediately after marrying Warigia when he asks a rhetoric question, “*Kai arume aria maguraga atumia atano ri, kai maari na ngukũ kĩongo*” (‘Did they have cockerels inside their heads?’) This may be interpreted to mean that those men who marry five wives have a serious problem. On another occasion, Machang’i makes his own inversion of Gĩkũyũ idiomatic expression when he says, “*Mũndũ wa ngai ni kwigurukia, na wa ngoma ni kwiitaria*” (‘A godly person speaks and acts like a mad man, an evil person speaks his mind.’) The elders participating in FGDs explained that in real Gĩkũyũ language, this expression goes, “*Mũndũ wa Ngai ni kwiitaria*,” (‘A godly person always speaks up his mind.’), adding that the part about the devil does not exist.

By inventing this version of the idiom, Machang’i creates a new meaning; that an evil person’s activities are never brought to the open even though he may speak.

Similarly, when Machang’i is pleading with his wife, Warigia, to give him some money to buy cigarettes, he frames his request thus *“Ona ti kaba ungurire igiri iria cia wana iria cia gitumumu ii rooster o mwena uria ukamundia bata ni igue kanua,”* (‘You could even buy for me two cigarettes for the blind, Rooster. The ones without a butt. This is because, one can light it from either side.’) In another instance, Machang’i complains to his wife that he is unable to wash all clothes since some cloths cannot be cleaned: *“Ingi iri ho ona ngoma angineo itingithera”* (‘Even the devil himself is unable to accomplish such a mission’), a euphemism referring to the grime on his wife Warigia’s inner wares. Still applying idioms, Machang’i humorously makes comparison between his wife Warigia and Kĩere’s wife when he wonders how Kĩere could exert authority over his wife, who is huge like a bush, yet Machang’i is unable to control his skinny and petit wife, who appears to have swallowed live leeches in her stomach, *“Mutumia waku ahana iyinga na wakwa ni uria uhanaga ta ameririe thambara.”* In this case, the reference to leeches is not only a humorous way to compare the character of the two wives but derives from a popular believe that skinny women are both quarrelsome and strange.



Figure 2. Machang’i’s skinny wife, Warigia (Mūrūthi, 2002) (Source – Screen Frame).

In this image, we see Warigia inside their kitchen house constructed from pieces of timber. She is positioned at the middle of the screen, thereby emphasizing her character over the rest of the space. Apart from two cooking pans, the two containers beside her (one of which is partially concealed), and the fireplace where she is seen building a

fire, the rest of the frame has no significant signification. It is noticeable that the shot is framed from a higher elevation, which symbolizes her lower stature. One may thus argue that the shot, and the scene to which it is a part, uses filmic elements to elicit crucial cultural nuances associated with womanhood in her community. On one hand, the choice of kitchen as the setting suggests the embeddedness of women in the domestic space where they are associated with cooking and other household chores. On the other hand, when read in tandem with the narrative in which this shot appears, one sees the framing as a comic strategy to caricature not only the female character, but to also aggravate the sense of demeaning associated with her husband playing the same role (which is what he does). One sees in this shot, then, the attempt to visualize the idea of domestic space as anti-masculinity which is essentially the point being pursued by representing Machang'i as a man confined to household chores. Consequently, the shot also reveals that star persona is pre-eminently elevated above other characters, so that Warigia here is a placeholder not of the social norms associated with femininity and masculinity, but of her husband, the star persona in this film.

One may also argue that despite being termed as a simplistic attempt to poke fun at individuals who are unable to cope with the vast social changes taking place around them (Mungai 2011), the strategies used in these films to accommodate cultural nuances are a serious creative leap towards cultural expression through comedy. Mungai (2011) claim that Kĩhenjo's male actors clearly seem to adopt the presentation style popularised by Cameroon's Zangalewa Dancers and that, 'they cut the air of buffoons, which is an interesting contradiction given that universally in local cultures old men are ordinarily expected to have dignified deportment (Mungai, 2011 p.57)' is objectionable in as far as comedy as expressive genre is concerned. The characters in these comedies are not obligated to dress as per the cultural conventions. The adoption and shedding off traditional costumes by the characters and use of haphazard make up point towards cultural dynamism and progressive thinking about the way Gĩkũyũ culture is jostling for its space in the fast-changing environment.

In this sense, the comedies can address cultural disruptions such as when men are seen doing women chores (in **Mũndũrũme ni Mũgambo**, for instance, Machang'i is seen carrying baby on his back, fetching water from a nearby stream as well as washing

clothes against customary dictates) and thus explicate the social challenges occasioned by these disruptions. It is on this basis that this study argues that these filmmakers use comedy genre to question, laugh at, mock, and provide alternative point of view and successfully recreate cultural norms through creative use of costumes, make up, and gags. Collectively, these comedies attempt to refract the numerous changes taking place among Agĩkũyũ community.

2.3.2 Narrative Codes as Cultural Symbols

A narrative is an account of a string of events occurring in space and time. It may be transmitted through oral or written language; through static or moving images, through gestures and through an organised mixture of all these substances. There is narrative in myth, legend, fables, fairy tales, novellas, novels, history, novel, epos, tragedy, drama, comedy, pantomime, pictures, vintage, comics, events, and conversation. In these almost infinite forms, narrative always exists, in all corners of the earth, in all societies. Narrative begins with the history of humanity (Barthes 1977, p.79).

From Barthes' argument, narration can be termed as a presentation of ordered series of events which are connected by the logic and effect in narrative films, of which these comedies conform; they generally focus on human characters and their struggles. These characters possess traits, face conflicts, perform actions, and undergo changes that enable or hinder their pursuit of a specific goal (Pramaggiore 2006). These two views can be applied to the interpretation of texts.

Greimas (1976), posits that every text is narrative, no matter which genre it belongs to, because language is narrative. Greimas describes the different layers of his sense generation model when he says that everything begins with a configuration of values connected step by step with narrative roles, themes, and figures. The main way to link things and facts through a narrative pattern is declaring the existence of some cause – effect logics. Jenkins (1992) terms this structure as a sequence consisting of exposition, complication, resolutions and usually a happy conclusion. According to Levi Straus, narration is simply a way to link signs in patterns, creating an order in what he defines as the “grammar” or semiotic of a story. Since language is one of the most important tools for our cognitive sensibility, narration is very important for the understanding of

sociosemiotics because it contributes to our socially shared vision of reality. This is the starting point from which this subsection discusses filmic narrative codes as cultural symbols.

Rabiger (2003 p.193) argues that “film language is a complex interplay of moving images accompanied by the infinite modifiers of words, symbols, sounds, colour, movement, and music.” This assertion is important here because it lays the foundation for understanding how these elements are used to create narrative codes within the comedy films. Every film story contains these (narrative) elements whose organization comprises its form. The producer must consider these elements when making cinematic choices to present his or her story, to engage the minds and emotions of the audience, and to realize the vision underlying the film. Because it is based on the filmmaker’s preferences, a finished film can be said to display distinctive choices and narrative patterns being manifested through such elements. In the following sections, this study gives brief overview of the way the various comedy films; Wandahuhu’s (2008) **Kĩĩro Kĩa Mwana** and Wandahuhu’s (2004) **Mũicĩ na Kĩhũ**; Machang’i’s (2008) **Mũthuri nĩ Mĩtugo** and Machang’i’s (2002) **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo**; Kĩhenjo’s (2005) **Mũtikũnyarira** and **Nganga Mbute**, use narrative elements and codes.

2.3.2.1 Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo

This comedy film is built around the complex power play between sexes and the tensions arising from contravention of cultural conventions. The comedy chronicles social codes that runs deep at individual and collective psyche of Gĩkũyũ community members. As title, **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo** (assertiveness makes a man) implies, Gĩkũyũ culture places great value on patriarchal hegemony. The word ‘patriarchy’ literally means the rule of the father or the ‘patriarch’ and is originally used to describe a ‘male-dominated family’. The household of the patriarch typically included women, junior men, children, slaves, and domestic servants all under the rule of this dominant male. In contemporary times, it is used generally refer to the “power relationships by which men dominate women, and to portray a system whereby women are kept subordinate in a number of ways (Bhasin 2006, p.3).” This comedy film thus uses this title as a signifier of this cultural hegemonic order that expects men to rule over their women. It opens with a scene in which Machang’i falls in love with Warigia, and in the

same sequence, they wed in a colourful ceremony. Soon after, Warigia relegates Machang'i to a village buffoon by forcing him to do domestic chores such as cleaning, cooking, taking care of his son, fetching water among other roles which are traditionally reserved for women. The significance of such an opening action, when contextualized in the patriarchal hegemony anticipated in the title, triggers a disruption of cultural order thus precipitating tension not just between the dominating wife and the subordinate wife, but more so between the cultural norms which the film narrative addresses.

This is evident when he visits his friend Kĩere (Ithe wa Kĩng'ori) in the next scene. In this scene, we see Kĩere's unfettered powers over his wife, Warũkũngũ (Nyina wa Kĩng'ori), as he orders her around and commands her to submission. Clearly, from a semiotic perspective, the use of this montage structure where Machang'i's subordination by wife is juxtaposed with Kĩere's overwhelming authority utilizes the contrast between the two families to engage with cultural patriarchal discourse. Indeed, the primary role of Kĩere here is to provide a reference point for this cultural hegemonic norm, so that when he counsels Machang'i to reassert his manly authority and not hesitate to apply force and coercion when dealing with his wife to regain his authority over his nagging wife, he is simply outlining the cultural schema of patriarchy in the Gĩkũyũ community. Almost predictably, this film ends with Machang'i regaining full control over his wife after following Kĩere's advise.

The foregoing discussion thus answers the question; how comedy films parade numerous codes including intrinsic consciousness such as behavioural (roles), interpretative, ideological, verbal (teknonymy, naming), and bodily (ngoi, kĩondo) codes; and material expressions such as commodity (goat, house) to explicate implicit and explicit social stratification which is largely informed by cultural schema. Through these codes, the roles, place and position of man and woman in social set up (embodied by the marriage institution) is explored extensively.

2.3.2.2 Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo (2)

The story in this film is a continuation of the previous episode, **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo**. The story opens with Wanyũrũ, Machang'i's new wife whom he married

after divorcing Warigia. Wanyūrū and Machang’i are juxtaposed with another couple, Kīhoto and Warūkūngū. Using character dialogue, we learn that Machang’i and Wanyūrū are planning to have a church wedding in few days’ time. On this material day, his former wife Warigia storms the wedding party and scuttles the wedding plans. Thereafter, Warigia returns to her former home and overshadows Machang’i’s authority by subduing him. Warigia and Wanyūrū, now co-wives, turn against each other and establish routine quarrels. Despite the pressure from Warigia, Wanyūrū avows not to leave Machang’i’s home, allegorically likening their husband to a maize-cob: “We are both threshing and winnowing maize seed from the cob, let the one who finally ends up with a maize cob stays with him”, she quips.

This allegory here fulfils two objectives. The first is that it creates comic relief by turning a rather serious and potentially stressful situation into a subject of laughter. As co-wives, Warigia and Wanyūrū are aware of the implicit competition to stay married and win the attention of the husband. Their quarrels attest to such duels and serve to reinforce their sense of conviction in remaining relevant in the marriage. It therefore follows that, necessarily, they see themselves as participants in a match to claim as much territory in the relationship as possible, which justifies the film’s narrative position that Warigia had bewitched Machang’i who seems to be under a very strong spell which reduced him into a zombie.

The second objective is that the allegory raises the history of power hegemony in the Gīkūyū community by invoking the colonial oppression which deprived the community of their farming land. The maize cob here is a strong signifier of the connectedness between agriculture and power tussles in this community as the colonialists primarily took away this land (implicitly conveyed in Wanyūrū’s reference to seeds), so that Machang’i in this context becomes a symbol of deprivation. As we subsequently see Warigia returning to a witchdoctor to receive a magic potion that could reverse Machang’i’s condition, only for the love potion to work against her when she shakes Kīhoto’s hands instead of Machang’i’s. Thereafter, after Warigia and Kīhoto become confused, Wanyūrū and Machang’i enjoy their matrimonial life. Clearly, the symbolism sought through these actions is to elicit the sense in which the Kikuyu’s became hypnotized by the colonialists and had to struggle with their enslavement (as colonial

zombies) and could only reclaim better life when the colonial culture imploded leading to struggle for independence. The use of the institution of marriage among the Agĩkũyũ people as a raw material for serious literal and allegorical narration renders this sequel to **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo** a rich cultural medium. Through Machang’i travails, we learn the importance of a man’s authority in a Gĩkũyũ household, which essentially protects patriarchy against encroachment by females.

2.3.2.3 Mũthuri nĩ Mĩtugo

Set in a modern Gĩkũyũ rural homestead, this comedy film narrates about a domestic conflict after Machang’i impregnates his house help, Kanyanya. His adversaries are his wife, Wanyũrũ, and Kanyanya’ s father, Kĩhoto. The film exposes Kĩhoto’s folly of going against traditional rules that forbade close interaction between a father and a daughter. It happens that Kĩhoto makes several trips to Machang’i’s home while the Machang’i and his wife are away, only for him and his daughter to jointly steal from Machang’i’s household.

The comedy exposes a myriad of changes taking place among the Agĩkũyũ people. The significance of ‘*nja*’ as a cultural symbol and a tool for self-expression is self-evident. Most of the dialogue between characters take place in this cultural space. The comedy also portrays the different tiers of individual, social, and cultural spaces. Failure to adhere, abide and respect codes regulating these spaces may lead to individual meltdown, social breakdown, disruptions, and misunderstandings. This is well portrayed by Machang’i’s standing in the diegetic society after impregnating Kanyanya, Kĩhoto’s failed marriage and his failure to observe acceptable social distance with his daughter that eventually makes her a social truant. The consequence is the eventual collapse of Machang’i’s marriage due to his philandering ways.

2.3.2.4 Mũici na Kĩhĩ Part 1 (2005)-Narrative Summary

Mũici na Kĩhĩ features Wandahuhu, Gĩthendũ, Gathoroko as the central characters. The comedy is about Wandahuhu’s delayed circumcision, here used as a social code that helps to give meaning within a social and cultural context (Chandler 2017). In this film, circumcision features as a ritual associated with behavioural codes. It further gives identity and situate individuals within social strata. By failing to get circumcised,

Wandahuhu goes against the dictates of Gĩkũyũ way of life, setting stage for conflict with his wife, Gathoroko, who takes advantage of his situation to harass and blackmail him. Wandahuhu is mortally afraid that she might expose to the community that he is a *kĩhĩĩ* (uncircumcised man), which could earn him scorn, social stigma and ridicule from the villagers.

Consequently, he feels dejected, unwanted, and despicable. Unable to continue being afflicted by his interminable psychosomatic trauma linked to his condition, he opts to confide his ordeal to his friend, Gĩthendũ. Following his confession, the duo hatches a plan to have him secretly circumcised. Wandahuhu feigns sickness and convinces his wife that Gĩthendũ is the right person to take him to the hospital. When he faces the knife, Gathoroko takes care of him after Gĩthendũ informs her that his doctor recommended a home rest and urged him to take *njũgũ* (special cultural beans) diet during this period of indisposition. Little did she know that she is performing what is traditionally known as '*Kũhiohĩria*' (nursing an initiate). This is a traditional role that initiate's mother nurses her son until her manly wound heals. *Njũgũ* signifies manhood, rebirth, virility, and future. In this case, these beans are coded messages only decoded in the last scene after the healing period is over when Wandahuhu confronts Gathoroko in a bid to regain his lost masculinity when Gathoroko reveals the highly guarded secret that her husband is a '*kĩhĩĩ*.' When the crowd gathers, Wandahuhu proves his wife wrong when he invites villagers to validate his wife's claims. They discover that Wandahuhu is circumcised and Gathoroko finds herself on the receiving end. She is utterly embarrassed as she tries to prove otherwise. She takes to her heels when people demand to know whether she is circumcised or not. It is only after this that Wandahuhu regains full control over his wife and symbolically attains his manly status, a '*Mũthuri*' in the community as dictated by social and cultural norms. The word '*Mũthuri*' is semiotically equivalent to strength, power, forbearance, fortitude and similar adjectives, and contrasts '*kĩhĩĩ*' which bears attributes of shame and immaturity.

Through this display of circumcision as a cultural code, the comedy unwraps salient semantic features and cultural themes including traditional herbal medicine, the significance and cultural meaning of male circumcision, traditional cuisine, and gender relations. The comedy also highlights the meanings and social significance of Gĩkũyũ

cuisines. One of the key cultural beans that is mentioned here is *njũgũ* and its semiotic significance during the rites of passage. The comedy unpacks how certain words like ‘*kĩhĩĩ*’ convey cultural connotations and denotations. This word is for instance, a social marker demarcating adulthood and childhood, maturity, and childishness. At the same time, it marks the identities of belonging and ostracizing among community members. These semiotic markers are discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

2.3.2.5 Mũici na Kĩhĩĩ part 2

This comedy features Wandahuhu, Gĩthendũ, Ebethi, Nyakĩrata and Kanyũtũ, a local Chief. We learn that Wandahuhu is now married to Ebethi after divorcing Gathoroko, possibly due to public spat occasioned by Gathoroko’s decision to expose him to the community. The scene opens with Ebethi tending her crops and Wandahuhu welcoming his friend, Gĩthendũ to his homestead. Once settled on their seats, Gĩthendũ informs Wandahuhu of ‘hot news’ relating to an armed robbery incidence at Farmers’ Cooperative Bank. It is alleged that about two million Kenya Shillings is stolen.

Gĩthendũ informs Wandahuhu that the loot, plus a firearm, are hidden in a nearby bush. In subsequent scene we see a young man trailing a mother. He snatches her bag and runs into a nearby bush. Upon inspecting the bag, he finds that it contains soiled nappies and abandons it. Later, we hear Wandahuhu complaining that he is suffering from erectile dysfunction and urges Gĩthendũ to recommend to him the most appropriate herbal remedy to rectify his embarrassing condition. Gĩthendũ advises him to visit the bush and look for herb that resembles ‘*Mũtamaiyũ*,’ or *Olea European*/Wild olive. When he goes to the woods, he stumbles upon a bag that he misconstrues to be the one containing the stolen loot. As he is contemplating on what to do, his wife Ebethi and Nyakĩrata, who have been in the woods fetching firewood, appear. He is forced to pretend that he is answering a long call of nature to wad them off from his ‘fortune’.

Later, he carries the bag and buries it within the vicinity of his homestead, believing that it contains the stolen money. As he does this, his wife is secretly monitoring his every move. Chief Kanyũtũ comes calling and wonders why Wandahuhu and his wife did not appreciate his intervention after he ruled in their favour in a dispute pitting them and their neighbour, Wathende. When he is asked why, Wandahuhu thinks that the

Chief is talking about his ‘fortune’. Perplexed, he promises to surrender *Mūcinga* (firearm) to authorities. The conversation is laced with dramatic irony prompting Chief Kanyūtū to seek further clarifications from Wandahuhu. The Chief reminds him that he is refereeing to his case with Wathende. Wandahuhu tries to regain his composure and says he is talking about *Mbata Mūcinga* (turkey) and not a rifle.

Later, Wandahuhu’s wife takes the ‘fortune’ and replaces it with potatoes wrapped in a polythene bag. Not knowing what his wife had done, Wandahuhu approaches Gīthendū and urges him to accompany him to his home to disclose something important. He gets bewildered after digging up his ‘fortune’ only to find a paper bag full of potatoes. This enrages Gīthendū who thinks that Wandahuhu has gone mad. He later confronts his wife and a scuffle ensues which attracts the attention of Chief Kanyūtū. Ebethi explains to Kanyūtū the reason behind their fight.

The unfolding actions and activities in this comedy point out the salient behavioural codes that inform and dictate material hegemony in contemporary Gīkūyū life. Semiotically money is presented in this comedy as a symbolic path towards social power, riches, honour, respect, and influence. When Wandahuhu takes his ‘fortune’ he plans to become rich through *matatu* business. On her part, Ebethi hatches a plan of taking the ‘fortune’ and sharing it with her brother. Kanyūtū pretends to take the loot to the bank but in actual sense, his plans were to use his supposedly found fortune for his personal aggrandisement. The narration helps to depict salient themes, images and cultural symbols that run through this comedy. Some of thematic concerns that have featured prominently in this comedy include: money-based economy, greed, exercise of control, gender relations, circumcision, and social stratification. These thematic concerns are discussed at length in the fifth chapter.

2.3.2.6 Kīrīro Kīa Mwana (2004)

This comedy features Wandahuhu (the main character) and his wife Wahīto, Gīthendū and his daughter Flava, Wandahuhu’s short-lived girlfriend Veronike, Gīkaru the real father of Veronike’s child and Nyakīrata and her daughter Agi. The story revolves around theme of childlessness (and hence barrenness) after Wandahuhu and his wife, Wahīto, bear no child for over ten years. Wandahuhu despises Wahīto terming her

barren. He accuses her of failing to bear him a child. When his friend Gĩthendũ is invited to reconcile the couple, Wandahuhu points out that the problem is with his wife, given that his girlfriend is expecting his own child. This new revelation prompts the two to part ways. Wandahuhu relocates to Veronica's house while Gĩthendũ, a widower, takes Wahĩto as his second wife. After Veronike delivers a baby boy, his boyfriend Gĩkaru appears and claims paternity rights. His claim is confirmed by Veronike. This leaves Wandahuhu confused and dejected. When he visits a fertility clinic, he is informed that he has low sperm count and is unable to impregnate a woman without technical assistance. The devastating news makes him to go back to Wahĩto only to realize that Wahĩto has since settled down with Gĩthendũ and is expecting his baby. In this film, barrenness becomes the semiotic code for debating masculinity and femininity.

2.3.2.7 Nganga Mbute

The comedy's story line revolves around Kĩhenjo, his sister Wakarĩndĩ, his niece Mũkindũri, Kĩhenjo's friend Mũkũngũgũ and Wakarĩndĩ's boyfriend Kĩmenyi. When Wakarĩndĩ short-lived marriage ends, she takes her child Wakarĩndĩ to live with her ageing parents and set forth to the city in search of a better life where she eventually meets a wealthy boyfriend and they start cohabiting. Her parents pass on, the responsibility of taking care of her daughter is bestowed on his brother, Kĩhenjo. Kĩhenjo is unsettled because of his sister's behaviour of neglecting her daughter. When she visits the village, she lies to all that she is serving as a police officer in the city. Kĩhenjo puts pressure on her sister to take her daughter along.

However, Wakarĩndĩ prevails upon Kĩhenjo to continue taking care of her and promises to give him cash reward. When Kĩhenjo does not budge, she promises him that she is ready to set up animal feed business or buy him a lorry to enable him carry transport business. Kĩhenjo hears none of this. Wakarĩndĩ agrees to come for her daughter in one week's time. Back in the city, Wakarĩndĩ tests her boyfriend resolve, by sharing an allegory of man who discovered that his girlfriend is a mother after spending a considerable time with her. Kĩmenyi does not mince his words. He notes that he will not allow that to happen in his home. Confused and disoriented, Wakarĩndĩ kills her daughter and dumps the body in a nearby bush. Her heinous crime is soon discovered and his brother and Mũkũngũgũ confront her in front of her husband, Kĩmenyi. The

comedy ends as the protagonists agree to involve the police to deal with the matter within confines of legal framework.

2.3.2.8 Mūtikūnyarira

The comedy revolves around Kīhenjo's misfortunes. He is unemployed and is grappling with many challenges notwithstanding a myriad of responsibilities that he is expected to fulfil for his family. His immediate family include his wife, Magīrī and his only son, Karūrūma. He is invited for a job interview for a position of a guard in local business establishment. To ensure he succeeds in the upcoming interview, he secures the services of village mate (former security man) who agrees to give train him on basic paramilitary drills. His troubles escalate when he is confronted by thugs and loses his bicycle and some cash. This motivates him to acquire some martial arts skills for self-defence. When he is attacked next, he punishes his detractors through his newly acquired martial arts skills. He is also involved in running battles with the police.

2.3.3 Symbolic Codes: Tracing Cultural Nuances and Meanings

Symbolic codes are social in nature. What this means is that these codes live outside the media product themselves but would be understood in similar ways in the diegetic life of the audience. Symbolic codes include: setting, mise-en-scène, acting and colour. Each of these elements are discussed in detail in this section.

2.3.3.1 Mise-en-scène: Panoramic View of Set Elements

Mise en scène is a French term that translates to 'place on stage.' Paris (2013, p.34) defines it as the activity that consists of gathering, in a time and a playing space, several elements of stage construal of filmic or dramatic works. He adds that it is the complex of movement gesture, the coordination of physiognomies, voices, and silences. Concisely, it is totality of the stage spectacle emanating from a single thought which conceives, regulates, and harmonises. Mise-en-scène as a potent film element is supported by Sikov (2010, p. 15) who defines it as the totality of expressive content within the image. Lacey (2016, p.3) terms it as consisting of production design such as sets, props and costumes; colour which is present in both production design and lightening; actors, including performances as well as casting; make-ups and movements; diegetic sounds, and framing.

Buckland (1998) posits that the *mise-en-scène* originated from theatre, where it designates everything that appears on the stage-set design, lighting, and character movement. He argues that in film studies, *mise-en-scène* has vague meaning: it is either used in a very broad way to mean the filmed events together with the way those events are filmed, or it is used in a narrower sense to designate the filmed events. Bordwell and Thompson (2008, p.112) agree that the term is also used to signify director's control over what happens in the film frame. Barsam (2004, p.92) refers to it as a term that represents to the overall look and feel of a movie -the sum of everything the audience sees, hears, and experiences while viewing a film.

Film enthusiasts and scholars have for decades recognised the potency of *mise-en-scène* in the film production. Cinema and TV codes are created within an area bounded by the edges of a screen. By controlling what objects and action are in this frame, a film director creates what is called *mise en scène*. Asking questions such as 'who, what and where' of the characters and objects and their relative positions, expressions, appearance, costume, make-up, scenery, props, lighting, sounds, etc. in a *mise en scène* has helped to analyse *mis-en-scene* and cultural symbols in these comedies. By exploiting these elements, a film director stages the event for the camera to provide his audience with vivid, sharp memories. It is therefore the most familiar technique of all the cinema techniques.

An analysis of selected Gikūyū vernacular comedy films reveals that although the directors of these films have utilised *mise-en-scène* elements (setting, lighting, costume and make up, and characters movement). This is highlighted in the following section. In the preceding section, each of *mise-en-scène* elements namely; setting, costume, properties, editing, make-ups, lighting, cinematography, sound, and camera angles is discussed in detail and its utilisation in the comedy films.

2.3.3.2 Comedies' Setting: Potency of *Nja* in Giving Meaning to Gikūyū Gender Relations

Setting is one of the most important visual features of a film. Lacey (2016, p.67) refers to setting as the loosest of the repertoire of *mise-en-scène* elements due to its specific nature and that in some works it ranges from the present through to a distant future.

Chee & Lim (2015, p.8) agree with Lacey, but add that a setting gives us important information about and affects our understanding of characters and the world they inhabit.

They expand this definition to include a real space *orb locale*, which gives audiences a frame of reference for the film's diegesis and its narrative. They warn that the design of the setting can also create views of that space that may differ from, or reinforce prior, knowledge or impressions of that space to which it refers. On his part, Lefebvre (2006, p.17) has different opinion on what constitutes a setting. He suggests that every unit of meaning in film whether action or a view of an object implies a setting. He insists that setting is devoid of fixed boundaries; or at least, any such boundaries are indefinitely divisible.

Although setting provides a container for dramatic action, its significance goes beyond that and invites the filmmaker to control its various aspects artistically. Interestingly, almost all the selected films: Machang's (Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo, Mũthuri nĩ Mĩtugo); Kĩhenjo's (Nganga Mbuta & Mũtikũnyarira) and Wandahuhu's (Mũici na Kĩhũ & Kĩrĩro kĩa Mwana) are set in rural areas but with some scenes set in urban areas. Higson (2006, p.240) describes rural setting as being relative neutral and insignificant. The choice of setting for the Gĩkũyũ vernacular comedies analysed in this study may have been motivated by the fact that, in rural Gĩkũyũ country, the language of choice is Gĩkũyũ. As maintained by Abdulaziz (1982), Agĩkũyũ have natural affinity to their language: In a Kikuyu village, only seven miles from multi-ethnic Nairobi and on the main road, 'at home despite the proximity to Nairobi, the children know no other language before school [except kikuyu] ... And at the marketplace, since the buyers and sellers are almost wholly Kikuyu, the language used is Kikuyu (Abdulaziz, 1982, p. 105). The choice of Agĩkũyũ's country rural setting, specifically Gĩkũyũ peasant homesteads shown with no or little improvisations, serves to mediate and exploit settings and the details of a rural setting to fill out the diegesis, creating a relative realistic space in which the narrative can happen (Higson, 2006).

Jiwaji (2012) observes that issues of cost are also applied when selecting filming setting and locations. He notes that Riverwood setting exploits the benefits of vicinity in selecting locations, which offers free popularization of a commercial venue and ropes in residential premises from the producer, his friends, and relatives. This type of setting helps to depict a proper representation of a modern Gĩkũyũ homestead. On the authority of Routledge & Routledge (1968), Leakey (1977) and Kamenju (2013) a Gĩkũyũ traditional homestead consisted of several structures. There is Nyũmba, a woman's house which contained several sections such as (*ũrĩrĩ*, woman's bedroom; *kĩrĩrĩ*, girl's bedroom; *kwerũ* served as both boys' bedroom and normal goats pen; *gĩcegũ* special pen for sacrificial lambs; *Gaturi-ini* or *thegi*, corner storage space). Another structure is a *Thingira* (man's hut). Forde, Smith & Westermann (1966) describes it as patriarchal house in the homestead in which husband slept whilst his wife is breastfeeding. Karanja (2003) calls it a man's abode: "As head of the home, a man had his own hut known as Thingira where he stayed and slept, he would go to his wives' huts when necessary. The wives would consult and feed him in turn (Karanja, 2003, p.10)." Other features include: an external space (*nja*); *Ikũmbi* (external granary); *Kiugũ* (cows pen); nearby bush and a river.

Another important component comprised a traditional Gĩkũyũ open fireplace called *boi-ini*. It is here that he lit a bonfire every night and together with his male folks spent most of their time before retiring to bed. It is here that a man passed on the old traditions, stories, secrets and tribal lore to his sons and offspring. However, as Kamenju (2003) notes Gĩkũyũ traditional home has transformed although it still retains some traditional aspects. He claims that *Thingira* and *Nyũmba* have been amalgamated to form a main house, while an external kitchen has remained as a constant feature in most Gĩkũyũ homes. There have been additions too in a form of a *kĩoro*, a pit latrine. Other aspects that still mimics traditional Gĩkũyũ architecture remain, namely: *Kiugũ*, a cattle or goat's pen, external space (*nja*), external granary, a public road, a bush, and a river. It is instructive to note that *nja* is an important aspect of a Gĩkũyũ household. The place is kept of bare earth and cleanly swept daily. It is here that woman executed her day to day domestic chores, meeting her women folk. It acted as a platform for sharing village gossips, sharing a woman's tribulations with her women folk, a place of woman power as opposed to *boi-ini*, which is exclusively a man's affair.

Suffice to say, the comedies under review are in quasi-modernized homesteads, thus visually accounting for the social changes taking place among the Agĩkũyũ. They have done away with traditional architecture and adopted a new architecture that fits well with ever changing cultural landscapes. Interestingly, very little action happens inside the house save for some scenes in **Kĩrĩro kĩa Mwana**, much of scenes in other comedies take place in *nja* (an open space outside the main house). In traditional sense, *nja* is a preserve of womenfolk. It served as a catalyst for private discourses among the women folk, as a conveyor of propagating village gossips, and a place for fermenting mutual suspicion. This is a view that is expressed by three old men who, participated in a FGDs. The *nja* also served as symbol for passing and sharing verbal codes, behavioural codes and understanding socially sanctioned codes.

A focused analysis of the comedies shows that *boi-ini* and *nja* have indeed been fused together to form a new *nja* that serves both men and women interests. It is here that major narrations, conflict development, character development and monologue take place. Given its significance in Gĩkũyũ traditional setting, *nja* as a setting helps to weave, deconstruct, and reconstruct events in a way that communicates to a Gĩkũyũ audience with aura of verisimilitude and reality. For instance, in **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo** part 1 and 2, Machang’i world revolves around his *nja* (homestead), with very few scenes shot in other locations. This uses the aesthetics of this exterior space as raw materials for a variety of actions. For example, Machang’i is forced by his wife Warigia to carry out feminine duties such as washing clothes, taking care of his child (Kababa), fetching water and other domestic chores within the precincts of the *nja* of his house.



Figure 3: A Screenshot from Mũthuri nĩ Mĩtũgo showing Machang’i (left) his wife and Kĩhoto (right) in animated conversation outside Machang’i’s homestead (*nja*). A cow pen is the background (Mũrũthi, 2008). (Source – Screen Frame)



Figure 4. Machang’i and Kihoto outside Machang’i’s (*nja*) compound (Mūrūthi, 2008). (Source – Screen Frame)

Traditionally, a man is expected to venture out, to meet with his age mates and to look after his wealth. This view that is supported by Mwaniki & Mouton (2015, p.348) who make the following observation, “Men’s duties required greater strength and were more dangerous and life-risking such as hunting, night watching and going to war. On the other hand, women were involved in agricultural work and homework.”

Therefore, in the traditional psyche of a Gĩkũyũ man, *nja* is meant for *andũ-a-nja* (people who belongs to a homestead). Surprisingly, when Machang’i visits Kĩere (*Ithe wa* Kĩng’ori) for some advice on how to deal with his nagging wife, the duo meets outside Kĩere’s main house, *nja*. It is noteworthy noting that the homestead is creatively used to deconstruct and reconstruct Machang’i’s troubled life. It is in this homestead that Machang’i is challenged to rise to the occasion and reject his wife’s domineering personality. It is here that he is injected with a right dose by his age mate, Kĩere. He is rebuked and challenged to stand up against domineering wife finally. This means that *nja* as a setting helps Machang’i to face, confront and deal with his worst nightmare, his wife’s overbearing arrogance. After this encounter, Machang’i manages to turn tables against his wife, astoundingly, in the same *nja* setting that his wife uses to demean and exploit his manhood. Symbolically, ‘nja’ bequeaths to Machang’i much needed male bravado which serves him right in overcoming his wife’s blasphemous attitude.

In **Mündūrūme nī Mūgambo** part 2, *nja* is used by characters as interactive platform. In scene 1, we find Machang'i and his new bride, Wanyūrū standing outside their homestead having an animated talk before they are joined by their family friend, Kīhoto. Soon after, they start discussing Machang'i's Church wedding. As they navigate through this discussion, Warūkūngū, Kīhoto's wife arrives. We learn that Mr. and Mrs. Kīhoto had offered to be the best maid and best man respectively. In this scene all activities, including an altercation that between Machang'i and his first wife take place in Machang'i's courtyard. The altercations led to eventual cancellation of the planned wedding.

As comedy ends, we once again find Machang'i relapsing to his earlier weakness at the behest of his first wife, Warigia. His unmanly actions all unfold in his own *nja*. He is forced to carry out domestic chores such as cooking, laundry among other domestic activities. *Nja* also serves to communicate and expose to all and sundry Warigia's evil traits.

She visits the witchdoctor's den, and we see him performing rites in an open place resembling *nja*. It is here that we realize that Machang'i is under a strong spell that transforms him into a mere zombie, a vehicle at the mercy of his wife, Warigia. We encounter Warigia at Witchdoctor's lair having gone there in search of a more potent spell that she hopes will make Machang'i to turn his undivided attention and express his love to her. However, she fails to adhere to the strict instructions given to her by the witchdoctor. Her evil plans come a cropper when she shakes hand with Kīhoto against Witchdoctor's instructions. Soon after, she goes mad right in front of Machang'i's *nja*. In **Mūthuri nī Mītugo**, the conflict between Wanyūrū and Kanyanya escalates outside her own backyard. It is in this backyard that we encounter Wanyūrū expressing her discontentment against Kanyanya obstinacy, inefficiency, rudeness, and lethargy. It is in this courtyard that Machang'i and Wanyūrū welcome their family friend, Kīhoto. We also learn most of characters' traits right in this courtyard. It is interesting to note that Kanyanya reveals to Machang'i's wife and her own father that Machang'i is the who is responsible for her pregnancy.

In **Mūici na Kīhī**, the director has attempted to balance his setting. It oscillates between *nja*, inside *nyumba* (house) and along the village paths and bushes. The use of different settings gives the comedy its authenticity in as far as the spirals and cycles of a normal life are concerned. In **Mūici na Kīhī** Part 1, the main characters Wandahuhu, Gīthendū and Gathoroko interactions, conversations and conflict take place in *nja*, country roads and inside the house. The setting of a local bush helps to propel the comedy narration and plot. The conflict between Gathoroko plays out in their courtyard, in Gīthendū's house, in village dusty roads, inside their own house and inside a clinic. An attempt by Gathoroko to blackmail her husband takes place in their *nja*. Additionally, Wandahuhu declamation also takes place in his courtyard. It can be deduced that the sitting room serves as a tool to communicate important errands, as is the case with Gathoroko and Wandahuhu who separately visit Gīthendū's house but with different messages. In one scene, that takes place inside Wandahuhu main house, Wandahuhu confesses to Gīthendū he is yet to face the knife against Gīkūyū's tribal dictates. The comedy also introduces an urban setting whilst for a few minutes. The urban setting helps us to interact with Wandahuhu. It is also in the city where he overhears a song by Kamande wa Kioi about an uncircumcised man. This helps to heighten tension and conflict in the comedy.

In **Mūici na Kīhī**, *nja* is used creatively to augment conflict that runs throughout the comedy. *Nja* serves to narrative the psychological conflict pitting Wandahuhu and Ebethi. The trio tries to outwit one another in possessing 'money bag' purportedly containing millions of shillings.

In **Kīrīro kīa Mwana**, the director uses sitting room and bed room as his main setting. This is portrayed as the rising conflict between Wahīto and Wandahuhu unfolds. For example, Wahīto encounters a nightmare right on their matrimonial bed. This helps to introduce the issue of childlessness in the family. The other notable actions are set in Wandahuhu, Gīthendū and Veronike's sitting rooms as well in market places. This helps to give the comedy a sense of authenticity, given that characters are given an opportunity to explore and interact with their immediate environs. In this regard, a table room seems to have replaced traditional *Thingira* in the sense that most important discussions take place here as is shown in the following scenes: when Gīthendū

promises to arbitrate Wahĩto conflict with her husband; when Wandahuhu denounces his wife Wahĩto in presence of Gĩthendũ; when Wandahuhu expresses his love, care and dedication to Veronike; when Wandahuhu learns that he is not the father to Veronike’s child and when Wandahuhu eventually learns that his wife, Wahĩto is expecting his bosom friend, Gĩthendũ’s child.



Figure 5. Wandahuhu (left) is crestfallen when he learns that Wahĩto (right) is married to Gĩthendũ (Kimani, 2008). (Source – Screen Frame)

Arguably, open places serve to weave through the story as is the case of three women pounding some grains in preparation to Gĩkaru’s family tour, an expectant Veronike’s stroll in a local market that eventually allows her to reconnect with Gĩkaru a fact that help to propel and infuse comedy’s conflict and the plot. In **Nganga Mbute** and **Mũtikũnyarira** by Kĩhenjo, the director also exploits *nja* (backyard or courtyard) to tell the story. **Nganga Mbute** is set on Kĩhenjo’s backyard on one hand and an urban setting on the other while in **Nganga Mbute** presents a rising conflict in Kĩhenjo’s courtyard while the climax of the story is played out in the city at the home of Wakarĩndĩ’s boyfriend, Kĩmenyi.

These two settings help to contrast village and city life. By using the two settings, the director seems to be suggesting that villagers are quite accommodative as shown by Kĩhenjo’s altruism regarding Mũkindũri’s plight while the city represented by Kĩmenyi and Wakarĩndĩ is depicted as indifferent, cold, unconcerned, and individualistic. It also helps to bring out the changing cultural landscapes brought about by modernity. By interacting with *nja* we can unearth and understand complex interwoven cultural

symbols entwined and expressed through verbal codes, (through talk exchanges and *tete-a-tete*), bodily codes (through greetings) commodity codes (houses, livestock, properties) among other cultural semiotic codes.



Figure 6. Gĩkaru’s relatives in a spirited conversation as they pound millet and sorghum (Kimani, 2008). (Source – Screen Frame)



Figure 7. Wandahuhu and Wahito inside their bedroom (Kimani, 2008). (Source – Screen Frame)

2.3.3.3 Props as Narrative Strategies in the Comedy Films

This subsection shall discuss how the various Gĩkũyũ vernacular comedies use props within specific settings to enhance the narratives’ symbolism. Setting can add meaning to narrative. This implies that props—part of the setting given specific significance in the total action—are also part of the control directors dictate in film art. Wales (2012, p. 137) defines a property as anything that a character touch. On his part, Kydd (2011, p. 155) reveals that the term ‘prop’ is the shortened form of ‘properties’ which is a borrowed theatrical setting. He adds that, the props in a theatre or a film are small items that are used during a scene. They are important ingredients necessary in the narrative and story. Sijll (2005) recognises props importance when she says, “props like wardrobe, live alongside the characters in a movie. That writer can leave them silent or

use them to give further depth to their characters or plot (Sijll, 2005, p.218).” On their part, Rodgers & Rodgers (1995, p. 86) go further to extend this definition to include all pieces of furniture, set dressing, or handheld objects needed for the look and action of the play. They divide props into four different categories as indicated below:

- a. Set props: They consist of all large or fixed objects, such as furniture and draperies.
- b. Hand props: They include small objects used by a single character such as fans, walking sticks, cloth hangers etc.
- c. Personal props: They include items worn as part of characters’ apparel, such as match boxes, watches, caps, stethoscope, etc.
- d. Décor or filler props that include paraphernalia that add colour and personality to a room or space such as pictures, figurines, and magazines.

It is instructive to note that in the selected films several props that are situated and resonate with Gĩkũyũ cultural symbols have been deployed to a greater in these comedies in form of objects and properties. Burnett (1991, p.208) reasons that in studying the codes, semiotics also studies the production of signs, which requires labour, both physical and nonphysical artefacts. He asserts that these physical objects function as nonverbal systems and fits within the general meanings of entire linguistic and cultural system. This means that these commodities may be interpreted as messages and having specific meanings within the continuum of ever-expanding social codes. Props that can be related to a Gĩkũyũ traditional setting and are deployed in the selected Gĩkũyũ vernacular comedies include: a *ngoi* (a child’s harness), *mũtirima* (a walking stick), *njũguma* (a club), *njũng’wa*, (a stool), *kĩondo* (traditional basket), *gĩtarũrũ* or *gĩtairũ* (a winnowing tray), *mũkwa* (a rope), *ithanwa* (an axe), *ikũmbĩ* (granary) and *muhuko* or *mondo* (a bag). Besides, other props not directly related to traditional Gĩkũyũ cultural setting are also deployed.

The use of these cultural articles as props is a testament that Gĩkũyũ culture is dynamic as depicted by numerous cultural artefacts which have been precipitated by the continued interaction with Westernization, Christianity, and modernity. These props include but not limited to a coat-hanger, a wedding dress, a radio, a bicycle, a car, a wedding dress hanger, an assortment of furniture, a newspaper, a *sufuria* (cauldron), a stethoscope, a walkie-talkie, a tricycle, and a mobile phone among others. These props

have been used to provide emphasis or even illustrate a causal relationship between otherwise seemingly coincidental events in these comedies.

In **Mūndūrūme nī Mūgambo** Part 1, there is a deployment of *Ngoi* (harness for carrying baby) as a narrative element. Traditionally, this is skin (cradle) pouch made for carrying a baby on a woman's back, or at her breast. Routledge & Routledge (1968) makes an elaborate description of a *ngoï* when they make the following observation:

The Gikūyū baby makes its first acquaintance with the world from the point of view of its mother's back, where, secure in her cape in the form of hood (*ngoï*), it becomes inured to sun and flies, and takes part, generally head downwards, in the work of the day. (Routledge & Routledge, 1968, p. 123)

As claimed by Leakey (1977) no skin from an animal having died a natural death could be used in any circumstances for a *ngoï*. A skin for this purpose is called '*karūa ka maiga*,' which means a skin free from ritual uncleanness. He adds that it is a taboo for men to carry their child on their back using *ngoï*. Routledge & Routledge (1968, p 225) who lists a series of ceremonial uncleanness supports this view. They note that one uncleanness, include an act that leads 'a father to carry his son on his back.'

After watching the comedy, elders who participated in the FGDs asserted that Machang'i's act is an abomination to the community. They heaped a lot of blame on Machang'i for having precipitated his own condition arguing that he is in that state because of either his own complacency or inaction. They blamed him for being unable to nip in the bud the unbecoming behaviour of his wife, who later reduces him into mere smithereens against all cultural edicts. "It is an abomination for a man to carry child on his back. He must never do this. If one must carry his child, then the child should only be placed on the shoulders," remarked one of the elders during FGDs session. The bodily codes prohibit man from using allowing his back to be used as a carrier whether to carry a child or any other form of load.

The transformation of Machang'i and the use of *ngoï* may be signifying a social transformation taking place among the Agikūyū. This view validates an earlier observation made by Routledge & Routledge (1968) over this matter. *Ngoï* as prop therefore serves as Warigia's oppression and subjugation symbol, that negates the very

customs of Agĩkũyũ people. Whereas *ngoi* is traditionally used as a symbol for nurturing and growth, in **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo**, *ngoi* serves as a domination symbol as represented and typified by Warigia's zealotry.

Other key props used in these comedies include *Kĩondo* and *gĩtarũrũ*. The *kĩondo* is a woven basket made in various shapes, colours, and sizes among the Agĩkũyũ people. As claimed by Amin & Moll:

Woven baskets (*kiondo*, pl. *ciondo*) are made from a variety of fibres, originally obtained from the bark of shrubs, more recently of sisal or synthetic thread. Flat trays (*gĩtarũrũ*, pl. *ĩtarũrũ*) are woven from the bark of the mugu, mugio and muthuthi shrubs. These baskets are knitted from strings gathered from shrubs. (Amin & Moll 1983, p. 68)

Nwauche (2017, p. 35) notes that *kĩondo* is hand woven basket which has been made by Kikuyu community in Kenya as early as the seventeenth century. Because the *kĩondo* is handmade every basket is unique. Traditionally, a mother weaves a *kĩondo* for her daughter's wedding. The basket is made of a sisal, which gives its strength, and colourful yarn.

Kĩondo is used as a prop in at least two of the films; **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo** and **Mũici na Kĩhĩ**. In **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo**, *kĩondo* serves as a commodity symbol and a code representing changing gender roles in comedies diegesis. Machang'i is forced by his wife, Warigia, to carry *kĩondo* as he goes to a local market to buy domestic supplies. Traditionally, a man is not expected to carry a *kĩondo* as it is a preserve of womenfolk. On his way to the market, he detours and goes to Kĩere's home to seek some advice on how to deal with his wife's tyrannical ways. Kĩere is astounded to see Machang'i carrying his son, Kababa, in a *ngoi*, while holding a *kĩondo* on the other hand.



Figure 8. Machang'i (left) narrates his tribulations to his friend Kĩere (left) (Mũrũthi, 2002). (Source – Screen Frame)

After a spirited encounter, Kĩere convinces him to take bull by its horns. Soon after, Machang'i confronts Warigia and eventually overwhelms her. He throws *Kĩondo* back to her with some strict instructions to rush to the market and buy domestic supplies. In a sense, *Kĩondo* is used as symbol of domesticity by both Warigia and Machang'i. In Gĩkũyũ's traditional setting, *kĩondo* is an epitome of feminine fecundity, a symbol of growth, life, and satisfaction. It also conferred woman's status privilege. It represented a woman's womb from which tribal off springs. Briefly, *kĩondo* is a kind of a centrifugal force in which a life of Gĩkũyũ woman revolved. This claim is supported by Thuku, (2007, p.98) who holds that a Kikuyu bride should receive a gift of *kĩondo* from her mother and other village mothers on the day of her wedding. He also regards *kĩondo* as a strong motherly status, symbol of care, responsibility, besides being the protector of the propagative seed.

Another basket worth mentioning here is *gĩtarũrũ* or *gitairũ* which Leakey (1977) describes as having been made from thin strips of the *mũgio* tree (*Triumfetta tomentosa*). The strips are cut longitudinally and held together tightly by the buck of the same *mũgio* into a width of a forefinger and done into an ever-expanding spiral adding more strips as you go.



Figure 9. Warigia holds kiondo after it is passed to her by Machang'i (Mürüthi, 2002). (Source – Screen Frame)

From study's FGDs, the respondents noted that *gitarũrũ* (diminutive one is called *gatĩĩ*) is a treasured winnowing tray by the tribe and that it is and still is, an indispensable household utensil in many a home. It has multiple uses. It is mainly used for winnowing grain. One of the respondents added that *gitarũrũ* is valued by women not only for winnowing but more so for involving them in physical activities. Women are culturally expected to attend to domestic issues, they are to choose what to say to their friends, what best suits their husbands and children. They are expected to make the best choices for their households. A woman who does not symbolically use winnowing tray in her domestic matters is considered incomplete and hence the invention of two words *Ngatha* and *Nyagacũ*. These words describe positive and negative attributes of Gĩkũyũ women. These terms are described at length in successive sections in this thesis.

Mũtirima/Mũkwanju/Mũtheji (walking stick) is yet another object used in the films. This is a traditional object that is extensively used by elderly male characters in the selected comedy films. Leakey (1977), defines it as straight stem almost of any wood used as a staff or walking stick by elderly males. He however posits that in the traditional sense, *mũtirima* had no special significance. *Mũtirima* is different from *mũtheji* which Leakey (1977, p. 1364) calls elders' staff of office, *mũtheji* is dyed black although the one for junior elders is undyed. Blakeslee (1956) supports this view by making a distinction between *mũtirima* on one hand and *mũtheji* on the other:

Unlike *mũtirima*, *mũtheji* is highly polished walking stick with a curved ball on the end, a token of prestige which Kikuyu custom permitted only to those whose wisdom and position in the tribe

warranted it. It was used to symbolise their senior elders' social status. (Blakeslee, 1956, p. 97)

Orchardson-Mazrui (1998) concurs with this view in her paper, *Expressing Power Status Through Aesthetics in Mijikenda Community*, when she refers to a flywhisk and a walking stick carried by the Kenya's First President, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta (a Gĩkũyũ himself) as symbolizing both eldership, authority, and power. It is apparent that in the selected comedies almost all male characters walk around using a walking stick. However, none of them is seen carrying a *mũthege*. This may be an indication of how cultural erosion have affected Gĩkũyũ tribe to an extent of obliterating objects such as *mũthege*, which hitherto signified power and social status among the community members. The respondents who were interviewed during this study had a varied view on the importance of *mũtirima* among the Agĩkũyũ community. There were those who felt that a walking stick is a utilitarian object that assists and support the elderly walk around. While another group of respondents observed that a walking stick symbolize status of an elder and a Gĩkũyũ adult male.

The respondents also mentioned that Gĩkũyũ men curved from wood and stone such products including *mũharatĩ* (trough), *ndĩrĩ* (mortar) and *Mũthĩ* (pestle). As a prop, pestle and mortar symbolise the role of women in a traditional set up, as well as situating Gĩkũyũ ingenuity in agricultural enterprise and culinary art that informed Gĩkũyũ way of life. In **Kĩrĩro kĩa Mwana**, there are two women who are depicted pounding grains on a *Ndĩrĩ* (mortar) using *Mũũthĩ* (pestle).

