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TRANSFORMATION OF MASCULINITIES AMONG THE AGIKUYU OF MATHIRA, NYERI COUNTY, KENYA; 1952-2014

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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work, and to the best of my knowledge has not been presented for a degree in any other university or institution of higher learning.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my parents who soldiered with me throughout my academic journey to make it a success.

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To complete this work, it took efforts and self-sacrifice of several individuals who due to practical reasons I cannot individually acknowledge one by one. However, I must admit that their generous contributions and advice immensely impacted in a positive way to the success of this work.

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OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Classificatory fathers- Male individuals among Agikuyu who acted as father figures for sons in absence of their biological fathers**.**

Matriarchy- Systems where the mothers are not necessarily the heads of their community but they have subtle power in various activities like shaping masculinities.

Masculinity- These are socially constructed features associated with men

Patriarchy - A system of social-political organization that concentrates power in the hands of men

Gender-Refers to socially ascribed traits that are used to differentiate between men and women. Such has to do with one's participation in the public sphere, authority in the family and ability and capacity to lead and make decisions.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AAWORD- Association of African Women for Research and Development

BBC- British Broadcasting Corporation

FAWE-Forum for African Women Educationists

FHH- Female Headed Household

FGD- Focus Group Discussions

FGM- Female Genital Mutilation

FIDA-Federation of Women Lawyers

KANU- Kenya African National Union

KAU- Kenya African Union

K.I.I- Key Informant Interviews

MAWE- Massachusetts Association for Women in Education

MyWO- Maendeleo ya Wanawake

O.I- Oral Interviews

SAPs- Structural Adjustment Programs

STEM- Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

UN- United Nations

ABSTRACT

The study aimed at examining transformations in masculinities in Mathira, Nyeri County in the period 1952-2014. The main objectives of the study were to explore how the *Mau Mau* war affected masculinities, analyse how masculinities in Mathira, Nyeri County were affected during the period when Kenya was fighting for her independence, and assess the trends in masculinities among the Agikuyu ethnic group within Mathira in the County of Nyeri. The study employed two theories; the functionalist theory and masculinity theory. Qualitative research design was employed in this study. The target population was both women and men above the age of 18 years. The population sample was selected using random and purposive sampling techniques. The study findings revealed that traditionally men in Mathira, Nyeri County were very authoritative and vocal in the public sphere. This explains why they were able to participate in the *Mau Mau* liberation in large percentages than from other areas within the central Kenya region. The findings further indicated that the *Mau Mau* war had a negative effect on the masculinity aspects in Mathira, Nyeri County. The *Mau Mau* operated as a guerrilla movement largely in the forests. However, upon returning from forests, the members of the movement found their positions in their families and within the public sphere had been taken up by women, leading to an increase in the number of Female-Headed Households (FHH) within Mathira, Nyeri County. The conditions after independence further reduced the masculinity of these men due to lack of compensation for their lost land, alcoholism, corruption, and heightened women empowerment campaigns. The shift in masculinities for some men was affirmed during the coffee boom in the 1970s as the coffee benefits increased and the acquisition of title deeds intensified. This research established that masculinities within Mathira in Nyeri County have undergone various changes since the *Mau Mau* era to date. With men feeling that their roles as heads of families was under threat, many turned to beer drinking as they tried to come to terms with reality. The study is significant because not only will it help understand the shifting socio-cultural dynamics of gender in Kenya, but will also enable policy makers adopt a more gender-responsive outlook when developing policies. The study concluded that aspects of weak masculinities such as irresponsibility of fathers have been witnessed in Mathira, Nyeri. From the study, it was recommended that there is need to sensitize both men and women on the need of cooperating in parenting roles in order to construct firm masculinities. Additionally, men as well should be engaged in gender empowerment campaigns for inclusivity.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Globally, there has been a rapid growth of studies on men and masculinity. Attempts to interrogate the changing dynamics of masculinities in Africa have however been minimal. From a global perspective, researchers such as R.W. Connell, researching on masculinity have defined masculinity in various ways in the 20th century (Connel, 2005). To begin with Connel (2005) notes that masculinity is a set of behaviours and traits that are socially desirable in men. It is measured through the concept of hegemonic masculinity, which argues that there are men who dominate without the use of coercion in society. The aspects of hegemonic masculinity as Connel points out include assertiveness, aggression, physical strength, and dominance. However, the concept of hegemonic masculinity has been criticized since the constructions of masculinity vary globally. In the United States of America, masculinities contributed to male exploits in the field of military, science, and literature (Mbataru, 2014). Traits like independence, assertiveness, honour, courage, bravery, self-confidence, and perseverance define a man. The construction of masculinity is changing, and in America, being masculine depends on class, ethnicity, age, race, and region (Goffman, 1963).

The construction of masculinity in Africa is society specific. Masculinity is what a society may accept as features that are associated with male gender and expression of maleness (Uchendu, 2008). Those practices and ways of being serve to validate a masculine subject in the context of maleness, boy, or man.