Njũguma ya ndemero (a club) is used by some characters. This type of club that did not require modifications save for minor alterations, given that they were picked from their natural sources. A club is an important article for a Gĩkũyũ man. It is primarily used as a defensive weapon. As observed by interviewees, it is considered culturally acceptable for a man to keep to himself, several clubs as means of protecting his family. Arising from these facts, it can be observed that some of Gĩkũyũ traditional woodwork products are still in use today. Some have been deployed in the selected comedies. In **Mũtikũnyarira**, Kĩhenjo moves around with *njũguma ya ndemero* and moves with it everywhere he goes, perhaps because of his horrible experience in the hands of the armed robbers. However, arising from field work interviews and observations, there is

noticeable disdain of these tools particularly among the young and the educated people in Gĩkũyũ community.

Gĩturwa/Gĩtĩ kĩa Mũrambo/Njũng'wa: As claimed by Mũkũyũ (2014) the traditional Gĩkũyũ stool is called the *gĩturwa*, (plural: *iturwa*) and is carved from a tree trunk piece without jointing. It is made by a professional wood carver known as *mwai wa itĩ* (stools carpenter). The trees used for this work were *mũringa*, *mũnunga*, *mũkũyũ*, *mũhũtĩ*, *mũrurĩ*, *mũthaitĩ* and the *mũkũ*. He explains that one could buy the stool from the carver or if one had a tree already felled, he could call the carver and they would share the stools from the tree. He makes further observations that the blocks near the base would make the four-legged *iturwa* of up to 16 inches in diameter and as the tree got thinner would be made into four legged smaller *tũturwa* as small as five inches' diameter. The four legs were always preferred especially for the bigger ones. The seat is always a perfect circle and slightly hollowed out at the centre to accommodate a bum. These seats were used by both men and women in traditional Gĩkũyũ setting. Nevertheless, Mũkũyũ (2014) makes a distinction between *gĩturwa* and *njũng'wa*. He writes:

Medicine men, and men of ruling council rank, *kĩama*, also had special stools that they carried with them wherever they went. These special stools were small and light and carved very delicately. They were usually also decorated with chains around the legs and had chain links arranged in patterns and hammered into the surface of the wood. I have been unable to get myself a living sample of this kind of seat to date but I am still searching. This man's seat was what was called a *njũng'wa*, but the name was also used to refer to any man's stool, three or four legged. A woman's seat was the *gĩturwa* and was never stylized or decorated. (Mũkũyũ, 2014)

Thus, it can be argued that *njũng'wa* symbolised and is a representation of tribal power and authority. It is an embodiment of tribal wisdom and wit, a projection of societal stability and quintessence of community leadership. In this stool, the Gĩkũyũ community communed with her past, present, and future. Kenyatta points out that, there were two councils of elders where *njũng'wa* is used by male elders: *Kĩama kĩa mataathi*, the council of peace and *Kĩama kĩa maturanguru*, tribal high priests, religious and sacrificial council. Kenyatta (1965, p.109), notes that this is the highest Council which very few had a privilege of joining before death. "For one to join this level, one had all his children children's' circumcised, and his wife cannot give birth, and has

become sexually inactive.” Kenyatta (1965). The custom dictated that each married man carried his own *Gĩĩ kĩa mũrambo*, whenever elders were summoned to meet over many social, justice and other matters. Although, the name *Njũng’wa* is referred severally in **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo**, we fail to see it being deployed but, in its place, we encounter a new form of gĩturwa suggesting that the community is attuned to new way of doing things. The neo-cultural seats are made up of plastics, timber, and metal. Unlike in the past, gĩturwa or *njũng’wa* are no longer a preserve of any gender. Both men and women use the improvised *njũng’wa* notwithstanding social or cultural occasion.

Rope (*mũhando*) features prominently in the selected comedies. *Mũhando* (rope) is made for various reasons such as tying bunch of sweet potatoes vine or for carrying foliage from field. In **Nganga Mbute**, we encounter Kĩhenjo with a rope vowing to hang himself if he failed to trace his sister Wakarĩndĩ, who is being accused of murdering her own daughter, Mũkindũri. Luckily the duo successfully traces Wakarĩndĩ’s abode in the city. In **Mũici na Kĩhũ** part 1 and 2, Gathoroko, Nyakĩrata and Ebethi use ropes to tie firewood or animal fodder. This demonstrates the fact that a rope and the woman are conjoined in the hip. A rope is an important element for facilitating domestic chores. The rope also represents the attempt by society members to keep community members together.

In *Mũicĩ na Kĩhũ*, we find a *mondo* (a bag) which Wandahuhu and a host of other characters believe that it contains about two million Kenya Shillings which is stolen from a local Farmers’ Cooperative Bank. It is this bag that compels Wandahuhu to build castles in his fertile ground of imagination thinking that with his ‘newly acquired fortune,’ he will transform his life tremendously. Top on his mind is the idea of buying a *matatu* (a mini-bus) but Gĩthendũ does not offer much insight into his idea given that he could not justify why he is engrossed and talking about lofty ideas, yet he did not even own basic things like a cart and a donkey. The ‘money bag’ runs as a motif throughout the comedy, right from the time the bag is snatched by a village scoundrel, who later threw it in the bush to the time when Wandahuhu discovers the bag, buries it in his compound and finally the eventual betrayal by his wife, Ebethi. The bag is ultimately confiscated by Chief Kanyũtũ.

Commodity code is epitomised by *Ikūmbi* (granary) which exemplify communal altruism. Culturally *Ikūmbi ria Ngai* (God's Granary). *Ikūmbi* is deployed as commodity code appears in **Mūicī na kīhī**, **Mūtikūnyarira** and **Kīrīro kīa Mwana**. *Ikūmbi* is a place for storing bounty harvest, stowing seedlings, storing communal hopes, a place of social renewal. In **Mūndūrūme nī Mūgambo Part 2**, a washing basin features glaringly. It is a critical symbol signifying power relation between Warigia on one hand and Machang'i on the other. Machang'i uses this basin to wash his wife's clothes and therefore this prop helps to depict Machang'i as the one out of sync with societal expectations.

Other noticeable props include an axe that features prominently in **Mūthuri mi Mītugo** and **Mūtikūnyarira**. Axe is used as a prop in **Mūthuri nī Mītugo** and **Mūtikūnyarira**. An axe is used to help develop the story revolving Wanyūrū entrepreneurship spirit. Thus, she requires a lot of firewood to ensure her 'cake business runs uninterrupted. That is why we see Machang'i trying to help Wanyūrū to split firewood outside his main house. Related to this is the fact that the business needed an extra hand and that extra hand is Kanyanya who is eventually impregnated by Wanyūrū's husband.

There are modern props that have been used to highlight Gīkūyū cultural dynamism. They include a radio, a bicycle, a stethoscope, bicycle among others. Radio serves as a prop when Wandahuhu asks Ebethi to bring his radio out as way of corroborating the information given to him by Gīthendū pertaining to a bank robbery targeting a local Farmers Cooperative Bank. Gīthendū alleged that close to 2 million shillings were stolen. We also see a radio in a scene in **Mūndūrūme nī Mūgambo** when Warigia holds it as she is seated warming herself in her kitchen. In **Mūicī na Kīhī Part 2**, Chief Kanyūtū, a local administrator walks around with his bicycle which enables him to move with speed and efficiency in attending villagers' concerns. In **Mūtikūnyarira** Kīhenjo makes use of a bicycle, an axe, a stethoscope, a club, and walkie-talkie. The bicycle helps to develop the plot in that Kīhenjo is waylaid by three thieves' and he manages to fight them off. He is later involved in a public spat with a law enforcement officer. The loss of the bicycle and subsequent injuries sustained in the brawl makes Kīhenjo to walk around with a club, supposedly for self-defence and a walking stick, signifying his advancing age as well as his elderly status. These props depict Kīhenjo

as petulant and confrontational individual. This is evident when Kīhenjo uses an axe to chase around police officers' who had visited his house to effect a lawful arrest following his earlier altercation with a police officer. A walkie-talkie is used by police officer who is assaulted by Kīhenjo to notify the others about the incidence. These officers exploit the same prop when they come to arrest Kīhenjo. Cars are also used in this comedy. Another prop that is used in **Mūtikūnyarira** is a hammer that Karūrūma uses to break down stones in his father's compound. Through this action, we learn that Kīhenjo is struggling financially and that the reason his son is forced to complement his income by engaging in child labour. The deployment of modern props indicate that the community has embraced new properties and has discarded some traditional properties to that effect.

2.3.3.4 Costume Aesthetics and Symbolism

Costume, or clothing and its accessories, is also an important visual element in film. Wilson (1998) observes that costume informs the audience about the style of a production, it indicates the period and location of a production, and like clothing of everyday, costumes tell whether people are from the ruling class, elites or working class or mere peasants. Costumes tell us about personalities of characters. In other words, they help to achieve verisimilitude in video film where they are categorized as important aspects of *mise en scène*. Nelmes (1996, p.67) views a costume as a variant of the prop directly connected to the character. He states that minor characters are often primarily identified on the basis costumes. He adds that subtle changes in the costume of a single character can be used to signify changes of status, attitude and even passing of time.

Pramaggiore and Wallis (2006, p. 72) claim that costumes provide information about time and place, but, more importantly, they express social milieu and personal style. Kydd (2011, p.150) notes that a costume is a tool used in a film to create depth of character and meaning. It also shows the difference between characters and thematically explores the differences. He adds that costume can also be used to show life progression of a character. Cons (2016, p. 42) observes that a costume defines a character's personality and status. It also creates narrative and emotional resonance, besides helping the audience to construct the film's milieu and aesthetic. Ogier (2009,

p.12) says that costumes are an important part of any performance, whether it is a dance or a drama or film, given that a good costume design helps the audience to become more involved in the story.

Costumes in the selected comedies are used to define characters, and through these costumes, we can read the story of a film. The respondents observed that long time before the coming of white men Gĩkũyũ costumes were dictated strictly by gender, age, and social status. Cow, goat, and sheep hides were usually used as raw materials for making Gĩkũyũ costumes. female cloths were called *nguo ya ngoro*, *mũthuru na mwengũ* (women clothes) while those for male were called *gathii* or *gĩthii*. One respondent informed the study that unlike men who never bothered much to hide their private parts, it is a taboo for women to do so. Hence their clothes were made of three different parts namely *nguo ya ngoro* (covering burst area) *mũthuru* (covering buttocks) and *mwengũ* (covering woman's genitalia). It is further observed that the use of these costumes has been discarded by Agĩkũyũ. Currently virtually everyone is dressing up in Western clothes.



Figure 10. Kĩere wears costumes that help to depict his state of destitution (Mũrũthi, 2002). (Source – Screen Frame).

A closer look at the comedies reveals that different characters have different costumes. This helps to identify them on the screen, project their personality and position and situate them in a station of life. In **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo**, Machang'i wears different costumes to signify his changing role and fortunes in both Part 1 and Part 2 series of the comedy.

In Part 1 he is introduced as a well-groomed man when he marries the love of his life, Warigia. As his life changes during the narrative, so does his costumes. When he eventually gives in to Warigia's overbearing attitude, he ends up wearing torn costumes signifying his contemptible and indigence state. Likewise, Kĩere's costumes depicts him as a man in a state of deprivation (see Figure 10). This is confirmed by the fact his material possessions include one sheep and a dilapidated mud house. We also encounter a wedding dress worn by Wanyũrũ, Machang'i's second wife. This shows that Christianity has taken root among the Agĩkũyũ. At the same time, we also encounter a witchdoctor properly robed in his ceremonial regalia to signify his role as a traditional healer. His costumes demonstrate black magic innate powers and his ability to mediate between the living, the dead and the spirits.

In **Mũthuri nĩ Mĩtugo**, the director contrasts costumes worn by Machang'i with that worn Kĩhoto on the other hand. We learn that Machang'i is well endowed financially and has several properties while Kĩhoto has fallen on hard times. Kĩhoto behaves like a derelict living on the edge. This prompts Machang'i's family to come to his family's rescue by employing his daughter as a house-help. In contrast, Machang'i's family wear relatively decent clothes as opposed to Kĩhoto who is always seen in torn clothes owing to his poor financial base.



Figure 11. Kĩhoto donning an apron and gumboots (Mũrũthi, 2008). (Source – Screen Frame)

In **Mūici na kīhī**, Wandahuhu is seen with fancy cloths whose colours contrast sharply making him look like a village clown (see Figure 11 above) and true to his costumes, he acts like a clown. He remains uncircumcised even though his own son, Karūmaindo is circumcised. His acts and disposition blend well with his costuming. In contrast, his friend Gīthendū dresses like a village peasant, a fact that he is content with. He has no conjectures or any urge to impress others unlike Wandahuhu.



Figure 12.
Wandahuhu donning
his costumes (Kimani,
2004). (Source –
Screen Frame)

In **Kīrīro kīa Mwana**, Wandahuhu's costumes (see Figure 12 above) communicates his status as a worker as opposed to his nemesis Gīkaru, whose clothes undoubtedly portrays him as a man struggling to eke out a living in economic hard times. On his part, Gīthendū appears well groomed and attuned with his taste. His clothing represents social and economic stability. This is demonstrated by the fact that he is stable both in outlook, his demeanour, and his ability to contain situations. He manages to stabilize Wahīto after Wandahuhu ditched her.

2.3.3.5 Make-up as Communicative Codes

Make up designs help communicate the age, condition, and attitude of an individual character, as well as general style of production. Barton & McGregor, (2015, p.166) identify five basic categories for stage make-up namely: straight getting the actor's face to 'read' at the back of the house without actually altering his or her features; corrective,

making the actor generally more attractive and vivid in appearance, much like the purpose of street makeup; age-adding years to an actor's appearance; character-changing the actor in a significant way to suggest an entirely different background and personality than that of performer . this is the most fun category, as false noses, beards, scars, warts, jowls, temporary tattoos, and entire range of prosthetic devices may be employed for a stunning transformation; and stylisation-creating a visual impression outside of natural, where characters may be supernatural, animal, mythical, or abstract rather than real.

Related to costumes is make up-the application of cosmetics to the face and body whose key function is help the performer personify and embody a character. Make up is often essential because the age of character differs from that of the performer Wilson (1998, p.399). In all comedies, the main characters in **Mündūrūme in Mūgambo** (Machang'i, Kīhoto & Kīere); **Mūthuri nī Mītugo** (Machang'i and Kīere); **Mūici na Kīhī** (Wandahuhu and Gīthendū); **Kīrīro Kia Mwana** (Wandahuhu and Gīthendū); **Nganga Mbute** (Kīhenjo and Mūkūngūgū) and **Mūtikūnyarira** (Kīhenjo) use make up extensively. In almost all comedies these characters are playing role of elderly men or women. They include Kīere, Machang'i, Gīthendū, Wandahuhu, Kīhenjo, Mūkūngūgū, Kīhoto and Wanyūrū. The study observes that the comedies make use of make ups to a certain degree although their deployment lack finesse, sophistication, and class.



Figure 13. Warūkūngū with her facial make-ups (Mūrūthi, 2002). (Source – Screen Frame)



Figure 14. Kīhoto donning a false dental formula (Mūrūthi, 2002). (Source – Screen Frame)



Figure 15. Machang'i wearing a false beard in **Mündürūme nī Mūgambo** (Mūrūthi, 2002). (Source – Screen Frame)

2.3.4 Application of Technical Codes

In film, technical codes include camerawork, editing, audio and lighting. As one may notice, they are specific and intrinsic to the film form. Consequently, our understanding of different camera shots and their connotations make sense when we look and films and photographs but mean nothing to us outside of those forms.

2.3.4.1 Camera Shots

Borst & Luppā (2007, p. 208) refers to a camera as a “communicative tool that conveys not just the occurrence of events, but also affective parameters such as mood of the scene, relationships that entities within the world have with other entities and the pace/tempo of the progression of the underlying narratives.” Therefore, a camera can be regarded as a gateway to film’s diegesis. Through its lenses and manipulation of its different parts, we are immersed into this world, and we can comprehend the unfolding story through its cinematography. Landau (2014, p.4) defines cinematography as the art and science of recording images (facilitated by a camera). He explains that in an image, a visual language comes into being which has the capacity to indicate time, place and three dimensionalities. This argument may be construed to mean that camera’s role in film is to function as *ciné-eye* (Feld & Rouch, 2003). This view is reinforced by views of Harper & Smith (2012) to the effect that film has power to construct physical spaces which incidentally can either liberate or limit inhabitants of its diegesis. They add that it “relies on mythical space - those shared mental landscapes which operate as explanatory models for the whole culture.” It is for this reason that this subsection

discusses the camera as a technical code through which filmic language (in this case creation of shots) may incorporate culturally portent symbols.

Grant (2007b, p.69) states that a shot is the basic building block of cinema because filmmakers work by creating a film shot by shot, and then, during editing, join these shots in the desired sequence to compose a film story. Manriquez & McCluskey (2015, p.37) define the shot from a geometric point of view, terming it as width in the lateral range of subjects or action captured in the frame. They stress that each shot plays a role in the sequence of shots that comprise a scene. At the same time, the distance between the camera and the action / subject creates a relationship which is both physical and psychological: the relationship is physical while recording, but psychological when screening the image recorded by the camera can impact emotionally on the viewer. This shall be demonstrated in the discussions that follow.

Esomba (2013, p.35) identifies seven types of camera shots as follows: extreme close-up, close-up, medium close-up, medium shot, medium long shot, long shot and extreme shot or distant shot. Manriquez & McCluskey (2015, p. 39) describes a medium shot as one where a head and upper body are visible in the frame and where the bottom of the frame cuts off at around the waist of a subject. They contend that this shot is normally used to handle dialogue heavy scenes. A medium close-up shot presents a subject close to the camera while leaving some space between the subject and the edge of the frame to include small portion of background. A medium long shot typically presents a landscape and focuses on a feature like topography, the sky, the ambient lighting, and weather. Additionally, Manriquez & McCluskey (2015) define close-up as having the face of character filling the frame, with bottom of the frame cutting off below the subject shoulders. The shot brings to the audience very close to the character in a way that can seem uncomfortable and this explains the reason this scene is saved for scenes of emotional importance or to convey suspense. Kerlow, (2004, p. 190) illuminates that close-up shot provides an appreciation of subject details. Extreme close-up presents delicate surface details such as teardrops or pores of the skin.

A long shot focuses on the scenery and barely permits recognition of individual characters in the environment. A wide shot presents enough of the scene to include the full body of at least five characters. An extreme long shot presents environment seen from very far away such as earth image from outer space. Indeed, different uses of camera angles can have different presentations for the same scene and convey different information.

The selected comedies deployed camera shots which include extreme close-up, close-up, long shot an average use of shots, the close-up and establishing shot. None of the selected comedies employs an extreme long shot or high angle shots. This because some of these comedies used single or two cameras. The producers lacked resources to exploit other shots such as high angle shots that require a camera to be mounted a helicopter hovering over a crowd. It is also apparent that these films use haphazard shooting angles, shot varieties and artistic presentations of shots. However, one notices extensive use of extreme close-ups in scenes where strong emotions and intra conflicts between and within characters are being communicated. In **Kīrīro ka Mwana**, for instance, we see a close-up of Wahīto's face (see Figure 16) as she tries to cope with undue pressure exacted by her stubborn husband, Wandahuhu over her failure to bore him an heir.

There is use of long shot as shown in a scene in **Mūthuri nī Mītugo**. Kanyanya is standing next to Machang'i's cow pen lost in her mind as she contemplates her next move over her pregnancy (see Figure 17). At the same scene, Machang'i and his wife are seen in animated conversation in the background. The shot depicts the social distance between Machang'i and his wife on one hand and Kanyanya on the other hand. The duo is oblivious of her psychological trauma. In several comedies under study, long takes are deployed. As Garret, Geffman & Hardison (1972, p.28) observe long takes generally feel as if they unfold in real time. In these comedies, camera reveal much more in a scene, showing relationships between characters and their environment. This allows viewers to decide where to look and what to look at. This creates a greater sense of realism. These long takes also create a slower and more languid pace. The short takes, on the other hand, are typical in the quick-cut in which a single shot can last under a second. This obviously creates a much more rapid, energetic style and pace.

Action films will often use increasingly short takes to create suspense and drama in their fight sequences or car chases. When an editor uses a short take, he or she usually is directing our attention to what is important, in contrast to the long take in which the viewer has an opportunity to examine the scene. This allows scene positioning to be as realistic as much as possible.



Figure 16. Macang’i and Wanyūrū in the foreground while Kanyanya is in the background (Mūrūthi, 2008). (Source – Screen Frame)



Figure 17. An extreme close-up scene showing Wahīto’s crying over her state of childlessness (Kimani, 2008). (Source – Screen Frame)

In **Mūndūrūme nī Mūgambo** Part 2, we encounter a long shot when Warigia attacks the bridal party (see Figure 18), an act that leads to cancellation of the planned wedding. The shot depicts Machang’i’s vulnerability at the hands of Warigia. This leaves Machang’i bruised to the core.



Figure 18. A scuffle ensues between Machang’i, his bride and Wanyūrū (Mūrūthi, 2002). (Source – Screen Frame)

Further, long shots have also been used in the selected comedies to portray characters' shortcomings. For instance, a long shot is used in **Kiriro kĩa Mwana** when Wahĩto admires a dog breastfeeding its puppies (see Figure 19). She soliloquizes and calls upon God to bless her with a child of her. Her fervent prayer is aimed at salvaging her marriage with Wandahuhu. By using a long shot, the director assumes a role of an omnipresent narrator. Most of these long shots besides revealing distance also depict lack of emotional connection between characters.



Figure 19. A Long shot showing Wahĩto (Kimani, 2008). (Source – Screen Frame)

A medium shot has some advantages over a long shot and the close-up. It gives more details as opposed to a long shot and more, so it reveals more of surroundings than a close-up. It is observable that majority of shots in selected comedies can be categorised as medium shots. The overuse of these shots make consumption of these works uninteresting and monotonous. This, however, has a benefit. It achieves emphasis of the various thematic issues raised in the films.



Figure 20. A Medium shot showing Githendu and his bosom friend Wandahuhu after executing their plan behind Gathoroko's back (Kimani, 2008).. (Source – Screen Frame)



Figure 21. Wandahuhu engages Wahĩto in an argument (Kimani, 2008).. (Source – Screen Frame)

2.2.4.2 Camera Angles and Movements

Camera angles and movements combine to create a sequence of images, just as words, word order and punctuation combine to make the meaning of a sentence. Ablan (2003, p.83) notes that camera angle is defined by subject size, angle, and height. He exemplifies that there are three types of camera angles, each with many factors such as point of view, subjective and objective angles. Thomas (2014, p.126) agrees to the fact that camera angle can have a major impact on how the product appears in the final image. He adds that moving camera position up just a few inches can cause that same elegant decanter to move into a bulbous, indeterminate figure, while repositioning camera at a lower angle can make the decanter take on a stronger characteristic.

Most shots used in films are eye-level, that is, a shot in which the audience sees an object straight on, in which the angle is even with the character or object. This is the case in the selected comedies where almost all scenes utilise eye-level shots. In **Mündūrūme nī Mūgambo** a shot is set in the kitchen (see Figure 22), adopting the viewer's point of viewer. While this type of shot may not carry a lot of effect the first time it appears, think about what a director might be saying when a character initially framed with a low-angle is subsequently shown with an eye-level shot, this may signal diminished strength and power. Nevertheless, the directors of these comedies principally fail to improve their aesthetics by way of exploiting other angular projections such as low and high angles. This makes their production somehow docile since camera use does not clearly augment the narratives within the film.



Figure 22. An image of Wahito obtained from her kitchen (Mūrūthi, 2002). (Source – Screen Frame)

2.3.4.3 Flashbacks - Right of Recall

Hayward (2013, p.59) describes flashback as a narrative device “used in film (as in literature) to go back in time to an earlier moment in a character’s live or history and to narrate that moments.” Turim (1989, p.1) defines it as an image or filmic segment that is understood as representing temporal occurrences anterior to those in the images that preceded it. It concerns a representation of the past that intervenes within the present flow of film narrative. He adds that memory in its psychoanalytic and philosophical dimensions, is one of the concepts inscribed by flashbacks where memory surges for it strengthens or protects or it repeats and haunts.

In film and literary works, the flashback technique is an important device used not only to demarcate present and the past, but also as temporal device in film’s diegesis. This proposition is supported by (Hayward 2013, and Stock 1978) who believe that this literary device serves to resolve an enigma such as murder, state of mental disorder, mischief, and conspiracies. It can also be used to foreground the role of past and that it is often associated with individual or collective crisis. “Flashback can also be used to dramatize a scene as well as hold on to a secret or suspense until the narrative calls for a dramatic recreation.” (Gulzar, p.127). Kuhn & Westwell (2012, p.184) refer to flashback as a portion of a film narrative that is presented out of chronological order in its plot. It shows events that have taken place before the present time established in the film. In the selected set of comedies, there is a thrifty use of flashbacks, the dream motive and other devices that rest on the subconscious mind of the characters.

In some of the selected comedies, flashback has been used and serves as confessional narrative codes. It allows us to intrude into individual characters world laced with personal misfortunes, unresolved issues, and omens. In **Kiriro kia Mwana** the device is successfully deployed to depict Wahito’s bareness with attendant despicable state courtesy of her husband, Wandahuhu. It serves to expose the process of psychoanalysis being experienced by Wahito following her inability to produce an heir for her husband, even after sharing matrimonial bed for over a decade. Wandahuhu complains that countless bed sheets are worn out yet there is no hope in the sight. In case of Wahito, the flashback comes in a form of a dream where Wahito successfully delivers a healthy baby, but the child is later killed by Wandahuhu. She wakes up screaming and this

rattles Wandahuhu. An argument ensues, and we come to learn that the childless couple has been married for the last ten years, and this has put lot of pressure on part of Wandahuhu and Wahīto in equal measure. The state of childlessness, which puts the couple on the edge of despair, strongly alludes to a cultural paradigm among the Gīkūyū community. Wandahuhu’s impertinence towards Wahīto, seen in the way he blames her for being a barren woman, is a strong signifier of this cultural potency.

According to Gīkūyū traditions, a child is an important element not only as a symbol of continuity of tribal lineage but also as a way of consummating marriage. Several proverbs are used to deride a woman without a child. (Ndaigiri 2013, Wango 2009 and Barra 1939). Several examples abound to support this view: *Mutumia Angikura Atari mwana ndangiona mutahiri mai* (a woman who grows old without bearing a child will have nobody to draw water for her. This emphasises the importance of children among the Gīkūyū people). *Mūka ari mwana ndateagwo* (a wife who has a child is not divorced for she will eventually be brought back by her child. This serves to advise men against divorcing mothers of their children. The provide is by default sanctioning divorcing and separating with barren women); *Mutumia utari mwana gutiri mundu atangikoma nake ona kihii agietha mwana* (a woman without a child is bound to sleep with any man even an uncircumcised by hoping she will conceive. This is because a child is a precious gift). *Thata ndiri mutahiri wa maai* (a barren woman has no one to fetch water for her.

In **Mūndūrūme nī Mūgambo** flashback technique is used variously to narrate Machang’i contorted life with his erstwhile wife, Warigia. It reveals the moment in time when he is in control of his own life and had unencumbered of authority over his wife.



Figure 23. A blurred image showing Wahīto immersed in her dream World (Kimani, 2008). (Source – Screen Frame)



Figure 24. Machang'i is subjected to unbearable suffering. He recalls equally important chores he had to attend but his wife will not hear of this (Mūrūthi, 2002). (Source – Screen Frame)

It also serves to reconstruct his evolving conflict with Warigia, a good example being when he receives an embarrassing punishment for not attending to specific domestic duties. He is unable to attend to these chores due to other pressing assignments that equally required his attention such as fetching water from a nearby river, looking after his son, Kababa among others. As he explains himself to his wife on why he had not finished some tasks, this device is used to re-count a conundrum of his life under his wife's iron fisted mien.

Another instance of a flashback occurs when Wanyūrū learns that Machang'i, her husband is involved in an extra marital affair with their housemaid, Kanyanya. Through this device, she recollects why Machang'i is imploring upon her to allow Kanyanya to put up in their house, arguing that this is going to make her working conditions more bearable. In **Mūici na Kīhī**, the device helps Ebethi to recall how her husband, Wandahuhu buried a bag, allegedly containing two million shillings in a garden adjacent to their homestead.

2.3.4.4 Editing and Cultural Narration

Editing, the process by which disjointed events in the form of shots are rearranged in an orderly manner to give a meaning, is an important element in film making. Orpen (2003, p.79) regards it as a both an art and a craft, suggesting that it straddles the line between art and craft. He divides editing into three stages: the selection of takes and their length; the arrangement and timing of shots, scenes and sequences and their combination with the sound tracks. She observes that editing is primarily (though not exclusively) a connective process, that facilitates joining of shots to form a whole.

Krasner (2008, p. 374) concludes by postulating that editing involves the coordination and joining of multiple shots each shot consisting of a series of frames that occupy screen space and time. Editing facilitates the management of time and space, through a combination of present-day happenings with past events. They hold that editor must never participate in the shooting but must be the second *ciné-eye*. Noting that although knowing nothing of the context, he can only see and hear what has been recorded, that which has intentionally been brought back by the director:

Editing, then, is a dialogue between the subjective author and the objective editor; it is a rough and difficult job, but the film depends on it. And here too there is no recipe, but “association (addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, bracketing) of similar film pieces. Uninterrupted permutation of bits of images until the right ones fall together in a rhythmic order where chains of meaning coincide with chains. (Feld & Rouch, 2003, p. 42)

From the foregoing discussions, one may conclude that editing is not just the technical skill of sequencing shots within a film. Most importantly, it is a creative skill of manipulating the perception of a film narrative so that the audience may be persuaded towards a specific point of view. There are several reasons why an editor assembles his or her shots in a fashion. These reasons may include building suspense, making connections between scenes, and moving the story along at a flow and rhythm. In several comedies, fade-out and fade-ins are used as transitional devices, either to move the story from one location to another or to signify the passage of time. Occasionally, filmmakers exploit several shades and colours other than black.

This study has established that directors of the selected comedies utilise various editing techniques to construct diegesis of the comedies, communicate key messages, represent characters, build conflicts, and address issues of space and time within the confines of comedy world and give meanings within cultural settings. Some of the techniques deployed in the selected comedies include parallel editing, elliptical editing, and point-of-view editing.

Wandahuhu uses elliptical editing in **Kīrīro kīa Mwana**. As Bordwell & Kristin (1997, p.283) maintain, an elliptical editing is a style of editing that “presents an action in such a way that it consumes less time on the screen than it does in the story.” According to

this view, it is arguable that when Wandahuhu introduces the conflict of childlessness that has bogged down his family for ten years through a dream by his wife, Wahīto, and subsequent conversation early the following morning, the montage of these shots condenses ten years into a single night. This technique ensures that only the details important to move the story forward and help the spectator understand the action is what is shown. This technique springs from a desire not to say everything about the story at once but to surprise and keep the audience in suspense.

In **Mūndūrūme nī Mūgambo** Part 1, the film director uses fade-out and fade-in to imply the transformation of Machang’i’s marriage life. This occurs when a flashback of Machang’i’s past days when he was living a good life is contrasted with present reality of misery. The flashback is gradually taken out and the picture fades to black. Machang’i now has transmuted from a once a promising husband, who is held in high esteem by his contemporaries in the village, to a mere derelict and a laughing stock. It is incomprehensible for many, on how such a man of his stature could be forced to attend to domestic chores by his erstwhile loving spouse. This may be accomplished through parallel editing, also called cross-cutting.

Parallel editing is the other editing technique in these comedy films used to cut between scenes that are happening simultaneously but not in the same location. This has been depicted in. In **Nganga Mbute**, we see two parallel events happening concurrently. To start with, Kīhenjo, the main protagonist informs his best friend Mūkūngūgū that his sister, Wakarīndī, the antagonist, is planning to come for her daughter in a few days’ time. He requests his presence during the anticipated visit. At the same time, Wakarīndī is scheming to eliminate her own daughter, Mūkindūri so as not to affect her cohabitation relationship equilibrium with Kīmenyi. This is after Kīmenyi informs her directly that he can never agree to be a step father to an illegitimate child borne by his lover.



Figure 25. Mũkindũri in a jovial mood in the village (Njũgũna, 2008). (Source – Screen Frame)

Other reasons for parallel editing include but not limited to making connections between events for thematic purposes. For example, in one of **Kĩrĩro Kia Mwana** scenes, we encounter Wandahuhu in a state of desperation after learning that he is sterile. At the same time, his erstwhile wife, Wahĩto, is elated after conceiving through the intervention of Wandahuhu’s bosom friend, Gĩthendũ. Wandahuhu seems to get a bit of reprieve when he approaches Wahĩto and learns she is expecting Gĩthendũ’s child. He is ready to receive her back notwithstanding her condition.



Figure 26. Wakarĩndĩ planning how to eliminate her daughter-Mũkindũri (Njũgũna, 2008). (Source – Screen Frame)

Parallel editing is also used to heighten rising conflict between Machang’i and his wife Warigia. In **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo part 1**, the action of Machang’i binding his time when he is sent to the local market to buy domestic supplies incenses his wife, Warigia. What Warigia does not know is that at the very moment her husband is

receiving critical insights on how to turn tables against her. This mission is accomplished when Machang'i regains control over his wife and Warigia suffers consequences thereafter.

Another important element deployed is the use of point-of-view editing. This type of editing usually occurs when an editor assumes omnipresent status and penetrates character's mind by way of trying to show what a given character is thinking about. For instance, in **Mūici na Kīhī** Part 2, Wandahuhu discovers a bag that he believes contains two million Kenyan shillings. From Wandahuhu's point of view, the viewer is eager to know what happens next with the bag, given that Wandahuhu has a penchant for mistrusting his closest family members and friends. Audience agonises as Wandahuhu goes through his travails and disappointments.

At the time, he behaves in a hilarious manner especially when he tries to prevent chicken from accessing the spot where he buried his 'loot.' This mistrust extends to his wife, Ebethi and the fact that he fails to get a sound advice from Gīthendū on how to make use of his 'loot.' The plot thickens when Ebethi betrays him. This leads to a confrontation between the duo which eventually attracts the attention of Kanyūtū, the local chief, to their home. The chief uses his authority to confiscate the bag from Wandahuhu and his wife. As he gets hold, the device is used to get into his mind and we are enthralled by his confidence over the supposedly 'loot.' As he rides his bicycle towards his home, he is convinced beyond shadow of doubt that his state of deprivation is now over.

2.3.4.5. Semiotics of Light

One of the respondents in the FGDs made an allegory between a pen and film. While ink is an important ingredient for a pen to function, lighting is a perquisite to a filming process. Without lighting, there is no film. Lighting can create atmosphere and mood as well as signify meaning, e.g. in a horror movie, light and shade are important codes of meaning. High-key lighting is harsh; soft-key lighting creates a romantic atmosphere, spotlighting picks out a character from a group, etc. The art of cinema is thus beholden to light 100%.

Hubris-Cherier (2012) makes a distinction between natural light and artificial light. Film critics like Grodal (2007) holds that lighting is the most powerful means of creating meaning and effect in films. He regards natural light as a term “meaning a light source coming from nature,” including the sun, the moon, and stars. He calls artificial light as any light source that is generated through artificial means such as electricity, fire among other sources. Malkiewicz (2012) believes that lighting provides an inside look at how cinematographers and directors bring out the visual concept while employing lighting to tell the story. “Lighting has strong impacts on the meanings levels of a film” (Viera 1993, p. 152).” Other scholars like Hubris-Cherier (2012) considers movie lighting as an art form through which there is an intercourse of light, shadows, colours, and movements. This serves as fundamental expressive elements in the narration of a story. Landau (2014, p.3) describes light as life giving, a mood setter, but an invisible phenomenon. He adds that it is radiant energy that is all around us and which most often is taken for granted. He elucidates light as an international transcultural language that is used to tell a story.

He concludes his definition by saying, “(l)ight is an emotional language-it evokes a common response by all who sees it.” While Irving & Rea (2015) suggest that” lighting gives the audience clues about the time of the day and season in which a scene takes place. The angle from which a light strikes a face or object affects how we see shapes and textures.” Kooperman (2009) agrees that lighting helps the audience to become immersed in the story. Jain and Jadon (2010) deduce that lighting is used by film directors to direct attention of the viewer to certain area of importance in the scene. Wilson (1998) observes that for the first 2,000 years of its recorded history, theatre was mostly staged outdoors during the day-primary reason being the need for illumination. The sun after all, is an excellent source of light. since sophisticated lighting is unavailable, playwrights used imaginations-the handiest tool available to suggest night-time or shifts in lighting. Performers brought on torches, or a candle, lady Macbeth does, to indicate night.



*Figure 27, Natural light is evident in this scene as Kihenjo in **Nganga Mbute** walks about (Njũgũna, 2008). (Source – Screen Frame)*

Analysis of the selected Gĩkũyũ vernacular comedies shows that the comedies have utilized natural lighting in most scenes. There are only few scenes that are staged indoors, but in day light. None of selected comedies is shot at night. One can easily conclude that in diegesis and the world of these comedies, there is only daytime. Night never comes. Yet, a day is always intercepted by a night. It is this natural interchange that demarcates time, makes us who we are, makes us old, fascinates our imagination, facilitates rites of passage, allows us to have time to rest, to recuperate, to reproduce and eventually provides in schemes of things time to die and a platform for regeneration.

Additionally, these comedies use little or no lighting effects. Light is merely used for illuminating subjects, characters, scenes, and objects. This diminished aesthetics however helps them to achieve verisimilitude and authenticity which may be interfered with by use of advanced lighting effects.

2.3.4.6 Aural Filmic Codes

The use of sound and music in film diegesis help the audience to have a meaningful engagement with characters and unfolding events in the film world. Scholars concur that a film tries to mimic “normal life” albeit in a highly compressed format. An event spanning hundred years is reduced to seconds or few minutes. Film directors use normal aspects of human life like movements, speech among others in the world of film.

Indeed, modern technology has been hailed for allowing seamless synchronization of moving pictures and sounds.

Unlike the pioneering cinema of 1920s, modern cinema combines moving images and sound and thereby allowing exploitation of human speech in natural setting beside enhancing verisimilitude given that in a normal life setting, there is no linear and defined sounds. Instead noticeable sounds exist alongside subtle sounds in the same platform. There is sounds of wind, a cry of a child, a moving motorbike, chirping of birds and mooing of cattle.

Callaway (2014, p.11) notes that “the soundtrack is specifically organized around the dynamic interplay between music, dialogue, and sound effects.” Therefore, music is best understood as an essential yet subsidiary element in the film’s overall “soundscape” that, along with sound effects and dialogue, establish the film’s narrative context. These events happen concurrently and independent of one another. Neumeyer (2015) posits that diegetic space of film is dependent creative use of both moving images and sound and music:

Diegetic space, in other words, can be established and levels of narration opened by nothing more than the juxtaposition of image and sound, regardless of the latter’s point of origin (if any). The diegetic is the register of the story world and its actors or agents. The nondiegetic is the register of the narration or the narrator. Both are necessary to establish and maintain a world of psychological realism. (Neumeyer, 2015 p.39)

Sound is regarded as an important element which has the capacity to attract the attention of audience owing to its manner of presentation and execution. Knopf (2017, p.82) further argues that sound can help bridge and shape the gaps between scenes, creating tempo, rhythm, mood, and duration of each transition.

Knopf (2017, *ibid*) considers sound as complimentary agent of mood in the story. He notes that film director can add background sounds or music, “sound that plays within a scene may be motivated by environment itself.” While Wilke & Moebus (2011, p.113) agree that sound derives its capacity from network of human interactions such

as phonetic structures, ritual setting, religious paradigms, and personal involvement in which it appears.

Neumeyer (2015, p.323) describes music within the context of a feature film's sound track, as having or performing one or more of the following roles: (1) referentially (supplying or reinforcing identifying markers of time, place, social status, ethnicity, etc.); (2) expressively (as a marker of emotion); (3) motivational wise (that is, in the manner of the motif in literature or motive in music, supplying recurring elements that help to clarify the processes of narrative comprehension).

Bordwell and Kristin (1997) talked about the effects of film music in their book *Film Art-An Introduction*. In this book, they argue that "whether noticed or not, sound (music) is a powerful film technique for several reasons. First, it engages a distinct sense mode; our visual attention is accompanied by aural attention. Even before recorded sound is introduced in 1926, the 'silent' cinema recognized this by its use of accompaniments (music from orchestra, organ, or piano). At a minimum, the music filled in the silence and gave the spectator a more complete perpetual experience." Second, sound can actively shape how we perceive and interpret the image. Bordwell and Kristin, (1997, p. 323). Third, it directs our attention quite specifically within the image. This possibility becomes even more meaningful when you consider that the sound cue for some visual element may anticipate that element and relay our attention to it. Fourth, they indicate that music cues us for expectation. If we hear a door creaking, we anticipate that someone has entered a room and that we will see that person in the next shot. Fifth, they posit that sound bristles with as many creative possibilities as editing. Through editing, one may join many shots of any two spaces to create a meaningful relation. Similarly, the filmmaker can mix any sonic phenomena into a whole.

There are five main types of film music and sound namely: theme music; mood music; room tones; sound effects and incidental music. Use of film sound/diegetic sound is a critical component of modern film. It gives flavour to film production and imbues it with style and taste, realism, and elegance. Pramagire & Wallis (2006) refer to diegetic sounds as to sound whose origin is to be in the story world. It includes voices of

characters and the sounds of objects that exist in the story world. They are generally considered to be three classifications of diegetic sound. The first is diegetic sound, meaning that the sound (be it music, dialogue, or sound effects) emanates from a source in the movie environment. Examples of diegetic sound can include characters talking, the sound of traffic or of a footstep, music from a radio, and any other sound that could logically be heard by a character.

The second classification of sound is nondiegetic, which refers to sound that cannot logically be a part of the movie environment. Hurtrez (2013) refers to non-diegetic sounds as sounds that do not belong to the story *per se*. they are used to reinforce the dramatic intensity of the scene such as music, voice over, or a sound effect. Hayward (2013) describes it as sound that is not being produced within the screen space. Analysis of these comedies yields several examples where diegetic, nondiegetic and internal diegetic sounds have been employed in the selected Gikūyū vernacular comedies. Barass (2006) describes them as:

Non-diegetic sounds are sounds heard by characters as well as audience and include voice overs of objects and events in story. They are not heard by the characters and may include the narrators voice, mood or places in a grammatical manner. They are used in flashbacks. (Barass, 2006, p. 157)

In literary world, there is a demarcation between the real and literary worlds. For instance, Sarkhosh (2011) terms the literary world as constituting several elements such as narrative metalepses. He holds that:

Fictional metalepses occur when the boundary between two embedded fictional worlds is transgressed without the narrator /narrative apparatus coming to the fore. Both types of metalepses produce their own comic effects which not only result from mere transgression (and its supposedly anti-illusionist effects) but go hand in hand with other circumstances. These may be either comical or absurd, causing or amplifying the comic effect of the transgression(s). Or, as in the case of fictional metalepses, they may be fantastical, even disturbing, thus calling for comic relief. (Sarkhosh 2011, p. 172)

Whereas a pen features prominently in literary world, camera assumes enviable position of narrating story in filmic world (diegesis). Sarkhosh (2011, *ibid*) adds, “Undoubtedly, the camera is the most important cinematic device on the prefilmic

level. Although present at almost every moment of a film, the camera normally goes unnoticed. It is one of the crucial conventions of (mainstream) cinema that nothing should draw attention to the camera.”

Diegesis is term that is used to refer to filmic narration, “the content of the content of the narrative, the fictional world as described inside the story (Hayward 2013, p.102). On his part, Soriau (1951, p.233) states that diegetic comes from a Greek word diegesis, which he goes on to define as the world in which drama or film is situated, including the components which come into being and exist in the mind of member of audience due to association. Kassabian (1999 p.47) refers to diegesis as narratively implied in spatiotemporal world of the film.

Given that diegesis refers to all that transpires in the world of film including but not limited to setting, mise-en-scène, lighting, sounds, storyline and characters. Within the realm of film there are two types of sounds namely; diegetic sounds and non-diegetic sounds Hayward (2013) describe diegetic sound sounds produced by characters/actors, songs and playing of instruments on screen. Hurtrez (2013, p.25) explains further that diegetic sounds belong to the diegesis or story, including dialogue. He clarifies that there are also external diegetic sounds which enables an audience to penetrate actor’s mind. On screen, diegetic sounds are those sounds whose physical source can be traced in the screen. Off screen diegetic sounds are those sounds outside the screen frame such as cows mooing from the background or a sound of commercial jet flying overhead. “Onscreen sounds support the suspension of disbelief, while off screen sounds expand their spatial environment (Barass 2006, p.158).”

On his part, Joe (2006, p. 366) states that diegetic music is type of music whose source is usually presented on the screen or narratively implied or music whose presence is motivated by something within the world of story, while Pramaggiore & Wallis (2006, p.288) concur that diegetic music can be used to help audience perceive the geography of setting. In the selected comedies, diegetic music has been made up of series of incidents skilfully linked in a cause-effect relationship, these events and incidents drive the stories and motifs. Occasionally in these comedies, incidental music is introduced

at intervals to heighten the unfolding action, explain the plot and or accompany the actions for dramatic effects or build up emotions in the audience.

In **Nganga Mbute**, Kīhenjo is seen in the first scene reciting a Mau song, *Twanahinjira Njira* which loosely translates ‘we got emaciated as we journeyed home.’ This song sets the mood which later unfolds in the film when Wakarĩndĩ eventually kills her daughter, Mũkindũri in a bid to secure her relationship with Kĩmenyi. In **Mũici na Kĩhĩ** Part 1 & 2 we encounter sound effects which can be described as an added sound for dramatic effect. These sounds include mooing of cows as well as crooning and squawking of chicken. There is also bleating of sheep and goats. These sounds indicate that the world of **Mũici na Kĩhĩ** is a world where characters’ life mimics the real world of Agĩkũyũ. We learn that Agĩkũyũ have kept livestock, especially sheep and goats from ancient time. Incontrovertibly, a conflict evolves and revolves pitting Wandahuhu and Wathende family which is ignited by Gĩthendũ’s livestock feeding on Wandahuhu pastures and garden. Livestock keeping is noticeable in other comedies.

In **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo** we also encounter *Ithe wa* Kĩng’ori, a proud owner of a single sheep, while Machang’i has some cows in **Mũthuri nĩ Mĩtugo**. In **Nganga Mbute** we encounter Kīhenjo with his cows, while Kĩmenyi boasts of his numerous cows, sheep, dogs, ducks, chicken among others. In **Mũthuri nĩ Mĩtugo** we learn that the main conflict between Wanyũrũ and Kanyanya is occasioned by her (Kanyanya) inability to take care of the cows. This eventually leads to revelation to the fact that Kanyanya is unable to manage these domestic chores due to her pregnancy. The use of animal sounds also enhances comic relief, a case in point being when Wandahuhu runs after chicken fearing that they were about to interfere with his bag of goodies, hidden outside his *nja* (courtyard).

In **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo**, Machang’i is heard singing several songs. This served as a coping tactic to his contemptable condition. His domineering wife, Warigia does not give him any room for manoeuvring. He neither exercises his masculinity prowess. He sings both spiritual and secular songs that help to build the tension and address thematic concerns of the comedy. As comedy opens Machang’i joins his friends in

singing a popular Gĩkũyũ wedding song, *Nitukenere Muhiki* (Hail the Bride). This is after he marries Warigia in a church wedding.

However, the mood changes in the next scene when we find Machang’i performing domestic chores that include taking care and nursing his young son, cooking, fetching water and doing other domestic tasks that are traditionally meant to be executed by women. His storeroom of coping tactics includes borrowed songs from the African Independent Pentecostal Church of East Africa (AIPCEA). The church was formed in early 1930’s and symbolised official protest against missionary churches which were accused of running a smear campaign which is meant to demonize and exterminate Gĩkũyũ cultural practices. These cultural practices included women circumcision, *rũracio*, traditional religion and other cultural practices. AIPCEA songs are contained in a volume christened ‘*Nyimbo cia Kiroho*,’ (*spiritual songs*). These songs were used both as worship songs and as protest songs against colonialism. In this comedy Machang’i finds solace in a song called *Ngai nowe Ungihota Kumenya* (Only God can Know) whose lyrics (chorus) is translated herein below:

<i>Twathinio muno nitwiuragia</i>	When we face tribulations
<i>Nitwiuragia gitumi gia tuhinyiririo</i>	We ask the reason for our oppression
<i>Riria turi aingi hakuhi</i>	When many of our neighbours
<i>Matathinagio ta ithui</i>	Are not experiencing suffering like us
<i>Ngai nowe unghota kumenya</i>	It is only God who knows
<i>Gitumi gia tuhinyiririo</i>	The reason why
<i>Cokia Ngatho muru wa ithe witu</i>	Give thanks my brother
<i>Macio mothe baba niamoi</i>	For our heavenly father knows why

At the same time Machang’i sings a rendition of Pius Kihingo’s song, *Mwendwa Wakwa Njeri*. (My Dear Njeri):

<i>Thina ni muru kwi ngui mwendwa wakwa</i>	poverty is worse than a dog my dear
<i>Njeri</i>	Njeri
<i>ngui ungimira wacha dingikruma ringi</i>	if you tell it to stop, it will not maul
	you
<i>No thina ungikunyita</i>	But when afflicted by poverty
<i>Tiga Ngai uri Iguru</i>	Unless God in heaven

Ungika ciama ciake
Uriaga na cumbi

Performs his miracle
He who is used to eating with salty
water

Wanjia kuria ngarange

When he starts eating fried stew

When Wandahuhu visits the city, he goes to one music shop and the only song he hears being played is Kamande wa Kioi's ***Hutia Ngoige wi Kivizi*** (mess up with me and I will inform others that you are uncircumcised). This song helps to build up or explain the subject matter of the film story. Just like the message in the song, Gathoroko, Wandahuhu's wife develops a penchant for blackmailing her husband with threats of exposing him to all and sundry. Therefore, Wandahuhu lives in his own shadow until the day he is circumcised. He knew his uncircumcised condition is anathema, unacceptable and a shameful act in as far as Kikuyu tribal customs are concerned.

2.3.4.7 Non-Diegetic Sounds

Dawkins & Wynd (2010, p. 268) define no-diegetic music as a music which has been added over the narrative at the post production stage and which thus, is not heard by the characters but supplements and enhances the narrative. Brown (1994, p.67) adds that this type of music theoretically exists for the audience alone and is not supposed to enter in any way into the universe of filmic narrative. Kellison (2009, p. 76) concurs with assertion adding that non-diegetic music is not heard by the characters but is added later such as soundtrack. In ***Mūici na Kīhū Part 1 and 2*** non-diegetic music is extensively applied. The music plays immediately after Wandahuhu leaves Gĩthendũ's residence for a nearby garden. The same music heightens tension in Wandahuhu when he immediately meets Gĩthendũ on his way to Chief Kanyūtũ's home.

The same instrumental music is repeated in the following scenes; when Wandahuhu eventually musters enough confidence, approaches Gĩthendũ and informs him that he is yet to be circumcised. The same music is deployed when a man snatches bag from a woman along a village dusty road. The man runs towards a nearby bush and the music plays until time when the man opens the bag, only to find some soiled diapers inside. Later, the same music heightens the mood when after discovering and taking the bag, Wandahuhu moves with hesitation towards his home and thereby raising suspicion of other passers-by. When Gĩthendũ warns the couple about the ongoing police operations

in search of the bag, Ebethi reminisces the scene when she witnessed her husband burying the said bag in their homestead, as she reminisces a non-diegetic sound plays depicting her strong-willed desire to snatch the money bag from her husband and plans to subdivide the loot with her brother.