Among the Shona of Zimbabwe, pre-colonial masculinity was determined by the ability to 'perform', actually to manifest verbal skills (Shire, 1994). A young boy who could perform by speaking convincingly and winning arguments was considered a man while an older man who lacked the verbal skills was considered a child and was left out in male gatherings. However, colonialism changed all these aspects. The colonial masters made the Shona men internalize masculinity intended to transform and place them in a subordinate position in relation to the colonial officers. In this regard, colonialism introduced masculinity cantered on the weapons notion (Shire, 1994).

The rule eroded the base of Shona masculinities leading to individual males to construct new identities that revolved around foreign ideas that promoted martial qualities. The new masculinities became a basis for determining a real man. Shire further notes that the colonial wage labour affected confused masculinities among the Shona youths. The youth migrated to towns to look for jobs. This way, they disengaged from the elders and the influence they asserted. In towns, they acquired new male images and traits predominant in the cities, and these differed with those in rural areas. Being colonial subjects, Shona men lacked autonomy over the type of work they did. The women left behind became the heads of their families. Thus, the authority of man in the familial context lost potency. This led to gender conflict and in the end medley masculinities fashioned from many conflicting models that submerged the original masculinities.

In Congo among the Lele men, polyandry was the norm where 10-12 men were attached to one woman. They expressed their masculinity through service to their parent-in-laws and the wife’s community. However, colonialism has changed this traditional

matriarchal society to Christian patriarchal tendencies since Christianity, as taught by missionaries, upheld monogamy (Uchendu, 2014).

In Africa, with the modern economy permitting women greater freedom, having a provider husband and a protective father is not a necessity (Mbataru, 2014). Traits that defined men, such as bravery, no longer count much (Ouzgane and Morrel, 2005). For example, in Zambia women are moving beyond confines of female gendered space that entail household chores and limited to the domestic sphere. This is viewed as a threat to men due to the rise of the Female-Headed Household. Women belittle men when they do not have money and are unable to provide for their family.

In the Kenyan context, researchers, such as Omondi (2009) note that a rooster is a symbol of masculinity among the Luo of Kenya. Thus, when a new homestead is started, a man is given a rooster by his father. When he dies, and he is buried, a rooster is taken and eaten by the relatives, marking the end of the homestead. Other factors that defined a man in the Luo community are the number of wives and children the man has (Tamale (2011). However, this is changing gradually and issues to do with class and the education level of a man are becoming determinants in masculinity. The society considers the most educated and well-established persons as respectable and masculine. On the other hand, the society considers unmarried men as boys and even their burial ceremonies differ from those who are married.

Among the Agikuyu in the pre-colonial era, *irua* (circumcision) indicated a rite of passage from a boy to a man. The Agikuyu carried out the rite along a river or the forest

without the use of any anaesthesia. This rite tested the bravery of the boys while also preparing them to deal with public and political affairs. Through circumcision, young adult males had higher ranks than the senior women did, even those in the council of women (Muriuki, 1974). Boys were raised to perform masculine work such as taking care of animals and became warriors to defend or protect the community.

Young initiates, therefore, were socialized to be providers and to provide security for their families (Muriuki, 1974). During the colonial era colonialists who referred to men as boys while providing labour for the colonialists psychologically reduced men into boys for example they worked as houseboys or *shamba* boys. In the 21st century, the construction of masculinity among the Agikuyu is dynamic due to factors such as class, race, religion, and education. Contemporary, initiation of boys into adulthood is mostly carried out in the churches and hospitals where anaesthesia is used contrary to the Agikuyu traditions. Accordingly, independence redefined manhood among the Agikuyu due to factors such modernization. During the post-colonial era, manhood is defined in various ways including a person's level of education.

Discussing Nyeri County, Ndiritu Njoka, the chairperson of *Maendeleo Ya Wanaume*; a Swahili phrase for men's development, pointed out that Nyeri men are facing masculinity the crisis with some receiving beatings from their wives. He urged Nyeri men to boycott meals cooked by their wives to meet in public places and discuss their problems (BBC Network Africa February 2012). Accordingly, Kimani (2014) observes that the construction of masculinities among the Agikuyu changed because of colonialism. She

looks at masculinities mainly from the circumcision point of view in the County of Kiambu.

It is paramount to note that one cannot discuss the trends in masculinities in Africa without looking at the role of women in it. Many of the African communities were patriarchal in nature, but a few were matriarchal. Uru (2013) is of the view that women controlled a variety of people in traditional African societies. They asserted their power, and maintained their authority in spite of the difficulty posed by patriarchal systems that minimizes the role of women. In matriarchal societies, children traced their lineage from the mothers' side and therefore, children belonged to their mothers. In addition, the mothers' domination echoed within their family and at the state level (Uru, 2013).

In matriarchal societies, women were heads of their families and possession rights were traced through mothers. As such, mothers were influential in the upbringing of their children. Amadiume (1997) notes that in such a set up relationships between mother and son was the only relationship between persons that was free of all external constraints, including those that identify a person to person by their descendants.