2.3.5 Written Codes

Written codes are used in a media product to advance a narrative, communicate information about a character or issues and themes in the media product. Written codes include printed language which is text you can see within the frame and how it is presented, and spoken language, which includes dialogue and song lyrics.

2.3.5.1 Gĩkũyũ Orthography: Finding identity and meanings

Gĩkũyũ language is one of the approximately 6,500 languages spoken in the world today. The correct name for the language is Gĩgĩkũyũ, or Gĩkũyũ and the speakers are called Agĩkũyũ. Kikuyu is the Anglicised form of the term Gĩkũyũ. In this study, Kikuyu, has been used interchangeably with the term Gĩkũyũ to refer to both the people and the language. *Gĩkũyũ* is also the name of a patriarchal ancestor. Wanjohi (1997) claims that Gĩkũyũ language belongs to Bantu language family. Due to its unique linguistic characteristics, Gĩkũyũ language continues to receive considerable attention by linguists. Asic (2007, p.107) describes it as an agglutinative language with different markers for the noun classes and a rich system of verbal tenses.

These scholars contend that among the languages they have investigated (both Indo-European and non-Indo-European, such as Swahili, Luo, Arab, Hebrew, and Japanese) Kikuyu is the only one that, just like Serbian, marks (though not with the same grammatical means) the difference between spatially static and spatially dynamic activities. Leakey (1959) posits, “Kikuyu is probably one of the most archaic of the Bantu languages and in consequence has a grammatical structure with fewer exceptions than in most of the others.” The import of this statement is that the language is closer to a prototype Bantu language as opposed to other Bantu languages in use today. At the time of the Bantu migration, all Bantu speakers probably spoke something like Kikuyu. Clements (1984, p.282) adds that Gĩkũyũ language has a tone system of considerable richness and complexity. He postulates that Kikuyu is of unusual interest in the context

of current research on Bantu tone and accent. Many of its tonal characteristics reflect structural features of Proto-Bantu, both lexically and grammatically. Regarding Kikuyu verb system, Clements adds that the verb, like that of other Bantu languages, is a highly complex, agglutinative entity involving two tiers of structure: the tonal tier and the segmental tier (that is, the tier upon which consonants and vowels are arrayed), he writes:

Formatives making up the verb are of three types: those that are specified for both tonal and segmental properties, those that are specified for tonal properties alone, and those that are specified for segmental properties alone. Much of the complexity of the verbal morphology arises from the interaction of formatives of these three types. It will be shown that the rules of tone assignment largely disregard the morphological relation between tones and tone-bearing units, with the result that tones are quite typically associated with segmental material characterizing other formatives than their own. (Clements, 1984, p. 282)

Specifically, Gĩkũyũ language can be classified into five vernaculars as follows: Southern Gĩkũyũ; Northern Gĩkũyũ; Kimathira; Gigichugu; and Kindia. Southern Gĩkũyũ is spoken in Mũrang'a and Kiambu counties; Northern Gĩkũyũ is spoken in Nyeri County; Kimathira is spoken in Mathira Constituency of Nyeri county while Kindia and Gigichugu are spoken in Ndia constituency and Gichugu constituency of Kĩrĩnyaga county. Gĩkũyũ spoken in Mwea constituency in Kĩrĩnyaga county and the adjacent counties of Nyandarwa, Nakuru and Laikipia are generally not classified because these are settlements, settled by Gĩkũyũ from other areas. Mũriũki (1974 p.61) adds that Gĩkũyũ language is closely related with two other linguistic groups namely Meru and Embu. Among the Embu people there are two notable vernaculars that is Kiemebu and Kimbeere while among Meru people there are different subtribes who speak the following vernaculars, Igembe, Tigania, Imenti, Miutini, Igoji, Mwimbi, Muthamba, Chuka and Tharaka.

Gĩkũyũ is written with seven vowels this is confirmed by Leakey (1959) and Armstrong (1967). Leakey compares the pronunciation of these vowels with the English language as summarized below: a – like the vowel in “hut”; e – like the e in “hen”; ĩ – as the i in “it”. I suggest that in “ate” is closer to the real pronunciation.; i – like the e in “he”; o – like the au in author. I suggest the o in “only”; ũ – like the oo in “good.”; u – like the u in “who.” In case of consonants, Armstrong (1967) observes that in Gĩkũyũ language

consonants are always immediately preceded by vowels (except when initial in a sound-group) and followed immediately by vowels. That is, they never occur in juxtaposition or finally. Leakey (1959) notes that l, f, p, v, q, x and z consonants are missing in Gĩkũyũ and that the Gĩkũyũ r is something between r and l. Leakey also states that that c is pronounced ch and b “has a touch off, v and p.” For example: b-baba; ch-Chania river among many other examples.

Armstrong (1967) questions the veracity of orthographic introduced by Europeans in Kenyan languages including Gĩkũyũ. She argues that the various orthography hitherto used in Kenya are defective in that they do not provide distinctive letter for each essential vowel sound. She points out that the system advocated as the standard by the United Kikuyu Language Committee and used by Barlow in his Kikuyu Grammar endeavours to compensate for this defect by introducing diacritical marks which sadly are rarely used by Agĩkũyũ. Thiong’o (1986, p.74– 5) shares his frustrations when he set out to learn to write in Gĩkũyũ. He admits that words and tenses were even more slippery because of the unsatisfactory Gĩkũyũ orthography. He blames this sorry to the fact that Gĩkũyũ language initially is reduced to writing by non-native speakers such as European missionaries and they could not always identify the various lengths of vowels. He stresses that the distinction between short and long vowels is very important in Gĩkũyũ prose and poetry.

He laments that the prevailing orthography often left the reader to guess whether to prolong or shorten the vowel sound and that this lack of the means of making distinction between the long and short vowel sounds assumed a previous knowledge of all the words on the part of the reader. Additionally, this study observes that this scenario is still compounded by the fact that virtually all selected comedies titles and subtitles do not indicate accent markers.

Arising from the study and having studied Gĩkũyũ vernacular comedies sampled in this study, it is apparent that the status of Kenya indigenous languages is facing insurmountable challenges, which end up upsetting filmmakers using these languages as medium of communication. Given that Gĩkũyũ orthography has been described by some scholars as being defective for failing to provide distinctive letter for each

essential vowel sound, this does affect the textual narration of the films. For instance, most producers ignore inclusion of diacritical marks which occur in two of seven Gĩkũyũ vowels, namely; ‘ĩ’ and ‘ũ’. This is particularly evident when it comes to titling and sub-titling of comedies under review.



Figure 28. Credits in Nganga Mbute omit Gĩkũyũ’s diacritical markers (Njũgũna, 2008). (Source – Screen Frame)

The Gĩkũyũ are polygamous and each woman in a homestead has her own hut, *Nyũmba* and the man his own hut, *Thingira*. Each woman also has her own granary and all these structures are held together by the *Nja*. The *Nja* is bare earth and always swept clean and it is taboo for someone to trip and fall within it. It means there are things lying around loosely. The swept *Nja* also makes it difficult for snakes and other small animals to venture there. The food preparation and cooking also happens in the *Nja* when weather permits, and the inside of the hut is used mainly in the evenings and at night.

2.3.6 Conclusion

This second chapter has discussed filmic elements and symbols ranging from formal conventions (titles, genre and humour); narrative codes (gender-specific allegories, proverbs and culturally - ascriptive language); symbolic codes (includes mise en scène, setting, props, costume and make-up); technical codes (camera shots, angles, flashbacks, editing, semiotics, aural, and non-diegetic sounds); and written codes (Gĩkũyũ orthography). Through such analysis, the study has demonstrated that cinematographic tools have been employed in the selected comedies to bring out discernible cultural inscriptions on gender hierarchies, masculinity, and femininity. These films, I have argued, offer rich repertoire of symbols and cultural performances

which recalibrate contemporary narration of Gīkūyū cultural nuances. Moving on to the next chapter, I build on this use of technical filmic codes by discussing the specific approaches used within the comedy narratives to enunciate cultural symbolism.

CHAPTER THREE: CULTURAL SYMBOLS IN GĪKŪYŪ COMEDIES

3.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the second objective of this study which seeks to investigate the role of vernacular language in expressing Gīkūyū culture. The chapter applies Chandler's (2017) groupings of codes such as verbal language (phonological, syntactical, lexical, prosodic, and paralinguistic sub codes); bodily codes (bodily contact, proximity, physical orientation, appearance, facial expression, gaze, head nods, gestures and posture); and behavioural codes (protocols, rituals, role-playing, games) in the analysis of the selected comedies. The other theoretic concept used in this chapter is Roman Jakobson's idea that the production and interpretation of texts depends on the existence of codes or that set of conventions for communication. Chandler (2006, p.147) defines a code as a rule for linking signs to their meanings. According to Roman Jakobson's theory, since the very meaning of signs depends on the code within which it is situated, codes provide a framework within which signs make sense. The chapter examines the nexus between verbal and the nonverbal communication acts in the synthetic world of cinema. By employing multimodal transcription and corpus methodologies, the chapter offers insights into the use of verbal codes such as figurative language, naming practices and greetings and nonverbal communication modes such as proxemic and kinesics.

3.2. Language Symbols and their Application

Many authentic interpretations of African films point to the role of oral tradition, use of local languages in eliciting cultural nuances. Sperber and Wilson (1986) have given an elaborate elucidation on the role of relevance of verbal communication in an event where human speech is used. Russel describes the potency of oral traditions thus:

Each society has its own version of the oral tradition that should be thought of as "traditions" rather than a monolithic system. The oral tradition also covers a variety of modes of expression from stories to epics, from poems to songs. The storyteller is not a passive conduit for the story. Teller and tale form a unit where performance is united with message. The subjects of oral narrative are as varied as its expressions. Griots can present history, epic tales, folk lore, genealogy, and general knowledge in their stories... The oral tradition also expresses the collective values of the society. (Russel 1998, p. 198)

Against this backdrop the chapter analyses the selected comedies with the aim of describing the role Gikūyū language and locating meanings imbued within cultural expressive elements, whether expressed verbally; (as in case of proverbs, idioms, greetings) narrative forms; (names, expressions) or by non-verbal cues (movements, clothing, and social space) as forms of language codes which these films use to communicate cultural issues. These determine the denotative meaning (literal meaning attached to a sign) and the connotative meaning (the subterranean or cultural meaning) of the signs.

Chomsky (1957, p.13) defines language as a set of finite numbers and sentences each finite in length and constructed out of finite set of elements. He explains that language is innate, saying that critical parts of the human language ability are built into the brain and are programmed into human genes. On his part, Iwuchukwu (2016, p.578) defines language as a system of structured vocal symbols by means which humans beings make meaning. Ferdinand de Saussure (1966) first defined and laid out language as a system of signs and redefined the concept of language in linguistic study shifting the focus from a diachronic approach to a synchronic approach, giving us, the concept of *langue* and *Parole* stating that *langue* is a language system of signs and signified. Language, and by extension, any other object of semiotic inquiry, is a "system of signs that express ideas," a network of elements that signify only in relation to each other. Buckland (2000, p. 6) accentuates the fact that fundamental premise of semiotics is that “the whole of human experience, without exception, is an interpretive structure mediated and sustained by signs.”

Semiotics offers an all-embracing theory of human culture – or, more precisely, of human experience, belief, and knowledge. It is a theory in which humans are posited to have an indirect – mediated – relation to their environment. He theorises that natural language plays a decisive role in this process of mediation, of enabling individuals to control and understand their environment. Halliday (1978) sees language as social semiotic element that allows for social interpretation of meaning. Eblach & Trager (1942) describe language as a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means by which a social group operates. Other scholars such as Tallerman and Gibson (2012, p. 2) say that ‘language’ is not a monolithic entity, but rather a complex bundle of traits that must

have evolved over a significant time frame, some features doubtless appearing in species that preceded our own. Natural language is not all encompassing, for human culture consists of numerous other semiotic systems – such as film – that also mediate between individuals and their environment. Singh (2010) enunciates that by using language as a vehicle for creative expression it bequeaths to humans an important tool for giving them identity, power, history, and legacies. As a synthetic medium, a film allows multiple users to connect simultaneously through visual, aural, and non-verbal signs and codes, which can be referred to as multimodality (Scollon & Levine, 2004, Kress & Jewitt, 2003, p. 2). Basing its arguments on this language conceptual, this chapter focuses on verbal and non-verbal codes within Gīkūyū language as potentially expressing Gīkūyū culture. The sampled comedy films have deployed Gīkūyū language verbal and nonverbal signs in diverse linguistic and social systems.

3.3 Verbal and non-verbal Codes: The Role of Language in Expressing Gīkūyū Culture

Culture influences verbal communication in that the words used in verbal communication are culturally determined (Gamble & Gamble 2013 p.118) and varies from culture to culture. When something is of profound value to a culture, various lexical items are used to describe it. The essential role of language use is communication of signifiers. Through this system, different signification codes are made available to speech users. These codes can either be verbal or non-verbal codes.

According to Liftin (2012, p. 25-27) the term verbal communication refers to all those ways that individuals communicate using a linguistic code. He adds that each of these codes have grammar, syntax, and vocabulary. In verbal communication is a process by which information meanings and feelings are shared by people and by so doing fulfil expectations in each speech community (Mandy & Louw 2007 p. 110). While Lane (2016, p.133) holds that cultural relationships affect the way they people use verbal communication and that culture influences the language a great deal, interestingly a language has got innate ability to determine how speak perceive and interact with their immediate world.

Further, Bakic-Miric (2012, P.77) describes verbal codes as a set of rules about the use of words in the creation of messages. Language is also a code that is conveyed symbolically. Symbols are units of meaning that are conventional and arbitrary and although they are arbitrary language is governed by rules such as grammar, syntax and phonetic. He avers that there are five different but interrelated set of rules that work in harmony to create verbal code or language. These are phonology, morphology, semantics, syntactics and pragmatics. The study singles out semantics and pragmatic aspects in this chapter. The two linguistic elements have been chosen owing to their potency in eliciting key observations when analysed against the second objective of the study. The discussion of semantics is incomplete without noting distinction between denotative and connotative meanings of words employed in the selected comedies. Pragmatics have been preferred due to the fact it goes beyond the analysis of phonology, morphology, semantics and syntactics to bring about meaning of specific utterances in a context. This allows an individual to understand how to participate in a conversation in a speech community such as the use of figurative language and related expressions. Besides language, verbal communication utilizes also non-linguistic sign systems - these symbolic codes may be used in a way parallel to language (e.g., reinforcing gestures, such as using fingers when counting), or they may entirely replace language (e.g., using the index finger to point at things); some of them are capable of being used as codes in their own right (e.g., using body language in a noisy setting). Besides, certain features of **paralanguage** (e.g., eye gaze, head nod, leaning forward) is instrumental in organizing the mechanism of turn distribution in face-to face interactions.

3.3.1 Verbal Codes: Denotations and Connotations in Character Naming

Nystrom (2016, p.40) notes that “names and words are not practical labels, instead they are packed with meaning in many senses. Indeed, using a name is an efficient way to individualise a person or an object. According to Ferdinand de Saussure’s semiotic theory a name has got two parts, namely the sign and the signified or referent. When a person refers an object using a name, he does that by pointing with a concentrated linguistic expression (name) instead of describing or “explaining” it. The literal meaning between a name and its referent is called denotation while implied meaning existing between a name is called connotation.

A closer look at Gĩkũyũ grammar reveals many rules that are used in assigning meaning to objects and speech acts. Leakey (1959) explicates how parts of speech are constructed and deployed in speech acts. These parts of speech include nouns, verbs among others. Regarding the use in Gĩkũyũ language, Leakey discloses that the first three classes of nouns in Gĩkũyũ represent things which are considered to have a spirit. Leakey divides them according to the importance of the category of spirit, which they are deemed to possess.

He illustrates that Class I includes nouns that denote human beings. Humans may be removed from this class to another class (but still retain a spirit) due to scorn or hatred, or otherwise for having “some special connection with religion, or magic...” Examples of class one nouns as used in the selected comedies include: Mũthuri – man such as Kĩhenjo, Mũkũngũgũ, Machang’i, Kĩhoto, Kĩere, Wandahuhu and Gĩthendũ, Gathuri - small man, Gĩthuri - big man (derogatory), Athuri - many men, ithuri - many large men (derogatory) Mũtumia – married woman such as Warigia, Wahĩto among others; Gatumia - small woman (derogatory), Gĩtumia - big woman (derogatory) in this regard derogatory word is used by Warigia in **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo** when she is involved in a shouting match with Wanyũrũ. Others include Atumia - many women; Ndumia - many large women (derogatory); Mũirĩtu – initiated girl; Kairĩtu - small girl; and Mwanake – Unmarried but initiated man. Class II nouns have second class spirits, lower than that of humans. Most large trees and plants fall under this category. Additionally, epidemic diseases which are viewed as being spirit borne would according to Leakey (1959) normally go to class III, but for some reason may find themselves in class II. Examples include, Mũirimũ - spirit-borne disease Mũkũngũgũ, Mũkindũri, Mũgumo, Mũthige (wolf).

While Class III is used to denote nearly all birds, reptiles, insects, mammals, and many lesser plants, are in this class. Humans in this class have received quite a demotion and social contempt, examples of these terms include: Ngĩa – pauper, Ngombo - serf or slave, Ndungata (servant) and Gĩtumumu (a blind person). Machang’i refer to Gĩtumumu in one of the scenes when he asks his wife to give him some money to buy a cigarette without a butt which is suitable for a blind person. He derisively refers to it in that it can be lit from any direction. Other names belonging to this class include

Nyamĩndigi (a mythical bird); *Nyagathanga* (a type of a bird associated with Gĩkũyũ and Mũmbi original home) and *Ndutura* (a dove). Naming of female characters appears to follow a predetermined system. Nearly all female characters start with a prefix ‘*Wa*’. This observation is also made by Wakaba (2013, p. 9) when he states, “Almost all the female names in the Agĩkũyũ community begin with the prefix “*Wa*” added to the exclamation (e.g., Wangũi, Wangarĩ, Wangũi, Wanjikũ, Wambũi, Wanjirũ, Wairimũ, etc.). Female characters whose names start with ‘*wa*’ include: Warigia, Wanyũrũ, Warũkũngũ in **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo**; Wahĩto in **Kĩrĩro kĩa Mwana** and; Wakarĩndĩ in **Nganga Mbute**.

During one of the FGDs, an elder argued that men’s names starting with a prefix ‘*Wa*’ are predominantly held by men from Nyeri or Gaaki region. Such names include, but not limited to, Wachira, Wangombe, Wambugu, Waruru, Watene, Wahome, Wairia and Wangondu. He also observed that common Gĩkũyũ names such as Kamau, Njoroge, Kimani or Mbugua denote Kiambu or Mũrang’a origin. Further to these assertions, it is claimed that Kĩrĩnyaga naming system is highly influenced by their neighbours, Embu people who have a penchant for naming their men after wild animals. Such names include, but not limited to, *Nyaga* (ostrich), *Mbogo* (buffalo), *Ngari* (leopard), *Nderi* (Eagle), *Ndwiga* (giraffe), *Njogu* (elephant) and *Mũrũthi* (Lion).

There are other terms that have been used in the selected comedies to refer to specific quality or character. For instance, among the womenfolk, *Ngatha* and *Nyagacũ* have been used in **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo**. Within Gĩkũyũ cultural context, *Ngatha* refers to a prosperous woman, a woman of substance of the *Nyakĩnyua* or *Makanga* grade. *Ngatha* is admired for simplicity yet overpowering and enviable presence. As Gachiri (2000) notes, the two terminologies, *Ngatha* and *Nyagacũ* were used to identify and describe different attributes of co-wives. According to Gĩkũyũ tradition, *Nyagacũ* is the name that is given to the unloved, looked-down upon, despised wife in a homestead. Wanjũi (2009, p.77) justifies ascription to this term, *Nyagacũ*, to a wife who is lazy, or is disobedient, or is a bad cook, or God forbid, any woman who is accused of committing adultery. On the other hand, *Ngatha* is personification of Gĩkũyũ virtues, forbearance, handiwork, beauty, and all that makes a human being great. She

is a woman who never failed, never erred in her responsibilities. She is described aptly by Gachiri (2000):

Ngatha at any time fields are neat and clean, without weeds. Her granaries are always full, her firewood piles are ever high, her indoor goat pens are always well stocked, her husband and children are well fed and happy. When harvest time comes about, she often has to feed the maize from previous harvest to her animals to clear granaries and thus make room for the new crop. (Gachiri, 2000, p.86)

She also cooks special dishes for family and friends whenever the husband spends the night with *Nyagacũ* he comes to *Ngatha* for water to bath in the morning. *Nyagacũ* on the other hand, is the name given to the woman despised and unloved by the husband. In **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo II**, there is profound rivalry between Wanyũrũ and Machang’i on one hand and Warigia on the other hand. The three individuals are involved in frequent marital squabbles which prompts Wanyũrũ to sing a song extolling virtue of *Ngatha*, a true virtuous, graceful, and respected Gĩkũyũ lady. In this comedy, Wanyũrũ is presented as a true epitome of *Ngatha*, while her co-wife is personified as the exact opposite. *Mũtumia uriangatha niamenyagirira mũciĩ wake*, this translates, ‘A true Gĩkũyũ lady is the one who takes care of her husband.’ Warigia is portrayed as a destroyer of her husband with a penchant for casting spells on her husband to disempower him.

Arising from the discussions of elders who participated in FGDs discussions, *Mũtumia wa makanga* is a woman past child-bearing age but who is still active. The name *Ngatha* is used by Wanyũrũ in **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo Part 2**. Wanyũrũ tells Warigia that a true *Ngatha* defends her home by exhibiting *Ngatha* qualities such as forbearing, fortitude, love of the family, respect of the husband among other qualities which Warigia is deficient in.

Another name that features prominently in these comedies is *Kĩhĩĩ*, a kikuyu word for an uncircumcised youth, In Kikuyu tradition such youth is considered immature in thought and action (Irungu, 1999, p. 154). On his part, Githuku (2016, p. 6) adds that *Kĩhĩĩ* is Agĩkũyũ word for a teenage boy. He describes the word as being synonymous with disobedience or bad behaviour. The name is socially despised hence Ndegwa’s (2006, p.84) admission that the use of term *kĩhĩĩ* is the highest form of provocation that

could lead to fierce fight. The word *kĩhĩĩ* therefore is a sign that represent signified in this case the uncircumcised lot. The use of this word denotes the referential meaning of a sign. In this case an uncircumcised boy. The word *kĩhĩĩ* connotes the various social overtones, cultural implications, or emotional meanings associated with negativity. The word embodies immaturity, truancy, irresponsibility, recklessness, and incompleteness. Being a *kĩhĩĩ* is like being condemned into cultural purgatory. On surface you belong to the tribe, but you do not have rights to engage, to be consulted, to belong and enjoy social and cultural privileges.

For this reason, a *kĩhĩĩ* is still considered childish, and the term is used to insult. One of the comedies under study, **Mũici na Kĩhĩĩ** mainly derives its name, motif, and plot from this very connotation as Wandahuhu has failed to undergo the circumcision rite at the right time. Due to his condition, Wandahuhu fails to enjoy his matrimonial rights, exercise authority over his wife and to participate in social functions befitting his age within the Gĩkũyũ customs.

Other names signify the cross-cultural interactions between Gĩkũyũ and their immediate neighbours such as Maasai and Akamba. In this regard, there are names whose origin is a result of intra and inter cultural assimilations. Examples include Nyokabi, Wokabi, Hinga and Wamaitha. This view is supported by a group of five men (aged 70 years and above) who participated in the FGDs. They claimed that names like Wokabi, Nyokabi, Wamaitha, Robi and Hinga originated from *Ukabi* (Maasai). They explained that Wokabi is possibly attributed to a Maasai man who is assimilated to Gĩkũyũ community through what Leakey (1976) terms as a blood-brother initiation rite.

Under this rite, a Maasai man is accepted into the community after undergoing an elaborate ceremony. On the other hand, Nyokabi is a name that is given to a girl abducted from Maasailand during numerous raids by *Njamba ya Ita* (Gĩkũyũ Warriors). Hinga (hypocrite) is a name that is given to a Gĩkũyũ or Maasai man, who is assimilated in both Gĩkũyũ and Maasai cultures and is conversant in both Gĩkũyũ and Maasai languages.

These men were never trusted by their fellow tribe members for fear of betrayal. There are several names deployed in the selected comedies that describe abstract nouns, such as Kīhoto, Wandahuhu, Warigia and Warūkūngū. Kīhoto is an abstract noun for justice. Wandahuhu literally means "a glutton." He is the greediest person of all time; the victims of his rapacious appetite are carefully chosen. They are those who cannot defend themselves, principally the children. Another name worth mentioning is Warigia, which denotes a woman who finishes her chores last. This name is given to Machang'i troublesome wife. While Warūkūngū is a person from a dusty place, this name is given to Kīere's wife.

The names can therefore be read as signs that signify something deeper within Gīkūyū cultural context. This is most evident in the naming of children characters. In **Mūndūrūme nī Mūgambo**, Machang'i's son, being his first born is named after his father, Kīhoto. When Machang'i is left to take care by his wife Warigia, Machang'i vows that if the boy is named after the mother's side, he would have killed her to avenge Warigia's cruelty towards him. This verbal outburst points to the fact that this naming method by Agīkūyū triggers subtle discrimination on the part of parents, with some parents showing affection or dislike towards a child, depending on whether he or she is named after wife's or husband's side. In the same comedy, we encounter *Ithe* and *Nyina wa* Kīng'ori. Although this is not mentioned, we infer that Kīere has named his son after his father, Kīng'ori.

In **Kīrīro kīa Mwana**, Wandahuhu is caught in the middle of nowhere after his wife fails to bear for him a child, "*Woigire ndigatua baba witu Karūmaindo*", this translates, "why did you fail to bear me a son, will die before naming my father Karūmaindo?" Wandahuhu is heard complaining in many the scenes. Eager to have a child of his own, Wandahuhu befriend Veronike, who unbeknown to him, is two months pregnant. Wandahuhu is convinced that he is responsible for Veronike's pregnancy prompting him to move into her house. His action attracts his wife curse for betraying her, even after staying together for over ten years as a man and a wife. When Veronike delivers a baby boy, Wandahuhu is elated and goes ahead to name the child after his own father. When Veronike is left alone in the house, she is in dilemma as to which name will be given to her child because she knew the real biological father, but she needed

Wandahuhu to take care of her financial needs, “*Riu ngugwita atia, wi Karũmaindo kana Kamenju?*” she quips. This shows the importance of naming process because a name confers to an individual a coveted stripe in the social and political set of Agĩkũyũ people.

As stated by Zawawi (1993, p.6) a name constructs a person. This means that the name a person carries in one way or the other creates an attitude in those who hear it even before such people have a facial interaction with the owner of the name. A name also speaks to the dreams or expectations of the person who names a child as it constantly reminds the named person in a symbolic way, of who that person is and the expectations of those who named them.

During the FGDs, it is established that Agĩkũyũ had a deeper knowledge of their immediate environment and made every effort to preserve trees. They preserved the environment by first designating or classifying trees in their bid to show their respective importance. After watching the comedies, the respondents could identify numerous tree names that have been used to name and identify various characters featuring in the selected comedies. They identified the following names associated with Gĩkũyũ floral (trees) heritage: *Mũkũngũgũ* (*Commiphora eminii*), *Mũkindũri* (*Croton Megalacarpus*), Kanyanya (derived from tomato) and Gathoroko (cowpeas). They also noted that although *Mũkũngũgũ* had limited uses in Gĩkũyũ cultural life, it is regarded as a critical plant that complimented yam tendrils and hence a popular saying among the Agĩkũyũ, “*Gũikarania hamwe ta gikwa na Mũkũngũgũ.*” This is translated thus: “Being together like a yam tendril resting on a *Mũkũngũgũ.*” *Mũkindũri* is very common tree planted on field boundaries, it is used as a firewood. Boys used their nuts to play a popular child game called *Mbira*. Additionally, the nuts were also used to play other games what Cagnolo (2006, p.75) describes thus, “Another game is the *giuthi.*” Six holes are made in the ground and each player has six little balls which he should get into the 22 holes according to a certain combination of numbers. Girls also used the nuts as playthings too. *Nyanya* (tomatoes) and *Thoroko* are used as staple food among the Agĩkũyũ. Surprisingly, all characters named after these trees are support characters. Some like *Mũkindũri* die to satiate the desire and aspirations of others. The same can

be said of Kanyanya who is impregnated by Machang'i, with Gathoroko ending up divorcing her wife following a protracted marital conflict.

Respondents identified other characters whose names resemble their demeanour and deportment. Such character includes Kĩmenyi and Wakarĩndĩ. *Kĩmenyi* is a name which loosely translates, 'the know it all.' As the name suggests Kĩmenyi suffers the folly and indignity of his own idiocy when his know it all attitude makes his girlfriend Wakarĩndĩ to take the life of her daughter, Mũkindũri. On another hand, the name *Wakarĩndĩ* is a word that denotes a person associated with a multitude. Meaning such a person belongs to many. On her part, Wakarĩndĩ loyalty is torn between her own people and her suitor, Kĩmenyi. Ndũng'ũ (2013) acknowledges regenerative nature of Gĩkũyũ language when he writes:

The creative and dynamic nature of the naming practice of Gĩkũyũ ethnic community is demonstrated by the capacity to use specific diminutive prefixes to create new names based on the existing ones. The newly created names were premised on specific criteria in which the attributes of individuals formed the basis for symbolic interpretation of inherent characteristics in term of degrees of amount, size, quality, and value in respect to diminution. Sometimes symbolic as well as metaphorical names were created. Interpretation of observed behaviour of individuals, shape and general appearance as well as body mass for example among other characteristics formed the initial catalyst in name coinage. The most commonly used diminutive prefixes are *Ga* and *Ka*. These two prefixes are popular in the name formation practices and are believed to account for the long list of newly introduced names in the language. (Ndũng'ũ, 2013, p.8)

There is also *Gĩ* and *Kĩ* to describe an enormous object or item. Examples that can be cited in the selected comedies include *Gĩthende* (owner of a big buttock). On the other hand, diminutive prefix is used to generate the following names: *Gathoroko* which is derived from *Thoroko* (a type of a legume called cowpea); *Kĩmenyi* derived from *Umenyo* (knowledge); *Kanyanya* derived from *Nyanya* (tomatoes).

Like in any other language, the most important grammatical elements in Gĩkũyũ are nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Most Gĩkũyũ nouns consist of a prefix and a stem. These grammatical elements feature a greater deal in the way characters are named. A look at the name Gĩkũyũ, sheds more light on this concept. Routledge & Routledge (1968) give the probable origin of the name Gĩkũyũ. Several different

species of fig trees grow in Central Kenya and they are all revered by the people - some species more than others. '*Kũyũ*' is a term in Gĩkũyũ language for a fig tree and "*Gĩ*" is the locative. Gĩkũyũ therefore, is simply "the place of the fig trees" and Gĩkũyũ, the people of the place of Fig trees." Such a lexical pattern is evident in the comedy films. For instance, the name Gathoroko, (Machang'i wife) consists of the prefix "*Ga*", a diminutive, and the root "*thoroko*." In every noun, it is the stem that carries the real meaning of the noun while the prefix gives extra information about the noun, whether it is singular or plural, diminutive, or augmentative or whether it is concrete or abstract.

In Bantu languages, the prefix also shows the sort of concordial agreement that the noun should enter with other grammatical elements in a sentence such as verbs, adverbs, adjectives, pronouns, and demonstratives (Mugane, 1999). In case of name Wandahuhu, it consists of prefix '*wa*' and the root '*ndahuhu*.' This is a name that has been adopted by one of the main characters in **Mũicĩ na kĩhĩ** and **Kĩrĩro kĩa Mwana** comedies respectively. This name literally means, a glutton, a greedy one, a self-serving person with no room for others. In **Mũicĩ na kĩhĩ**, Wandahuhu picks the 'money bag' and engages in a lot of folly to conceal it. Warigia, another name follows the same Gĩkũyũ linguistic logic.

3.3.1.1 Practice of Teknonymy Among Agĩkũyũ

Teknonymy is word is borrowed from the combination of two Greek words: *τέκνον*, "child" and *ὄνομα*, "name" (Panopi and Rolda 2006, p. 170). It is also known as a paedonymic and refers to the practice of referencing parents by the names of their children. This practice is well established among the Agĩkũyũ as evidenced in the selected comedies. Goddard (1996, p.72) concludes that teknonymy is a practice deeply rooted in some societies where relationship name is preferred, which is then used as alternative. He is of the view that in many non-Western indigenous communities' adult were known by their relationship to an offspring and where there are no children, the relationship is attributed to a niece, nephew, or sibling.

Cormier, (2003) makes inferences to the fact that teknonymy is consanguineous:

One might even consider it as a reversal of descent, in that identity is constructed through one's descendants rather than one ancestor. It restricts the retention of genealogical information because of the name of forebears are merged with those of the living, particularly when original, given names fall out of the use. (Cormier, 2003, p. 76)

Haviland et al (2010, p.402) hold that teknonymy occurs in societies in which only close relatives are permitted to address someone by his other personal name. If outsiders or inferior do so, it may be regarded as inappropriate or disrespectful. As claimed by Howard and Millard (1997, p.140) among the Chagga of Mt Kilimanjaro, teknonymy signified parenthood which is a major anchor of personal identity and central part of life. In the words of Kiruhi (2006, p.6) the social status of the traditional Kikuyu wife is enhanced when she is addressed as *Nyina wa Kamau* (mother of Kamau). This title remains even if she loses all her children. Therefore, it can be concluded that among the Agĩkũyũ, for one to be considered fully adult, one must become a parent first. This helps to explain why Wandahuhu's marriage with Wahĩto as depicted in **Kĩĩro kĩa Mwana** run into turbulent waters when the couple fails to produce a child in their ten-year marriage. It is a cultural taboo and consequently they part ways.

In **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo**, teknonymy permeates throughout the storyline where characters address one another using their children's name. For example, we encounter such names as *Ithe wa Kĩng'ori* (Father of Kĩng'ori) and *Nyina wa Kĩng'ori* (mother of Kĩng'ori) about Mr. & Mrs. Kĩere. Machang'i and Warigia invariably address one another as *Nyina wa Kĩhoto* (Kababa) and *Ithe wa Kĩhoto* (Kababa) respectively. Wandahuhu is addressed as *Ithe wa Karũmaindo* while his wives Ebethi and Gathoroko are addressed as *Nyina wa Karũmaindo* respectively.

This is in conformity with Gĩkũyũ customs where it is considered impolite to address an adult with a child by his first name. It is important to note children belonging to adult children's age-grade address him in the same manner as his children do for it is considered ill-mannered to address the father or mother by his own name or names; his children speak of him as 'my or our father,' other children address him as 'father of so-and-so.' Unless he is a rascal, they dare not mention his name in private or in public,

except when mentioning it in a collective sense, that is, in referring to the family group, such as *mbarĩ ya Mũcobe* (Machang'i family), or *mũgũnda wa Machang'i* (Machang'i land), etc. About one's father in third person, an elderly person can use *thoguo* as in the following sentence, "*Ekũ thoguo?*" where is your father? The mother is called *maitũ* (my or our mother), *nyina* (his, her or their mother), while '*nyũkwa*' is equivalent of '*thoguo*' (your mother)." An analysis of selected comedies shows that Machang'i's uses the name '*nyũkwa*' severally when explaining his burdens to his son Kababa, who is also known as Kĩhoto.

3.3.1.2 Semiosis of Dramatic Irony and Monologue

In dramatic irony, the characters think one thing to be true, but the audience knows something else to be true. Merriam-Webster (1995) defines it as a plot device consisting of irony that is produced when audiences' or readers' knowledge of events or individual surpasses that of character: He adds:

The words and actions of the characters therefore take on a different meaning for the audience. This may happen when, for example, a character reacts in an appropriate or foolish way or when a character lacks self-awareness and thus acts under false assumption. (Merriam-Webster, 1995, p.345)

The device has been used by man since time immemorial. Lee (2001, p.116) says that the device is as widespread as symbol and that it has been deeply embedded in people's innate abilities. He avers that people have been ironic since the time they became social. He calls it sardonic which can lead to bitter or cynical expressions. Pfister (1988, p.56) notes that it occurs when communication element in play or film interfere with each other and overlap. Dempster (1932, p.251) attribute it to existence of a strong contrast, unperceived by character in a story between the surface meaning of his words or deeds and something else is happening in a story. This creates interest and tension in a story or play. It creates an outcome that is contrary to what was, or might have been, expected.

Turner (1926, p.4) extols the virtues of this device when he says, that dramatic irony involves two people who have no connection with each other. One person, the onlooker, perceives another acting in a manner which is the result of ignorance, on the part of the actor, of certain facts known to the onlooker. The study observed that in the selected comedies under study cases of dramatic irony abound. Several instances can be cited.

The use of dramatic irony helps in positioning the cinematography as a formidable tool for telling a Gĩkũyũ language story.

In **Mũicĩ na Kĩhũ**, Wandahuhu thinks that his wife has already revealed his biggest secret (the fact that he is uncircumcised) to Gĩthendũ, yet the audience know that the conversation between Gathoroko and Gĩthendũ is about an urgency matter revolving inability of Wathende to comply with an earlier order from the local chief. Likewise, there is a dramatic irony when Wandahuhu visits Gĩthendũ with an intention of revealing to Gĩthendũ that he is yet to be circumcised. In another instance, Gathoroko is oblivious of a conspiracy between Gĩthendũ and her husband that led to circumcision of Wandahuhu.

In **Kĩrĩro kĩa Mwana** Wandahuhu walks away from his matrimonial home and joins Veronike's thinking that he was responsible for her pregnancy. Wandahuhu displays lack of tact when he dismisses his legitimate wife and accuses her for being barren. Later, we learn that the person who was responsible for Veronike's pregnancy was Gĩkaru. Upon learning of this truth, he is crestfallen. His fears are confirmed at a clinic when the doctor informs him that his sperm count is too low and cannot impregnates a woman.

In **Mũtikũnyarira**, Kĩhenjo fights with law enforcement officers but keep this to his self. He never informs his wife Magĩrĩ and his son Karũrũma of what had transpired. They only learn of his heinous crime when the police officers storm their home in search of Kĩhenjo. In **Mũthuri nĩ Mĩtugo**, Macang'i and Kanyanya keep Wanyũrũ and Kĩhoto in dark over Machang'i's extra marital relationship with Kanyanya, which eventually led to her pregnancy. They only learn of this debacle at the end of comedy.

We are invited to Wandahuhu's home following an altercation between Wandahuhu and his wife Ebethi over the '*mondo*' saga. The chief learns that Wandahuhu is in the possession of the bag, allegedly containing Kenya Shillings two million, stolen from a local Coffee Cooperative society. The Chief exhibits his cunningness when he offers to return the said amount back to the bank. As he goes away, he soliloquises that his days

of abject poverty and meagre pay are finally over. His dramatic monologue exposes him as a man in need of money and wealth.

3.3.1.3 Proverbs as Communicative Elements

Basically, the purpose of communication is the preservation, growth, and development of the species Smith and Miller (1968, p.265). The ability to exchange information is shared by all communication systems, and several nonhuman systems share some features of human language. The fundamental difference between human and non-human communication is that animals are believed to react instinctively, in a stereotyped and predictable way. Mostly, human behaviour is under the voluntary control, and human language is creative and unpredictable. It is what gives people an identity through manipulation of its creative mien. Singh (2010) articulates that by using language as a vehicle for creative expression it bequeaths to humans an important tool for giving them identity, power, history, and legacies:

Creative expressions are the most visible symbols in understanding human identities. They mark and embody the passage of time and the way of life for individuals. A statue, a stanza, or a city's architecture may well reveal to us many things about its creators or the groups that have successively inhabited or experienced such forms. Representations—linguistic, visual, musical, or otherwise— are, therefore, practices created and interpreted by individuals. Being representations, they can be shared, inherited, and left behind as legacies...Creative expressions reflect but also constitute our reality; the mirror tells us who we are. Who are we, then, when surrounded by several mirrors, each showing a different and changing portrait...Such is the power of representation or art; expressions beget power by providing an identity to the issues they enact. Once the contours have been set, what we do with our identities is business as usual. No wonder, then, that art calls forth such passions and reasons everywhere. Globalization has given metapower to actors hitherto not present in our living rooms. Who decides which representations are creative? (Singh, 2010, p.3)

Language is both an individual and asocial phenomenon. It is individual because it manifests itself in the habits of each individual speaker. Proverb forms part of man's oral tradition. Mieder (2008, p.10) refers to an American paremiologist Bartlett Jere Whiting (1904– 1995) who reviewed many definitions of proverbs and ended up summarizing his findings in a lengthy conglomerate version of his own. Defines it as an expression which, owing its birth to the people, testifies to its origin in form and phrase. It expresses what is apparently a fundamental truth – that is, a truism, – in

homely language, often adorned, however, with alliteration and rhyme. It is usually short, but need not be; it is usually true, but need not be. Some proverbs have both a literal and figurative meaning, either of which makes perfect sense; but more often they have but one of the two. A proverb must be venerable; it must bear the sign of antiquity, and, since such signs may be counterfeited by a clever literary man, it should be attested in different places at different times. Ashu (2010, p.82) referring to the *Longman Larousse Dictionary*, defines proverb as: “A brief familiar maxim of folk wisdom, usually compressed in form, often involving a bold image and frequently a jingle that catches the memory.” Ashu (ibid, 2010) adds:

In most African societies, proverbs are highly valued. They are often played on drums, included in songs, epics and folktales. In several West African cultures, once literacy skill is measured by the fluency with which one can use proverbs to express his experiences. (Ashu, 2010, p.82)

While noting the Swedish definition Ashu notes that: “a proverb is what man thinks”. In simple terms, a proverb is a selection of words put into sentences from detailed observation of behaviour of human beings, animals, plants, natural phenomena, folklore, beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, emotions and the entire system of thoughts. Domínguez (2010, p. 71-72) emphasises that the socio-discursive functions roughly resonate with the “functions” of the elements that constitute verbal communication as claimed by Roman Jakobson (1960). Jakobson’s theoretical construct requires that their function be accounted for in relation to these six interdependent elements, each of which foregrounds orientating function in linguistic communication: An Addresser (who serves an emotive function), a Context (which serves a referential function), a Message (which serves a poetic function), a Contact. (which serves a phatic function), a Code (which serves a metalinguistic function), and an Addressee (who serves a conative function).

The interdependence of these constitutive factors prohibits us from thinking that only one function is being served in a communicative exchange or speech event, but Jakobson does note that the functions are organized hierarchically in relation to the goal of the speech event, so that any given function may assume a predominant role or a prominence considering the socio-communicative situation. This allows us to talk of

the most prominent function apparent regarding a speech event and the socio-communicative context in which that event is embedded. Regarding the socio-communicative situations that Domínguez expects proverbs to (1) support an argumentative claim concerning behaviour; (2) to teach or promote reflection by way of advice; or (3) to establish interpersonal rapport. An additional aspect in the use of proverbs which could arguably be considered a purpose seemed to be (4) to add variety to a conversation and thus entertain or engage the listeners by the verbal creativity manifested in the proverb's poetic quality.

Speaking of Gĩkũyũ proverbs Barra (1939, p. ii) observes: "The proverbs are quintessence of Gĩkũyũ eloquence and represented for centuries the code of tribal laws...they are full of wisdom and embody the maxims of natural law 'written by God on the heart of all men'. Therefore, they are for the Agĩkũyũ a precious inheritance, which must not be lost in the changes taking place." On his part Wango (2009) recognises that proverbs serve to community by facilitating acquisition of knowledge and wisdom which is vital to navigate intricate life's labyrinth. Ndaigiri (2013) terms proverbs as:

Short expressions of popular wisdom based on long experience. The proverb language is rich, picturesque and expresses hidden or obvious wisdom, truth, a discovery of ideas as well as life lessons. They are used in teaching ethical and moral codes of the community and they do reflect the culture of a community and traditions of its people. (Ndaigiri, 2013, p.viii)

Chinua Achebe (1994) once wrote in *Things Fall Apart*, 'among the Igbo the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten.' This observation can also be true in respect of Agĩkũyũ people. The art of proverbs is highly valued and regarded as expression of cultural intelligence. Those who were unable to use or comprehend the use of proverbs were usually despised and held in low regard. Riddles were passed to young ones alongside tales and stories that carried a lot of innuendos.

Most of these stories have two sets of characters. They have protagonists-representing, mostly human beings and representing good values and antagonists in form of ogres (*marimũ*) representing evil. These stories also used animal characters such as hare, hyena, elephants, tortoise, fox, dove and weaver bird with varied characteristics (good

or bad) that is necessary to use as a learning lesson to the younger ones. However, many respondents interviewed in this study mourned the death of *boi-ini* and *Thingira*, man's traditional hut, where youngsters converged at night to learn more about the tribal lore as well share with elders a series of stories. The respondents pointed that today *Thingira* has been transformed into Television set and smart phones which incidentally alienate Gĩkũyũ children from their oral culture. The following proverbs which are situated in sampled comedies signify how deeply the art of proverb is valued by Agĩkũyũ. One proverb summarises their use, potency, and effect in the following proverb: "*Ciunagwo rukomo, kimenyi akamenya ikiunwo.*" This loosely translates thus; We speak by proverbs: he who is intelligent will understand.

3.3.1.3.1 Love Proverbs

Wa mundu ni umwe, Giki kingi ni kirindi- This proverb which loosely translates, "A person has only one confidant; the rest is the crowd." The English language equivalent is 'Two is a company; three is a crowd. Used in *Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo*, the proverb depicts a time when the love between Warigia and Machang'i is blossoming, they are in their nirvana soon after their fairy tale wedding.

3.3.1.3.2 Proverbs about Survival

Ireragira rukui-ini ikaya kuigana, this translates thus: "the cimex (moth) lives in the firewood and still reaches its full growth. Machang'i uses the proverb is used in *Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo*, when he laments to his young son, Kababa (Kĩhoto), assuring him that despite his current upheavals, Kababa (Kĩhoto) will become of age in the fullness of time.

Njogu ndiremagwo ni miguongo yayo. The literal meaning of this proverb is, "The elephant is never overpowered by its tusks. This proverb is used by Kĩhenjo, when he advises her sister to assume parental responsibility by taking care of her daughter, Mũkindũri. The proverb is also used by Machang'i in *Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo* when he gets off his son, Kababa, off his back once he arrives at Kĩere's compound.

3.3.1.3.3 Proverbs on Gender Relations

Ngingo ndiri yakira mutwe, this is used by Nyina wa Kĩng'ori in **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo** the literal translation for this proverb is, “The neck does not grow above the head.” Using this proverb as an analogy, Kĩhoto informs Machang’i that as head of the family, it is incumbent upon him to regain his authority over his wife Warigia, who in this context is being regarded as a ‘neck.’

Kĩrema arũme ni kĩgariũre, this proverb literally translates, “What overpower men’s efforts has been turned many times.” This is about Kĩere reaction towards Machang’i after he accompanies him to his home, only for Machang’i’s wife to treat him with contempt and disrespect. After this, Kĩere admitted that Machang’i is in deep trouble. The proverb is also used by Wandahuhu, when he and Gĩthendũ finally managed to trick her wife Gathoroko that Gĩthendũ has been taken ill. Gĩthendũ convinced Gathoroko to let him take her husband to the hospital, an event that later redefined her husband relationship with her. Wandahuhu goes through a full transformation and when he is finally circumcised, he confronts Gathoroko and turn tables against her machination.

Mũicĩ na kĩhũ akenaga kia rua, na Mũicĩ na mutumia akenaga akua, this proverb literally means, that “he who commits a crime in the company of a boy lives in fear until the boy is circumcised and he who commits crime in the company of a woman, will live in fear until she dies. The proverb has been used to refer to various scenes in the selected comedies. Indeed, **Mũicĩ na Kĩhũ** derives its title from this proverb. In **Mũicĩ na Kĩhũ**, Gathoroko, Wandahuhu’s wife is unable to keep to herself the fact that her husband is uncircumcised. She uses this information to blackmail her husband instead. When Wandahuhu is finally circumcised he sets forth to exercise his authority.

When Wandahuhu sticks to his guns, the wife finally ‘exposes’ her husband to the villagers. She is however embarrassed when she learns that Wandahuhu is circumcised. Wandahuhu suffers the same fate at the hands of a woman, who is unable to keep a secret in **Mũicĩ na Kĩhũ Part Two**. Ebethi, his second wife, steals the bag that contains ‘his fortunes’ and after a physical confrontation, which attracts the local chief and wants an explanation on why there is a commotion. Instead of Ebethi protecting her husband

from authorities, she goes ahead and spills the beans to the chagrin of Wandahuhu. The chief confiscates the ‘bag’.

3.3.1.3.4 Proverbs on Wisdom and Hard work

Njika na njika ndiri maruru, the proverb can be translated in English thus, “The action and subsequent reaction does not generate bitterness.” This proverb is used by Machang’i when he finally regains his authority over his wife, Warigia. Warigia has no locus Standi to complain against her husband since it is now a payback time.

Mwana uri kio ndagaga muthambia, this proverb means that “A hardworking child will always have someone to take care of him.” This means that society will compensate a hardworking person no matter his background or nature of his condition. The proverb is used in **Mũthuri nĩ Mĩtugo** comedy. This is when Kĩhoto urges her daughter to redouble her efforts to gain favour from her employers, who also happen to be their family friends, Machang’i and Wanyũrũ.

Mucie ni kurarwo uraragwo, ndutindagwo. The proverb is used in **Mũthuri nĩ Mĩtugo** and loosely translates, “the house is for sleeping in by night, not for staying in by day.” The proverb is used by Wanyũrũ, when serving breakfast to her husband.

Mucie Ukuaga Ngaguro, the proverb can be translated in English thus; “a home is ruined by husband scolding his wife over food.” This proverb is used in **Mũthuri nĩ Mĩtugo** comedy when Kĩhoto complements Wanyũrũ for serving him with a breakfast after he pays a visit to Machang’i’s home. The scene also introduces product advertising, specifically ‘Aberdare Mupa’ Maize flour.

Thiga ni mũruu: marara nja gũtiri. The proverb which appears in **Mũicĩ na Kĩhĩ** loosely translates, “Since now Thiga is circumcised, there is no reward for the night vigil.” This proverb is used by Gĩthendũ after he learns from Gathoroko that Wathende is yet compensate Gathoroko after being prevailed upon by the local chief. Wathende is being accused of letting his livestock feed on Wandahuhu’s farm.

Mūicī athinagia murogi, the proverb is used in **Mūthuri nī Mītugo**, this proverb loosely translates, “A thief will cause the poisoner to change his residence.” This proverb is used by Machang’i after he learns that there are petty thieves terrorising Kīhoto in his village.



Figure 29. Product advertising in some of the comedies (Mūrūthi, 2008). (Source – Screen Frame)

Murunguru wa njamba utahaga na ime. “The male fox hunts at dawn or skips in the dew.’ Ndaigiri (2013) explains that at dawn the fox cannot be seen by its prey therefore to catch the prey is easier for it sees well in dark. The proverb is used by Kīhoto when referring to Machang’i habit of waking up early to attend to his businesses.

Maundu ni ndiganiro, this proverb means, “the important things are left in the locker.” In other words, important issues are not shared with everybody. In **Mūthuri nī Mītugo**, this proverb is used by Machang’i and Kīhoto about a simmering tension between Wanyūrū and her house help Kanyanya. She is also Kīhoto’s daughter.

Giburi kirumarumi gitiumagia ruua, this proverb loosely translates, “A goat that keeps on walking around never fails to put weight.” This proverb is used by Kīhoto in **Mūthuri nī Mītugo**, when justifying why it is necessary not to ignore an invitation to a feast. He assertion is validated by his own daughter when she says that, “My father’s character is synonymous with food.”

Cia Mucii ti como. The proverb loosely translates; “Family matters should not be revealed to outsiders”. The proverb is used in **Mũthuri nĩ Mĩtugo** by Machang’i when he dissuades Kanyanya against revealing the person responsible for her pregnancy.

‘*Mundu mugi ndari mihere ya uhoro*’- Gĩthendũ tells Wandahuhu who is blabbering about his libido issues. The proverb means ‘One does not need to belabour when telling his story to an intelligent person.’

3.3.1.3.5 Semantic Discussions on the Identified Proverbs

In traditional and modern contexts Gĩkũyũ proverbs fulfil social, religious, political, and communicative functions. Just as the proverbs are used all over the world, Gĩkũyũ proverbs are products of the people’s socio, political, environmental, cultural, and geographical experience. In other words, they are used to express the forms and the situation, flora and fauna, of the people according to their natural environment. The study analysed semiotic elements of the following proverbs as deployed in the selected comedies.

1. *Wa mundu ni umwe, Giki kingi ni kirindi-*, “A person has only one confidant; the rest is the crowd.”
2. *Mwana uri kio ndagaga muthambia*, this proverb means that “A hardworking child will always have someone to take care of him.”
3. *Mucie ni kurarwo uraragwo, ndutindagwo.* The proverb is used in **Mũthuri nĩ Mĩtugo** and loosely translates, “the house is for sleeping in by night, not for staying in by day.”
4. *Thiga ni mũruu: marara nja gũtiri.* The proverb which appears in **Mũicĩ na Kĩhũ** loosely translates, “Since now Thiga is circumcised, there is no reward for the night vigil.”
5. *Mũicĩ athinagia murogi*, the proverb is used in **Mũthuri nĩ Mĩtugo**, this proverb loosely translates, “A thief will cause the poisoner to change his residence.” This proverb is used by Machang’i after he learns that there are petty thieves terrorising Kĩhoto in his village.
6. *Maundu ni ndiganiro*, this proverb means, “the important things are left in the locker. “In other words, important issues are not shared with everybody.

7. Gĩburi kĩrumarumi gĩtiomagia ruua, this proverb loosely translates, “A goat that keeps on walking around never fails to put weight.”
8. Cia Mucĩ ti como. The proverb loosely translates; “Family matters should not be revealed to outsiders.”
9. Ireragĩra rukui-ini ikaya kuigana, this translates thus: “the cimex (wood mite) lives in the firewood and still reaches its full growth.”
10. ‘Mundu mugĩ ndarĩ mĩhere ya uhoro’ - ‘One does not need to belabour when telling his story to an intelligent person.’
11. Njogu ndĩremagwo nĩ mĩguongo yayo. The literal meaning of this proverb is, “The elephant is never overpowered by its tusks.”
12. Ngingo ndiri ya kira mutwe, this is used by Nyina wa Kĩng’ori in **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo** the literal translation for this proverb is, “The neck does not grow above the head.”
13. Kĩrema arũme ni kĩgariũre, this proverb literally translates, “What overpower men’s efforts has been turned many times.”
14. Ngingo ndiri ya kira mutwe, this is used by Nyina wa Kĩng’ori in **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo** when she soliloquizes and avows that she will never contradict her husband. The literal translation for this proverb is, “The neck does not grow above the head.”
15. Njĩka na njĩka ndĩrĩ maruru, the proverb can be translated in English thus, “The action and subsequent reaction does not generate bitterness.”
16. Mũicĩ na kĩhĩĩ akenaga kia rua, na Mũicĩ na mutumia akenaga akua, this proverb literally means, that “he who commits a crime in the company of a boy lives in fear until the boy is circumcised and he who commits crime in the company of a woman, will live in fear until she dies.

S/NO	GNS	METONYMY	SIGNIFICANT	F.J or S.J	M.Q
1.	comparison opportunity	individuality-crowd related	love, relationship	semiotic	unlimited sememes
2.	comparison opportunity	hand-work-reward related	Determination, appreciation	Linguistic	limited sememes
3.	Opportunity conduct	home, purpose related	time, function	Linguistic	limited sememes
4.	comparison-different	Thiga-indifference Unrelated	rite of passage (circumcision)	Semiotic	unlimited sememes
5.	comparison experience	thief-sorcerer unrelated	harassment, loss	Semiotic	unlimited sememes
6.	comparison discourse	<i>maundu</i> (issues), succession <i>related</i>	responsibility, continuity	Semantic	unlimited sememes
7.	comparison experience	he-goat-aggressiveness related	yield, result	Linguistic	limited sememes
8.	comparison conduct	domestic -public related	matters, secrecy	Semiotic	unlimited sememes
9.	comparison discourse	wood mites, growth unrelated	survival, persistence	Semiotic	unlimited sememes
10.	comparison experience	wise-man, discourse unrelated	versatility, interpretation	Semiotic	unlimited sememes
11.	comparison conduct	elephant, tasks related	duty, responsibility	Linguistic	limited sememes
12.	Comparison discourse	neck, head related	roles, hierarchy	Linguistic	limited sememes
13.	comparison experience	men's power, task accomplishment	failure, evidence	Linguistic	limited sememes
14.	comparison different	action, reaction opposite	contentment, bitterness	Semiotic	unlimited sememes
15.	comparison similarities	woman-lab/boy matching	robbing, trust, secrecy	Linguistic	limited sememes

KEY:

GNS-Global Semantic Field; FJ-Functional judgement; semiotic judgement and Mode

Q.

The analysis of proverbs in this study is based on Eco's (1985) work in which he presents metaphor as being embedded in a Global Semantic Field (GSF) – one of the main notions of his semiotic theory. This proposition is based in a subjacent chain of metonymies. His goal is to uncover 'the real linguistic mechanism' in metaphor to show how it (metaphor) may be seen as the process of unlimited semiosis – the continual generation of signs. In this regard, any metaphor which 'institutes' a resemblance between the two or more semantic spaces that it is fusing, would be definable only through the metonymic chains of association in which it is embedded and also an infinite chain of interpretants. By this is meant that metaphorical expressions are already latent in the expressive possibilities of the GSF. He (Eco) asserts:

A metaphor can be invented because language, in its process of unlimited semiosis, constitutes a multidimensional network of metonymies, each of which is explained by a cultural convention rather than by an original resemblance" and thus a metaphor is supplied with a 'subjacent, network of arbitrarily stipulated contiguities.'" The contiguities can be between signifiers, between signified, in the code, in the co-text, and in the referent, each possibility being examined." (Innis 1985, p.247-249)

Eco believes that the seeming fusion of semantic spheres or semantic labyrinth is the GSF which he has constructed using his model of a 'semantic memory'. His assertion is, that factual judgments operate 'from the extension of language' while metaphor 'draws the idea of a possible connection 'from the intension' of the circle of unlimited semiosis. As can be seen from the identified proverbs in this study, all proverbs have the GSF of comparison followed by the underlying meaning of the proverb. Its factual or semiotic judgment (in this case, semiotic) is premised on the complexity of metaphoric expression. If it is more structural, it is factual. If it is more semiotic; it is semiotic. In this instance, it is semiotic. This means that it has unlimited (i.e. complex) semiotic interpretations

It is significant to note that all proverbs employed by characters in the diegesis of comedies have comparative GSF elements because all proverbs have inherent comparisons. Yet, each one has its basic resource for a separate meaning. These are love, wisdom, gender relations, patriarchy, rites of passage and social relations, duty, responsibility, truancy, crime, morality, and values.

3.3.1.4 Idiomatic Expressions in Comedies

Oral culture is as old as man himself. Part of this oral culture is manifested using idiomatic expressions. Sera (2003, p. 5) refers idioms as informal expressions used in everyday speech. Often referred to as catch phrases, colloquialisms, or clichés, they are groups of words that, together, have a special meaning that is different than each of the words alone. They sum up an idea (for example, “mad as a hornet” illustrates a recognized degree of anger in a simple expression). Idioms are widely used in these comedies.

In **Mūicī na Kīhī**, – Chief Kanyūtū refers to the buttocks as *Nyama ino ya thirikari* which loosely translates to ‘government’s flesh’. During field interviews, it was revealed that this idiomatic expression came because of Gīkūyū nasty experience with the white settlers. During the time, Gīkūyū able bodied men were conscripted into the forced labour, where personal violence was the order of the day. The white settlers ended up flogging these men at will and they did this without any inhibitions of reappraisal from authorities. This account is supported by Shandle (2012) in his paper entitled; *Settlers, Africans, and Interpersonal Violence in Kenya*. Shandle observes that many settlers were thrilled at the prospect of dehumanising their African servants. They had a penchant of writing in the local dailies, their memoirs, and other accounts, of how they executed this practice. He continues to describe how they justified this violence. To them Africans were childlike and that the only punishment they understood is lash (*kiboko*) which is applied on their buttocks or the so called ‘*Nyama ya thirikari*.’” Writing of this poor Shandle writes:

Settlers demanded the state play a role in training Africans via the lash. Based on racial and cultural commonalities with colonial rulers, their role as steady the front line of Empire, and having been encouraged to come to Kenya, settlers insisted that the state must bow to their wishes.... It is conventional knowledge among whites that jail simply had no deterrent effect on Africans... Corporal punishment had far better effect. As Conway Harvey argued in the Legislative Council, "Whenever we discuss these matters in the native reserves with those best qualified to know they invariably say that there is one form of punishment and one only which is a deterrent, especially where the young men are concerned, and that is whipping. A little physical pain," the Standard noted, "is a greater deterrent to the Native than imprisonment for long periods." Even better: lashings on a regular basis while the convict served his jail time. Unless the courts made greater use of corporal punishment crime would be sure to increase. (Shandle, 2012, p. 69)

Arising from these observations it can be argued that, Agĩkũyũ having borne brunt of white colonialism in Kenya, coined new words such as the idiom in question to describe the severity and cruelty of white man against Africans. The use of this word is now commonplace among the Gĩkũyũ language speakers in Kenya and beyond. *Thingo ci Matu* (this can loosely translate ‘the walls too have ears’). This idiom is used by Wandahuhu when convincing Gĩthendũ to accompany him to his homestead so that he could confide to him about ‘a big secret,’ regarding ‘the lost bag’ containing two million shillings stolen a few days ago from the local coffee cooperative bank. The essence of this idiom is that Wandahuhu is not comfortable sharing this secret in open, lest other people learn of his surreptitious information which could work against him.

Another idiomatic expression that has been used in **Mũici na Kĩhũ** is ‘*Gukira mukuru wa thina,*’ and “*mbia cia igoto*” which are comparable to an English idiomatic expression, “Crossing the Rubicon” that means to reach a point of no return, in reference to Julius Caesar’s army crossing Rubicon River in Northern Italy. *Mbia cia Igoto* is a term used in Gĩkũyũ language to refer to ‘a meagre amount.’ Likewise, Chief Kanyũtũ monologue, reveals to the audience his intention of taking away the ‘loot’ which is in the possession of Wandahuhu. He takes the loot with a pretext that the money will be surrendered to the bank as fast as possible. In his monologue, however, the Chief Kanyũtũ ostensibly is in a celebration mood for having crossed over financial his Rubicon. He now feels fortunate given that the meagre salary he receives from the government (*Mbia cia Igoto*) cannot make ends meet.

Another interesting idiom used in the Gĩkũyũ comedies under the study is ‘*Ni Giaita na Ndumo.*’ This loosely translates ‘the centre can no longer hold.’ These words were said by Wakarĩndĩ, after her boyfriend, Kĩmenyi’ stated categorically that he cannot take care of an illegitimate child borne by his spouse. Wakarĩndĩ hopes that a positive response from Gĩthendũ will translate into a soft landing for her daughter, who stays in the village with her brother, Kĩhenjo.

3.3.1.5 Metonymy: Figurative Language

In cultural discourses, it is against Gĩkũyũ practice for men not to understand linguistic symbolism. The language of symbolism, idioms, proverbs, and figurative language. For example, when Kanyanya, Kĩhoto's daughter tries to communicate to his father, Machang'i and Wanyũrũ (Machang'i wife) that she is pregnant, the three-start making fun of her, when she uses euphemism to describe her condition.

She states: *Ndĩ mũritũ* (I am carrying a heavy load/yoke); *Ndĩ na Nda* (my tummy is full). It important to note that the age difference between interlocutors bring about the type of message being communicated. These statements figuratively communicate that Kanyanya is pregnant. It only after she explicitly declares that she is pregnant that the trio seems to understand the severity of situation. When pressed to explain her condition further, Kanyanya does not name the man responsible but states that the man behind her pregnancy is within the vicinity of Machang'i's homestead. This revelation leaves them aghast given that the only man in Machang'i's household is Machang'i himself. Kanyanya choice of figurative language is informed by the fact that there exists presupposition, a feature in sociolinguistic which can be referred to as a common ground between interlocutors. She knows it is unethical to refer her condition directly. However, the contemptuous behaviour by her father and Machang'i and his wife forces her to explain her condition blatantly. She does this because she feels that the trio seems to trivialise an otherwise grave matter.

3.3.2 Non-verbal Codes

Dube (1997) observes that video recordings have the capacity to capture paralinguistic aspects such as kinesics, proxemics, haptics and choreographic aspects of a talk exchange, or performances among interlocutors. Non-verbs codes may be divided into *visual* (static: colour, graphics; dynamic: gestures, facial expressions, posture, proxemics, kinesics) and *non-visual*; the latter can be further subdivided into *non-acoustic* (taste, haptics, smell) and *acoustic*, which may either be *non-vocal* (body noise: clapping; instrumental: drums, whistle) or *vocal* (paralinguistic: vocal quality, hoarseness, laughter, loudness, tempo; prosodic / suprasegmental: intonation, stress, tempo, rhythm, etc.). These codes send concomitant signals accompanying actual words; these two systems may either work together and strengthen the intended

meaning or they may conflict with one another and distort it. It should also be stressed that possibilities of the representation of the prosodic features in writing are quite limited.

3.3.2.1 Touch and Greetings as a Semiotic tool

Greetings are the general rituals of beginning and finishing an encounter. Benveniste (1971) terms them as social decorum signs. (Leech, 1983) it upholds the fact that interlocutor's reaction towards one another is usually well-mannered given the fact that individuals tend to revere physical contact especially each other's 'face,' (Brown & Levinson 1987). They have an essential social function in casual visits which goes beyond Malinowski's "phatic communion. "Some languages can be evaluated according to their greeting patterns (Schegloff, 1972, p.211).

Semantically, greetings gain their meaning from the culture they are derived from and their Included here are many different phrases ranging from trivial words of greetings to more potential discourse of ceremonies. This use of language is a mixture of expressive and directive discourse. The usual ceremonial greetings and chit chats at social gatherings serve the purpose of evincing good will and sociability. The impressive e.g. in a marriage ceremony is intended to express the solemnity of the occasion (its impressive function) and to cause the wedding couple to perform in their new roles with heightened appreciation of the seriousness of the marriage contract (its directive function). The World Trade report entitled *Kenya Society & Culture Complete Report (2010)* illustrates the position of greetings and courtesies of shaking hands in Kenya.

The report notes that there are many different types of shakes for different relationships. For example, a long, extended clasp is typical for well-known acquaintances and a brief, standard handshake for someone you have just met. Some Kenyans, when shaking hands with a person of elder status, grasp their right wrist with their left hand. Kenyans tend to be conservative and formal in business situations. The report notes that in Kenya titles, such as doctor and professor, should always be used when applicable. Expect to know someone a while before using their first name. Initial greeting periods are always marked by a rather lengthy period of basic questions about your family, country, etc.

Politics is an acceptable area of conversation once you are well acquainted with your hosts. Some traditional women will not look men in the eye.

There are some sociocultural and socio-religious rules of initiating greetings in general. Ikaria-Maina (2012) observes that among the Agĩkũyũ the most common greeting term is "Thayu" (Peace be upon you). She adds that the ancestors ordered Gĩkũyũ speakers to spread this greeting among themselves. Besides this greeting, there are other cultural greeting terms which are commonly used such as "Niatia" (How are you) which is less polite than "Thayu" (Peace be upon you). Ikaria-Maina (ibid) confirms that among Agĩkũyũ greetings normally encompass proper forms of address. These forms of address are either relational (e.g. uncle, grandparents, parents, aunts, siblings) or absolute (e.g. teacher):

The community members habitually extend these social titles to display courtesy to or solidarity with the recipient. For example, "niatia dagitari/mwalimu" (How are you doctor/ teacher) is used to show respect to the hearer, whereas "wakia iyu/awa" (how are you mother/father) is used by old people to address younger people to show solidarity and increase intimacy with them. Likewise, the younger people use "wakia maitu/baba" to address the old people of their parents age and "wakia cucu/guka" (How are you grandfather/grandmother) to greet the grandparents. Relational forms of address are usually used when the level of rapport and intimacy are relatively high between the collocutors, whereas absolute ones may be used by someone either to show that he is a cultured and a polite person, or when the level of intimacy between him and the recipient is low. (Ikaria-Maina, 2012, p.983)

In Cagnolo's (2006) words, Gĩkũyũ language is rich in greetings according to age, class, and personal status. He gives accounts on how these greetings are exercised. Shaking hands is normal salutation. If two people who have not seen each other for a long time met, both spit on their palms and shook each other's hand gripping alternatively the palm and thumb. Saliva corresponds to a blessing, they believed that, if the hand contained poison, the saliva will neutralize it.

Whether one met another early in the morning, at noon, or at night, one always heard the same greetings: "Uri mwega?" Are you well? The greetings were different for different age groups and different sexes. When parting, they shook hands and told each

other “*Tigwo na Wega*” or “*Tigwo uhoru*.”- Best of luck. This type of greetings is common among Agĩkũyũ of Mũrang’a and Kiambu regions. A mother greeted her daughter, daughter in law or the daughters of her age mates, “*Wakia iiyu*’ then they responded “*Wakia Maitũ*.” A mother greeted his son, his son in law and sons of her age mates saying “*Wakia Awa*” they responded, “*Wakia Maitũ*.” Because she had the same greeting when shaking hand, they cross their arms. A father greeted his daughter, daughter in law and daughters of his age mates saying, “*Wakia Maitũ*,” then they responded “*Wakia Awa*.” A father greeted his son, sons in law or the son of his age mates saying, “*Wanyua*” they responded, “*Wanyua Awa*.” These greetings are more common among the Agĩkũyũ from Nyeri region.

As portrayed in the selected comedies, greetings are highly valued. Whenever a character encounters one another they start by greeting as a sign of peace. The only exception to this rule is mannerism exhibited by Warigia who is devoid of Gĩkũyũ cultural decorum. She fails to greet Kĩere in **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo Part 1**. When Kĩere greets her, she rudely responds to him instead of responding in kind. This makes Kĩhoto to realise that Machang’i has a more serious problem in his marriage than he had earlier thought. In **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo Part 2**, Warigia lack of solemnity comes out again when she storms the wedding party with no courtesy to exchange pleasantries with her erstwhile husband, Machang’i and his bride Wanyũrũ, Kĩhoto or Warũkũngũ. Similarly, where she defies cultural norms is when she finds Kĩhoto outside her husband homestead after visiting a local witchdoctor where she is under firm instructions not to greet anyone other than Machang’i. Warigia ignores these instructions when he greets Kĩhoto. In **Nganga Mbute**, Kĩhenjo greets her sister Wakarĩndĩ, Mũkũngũgũ when welcoming “*Wakia Maitũ*,” (one who belongs to my mother) to which she responds, “*Wakia awa*,” (one who belongs to my father.

Several instances abound where male members of society, who happen to be age mates, use special greetings. This is evident in the interactions between Gĩthendũ and Wandahuhu on one hand and Kĩhoto and Machang’i on the other. *Wakinĩ*- A name by which age mates refer and address each other. Indeed, men who were circumcised together would be very proud of their masculinity citing their circumcision name and calling themselves pet names as *Wakinĩ* (of the same age set). This name gives these

men a sense of power because as they call each other such names as a proof that indeed they underwent through the process of circumcision. This is meant to bring out hegemony over the younger men and women as evidenced by relations between Gĩthendũ and Wandahuhu as well as that of Machang’i and Kĩhoto.

Greetings in Gĩkũyũ helps to accentuate haptics theory which form part of Gĩkũyũ greetings system. Haptics refers to the study and analysis of touch-handshakes, pats on the back or head, kisses, and hugs are all way of communicating by touch, (Nanda & Warms, 2015, p.94). Guitierrez (2009) explicates that haptic can be gentle, affectionate, or violent. Among the Agĩkũyũ touching is experienced in many ways, such as handshakes, pats, and hugs. These touches are used to express various feelings and emotions, either ritual or affectionate. But touching has culturally specific meanings. Different cultures emphasize various ways of touching. According some anthropologists, cultures can be categorized as high contact or low contact, depending on which senses a culture stress. Analysis of haptics as they appear in the selected comedies points to the fact that Gĩkũyũ fits within the parameters of high contact society.

3.3.2.2 Exploitation of Proxemics and Kinesics

The use of nonverbal codes in the selected comedies is employed by some characters. For instance, in **Mũici na Kĩhĩ**, there is mooing and bellowing of cows and goats. These animal sounds are presented as non-verbal codes indicating that livestock farming is part of the Gĩkũyũ people besides indicating that Wandahuhu’s flock has not been fed since his wife has not been in the home for better part of the day. She is also not keen on her domestic chores. She did this deliberately since she knew that her husband had no moral authority to exercise authority over because he is still a *‘kĩhĩĩ.’* or uncircumcised man.

At another scene, Wandahuhu uses his walking stick to ascertain the level of water volume in his metallic tank. The sounds that emanates from the tank once it is hit indicates the tank is virtually empty. This sound is used as nonverbal code to exemplify the life of Wandahuhu in this scene where he felt inadequate, depleted of his dignity and hollowness regarding his social standing as the man of the house. At one time

Wandahuhu is afraid when he excuses himself to pass water by the road side only for his friend Gĩthendũ to follow suit by positioning himself next to him. Seeing this, Wandahuhu moves several steps away from Gĩthendũ. Given that proxemics is indispensable to non-verbal communication, Wandahuhu feels uncomfortable urinating next to Gĩthendũ. The need to keep his social distance is real.

Through manipulation of space between the two, Wandahuhu helps to indicate that there is social distance between circumcised men and uncircumcised men among the Agĩkũyũ people. He is afraid that Gĩthendũ is going to peep through and discover that he is still a 'boy.' Soon after, Wandahuhu is seen eavesdropping as his wife engages in an animated conversation with Gĩthendũ. He misconstrues his wife's intention and wrongly thinks that she is exposing him to Gĩthendũ that he is still a '*kĩhĩĩ*.' He believes the reason Gĩthendũ heeded to Chief's place is to report him that he is a *kĩhĩĩ*. Later he learns that the issue at hand is case of negligence involving his neighbour Wathende, who had refused to compensate Wandahuhu following the destruction of his crops by Wathende's livestock. Eavesdropping is therefore used as a code to signify fear and uncertainty. In yet another scene, Wandahuhu uses employs kinesics and gestures when explaining to Gĩthendũ that he is yet to be circumcised. He finds it hard to let cat out of bag. The gestures do the bidding. In a way the gestures signify the heavy load that Wandahuhu is carrying on his manhood, so grievous that he could not explain in it in conventional language. Gĩthendũ is perplexed and ask him how he had managed to stay with that 'load' for years and seek clarification on whether it has not been burdensome for him. This communication regarding circumcision is a code of the Gĩkũyũ if codes are not simply conventions of communication but rather procedural systems of related conventions which operate in certain fields.

In **Mũthuri ni Mĩtugo** tinges of social proxemics are discernible. This comes in the form of social relations between father and daughter, and men and unmarried girls. The Agĩkũyũ spatial codes set social boundaries between the sexes. It is not acceptable for a father to become close to his daughter. In fact, in traditional set up, the father could only pass important information through her mother, while the same applied to mothers' relationship with their sons. The same rules applied in case of domestic servants. If a

female servant, the instructions will come from the woman of the house and if a male, the man of the house will take charge.

These were social codes that were expected to be observed by all without fail. Nevertheless, these spatial codes are not adhered to in **Mũthuri ni Mĩtugo**. To start with, Kĩhoto becomes cosy with his daughter Kanyanya. They are too close with one another to the extent of conspiring to defraud Machang'i of her domestic supplies. The spatial code is meant to give a father or mother authority over his children as well as instil and pass to their offspring acceptable standard of behaviour, virtues, and values. In this comedy, these attributes are absent, and the society stability is seriously threatened for the failure of parents and guardians to impart right values on their children and heirs. In the same comedy, Machang'i have an illicit sexual relationship with Kanyanya, his domestic servant. In the process, Kanyanya gets pregnant, a situation that worsens her relationship with Machang'i's wife, Wanyũrũ. She believes that Wanyũrũ has no right to issue instructions to her. She sees herself as having equal status with Machang'i's legitimate wife, Wanyũrũ. The marriage eventually disintegrates. This situation is precipitated by lack of adhering to cultural spatial codes.

In **Mũndũrũme ni Mũgambo**, the use of spatial codes comes in handy especially in a case where Machang'i is forced by his wife to carry his own son using *ngoi* (child's harness). The cultural codes forbade man from carrying a child or any form of load on his back. The only thing that is allowed between a man's back is his skin and cloth. The back is a sacred thing, a tribal wall that insulated the tribe from natural elements, social calamities, and instability. It is unfathomable therefore to see this sacred entity as desecrated by child's bodily perspiration and waste. This meant that *ngoi* is only a preserve of women. Men were expected to keep off this cultural tool, yet we see it being used by Machang'i with reckless abandon. He is forced by Warigia, his no-nonsense wife. Warigia uses this as a tool of subjugation of men social space. It is used to question their social and economic dominance.

3.4 Conclusion

The third chapter has demonstrated the embeddedness of cultural symbols in Gīkūyū comedies. It has offered clear insights on the use of various symbols including: language symbols; verbal codes (teknonymy, dramatic monologue, proverbs, idiomatic expressions, and metonymy); non-verbal codes (touch and greetings, and proxemics and kinesics). It has demonstrated the role of these elements in expressing cultural and social orientation. through this discussion, the chapter has demonstrated the creative way in which the filmmakers have utilized Gīkūyū culture as a platform to enrich their narratives and thus position themselves as crucial cultural voices. In the next chapter, I offer further analysis of the way these films use themes to offer further commentary on various cultural issues.

CHAPTER FOUR: THEMATIC CODING OF CULTURAL DISCOURSES

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is hinged on the third objective of the study which, “to investigate the various cultural discourses and themes mediated in the selected films.” The chapter heavily relies on linguistic nuances to actualise this intent. Language, in the form of speech, is absorbed within a culture. It is attained through imitation, through trial and error, and through conscious teaching and learning. The symbolic aspect of communication and its reliance on encoding and decoding are particularly important in understanding cultural discourses. Allen (2001) mentions that the assumptions that all communications relies exclusively on encoding and decoding process has itself been questioned. Indeed, a few cognitive theorists have questioned veracity of this claim, arguing that the comprehension of films relies more on inferential processes other than decoding operations. This chapter is informed by the study’s third objective which aimed at investigating the various cultural discourses and themes mediated and enunciated in the contemporary *Gikūyū* comedies. The chapter makes critical insights into how language has been employed in the diegesis of selected comedies against the background of sociolinguistic norms. By critically analysing these aspects the study yields critical observations enunciated in discursive elements, individual interactions, and cultural contexts. The use of semiotics has brought to the fore several cultural themes that are discussed in detail in the subsequent sections of this chapter. Some of these themes include; marriage; food; religion and public authority.

4.1.1 Cultural discourses

Language is important in shaping human social structures and subsequent interactions. Language is utilised to define, create, recreate, and shape the world. This means that every language is confined and operate within social world. Speakers in a speech community depend on a corpus of pragmatic knowledge which is shared in wholly or in part with others in a linguistic environment. The idea that a language is capable of influencing people’s comprehension of social reality is traceable to the postpositions of two American linguists, Edward Sapir, and Benjamin Lee Whorf. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (also called the principle of linguistic relativity) claim that there is a tangible connection between language and culture. Specifically, they believed that language is

necessary for thought, and that certain thoughts of a person cannot be understood by someone using a different language. They further argued that a person's world view is largely determined by his or her vocabulary and by the language structure of his culture. Language is the site of the production and reproduction of cultural, institutional, and organisational forms characteristic of the overall society. A reflexive analysis of language, action, and social structure sees the interaction order and the institutional order having complex interrelationships. The language that humans use can help constitute an infinite variety of social actions. Austin (1962, p.150) suggests that there could be more than a thousand or so actions, while Wittgenstein (1958, p. 23) proposes that there are "innumerable" activities in which language plays a part, including but by no means limited to "ordering, describing, reporting, speculating, presenting results, telling a story, being ironic, requesting, asking, criticising, apologising, censoring, approving, welcoming, objecting, guessing, joking, greeting." This list can be indefinitely extended and shows that the communicative function of language, wherein people refer to objects and report their thoughts or feelings about them in a verifiable way, is only one among many modes of linguistic usage. The chapter has therefore employed semiotic theory to investigate and explicate selected film as cultural narratives, where the dialogue is a site for defining cultural voice. Cultural ideologies permeate in these comedies. They include gender, identity formations, language, and social behaviour.

4.1.2 Implication of Language Ideology in the Selected Comedies

In sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology, a language or linguistic ideology is a systematic construct about how languages carry or are invested with certain moral, social, and political values, giving rise to implicit assumptions that people have about a language or about language in general. Like other forms of ideology, language ideologies are often culturally significant and deeply shape how speakers understand social life. Ideologies are expressed through gender relations, cultural identities and social behaviours that are discussed at length in this chapter.

Language ideology refers specifically to the perceptions held by people about language and, more importantly, how speakers project those perceptions. Irvine (1989) defines a language ideology as the cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic

relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests. Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (2006) see language ideology as ingrained, unquestioned beliefs about the way the world is, the way it should be, and the way it must be with respect to language.

4.2 Cultural Discourses and Gender

Very broadly speaking, the study of language and gender through analysis of Kikuyu comedy filmic devices here attempts to answer two questions. First; how does language reveal, embody and sustain culturally arrogated definitions of gender? Second; how language users, in this case filmic characters, use spoken language, both monologue and dialogue, and write in (different and distinctive) ways that reflect these culturally appropriated gender identities. The broad categories discussed here are man and woman, and their usages in the everyday life to enunciate cultural discourses of gender.

In Gĩkũyũ language, each gender, is identified by specific a word that give meanings to the gender relations within a cultural context. Agĩkũyũ refers a man as *Mwene Mũciĩ*, *Kĩongo kĩa Mũciĩ*, *Mũndũ Mũrũme* or *Mũndũrũme* and *Mũthuri*. Within the marriage establishment, , the man is often referred to as *Mwene mũciĩ* while the woman is called *Mũtumia* or *Mũndũ wa nja* (Brinkman 1996, p.65). Such cultural schema, imprinted in the everyday titles referring to the man and the woman, is a useful tableau that significantly contributes to the way one may interpret words as communicating important nuances as far as power relations between men and women within Gĩkũyũ cultural sphere is concerned.

Furthermore, this relational hierarchy is manifest even at the very lexical level at which gender power is imagined and expressed. A case in point would be the word *Mũthuri* which is based on the Gĩkũyũ root word ‘*Thuura*’ meaning to choose. The prefix ‘Mu’ in Gĩkũyũ linguistic context means the one who does something. In effect, the word *Mũthuri* may be construed to mean the one who make the right choices for his family (and by extension his community and country. The cultural valence of this argument is exemplified by the responses made by the elders during FGDs. Many argued that the word *Mũndũ Mũrũme* is based on the Kikuyu root word *ũrũme*, which means courage or bravery. The term *Mwene mũciĩ* means owner of the house (Brinkman 1996, p. 65).

The axis of power implicit in these discussions is pivotal in my subsequent interpretation of the various films.

Taking *Mündürūme ni Mūgambo* as my starting point, I wish to draw attention to the way the leading male character, Machang’i, reveals to this cultural axis of power by openly questioning his own existence when he says, “*Riu nī ndi Mūthuri kana mathuro mao?*” (Am I a real man or a tomgirl?). The filmic significance of this proclamation is two forked. On one hand, there is the superficial level which literally expresses his doubts about his own manhood.

On the other hand, this use of monologue as a filmic device enunciates the culturally ideal attributes of man in Gikūyū society, that is, a male who exercises command and control over of his wife and by extension his family. It is this usurpation of the biological by the cultural which explicitly positions this film as a culturally portend medium. This statement cannot be overlooked or dismissed as pure citation by the male character who up to this point, through a series of actions where his wife seems to disrupt this cultural hierarchy of power, has shown insignificant brevity and courage. To provide contrast and emphasize on the cultural identity of the male, this film further pairs Machang’i with Kīere, a tyrant husband who totally controls his wife. He treats her like a slave, a mere chattel, an object orbiting her husband’s unfettered powers. Where his wife is subservient, Machang’i’s wife, Warigia, is depicted as an embodiment of evil as she carries love potions, talismans, and spells. She thus symbolizes instability of both her family and the society at large. Bearing this contrast in mind, Machang’i’s question can therefore be requires the film viewer to revisit the cultural framework in which the attributes of a husband are not regarded in the biological term but are contemplated in the cultural ontology of the Gikūyū community in which he is a member.

Similarly, in – In *Mūici na Kīhī*, the idea of disrupted hierarchy is clearly implicit in the metaphorical construction of the identity of a husband which underpins the entire film narrative. When Wandahuhu, in the presence of his friend, Gīthendū, tells the wife *Giturehere tuti tuu* (bring us those seats), he is using this action symbolically to show that he is in charge, and can therefore command his wife. However, as the viewer is

already privy to his distress as his wife is very arrogant, this action appears as a pretence to be in control when clearly his sphere of influence is limited. Furthermore, the wife had already offered to bring them seats, so that the repeated instruction serves no other role than to signify Wandahuhu's pretence of being in-charge.

On the other hand, the term Mūtumia (woman) is based on the Kikuyu root word *tumia*, literally meaning shut up. The other term, *Mũndũ wa nja*, literally means person of the outside or person of the courtyard (Brinkman 1996, p.65). The general term for a woman is *Mūtumia*, meaning 'one whose lips are sealed' or *Mũndũ Mũka* meaning one who comes or is adopted to a family through marriage. The compound word is made of two words '*Mũndũ*' meaning a person and which literally means 'the person who came' (from root *ũka-* meaning to come). Another word used to refer to female gender is *Mũndũ-wa-nja* meaning 'Person of the *Nja*' or one who does not belong (Githuku, 2016, p.5). The *Nja* is the open courtyard space surrounded by all the huts in a homestead.

These definitions of female gender may help explain the reason woman characters are represented as the 'other' in the diegesis of selected comedies. The male dominance is communicated throughout the selected films. This dominance is based on assumption that what is important and of central value is limited to norms, beliefs, practices, and formal prescriptions. In **Mũici na Kĩhĩ**, this motif is revealed by Wandahuhu assertion to the effect that you cannot afford to share your deep secrets with a woman, rest she exposes you to all and sundry. Wandahuhu says, *Kwanja aya atumia twarehire micii mungirakarania hanini akuanikaga riua ri thaa thita (I am mortally afraid of these women that we brought to our homes. They will expose you at the slightest provocation.)* This statement portrays women as revealers of family secrets and shows why Wandahuhu is afraid of his wife. Ironically the social structures expect them to remain silent even when men are violating cultural dictates. For instance, in **Mũici na Kĩhĩ**, Gathoroko is expected to remain silent even when the culture expects married men to be circumcised. Even when she finally exposes her husband, it is her who suffers the consequences. Her marriage comes tumbling down.

A woman is depicted as a reproductive symbol. In **Kĩrĩro Kia Mwana**, Wahĩto is accused of infertility. She is abused physically and psychologically. Her husband hurls profanities to her with careless abandon. In traditional Gĩkũyũ cultural set up, a woman is a sign and symbol of fecundity because of her ability to bring forth man's offspring and ensuring that her husband's tribal lineage is insulated from any forms of barrenness and infertility. Ironically, Wahĩto is fit as fiddle, the problem is Wandahuhu himself. He suffered from a biological condition called oligospermia (low sperm count). However, Gĩkũyũ society is more lenient with the infertile men as opposed to hostility directed towards barren women.

As elders in FGDs confirmed, in the Gĩkũyũ tradition, a woman is the one who is married by a man, she signifies this rite by leaving her own people and join the man in his own homestead. A woman does not marry, she is only married to someone and hence the term *Mũhiki* (one who is married) and *Mũhikania* (one who marries), this is evident when the following women join their husbands or boyfriends in the following comedies: Machang'i wed Warigia and Wanyũrũ, with Ithe wa Kĩng'ori marrying Warũkũngũ in **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo**; Wandahuhu wed Gathoroko and Ebethi in **Mũici and Kĩhĩ** as well as Wahĩto in **Kĩrĩro kĩa Mwana**. Gĩkaru also weds Veronike in the same comedy; Kĩhenjo weds Magĩrĩ in **Mũtikũnyarira** while we encounter Kĩmenyi cohabiting with Wakarĩndĩ in **Nganga Mbute**. At one-point Machang'i poses a rhetoric question, "*Riu niinikuhikania ka nikuhiokio ndahikirio*"- Machang'i, (I am the one who is married to my wife or it is me who married her?) This validates earlier assertion that within Gĩkũyũ culture man marries and is as such the head of his family.

According to Gĩkũyũ culture relationship between people men and women is strictly guided by old age held customs. This is explained by Cagnolo (2006) in his book, *The Agĩkũyũ: Their Customs, Traditions and Folklore*. Fr Cagnolo explains that in traditional Gĩkũyũ set up, there were clear and unambiguous delimitations in as far as relationship between sexes is concerned. For example, men never remained entirely naked in the presence of others even in front of relatives. In the same token, a father had a great respect for his grown-up daughters. He did not play with her or touch her. He only disciplined her for serious wrong doing. During the field work, one of the respondent corroborated Father Cagnolo's (2006) observations, he gave an example of

his own father, whom he said never exposed his affection to his wife in front of his daughters. He only lived in *Thingira*. He did not act in a manner to suggest that he fulfilled his conjugal right with their mother.

He added that a ten-year-old girl child is not allowed to live in the same house with the father. It is also against tradition for man to enter his daughter's room, noting that if a girl happened to be impregnated while at his father's house, she is not supposed to live together with her sisters. She moved to her own room. Symbolically she is entitled to inheritance of her father just like her brothers.

However, a closer look at **Mũhuri nĩ Mĩtugo** paints a stark contrast against Gĩkũyũ traditional set up. The issue of pregnancy is not initially discussed by men as portrayed in this film. This is exclusively left to women to gather crucial information as to who is responsible for the pregnancy. This information is later relied to men for adjudication. In comedy, Kanyanya is expectant and reveals that Machang'i is the father of the unborn child. She does this in the presence of her father, Machang'i and Wanyũrũ (Machang'i's wife).

Traditionally, if a male accused of being responsible owns up, he is expected to slaughter a goat called *Gũthezenia*. He is expected to abduct the girl before she delivered to ensure that the child is born in his homestead. This is to facilitate and conform with Agĩkũyũ naming rite to avoid a costly and rather embarrassing rite called *Mbũri ya mĩruru*, which is used as a penalty to appease ancestors to accept a child born out of wedlock. If a man declined to own up, a special ceremony is conducted where goat's heart is inserted into girl's private parts, if he agreed to eat this meat he is absolved of the blame. But if he declined to eat it, he is fined additional nine goats, including the one which is slaughtered for such a ceremony.

The respondents also noted that there were clear boundaries with in laws. It is against Gĩkũyũ culture for a father to make visitation to his *Uthoni* (the home of in-laws). This is construed to mean even places of occupation where his daughter worked. There is even a proverb that goes, *Uthoni ndurangaragwo* (the home of in-laws ought to be visited sparingly) It is considered demeaning for a man to do this. It is always important

to avoid such a practice. Thus, Kĩhoto is out of order for visiting daughter regularly at Machang'i homestead where she is employed as a house help. Kĩhoto is portrayed as man without morals in the way he related with his daughter, Kanyanya. It is embarrassing to see him, exchanging pleasantries, and conspiring to deprive Machang'i of his domestic supplies. The tragic end in **Nganga Mbute** would have been avoided had Kĩmenyi taken precaution by visiting his girlfriend's home as per the Gĩkũyũ customs before cohabiting with Wakarĩndĩ. Had this happened, he would have made up his mind based on the information he would have gathered from his in-laws. Because of this anomaly, his in-laws storm his house in protest after his girlfriend kills her own daughter to secure her future with Kĩmenyi.

Ideally, Gĩkũyũ's treat their in-laws with a lot of respect and this is demonstrated in **Kĩrĩro Kia Mwana** when after cohabiting with Warigia for some time, Gĩthendũ sends emissaries to her parent's home to formalize the arrangement. At the same time, Gĩkaru relatives are seen pounding some grains in preparation for a visit to the city, to see the new-born and Gĩkaru's bride, Veronike. The child who is named after Gĩkaru's father.

As Routledge & Routledge (1968, p.121) observe, custom prescribes the boundary between a man's and a woman's work. They note that this demarcation starts right at birth: in earliest years, little girls make string bags while little boys herd the goats. Kenyatta agrees with Routledge & Routledge (ibid) when he states that in marriage, man's and woman's positions are well defined. Man carries enormous responsibilities as the head of the family. On the other hand, the woman is essentially the home. Routledge & Routledge (ibid) highlight the roles of Gĩkũyũ women that is fetching of firewood and water, sewing skins, and assisting in building the huts. Kenyatta adds that the woman has a special duty assigned to her in the general affairs of the household such as taking care of children, cooking, milking the cows, tending crops, fetching water and firewood, and taking care of her husband.

In the film **Mũndũrũme Ni Mũgambo**, the main inference is the patriarchal formation among the Agĩkũyũ people. Further analysis of communicative acts among the characters reinforces this proposition. While soliloquizing after his wife fails to report to home within expected timeline, Wandahuhu exclaims *Aya atumia ri!* (this woman!).

He complains bitterly about his wife's absence and the unfed animals. Wandahuhu places the blame on his wife and women by extension. The statement communicates and points at low status of women within Gĩkũyũ community. This patriarchal formation has existed among the Agĩkũyũ for years, a fact that is reinforced by respondents during the FGDs. The respondents pointed out that chauvinistic tendencies are deeply rooted in Gĩkũyũ tradition. Kikuyu conceived of their system as one in which women were excluded from social and decision making. Colonial writers captured this ideology of male dominance in their reports and analyses of Kikuyu social and political structure, and they recorded many folktales and proverbs that repeat the same theme (Shaw, 1995, p.28).

The film titled '**Mũicĩ na kĩhĩĩ**' – the term *kĩhĩĩ*, refers to uncircumcised boy. The word as used is a cultural sign that symbolise members of society devoid of societal expectations. A *kĩhĩĩ* is a sub human in Gĩkũyũ psyche. He is regarded as uncouth, uncivilised, lacking mannerism and other society virtues. In tribal continuum hierarchy, a *kĩhĩĩ* is placed just above beast. To be referred by this term is loathsome, repugnant, and out of tune. Using the term is spiteful and a sign of disrespect. No well-meaning man will be comfortable if referred by this contemptible term. Yet in this comedy an elderly male is yet to undergo through the cultural rite despite his advanced age. Against social dictates, Wandahuhu, the main protagonist, has gone out of his way to marry and carry himself as initiated male who is entitled to all privileges and community rights. Some of the rights that he exercises include exercising authority over his wife, Gathoroko. In one scene, Wandahuhu soliloquizes avowing to discipline his wife, '*Niekungora* - (she will find me); *Nitukuonana* (we will see each other) *umuthii niakunyona* (today she will see who I am). On the other hand, he wondered how Gathoroko would have temerity to give away his goat "Kamiri, *Mbũri yakwa*?" (Kamiri, my sheep) to her own brother. These communicative acts suggest that in Gĩkũyũ culture, the man has absolute authority to dictate and discipline family members at will. The standpoint on sheep ownership infers that wealth belongs to a man, ironically his uncircumcised condition renders him powerless.

The converse is also true, Gathoroko, Wandahuhu's wife, exploits communicative acts when she uses language to blackmail her husband. She exclaims, *Geria ndimere* (I will expose you, if you try to tamper with me.) Gathoroko counters Wandahuhu threats, communicates that Wandahuhu has a secret, of violence with a veiled threat of exposure. *Gitũ urehere tũti tũu* – Wandahuhu tells the wife to bring them seats when Gĩthendũ pays him a visit. She had already offered to do so, so the repeated / redundant instruction communicates Wandahuhu pretenses of being in-charge. Money seems to be a tricky issue in the contemporary Gĩkũyũ society. "*Hathara iria ina ũhiki ndirenda itherũ* - these words point out and depict Machang'i as being parsimonious and sensitive towards spending. This communicates and infers that a wedding celebration is a resource waster and hence, not an endemic element of Agĩkũyũ culture.

4.3 Social Identities and Cultural Rites of Passage

Language is made up of words, which are arbitrary signs that have no inherent relationship with what they signify? The language expresses much more than what is signified by its words. It expresses the way individuals situate themselves in relationship to others, the way they group themselves, the powers they claim for themselves and the powers they stipulate to others. People use language to indicate social allegiances, that is, which groups they are members of and which groups they are not. In addition, they use language to create and maintain role relationships between individuals and between groups in such a manner that the linguistic varieties used by a community form a system that corresponds to the structure of the society. Language is used to express role relationships between individuals. Speakers position themselves in relation to others by using specific linguistic forms that convey social information. A single utterance can reveal much about a speaker: his/her background, place of birth or nation of origin, social class, or even social intent; that is, whether s/he wants to appear friendly or distant, familiar, or deferential, superior, or inferior.

Wilkins & Wolf (2013, p. 169) define cultural discourse as a complex expressive system of terms, topics, forms, and their meanings that people use on occasions to help shape and organize social lives. By cultural we focus on the basic premises of belief and value that people share in public life in order to recognize who they are and of what they are a part; by discourse we have a pragmatic focus in mind, referring to expressive

practices being used in specific social scenes; by terms and topics we refer to the actual words, phrases, and images (verbal and nonverbal) people use and the domains of meaning these bring into play; by forms, we refer to recognizable means of expression from individual acts such as requests to complex sequences of acts such as rituals; and by meanings we refer to basic concepts and premises about being, acting, relating, feeling, and dwelling that people recognize as part of their common life.

As a complex construct, cultural discourse draws attention to the specific resources that people use to make meanings, by explicating the expressive system of which these resources are a part. Communication symbols can be discerned by analysing these symbols in a language system. “The images of symbols in the films reach deep into cultural mythology, tapping the elementary roots of kinship, the sanctity of family and of the land, and sacrificial rituals that regenerate culture and insure continuity (Landy, 1998, p.158). While Harper & Smith (2012) contends that film has a double function of “both displaying and sanctifying those practices which bond society together in a coherent way.” On his part, Carbaugh, & Milburn (1997) advocate its use, “as a way of understanding how cultural meanings are immanent in situated communication practices.” The concept of cultural discourse integrates four basic propositions: (1) There are cultural discourses in all communication; (2) these cultural discourses are located throughout symbols, symbolic acts, forms, and rules; (3) these cultural discourses consist in basic premises about being (identity), doing (action), relating (social relations), feeling (emoting), and dwelling (living in place); and (4) the deep meanings of the cultural communication of a people are found in situated communication practices.

Ruby (2000) holds that culture is manifested through visible symbols embedded in gestures, cultural ceremonies, rituals, material culture, diction, cultural activities, and other culturally mediated activities. He believes that culture is conceived and utterly manifests itself in scripts with plots involving entire cast together with accompanying costumes, props, and settings. Grant (2007a) observes that, “symbols in works of art have cultural meaning beyond the context of the individual in which they happen.” Although cinema is not native to Africa, it has been adopted to record and reflect rich linguistic and cultural heritage. Wilkins & Wolf (2013) define cultural discourse as a

complex expressive system of terms, topics, forms, and their meanings that people use on occasions to help shape and organize social lives. By cultural we focus on the basic premises of belief and value that people share in public life in order to recognize who they are and of what they are a part; by discourse we have a pragmatic focus in mind, referring to expressive practices being used in specific social scenes; by terms and topics we refer to the actual words, phrases, and images (verbal and nonverbal) people use and the domains of meaning these bring into play; by forms, we refer to recognizable means of expression from individual acts such as requests to complex sequences of acts such as rituals; and by meanings we refer to basic concepts and premises about being, acting, relating, feeling, and dwelling that people recognize as part of their common life.

Madhavi (2001) argues that, ethnic communities need to develop systems that create ‘Cultural diversity. She explains that the importance of culture is so potent that it not only provides identity to a people but the fact that human beings are creative and cultural conditions are always seeking to make and remake our world and by so doing contribute to commerce, culture, science and spirituality. Like any other set of people, the Gĩkũyũ have many cultural discourses that mean much to them. This section discusses the import and significance of circumcision and marriage as rites of passage.

4.3.1 Circumcision as Cultural Rite of Passage

Among the Agĩkũyũ, birth, circumcision, age set system, marriage and death are important rites of passage. These rites of passage symbolise important cultural status, transitions, maturity and may naturally earn or deny one the right to adult privileges and rights. As Leakey (1977) rightfully puts it:

Of these *rites de passage* there was no doubt at all in the minds of the Kikuyu that the most important was the one which marked the transition from childhood to adult status, the ceremony that is commonly spoken as initiation, and which had its outward and visible sign in the operation of circumcision in the case of males and clitoridectomy in the case of the females. (Leakey, 1977 p.587)

In this same way, these rites of passage and many others have meanings and implications which selected comedy films highlight and which this thesis attempts to point out in their various forms and shades.

Life as a Gĩkũyũ male or female is an odyssey that every member of the community has had to travel and experience. Gathingira (1934) argues that this is a collective fate that is inescapable, not even an iota of wildest imagination could escape from these cultural requirements. Failure to adhere to these revered customs led to ostracization or outright rejection. Rosberg (1968) argues that age grades and age sets would continue throughout their lives cutting across the various *Mbari* kinship grouping and organized populations on basis of age. Just like soldiers are conscripted into the military, a Gĩkũyũ boy or girl child got conscripted too, within Gĩkũyũ social and cultural edicts the moment he or she is born. Rosberg & Nottingham (1966) and Kershaw (1997) give different layers of authority within Gĩkũyũ cultural set up that is attained by a combination of passage of years or through effort and accomplishment as per standards prescribed by custom, common knowledge, and social expectations.

A child's first stripe is automatic, but with varied degree of significance depending on the gender of a child. Kenyatta (1965); Routledge & Routledge (1968); Leakey (1977), and Mugo (1982) agree that When a Gĩkũyũ child is born, the mother together with the birth attendants would emit five *ngemi* (ululations) if a boy and four *ngemi* if a girl. The number of ululations signified the gender of a child. The father would be pleased to have a son. He would then go to his garden and cut down five sugarcanes. He would then squeeze a little juice of the crashed cane, inside the new born baby boy's mouth giving his blessings that the child may start its life with the sanctifications of sweetness. The scrap of the crushed sugarcane will then be placed carefully on the right-hand side of the entrance of mother's hut. The same will be done in the case of a girl but this time around he will cut down four sugarcanes, squeeze the juice on the baby girl's mouth and place the crushed sugar cane on the left side of mother's hut. This is how a boy child, or a girl child earned his or her stripe.

Next came the naming ceremony. Fitzgerald (1993, p.49) describes naming practice as being part of social perception and creator of these perceptions. He adds that naming is important source of culture. Ndũng'ũ (2013) agrees with this proposition when he argues that a name is important heritage that is culturally and socially significant. This is because it has the capacity to provide meanings within a cultural context. He illuminates that the ethnic names that children are given after birth are not merely

identity labels but insists that they have both intrinsic value as well as cultural and linguistic attributes. Wawerũ, (2011, p.33) contends that, this naming pattern is an extremely strong and important factor of Kikuyu identity. He makes a salient observation when he avers:

However, unlike many African peoples Kikuyu names have no meanings (*ritwa ni mbuukio*), so Kikuyu names are not religious but traditional. You do not expect in this respect to have a name that has a religious significance within the society unless it is a nickname to a person depending on daily practice farming or business. However, such persons have other names, which are traditional and meaningless, e.g. Wanjiku, Wambũi, Kamau and Njoroge. These names simply refer to a clan as an age group without any religious connotations. (Waweru,2011, p.33)

Nonetheless, Ndung'u (2013) counters Waweru's argument by explaining that Agĩkũyũ used to name their children as informed by the various cultural attributes, occasions, practices and traditions. He contends that among the Agĩkũyũ of Central Kenya, the use of highly descriptive defining names is a common feature which pervades the socio-cultural practices of the community. The adopted names by the Agĩkũyũ are culturally significant since they are not just identity labels. There are those that represent *Riika* (age sets), kinship and lineage, social status, while some of the names represent kinship and lineage relationships, others represent subtle but cultural attributes of the ethnic community.

On his part, Mapara (2013, p.1) argues that names are words or sets of words by which a person, animal, place, or a thing is known, addressed, or referred to. Regarding personal names, Haviland et al (2010, p.402) explain that they are important devices for self-definition in all cultures. They note that it is through this system of naming that a social group acknowledges a child's birth right and establishes his or her social identity. Such a name represents and signifies one's group identity such as ethnic, gender, religious affiliation, political, event rank, class, or caste. As Oyeleye (1991) observes in an Essay titled, *Things Fall Apart Revisited: A Semantic and Stylistic Study*, in the traditional African societies a man's individuality is often summed up in the proper or personal name he bears. Each person's name is essentially inseparable from him. By implication the study of selected comedies, the names given to characters and

comedies suggest their denotative and connotative meanings, mannerisms, idiosyncrasies, mien, personality, and character.

If the baby is *Irigithathi* (first born) male, he or she is named after paternal grandfather or grandmother. Muchiri (2009, p.127) claims that among the Agĩkũyũ of Kenya, children are named after both dead and living relatives. The first son is named after the father's father, the first girls after the father's mother, the second son after mother's father, the second girl after mother's mother. After that the names of father's and mother's brothers and sisters are used. This naming system is reflected in these comedies where his first-born is named after character's paternal parents. For instance, in **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo**, Machang'i names his son Kababa, while Kĩere names his son Kĩng'ori after his father. In **Mũici na Kĩhũ**, Wandahuhu names his son Karũmaindo, his father's name. While in **Kĩrĩro Kia Mwana**, upon delivering a baby boy, Veronike is confused whether to name her child after the biological father, Gĩkaru's, father, Kamenju or to name him Karũmaindo, Wandahuhu's father.

Arising from informant's responses, in Gĩkũyũ cultural set up, a child is entitled for another stripe after three to five years. Leakey (1977) maintains that a child had to be separated from or weaned from its mother in an elaborate ceremony called *Gucokia Mwana ihu-ini* "Returning the child into the womb." The Second Birth is important for several reasons: It is widely believed that for about three to five years, the child's soul is in formation and could not take on any responsibility for sin. Any sin and the misfortune arising therefrom, *thahu*, is the parents' responsibility and they were the ones who would undergo the purification ceremony for the sin, *thahu*. Gathingira (1934). The Second Birth ceremony is therefore the real birth of the individual's ego and personality. Henceforth not only did the child become responsible for its own destiny but it shed any inherited sins of its parents. It is after the ceremony that a child graduated from its first stage of child, *mwana* into becoming either a *Kairĩtu*, girl or a *Kahĩ*, boy. It does not mean he or she is a generic genderless being, but he is a *mwana wa Kahĩ*, and *mwana wa Kairĩtu*. The child after that could be sent, for instance to fetch such and such item from so and so.

The child could be allowed to sleep in another house away from the mother. Before that it could never be allowed to sleep out with relatives. Even more, the child could leave its mothers bed and sleep in the *Kwerũ* for a boy and in the girls' bed, *Kĩrĩrĩ* for the girl. "I say could because getting the privilege of sleeping in the girls' bed, *kĩrĩrĩ* required the consent of the older girls," Kabetu (1946, p.12-17). This ceremony entailed use of the intestines of the ram which were tied between mother and child and the climax of the ceremony is the cutting of this ritual cord. On the authority of Kabetu (1946), after this, the woman and the child were shaven bald. Waweru (2011) adds that after attaining the Age of 12, a *Kahĩĩ* transited into *Kĩhĩĩ*, while at about 10 years a *Kairĩtu* transited into *Kĩrĩgo*. A boy remained a *kĩhĩĩ* until he attained 18 to 20 years when he is circumcised and attained new status of *Mũmo*. A girl remained a *Kĩrĩgo* until the age of 16 when she too underwent circumcision rites. Waweru claims that the uncircumcised boys formed a council called *Ngutu* (council of boys).

The boys' organizations start in the family. On family level, they organise some games like throwing stones or dancing. 12 From the family, they move to *ituura* (village) organize how they are going to work as a team especially on the land. They move from one family to the other. When they go to pasture the goats, they put them together. They allocate positions from which to watch the goats. In their free time, they organize dances. The name for their dance is called *nguchu*. (Waweru, 2011, p.42)

A boy, a *kĩhĩĩ* is formally admitted to the *Anake* age group, the defenders of community, after completing initiation rites. All men and women had to be circumcised before they were ritually fit to be tribal members, adherents of old age tribal customs, community lore and socially sanctioned activities.

Circumcision (*irua*) among the Agĩkũyũ people is an important rite of passage. It is much revered by the community because it symbolised and marked an important transition from childhood to adulthood. It is demarcating line between irresponsibility and responsibility, pettiness, and seriousness among many other tribal attributes. In the real meaning of the word, circumcision is a combination of two Latin words, *circum* which means around and *caedere* which means to cut (Gollaher, 2000). In the case of the Agĩkũyũ, it entails the removal of a male foreskin and excision of the clitoris for girls. Traditionally, circumcision ceremony for boys is organized by age-sets, comprised of members within five-year periods. Although boys could be circumcised

throughout that period, they would become part of the same age-set, and all the men in that circumcision group would take an age-set name. Times in the history of Kikuyu society could be gauged by age-set names.

Circumcision is traditionally a public affair, which only added to the anxiety - and determination - of the boys to pass the ordeal without showing the slightest trace of fear. The practice of circumcision is still followed, although nowadays it is likely to be performed in hospitals, elders participating in the study observed. Among Agĩkũyũ uncircumcised boy is called a *Kĩhĩĩ*, which is also an offensive term, particularly when used to refer to an adult. It is disheartening to find Warigia, in **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo** treating her husband with contempt when she calls him a *Kĩhĩĩ* against social edicts that abhor such behaviours and attitude.

Quoting Northcote, Mũriũki (1974) claims that it appears that it is from Gumba that the Agĩkũyũ borrowed the rituals of circumcision, clitoridectomy and some features of the age set system. However, Isichei (1997), Munro (1975), Gregory (1968), and Routledge & Routledge (1968) dispute this view arguing that Agĩkũyũ borrowed the art of circumcision from the Maasai. Kikuyu society absorbed a few Maasai elements especially in the sphere of life. Kikuyu adopted Maasai age sets and circumcision techniques Isechei (1997). While Munro (1975) supports this view by holding that:

Kikuyu adopted the Maasai weapons-spear and shield-while Kamba favoured the bow and arrow; the Kikuyu took up Maasai regimental age sets based upon periods of initiations by circumcision, while the Kamba had no age-sets, only age-grades through which they passed an individual rather than members of a corporate body. (Munro, 1975, p.18)

Mwaniki (1985) backs the theory claiming that Gĩkũyũ borrowed circumcision rites from Maasai when he opines that there are several theories that points to a Maasai origin and which may be supported by the fact that the naming of Gĩkũyũ age sets followed that of Maasai. One of theories propagated by Mwaniki (1985) holds that when Agĩkũyũ suffered successive defeats at the hands of Maasai, who were circumcised, they thought that the courage and bravery of the enemy is because of they were circumcised, and they decided to copy the practice as a mean of survival. Once adopted by the Agĩkũyũ, circumcision for both boys and girls became an important rite of

passage. TAG (1994), points out that circumcision of both male and female is requirement of one to be accepted in Gĩkũyũ society, a view that is recounted by Stigand (1966) at the time when he encountered Gĩkũyũ's newly initiated novices.

He writes of how he observed boys about to be circumcised dancing naked. He noted that the body is from the last few days before the ceremony smeared in white chalk from head to toe, and perhaps a few ornamental bells were strapped to legs to jingle as they danced. Soon after the circumcision rites, both boys and girls were shaved bald. The new initiates as claimed by Stigard (1966) could be recognized as they were generally carrying in their hands several sticks for use in subsequent dances. Hobley (1967) explains that among Agĩkũyũ, circumcision is one of the necessary rituals which a male individual had to undergo. This view is supported by Toulson (1976) who notes that formal indoctrination of age sets into the political life of the community is achieved by means of circumcision. Leakey (1977) and Kenyatta (1965) agree with the fact that circumcision is more than mere ceremonial activity. It carried symbolic values which embodied age-class system with attendant characteristics such as education, social, moral, and religious inclinations. As Leakey adds, it is beginning of a series of *rites de passage* through which each Gĩkũyũ would pass.

Kenyatta is more emphatic when he refers the rite as, 'the *condition-sine-qua-non*-encompassing the whole teaching of tribal law, religion, and morality.' This single activity heralded to the new initiate, a new social status, and a kind of a *carte blanche* to indulge in tribal activities, almost with abandon. Importantly, one ought to note that the new initiate is expected to abide with established customs and traditions of the community.

According to elders who participated in the FGDs, Gĩkũyũ had two methods of accomplishing this rite. There is Gĩkũyũ guild system and Maasai guild system. Accordingly, *Gĩkũyũ Karing'a*, who consider themselves pure Gĩkũyũ in blood and practice observed Gĩkũyũ guild, while *Ũkabi wa Ngwaci* followed Maasai guild system. Karing'a guild rites took a maximum of 8 days while that of *Ũkabi wa Ngwaci* took four days. During the actual circumcision *Ũkabi wa Ngwaci* used to sit on *ndarwa* (cow skin) while *Karing'a* used to sit on *mathakwa* or *magio* leaves from *Mũthakwa*

(*vernonia auriculifera*) and Mũgio trees. Both guilds required the initiates to undergo a pre-circumcision ceremony (*Mararanja*) that involved dancing overnight few days before the event. Gĩkũyũ customs dictated that potential initiates engage in competition where they threw sticks made from *Mũgio* over a *Mũgumo-ini* tree. This is meant to demonstrate who among them is the finest.

This study reveals that due to the elaborate nature of original Gĩkũyũ ceremonies, most Gĩkũyũ people opted to switch over to *Ũkabi* ceremonies because they were shorter, less laborious, and less disgusting. Traditionally, boys who underwent circumcision became warriors (*anake*), although this institution is now defunct. The elders who participated in the open discussion recalled the old days, when circumcision was done in the village using circumcisers' *rwenji*'. As they noted in Gĩkũyũ land, modern hospitals have effectively replaced the *Mũruithia*'s (circumcisers) revered *rwenji* (knife).

Much has passed due to a multiplicity of factors that have affected traditional circumcision rites. Dr Leakey attribute this to education, religion, globalisation, rural urban migration which have reduced the initiation rites of the Agĩkũyũ to nothing more than hurried performance. He bemoans this sorry by noting that this abandonment of character and tribal training he finds, 'just one more underlying cause of cultural lethargy in Kikuyu tribe.' Circumcision, therefore, was necessary for maintaining relations with ancestors and God.

Many societies - the Kikuyu included - have a taboo against an uncircumcised man or woman bearing children. If this occurs, the usual punishment is exile for both the mother and father. Society had no kind words for uncircumcised boy. He is a *Kĩhĩĩ*, an object of ridicule and contempt and hence no well-meaning man would have liked to be referred as such. The issue of circumcision features prominently in the selected comedies. In **Mũtikũnyarira** we learn that Karũrũma the son to Kĩhenjo is yet to undergo through this hallowed practice and upon textual reading of **Mũici na kĩhĩĩ**, the issue of circumcision manifests itself as an important motif in the comedy. It is interesting to note that the main character in the comedy, Wandahuhu is not circumcised. This omission makes him to live in perpetual fear of being exposed by his

wife. Wandahuhu devices means and ways of circumventing this stigma, when together with his friend Gĩthendũ they hatch a plan of having Wandahuhu circumcised without raising her wife's eyebrows. In the circumstance, Gĩthendũ assumes the role of *Mũtiiri* (sponsor) who is an equivalent to godfather in Christian baptismal rites. Having undergone the rite, Wandahuhu rightly used Gĩkũyũ proverb to his advantage, "*Thĩga nia rua gurira mararanja rĩngi.*" this translates *Thĩga* is now circumcised, he can no longer be subjected to night vigils again. These vigils symbolised contempt, derision, and low status. When he finally faced the knife, Wandahuhu picked a fight with his wife. In the fit of anger, Gathoroko caused commotion shouting that Wandahuhu is a *kĩhĩĩ*. Wandahuhu proves her long when he calls villagers to validate her claims. Wandahuhu is finally vindicated but not before Wandahuhu urging the villagers to ascertain whether his wife is circumcised, bringing to the fore the contentious question of female circumcision among Agĩkũyũ people. Although the practice has been suppressed for decades now, it is interesting to find it being mentioned in the selected comedies.

Male circumcision is conducted alongside that of female circumcision. Routledge & Routledge (1968) ascribed the right age of girls' circumcision as ranging being twelve to fifteen. A hallowed practice and as Routledge & Routledge (ibid) observed no man accepted to marry a girl who failed to undergo the rite, although he clarified that these girls' despite being circumcised never used to marry before the age of sixteen and twenty years.

Even today the rite is still practiced by some communities in Kenya, Kibor (2007) notes that among Marakwet people the practice is still alive and is used as marker to distinguish the real women from imposters. He says that the mothers of uncircumcised girls are at the receiving end, they are not expected to interact with the others during community feasts. "Don't talk to me because I am unripe," this is the answer they give to the mothers of circumcised girls since they only ripen when their own daughters are circumcised. Mokaya (2001) while commenting on female circumcision among Abagusii community explains that the community view female and male genitals as sign and source of life. This means that circumcision is meant to unlock them and allow

continuity of life in procreation. Every woman is supposed to undergo the process before marriage. This assertion is supported by Gachiri (2000) when she writes:

Some communities in Africa believe that a child is born bisexual. They believe that at birth each human being is double, 'a twin', at one and the same time male and female, physically and spiritually. The prepuce in the male and clitoris in the female represents this double sexuality. The removal of the two principles of circumcision and excision confirm the boy as a man and the girl as a woman. Until this is done child's growth and development is inward looking and anti-social. The rite of passage is believed to bring about a profound change in the child and establishes, in a decisive manner, a natural difference between the child and the adult. The rite therefore causes an irreversible break and opens the person to opposite sex and society. (Gachiri,2000, p.37)

Rosberg and Nottingham (1966, p.148) note that in Gĩkũyũ culture only circumcised girl could be considered fully a woman after going through the rite of passage. There is a general belief that uncircumcised girls would not physically be able to bear children. In fact, not to be circumcised is to be able to bear children. It is unconceivable that any mature girl could skip the process. Not to be circumcised is to be debarred from developing the personality and attributes of womanhood and to be condemned to remain psychologically a little girl (*Kĩrĩgo*). In Gĩkũyũ community, an uncircumcised girl of marriage age is an object of derision, indeed almost of disgust. Far from being unnecessary, the operation symbolizes the most important moment in a girl's life, and her bearing during the pain that accompanied it is a matter of great pride (or shame to her family if their girl cannot face the cut confidently.)

Scholars such as Kenyatta (1965) and Mugubi (2015, p.22) question whether it is a physical or symbolic operation. While quoting Mariana, a character in Rebecca Njau's play-*the Scar*, Mugubi (ibid) notes that the whole initiation of both sexes in Agĩkũyũ traditional society is an elaborate religio-initiatory rite within which the surgical operation is just one of the many aspects. Mugubi agrees with Kenyatta that before the surgical operation, a lot of formal education is carried out by experienced people such as members of 'Women's council' '*Ndundu ya Atumia*'. Some of lessons taught focused on marriage and generally all their duties and obligations to the society.

However, at the advent of colonialism, missionaries waged a spirited war against female circumcision. Christian Missionaries Society (C.M.S) led this campaign which finally obliterated its foundation leaving a permanent scar, a move that made this custom to be shunned by some Kikuyus while cultural purists still prefer practice it but in private ceremony with little or no ritual:

The traditional context within which the custom is practiced thus ceased to be and what remained of the whole rite is only the physical operation. That only the surgical operation remained rendered initiation worthless since Kenyatta claims that what is more valuable is the initiation process itself where the neophytes were taught their norms and how to become responsible adults. (Mugubi, 2015 p.22)

To C.M.S missionaries' rites associated with Female Circumcision is primate and primeval Nthamburi (1982) writes that in 1916 it is decided that female circumcision within the Church of Scotland be forbidden, a decision that is reiterated by the church in Tumutumu mission in 1920. This is followed by yet another meeting in 1922 of the Alliance of Protestant Missions at which a resolution is passed emphasizing the necessity for missionaries to use their influence to discourage or even abolish the practice. This attracted a lot of resistance from Agĩkũyũ people. Gachiri (2000) argues that these churches incorporated anti-circumcision campaign in their schools' curriculum and liturgy. They also made laws against the practice. One of the most vocal and propagator of this campaign is Dr A. Arthur, who arrived in Kenya in 1907. He based his arguments on his experience as a medical doctor working in female wards among Gĩkũyũ people and witnessing deaths of mothers and children at childbirth. He did this by using government machinery and former students of missionaries' schools.

Langley and Kiggins (1974) described Dr J. Arthur as a man of enormous energy and drive, and a forceful personality. He is to play an important role in the establishment of Alliance High School, in his capacity as Secretary of the Alliance of Protestant Missions and in issue of wide educational and political significance. He led a two-decade campaign against the circumcision of girls and by 1929, a significant number of girls refused to undergo the rite. These efforts were met with mixed reactions such as desertion of the Christian faith by many former converts of the protestant churches. The cultural enthusiasts and those opposed to this campaign assumed a non-predicated

political persuasion with far reaching influence. The implication of this is that Gĩkũyũ people started their own independent churches and schools.

These churches and schools acted as a haven for circumcised girls, given that protestant churches had declared a *persona non-grata* to initiated girls and hence they could neither attend their churches nor schools. Elkins (2005) notes that missionaries were determined to convert the Africans not just to Christianity but to an entire Western way of life, belief, and customs. During their great time of ‘saving lost souls’ of Africa, they actually competed for them with each denominations and sect curving out and exerting its own sphere of influence in Gĩkũyũ country. Elkins observes that in Gĩkũyũ country the Presbyterians, the Anglicans, the Methodists, and the Catholics were a constant feature. They proceeded to establish churches, hospitals, and schools but not before banishing and denouncing Gĩkũyũ cultural practices, that were regarded by church as paganist in approach, savagely and heathenistic. Rosberg & Nottingham (1966) identify the Church of Scotland (CSM), for its puritan and rigid attitude towards the matter of female circumcision. Gachiri (2006) concludes that the Africans did not give in to the colonizers.

As early as 1924 organizations were formed in Kenya to fight the ban. In Gĩkũyũland Independent School Associations were formed so that circumcised girls could continue with schooling. The counter campaign is picked up by cultural enthusiasts led by the Kenya Central Association (KCA). The Association responded energetically by defending their cultural practice fervently. This matter exploded in 1920s following a decision by several missionaries banned the practice for their converts. By 1929, thousands of Gĩkũyũ were protesting and leaving the established churches to form their own independent churches and schools which would permit the practice in their creed and practice. Hill (2013) comments that as soon as the Gĩkũyũ were able, they introduced education in English in their independent schools. This is informed by the fact that access to English is very important to being able to compete on the same level as Europeans and Asians.

Now, the inequality in educational access and opportunities between Europeans, Asians, and Sub-Saharan Africans was symbolized by access to English. Activities of KCA and those who opposed entrenchment missionaries' ideologies gave rise to a great divide that swallowed Gĩkũyũ country. Therefore, the Gĩkũyũ country was in trouble in what Rosberg & Nottingham (1966) identify as two sectarian groups that took sharp divergent views on this matter and thereby dividing the tribe down in the middle, where people were divided into '*Karing'a*' (pure Gĩkũyũ) and '*Kĩrore*' (thumbprint or sign), and those who had signed were subject to abuse." (Hill, 2013, p. 121).

This prompted apprentices from the Kabete Native Industrial Training Depot (NITD), brought the tune back with them after completing a construction job in Mombasa and composed *Mũthĩrĩgũ*. This song spread rapidly across Gĩkũyũ country and into the "White Highlands." Roberg & Nottingham refer to this song as being comical and capable of recreating the frustrations and emotions of Gĩkũyũ people. However, this powerful song called, the *Mũthĩrĩgũ* was banned in January 1930, with the Colonial government imposing singers' heavy penalties.

However, the practice of female circumcision is almost obsolete in Gĩkũyũ country because of concerted efforts by the church and subsequent governments, right from colonial days to modern Kenyan state. This goes to explain to why the practice of female circumcision has never been the same again. A closer look at the comedies under study, no character who refers to this practice directly. The only exception is that moment when Wandahuhu urges the villagers to ascertain whether his wife is circumcised or not:

Gathoroko: *Ukai ndimwire* (Come I reveal it to you) Gathoroko screams attracting villagers in her homestead. Villagers respond and arrive and want to know what is happening to Gathoroko:

Villagers: *Nikii Gathoroko murorania na Mũthuri waku?* (What is the matter between you and your husband Gathoroko?)

Gathoroko: *Atuire ee kĩhĩĩ* (He is still uncircumcised)

Villagers: (laugh)

Wandahuhu: *Ati kii...ukai mwone kana ndire mugima* (come ye all and confirm whether I am not circumcised)

Villagers: let get inside and ascertain. The villagers get inside and are perturbed to realize that Wandahuhu is circumcised.

Wandahuhu: Ukanjonora uguo Gathoroko (Gathoroko, you have opted to embarrass me this much)

Gathoroko: *Aaca tiguu arahana* (I am sure; he is not in that condition).
Wandahuhu: *Tondu niwanjonorithia mbere ya andu ri? gaka nako nikahinda keega unaithue tukurore kana nawe uhana atia* (Now that you have embarrassed me in the public it is just fair that we too, confirm whether you are circumcised too).

Once Wandahuhu calls on the crowd to confirm whether Gathoroko is circumcised or not, Gathoroko takes to her heels. This confirms that it is highly likely that she is not circumcised given that the practice is almost none existent in Gĩkũyũ country today. This assessment is confirmed during the FGDs with some respondents agreeing that the Female Circumcision practice is in steep decline among Agĩkũyũ. They noted that the practice is no longer embraced by cultural enthusiasts who hitherto were in the frontline fighting for its preservation in 1920's.

Today Independent Churches adherents among the Agĩkũyũ people are ambivalent towards the practice. Its deterioration has been precipitated further by the Government of Kenya policies and various legislation which have proscribed and outlawed the practice across the country. However, in Njoroge/Mzee Kibeba (2016) Mzee Kibeba a 96-years' old respondent is adamant that Agĩkũyũ have gone astray for abandoning this cultural rite of passage by posing this rhetorical question. "But why I am saying that we have gone astray? It is disheartening to find that women of today have temerity of even taking their sons or superintending circumcision process, this is unheard of. I am proud of Ameru people because they have maintained their heritage to date. That why we continue to have issues since our women are not circumcised. They are (*irĩgũ*) and in their state, they can easily go out of control."

An age-set is made up of cohorts who faced the circumciser's knife at the same time. After circumcision, he is admitted into what Routledge & Routledge (1968) calls *Kirui*. Soon after healing he is known as *Mumo*. Routledge & Routledge (1968) and Rosberg & Nottingham (1966) concur that for *Mumo* to proceed to the warrior grade he is expected to pay one goat to warrior grade. A 96-year respondent argued that this goat signified that such a man could remain with senior warriors when they went to bath on the river. He is not expected to take to his heels when the warriors removed their clothes. It also meant that he could now, without social inhibitions, learn warfare and age group secrets. As *njama ya ita* (Gĩkũyũ traditional military wing) members to this respected

warrior grade ate life literally with a big spoon. A fact that is endorsed by Rosberg & Nottingham and Kenyatta.

Being in the same age set, it meant that the cohorts, who would greet one another using the following term *Wanyua Wakiniĩ*, regarded one another as blood more than just being a mere cohort. They were like Siamese twins, conjoined by their shared heritage, tribal fraternity, trust, fortitude, and oneness. They were tribal equals, bound by corporate virtues and values. However, society is alive to the fact that, they could not forever restrict young men from interacting with the opposite sex for they knew that that is tantamount to placing a curse on the procreation role of men and women.

Anake were psychologically prepared for sexual life through some culturally sanctioned sexual rehearsals called *nguĩko*. The society allowed them to mingle and interact with girls through traditionally sanctioned *nguĩko* observance. TAG (1994) reports that this practice is done according to a well-regulated code since if it is not properly observed it would have led to complete sexual intercourse. During those days, a special hut is built for an age group where girls could visit their boyfriends' night or day, to enjoy food and drink together. Afterwards one of the boys/*anake* would turn the talk to the subject of *nguĩko*, saying, "I am going to stretch myself." After the girls chose their partners, each boy removed his clothes and the girls removed their upper garments but placed their *mũthuru* between their legs. Kenyatta (1965) paints a vivid mental description of *nguĩko* as explained below:

The lovers lie together facing each other, with their legs interwoven to prevent movement of their hips. They begin to fondle each other, rubbing their breasts together, whilst at the same time they engage in love making conversation until they gradually fall asleep. Occasionally, the girl might allow the boy to place his sexual organ between her thighs and hold it tight in that position without penetrating; or by mutual arrangement a girl may allow her lover to have fuller intercourse, trusting that incomplete penetration would safeguard against risk of conception. (Kenyatta, 1965, p. 152)

Rosberg & Nottingham (1966) adds that together with circumcised girls, they will indulge in *Nguĩko*, tribal sexual escapades inside a common hut where switching of partners is an accepted practice. In Gĩkũyũ society a young man is subjected to many of tests, some of which bordering pervasion. TAG (1994) adds that tradition is told of

a Gĩkũyũ dance for the youth, both boys and girl. The boys danced in a circle around a fire while the girls danced naked in an outer cycle. First boys would dance towards the fire, then they would turn and dance towards the girl, embracing them tightly, then they would turn towards the fire again. If any boy is found to have an erect penis, he is sorely disciplined. Usually no boy is found to have an erect penis. Youth were taught strict personal discipline. If a young warrior could persevere and come out unscathed, he is then admitted into senior warrior class. Only senior warriors, who were preparing to leave warrior grade, could marry and raise children.

A.H.J Prins (1953) and Kenyatta (1965) both relate that this practice not only prepared the participants for polygamy but also established a normative pattern which allowed age-brothers to have intercourse with each other's wives without breaking the customary law or arousing paternal jealousy. TAG Group (1994), agrees with Kenyatta and Prins when he points out that there is mutual brotherhood between men of each age group so that a man would offer his wife to his age mate when visiting. Traditionally anyone in age group could have sexual intercourse with the wives of his age group:

If a man came to the house of a fellow age mate, it is an act of hospitality to provide the guest with a bed with his wife that night. The Gĩkũyũ had no guest room for visitors. The wife prepared a bed for him where she also slept. (TAG Group, 1994, p.16)

In these comedy films, a replica of this sexual abandon manifests itself though subtly in **Kĩrĩro kĩa Mwana** when Gĩthendũ decides to marry Wahĩto, the wife to his *Wakinĩ* and age-mate, Wandahuhu. We also find very close relationship between Kĩhoto and the wife of his Wakinĩ, Machang'ĩ in **Mũthuri nĩ Mĩtugo**. Although it does not spill over to lover's parlour, the manner of addressing one another, body language and dispositions suggests that if given a conducive atmosphere, they could result to this cultural practice.

4.3.2 Marriage as a Cultural Rite of Passage

Marriage is a revered institution in African cultural life. Mbiti emphasizes that for African peoples' marriage is actual focus for existence. He compares it as appoint whereby all members of society converge be it the dead, the living dead, the living, and those yet to be born. He postulates that all dimensions of time meet in a marriage

institution, “and the whole drama of history is repeated, renewed and revitalized there, Mbiti (1969, p.133).

Ndungo (2006) explains that among the Agĩkũyũ both men and women are encouraged to get married. A woman is expected to be good and responsible to the husband by attending to all his needs and desires, and then playing the rest of the household roles:

As a good wife, she is also expected to obey the husband, share his likes and dislikes and respect his relatives. The importance of the position held by women in the society is best captured in the following proverb: *Nyoni ya njamba ndĩrĩ gĩtara* (A male bird has no nest.) This proverb shows that as far as the society is concerned, the home belongs to the woman. Various attitudes towards women seem to have stemmed from the numerous roles assigned to them by society. By the process of social conditioning or socialisation, women came to accept the social attitudes towards them. For example, they came to accept that they are inferior to men and should occupy an inferior position in society. They also came to believe that men are biologically stronger which implies that they are superior. They came to believe that since they are not endowed with the same strengths that would enable them to perform similar activities as men, men's roles are more important than theirs. (Ndungo, 2006, p.21)

In Gĩkũyũ culture, marriage confers on woman the social status of a married woman, which establishes her reputation. In a patriarchal based society like Gĩkũyũ, unmarried woman is subject of ridicule. From an early age, girls are taught that marriage and maternity dignify and position woman in envious position as a dignified woman. As claimed by Ayiemba (1990) in a traditional marriage among the Agĩkũyũ the minimum age of marriage is about twenty years. It is expected that that the couple should not be within degree of relationship such as *Mũhĩrĩga* or *Mbarĩ*. This view is supported by TAG (1994) who acknowledge that Agĩkũyũ prohibited consanguinity, meaning that marriage between close blood relations from a common ancestor is prohibited. The community also prohibited affinity, meaning that a man is prohibited to marry or cohabit with wife's mother or grandmother or his wife's daughter or granddaughter or even a daughter of his age-mate.

Quoting Mzee Kibe Njoroge, he notes that marriage negotiations were carried out by the families of both the girl and the boy. Where a consensus had been reached, the girl could get a friend from the boy's side to tell her about the boy and vice versa. The

family of the boy initiated the marriage ceremony by sending goats to the girls' family. The initial bride wealth is a *Mwati* and *Harika* (an ewe and young she goat) once the number of goats had been reached thirty or a number agreed upon depending on the economic status of parties involved, the girl is given away. Importantly, marriage is accompanied by sharing livestock with the family in the form of bride wealth which is divided among the members though in different shares. Since the girls' virginity is cherished, on the wedding day a 'confirmation' ceremony done.

If confirmed a virgin, there would be joyous shouts by women; afterwards the girl would be returned to the parents' home with gifts and a ceremony performed to indicate that she is a virgin. TAG (ibid) notes that virginity is also very important among the Gĩkũyũ. The parents expected their daughter to be married as a virgin. Sexual intercourse before marriage is regarded as a disgrace. If a girl got pregnant before marriage, she had to be cleaned for it is difficult for such a girl to become married. In **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo** and in **Mũthuri nĩ Mĩtugo** we encounter the issue of virginity at play. To start with Warigia makes a sarcastic remark to Machang'i that he married her when she is still a (a virgin) while in **Mũthuri nĩ Mĩtugo** we find Kanyanya falling pregnant and therefore becoming a village laughing stock.

As the first European to come into direct contact in early 1900, Routledge observed that among the Agĩkũyũ, marriage is an important unit that dictated the community life. Life is concisely vested in the family and the homestead. His views were supported by Cagnolo (2006), Kenyatta (1965) and Leakey (1977). They all seemed to agree with the fact that that life a Gĩkũyũ person is unfulfilled if such a person failed, in one way or another, to establish a family, bear children and experience marriage life in its entirety and splendour. Ayiemba (1992) notes that among the Agĩkũyũ the marriage is deemed as not having taken place where dowry is not paid. The woman gains custody of the children only if the dowry is unpaid. the man retained custody of the children in the event of divorce if the dowry has been paid. Most Gĩkũyũ marriages as is case with those of nearly all Bantus were arranged based on *rũracio*, or what is commonly described by Englishmen as the 'Bride Price.'

Under this system, the bride grooms' family transfer wealth in the form of livestock of one kind or another, to the family of bride to be. Ferraro (1976) terms *rũracio* as a nexus of true Gĩkũyũ marriage. He reinforces Kenyatta observations when he notes that irrespective of the amount, the *rũracio* is transferred in instalments, the first payment occurring at the time the groom's proposal is accepted by the bride's father, and subsequent payments occurring at agreed-upon intervals. It is instructive to note *Rũracio* established the customary law basis for the union, 'Without which there can no legitimate transfer of marital rights. It is quite telling how this used to work. If the marriage fails to work, *Rũracio* is returnable upon marriage dissolution. Leakey (1974) notes that this practice had several objectives which he enumerates as follows:

Ensuring security, welfare and proper upbringing of any children having born or arising from marriage...the Second objective is to make sure that no widow is ever left without proper maintenance for herself and her children. The third objective is to impress upon young men and women the seriousness of entering into a marriage contract. The objective of Kikuyu marriage is no legalization of a sexual relationship between two people but a means of founding a stable family unit that gave credit to the tribe. (Leakey, 1974, p.89)

Besides *rũracio*, there are other payments or presents that are exchanged on a reciprocal arrangement between the families of wedding couple. However, these payments do not constitute *rũracio*. They are not jural instruments for the transfer of rights. Ferraro (1976) calls them discretionary gestures. However, modernization has eroded, this sacred institution chiefly because of monetization of *rũracio* (bride price). Ferrero attributes it to the lack of goats, noting that Agĩkũyũ now prefer cash money 'although the symbolism of goat in negation which is mutually translated into equivalent cash is prevalent. Notwithstanding this, TAG (1994) claims that *Ngurario* is the last rite before the marriage is considered to have matured and able to stand on its own. *Ngurario* is a final rite that cemented marriage under Gĩkũyũ customary law.

Arising from this, Machang'i, in **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo**, complains that arranging marriage by a Gĩkũyũ man is a tall order. He says this after undergoing a haranguing experience before officially marrying Warigia in an expensive church wedding. Ferraro also posits that *rũracio* has suffered collateral damage because of widespread education opportunities for girls in Kenya. This has increased inflationary pressures when it comes to marriage negotiations. This view is supported by men who participated in

FGDs who observed that some clan members are demanding more *rūracio* claiming that their educated daughters attract high premium as a way of compensating the amount spent on her education.

The FGDs participants concluded that remarks by Machang’i that ‘*Uhiki wa nduku ici ndurenda itheru.*’ which translates, “Today’s wedding I no child play, is a valid statement. This sad is leading to mature girls ending up single or resulting to ‘come we stay marriages.’” Ferraro makes a case in 1970s that led to formation of a movement with an objective of containing rising cost of bride price. The concern at the time was prompted by unprecedented increase of postponement of marriage by prospective men, leaving many marriageable girls unmarried.

This view on marriage is supported by elders who participated in the study’s FGDs and subsequently illustrated in these films. To start with, in **Kĩrĩro Kia Mwana** Veronike and Gĩkaru end up in ‘come we stay’ marriage after she delivers her child, we do not find Gĩkaru making any efforts in ensuring that he abides by Gĩkũyũ cultural principles dictating a marriage arrangement. The same fate befalls Wakarĩndĩ is cohabitating with Kĩmenyi due to economic considerations. As respondent noted, this is now more prevalent in Gĩkũyũ country especially among young men and women residing in urban areas.

As Routledge & Routledge (1968) observed, custom prescribes the line between a man’s work and a woman. He noted that this demarcation starts right at the birth. This begins in earliest years-the little girls make string bags, the little boys heard the goats. Kenyatta agrees with Routledge & Routledge (ibid) when he states that in marriage man position is well defined as well that of a woman. Man carries enormous responsibilities as the head of the family. On the other had the woman is essentially the home. Routledge & Routledge (ibid) highlights the roles of Gĩkũyũ women as costing of fetching of firewood, water, sewing skins and assisting in building the huts. Kenyatta adds that she has a special duty assigned to her in the general affairs of the household such as taking care of children, cooking, milking the cows, tending crops, fetching water and firewood, and taking care of her husband.

During the FGDs, elderly men participating in the study observed that the one could know the role and status of boys and girls at the point of birth. If a boy is born, the midwife announced the arrival of a protector of the tribe. To signify this, women responded by ululating five times. If it is a girl, they ululated four times. This single act placed a boy higher in social order of things. In fact, many proverbs attest to this fact. These respondents (elders) gave an example of one proverb that goes, '*Kahĩĩ nĩ ithĩgĩ rĩa mũciĩ*' Gĩkũyũ which literally translates, 'A boy is the pole of the family.' Nevertheless, Routledge & Routledge (ibid) had a different view on the actual importance of a girl among the Agĩkũyũ.

He observed that from the moment a girl is born, the family is much elated due to the prospects she brings along her arrival. She is going to complement her mother in finishing home chores which is an invaluable contribution in an ever-increasing homestead among the Agĩkũyũ. Another prospect for girls is that when she is mature, she is going to fetch to her father thirty (30) goats. This reflection indicates that to some degree, women are considered as sources of wealth and objects for sexual gratification.

This societal imbalance is implicit in Routledge & Routledge (ibid) conclusion that among the Agĩkũyũ, a woman has no legal status. Theoretically her husband may treat her as he likes, without being amenable to tribal justice; in practice, she is protected by her critical values and by traditional customs. It can be assumed that these traditional roles can be traced back to the time immemorial. Noting his encounter with Gĩkũyũ women in early 1900, Routledge & Routledge add:

The carrying of heavy loads of firewood and other produce is work to which, it is hardly necessary to say, the women are inured from their earliest childhood. Quite tiny girls may be seen trotting along by their elders carrying their proportionate of burden. (Routledge & Routledge 1968, p.121)

To exist in a cordial manner, cultural custom provided for delimitation in terms of roles and responsibilities for both sexes. This may help to explain the reason behind having marriage being site of cultural discourse in virtually all selected comedies in this study. This is true regarding coupling of characters as depicted in **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo** where Machang'i play critical role in the comedy with his wife Warigia on one hand and Kĩere (Ithe wa Kĩng'ori) and his wife Warũkũngũ or Nyina wa Kĩng'ori) who helps

to provide contrast between Machang'i family and 'proper' family where man authority is exhibited and respected as the title of film suggests. However, Machang'i family is a stark contrast of Kĩere's family. "*Nii ngaikurukaga gutaha maai nyukwa ari nyumba-*" This can loosely be translated thus-My son why is your mother forcing me to fetch water while she is relaxing at my house? -Here Machang'i laments his plight after his wife usurped his male roles. His cry demonstrates a man suffering from effects of reversed roles in marriage. The propagation of matriarchy by a woman. (*guikarirwo*).

During FGDs, the participants expressed their fear that motif in **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo** where Warigia takes a centre stage at Machang'i house mimics the days of Iregi and Wangũ wa Makeri. Asked to expound more on these two different eras when women reigned supreme, the respondents explained that that Gĩkũyũ culture is explicit on the roles of both sexes. This view is supported by Routledge & Routledge (1968) and Kenyatta (1965). During their discussions, they noted that this is not first time Agĩkũyũ have experienced this type of scenario. Indeed, it mirrors Iregi's era were forced to conspire against their women.

This revolt is based on women sexuality, pregnancy. Mazrui & Mutunga (2004) opine that: "While motherhood is a qualification for centrality, pregnancy can be a disqualification for power, at least according to Gĩkũyũ mythology," (ibid, p.222). They add that, "the Kikuyu myth about destruction of matriarchy recounts how men staged the most supreme of all coup." This is confirmed by respondents who explained that before this revolt men were expected men to do all domestic chores. The women were only interested in washing their bodies. Following this Iregi revolt, women were expected to remain in their homestead. They were expected to be back home by dusk. Men were barred against holding the children, milking the cows, or tending the hearth. This rule existed until the time of Wangũ wa Makeri. They however tricked Wangũ into performing Kĩbaata (traditional dance) while naked. After she consented, men had every reason to depose her. Arising from the film, the trend is returning to our culture. "I don't know whether men will overcome this. Women nowadays they are one in parliament, they are judges and modernity has exacted a lot of influence on us. I don't know whether we will be able to extract ourselves from current cultural maze," one respondent bemoaned.

Another respondent had similar assertion, extolled virtues of men but decrying any attempt to position women in the management of society. He is particularly incensed by the fact that Wangũ wa Makeri is overbearing on men when she reined as a Chief in Mũrang'a county. He told of how men conspired to overthrow Wangũ and her woman ilk. He started by admitting that men used to be ruled by a woman called Wangũ. Tired of her rule, a Kĩbaata dance performance is organized in Muruka (location 4) of Mũrang'a county. When Wangũ arrived at the scene, she wanted to become like the men and went to bath at the nearest stream, adorned *Mũthuru*, the men's regalia. This regalia did not cover men's nakedness, only their back. Wangũ did the same to the chagrin of men, who felt offended because according to Agĩkũyũ culture, woman nakedness should never be exposed in public places, safe in the private when a woman is fulfilling her conjugal rights with her husband. Because of this abomination, men resolved to depose Wangũ and her ilk.

Another respondent had another version of what transpired long time ago when Agĩkũyũ men deposed women from the positions of leadership. The respondent in his nineties told a story of a boy who set forth to take his father's flock in Gatuanyaga (next to Thika town) for pastures. When the boy came back home, he refused to take his mother's food. When the father inquired why, he requested his father to bring his spear along and together they left for Gatuanyaga area. Once they reached there, the son revealed to his father how he had eavesdropped and gathered credible intelligence concerning a conspiracy by womenfolk against their men. "If you do not take necessary measures you will be killed," the boy warned.

When the man later returned home, he sent some few men to Wangũ, requesting her to prepare porridge made from millet and to roast bananas for them with a caveat that if she declined, she is to be killed. When this information is passed to Wangũ, she requested the young men to make themselves comfortable in her hut. To their surprise, Wangũ complied to their request. After taking her meals, they left and visited another woman's home making similar request. The second woman complied too. However, there is one who defied their request.

Therefore, she is speared instantly. One woman who is tending her farm saw what had transpired, she run fast as she could, going to every homestead and warning women against defying request made by a group of men who were roaming wild in the village. only three women were killed after defying this request. At the end of this exercise, power is eventually transferred from womenfolk to men. This is the end of their rule. It is therefore a surprise to the respondent to find the same behaviours that were exhibited by Wangũ in the past taking root once again in Gĩkũyũ country.

In **Mũthuri nĩ Mĩtugo** comedy, the storyline revolved Machang’i family and societal expectation on man’s conduct in married life. Machang’i goes against the grain when he befriends his maid and eventually impregnates her an act that is abhorred in traditional Gĩkũyũ set up. Traditionally, affinity is abhorred, this is construed to mean having sexual relations with a daughter of somebody’s age mate. Machang’i therefore goes against the grain when he copulates with Kanyanya, daughter to Kĩhoto and who is coincidentally Machang’i’s Wakinĩ (age mate).

In the selected comedies, we encounter a new form of marriage phenomenon taking root among the Agĩkũyũ. Suda (2007) for instances notes that one of the emerging trends in contemporary Africa and indeed other cultures of the world is increasing acceptance of cohabitation as an alternative family arrangement. She argues that this type of live-in relationships is not popular in traditional set up, including among the Agĩkũyũ people. She notes that today cohabitation is gaining ground as type of domestic and sexual arrangement especially among the youth residing in urban and peri-urban areas. In Kenya, this phenomenon is variously referred to as ‘Come we Stay’.

Among the selected comedies, ‘Come we stay’ marriage arrangement is depicted in **Kĩrĩro kĩa Mwana** and **Nganga Mbutu**. In **Kĩrĩro Kia Mwana** we encounter five characters who end up in ‘Come we stay’ a marriage arrangement. To start with, when Wandahuhu ditches Wahĩto, the couple end up with other partners. Wandahuhu teams up with Veronike while Wahĩto team up with Gĩthendũ. After the entry of Gĩkaru, Wandahuhu cohabitation with Veronike cannot hold since Veronike child is sired by Gĩkaru and not Wandahuhu as he is made to believe.

In **Nganga Mbute**, Wakarĩndĩ is cohabiting with Kĩmenyi. Neither of the two is responsible to take up responsibility of taking care of children. In his own words, Kĩmenyi states in unequivocal terms that he cannot take responsibility of a child of another man without knowing that Wakarĩndĩ, his mistress, is a mother of a daughter who stays with her uncle back in the village. The attitude portrayed by the couple (Wakarĩndĩ/Kĩmenyi) corroborates an observation by Suda (2007), who notes that in ‘Come we stay’ marriage arrangement, there is ambiguity between cohabiting parties in as far as parenting roles is concerned. She adds that there is also lack of a legal framework to enforce children’s right, therefore making cohabitation an unstable arrangement. It is also apparent that one of cohabiting couple may fail to disclose to the other partner of child born in previous relationships. This can lead to outright rejection by the other partner. This is how Mũkindũri, Wakarĩndĩ’s daughter loses her life in **Nganga Mbute** tragi-comedy.

4.3.2.1 The Place of Children in Gĩkũyũ Marriage

Among the Agĩkũyũ community, children signified completeness. They are signs and symbols of stability and future. They are that part that completed a marriage life cycle. Without a child, a marriage remained in a state of limbo, which oscillated between optimism, guilt, anger and outright rejection. Mbiti (1969) writes:

In some African societies, marriage is not fully recognised or consummated until the wife has given birth...Pregnancy becomes therefore, the final seal of a marriage, the sign of complete integration of the woman into her husband’s family and kinship cycle. (Mbiti, 1969, p.107)

Mbiti makes some shocking remarks to the effect that that any woman who for whatever reasons fails to get a child, her fate is considered worse than that person who opts to commit suicide. It is like coming to a dead end of human lifeline as well of genealogical line. It is said that a childless woman bears a scar which nothing can erase. As Wakaba (2013) notes marriage and its obligations occupy a position of great importance.

One of the outstanding features in the Agĩkũyũ system of marriage is the desire of every member of the tribe to build up one’s own family group, and by this means, extend, and prolong the father’s *mbarĩ* (sub-clan or family). The desire to have children is, therefore, deep-rooted in the hearts of both husband and wife, and on entering

matrimonial union, couples regard procreation as their first and most sacred duty. The Agĩkũyũ tribal custom requires that a married couple should have at least four children, two males and two females. To them as Mailu (1988) puts it:

A child is not merely a child but a great event. Childlessness is not merely an unfavourable incident, but a calamity. And as one anthropologist puts it, to an African, marriage is not an event, but a process that, if normal and blessed, culminates in the birth of a child. (Mailu, 1988, p.39)

Wilson (1971) acknowledges the importance the coming of a child brought not only to the community at large but to the mother and father. At the birth ritual, a child is accepted as a member of the lineage and the mother, especially at the birth of her first child, went up in estimation of her contemporaries. For a man, not only the novice changed his position from a young man to man, but his parents, if he were their eldest son, moved to a more senior position in society as parents of an adult man. And similarly, when a girl is initiated, she changes from a child to a bride, or potential bride and her mother changes in status. Wilson's reflection authenticates Leakey (1977) view that among the Agĩkũyũ, no man who had not had a child of his own initiated is entitled to drink beer, other than just a sip for ceremonial purposes. The only exception to this rule is in a case of a man who happened to have lost a few children in early life, who, if they had lived, would by then have reached an initiation age. Additionally, women attained the veritable title of *Nyakĩnyua*, after their children married or were married. *Nyakĩnyua* loosely translates, 'those who are permitted to drink.' They could partake beer based on the status of their children.

Among the Agĩkũyũ, it is no better for those who enjoy matrimonial life but without a blessing of a child. Arrival of a child completes the family union. Routledge & Routledge (1968) describe the place of children in Gĩkũyũ cultural life, where he notes that children are much valued. The child is treated in a manner which could be termed indulgent. He is given food whenever he is hungry, his hygienic training is late. And he is allowed considerable freedom. Furthermore, he is rarely punished. When he is, the type of sanctions is not usually physical, Rosberg & Nottingham (1966).

Parents were expected to take care of their children as well as ensure that they conformed with tribal dictates one of which is *Gũcokia Mwana Ihuinĩ* (returning a child back to the womb). Leakey, Kenyatta, Routledge & Routledge, Mbiti and Cagnolo write about this process in detail. A Gĩkũyũ child had to undergo this process when they were about three to five years old. Mbiti (1969) terms it as an important rite of passage that every child is expected to participate in. It is a mandatory requirement and unless a child is inducted in this ceremony he could not participate fully in the affairs of the community. For instance, he is forbidden to assist in the burial of his own father, to be circumcised or to get married, to inherit property or to take part in any ritual.

These prohibitions underlined the importance of a second birth for it is considered, essentially a second rite of passage that child had to undergo after the actual birth. It is a symbolic second birth. A goat is killed, and the entrails put around mother and child, the latter being placed between the mother's legs. The mother would then feign labour pains. The attending women would then cut off the intestines symbolizing the cutting of the umbilical cord in real birth.

The child would then be told to cry like a new born baby signifying that he is successful in the second birth that he has come out of his mother's womb alive. The mother and child will be shaven bald, Mbiti (1969) explains the importance of this practice:

The shaving of mother's hair is an act symbolizing and dramatizing the death of one state and rising again of another...the hair also symbolizes the child now belongs not only to her but to the entire body of relatives, neighbours and other members of the society. She has no more claims over the children as exclusively as her own: the child now is 'scattered' like her shaven hair, so that it has a hundred mothers, a hundred fathers, a hundred brothers and a hundred of other relatives. (Mbiti, 1969, p.112)

The rite symbolized that the child is no longer in the ambit of the mother, which in turn indicates that the mother now is free to give birth to another child. It is a subtle communication to child that he is now on his own for now. The child, if of a male gender, is obliged to look after the goats. If a girl, she is obliged to join her elder sisters to perform domestic chores such as fetching water and firewood as well as cooking. It is doom and gloom for a couple without a child, they could not participate in such hallowed ceremonies associated with children. Among the Agĩkũyũ, a childless

woman, is much to be pitied. In Gĩkũyũ cultural life, there is no alternative to a failed marriage. Wakaba (2013) concludes that a childless marriage in the Agĩkũyũ community is, therefore, considered a practical failure, and often results in either a divorce or a polygamous family.

Given that Wandahuhu blames Wahĩto for childlessness and leave her for Veronike, Wahĩto tries her lack with Gĩthendũ in line with Gĩkũyũ cultural practices. As maintained by (Potts & Short, 1999, p.242) the Agĩkũyũ permit childless woman to test her own fertility by having intercourse with one or more men who belongs to her husband's close-knit social group, created when he was circumcised with many of other boys at puberty. This was meant to ensure that her husband lineage was intact and progressive.

As claimed by Brockman et al (2004, p.681) among the Agĩkũyũ, an infertile or impotent husband may provide another sex partner for his wife. Thus, Wandahuhu is fine with an arrangement where his wife, Wahĩto is impregnated by his bosom friend, Gĩthendũ. This notion gets credence from Arthur (1998, p.60) who observes that among the Agĩkũyũ, sex with wives of agetates was not discouraged. This practice was based on cultural beliefs and superstitions, curses and misfortunes that may have affected one family's lineage. Arthur describes instances when such eventuality was permitted:

It was believed that if a man had a genetic problem or disease which he could pass on to his children then it was acceptable for sexual relationships to occur between his wife and other men for it would produce healthy children for him. The practice of wife sharing with agetates was, therefore, encouraged. It follows that quite often there would be children in a family whose real father was someone other than the husband. Wives who had children through this means were not considered to be adulterous. (Arthur, 1998, p.60)

In the selected comedies, we encounter several children, **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo** (Kababa, Kĩng'ori) in **Kĩrĩro Kia Mwana** (Agi) the daughter of Nyakĩrata, and Flava the daughter of Gĩthendũ), in **Mũthuri nĩ Mĩtugo** we encounter Kanyanya the daughter of Kĩhoto, in **Nganga Mbute** we encounter Mũkindũri who is later killed by her mother Wakarĩndĩ and in **Mũtikũnyarira**, we encounter Karũrũma the son to Kĩhenjo and Magĩrĩ.

The struggles inherent in childless characters' mind are borne out of realization that without a child is like being condemned into the sea of nothingness. Mailu (1988) describes it as part of realization that life can only continue earth only when the old give way to the birth of the young, and that the tree does not bear brings an end to its own kind. That the old make the bridge to the future by bearing young ones and a recognition that life appears to have only two major shifts: one in which the old nurse the young who are too young and helpless; the second shift when the young should nurse the old because the old are too weak to help themselves. That is, the two generations are purely complimentary.

4.3.2.2 The Polygamy as a Sign of Wealth and Social Status Among the Agĩkũyũ

In traditional Gĩkũyũ society a man could have as many wives as he could support. Mailu (1988) contends that Africa has practiced polygamy as far back as records can take us. While TAG (1994) concur that this old folk practice is most distinctive characteristic of Africa customary marriages which sets it apart from marriages of western cultures, and that it has created more problem for Christian church than any other traditional practice in the continent. Writing about this practice in 1938 Kenyatta reported that a man may have as many wives as he can support, and that the larger one's family the better is it for him and the general tribe and community.

He also holds that this custom ensures that all women must be under the protection of men, and that to avoid prostitution (no word exists for prostitution in the Gĩkũyũ language) all women are married in their teens i.e. at the tender age of between fifteen and twenty. Thus, there is no term in Gĩkũyũ language for 'unmarried' or old maids. During a marriage seminar held in Masinga, Machakos Kenya, Ayiamba (1991) quotes three men from Gĩkũyũ, Kamba and Luo communities and shared their views on the issue of polygamy in their respective communities.

Mzee Kibe Njoroge said that among the Agĩkũyũ community, the practice is traditionally sanctioned and caused a lot of pride, contentment, and prestige among those who practiced it. Mzee Oningo Oduge that polygamy increased prestige among Luo men while Mzee Maiko Mbuondo Muthoko noted that the practice is cherished beyond measure. He noted that the sitting arrangements during traditional beer drinking

were made on the basis the number of wives that an individual had. Those with one wife were classified as apprehensive and were therefore placed furthest from the drinking pot, while polygamous husband sat closest. As Suda (2007), maintains a man's worth is therefore largely defined in terms of the amount of land and the number of wives, children, and cattle he has. She adds:

In agrarian economy, having many wives and a large family is seen both as a social and economic asset because a typical traditional Africa man did not only value variety but also needed many wives and children to work the land and produce food. (Suda, 2007, p.14)

Kirima and Mugambi (1976) agree that the practice is widespread among African communities. They observed that among the Agĩkũyũ the issue of when to get another wife is in some cases requested by first or subsequent wives to enlarge the family. Gachiri (2000), supports this line of thought when she opines that men expected his wife or wives to fatten as many sheep and goats as possible. This is necessary for the man of the house because enlarged flock meant that at his own volition or upon request, he could marry a young girl with honour due to his ability to pay any amount of dowry that the girl's father may quote. If he happened to get a new wife, the other wives were expected to assist in the process of cooking for a bride and bringing her home for the husband. This may help to explain why Routledge & Routledge (1968) made a startling conclusion upon their arrival in Gĩkũyũ country in early 1900, He is surprised that he never came across a man with one wife although he never disputed the fact that such cases existed but concluded that this is by force of circumstances and is considered a sign of poverty. Once a new wife is acquired by a husband, the existing wife status changed too.

However, ever since coming of colonialism, Christianity and modernity, this practice is in steep decline especially among the Agĩkũyũ. In the opinion of Suda (2007) a KDHS Survey done in 2002 North Eastern Province had the highest prevalence of polygamy with 19.8% of married men reported to have two or more wives, while Central Province (Gĩkũyũland) had the least number of polygamous married men at 2.4%. the low prevalence of polygamy in Gĩkũyũland is attributed to spread of Christianity religion, growing economic independence of girls because of widespread

educational opportunities, combining these with women rising expectations of marriage among many other factors.

Kirima and Mugambi (1976) attribute the decline of polygamy to the coming of white settlers and the drastic change in system of land tenure and ownership that caused a lot of strain. The land shortage resorted in complex legal cases and much friction developed, and especially in large households, as individual members tried to grab land from kinsmen for individual use and registration. The duo adds that education and cash economy favoured small families' units as it is difficult to maintain many children in school and at the same time fulfil traditional duties of cultivation, herding, and management of tribal welfare. All these factors affected the system of marriage and family cohesion and to many in Gikũyũ land the Christian ideal of monogamy became solution.

According to respondents interviewed during field study, women's political power tends to increase with the number of co-wives in a marriage. They found for example, that men with several wives tend to spend less time with each wife who subsequently gain more influence, autonomy and control over her life, children, and resources. However, they also point out that there is apparent envy, joyously and outright hatred among Gikũyũ co wives which arise because of favouritism or inequality in the allocation of husband love and other resources to his wives and children. This may explain why in the selected comedies envy and outright hatred manifest in *Mũicĩ na Kĩhũ II*, between Warigia, Wandahuhu's first wife and Wanyũrũ. In this context Wanyũrũ positions herself as a *Ngatha* (celebrated and a virtuous wife) while Warigia occupies a despicable position of *Nyagacũ* (despised wife).

Wanyũrũ is a true representation of a Gikũyũ wife, always concerned with her husband welfare while Warigia is the exact opposite. Evil, unconcerned, quarrelsome and a woman without a focus. Another aspect that comes out clearly in the comedy is the fact that even if Warigia had walked away from Machang'i, she still considered him as her husband. Wanyũrũ too, she does not walk out on Machang'i elder wife return to her home. She seems contented in the knowledge that polygamy is a way of life among the Agikũyũ. She is patient enough, even when Warigia uses juju and other unconventional

methods against her husband. Unlike Warigia, she continues to see the best in Machang’i even at his lowest moment of his life, when Warigia uses charms and reduces him into a shell of his former self.

In **Mūici na kīhī**, Wandahuhu marries Ebethi after separating his first wife Gathoroko. Ebethi seems contented to take her role as Gathoroko’s replacement without qualms. Meanwhile Wandahuhu in **Kīrīro kīa Mwana** suffers double tragedy when he attempts to ditch his wife Wahito over accusation of being barren, for Veronike. Whereas he is convinced beyond a doubt that he is real father of Veronike baby boy, his hopes come a cropper when he learns that the real father of the baby boy is Gīkaru, who returns to Veronike’s house and demand full paternal responsibility over his child. This prompt Wandahuhu to consult fertility clinic and he learns that he is sterile. Dejected he goes back to Wahito only to learn that she is expecting his *Wakinī*’s (Gīthendū) child.

A cursory look at selected comedies shows that monogamy has taken root in Gīkūyū country as depicted by the following couples: Kīhenjo and Magīrī in **Mūtikūnyarira**; Kīere and Nyina wa Kīng’ori in **Mūndūrūme nī Mūgambo**; Machang’i and Wanyūrū on one hand and Kīhoto and Warūkūngū in **Mūthuri nī Mītugo**. It is apparent that monogamy practice is currently well entrenched across Gīkūyū country as depicted by research findings by Mburugu &co that indicate that among Agīkūyū people, polygamy prevalence rate stands at 2%.

When this matter was tabled to elders participating in FGDs, they agreed that the practice of polygamy started disintegrating due to Mau rebellion, the Christianity and lack of land. Among the respondents who were aged over seventy years, the oldest being 96, none of them is polygamous, indicating the extent to which the monogamy has established itself in the psyche and disposition of Gīkūyū men, “Polygamy today is frowned upon, any one practicing it is considered as renegade. To have two wives today, requires a man with a heart of steel,” said an 84-year-old respondent.

4.3.2.3 Divorce in Gĩkũyũ Culture

Divorce is the culmination of a failed marriage. Divorce is a legal or customary decree that a marriage is no longer tenable and is dissolved. Divorce is thus a permanent separation of married people because of unexpected marriage outcome. Mbiti (1969, p.145) argues that this is an occurrence that comes thus a delicate accident in marital relationships. What constitutes a divorce must be viewed against the fact that marriage is a process. Divorce is a legal or customary decree that a marriage is dissolved in other words, divorce is a permanent separation of married people because of unexpected marriage outcome. Mbiti (1969, p.145) argue that; Divorce is a delicate accident in marital relationships.

Divorce is something alien to Agĩkũyũ people, especially when a couple had undergone all the rites pertaining to the marriage. Leakey (1974) stresses that once children have been born from a union, traditionally it is next to impossible for one to contemplate divorce. Mbiti (1969) gives several reasons that complicate any divorce proceedings. He explains that what constitutes a divorce is viewed against the fact that marriage is a process. In many societies that process is complete only when the first child is born, or when all the marriage presents have been paid or even when first children are married. Once the full contract of marriage has been executed, it is extremely hard to dissolve it. TAG (1994) attributed divorce rarity among Agĩkũyũ to the fact that the community had put a lot of emphasis on virginity. Kiriro (2011) supports this view when he observes that once a marriage is validated by important rites of *Ngurario* and *Gũtinia Kĩande*, it is akin to make the couples eternally conjoined in the traditional holy matrimony without an alternative to divorce. It is extremely hard to dissolve.

Ayiemba (1991) quoting Mzee Kibe Njoroge during a marriage seminar held in Machakos in April 1991, Mzee Njoroge stated that in Gĩkũyũ traditional set up divorce is frowned upon; before this could happen the husband's parent arbitrated conflict between the married couple but if it became necessary to inform woman's parents then two elders accompanied the woman to her parents' home. He is emphatic in most of cases, the problem will be resolved, and woman sent back to her husband with a goat as compensation for the food she could have prepared for him while she is away.

Grounds for divorce were therefore few: these include total incompatibility and witchcraft.

Mzee Njoroge asserts that barrenness or sterility were not grounds for divorce since husband could as well decide to marry another wife among other options that were before the couple. However, Kenyatta (1965) through his seminal work, *Facing Mount Kenya*, claim that there were instances when divorce is permissible:

Among Gĩkũyũ divorce is very rare, because a wife is regarded as the foundation-rock on which the homestead is built...According to the Gĩkũyũ customary law, a husband may divorce his wife on the grounds of (1) barrenness; (2) refusal to render conjugal rights without reason; (3) practicing witchcraft; (4) being a habitual thief; (5) wilful desertion; (6) continual gross misconduct. A wife has the same right to divorce her husband on these grounds except (6) owing perhaps to the system of polygamy. Besides the above-mentioned grounds, she can divorce her husband for cruelty, ill-treatment, drunkenness and impotence. (Kenyatta, 1965, p.176-177)

It can be deduced that divorce is a rare occasion in traditional set up. But analysis of selected comedies depicts a different picture. In **Mũici na Kĩhĩ**, Wandahuhu divorces his wife Gathoroko after what can be described as irreconcilable differences occasioned by her blackmail and eventual betrayal when she exposed her husband to all and sundry ‘that he is still a *Kĩhĩ*.’ This is a last straw that broke camel’s back. Wandahuhu settles for a second marriage with Ebethi. On the other hand, we find Machang’i in deep dilemma after undergoing a tumultuous experience with his first wife Warigia. Tired of her domineering attitude, Machang’i separates with her and marries his second wife Wanyũrũ. Although we do not see any divorce proceedings, Machang’i goes ahead to plan for another church wedding (see Figure 30) when his previous marriage is still in existence. This is an indication that he is unaware that he is committing bigamy a crime punishable by custodial imprisonment. Machang’i as a Gĩkũyũ man has the mentality that he can enter and leave official marriages at will without bothering the principles of law.



Figure 30. Machang'i and Wahito soon after exchanging marriage vows (Mūrūthi, 2002). (Source – Screen Frame)

In **Kīrīro kīa Mwana**, Wandahuhu is in the state of quagmire after his wife Wahito, fails to bore him a child. He decides to divorce his wife and moves in to Veronike, his girlfriend's house with the belief that she is carrying his own child. As the plot unfold, Wandahuhu realizes that Veronike's child is not his but is sired by Gīkaru, Veronike's boyfriend. Devastated by the news, he seeks medical intervention and it dawns on him that he is sterile. Going back to Wahito, he learns that she has ever since married his friend Githendū and is expecting his own baby. That how Wandahuhu marriage with Wahito ends.

4.3.2.4 “Ago” Practices and the use of Magic Potions in Gīkūyū Marriage

African native doctors existed well before the coming of Europeans. For instance, among the Agīkūyū a native doctor referred by his Gīkūyū title *Mūndū Mūgo* (plural *andū ago*). Crawford (1909, p.53) stated that *mūndū mūgo* is known to Agīkūyū by two names namely; *mūragūri*, which means fortune teller or prophet and *mūndū mūgo* which combines the offices of priest and physician. Gīkūyū ‘ago’ were involved in several activities such as presiding over in initiation ceremonies, treating diseases using herbs, making charms among others. Forde (1965 p.66) describes him as a maker of medicines, antidotes, and charms against sorcery.

Wills, (1953, p.86) terms him as a medical practitioner aligned to benevolent function of Gīkūyū traditional medicine. Grof & Grof (1989, p.87) attribute his prowess to innate and inborn qualities that come as result of Ngai (God) will. This statement is supported by elders participating in FGDs by noting that a Mūndū Mūgo qualities were divine, innate, and predetermined. It is believed that at the time of birth, *mūndū mūgo* is born

while holding *mbūgũ* (special pellets) on his right hand. This signified his future role as a *mũndũ mũgo*. Consequently, community members had to prepare him for his divine role, a process that ended with his ordination (*gikunuro*), an elaborate ceremony that is presided over by senior *andũ ago*.

As claimed by Leakey (1977, p.1121) Gĩkũyũ native doctors, were enjoined to keep confidentiality of the health and social problems of their clients. *Andũ ago* were not pretensions but exhibited high level of professional conduct. As one elder noted, if a *mũndũ mũgo* realised that the case at hand is beyond his ability, he usually exclaimed to his apprentices, ‘*Kunja Mbũri na rũa, mũndũ ni witu na Ngai,*’ which translates, (fold the goatmeat with goatskin. The fate of our patient is between us and God’s providence (*Ngai*). This is a code sign to notify patient’s relatives that death is looming large and that anything is possible. During my fieldwork, my own father, Njoroge (Kĩng’a) wa Mũngai, remembered hearing this term way back in 1949. This happened after my grandmother (*cũcũ*) Mũthoni (Ndundu) Mũngai enlisted the services of a *mũndũ mũgo* to save his life. Upon examining him, he exclaimed the dreaded words and left my grandfather to face his fate. He died soon after *mũndũ mũgo*’s exit.

Mũndũ Mũgo is the exact opposite, and a sworn enemy, of *Mũrogi* (sorcerer) who practices malevolent witchcraft in secret. In agreement with Wills (1953), Ndeti (1976) adds that among the Agĩkũyũ *Mũndũ Mũgo* or *Mũragũri* is an embodiment of wisdom. He is also regarded as a seer and a diviner at the same time. Among the Akamba he is called *Mũndũ Mue* (rainmaker, seer, wiseman) while Maasai referred to him as *Oloibon*, (he who performs good acts and has no counterpart anywhere else). Leakey (1977) notes that such word as traditional healer, witchdoctor, seer, and diviners all convey an incomplete impression of varied specialties of *Mũndũ Mũgo*. He makes this observation:

Taken as whole, the *Mũndũ Mũgo* is derived from an abstract noun standing for the profession of *Mũndũ Mũgo*, is something far more comprehensive than mere magic. The profession like the medical profession today is one that had several specialized branches, and once a man had been initiated and had served as an apprenticeship, he decided for himself whether to try and become a well-known specialist in one or another branch of *Ūgo*, or whether he would content himself with remaining general practitioner. (Leakey, 1977, p. 45)

These qualities enabled them to command unrivalled respect among community members. Indeed, one scholar (Karanja, 2009, p.25) holds that the acceptance by some Agĩkũyũ to newly introduced Christian teachings was because the missionary activities corresponded to that of four important categories of people in traditional Gĩkũyũ set up: *andũ ago*-medicine men; *athinjiri*-priests; *aramati* (*athamaki*)-spokesperson and *gitonga*-the wealthy men. Ndeti extolls virtues of traditional African doctors when he notes:

All these designations point to the fact that a native doctor in traditional African societies was a man of critical mind endowed with many abilities and dedicated to his vocation. He was well informed of his environment and possessed practical knowledge in botany (herbistry), pathology, psychology (divination), surgery, animal and plant curative agents, climatology, cosmology and psychiatry. (Ndeti, 1976, p.15)

Nevertheless, there is a thin line between their practice, magic, and superstitions. As claimed by Richmond & Gestrin (2009) things did not happen unless someone wishes to happen. This meant that if someone died or is struck by a misfortune the blame is assigned to magic, superstition, sorcery, or witchcraft. This brings to the fore another dimension of witchcraft among the Agĩkũyũ represented by *Mũrogi*. This institution which is highly despised among the Agĩkũyũ. Bewes (1953, p. 25) states that there is a great difference between the work of *Mũrogi* and *mũndũ mũgo*. While *mũndũ mũgo* helps during the time of trouble a *Mũrogi* is impersonation of evil.

Willis (1953, p.86) calls a *Mũrogi*, a sorcerer who practices malevolent witchcraft in secret. Lamentably, today the institution of *andũ ago* has been obliterated among the Agĩkũyũ, a fact that led Buijitenhuijs (1982, p140) to admit that traditional medicine and Gĩkũyũ religion are practically non-existent due to a multiplicity of factors including but not limited to colonialism, Christianity influence and modernity. As Harrington (2015, p. 182-183) notes the colonial government introduced *Medical Practitioners and Dentists Ordinance (MPDO) and Witchcraft Ordinance (MPDO)* (and now Act) of 1925. In case of MPDO, the colonialists prevented local healers against integrating their practice with Western techniques, instruments, or medicines. Luongo (2011, p.88) decries the fact that the colonialists could not distinguish between

traditional healers who used their power and knowledge to heal others (traditional healers) and those who used their powers to harm others (sorcerers).

Therefore, all of them were lumped together a fact that led to the passage of Witchcraft Ordinance in 1909. Luongo terms this as creation of an ‘avenue through which colonialists could discipline and deny witchcraft. In the context of this study, witchcraft is introduced in **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo** in the form of love potion. Kenyatta (1965) admits that *Andũ* (plural of *Mũndũ*) Ago were also involved in the practice of preparing Love Magic. He notes that there are two kinds of love magic, each of which serves an important function in the field of love.

There is magic which exerts its power on behalf of the seeker after the love of many (*moreria* or *monyenye*), and the magic which helps him who seeks the love of one (*Mũthaiga wa rwendo*). In **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo**, Warigia visits a medicine man in search of *Mũthaiga wa rwendo* referred to by Kenyatta. But unlike Gĩkũyũ traditional setting where *Mũndũ Mũgo* is supposed to preside over his divination ceremony in Gĩkũyũ language, the Witchdoctor Warigia visits is uses Kiswahili language, signifying a social change that have taken place in modern Gĩkũyũ country.

These changes have precipitated dwindling of revered Gĩkũyũ cultural practices. Nevertheless, after watching the comedy, elders, felt that such a habit of going to seek oracles to *Andũ Ago* to secure magical potions is not tolerated in Gĩkũyũ culture. They agreed that such behaviour constituted enough grounds for divorcing one’s wife. They decried this practice which is now taking root in several Gĩkũyũ homesteads. “Just like Machang’i who is at the disposal of his wife Warigia, this mimics some instances, even in this village. It is only happening only under influence of love potions.

4.4. Culinary Discourse: The Meanings of Gĩkũyũ Cultural Cuisine

It is acknowledged fact that, food has attracted a lot of interest from scholars in various disciplines due to its potency and insights in assigning meanings in different cultural setups. Anthropologists and sociologists seek to comprehend social and cultural constructions and power relationships in societies through investigation of culinary cultures, nutritional trends, and forms of food. The need to contextualise and blend

semiotics of food as a cultural discourse is conceived as a necessary enterprise given the potency of food in any given cultural society. Indeed, food is not only a substance for survival and nourishment, but also part of a sign system. Given that semiotics concerns with understanding and signification of cultural and social communication processes, it follows that use of semiotics in study of food will yield very interesting observations imbued in rituals, practices, and observances. Through semiotic analyses of food, a researcher is immersed in a wide range of social and cultural possibilities as reflected in classification of what is edible, and what is not edible, the food as a tool for social stratification, food for ritualistic observances and the gustatory perception and its links with both the physiological level and the intersubjective dimension. Indeed, many languages and forms of communication related to the food universe; food design; and so, on and so forth.

4.4.1 Semiotic Analysis of Gĩkũyũ Food

Agĩkũyũ people were farmers per excellence. Stigand (1966) observed Gĩkũyũ are essentially agricultural people. This may explain the reason we encounter characters tending their crops as in the case of Kĩhenjo in **Nganga Mbute**, Ebethi in **Mũici na Kĩhũ**, and Magĩrĩ in **Mũtikũnyarira**. As Stigand averred:

Gĩkũyũ are immensely rich, as they have everything heart could desire in abundance... their crops include; banana, arrowroot (*nduma*), maize (*mbembe*), Millet (*muhia*), sweet potatoes (*ngwaci*), yams (*ikwa*), castor oil (*mbariki*), peas (*thoroko*), pumpkins (*marenge*), beans (*mboco*), sugar cane (*kigwa*), Eleusine. (Stigand, 1966, p. 238)

Gregory (1968) described Agĩkũyũ as agrarian based Bantu tribe, in his book *The Great Rift Valley*. He regarded them as generally agriculturists-based tribe noting that they have some food plants, which Schweinfurth (1874) writing earlier on identified as *Panicum Italicum* (foxtail millet), and which he thought must have been introduced from India before the time of Mohamed. Agĩkũyũ also excelled in cereal growing out of which sorghum, maize, eleusine taking prominence as principal crops. There is also other type of peas, beans, haricot, lima beans, and pigeon beans. Regarding food preparation, it is worthwhile to note that Gĩkũyũ, just like other communities around the world have a good developed cuisine.

The Gĩkũyũ cuisine is made up of both animal products (*nyama*) and agricultural produce such as *njũgũ*, *njahĩ*, *thoroko*, *ngwaci* (sweet potatoes), *nduma* (arrow roots), *muhia* (millet), *igwa* (sugar canes), *marenge* (pumpkins), *marigu* (bananas) among many other farms produces. However, unlike other communities, Gĩkũyũ dishes made from traditional beans served to represent cultural expressions and meanings. Munene (1995) expresses that in all Gĩkũyũ ceremonies there were three principal food item such as *Ngoima* (fattened ram), *njahĩ* and *ũcũrũ wa mwere* (millet made of porridge). During community feasts, levellers started by taking the *njohi* (liquor) and porridge and later *ngoima* (ram) and *njohi* in that order.

In other community's grains, will not carry symbolism and meaning in expressing cultural nuances and meanings but this is not the case with Agĩkũyũ. Grains occupy a central place in the way community communicates and fulfil cultural practices which has been handed over from and in between generations. *Nyahĩ* as Robertson (1997) claims that no one else eats them in Kenya although Kamba did so but not with the same ritual and symbolism association for Gĩkũyũ. A closer look at Gĩkũyũ mythology indicates that one of their four sacred mountains is named after *Nyahĩ*. Kĩrĩma kĩa Nyahĩ is believed to be second abode of Ngai and is well endowed with Nyahĩ for the Gĩkũyũ community.

Gĩkũyũ country have two rain seasons namely *Kĩmera kĩa Nyahĩ* (March-May major harvest) and *Kĩmera kĩa Mwere* (October-December minor harvest). Given its association with the women fertility, it is no wonder that *Kĩmera Kia Nyahĩ* signified the onset of long rains, which symbolic represented the fertility, vivacity and a bountiful harvest. Writing about the importance of njahĩ among the Agĩkũyũ womenfolk, Robertson notes:

At each critical transitional stage in their reproductive lives, women were given *njahe* as a special food, considered to be most nourishing. Jomo Kenyatta stated that before the bloodletting associated with clitoridectomy at initiation girls were given *njahĩ* and *ngima ya ugimbe*, "a stiff porridge made of a small kind of grain [millet] ground into flour and mixed with water and oil." During marriage negotiations *njahĩ cia athoni* (Kikuyu for "of the in-laws"), a special dish prepared with bananas mixed with *njahĩ*, is consumed. During pregnancy and especially after childbirth for nursing, women were given *njahĩ*. Kenyatta called *njahĩ* "a very nourishing kind of bean used mostly to feed women after childbirth." Anthropologist

Louis Leakey described *njahe* as an essential dish used as part of a ceremony to cure women of excessive menstrual bleeding, while Elspeth Huxley described black beans being used as instruments for divination in the 1930s. (Robertson, 1997 p. 342)

Among the Agĩkũyũ it is a common practice to tell an expectant mother, ‘*ningoka kuria njahĩ*’ – I will come to eat *njahĩ* soon, the real meaning being that I will soon come to see the new born baby. There is remarkable use of *njahĩ* as a symbolic object. It is mentioned in **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo II, Mũici na Kĩhĩ** and in **Kĩrĩro kĩa Mwana**. In **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo**, we learn that Kanyanya is expecting *njahĩ* after she is impregnated by her employer’s husband, Machang’i. In a strict Gĩkũyũ setting, a girl who became pregnant outside marriage set up is chastised to a point of being ostracised from the society.

In **Mũici na Kĩhĩ**, Wandahuhu is presented as an elderly man who has defied all customary edicts by failing to face the knife. Wandahuhu is mortally afraid of his wife, whom he fears of exposing him to the rest of community that he is uncircumcised. After much tribulations, he hatches a plan with his friend to be circumcised without the knowledge of his wife. After feigning Wandahuhu sickness and following Gathoroko consent to take his husband Wandahuhu to hospital, Gĩthendũ who take the role of *mũtiiri*, ensures that he informs the wife to prepare *njũgũ* before they leave Wandahuhu’s home for the hospital as depicted in the following excerpt from **Mũici na Kĩhĩ**:

Gathoroko: *Gĩthendũ, ndigukuhenia nii ngumakite muno. Mũndũ ta Mũthuri uyu wakwa riu a angithinikana ndiguo nau nii?* (Githendu, let me not lie to you, I am afraid that something sinister is going to happen to him. I do not know what to do if such thing happens.)

Wandahuhu: (starts to yelp)

Gathoroko: *Reke ngũtware ma...thibitarĩ*. (Let me take you to the hospital)

Gĩthendũ: *Aaca reke tũ thie tondũ ni Mũndũrũme tanie ndũkũmenya haria ngũnyita. ahota kũyitwo haria atagiriere ni kunyitwo*. (Let me take him instead. He is a man like me and I know where to touch if told to do so).

Wandahuhu: *Ekwenda atiguo akĩruga kĩndu ta gacuru* (Let her be left behind preparing something like porridge).

Gĩthendũ: *Indo cia maĩ rĩ ndũkaruge muno tondu maĩ macio nĩmo maramũthukia* (Do not cook food with watery ingredient, this is what is affecting him.)

Gathoroko: *Makaingira githũri* (They are affecting his chest).

Gĩthendũ: *Akorwo ni ta njũgũ, gũra njũgũ. Njũgũ cia gũkima. kindũ kina hinya.* (Consider and buy njũgũ, mashed njũgũ. Something energetic.)

The same foodstuff is also mentioned by Gathoroko and Nyakĩrata after attending a circumcision ceremony in respect of her friend's 16-year son. This shows that *njũgũ* is a valued meal for Gĩkũyũ initiates. It is felt that the food provided them with enough energy and hastened their healing process. Other food stuff that contributed the development of Gĩkũyũ cuisine, include; maize (*Zea mays*) *mbembe* and maize flour (*Zea mays*). LSB Leakey cite a case in his seminal work on Gĩkũyũ culture, where an old man told him that his father would not eat maize because it is not a Kikuyu food (maize was introduced to Africa by the Portuguese at the Kenyan coast).

In retrospect, the original Gĩkũyũ food include millet flour (*Pennisetum americanum*) *Mũtu wa mwere* finger millet flour (*Eleusine coracane*) *Mũtu wa ũgĩmbi* sorghum flour (*Sorghum bicolor*) *Mũtu wa mũhĩa*. Apart from the maize that is boiled, roasted, or served in a mixture with beans (*gĩtheri*) as a meal, the rest were used as flours for porridge (*ũcũrũ*). This gruel is usually popular with new mothers and initiates in equal measure. Gĩkũyũ believed that porridge is more nutritious when is a mixture of as many cereals as possible, including a bit of maize flour. In **Kĩrĩro kĩa Mwana**, there is scene with three women, two of whom are pounding grains using *ndĩrĩ* and pestle as part of preparing a special porridge for Gĩkaru's wife veronica who recently delivered a baby boy. Set in the village, the women are preparing to make a visit in the city to pay homage and congratulate Gĩkaru's.

Meat is also part of Gĩkũyũ cuisine. It is normally originated from cows, goats, and sheep. However, Gĩkũyũ people rarely feasted on game meat. Stigand (1966) remarked that that Agĩkũyũ eat flesh goats and cattle, but their diet is mainly vegetable. He emphasises that in their natural state they never eat the meat of game or wild animal as tribal custom forbade such behaviour. His account is supported by Kimuhu (2008 p.269) who observes that "the Kikuyu people did not eat the flesh of wild animals except for the antelope, which are of the family of sheep and goats. In view of this, any association with wild animals is taboo.

Sheep and goats were not a mere livestock to Agĩkũyũ. They were personification of tribal lore customs and practices. They constituted Gĩkũyũ cosmos and sense of being. They carried with them deep cultural meanings and symbolism. They formed currency for exchanging goods and services. A marker of life and death. It is through their blood and flesh that Agĩkũyũ used to signify rites of passage, cultural practices and life and death.

Schneider argues that there is no sure indication that Gĩkũyũ kept many cattle, although they appear to have owned a lot of goats. Although the Agĩkũyũ kept cows alongside goats/sheep the former counted far less in terms of cultural significance. Among Gĩkũyũ neighbours like Maasai and Kamba they had put a lot of emphasis on cows. But in contrast as Schneider (1979) illustrates Gĩkũyũ first love is in sheep and goats:

There were small and large livestock, but in nature of things, the amount of value that can be stored in a goat or sheep is so small, along with the limited size of goat and sheep population in most non-pastoral system, that these animals cannot carry the weight of an exchange system that will produce non-hierarchical forms. The ...Kikuyu who contracts on goat production, are exceptions. (Schneider, 1979 p. 192)

The other communities that placed a lot of importance on sheep and goats are Semitic peoples as evidenced in Biblical texts. The old and new testaments provide numerous accounts of the symbolic and sacrificial importance of sheep and goats. Goats were a clean food and could be eaten. Their skin is used to make clothing and the milk is used for food. They are defined as clean and edible animals in Deuteronomy 14:4-5. Although goats could be used as a sacrifice before God if they were without spot or blemish, Biblical texts do not give a lot of indication to the natural tendencies of a goat, it is almost taken as an alternative. The Sheep ranks higher in Biblical context. Take a passage in the *Book of Mathew* where sheep are adorned over their goats' counterparts:

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divided his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. (Matthew 25:31-34 Revised Standard Version)

In contrast to Biblical texts, Agĩkũyũ rank goats higher than the sheep. Marciniak (2005, p.52), holds that among Agĩkũyũ sacrificial slaughter and consumption of sheep and goat is common among Kikuyu who performed as many as 108 occasions in their ceremonial calendar. Kirika (2002) accentuates that sheep and goat play a significant aspect of Agĩkũyũ life. He identifies two systems that Agĩkũyũ rear their sheep and goats.

To start with, there are those that are fattened solely for ceremonial purposes such as marriage and other related ceremonies. Traditionally these types of sheep and goats were kept in man's Thingira. They were fed in a special shed called *gĩcegũ*. In traditional set up, sheep and goats frequently slept in the same huts as the owners. These animals formed part of Gĩkũyũ inner sanctum. As Kinuthia, & others (2016), indicate Agĩkũyũ had specific names assigned to different type of sheep and goats. For example, *Ngoima* is a special term used to denote a big healthy male sheep. This is a requirement during the '*kĩande*' ceremony. *Kĩande* is a ceremony that signify the ultimate marriage rite of passage and significance in Gĩkũyũ marital life.

Marciniak (2005) concede that goats acted like catalyst, a marker of birth, second birth, circumcision, marriage, eldership, burnt sacrifice, harvest sacrifices and death. To every Gĩkũyũ a sheep or a goat typified the very being of the tribe, without the two, the tribe will be forced to drift into the space of nothingness, without meaning, devoid of symbolism. Elders participating in the study added, in sheep and goats, the community communed with the unborn, the living and dead. They helped them to reach out to *Ngai*. They transported them to tribal nirvana. Sheep and goats signified social status, the many goats and sheep an individual had, the more he is held in high status. Such individuals were natural choice of tribal leadership-*Athamaki*.

The tribal ceremonies were exemplified and executed by slaughtering of sheep and goats. Indeed, being referred or assuming titles such as *Mũthuri* is because of an elaborate cultural process. One had to pay prescribed fees in form of a goats before one could be admitted into *Athuri a kĩaama* (the council of men). In these films, the name *Mũthuri* features prominently, with two of the comedies deriving its name from this name; **Mũthuri nĩ Mĩtugo**, and its derivate *Mũndũrũme*. Equally, characters in several

comedies keep goats and sheep signifying their value and significance in Gĩkũyũ society. Some of the characters who own goats or sheep include Kĩere (Ithe wa Kĩng'ori) in *Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo*, Wandahuhu in **Mũici na Kĩhĩ** and Kĩmenyi in **Nganga Mbute**.



Figure 31. Kĩere, his sheep is seen in the background (Kimani, 2002). (Source – Screen Frame)



Figure 32. The sheep features prominently in Gĩkũyũ cultural psyche (Mũrũthi, 2002). (Source – Screen Frame)

In Njoroge / Kĩambicho interview (2016), any man having been accepted in *Athuri* council is expected at a bare minimum to preside over a goat slaughtering process. Slaughtering a goat is a serious and revered process for in the goat's flesh and blood Gĩkũyũ customs and its social fabrics are sewed and held together in ligaments, joints, tendons, and bones. The tribal lore is conjured up in its intestines, while tribal myths and legends are stored in its entrails and innards. In a nutshell, a goat or sheep is like a cultural currency for exchanging good and services. It can be regarded as a tribal tome

with rich contents that are passed from one generation to another. Once a man had earned enough stripes, he could preside over a goat slaughtering process.

One thing is clear, Gĩkũyũ having understood parts of goat/sheep meat that were meticulously named. These parts carried with them tribal memories, nuances, idioms, and deeper meanings. During the study, the researcher endeavoured to understand parts of goat / sheep goat, their names and meaning as way of deciphering and understanding semiotics of sheep / goat meat the use and its application given the relevance of a goat within a cultural context.

To start with a slaughtering process is not done by one man. At least the lead slaughterer needs the support of at least four people. The process starts by subduing the animal. Once on the ground its jugular is severed by *ruoro* (slaughtering knife). The throat is slit quickly to impart the least pain to the beast. The blood is collected in a pan which had some salt in it to hasten the clotting. This gives meaning to an old Gĩkũyũ adage that goes, “*Iri kurundwo ndĩregaga ruoro,*’ (Once subdued a goat cannot resist a slaughtering knife). The slaughterer ensures that the blood gushing out from the neck is drained into a bowl to the last drop. The blood is later mixed with *ngarango* to form ingredients for preparing *Mũtura* (a type of sausage made using intestines). Satisfied with the process of draining blood, the carcass, held on its back position is placed on *macoya* (banana leaves) while the men hoist the four limbs, the slaughterer start in earnest to dismember it following tribal dictates.

The head and the lower leg below the knee are singed in the flames until all the fur is non-existent. The black soot is then scraped off with a sharp knife. When the head and the lower limbs have been scarped to a clean greyish white, they are dropped into the soup making pot. In the meanwhile, the skin is carefully removed with as little attached meat as possible. Once the skin is off, the belly is split open, taking care not to open the stomach or puncture the intestines. The gall bladder is carefully removed, since if it were to pour its contents on the meat, it would render it unpalatable.

The stomach is then punctured and the contents (*tatha*) spilled in the ground and buried. The stomach which now resembles a towel is separated from the intestines, cleaned superficially, and kept aside for stuffing with precooked bits (*ngarango*) of the meat and some of the blood. A sharpened stake is used to seal the punctured ends once the stuffing is complete. Alternatively, a string made of banana fibre is used to tie the ends. This stuffed stomach is then roasted on the grill alongside, the small intestine.

4.4.2 Semiotics of *Mūratina*

Gikūyū have since time immemorial known the art of preparing *Njohi*, *Karūbū* or *Mūratina*, (the traditional beer). Stigand (1966) explains in detail how *Njohi* is made from sugar cane. He describes the process of preparing *Njohi*. He says that sugar cane is first stripped of its outer rind with knives. Then it is pounded by women using *Ndīrī* (mortar). Women do the pounding. This accomplished, the women's part of the work is finished; as he notes, this is considered *infra dig* for a man to be seen pounding.

Then men work on *Ngogoyo* (sugarcane juice) they mixed it with some water and put *Mūratina*, which as a catalyst on *Njanja ya Njohi*. "*Mūratina*" tree also called "*Kigelia africana*" is locally called sausage tree When its seeds are removed from the seed pod, it is used in the manufacturing of traditional beer – which the incoming missionaries opposed vehemently as barbaric and satanic. It's also used as a scrubber when washing of the body and/or utensils. It stores yeast (*fungi*) which is also medicinal; hence it helps in beer fermentation. Two days pass and *Njohi* is ready to be served.

Traditionally and in the words of elders who were interviewed in this study, *Njohi* is not to be consumed anyhow. It is used as signifier for important social events such as marriage negotiations or during sacrificial events where it functions to strengthen the bond between elders. Traditional liquor This view is corroborated by Leakey (1977) when he admits:

Honey beer was not brewed for ordinary drink, but only for special occasions such as ceremonies connected with initiations, marriage or religious purposes. No man ever brewed more than one large brewing gourdful (*ndua*) at a time, i.e. enough for about three or four ordinary beer gourdfuls. Before it was poured off into the beer gourds on the following morning, a little was offered to the ancestral spirits in the same way as the

one for sugarcane beer. There was a short ceremony called *Kwũmbũra*. (Leakey, 1977, p.295)

Generally, Njohi is meant for the elders. Young men (*anake*) were never allowed to take Njohi. Leakey term it is acting contrary to social dictates. This is more so for any unmarried man. The custom did not allow this, and if they had to, they could never get drunk, and in fact the general practice is that not unless a man had a warrior son could he partake of the drink.

The general wisdom is that faced with constant threat from their neighbours the tribe required all able-bodied warrior group to stay alert always in to protect the tribe from vagaries of neighbouring tribe hostilities. Among women, it is only *Nyakĩnyua* (those past menopause) who could take Njohi. The beer is a social marker, as well as an important ingredient for catalysing marriage negotiations and other cultural rites. In **Nganga Mbute**, Kĩhenjo invites his friend Mũkũngũgũ to his home to discuss the unbecoming behaviour of his sister Wakarĩndĩ who for years had abdicated her motherly role for good life in the city. In their conversation, the two seem to be elated when preparing Mũratina, a traditional Gĩkũyũ liquor that appears to cement their good neighbourliness and age-set status. In the views of elders who participated in FGDs, it is only Nyakĩnyua, old women past child bearing age who could take alcohol. The elders agreed that *Mũtumia wa Nyakĩnyua* qualified to be referred as such if she had at least three circumcised daughters or sons. If so, she is entitled to drink (*kũnyua*) beer.

Elders also stated that young men right from *tũhũ* (uncircumcised boys) to *anake* (young men) were not allowed to take alcohol. However, Cagnolo (2006) counters this view when he states that the young boys used to serve liqueur to elders, and that it is during such events that they were eventually introduced to tribal customs and practices. This may be argued, helped to accentuate patriarchal architecture in the name of enhancing social relations between men and boys. As claimed by Fr. Cagnolo, when beer is ready it is the son's duty to take it home. It is against the tradition for the son to drink from his father's horn nor eat from his calabash.

4.5 Traditional Knowledge as Cultural Discourse

Nakata & Langton (2005) posit that indigenous knowledge is acquired by local people through the accumulation of experiences, informal experiments, and intimate understanding of the environment in each culture. Indigenous knowledge is collectively owned and exists as agricultural and medicinal practices, stories, songs, folklore, proverbs, cultural values, taboos, norms, languages, and rituals. Crookshanks & Philips (2012, p.68) state that Traditional Knowledge encompasses the 'knowledge,' innovations and practices of indigenous people embodying traditional lifestyles. Convention on Biological Diversity provides definition as follows:

Traditional knowledge refers to the knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities around the world. Developed from experience gained over the centuries and adapted to the local culture and environment, traditional knowledge is transmitted orally from generation to generation. It tends to be collectively owned and takes the form of stories, songs, folklore, proverbs, cultural values, beliefs, rituals, community laws, local language, and agricultural practices, including the development of plant species and animal breeds. Traditional knowledge is mainly of a practical nature, particularly in such fields as agriculture, fisheries, health, horticulture, and forestry. (*Convention on Biological Diversity*, 2006: n.p.)

On his part, Hiebert & Van Rees (1998, p.3) maintains traditional knowledge has many definitions but the central theme consists of cultural beliefs and traditions being passed on from their forefathers to the present generation for survival while still living in harmony with the ecosystems. He concludes that traditional knowledge is something that is learned during a lifetime and realizes the interconnectedness of the trees, soil and water. ARIPO (2014, p.235) defines Traditional Knowledge as any knowledge originating from local or traditional community that is the result intellectual activity and insight in a traditional context including expertise, skills, innovations, practices and learning, where the knowledge is embodied in the traditional lifestyle of a community.

However, Gyekye (1997) regrets the fact that much of this knowledge, particularly in Africa is shrouded in secrecy. Usually, the practices and information about most aspects of Traditional knowledge are guarded secretly. These secrets are revealed only to the apprentices. Those who also have this secret information on these trades are also under oath not to reveal the secrets to any non-initiate. This secrecy makes it difficult for the

non-initiates to have a true understanding of these crafts. Gyekye (1997) points out that the prevalence of this secrecy culture has been counterproductive to scientific and technological development in Africa. This assertion gets credence from one elder interviewed during the study who maintained that almost all blacksmiths in Central Kenya are now long gone.

He lamented that they went to their graves with immense knowledge, that they guarded jealously until their death. Other factors affecting the transmission of indigenous knowledge are colonial and postcolonial education, which has excluded indigenous knowledge (Whatman & Duncan, 2005) and the deliberate or inadvertent destruction of local knowledge (Eyong, 2007) argues that indigenous knowledge and expression have suffered for decades from several strategies of disinformation embedded in western centric, colonial and post-colonial education and western religion, science and technology . . . often data on indigenous knowledge and expression are distorted to confirm the hypothesis of non-Africanist scholars.

Therefore, formal education and the advance of technology account for the loss of interest in indigenous knowledge, especially among younger generations. As maintained by Msuya (2007) younger generations that are exposed to Western education are less interested in indigenous knowledge, viewing such knowledge as outdated and primitive.

As claimed by Muchae (2000, p.6) among the Agĩkũyũ, indigenous knowledge in some fields is a well-guarded secret. For instance, blacksmith is a carefully guarded skill of making instruments such as digging hoe and spears. The same case applies to herbalists. The problem with this type of system is that such important knowledge is owned by and confined to a few family members and rapid development or innovations is hampered by this secrecy. In retrospect, Western world has excelled in science, art and technology owing to her culture that encourages sharing of ideas. In fact, the ideal of Intellectual Property is premised on this concept. For instance, an inventor is guaranteed protection of his innovation for a specific period in exchange of disclosing in totality the idea behind such invention. Upon disclosure, the inventor is granted patent that is

exploitable for twenty years after which information pertaining to such invention goes to public domain for all and sundry:

In Kenya, among the members of the Kikuyu community, indigenous knowledge in some fields was a well-guarded secret. For instance, a person who had acquired special skills as a black smith would not allow just anybody to walk into his workshop and watch him make such instruments as spears, *pangas*, diggings hoes, etc. The skills of making such instruments were carefully guarded. Such a person would only train his son or a very close relative. The same case applied to herbalists. An intruder was always heavily fined in order to deter any attempt to steal such knowledge. The problem with this type of system is that such important knowledge was owned by and confined to a few family members and rapid development on innovations was hampered by secrecy. (Muchae, 2000, p.6)

Following the analysis of the selected comedies, it is evident that characters have considerable knowledge of Gĩkũyũ traditional knowledge. In **Mũtikũnyarira**, Kĩhenjo seems to be conversant with Agĩkũyũ people herbal traditional knowledge. When his wife complains of stomach upsets; he advises her to consider taking concoctions made from the following medicinal plants: *Wanjirũ wa Rũrie (Ajuga remota)*; *Kiruma (Aloe lateritia)* and *Mucatha (Vernonia lasiopus)*. In **Mũici na Kĩhĩ** we encounter Wandahuhu complaining to Gĩthendũ that he is unable to meet his conjugal responsibilities with his wife, Ebethi. Gĩthendũ knowledge of herbal traditional knowledge is evident when he advises Wandahuhu to visit a near bush and look for a specific plant resembling *Mũtamaiyũ* and which he calls *mukirinithu*. Wandahuhu is assured that if he boils its roots and takes the concoction, his bed affairs problems will be resolved instantly.

When the issue of traditional medicine was placed before the elders participating in the FGDs, the respondents noted that herbal medicine played a vital role in the provision of health care within Gĩkũyũ traditional set up. The *Agũ*, (traditional health practitioners or herbalists) used to treat patients by exploiting indigenous knowledge passed through generations which is acquired and perfected over a period. The vast knowledge and information were usually stored in human pharmacopoeia.

The respondents held that herbalists could identify poisonous plants, by observing the foliage which domestic animals avoided while grazing. In addition, birds and bees avoided nectar from flowers of toxic plants, and through this “traditional taxonomy” plants with thorny leaves were regarded as “male”, that is, naturally poisonous. On the other hand, plants without thorny leaves were regarded as non-poisonous. From their discussion’s elders noted that *Wanjirũ wa rūrie* is normally used to treat fever, *kiruma* provided key ingredient for treating typhoid and Malaria while *mũcatha* had key therapeutic properties for treating pneumonia, vomiting and other ailments.

Besides herbal based medicine as mediated in the selected comedies, there is also a corpus of material culture worth mentioning in this chapter. The tangible products of a culture, or those objects with some dimension used by a culture, such as spears, walking sticks, metal works, wood works, clothing and much more, makeup what sociologists call material culture. Within these objects, which by the frequency of their use indicate their importance to a culture, one can also find symbolism in these materials. In the opinion of the Kenyan National Folklore Board of Trustees (GNFBT), material culture represents the various manifestations of what is sometimes called “physical folk life.” Material culture involves processes and products of traditional techniques, skills, recipes, formulas, etc., such as were manifested in traditional architecture, crafts, costumes, cooking utensils, tools, furniture, etc., in short, basic folk or traditional technology.

The study cites several material cultures that have been exploited by characters and by doing so represent Gĩkũyũ cultural symbols. During one of FGDs, respondents observed that Gĩkũyũ people were well endowed with material cultural heritage such as: architecture; weaponry such as *matimũ* (spears), *mĩgwĩ* (arrows) *njora* (sword); traditional utensils such as *Nyũngũ* (pot) *Ndigithũ* (traditional water cooler), *Mburi* (a small pot for making *thathi* (Gĩkũyũ traditional soup), *ndua*, *nyanja*, *kĩihũri*, *kĩnya*, *kameni* (all these were made from gourds; and Baskets such as *Kĩondo*, *Gĩtarũrũ* (traditional winnowing tray).

Kenyatta (1965) and Leakey (1977) observe that the responsibility for producing materials made from metal is vested in *mūturi* (blacksmith), a man who is usually a smelter or forger. The two contend that the smith profession is a family affair and a man's male offspring would acquire the skills from their father. Nonetheless, there is no custom law that prohibited any man who so wished from apprenticing himself to a *mūturi* (smith) and in course of time became a smith himself but he could not be admitted in the guild before paying the necessary admission fee, which consisted 30 ordinary goats and sheep and ten stall fattened animals.

As indicated by the respondents, *Mūturi* is a highly skilled traditional professional and treated his profession with high secrecy. A smith occupied a high status in society, and it is taboo to cause one to bleed. The smith guild is protected, and one required undergoing certain ceremonies to be inducted. They worked in a special area removed from the rest of the people and a visit to the smith in his workshop entailed following prescribed rules of behaviour while one is within the area of the smithy.

Gathigira (1934) notes that smith guild is protected, and one required undergoing certain ceremonies to be inducted. This means ownership of this knowledge is restricted. They worked in a special area removed from the rest of the people and a visit to the smith in his workshop entailed following prescribed rules of behaviour while within the area of the smithy. Most respondents attributed limited industrialisation in the tribe to the restrictive behaviour by blacksmiths.

They made the following cultural materials *matimū* (spears), *mĩgwĩ* (arrows) *rũhiu rwa njora* (sword), *raũ* (slaughtering knife) *rũhiu rwa kũrima* (cultivating knife), *rwenji* (shaver) among others. The respondents observed that these blacksmiths used (*igera*) or iron ore as their raw materials for making these materials. Stigand (1966) claims that iron ore for making swords and spears is obtained from Katuli (sic) or Gaturi in Mũrang'a and from Ol Doinyo Sapuk (sic) that is Ol Donyo Sabuk near Kilimambogo in Thika. They were quick to observe that this practice has been abandoned due to emergence of modern metal works precipitated by the introduction of modern education system. This observation gives credence to an earlier observation made by Leakey (1977) decrying the dearth of Gĩkũyũ material culture at the turn of 19th Century:

The traditional hut was slowly but surely disappearing, giving place to comfortable small houses, quadrangular, large, well-lit and airy. Cotton cloth and western garments had caused a great many skin clothes to disappear. The old agricultural implements had given way to the hoe and sometimes to the plough. (Leakey, 1977, p.252)

However, the respondents felt that traditional methods should not be abandoned all together, since, they can be utilised to compliment the modern metal works especially by the less endowed members of society, most of whom are employed in *Jua Kali* sector. One respondent even suggested establishment of traditional blacksmith industries akin to light industries, saying that with proper utilisation of other IPRs such as trademark and branding, these metal products could fetch good prices at the local and international markets.

Regarding woodwork, the Agĩkũyũ made several their articles from the wood although the process required comparatively little skill or artisanship. These articles were made as required by anyone who needed them. As Leakey opines:

Unlike smiths and wireworkers, professional wood workers were not jealous of their profession and a man who wanted to take up could easily make friends with a wood worker and learn the craft without any recognized apprenticeship fees having been paid. (Leakey, 1977, p.324)

In his report titled *Safeguarding Endangered Oral Traditions of East Africa*, Mhando (2008) contends that cultural heritage is disappearing from many Kenyan communities often due to rapid changes in their lifestyle which is also hindering the process of transferring knowledge from the elders to younger members of the community. The report identifies four main factors that are contributing to the extinction of traditional cultural expressions: local communities have not been sensitized to know how important is the knowledge they possess as they consider their own cultural heritage as backward and as a hindrance to them in accessing economic wealth; many communities do not know how to go about identifying and protecting their knowledge; there are no specific national laws that help communities protect their knowledge in a way that reflects their traditions and customs; the deterioration in the use of indigenous languages in everyday conversation, destruction of cultural spaces, and the lack of interest in the traditional cultural expressions on the part of the institutions charged with the responsibility of protecting the cultural heritage in the country.

The respondents noted that several of these material culture feature prominently in these films. It is further observed that the beside bringing out cultural symbols to the front, these materials act as props and hence assist in delivering cultural messages through cinema techniques. The respondents held that the selected comedies do not give a proper representation of Gĩkũyũ material culture, noting that their use is scanty, accidental, and ill conceived.

Nevertheless, they identified the following articles that feature in the selected comedies as either representing concept of such article or used in its original form as a conveyer of the Gĩkũyũ material culture: *mũtirima* (walking stick); *njũguma ya ndemero* (a type of club); *Kĩondo* (Gĩkũyũ traditional basket); *mondo* (traditional purse); *mũhando* (rope); *ndĩrĩ* (mortar); *Mũũthĩ* (pestle) *ngoi* (harness) and *kahiũ ga kũrĩma* (knife for cultivating), it seems that there is no or little effort geared towards protecting and preserving traditional knowledge in Kenya. This official neglect can be traced way back in the colonial days when anything indigenous is chastised and dubbed as being regressive and primitive. Successive post-independence governments have been disinterested in the subject.

4.6 Religion and Gĩkũyũ Creation Myth

In their natural setting, discussants are informed by various modes of communications such as intra, extra, inter and group communication. Sociologists have noted that during such interactions, several cultural identities are discussed one of them being religion. This section delves into the subject of religion as portrayed and represented in the selected comedies.

4.6.1 Mythical Theme Runs Deep among Agĩkũyũ

The Agĩkũyũ traditional religion fits within the mythological maxim as postulated by Smart (1996). Wilson (1971) posits that myths are associated with rituals of African communities like that of Agĩkũyũ. Such myths try to explain the origin of man and of animals, of fire, crops, chieftainship, and ritual itself. Concisely, they provide a charter for the social structure. Bettison & Rushton (2010) while quoting Claude Levi-Strauss (1908–2009) upholds that Strauss work as an anthropologist formulated the famous the structural study of myth. He treats myths in the same way Saussure treated signs and

words. He suggests that myths as surface stories have no intrinsic meaning in themselves but can only be understood in relation to the deeper beliefs through which social organizations are structured. Significantly, he theorises that myths arise as a way of providing resolutions to otherwise irreconcilable social issues and phenomenon. As stated by Kirima & Mugambi myths are critical in total being of a community, they offer a definition of a myth as follows:

a myth is story or explanations which contains some truth, but which is told in a conversational style to make it interesting and give it a lasting impression. Myths are developed in order to explain and answer questions about meaning behind the historical events of a people's past. (Kirima & Mugambi, 1976, p.5)

In the case of Agĩkũyũ, a mythical story of Gĩkũyũ and Mũmbi abounds. Waweru (2011, p.24) postulates that Agĩkũyũ traditionally believe that a man called Gĩkũyũ is the founder of the tribe. This man had a wife named Mũmbi, who gave birth to nine full daughters (meaning ten). The daughters married men provided by Ngai and lived in their father's land making their own families, which allowed them to retain their names as clans resulting to women domineering in Kikuyu society for a few generations. Sarinjeive (2008, p.38) infer that the primary Gĩkũyũ - Mũmbi narrative, function like an archaeology of self, which comprises Gĩkũyũ ontology. They consider myth as a preserver of total community personality and its rituals, such as circumcision, and even Western education. Sarinjeive (ibid, p.30) refers to Gĩkũyũ and Mũmbi creation story as a community's living pulse given that it serves as an inspiration to the Gĩkũyũ, especially in the most demoralising terms. He adds that it is the moral centre that connects the communal psyche with the metaphysical and anchors the past with the present. Briefly, it presents a total context, a complementarity of myth and history.

The researcher together with participants in FGDs identified at least four mention of Gĩkũyũ and Mũmbi mythical story in the following selected comedies; **Mũndũrũme ni Mũgambo, Kĩrĩro kĩa Mwana** and **Nganga Mbute**. To ascertain veracity of claims and observations made scholars and participants, the researcher visited Mũkurwe wa Nyagathanga on Monday 2nd January 2017. Located in Mũrang'a county, Mũkurwe wa Nyagathanga is believed to be the original home of founders of Gĩkũyũ ethnic community. At the sacred grove he met two elders aged between 78 and 91 years and six (6) elderly women aged between 72 and 81 years old who provided insightful

information about this hallowed cultural site. The researcher recorded the oral account of Gĩkũyũ mythical story as narrated by Mzee Mwangi wa Muchoki as documented below:

Ngai (God) created Gĩkũyũ in his holiest sanctuary, Kĩrĩnyaga. He promised him to give him land in which his children and offspring they will call home. Gĩkũyũ is invited a top Kĩrĩnyaga and is given the land as far as his eyes could see. To start with he is told to face on his left and there beyond he saw a mountain to which Mwene Nyaga said to him, “That is Kia-Nyahĩ or Kilimambogo). That is where your second *itoka* (boundary) will be placed. Remember your first *itoka* is Kĩrĩnyaga; he then faced on his right hand and there in the horizons he saw a mountainous range which God called Nyandarwa. That is third *itoka* (boundary) and finally he is told to look in front of him, “Can you see the furthest end that your eyesight can take you?” to which he replied, “Yes, my Lord, I can see some blueish mountains.” That is Kia-Mbirũirũ (the blueish mountain) and your last *itoka*.

God demarcated his land as that land which falls within the four mountains. Then Mwene Nyaga told Gĩkũyũ, “I will now send you over to a place that sits in the centre of four mountain ranges. There you will establish your home with your wife Mũmbi.” “How do I get there my lord?” Gĩkũyũ enquired. “You will follow one of the streams (possibly Kiringa or Nairobi rivers) whose source is on the slopes of Kĩrĩnyaga. This river flows into Thagana (Sagana). Once you get to Thagana follow its upstream route until you get to another river called Mathioya which also flows into *Thagana*. Detour and take Mathioya upstream route. Continue with your journey until you get to a stream called Gathambara, that flows into Mathioya.

You will know of this stream by its freshness, pureness and the sacred aura surrounding its banks. Then you must trace its source. When you get to its source, then that is the place that I have appointed as your home which rests on high ground directly opposite the source of the holy stream. Once you scale up the valley, you will find the place I have appointed as your home. You will know it by a large Mũkũrwe tree which is inhabited by Nyagathanga (special birds).” Gĩkũyũ did as he is instructed and as he approached the holy site, the birds that perched on the tree amplified their squeaking, chirping and tweeting, they had never seen a man and hence excitement. Nyagathanga are said to have the colour like mice which is native to Gĩkũyũ country. The mice have got dark grey pigmentation with white stripes running parallel from head to tail.

The story goes that these birds used to feast on millet and sorghum. However, owing to depletion of these crops’ courtesy of human habitation, the bird species have ever since left the place for other locations such Mwea where rice is in abundance. Gĩkũyũ, together with his wife Mũmbi, established their first home. They built two huts, *Nyũmba* for Mũmbi and *Thingira* for Gĩkũyũ. Later they were blessed with ten

daughters, but it is against their custom to count to ten, so they held that they had nine number of their daughters, but in full.

The daughters included Wanjikū the matriarch of Anjirū clan (given her name due to her dark complexion) and followed by the following sisters Wambūi, the matriarch of Ambūi clan (a pretty girl that is compared to Zebra); Wacera or Wanjeri, matriarch of Aceera clan (she is very selecting, materialistic minded); Wanjikū (she liked backbiting her elder sisters) Backbiting in Gīkūyū in *njuukū* and hence Wanjukū, however the name is euphemized to Wanjikū; Nyambura/Wakiuru of Ethaga clan. They had special powers of *Guthemenga* (to curse); Waithera of Aitherandū clan, she is though in her chores; Wairimū, matriarch of Airimū or Gathigia clan. She is born at the advent of ogre (*marimū ma nyakondo*) stories.

It is said that she is called Gathigia owing to her characteristic of leaving indelible mark made by stool on what she sat on: Wangarī, born at the time of great distress caused by *ngarī* (leopard). She is a matriarch of Aithe Kahuno or Angarī clan, she is credited with her courage and boldness: Wangūi is the ninth born, a natural soloist in Gīkūyū homestead. Her voice is compared to that of *Nyamīndigi*, a Gīkūyū mythical bird. Her clan is called Waithiegeni or Aithiegeni owing her roving characteristics. She is sought after to entertain her guests. A matriarch of Aithiegeni or Angūi clan. Finally, there is a last born called Wamūyū or Warigia.

When Gīkūyū and Mūmbi daughters came of age, the couple decided to build another house, *Thingira* specifically for housing the man of the house. This is prompted by the fact that his daughters were mature, and it is not for him to share the same room with them. After he moved to his Thingira, the daughters now had ample time with Mūmbi and this is the time they asked their mother about their suitors. “*Maitū*, we can see you are happy in the company of our father. When are, we going to have our own partners?’ they inquired. Mūmbi passed the same information to the husband who in turn supplicated to Ngai for an answer.

He is advised to make a burnt sacrifice at the foot of Mūkūrwe wa Nyagathanga. He advised the wife to bring a *Ngoima* (a fattened sacrificial ram) from her *Gīcegū* (a special pen inside woman’s house, for fattening sacrificial rams). The daughters were also advised to look for some sticks from *Mathīnjiro* stems and ensure that the height of such as stem is equivalent to the owner. Each is advised to take the stick to the alter where their father is awaiting to make a burnt sacrifice. Once they delivered the sticks they were advised to leave immediately, for it is against the customs to allow womenfolk to participate in such a ceremony. Once alone, Gīkūyū proceeded with the ceremony. He decided to use the nine sticks as *Ndara* (gridiron) for roasting the sacrificial meat.

When he lit the fire, the fire became strong and almost immediately as it is burning, it started to rain. So, intense is the rain that the hailstorms, thunderstorms and lightening engulfed Mũkũrwe wa Nyagathanga causing Gĩkũyũ lost his consciousness. The development caused a lot of strain and restlessness on part of his daughters. They decided to move towards the alter to check on the status of their father. Luckily, the rain had subsided down. There is however a fog that affected their visibility. When they reached on the alter spot, they were surprised to find their father on the ground as well as nine young men who sat on the exact spot where each one of them had placed their sticks.

When Gĩkũyũ regained his consciousness, he saw the men too and said.” I can see you have come to take my daughters, who are you?” he asked. The men responded, we are ‘*Cienyu cia Ngai*, (we are part of Mwene Nyaga Divinity). This explains why even today there is a Gĩkũyũ proverb that goes, “*Mwanake ni Kienyu kĩa Ngai*,” (The youth is part of the Divinity). Later these men married nine of Gĩkũyũ daughters setting a stage for the establishment of Gĩkũyũ tribe through nine clans, represented by Gĩkũyũ nine daughters. However, Warigia/Wamũyũ, the last born of Gĩkũyũ and Mũmbi, does not receive a lot of attention due to myth associated with her perturbed life. Warigia is said to have fallen in love with Wambui’s son, who run to Gĩkũyũ, his grandfather’s house. When the circumciser is in the act, he bolted out and sought refuge to his grandfather’s house. This means, he never completed the process of circumcision.

In Gĩkũyũ homestead he met equally young Warigia, Gĩkũyũ last born child and with no time, the two fell in love an act that culminated with Warigia’s pre-marital pregnancy. Incensed by this despicable act, Gĩkũyũ banished her own daughter, together with her suitor to uncultivated land far beyond. As per this account, the two were the founders of Akamba tribe and this explains why Kamba have two circumcision rites (*njahiko igiri*), the first one to signify Wambui’s son initial attempt at circumcision, which aborted midway when he run away and the second circumcision which is supposedly meant to complete the aborted rite of passage. (Muchoki / Njoroge, 2017, n.a)

Mbiti (1966) confirms that indeed Akamba boys undergo two separate circumcision rites. He notes that each child is circumcised before the age of ten. About the age of fifteen they go through another initiation - ‘second circumcision - after which they are considered ‘*Anake*’. After the second circumcision, they receive respect from other members of the community, and can get married, or become warriors.

Regarding the original Mūkūrwe tree, the researcher, is informed that the current Mūkūrwe tree at the sacred site is not the original tree that is associated with Agĩkũyũ patriarch, Gĩkũyũ. The original tree no longer exists. In 1957, former politician and Gĩkũyũ academician Dr. Julius Gikonyo Kiano approached elders in Nyagathanga and requested to be shown the exact spot where the original Mūkūrwe tree stood. Before then, this spot is kept as a high secret with only a few of elders knowing the exact spot. The elders proceeded to offer a sacrifice before replanting a new Mūkūrwe tree. The ceremony involved slaughtering of unblemished *Ngoima* (fattened ram) among other associated ceremonies. Part of its blood is poured on *Kiihuri* (special traditional spoon), which is then mixed with *tatha* (ingest from ram stomach/ingests). Meanwhile, *rwambo* is fried on a pot and the liquid oil that is produced is mixed with *tatha* (ingests) and blood. The concoction is poured on a hole, before the real planting took place. The men took some meat, but the rest is burnt to ashes thereafter. The sacred site sits on a 4.5 acres' piece of land.

Several characters in the selected comedies disclose their reference towards Gĩkũyũ and his wife Mũmbi mythical story. This mythical story forms part of what Smart (1996) calls glue that cement and institutionalise Gĩkũyũ way of life, sense of belonging. Undeniably, the myth of Gĩkũyũ and Mũmbi is well documented by several scholars such as Wanjohi (1997) Njururi (1983), Mugo (1982) and Kenyatta (1965). In a nutshell, they provide a charter for the social structure. In the case of Agĩkũyũ, a mythical story of Gĩkũyũ and Mũmbi abounds. Waweru (2011, p.24) postulates that Agĩkũyũ traditionally believe that a man called Gĩkũyũ is the founder of the tribe.

Sarinjeive (ibid, p.38) posits that the primary Gĩkũyũ-Mũmbi narrative, function like an archaeology of self, which comprises Gĩkũyũ ontology. This observation gains credence when analysed against personal attributes associated with some characters such as Kĩhenjo in **Nganga Mbute**, Machang'i in **Mũndūrũme nĩ Mũgambo** and Wandahuhu in **Kĩrĩro Kia Mwana**. In **Nganga Mbute** Kĩhenjo romanticises about Gĩkũyũ and Mũmbi, the mythical founders of Gĩkũyũ tribe. He evokes the values and importance of Gĩkũyũ myth of creation which for millennia has bequeathed to the tribe a sense of identity and belonging. Kĩhenjo romanticises of Gĩkũyũ true *Ngai* who watched over Agĩkũyũ people long before the coming of colonialists. Kĩhenjo is in a

way questioning the current where Christianity and Western way of life have entirely eclipsed the traditional way of life. Kīhenjo recollects the past time in a manner that depicts the distant past as being ideal Parthenon, that is full of mirth and life. Time when humanity and respect of values is supreme. Moments when a man is at the centre of society. In contrast, Kīhenjo frowns at modernity which is epitomised by individualism, materialism, greed and social mischief. He talks of the days when Gīkūyū sages, *Maturanguru*, would appease their God for his providence without fail. “*Maturanguru* order usually were those old age, say from 80 and above years. These are men who no longer exercised their conjugal rights,” notes Kenyatta (1965). They were expected to preside over ceremonies under Mūgumo tree or other sacred sights, they were intermediary between *Ngai* and the tribe. They also acted as a supreme court, in instances where elders had to refer some difficult cases to them. They were to Agīkūyū, a representation of their God. Waweru sums explains the role of *Maturanguru* as follows:

In order, be initiated into the religious council, one must give a fifth goat. When accepted, the person becomes less active in the governing council to take on his new responsibility of a religious leader perhaps equivalent to the position of an Archbishop today. However, doubles up as a strong advisor to the governing council. The role of religious council of elders is to offer sacrifices and prayers to God for the community. They are the people who lead the national and communal sacrifices. The religious council takes sacrificial role because they are believed to be pure, having passed childbearing period. It is because they are pure and clean that God can hear their prayers. This is the highest and most honoured status that a person can have within Kikuyu community. (Waweru, 2011, p.47)

Kīhenjo monologue reflects and rekindles memories of this distant past when the community is unadulterated by colonial and Christianity influence. Today such important traditional religion hierarchy has been almost being erased in totality. He also mentions that material culture is also disappearing first. These material culture include mūthegi (special staff for priestly order), *maturanguru* (special twigs used by elders of order of *maturanguru*), and *njūng’wa* (a special tool). The sacred groves that were used as holy sites for sacrificing to Ngai are also disappearing fast as a result changes that continue to shape and reposition Gīkūyū way of life.

In **Mündūrūme nī Mūgambo**, Machang’i positions himself as the head of the house, arguing that the tribal dictates as passed down through generations by Gīkūyū and other patriarchs require a man to be assertive by playing his role of shepherding his homes, clans, and community. In retrospect, Wandahuhu sterility makes him to feel unwanted and inadequate for failing to produce progenies as per the wishes of Gīkūyū and Mūmbi. In this way, Gīkūyū and Mūmbi mythical story acts as a sign that signifies identity, assigning gender roles and social expectations. Through this myth, characters find cultural identity and meanings in as far as their individual and collective actions are concerned. As stated by Shaw (1995, p.33) Mūmbi, is associated with the land, giving rise to powerful connections between land and kin. Clan ties, but more importantly the generation set and age grade system, which provides the cross-cutting links that allows members of different local groups to act cooperatively.

4.6.2 Temporality of Religion: Past, Present and Future Perspectives

Reading filmic text as depicted in the selected comedies yields quite interesting observations in as far as Gīkūyū religious beliefs are concerned. Gīkūyū traditional dogma acknowledges that there is only one God who exists alongside ancestral spirits. However, this Theo monistic cosmology appears to have been altered by interactions between Agīkūyū on one hand and Colonialists and White missionaries on the other. It is apparent that the colonialists and missionaries never bothered to understand and comprehend Agīkūyū’s cosmology, culture, and political organization. This is directly attributable to the fact that colonialists and missionaries looked down upon Gīkūyū culture, a position that has been recorded by Wawerū (2011):

When European missionaries arrived in Africa, they did not in any way try to understand or appreciate the African culture. They were taken aback by practices like traditional circumcision, praying facing Mount Kenya, mode of dressing and pouring libation. To the missionaries, who had just witnessed developments in Europe. (Wawerū, 2011, p.9)

To them anything African is inferior, rudimentary, sub-standard, and contemptuous. This scornful and contemptible worldview is exemplified by Buxton (1927) who disparagingly describes Gīkūyū traditional healer as being primordial and diabolical:

His stock in trade of medicines, charms and implements is contained in horrible smelly rags and tightly corked gourds. Pebbles, lion’s claws, mysterious powders, a nail or two, a

knife, a little twist of gunpowder- a jackdaw collection that only our most sophisticated boy-not himself a Kikuyu would touch. (Buxton, 1927, p 124)

Such description shows the extent to which the Europeans perceived natives as being devoid of sophistication and cultural finesse. The Europeans considered themselves as ‘civilisation agent’ that is meant not only to civilize Africa but to humanise entire Black race. White missionaries adopt the same attitude when they met Africans, no wonder Agĩkũyũ people coined new idioms to express their deep-seated mistrust and disdain towards Christian missionaries. One such idiom is, ‘*Gũtiri ngũrani ya mũthũngũ and mũbea*’ which loosely translates, ‘There is no difference between a white settler and a white missionary.’ Thiong’o (1972) explicates how the Christian missionaries set in motion of social transformation, and which led to fragmentation of Gĩkũyũ tribal set up and accepted framework for social values, norms, and way of life. Elkins (2005) bemoans the fact that missionaries were determined to convert the Africans not just to Christianity but to an entire western way of life, belief, and customs. During their great time of ‘saving lost souls’ of Africa, they actually competed for them with each denominations and sect curving out and exerting its own sphere of influence in Gĩkũyũ country.

Elkins observes that in Gĩkũyũ country the Presbyterians, the Anglicans, the Methodists, and the Catholics were a constant feature. They proceeded to establish churches, hospitals, and schools but not before banishing and denouncing Gĩkũyũ cultural practices, that were regarded by church as paganist in approach, savagely and inherently heathenistic. Thiong’o (1972) mentions Church of Scotland Mission for adopting a highly strict puritan tradition and blames them for failing to separate Christian dogma from what he calls European scale values and customs. Rosberg & Nottingham (1966) also identify the Church of Scotland (CSM), for its puritan and rigid attitude towards the matter of female circumcision, polygamy, veneration of *ngoma* and other cultural practices. “Acceptance of the Christian Church meant the outright rejection of all African customs’ meant rejection of those values and rituals that held us together, (Thiong’o 1972, p.32). The selected comedies yield quite interesting observations in as far as Christianity and vicissitudes of traditional Gĩkũyũ religion in diegesis of the selected comedies.

4.6.3 Discerning traditional religion through the Diegesis of Selected Comedies

Agĩkũyũ believe in the Supreme Being they call Ngai or *Mwene Nyaga*. They believed that he resides in sacred places scattered all over the Gĩkũyũ country. Their belief in supreme being vindicates a position taken by Wilson (1971, p.2) who held that Africa traditional set up consisted of law and customs, system of beliefs, and judgement on right or wrong. These key attributes together with values make up a peoples' religion or ideology.

Gĩkũyũ religion can be contextualised within the framework of the six dimensions of a religion as defined by Ninian Smart. According to Smart (1996) the original dimensions of religion include; mythical, doctrinal, ethical, ritual, material, social and experiential. This paper discusses the following Gĩkũyũ traditional religion dimensions as depicted in the selected comedies: social and experiential, mythical, ritual, and ethical dimensions.

The traditional Gĩkũyũ religion is experiential in more than one way. According to Smart (1996) the experimental and emotional dimension is an important aspect of religion. He asserts that religious history is full of experiences and encounters among the Agĩkũyũ people, Gĩkũyũ, the founder of Agĩkũyũ people had a celestial experience when *Ngai* gave him a wife and commanded him to establish his home at Mũkurwe wa Nyagathanga. These were shaping events in Agĩkũyũ history. The experiential dimension is depicted in **Kĩrĩro Kia Mwana** where we find Wahĩto, a troubled 'barren woman', vexed and resigned to her own fate. She results to dreaming and seeing visions in the realm of invisible world. In this state, she not only uses meta communication with the invisible God, but she experiences dreams and nightmares in equal measure.

She has a vision where she is finally blessed with a child who is eventually killed by her husband Wandahuhu. This serves as a premonition which comes to pass when Wahĩto is married to Wandahuhu's best friend and bore him a child while Wandahuhu cohabits with a mistress only to learn that he is infertile. Such dreams and visions evoke and bring to live the experiences of great Gĩkũyũ seer, Mugo wa Kĩbiru. Legends, he is loved by God and as a result made futuristic revelations about the Gĩkũyũ community.

During his life, Mugo ‘foretold the coming of Europeans in the form of White butterflies’ (Etsula, 2008, p.2).

Scholars have long held the fact that religion and rituals form an important role in the life of indigenous communities all over the world such as Agĩkũyũ of Kenya, Shona of Zimbabwe, Acholi of Uganda, Igbos of Nigeria, Mandinka of Senegal or Dagon of Mali. Mbiti (1969) acknowledges this fact when Gĩkũyũ by noting that when making sacrifices and prayers for rain, the Gĩkũyũ’s high priests addressed *Ngai* (God) as one who makes mountains quake and rivers overflow. Parrinder (1962) agrees with Mbiti (ibid) when he mentions that Gĩkũyũ elders just like multitudes of other Africans always put a little food on the ground for the departed spirits before eating, and at beer drinking a little drink is always poured on the ground first. In case of women they pour some porridge on the ground for the spirits.

They did this as way of offering a token of fellowship and a sign of oneness with the departed spirits. The Agĩkũyũ religion is systematic and ritualistic a fact that is depicted in **Nganga Mbutu** when Kĩhenjo recites traditional prayer while facing Mount Kenya. Peek & Yankah (2004, p.53) authenticate Kĩhenjo’s invocations and conduct when they hold that Gĩkũyũ prayers traditionally began with an invocation to four mountains namely: Kĩrĩnyaga, Kilimabogo, Nyandarwa and Kia Mbirũirũ. Rwehumbiza (1988) adds that this prayer is also the petition to God:

As Father and enabler of all men, to give offspring, peace, rain, abundance of harvest and many other blessings for making people happy and prosperous. Implicit in the prayer to God, to bless and establish their home, is the hope that the divine will abide with the new family and give needed security and other blessings. (Rwehumbiza, 1988, p.36)

These prayers place *Ngai* at centre stage of Gĩkũyũ cosmology. As Imbo (2011, p.81) states *Ngai* (God) stands at the apex of the cosmic hierarchy. To Agĩkũyũ, *Ngai* exercised authority over the world and wielded omnipotent power that transcended the whole of universe. Kinyua (2017, p.80) argues that although the Agĩkũyũ accepted that they were the “children of *Ngai*.” they evinced a very ridiculous conception of *Ngai* as their Father, who never presented any revelation.

The religious theme is also discernible at the time of calamities and when characters fall on hard times. Prayers to God abounds virtually in all comedies under study. In **Kĩrĩro kĩa Mwana** Wahĩto calls out to *Ngai* (God) saying, ‘Ooh my *Ngai*, why don’t you give me my own child?’ This is after she is constantly pressurised and accused by her husband for failing to bear him an heir.

Bernardi (1994, p.193) concedes that Gĩkũyũ traditional cosmology consisted of two domains. There is *Ngai*-the high God and secondly, *Ngoma*, the spirits of ancestors and living dead. Writing on the same subject, Kenyatta (1965) classifies *ngoma* into four different categories namely: *ngoma cia aciari* (parents’ spirits); *ngoma cia mbarĩ* (clan spirits); *ngoma cia muhiriga* (sub-clan spirits) and *ngoma cia riika* (age-group spirits). While referring to a study by Kamuyu (1988), Mbugua (2016, p.33) agrees with Kamuyu that the word *ngoma* comes from the verb *gukoma* (to sleep). Kariuki (2006) cites some responses by informants from the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) who described *ngoma* (ancestors) as intermediaries between the Agĩkũyũ and God. They held that *ngoma* used to intercede for their loved ones with (*Ngai*) God.

Sandgren (1989, p.10) concludes that ancestors formed an important realm of Gĩkũyũ’s religious conceptions, a fact that leads Karanja (2009, p.106) to account that in Gĩkũyũ manner of speaking, the phrase *Ngai wa igũrũ*, (God of the Universe) contrasted with *Ngoma*, who were said to dwell underground and around sacred trees. Leakey (1977, p.990) a renown Gĩkũyũ ethnographer, writes that when he asked a Gĩkũyũ elder about the fate of those who die, the elder retorted, ‘*Ngoma ithiaga kũrĩ arĩa me thĩ*.’ (The spirit goes to join those who are on the ground). This response reinforces the belief that the spirits of the dead did not go heaven, but in the bowels of the earth.

The dead continued to commune with the living through *ngoma* (spirits). They were considered as an important component of community’s collective identity. Hobley (1967, p.22) supports this view by noting that Agĩkũyũ believed in ancestral spirits - *ngoma*. He terms this belief as pre-dominating spiritual factor in the mind of the great majority of the people. He describes these spirits as being ever present and that they always communed between the living, the dead, and unborn. Sandgren (1989) reinforces this view when he avers that relationship with *ngoma* and the living begun

with the living and stretched into the past to include the dead as well. This means that Agĩkũyũ believed in life after death, a concept that is reinforced by Tebaldi (2001, p.61) who points to the fact that, although the Kikuyu traditional religion recognises life after death, unlike Christian's dogma man's earthly life does nothing to determine the fate of the soul after death. The *Ngai*, *Ngoma*, living and the unborn were intricately bound together and the life of Agĩkũyũ is largely dictated on how well an individual related with these entities. According to Imbo (2011, p.82) this may explain the reason Agĩkũyũ venerated *Ngoma* because it is believed that they, as active participants of community affairs, held sway and could act against any transgression, commission or omission by any member of the community.

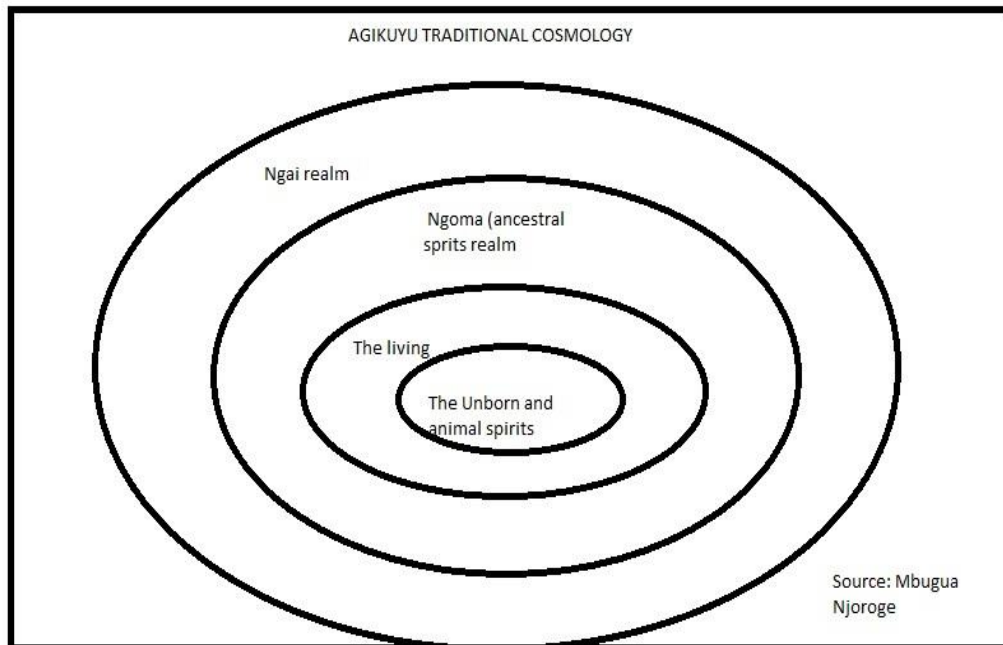


Figure 33 Gĩkũyũ Cosmological Hierarchy Source: Mbugua Njoroge

The term *Ngoma* features prominently in the diegetic space of **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo**. The term is employed by Machang'i's co-wives, Wanyũrũ and Warigia as an abusive word. The duo has penchant of throwing epithets and expletives at one another using the word *ngoma* (devil).

As claimed by Bower & Crowley (2010, p.200) words change their connotation overtime with some words acquiring positive connotations, while others acquire negative ones. The term amelioration as a technical term for words whose meaning changes to be more positive over time, while pejoration is the opposite. This view is

espoused by Kolby & Standridge (2016) who state that words gain power and they lose power. Words can also gain or lose bad reputation. Considering this the term *ngoma* has changed its original meaning because of changes precipitated by the adoption of Christian faith by the Agĩkũyũ. The application of word *Ngoma* in the selected comedies suggests that the lexicon has undergone pejoration to acquire a negative semantic connotation. The word originally meant ancestral spirits, but its application in the selected comedies has depreciated to mean a malevolent and evil spirit akin to Judeo-Christian-Islamic Satan, demons, and other wicked spiritual forces.

Mbugua (2016) traces this distortion way back in 1926, when Christian missionaries, while translating Bible to Gĩkũyũ language, distortedly equated the word *ngoma* with Satan or devil with 'hell' being translated as *Kwa Ngoma*.

The pejoration of term *Ngoma* is a pointer to the level of changes occurring among Agĩkũyũ people because of what Njogu & Maupeu (2007) terms as systematic approach that won Gĩkũyũ people over through comparison of Gĩkũyũ belief systems and Christianity and translating hymns, catechisms, sections of the Old and New Testament.

The use of word *Ngoma* by the two protagonists in **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo** namely; Wanyũrũ and Warigia points to the fact that the two are adherent of Christian religion. Their interpretation of *ngoma* is thus defined by Gĩkũyũ's Bible translation which assigned the word a negative connotation. The two protagonists seem oblivious of this change and the same can be said of a majority of Gĩkũyũ speakers. Through these methods the missionaries not only sought to enter the psyche of the Gĩkũyũ people but also succeeded to comprehend their world through songs and linguistic imagery and in the process managed to position Christianity as the only authentic religion in Gĩkũyũ country.

Since early 1900, Christianity has become as true authentic religion of Agĩkũyũ people although they still retain some traces of traditional belief systems. Consequently, the majority of Agĩkũyũ identify with Christianity which has almost permeated in all Agĩkũyũ spheres of life be it naming, marriage, rites. None of the selected comedies portray a scenario where viewers interact with traditional worship or even traditional

marriage negotiations. We only get a glimpse of a Christian wedding involving Machang'i and Wanyūrū on one hand and Machang'i and Warigia on the other hand. It follows that traditional wedding is receiving limited attention and hence the apparent breakdown of this institution as depicted by several characters such as Wandahuhu versus Wahīto; and Kīmenyi versus Wakarīndī.

4.7. Cultural Discourse: Exercise of Public Authority and Administration of Justice

Gīkūyū ethnic and tribal authority subsists in a plethora of institutions within which Agīkūyū established both legitimacy and legality for their governance. The binaries of modernity and tradition have brought complexities in the way tribal authority is held and exercised. The next section analyses semiotic practices that construct authority and legitimacy within the dichotomy of ethnic and modern legit authority.

4.7.1. Semiotics Aspects of Authority, Justice and Jurisprudence

Before the coming of the white men, Gīkūyū exercises their political power collectively through council of elders. Kenyatta (1966) stresses that Gīkūyū did not have room for a monarch, instead the community was governed by a council of elders, supported by strong council of fighting warriors. He avers that the ruling eldership came to power following an elaborate ceremony called *Ituika*, that epitomized transfer of power from one ruling age-set to a new one. The ceremony was held once in every thirty or forty years. He explains that the interplay between these age set was marked by identity of two names, namely Mwangi and Irūngū or Maina. He says that Mwangi means the one who captures or wins. Irūngū means one who puts things in order or rūnga. Gīkūyū. Lambart (1965, p.11) adds that age set are described as right hand (*tatane*) and left hand (*gitiene*). This arrangement was likened to man alternating the names of his own sons between his own and his wife's families. This was a direct imitation of Maasai system namely; '*etatene*-right hand' and '*ekendyanje*-left hand.'

Elders coalesced around *Kiama* (council of elders) which collectively made decisions on behalf of the entire community. The Council signified tribal authority and cohesion. They were like stitches that held together community garment consisting of practices, customs, law, order, expectations, and way of life. *Kiama* is the sum of corpus of tribal

authority. Gĩkũyũ had a great sense of justice. Whereas modern set is structured along the doctrine of separation of powers typified by three arms of government (Executive, Legislature and Judiciary) traditional Gĩkũyũ government had these institutions but the fusion and demarcation between one institution from another is quite fluid and subtle. In Gĩkũyũ traditional set up, Ogot (1976) posits that long before the coming of Europeans there is an inner core of prominent elders who virtually ran the affairs of *Kĩama* (council of elders. Ogot adds that these councils existed primarily to dispense justice. When dispensing justice, the guiding principle is that the primary purpose of the judicial process is to maintain peace and stability in society. Rohio & Mutiso (1975) classify these councils into five distinct entities namely: *Njamba ya Mumo* (Council of junior warriors); *Njama ya ita* (Senior warriors); *Kamatimũ* (the council of junior elders; *Kiama kĩa mataathi* (the council of peace) and *Kiama kĩa maturanguru* (the religious or sacrificial council. Kershaw (1972) claimed that these councils could be named after other insignia worn or after the kind of work they perform or even after the territorial unit in which they do their work.

At the lowest level were those too young to be warriors; next were warriors and finally came elders, men of respect, esteem and reverence for their priceless wisdom and wit. After warrior grade, a man transited to another grade variously referred to as *Kamatimũ* or *Karabai*. For one to transit to this stage, he is expected to pay a goat but more importantly he is expected to get married and establish his own homestead. This requirement is a time waved as per the discretions of the elders. Soon after marriage young males paid one goat for members in the junior council which entitled him to make decisions in the meeting of junior council and to attend meeting of the senior council without participating in deliberations. A second goat gave admission into this council Kershaw (1997). The 96-year-old responses stated that over time almost everyone got married meaning that for an individual to go up the ladder, much is demanded from him. As Waweru (2011) records *Kamatimũ* (Council of commons) is an important stage for one to rise to coveted eldership position:

a young man married he retires from military service. His father arranges for him to be introduced into the council of commons. father is required to pay a fee of one goat. This is the beginning the process of initiation. The individual person is now not a warrior but between a warrior and half an elder (commoner). He is a commoner because he can carry arms like a warrior with a spear, sword and arrows in case of

an emergency, hence the name *kamatimũ*, the lowest level is the council of common..... this lowest council is made up of junior elders, a group that consisted of all those men who had married and hence ceased to be active in military service. For anybody joining this council of common elders one had to give a goat and a calabash of beer. (Waweru, 2011, p.42)

The role of this council of *Kamatimũ* is to act as messengers for the council of peace (council of senior elders). The members of the council of commons are not fully recognized elders and may not take part in the council of peace discussions and deliberations. However, during the council of peace meetings, the members of the council of commons are invited. An elder added that he is expected to have mustered tribal lore, acquired considerable amount of property, exhibited his wit, judgement, and disposition, and demonstrated his leadership prowess. This assured him of coveted *Athamaki* status once he is admitted in the *Athuri a Mataathi* Council of elders transiting towards the most coveted elder status, *Maturanguru*-the tribal sage.

There are those who were retarded and never moved from general age-controlled status allocation of *Athuri*. They were just there, like a geographical feature, they counted less in the social organization and sometimes they were regarded as mere spectators' ions that were only necessary for tribal 'chemical reaction' to be consummated. *Athuri a Mataathi* symbolically moved around with *Mataathi*, sacred leaves extracted from *Mũtathi* tree and a walking stick called *Mũthegi*. This is to these elders, a status symbol, an insignia of leadership, a hallowed stripe, a kind of tribal mace whose presence in a gathering of elders signified sobriety, deep insights, justice, and a representation of tribal aspirations.

These elders had a singular responsibility of carrying *Mataathi* and *Mũthegi*, two symbols of peace, to remind them of the duty of peace-maker in the community. The members also pledged to be calm and peaceful during deliberations for the prosperity of the people. They were expected to be guided by reason and wisdom in all deliberations. Kenyatta affirms that, there were two councils of elders where *Njũng'wa* is used by male elders: *Kĩama kĩa mataathi*, (the council of peace) and *kĩama kĩa Maturanguru*, religious and sacrificial council. Waweru (2011, p.45) notes that the next stage is the council of peace. One qualified to join the Council of Peace (Mataathi) after

serving in the council of commons for a period, one is initiated into another stage. Now the second stage of councils is when a person gives another goat (second goat) to the elders. It is after this goat that the person is qualified to join the council of peace. Waweru stresses that it takes quite several years (15-20) between the first and second goat. In most cases one can give the second goat after the circumcision of the first born of the person undergoing the initiation.

A 96-year-old informant added that “Maturanguru order usually were those old age, say from 80 and above years. These are men who no longer exercised their conjugal rights.” Thus, he noted, they were expected to preside over ceremonies under Mūgumo tree or other sacred sights, they were intermediary between Ngai and the tribe. They also acted as a supreme court, in instances where elders had to refer some difficult cases to them. They were to Agĩkũyũ a representation of their God in a chosen few-Maturanguru. Waweru sums explains the role of Maturanguru as follows:

In order, be initiated into the religious council, one must give a fifth goat. When accepted, the person becomes less active in the governing council to take on his new responsibility of a religious leader perhaps equivalent to the position of an Archbishop today. However, doubles up as a strong advisor to the governing council. The role of religious council of elders is to offer sacrifices and prayers to God for the community. They are the people who lead the national and communal sacrifices. The religious council takes sacrificial role because they are believed to be pure, having passed childbearing period. It is because they are pure and clean that God can hear their prayers. This is the highest and most honoured status that a person can have within Kikuyu community. (Waweru, 2011, p.47)

All the councils were involved in judicial, governance and law enforcement process. Leakey (1977) refers to Njama as forming part of an elaborate system that assumed the roles and functions of local police warriors. They were strong and kept strict law and order. Leakey described them as “men who take the lead in wartime, persons of power and position. They constitute of young men, and all eligible to join the ranks, but newcomers can only be received by consent of the body. Their power included judicial attributes and the keeping of order especially regarding affairs outside immediate homestead.” Any dispute arising among community members is resolved first by

immediate family before it is escalated to junior elders, elders and finally to senior elders.

In the opinion of Ayittey (2006, p. 65) the father settled disputes at the nuclear family level. In his absence, his eldest son by the first wife assumed authority. Disputes between members of different families were settled by family heads of appropriate grade. Beyond that *Kiama kia Mataathi* which is locally known as the *Kĩama kia ituura*, or *Kĩama kĩa* mwaki (village council), took over the settlement of disputes between members of unrelated families. It is composed of clan heads; the parties paid a fee. The council is expected to bring about peace and social healing in case of disputes and conflicts. This explains the reason members of this council of elders always carried peace symbol represented in *Mũthĩgi* and *Mataathi* leaves. Wachege (1992) adds that as peace lovers and initiators, Gĩkũyũ elders reconciled members of tribe in their differences and disputes. They were responsible for bringing calmness, restoration of peace in the community:

Whenever people from different ridges quarrelled and were about to have violent confrontation, it is elders from the same ridges who met and advised people that *mbaara ti ũcũrũ* (fighting is not porridge). They used their power of *kũhorohia* (to effect reconciliation and unity). In such reconciliation interventions, the elders carried no spears, swords or shields. Instead they armed themselves with elder hood symbols of peace i.e. *mataathi* and *Mũthĩgi*. (Wachege, 1992, p.133)

In serious disputes like homicide involving two *mbarĩ* (clans), the *Maturanguru* or *Athamaki* (leader) from outside the two clans were called to settle the case and restore peace and equilibrium. Ssekamwa (1971) extols the Council of *Maturanguru* when he describes it as consisting of dignified elders:

Who form the inner circle of the Kiama and settle the knotty points of law and customs. They wear a special brass ear-rings, *icũhĩ*, (bangles) and a bunch of ceremonial leaves, *Maturanguru* carry a bunch of ceremonial leaves, *maturanguru*, as symbol of their authority. They decide the dates of circumcision feasts and the holding of *itwĩka* ceremony when the older generation of rulers gives place to another. (Ssekamwa, 1971, p.5)

This independent court is not a permanent institution. It is ad hoc, and each party is advised by his *mũthamaki* (spokesperson, adviser), but the members of the public who knew the facts could be called upon to testify. The parties were then instructed to choose about four *athamaki* each, leaving out close blood relatives. The eight would then join the independent *athamaki* to constitute the complete court that deliberated in camera. This court is called *ndundu* meaning secret. The judgment is pronounced publicly. In sense, these councils can be equated to the modern institutions as follows: *Mumo* (police service); *njamba ya ita* (army) *Kiama kia kamatimũ* subordinate courts; *Kiama kĩa mataathi* (high court) *Kiama ka Maturanguru* (appellate court and Supreme court).

Justice is highly cherished by the community members. This is evidence by the numerous proverbs extolling justice: *Kĩhoto gituthaga ruga rutunge*, ‘Justice breaks the strained cord of the bow’; *Kĩhoto nita ruui ruiyuru*, ‘*Kĩhoto ni indo*, ‘Justice is like having riches’ Barra (1939). They dispensed justice on behalf of the community. Nevertheless, the judicial system required a strong enforcement which they got in *Njama*. In the Gĩkũyũ traditional set up, there is no imprisonment under customary law, compensation being the main method of concluding most litigation. Any accused person if he or she is convicted, they were forced to pay compensations in form of goats. In the selected comedies, we encounter several conflicts that today are no longer referred to *Kĩama*.

In the selected comedies the Agĩkũyũ traditional justice System is seldom portrayed but new institutions feature prominently indicating cultural vivacity that informs Agĩkũyũ people. One of these new institutions is the police service which features prominently in **Mũtikũnyarira** and **Nganga Mbute** comedies. The police officers appear to have precipitated the merger of *njama ya ita* (traditional senior warriors) and *njama ya mumo* (junior warriors) into one institution for preserving law and order. Unlike in the past where the traditional institution for enforcing law and order held sway in Gĩkũyũ country, the new institution has powers to enforce law and order in the Kenyan territory which include other ethnic communities apart from Agĩkũyũ.

Agĩkũyũ did not have centralised authority. Before the advent of colonialism Gĩkũyũ were acephalous in nature. Thompson (1976), supports this view when he underscores the fact that the notion of hereditary dynasties typified by emperors, kings, sultans, caliphates, princes, chiefs and headmen is alien among the Agĩkũyũ people. Scholars such as Mũriũki (1974), Kenyatta (1965) Gathigira (1946) have pointed out that Gĩkũyũ never had a monolithic tribal leader. Their social encounters were largely organized around their localities and villages, with elders giving leadership and deciding on tribal disputes from time to time. This fact that is acknowledged by Elkins (2005) and Wakaba (2013). Among the Agĩkũyũ the individuals counted far more than in most other tribes (W. Thompson, (Unpublished) Memoirs, 1976). Ayittey (2006, p.46) mentions that such societies as the Ewe of Ghana, the Kikuyu of Kenya, and the Kuranko of Sierra Leone, showed a greater disposition toward elevating the interests of the community to much higher levels. Where there is creation of a network of mutual obligations and interdependence. Bonds of amity were forged through participation in village festivals, visiting, and sharing food.

Chieftainship is alien concept to Agĩkũyũ people as Mũriũki (1976) writes, “Indeed chiefs were a mere creation of the British Administration at the beginning of this century. Hence the genesis of many administrative problems encountered by early British administrators, whose arose by few elders to behave as chiefs supported by British mentors.” This assertion is sustained by Elkins who postulates that Gĩkũyũ did not have chiefs prior to colonialism. They were a stateless society governed by Council of elders and lineage head. Smith (2005) contends that Gĩkũyũ were traditionally organised in what today would be called committee principle. Under this arrangement, the leadership is exercised through local clans. Smith postulates that this leadership style ensured stability and peace among tribe members than those who had one dormant leader.

Wakaba (2013) seems to romanticise the pre-colonial Gĩkũyũ lifestyle by reliving old goods days when he points out that the Agĩkũyũ social life of present day differs greatly from that of the precolonial period. Days gone by when tribal traditions held sway. “Before the coming of colonialists and missionaries, real chiefs or rulers in the political sense of government did not exist Wakaba (2013). Mwaura (2007, p.49) hold that

Agĩkũyũ did not have a central authority and the tools of coercion and oppression, the police and army, were absent because when morals are respected and upheld, enforcers are unnecessary. In place of a single ruler there is a supreme council of elders, *Kĩama*, which guided rather than governed the people:

Decisions were made after extensive consultation and were obeyed by everyone, without question. This pure form of democracy was common throughout Africa and ensured that no one could exploit another; all men were equal in fact, and no one could die of starvation while others enjoyed a surplus and threw away the excess. This social organization was developed in response to the needs of the people and their environment. (Mwaura, 2007, p.49)

Tribal rule as, Thompson (1976) affirms is exercised by clan elders who derived their strength from a mixture of wile, guile, respect due to them as older persons, and descended mysticism of Gĩkũyũ and Mũmbi through their clan forming offspring. He admits that this formed a powerful concoction which when it is allied to tribal penchant for secret oaths, gave local elders enormous powers. This argument is sustained by Elkins (2005). When she emphasises that, the British settlers had to introduce chieftainship as a way of penetrating and controlling the tribe. Elkins is more explicit in her explanation when the chieftains were eventually introduced:

In Kikuyu districts these chiefs were a phenomenon of colonial rule. They were created by the colonial government and thus wholly illegitimate in the eyes of ordinary Gĩkũyũ people. By accepting British Authority, the chief is granted a monopoly of power in the African districts and given a great deal of authority. (Elkins, 2005 p. 19)

The practice of chieftainship is particularly effective after the establishment of Kenyan colony in 1920. They were in effect the tools that were used by British government to enforce forced labour on European farms, to collect intelligence on behalf of Europeans, to engulf African psyche and above all to keep the tribes divided and hence giving the colonisers to direct access to their land, livelihood and liberty and property. Sadly, this institution is retained in 1963, when Kenya attained her independence. The institution still exists in modern Kenya albeit with less fanfare, power, and privileges. However, in many rural areas in Kenya, a chief or a headman is still held with awe and high regard. He personifies law and order. He is quasi-judicial officer whose edicts and precepts must be obeyed by all. The Chief derived their powers from defunct *Chief's Authority Act* that gave this institution unfettered powers.

In **Mũici na kīhī**, the authority being exercised by Chief Kanyūtũ in **Mũici na Kīhī** may be attributable to these historical factors associated with the Chief. Chief Kanyūtũ's presence is conspicuous due to the uniform he wears. He expresses his power through his uniformed he dons. As semioticians have observed outfits bear connotations in society that go far beyond the dresses themselves. These layered significances mean different things to beholder and his immediate third parties. Within this context, messages about attires are created and re-recreated through design, elegance and through the power relations it creates between an individual and the rest of group members. We first encounter Chief Kanyūtũ in **Mũici na kīhī I** when Gathoroko visits Gĩthendũ and requests him to help report Wathende to the local chief. Wathende is alleged to have failed to honour a tripartite agreement between her, Wathende and Chief requiring him to compensate Gathoroko for the crops destroyed by his herd. In **Mũici na Kīhī II**, Chief Kanyūtũ appears in person, when he visits Ebethi, Wandahuhu's new wife and demanded to know why Wandahuhu failed to appreciate his efforts that eventually resolved his dispute with Wathende. It is apparent that the Chief is expecting to be given a token in form of cash, but Wandahuhu thinks that the Chief is alluding to his 'mondo', a bag of goodies. This helps to depict the institution of Chief as having unfettered powers. It symbolises his 'power to thwart,' and hence Wandahuhu's mortification at the mention of Chief Kanyūtũ. It is also true that the days when *Athuri a Kĩama* used to decide cases are long gone by. Their revered symbols, *mataathi* and *mũthĩgi* are no longer tenable. They have been replaced by institution of chief which signifies the state executive power. The state executive power is vested in the Office of President while Chief acts like presidential viceroy at a local level. The hallowed cultural symbols of *mataathi* and *mũthĩgi* have been replaced by 'Chiefs swagger Cane,' This largely attributed to the coming of Whites and colonial systems which introduced new form of administration based on modern democratic statehood.

4.8 Conclusion

This fourth chapter has addressed the thematic coding of cultural discourses. It starts with an in-depth discussion of cultural discourses to open the specific perspectives of culture with which it is working. It has also, as part of the introduction, discussed the use of sociolinguistics and ideology in these films. The specific areas covered by the chapter include: social identities and cultural rites of passage (circumcision and marriage (children, polygamy, divorce, and marriage potions)); culinary discourse (Gĩkũyũ food and Mũratina); traditional knowledge; religion (myth, temporality, and religion); and exercise of public authority and administration of justice. The chapter has observed that one of the important aspects of cultural discourse is an understanding of social roles and expectations within various cultures. Specifically, this refers to role relationships, personness which deals with what is expected and tolerated. It has been observed that formality is a related area, often focusing on existing relationships such as child-adult, husband-wife, father-son. The other aspect is social hierarchy which focuses on cultural norms, particularly those associated with authority or station in life for example the role of those in authority, men, women, boys, and circumcised men. This contextualisation feeds into various discourses and thematic concerns within the selected films. The analysis brought out thematic features such as rites of passage (circumcision and marriage); gender relations; semiotics of cultural cuisine and of traditional knowledge; cultural discourses such as religion and semiotics aspects of authority, justice, and jurisprudence. In the next chapter, the study gives a summary, conclusions, and recommendations of this study.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the major findings of this study. The discussions are derived from the focus areas of the research questions. The first research question; how the technical filmic codes deployed in contemporary Gĩkũyũ vernacular comedies intersect with Gĩkũyũ cultural paradigms, is discussed in the second chapter of this thesis. The second research question focuses on the role of native vernacular language within contemporary Gĩkũyũ comedies in expressing paradigms of Gĩkũyũ culture, whose findings comprise the third chapter. And for the third research question; which Gĩkũyũ cultural discourses are encoded within the themes of the selected films, I offer a summary of the fourth chapter. Further, the section shall offer conclusions drawn from these findings, and finally give recommendations for further research.

The key focus of this study has been the analysis of the selected comedies reveals that these films dwell less on encoding and more on construction of aural and visual evidence through which spectators can infer the intention of communicating cultural issues. Further, the study has widely applied Semiotics in the discussion of the use of filmic symbols, the role of languages and cultural discourses and themes that are weaved into and reflects the philosophy and cosmology of the Agĩkũyũ people. This study has revealed that artists are using Gĩkũyũ vernacular language in Gĩkũyũ comedy films, draw on Gĩkũyũ culture as a narrative resource, and use cinematographic tools to achieve communication about Gĩkũyũ culture in unprecedented scale. Below is the summary of the findings.

5.2 Summary of Findings

For ease of presenting the information, these findings are summarized in a triad sort of approach that draws the relationship between the comedy genre on one end, Gĩkũyũ cultural symbols on the second, and filmic language on the third end. In this triad, I wish to illustrate how my arguments are working across the inter-disciplinary web within which my research was carried out.

5.2.1 Genre, Narrative and Cultural Symbolism

Genre represents the first end of the summarized triad used here. The decision to focus on comedy genre has been helpful in this study in that the genre is regarded by scholars as being liberal, anarchic, and unconventional. It is not restricted by cinematic rigidities in the subjects it can address as its style makes it capable of parodying the society and by so doing mirror changes and subtleties occurring in the society with ease. The characters do not have to conform with conventions, they can parody, imitate, speak freely, move without inhibition, access forbidden subjects such as taboo issues and elucidate cultural subtleties, linguistic nuances, and social peculiarities. The comedy genre as a filmic style that can communicate social changes offers Gĩkũyũ filmmakers an effective channel to show the Gĩkũyũ traditional culture and the chaos resulting from contemporary modernization of the culture. The characters depicted in these comedies are in constant struggle trying to fit into new realities within marriage, religion, social interactions, communal authority, money economy, entrepreneurship, and law enforcement. The comedy genre has helped to depict major and subtle changes taking place among the Agĩkũyũ through narration, setting, costumes, properties, and lighting.

Narratology is made possible by the fact that Gĩkũyũ culture is traditionally oral, based on the community's cherish for the art of oral conversation. These conversations were and are still carried using simple narratives with a beginning, a climax, and an end. The plots of the selected comedies aptly fit in this simple narrative style, allowing characters to interact, exchange ideas and reveal cultural tones that feed into the corpus of cultural symbols being investigated in this study. Narration is also enabled and enhanced through setting, costumes, material objects symbolizing confluence of tradition and modernity, props, cinematographic codes, and written codes. A peek preview of the selected comedies shows that **Mũici na Kĩhĩ** and **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo** are victims of what Ayakoroma (2014, p.159) calls 'the parts or sequel syndrome.' The two comedies are structured in two-part series. He notes that this syndrome is borne out of the fact that 'soup opera' tradition thrives on suspense by instalments.

Setting of these comedies shows how the cultural changes have affected Gĩkũyũ traditional home. The grass-thatched huts have been replaced with iron sheet roofs and made of timber or bricks. The revered *nja* and *boi-ini* have been fused to form a new

nja (courtyards) where most scenes take place. Unlike in the traditional setting where *nja* is a preserve of womenfolk, the new *nja* is a new meeting point for both men and women. With this new usage of a common homestead space, many cultural conflicts have also ensued. At this courtyard, not only are important decisions are made, rumors conveyed, and conversations carried out, it is also used as change agent in that many cultural changes affecting characters happen here.

Costumes used in the diegesis of the comedies has helped to depict monumental changes in Gĩkũyũ culture in regard to clothing. Traditionally, there are special clothing for male and female gender. In the chaotic modernity depicted in these comedies, these clothing practices have dissipated, and, in its place, Western clothing style have been adopted by Agĩkũyũ people.

The choice of symbolic material objects has helped to reveal tinges of Gĩkũyũ traditional artefacts. They include *ndĩrĩ na mũũthĩ* (mortar and pestle), stool, *mũtirima* (walking stick), *mũkwa* (rope), *ngoi* (baby harness), *kĩondo* (traditional basket), *gĩtarũrũ* (winnowing tray), *ikũmbĩ*, *sufuria*, and *riiko* (hearth). These traditional properties show that despite widespread globalization, Agĩkũyũ people still cherish and apply their traditional knowledge in their day to day life. Some of these properties such as *kĩondo* have acquired iconic connotation and are associated with the Agĩkũyũ people. Some of these properties such as *ngoi* has been deployed as a symbol of changing gender roles. It is applied as an oppressing tool by Warigia in **Mũndũrũme ni Mũgambo**. *Kĩondo*, which is traditionally associated with women, represents their productivity. Its wide opening portrays a woman as an open minded individual. However, it is used at a time as a garbage trash men folk, particularly the likes of Kĩere and Wandahuhu who treat women like second class citizens. The three stones *riiko* (hearth) set-up is a ubiquitous Gĩkũyũ image. It typifies stability in Gĩkũyũ family set up with each stone representing three stakeholders in a family namely (father, mother, and children). In absence of one stone, such hearth is considered incomplete as is in the case of Wandahuhu and Wahĩto in **Kĩrĩro kĩa Mwana**. The couple separates after spending years without a blessing of a child.

There is deployment of modern props are used by several characters. They include; mobile phone, radio, stethoscope, bicycle, chief's uniform and swagger cane, motor vehicle, court hanger and tricycle. The use of modern props such as stethoscope in **Mūtikūnyarira** indicates that Gīkūyū are not passive people but have adopted the Western medicine. This have effectively suppressed their traditional herbal practice that is represented by the institution of *Mündū mūgo*. This institution has almost been obliterated from Gīkūyū individual and collective psyche. With disappearance the institution has vanished with rich cultural heritage and knowledge that is gained for hundreds of years. The deployment of radio shows that the prop is now widely accepted tool for disseminating information and has replaced traditional meetings where important information about the tribe were conveyed and relayed to community members. In **Mūici na Kīhū**, chief's uniform and swagger cane, as displayed by Chief Kanyūtū, express the transmutation of tribal authority. Unlike in the past where decisions were made collectively by council of elders, today such powers have been taken over by state institutions. The chief is a symbol of this transformation. He exercises his power courtesy of the state and his uniform symbolizes his authority to make decision within his area of jurisdiction. The swagger-cane appears to have substituted traditional *mūthegi* which is a symbol of authority. It is carried only by *mūthamaki* or the chair of the council of elders.

The filmmakers have also deployed and exploited cinematographic elements to tell their story. One of the elements that they have exploited is natural light. A textual reading of selected comedies establishes that producers prefer natural light, which here symbolizes simplicity of Agīkūyū people, and openness in their dealings. Whenever characters do any activities at night, darkness is used to represent opacity, evil, pessimism and negativity. Further, the selected comedies use camera work and editing codes. The analysis of the selected comedies confirms that syntagmatic and paradigmatic principles as postulated by Ferdinand de Saussure are quite applicable. The paradigmatic is the disposable, that which can stand on its own and can be interpreted on its own merit. The syntagmatic is the methodical, well-organised sequence of elements, that is, a linear thread that combines to make a whole. In words of Gīkūyū sage, paradigm and syntagm are *gīkwa na mūkūngūgū*, the warp and woof of a filmic text.

The syntagmatic elements manifest themselves through linear narration that is employed by virtually all comedies. The shots and scenes are closely related right from montage and introduction credits, through the rising and falling actions. These syntagmatic elements are bound together to form a whole filmic text. In total the study has evaluated six comedies. This is particularly reinforced by the fact that linear editing appears to be default editing method. On the other hand, paradigmatic elements appear to give cultural meaning imbued in the filmic text. These paradigmatic elements require proper contextualization if the real meaning of these elements is to be understood. These elements come in many forms such as certain props, settings, use of make-ups and camera angles help to situate a condition within a cultural set up. For instance, *mūtirima*, radio, stethoscope, costumes help to communicate about hidden changes that are occurring in the Gĩkũyũ society. They all help to point out inert, hidden meanings wherever they are being used.

Finally, as a strategy to enhance the filmic narratives, these comedies have used written codes to portray Gĩkũyũ language that is jostling for a place in the globalized world. Although the community is traditionally oral, the language has adopted orthography borrowed from Western alphabets. Expressions using the written codes is found to be defective in that prosodic markers ‘ũ’ and ‘ĩ’ are written as ‘u’ and ‘i’ interchangeably. This is evident in the way film makers write credits and captions. The study concludes that by failing to appreciate these linguistic nuances words used in the comedies end up bringing out inadvertent meanings.

5.2.2 The Role of Gĩkũyũ Language as a Reflector of Cultural Symbols

Cinema as a tool for expressing Gĩkũyũ cultural discourses and themes is gaining traction in contemporary Gĩkũyũ society, where it is replacing the oral tradition. The use of Gĩkũyũ language as medium of expression bequeaths to the audience a sense of cultural ownership, a pride of place by appealing to the sense of oral tradition already popular in the Gĩkũyũ community. Armes (2006) supports this view by admitting that even an illiterate (if limited) African public can follow that film dialogue in the native tongue easily. This is because the audience is endowed with what Bourdieu (1986) calls ‘cultural competence’ to understand the cultural symbols in the comedies.

These film productions use traditional homestead scenarios, characterized by the countryside, and obviously appeal to people who can relate to this new approach to cultural entertainment. As a cultural tool, film in this case is used to bring to life the old age orality culture and in the process exposing hitherto suppressed cultural symbols that permeate in the spoken word.

Film art, which relies on the spoken word, rhymes with Gīkūyū cultural ecology and social architecture where spoken word epitomize the soul and spirit of Gīkūyū existence. The Gīkūyū oral background has converged and found a nestling ground in expressive nature inherent in a film. Within a filmic diegetic space and through characters' introspection, reflection, and prospection the inert Gīkūyū cultural symbols have been resuscitated. Through these comedies, we encounter characters recreating their traditional lives uninhibited. Gīkūyū language thus serves to personify the rich cultural stock including its nuances, gradations, tinges, religion, imagery, proverbs, riddles, and cultural expressions. Arguably, then, film uses Gīkūyū language which carries numerous myths, religion and cultural symbols that eventually form comedies' architecture, aesthetics, and storylines. This has helped to unpack hidden shades and tinges suffused in Gīkūyū language through filmic lens.

Language is the second end of the three-forked triad which I use here to present the summary of this study's findings. Chandler's (2017) categories of codes and Fiske's semiotic model show the applicability of language in expressing Gīkūyū cultural symbols. According to Chandler, several typologies of codes can be found in the literature of semiotics. This study refers to those which are most commonly used in the setting of media, communication, and cultural studies. Chandler's (2017) strand of social codes: verbal language (phonological, syntactical, lexical, prosodic, and paralinguistic sub codes); bodily codes (bodily contact, proximity, physical orientation, appearance, facial expression, gaze, head nods, gestures and posture); and behavioural codes (protocols, rituals, role-playing, games), were used. Under language, the study has demonstrated that signs are used to signify cultural concepts and symbols such as symbolic words, naming, figurative language, and non-verbal codes.

The study observes that verbal codes show that Gĩkũyũ language conforms with the linguistic attributes propounded by linguistic scholars. Some of salient words that have been discussed include ‘*kĩhĩĩ*,’ *ngatha*, *nyagacũ* and *ngoma*. The use of these words shows social and cultural meanings whose interpretations is contextualized within Gĩkũyũ cultural setting. *Kĩhĩĩ* is the word that is used to refer to young and uninitiated boy. At the face value it means just that, but it carries deeper connotation. The word when used in paradigmatic manner may mean immaturity, irresponsibility, lack of cultural gravitas, a symbol of denial of certain cultural rites and as an expletive to disapprove unbecoming behaviour among members of society. On the other hand, the word is used as an identifier, a cultural marker that shows who belongs and who do not belong. The word is majorly used in **Mũici na Kĩhĩĩ** comedy where the main character, Wandahuhu, a *kĩhĩĩ*, is lampooned for having failed to get initiated. He faces the wrath of his wife who targets his ‘kĩhĩĩ-ness’ to intimidate and blackmail him. She reduces him to a moribund husband with reduced sphere of influence. The word *kĩhĩĩ* also feature in **Mũndũrũme ni Mũgambo** when Warigia she refers to her powerless husband as a *kĩhĩĩ*. She also equates any man who befriends her husband as a *kĩhĩĩ*. The word also features in **Mũtikũnyarira** when Kĩhenjo announces that he is looking for money to help his son Karũrũma undergo circumcision as per the community’s dictates. This shows that it is the desire of every Gĩkũyũ parent to have their boys circumcised when they become of age.

The words *ngatha* and *nyagacũ* are used in opposition to each other. *Ngatha* has been used as a sign of social purity, handwork, forbearance, virtuous wife and family stability. On the other hand, *Nyagacũ* has been used as sign and symbol of marital chaos, lack of social cohesion and all that typifies evil. The selected comedies portray Wanyũrũ (**Mũndũrũme ni Mũgambo**), Warigia (**Kĩrĩro kĩa Mwana**); Warũkũngũ (**Mũndũrũme ni Mũgambo**) as the real Gĩkũyũ *ngatha*. They are depicted as reasonable, caring, graceful and understanding characters. On the other hand, Warigia (**Mũndũrũme ni Mũgambo**), Nyakĩrata (**Mũici na Kĩhĩĩ**), Gathoroko (**Mũici na Kĩhĩĩ**), Veronike (**Kĩrĩro kĩa Mwana**), and Wakarĩndĩ (**Nganga Mbutu**) as personification of *nyagacũ*.

The word '*ngoma*' as used in **Mündürūme ni Mūgambo** shows that it has acquired negative connotation to mean devil or evil. In its traditional context, the word is used as a sign to represent the ancestors. The word is a symbol that represents cyclical life of Agĩkũyũ where life is comprised of the living, dead, and unborn. The trio were conjoined in the hip of cultural sense of being like Siamese twins. They could not be detached. They were one, like Christian Holy Trinity. Ironically, it is Christian doctrine that seems to have put a knife and severed this strong bond. This is done by assigning the word to mean 'Satan' or malevolent force that is naturally in opposition to God. As a result, the word is used as swearword, to express anger, to provoke and as a weapon in a verbal contest.

Naming is central concept to Gĩkũyũ cultural psyche. The community has penchant for naming children names that typify positive attributes. A case in point is Kĩhoto (justice) who happens to be a character in **Mũthuri nĩ Mĩtugo** comedy. However, the comedies bring to the fore a plethora of names that culturally represent negative attributes such as Wandahuhu (a glutton); Wathende (a person with big buttocks); Warigia (the one who comes last); Kanyũtũ (a diminutive name of a cheetah 'predator'); and Kĩmenyi (know it all). Another aspect of naming that comes up is the issue of using borrowed Christians and English names. This is attributed to the fact that traditional naming system has largely changed to adopt a dualistic approach. Many Gĩkũyũ people feel incomplete without an English name. Such name confers to an individual status an acceptability within Cultural/Christian norms. This helps to explain why such characters like Veronike and Agi in **Kĩrĩro Kia Mwana**; Nyakĩrata (Margaret) and Ebethi (Elizabeth) in **Mũici na Kihei** feature in the sampled comedies. It is also discernible that teknonymy is still practiced by Agĩkũyũ people. There are numerous instances where teknonymy is used in the selected comedies to show that the comedies are representing modern Gĩkũyũ people way of life.

Use of figurative language, specifically proverbs and idioms, is also prevalent in the diegesis of selected comedy. Proverbs and idioms appear to be an important linguistic tool that is employed by the characters in the comedies. The application of proverbs seems to have inert delimitations in that those who use the proverbs and idioms are adults and they derive them from cultural fountain that is fed directly from common

cultural reference that is gained as a result of long-time experience. It is conceivable why young characters in the selected comedies only use flat language leaving flowery language to their seniors. The use of proverbs and idioms therefore situate the study within the confines of Gĩkũyũ language beside highlighting her rich cultural milieu, linguistic creativity, and linguistic interoperability. For instance, five of six comedies derive their titles, plots, and story lines from a rich repertoire of Gĩkũyũ vernacular imagery, proverbs, idioms, and cultural and social expressions. **Mũici na Kĩhũ** by Wandahuhu, **Nganga Mbute** (a Gĩkũyũ idiom), **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo** (a proverb), **Mũthuri nĩ Mĩtugo** (a proverb), **Kĩrĩro kĩa Mwana** (Gĩkũyũ expression closely related to a Biblical text).

Non-verbal codes in form of proxemics, kinesics and gestures have also been used in the selected comedies. These codes contextualize social relations between the characters. These codes dictate socially allowable distances between individuals. Non-adherence of these spatial codes leads to undesired consequences as in the case of Machang’i and Kanyanya in **Mũthuri ni Mĩtugo**. The cosy relationship between Kĩhoto and Kanyanya makes them to conspire on how to deprive Machang’i’s family property. Verbal codes have also brought out gender roles regarding taking care of children. Ngoi has been used to portray the changing cultural landscape and how women are positioning themselves in response.

5.2.3 Filmic language as a Site for Cultural Discourses and Themes

The third and final aspect in the triad summary is filmic language (semiosis and thematic) as potential site for cultural discourses. Coincidentally this study draws a lot of similarity from Adeleke (2003, p.54) observations on Yoruba films which he termed as having common themes focusing on domestic issues, marital problems and family intrigues. The study observes that filmic representations draw a lot of inferences from societal cultures and socio-political realities, what is herein referred to as cultural discourses, in the form of cultural symbols and themes encrusted in linguistic system.

These include but are not limited to traditional knowledge, material culture and traditional cultural expressions such as dances, performances, religion, marriage, circumcision ceremonies, tribal authority, and social stratification. These enunciations

show that characters in these comedies are abreast with the cultural structures of the society and institutional lifestyles, and that they can interpret the codes and cultural symbols through their performances in the filmic texts under the study. This subsection summarizes how these are encoded within the filmic language, paying special consideration to the representations of rites of passage, religion, traditional knowledge, and cuisine.

Rites of passage are part of Gĩkũyũ community's cultural practices. They are so important that they give identity to individuals, open possibilities, allows individuals to copulate, to participate in communal decision making, to be a citizen, to achieve full recognition as man or woman. Without these rites, one easily oscillates from full communal membership to becoming despicable and recluse. The most critical rites of passage include initiation and marriage. All other rites are dependent of these two.

Circumcision as a cultural symbol and a theme is well mediated in **Mũici na Kĩhĩ** comedy. The symbolic and thematic concerns revolve around a story of Wandahuhu who remains uncircumcised for decades. This lack of accomplishing this rite of passage deprives him of his status as a full man, a husband, and makes him vulnerable to his wife Gathoroko. The comedy brings salient features and importance of circumcision among Agĩkũyũ people. We learn that failure to undergo the cut can open an assortment of problems, subjects an individual to cultural contempt and indifference. It is apparent that the practice has undergone changes in its use and administration. Unlike in the past, practise is highly individualised and is conducted at hospitals. Eons ago, traditional circumcisers conduct the practice, usually in the open fields next to a river. With death of communal circumcision ceremonies comes the death of age-set system. The system allowed such initiates to earn their stripes in an organised and systematic manner. They were aware of all progressive steps that a man is expected to pass through right from cradle to grave. There is warrior grade that prepared one for junior eldership (*Kamatimũ*), then eldership (*Kiama kĩa Mataathi*) and finally the highest and most prestigious eldership (*maturanguru*). The elders were categorical that *maturanguru* grade is almost becoming extinct due to decline of its priestly role. With the demise of Gĩkũyũ religion comes annihilation of *Maturanguru*. The import of this is, now power and social sanctions are exercise by bodies that are alien to Gĩkũyũ culture.

It is discernible that initiation allowed one to have a family. One is then expected to have children and by so doing facilitate the birth of children and perpetuity of lineage. Birth is the first rite of passage among the Agĩkũyũ. This is well verified by Gĩthendũ and Wahĩto in **Kĩrĩro kĩa Mwana**; Wandahuhu and Gathoroko in **Mũici na Kĩhũ** and Machang’i and Warigia in **Mũndũrũme ni Mũgambo**. Each of these couples featured in these comedies is raising a family. Marriage has been presented as an important cultural aspect. The characters identify with their families which are largely controlled and led by male characters. Deviation from this norm is regarded as a disgrace, an abomination and anathema. This explains the reason there is much hue and cry when Warigia in **Mũndũrũme ni Mũgambo** usurps powers from her rather friable husband, Machang’i. She goes against cultural marital edicts. Warigia is depicted as a pariah who has lost her sense of being. This prompts their eventual separation. Later she re-joins her husband only to find him with another woman Wanyũrũ. From their actions, speech, thoughts, and pronouncements these women are contented being Machang’i wives. This is in line with Gĩkũyũ old tradition that sectioned and supported the institution of polygamy. The study also observed that today, polygamy is more of exception than a norm among Gĩkũyũ families.

In **Mũndũrũme ni Mũgambo**, Machang’i weds Warigia in a church wedding while in Part II of the same comedy, he is about to wed Wanyũrũ in yet another church ceremony. Warigia interrupts these grand plans. It can be argued that the institution of traditional marriage is no longer intact owing to Westernisation, Christianity, and modernization. Other marriages that are depicted include that of Wandahuhu and Wahĩto on one hand and Wandahuhu and Gathoroko on the other. We also encounter single parenthood, a new form of family that is slowly gaining ground in Gĩkũyũ country. This is represented by Kanyanya in **Mũthuri nĩ Mĩtugo**. Elders participating in FGDs discussions agreed that a substantial number of women of marriageable age are never married but go ahead to have children. “We have a battalion of children brought up by their mothers without presence of a father.” noted one respondent. This is distorting the real meaning of a family. They expressed their fears of the rise of tomboys among the Agĩkũyũ cultural stock as a result of these developments.

Religion is yet another cultural symbol that features in several comedies. Christianity is mostly depicted in **Mündūrūme nī Mūgambo** and **Kīrīro Kia Mwana**. We encounter Machang’i wedding or planning to marry his wives through church wedding while Warigia in **Kīrīro Kia Mwana** prays vehemently and invokes the name of Jesus Christ as pleads to the heavens to bless with her own child. Several respondents claimed to be practising Christian faith and hence, they do not see the need to engage in cultural activities such as traditional observances and traditional practices. The study observes that prevalence of adoration of *Ngai* among the Agīkūyū people, the discernible influence by Christianity, has not only altered the traditional way of life but has also affecting lexicons of Gīkūyū such as name *Ngoma* whose original meaning has depreciated to acquire negative connotation.

On cultural symbols relating to traditional knowledge, the respondents revealed that many people have discarded cultural aspects and values, especially active production of material cultural artefacts such as pottery, woodwork and blacksmithing, Gīkūyū architecture, making of calabashes and accompanying products, traditional medicines, music instruments, Gīkūyū cuisine and ornaments. Most comedies make limited reference to Gīkūyū material culture. However, some material culture is evidently in use by several characters. They include *njūguma* (**Mūtīkūnyarira**); *mūtirima* (in all comedies); *gītārūrū* (**Mündūrūme ni Mūgambo**); *mūthege* in **Kīrīro kīa mwana** and *kīondo* (**Mündūrūme ni Mūgambo**). The use of these material culture helps to symbolize their significance and meaning within Gīkūyū cultural context. Despite the widespread globalization, some of these cultural artefacts or products are irreplaceable. The cultural meanings represented by these artefacts will be deficient or distorted if one to try to replace say a *kīondo* or *mūthege* within a given and acceptable cultural context. For instance, during marriage negotiations, women are expected to put their gifts in *kīondo* and not any other form of carrier bag. Gīkūyū Cultural artefacts are depicted in the selected comedies. Articles such as *Mūtirima* (a walking stick) features prominently in all comedies. Male characters carry this article whenever they move. This helps to symbolise their status and authority in Gīkūyū society. The same is true with *Mūthege*. This is a priceless cultural tool used by elders to indicate who is in charge during meetings. It has no equivalent in modern day practices. It acts like official mace. It gives legality of social and cultural deliberations. These cultural artefacts therefore act as

identifiers, they provide cultural boundaries that defines what constitutes Gĩkũyũ culture. They are icons and cultural symbols, the pride and epitome of individuality of the tribe.

Closely related to this is the practice of traditional medicine which is today virtually non-existent in many villages although the practice is mentioned in **Mũici na Kĩhĩ** and **Mũtikũnyarira**. Both Gĩthendũ and Kĩhenjo seems to have some knowledge of herbal medicine. Gĩthendũ advises Wandahuhu to take some herbal concoction to address his sexual dysfunction problems. On his part Kĩhenjo advises his friend to take some herbal products when he complained of stomach problems. It can be inferred that trees in Gĩkũyũ cultural set are not just natural occurring plants. Each tree has its own cultural or social significance. Some tree are symbols of health, healing, and wellness. The knowledge of potency and efficacy of their properties is what is referred to as traditional knowledge, this knowledge has been passed down from one generation to the next. However, this knowledge looks scanty, in the selected comedies. Characters who have this knowledge only appear in two out of six selected comedies. This is a pointer to the fact that this corpus of knowledge is in deep decline. Matters have been made worse by association of this practice with witchcraft. Several respondents agreed that there is no distinction between traditional medicine and witchcraft. Anyone one practicing this form of medicine is viewed as a necromancer or a witch. However, elders explained that there is a distinction between the two practices. This has prompted people to shun the practice altogether and the practice is misconstrued to mean any enterprise with malevolent intent and use. Witchcraft practice is depicted in **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo** when Warigia buys a love potion from a medicine man. The concoction affects not only her but her accomplices as well; Kĩhoto and his wife Warũkũngũ.

Among Agĩkũyũ people, authority is no longer exercised collegiately as is the case before the coming of White men. It is apparent that the modern law enforcement infrastructure has been instituted and holds sway. The institution of chief represented by Kanyũtũ and police force in **Mũici na Kĩhĩ**, **Mũtikũnyarira** and **Nganga Mbuta** indicates that power now is exercised by state institutions. Kĩhenjo is involved in a fist fight with a police officer, a serious crime in the land. This makes the government to unleash furry against his household. If this happened eons ago, the *Njama* would have

gone after Kīhenjo and present him before the *Kīama* to answer charges of contravening the customary law. In **Nganga Mbute**, we find Wakarĩndĩ committing murder, a capital offense under the *Penal Code Chapter 63* laws of Kenya. Kīhenjo talks of going to police to report his sister Wakarĩndĩ after she kills Mũkindũri, her biological daughter.

There is an interesting power play between male and female characters. The comedies seem to represent Gĩkũyũ cultural psyche which cannot be said to be strictly chauvinistic. This is because legends and epics present narrations of how women used to rule the land before they were dethroned. Indeed, Gĩkũyũ clans are purely based on nine daughters of Gĩkũyũ and Mũmbi, the founders of the tribe. This perhaps explains why Warigia got courage to intimidate her husband Machang’i with a reckless abandon. This is feminism at its best. Just like the time of legendary Iregi, Warigia’s feminism is short lived when Machang’i successfully turns tables against his erstwhile and troublesome wife. One thing is clear, male chauvinism features dominantly in all comedies. In **Mũndũrũme nĩ Mũgambo**, Kĩere is personification of a village tyrant. He rants and mistreats his wife just to prove a point that he is the man of the house. He indeed works against his wife best interests. He mistreats his wife by meting inhuman punishment and dehumanising treatment. The same can be said of Wandahuhu who demeans his wife Warigia, apparently for failing to bear him a child in **Kĩrĩro kĩa Mwana**. Wakarĩndĩ is motivated to kill her own daughter, Mũkindũri to please her man, Kĩmenyi. This is after Kĩmenyi informs her he cannot accommodate a child born out of a wedlock.

The cuisine and food of Gĩkũyũ carry with it social and cultural meanings. *Njahĩ* and *njũgũ* have been shown to have semiotic meaning. Njahi are semiotically used as symbol to represent nursing mothers. They are the source of bountifulness, progenitor of life. Njahĩ represent the growth, the development not only of a child being nursed but they ensure regeneration of a woman’s womb, the source of life, hope and future of the Gĩkũyũ people. The use of these special beans is depicted in **Kĩrĩro kĩa Mwana** when Veronike delivers a boy. Njũgũ on the other hand, are associated with initiates, those who are healing their tribal wounds. They represent the renewal of young men. They are like a mustard seed that is expected to sprout and give to the community the protection, leadership, and reassurance. These beans are mentioned at **Mũici na Kĩhĩ**.

This is after Wandahuhu feigns sickness but discreetly undergoes circumcision. Githendũ convinces Gathoroko to ensure that she prepares *njũgũ* as a way of ensuring Wandahuhu's quick recovery from allegedly upper respiratory ailment.

Goat and sheep are yet another type of food that has important meaning in Gĩkũyũ cultural set up. The practice of keeping these animals abound in the diegesis of selected comedies. Some of the characters who own these animals include Kĩere in **Mũndũrũme ni Mũgambo** and Wandahuhu in **Mũici na Kĩhũ**. It appears that the practice of keeping sheep and goat is beyond livestock farming. Through these animals hide, veins, blood, horns, and internal organs, the Agĩkũyũ find and assign meanings. They are signs of continuity. They act like cultural currency. They serve as a thread that is used to sew and give social and cultural meaning to virtually all cultural activities. The rites of passage, social functions and engagement are always consummated through blood of either of these animals. The shedding of their blood signifies reunion of two individuals, atonement of sins, breakage of curses, establishment of covenants and securing of future.

In agreement with Phelps (1990, p.337) observation, the study concludes that there are some aspects of the African ancestors that seem to correlate with the Christian doctrine of 'Communion of Saints' in which the living and dead maintain spiritual unity before God. This compares favorably with Gĩkũyũ tradition of venerating their *ngoma* where it was believed that there was intricate and unbreakable relationship between the living and the dead, a concept that is still cherished by Christian today. The study makes inferences in that missionaries attempt to obfuscate and deride Gĩkũyũ *ngoma* was made in bad faith. It is illogical to learn that the missionaries venerating and adoring of 'dead saints' while at the same time going as far as demonizing Gĩkũyũ's *ngoma* as belonging to malevolent force. There is need to demystify and debunk this distortion which have existed for a close of a century now.

5.3 Conclusions

Following the empirical data of this study both from the textual reading, observation, and responses from the field, it is evident that Gĩkũyũ vernacular comedies exploit

filmic symbols to represent Gĩkũyũ cultural quintessence, paradigms, nuances, and epithets. In the past, the Agĩkũyũ people expressed their culture through open performances, cultural observances, material culture and highly developed use of oral expressions. The study observed that film, as expressive platform, has been used to express Gĩkũyũ cultural paradigms. The sampled comedy films have deployed Gĩkũyũ vernacular imbued with cultural expressive elements, whether expressed verbally as in case of stories, epics, legends, poetry, riddles, or through other narrative forms: words, signs, names, expressions by movement, including dances, plays, rituals or other performances.

The Gĩkũyũ films' cultural elements and cultural performances attest to the fact that the local film industry exercises a deep influence on the history, cultural values and the nation's destiny as well as the national life presenting a positive image on African culture and films; as the filmmakers inculcate cultural elements in their films making both African and foreign audience who truly know less about Africa, perceive African culture along those lines.

The study concludes that Gĩkũyũ filmmakers have adopted cinema as a tool for telling their stories in their own language. This fits well with Gĩkũyũ cultural context which traditionally has been oral. By using orality and the use of filmic elements such as characterisation, *mise-en-scène*, editing, lighting salient cultural symbols infused in Gĩkũyũ vernacular come to the fore. These symbols that are fused in film diegesis include but not limited to idiomatic expressions, proverbs, use of songs and cultural practices. These practices include marriage, circumcision, exercise of authority, cuisine, relevance of livestock among others. Through this, the factors encumbering this endeavour were identified.

The study has shown that no language is inferior and that despite its context or location an indigenous language serves similar role as any language once used in cinematic language. Gĩkũyũ language has been used in sampled comedies for educative, informative and entertainment.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations have been formulated for the attention of the Gĩkũyũ film industry, film institutions, scholars, and all interested bodies concerned with understanding, developing, and improving vernacular films in Kenya and beyond. Here I offer two categories of recommendations; for cultural development and promotion, and recommendations for further research.

5.4.1 Recommendations for Cultural Development and Promotion

1. Filmmakers should search for phenomenal values and themes based on cultural beliefs, expressions, moral values, historical and cultural event, to tell Kenyan stories and thus promote traditional and cultural knowledge systems.
2. Filmmakers should consider making use of authentic cultures and achieving high artistic standards through training and capital injection to carve a niche for cultural films on the national, regional and global scene. This shall contribute to the projection of African culture and its elevation to a new plane where it will be celebrated, used to enhance community pride and dignity of African cultural ambience.
3. To sustain the documentation function that is being achieved through these comedies, it will be paramount to carry out extensive research to obtain reliable information from resource persons knowledgeable in the customs and traditions, histories, and indigenous settings where culture remain less adulterated. Filmmakers should thus seek for reliable information on Gĩkũyũ cultural elements from traditional elders and people who are well versed with the customs and traditions, histories, and indigenous settings to enrich their future productions.
4. Gĩkũyũ films alongside other African cinema, in the service of cultural nationalism, must be seen and used as a revolutionary weapon fashioned “to provide concepts cultural discourses, setting cultural agenda and themes capable of engaging radical change which will help Africans define their own culture, based on their heritage and history.

5.4.2 Recommendations for Further Research

To extend the understanding of cultural transmission through cinema in Kenya, this study suggests that further research is possible in the task of identifying, mapping, documenting, and creating a native languages film register. The possible off-shoots of such a research include:

- i) Ways of improving culturally-based films in Kenya.
- ii) Researching on the use of Gĩkũyũ cultural values as basis for cultural films research in Kenya.
- iii) The economic contribution of Riverwood to the Kenyan economy. How many films are produced annually? Which genre constitute Riverwood films? What are their distribution networks? Such a study will be used as a tool to influence decision makers to reposition the sector within the realm of government economic planning and related priorities.
- iv) Presence of foreign cultural elements incorporated in Gĩkũyũ films.
- v) Formal filmic elements as possible distortions of Gĩkũyũ culture.

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LEGAL INSTRUMENTS AND STATUTES

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APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT GUIDE

What you should know about study

Introduction

My name is Stanley Mbugua Njoroge a PhD student at Kenyatta University pursuing the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Film Studies). We are carrying out a study on, *Cinema as Cultural Discourse: A Study of Cultural Symbols in Selected Contemporary Gĩkũyũ Language Comedies*. I am kindly asking you to participate in this study by answering the *following questions*/filling in provided questionnaire.

Purpose of the study

This study will add value to the field of film, culture, and related areas of study like linguistics, communications, and intellectual property at a theoretical as well as a methodological level. The study is expected to produce suggestions for policy regarding locally produced Gĩkũyũ language films and comedies. The 2010 Constitution does recognize a bundle of rights that in my view are necessary for the welfare of film artistes in Kenya. To start with Article 11(1), of the Constitution recognizes culture as the foundation of the nation and as the cumulative civilization of the Kenyan people and nation. Therefore, it mandates the state to promote all forms of national and cultural expression through literature, the arts, traditional celebrations, science, communication, information, mass media, publications, libraries, and other cultural heritage; It also recognizes the role of science and indigenous technologies in the development of the nation; and promotion of the intellectual property rights of the people of Kenya. Parliament is also mandated to enact a law to ensure that communities receive compensation or royalties for the use of their cultures and cultural heritage.

Procedures and duration

Altogether, a total of 41 participants will be purposefully targeted with the intention to successfully conduct this study over a period of three (3) months. If you decide to participate you will be interviewed at an appropriate time and at your own convenience. It is expected that this will take about 2 hours and, subsequently, should there be further need, a follow-up-up interview of a shorter duration may be pursued with your express

consent. Principally, the interviews will take the form of an informal discussion where the interviewer will pose questions and follow-up on same if necessary while the conversation will be simultaneously recorded for further transcription and analysis.

Risks and discomforts

It is envisaged that the interview/ discussion may require that reference to some written materials be made and all effort will be made to advise you of possible items of relevance in advance for ease of reference and possible cross checking. Indeed, convenient times to your busy schedule will be arranged with your express consent.

Benefits and/or compensation

There are indirect benefits in responding to study questions. The results of your responses will benefit to inform film discourses in Kenya. It will also provide critical data to the policy and decision makers. There are no personal gains like tokens or incentives.

Confidentiality

The participants may be pleased to note that the highest standards of confidentiality will be maintained throughout the study and any information obtained through the study can be identified with the participant will not be disclosed to any other party without the express permission of the participant concerned. Names and any other identification solicited by the researcher during the one-on-one in-depth interviews will be retained solely for the researcher's ease of reference and not for unauthorized publication.

Voluntary participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. If a participant decides not to participate in this study, his or her decision will not affect their future relationship with researcher, participant's organization, or other authority. If they chose to participate, they are free to withdraw their consent and to discontinue participation without penalty.

APPENDIX B: FILMS OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

Research Question/Chapter	Subject	Key Elements to observe/Sub heads	Observations
CHPATER TWO	Film Symbols in Gīkūyū language comedies	Filmic conventions	
		Application of Symbolic codes	
		Application of Technical codes	
		Application of Written codes	
CHAPTER FOUR What is the role of native language within contemporary Gīkūyū Comedies in expressing the Gīkūyū culture?	Gīkūyū language & Culture	Language symbolism	
		Phatic function of Gīkūyū language	
		Verbal Codes	
		Application of proverbs, humour, idiomatic expressions.	
		Application on non-verbal codes, proxemics, and kinesics.	
CHAPTER FIVE Which Gīkūyū cultural discourses and themes are mediated in the selected films?	Gīkūyū Cultural discourse and themes	Coding of cultural discourse	
		Cultural discourse and Gender.	
		Cultural and social identities; rites of passage	
		Culinary discourses.	
		Religious theme and cultural discourses.	
		Local administration theme and concept of justice.	

Section 1: Identification of filmic symbols in the selected comedies.

1. How does the filmic symbols deployed in selected comedies expedite Gīkūyū cultural paradigms?
2. Which filmic symbols are deployed in the selected comedies?
3. Which filmic codes can be discerned from diegesis of the films?
4. Does the use of textual codes yield important data on the selected films?
5. What type of narration is used in these comedies?
6. What technologically mediated signs can be discerned in these comedies?

Section 2: The usage and the role of Gīkūyū language

1. What is the role of Gīkūyū language comedies in expressing the Gīkūyū culture?
2. Do the characters talk like Agīkūyū in the comedies?
3. Can you identify instances when humour is used to tell the story?
4. List any scene of the use of Gīkūyū proverb
5. List any scene of wise sayings or idioms.
6. How is the naming system being deployed in the films?
7. How are social codes (verbal and nonverbal language, bodily, commodity, behavioural) being utilized in the comedies?
8. Identify instances of salience, nodding of head, etc. and what for?
9. Note whether the proverbs and wise sayings are expressed gently or in a veiled way?
10. Are the uses of songs observed? If any do, they reflect the instances they are been used?

Section 3: Investigating cultural discourses and themes

1. Which Gīkūyū cultural discourses and themes are mediated in the selected films?
2. What are cultural discourses that dominate selected films?
3. How do powerful groups control public cultural discourse and how do they reflect social inequalities?
4. What do the following come out as film thematic concerns (circumcision, marriage, gender relations, cultural cuisine, religion, money, greed etc.)?
5. What are discursive practices employed in the film and how do they contribute to social change?
6. What kind of cultural images do the film construct about Gīkūyū community?

APPENDIX C: QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for agreeing to this meeting. This interview forms part of my research into the use of cultural symbols in selected contemporary Gĩkũyũ language comedies. The purpose of this interview is to obtain your views on several aspects related to the use of cultural symbols, in these comedies.

1. Do characters talk like Gĩkũyũ in these films? Yes No
2. What language(s) is or are used in these films?
3. Do they make use of proverbs? Yes, No A. If yes, are they the right proverbs?
 - B. Are the proverbs used in their proper context?
 - C. How is humour employed?
 - D Do they use verbal and non-verbal cues?
4. Is the figurative language expressed gently or in a veiled way?

-
5. Do these Gĩkũyũ films make use of hidden Language? Yes No
 6. Do you find any other foreign intrusions in Gĩkũyũ films? Yes No
 7. What unethical languages do you find in these films?

-
8. What unethical scenes do you find in these films?

-
9. Are the uses of traditional songs observed? Yes No
 10. If any do, they reflect the instances they are been used?

-
11. Tick Gĩkũyũ Moral Values or Conducts regarding the following which deviates from Gĩkũyũ ones should be noted and described as depicted in the films
Dressing setting music relationship Partying marriage
cheating Fraud dishonesty dinning Service generosity truth
compassion faithfulness fruitfulness love dignity diligence

**APPENDIX D: INFORMATION FOR FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS
(GĪKŪYŪ ELDERS)**

Dear elder

You are invited to attend a Focus Group Interview with a few of your local elders on.....2017. We are asking you to participate because of your rich knowledge in Gĭkŭyŭ cultural expressions and I would greatly value your opinions and recommendations at this focused group.

I look forward very much to meeting with you.

Sincerely,

Stanley Mbugua Njoroge-PhD Candidate, Kenyatta University

Questions

1. Are you aware of any Gĭkŭyŭ films/comedies in the market today?
2. Can you name some of the cultural attributes covered in the comedies you have watched?
3. Do you find any connection between Gĭkŭyŭ culture and activities depicted in these Gĭkŭyŭ comedies?
4. What are some of cultural symbols that you can pick from the comedy you have watched?
5. Other than cultural symbols, which other element(s) do you think attract(s) more value in these comedies, commercially or otherwise, in your community? (Please explain)

APPENDIX E: PHD PROVISIONAL REGISTRATION



KENYATTA UNIVERSITY OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR (ACADEMIC)

P. O. Box 43844,
NAIROBI, Kenya.
Tel. 8710901/811622
Email: admission@ku.ac.ke.

Our Ref. M88/29307/2014

DATE: 26th January, 2015

Njoroge Stanley Mbugua
P.O. Box 10475 - 00200
NAIROBI
Student's Mobile No. 0721489665

Dear Njoroge,

RE: **ADMISSION TO DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY - PhD COURSE
(PROVISIONAL) - 2014/2015 ACADEMIC YEAR**

Following your application for admission to Kenyatta University to undertake a **Doctor of Philosophy (Theatre Arts & Film Technology)** degree course, I am pleased to inform you that your admission for the **Doctor of Philosophy** in the **School of Visual & Performing Arts** has been approved.

Your admission number is **M88/29307/2014**.

This offer is made on the basis of the statement of your qualifications as indicated by you in your application form. It is subject to satisfactory verification of those qualifications by the University authorities.

The degree course will be offered by thesis in the **Department of Theatre Arts & Film Technology**. The duration of the degree programme is **three (3) years**. In special circumstances acceptable to the University, a **one (1) year** extension may be granted.

Your registration will be effective from **5th January, 2015** subject to payment of fees and will be governed by the common regulations for Ph.D. degrees in all the Schools. You should therefore ensure that you are familiar with these regulations. However this registration is provisional until you develop a proposal and register with Graduate School within **eight (8) months** after which you will be given a substantive registration. The study programme will run as per the schedule in the enclosed document (**KU/10**).

Also enclosed are detailed joining instructions **KU/2, KU/3A, KU/4, KU/6 and KU/7** which you should complete and return to the Registrar (Academic).

APPENDIX F: SUBSTANTIVE PHD REGISTRATION



**KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR (ACADEMIC)
P.O. BOX 43844 – 00100 NAIROBI
TEL: 8703222/23
Email: admissions-pg@ku.ac.ke**

=====

Our Ref: M88/29307/2014

Date: 30th June, 2016

Njoroge Stanley Mbugua
P.O. BOX 10475-00200
NAIROBI

Dear Mr. Mbugua,

RE: SUBSTANTIVE REGISTRATION (Ph.D)

Following the recommendation by the Dean, Graduate School, you are hereby granted substantive Ph.D. registration.

Please note that your registration number and all rules and regulations remain the same as per your admission letter.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J.I.O. Michoki', is written over a blue circular stamp.

**J.I.O. MICHOKI
FOR: REGISTRAR (ACADEMIC)**

CC Dean School of Virtual & Performing Arts
Dean, Graduate School
Chairman, Dept. of Film & Theatre Arts

JIOM/lcm

**APPENDIX G: ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE AUTHORIZATION
LETTER**



**KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE**

Fax: 8711242/8711575
Email: kuerc.chairman@ku.ac.ke
kuerc.secretary@ku.ac.ke
secretariat.kuerc@ku.ac.ke
Website: www.ku.ac.ke

P. O. Box 43844,
Nairobi, 00100

Tel: 8710901/12

Our Ref: KU/ERC/APPROVAL/VOL.1 (112)

Date: 23rd October, 2017

Stanley Mbugua Njoroge
Kenyatta University
P.O. Box 43844-0100
NAIROBI.

Dear Stanley,

APPLICATION NUMBER PKU/705/I776 "CINEMA AS CULTURAL DISCOURSE: A STUDY OF CULTURAL SYMBOLS IN SELECTED CONTEMPORARY GIKUYU DIALECT COMEDIES"

1. IDENTIFICATION OF PROTOCOL

The application before the Committee is with a research topic Application Number **PKU/705/I776** "Cinema as Cultural Discourse: A Study of Cultural Symbols in Selected Contemporary Gikuyu Dialect Comedies." received on 24th July 2017 and discussed on 29th August 2017.

2. APPLICANT

Stanley Mbugua Njoroge

3. SITE

Kenya

4. DECISION

The Committee has considered the research protocol in accordance with the Kenyatta University Research Policy (Section 7.2.1.3) and the Kenyatta University Review Committee Guidelines **AND APPROVED** that the research may proceed for a period of **ONE year from 23rd October 2017.**

ADVICE/CONDITIONS

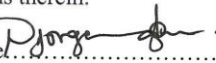
- i. Progress reports are submitted to the KU-ERC every six months and a full report is submitted at the end of the study.
- ii. Serious and unexpected adverse events related to the conduct of the study are reported to this committee immediately they occur.
- iii. Notify the Kenyatta University Ethics Committee of any amendments to the protocol.
- iv. Submit an electronic copy of the protocol to KUERC.

**When replying, kindly quote the application number above.
If you accept the decision reached and advice and conditions given please sign in the space
Provided below and return to KU-ERC a copy of the letter.**

DR. TITUS KAHIGA
CHAIRMAN ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE



I STANLEY MBUGUA NJORGE accept the advice given and will fulfill the conditions therein.

Signature  Dated this day of... 04/12/20172017.

C.c. DVC Research Innovation and Outreach

Appendix H: KENYATTA UNIVERSITY LETTER TO NACOSTI



KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

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

Website: www.ku.ac.ke

OUR REF: M88/29307/14

P.O. Box 43844, 00100
NAIROBI, KENYA
Tel. 8710901 Ext. 57530

Date: 30th May, 2016

The Director General,
National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation
P.O. Box 30623-00100
NAIROBI

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION FOR MR. STANLEY M. NJOROGE REG. NO. M88/29307/14

I write to introduce **Mr. Njoroge** who is a Postgraduate Student of this University. He is registered for Ph.D. Degree programme in the **Department of Film & Theatre Arts in the School of Creative Arts, Film & Media Studies**.

Mr. Njoroge intends to conduct research for a Ph.D. thesis entitled, "**Cinema as Cultural Discourse: A Study of Cultural Symbols in Selected Contemporary Gikuyu Dialect Comedies**".

Any assistance given will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Lucy N. MBAABU', written over a blue circular stamp.

MRS. LUCY N. MBAABU
FOR: DEAN, GRADUATE SCHOOL

RM/cao

APPENDIX I: NACOSTI AUTHORIZATION LETTER



NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

Telephone: +254-20-2213471,
2241349, 3310571, 2219420
Fax: +254-20-318245, 318249
Email: dg@nacosti.go.ke
Website: www.nacosti.go.ke
When replying please quote

9th Floor, Utalii House
Uhuru Highway
P.O. Box 30623-00100
NAIROBI-KENYA

Ref. No. **NACOSTI/P/17/74052/17634**

Date: **3rd July, 2017**

Stanley Mbugua Njoroge
Kenyatta University
P.O. Box 43844-00100
NAIROBI.

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to carry out research on "*Cinema as cultural discourse: A study of cultural symbols in selected contemporary Gĩkũyũ dialect comedies,*" I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in **Kiambu, Murang'a, Nairobi, Nyandarua and Nyeri Counties** for the period ending **19th June, 2018.**

You are advised to report to **the County Commissioners and the County Directors of Education of the selected Counties** 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.


GODFREY P. KALERWA MSc., MBA, MKIM
FOR: DIRECTOR-GENERAL/CEO

Copy to:

The County Commissioners
Selected Counties.

The County Directors of Education
Selected Counties.

National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation is ISO9001:2008 Certified

APPENDIX J: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION PERMIT

CONDITIONS

1. The License is valid for the proposed research, research site specified period.
2. Both the Licence and any rights thereunder are non-transferable.
3. Upon request of the Commission, the Licensee shall submit a progress report.
4. The Licensee shall report to the County Director of Education and County Governor in the area of research before commencement of the research.
5. Excavation, filming and collection of specimens are subject to further permissions from relevant Government agencies.
6. This Licence does not give authority to transfer research materials.
7. The Licensee shall submit two (2) hard copies and upload a soft copy of their final report.
8. The Commission reserves the right to modify the conditions of this Licence including its cancellation without prior notice.



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RESEARCH CLEARANCE
PERMIT

Serial No.A 14549

CONDITIONS: see back page