It is important to note that given the patriarchal nature of most African communities women were caregivers. Many are the times that patriarchy is blamed on colonialism forgetting of the African patriots who put women in subordinate positions (Mama, 1996). The sole role of women was to take care of children while the men were breadwinners. As such, the mothers did play a key role in shaping the manhood of the boys until they were ripe to accompany their fathers to the fields. Regardless of who the sons became,

mothers had and still have a privileged relationship with their sons (Dimandja, 2004). Lamphere et al. (2012) note that the confinement of mothers in homemade them develop an environment that could cater for the family needs in terms of food. This was because men alone could not be able to fend for the family from hunting. This aspect made mothers, not only caregivers, but also made them powerful family providers. By so doing, women gained powerful economic value within the patriarchal richness.

It is noted that according to Agikuyu myths, matriarchy played a role in shaping identity among the Agikuyu and that men rose over women when they realized that the women's rule was brutal to them (Wanyoike, 2002). They therefore made the women leaders pregnant, thus making them weak. However, to date Agikuyu clan names are matriarchal in nature. Among the Agikuyu the child identifies with the mother. For example, the children belong to the mother and in cases of separation or divorce; the children go with the mother. A man is identified as a son not only to the individual person, but also of the clan of his mother's name. For instance, some males are happy to be referred as the son of Wambui while others feel inferior when referred to by their mothers name (Adhunga, 2014). This implies that the mothers have a great role to play in the upbringing of a man in such societies. However, scholarly literature on matriarchy in construction of masculinity among the Agikuyu of Mathira has received little attention. Several scholars such as Saleeba (2010), Shire (1994), and Kimani (2014) among others have examined masculinities from the perspective of circumcision yet this is not the only determinant of manhood. The place of a mother in modelling masculinity is a significant aspect, and

this is what the current study interrogated. This study aimed at studying masculinity through incorporating the role of mothers in construction of masculinity.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Circumcision among the Agikuyu was practiced traditionally on both females and males, although great emphasis was on the male circumcision. Boys were circumcised at the age of fifteen to eighteen years, with the father and male sponsors playing a crucial role in supporting boys during the initiation process. After circumcision, male sponsors gave advice to the initiates on the ways of the community. Fathers and sponsors gave lessons to initiates about the importance respecting elders, and the initiates were not supposed to see or meet their mothers during the healing process as the society considered it a taboo. Through circumcision, the boys were initiated into a class of manhood with responsibilities of being ready to tackle the challenges that come their way. In addition, the initiates after circumcision would not sleep in their mothers' huts, and they had to build their own huts made of grass. Young initiated men had multifaceted obligations to serve their families, relatives, clan, and the tribe. This implies that circumcision was an important aspect in shaping maleness, and male adults played a crucial role. However, circumcision although being a key determinant of manhood cannot solely be a determinant of masculinity; other factors such as land ownership were as important. Due to colonialism and the era of globalization the aspects that defined a man among the Agikuyu are dynamic therefore the need to interrogate the changing trends in masculinity.

Additionally, scholars have focused on masculinities in connection with patriarchy and the key roles fathers played in son's lives especially during circumcision. However, it is worth noting that mothers played crucial roles too and as such, it was crucial to interrogate the place of a mother in shaping masculinity because primarily the circumcision process among the Agikuyu traditional society was a male affair. This study therefore focused on historical analysis of the transformations of masculinities in Mathira sub-county, Nyeri County between 1952 and 2014 in order to understand the place of a woman in influencing maleness within the Agikuyu community. It began by examining how colonialism affected masculinities among the Agikuyu. The study also analysed how masculinities in Mathira sub-county were affected in the era of the fight for independence. Further, the study examined the changes in masculinity among men of Mathira. The study focused on men in Mathira because they were very vocal during the *Mau Mau* rebellion with most *Mau Mau* leaders having been from Nyeri County. During the colonial era, the study examined how majority of the male adults were involved in migrant labour, and this left women as heads of households and the latter took over both productive and unproductive labour. On coming back, the study investigated the nature of gender roles and how they had been distorted and rendered men in a state of crisis as far as their masculinity is concerned.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study sought to achieve the following objectives:

a) To examine how the *Mau Mau* affected masculinities among the Agikuyu of Mathira, Nyeri County 1952-1963

b) To interrogate how the dynamics of independence impacted on masculinities in Mathira, Nyeri County from 1964-1980

c) To examine the changes in masculinity among Agikuyu of Mathira, Nyeri County in the period 1981-2014

1.4 Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following questions:

a) What role did Mau Mau play in the construction of manhood among the Agikuyu of Mathira, Nyeri County in the period 1952-1963?

b) How did independence impact on masculinities among the Agikuyu of Mathira, Nyeri County 1963-1980?

c) To what extent has masculinities changed among the Agikuyu of Mathira, Nyeri County in the period 1981-2014

1.5 Research Premises

This study was based the following premises.

a) Land alienation and migrant labouring significantly affected masculinities in Mathira, Nyeri County in the period 1952-1963.

b) Land relocation after independence helped men in Mathira, Nyeri County rediscover themselves in the period 1964-1980.

c) That decline in the coffee boom and increased alcoholism have seen masculinities challenged among the Agikuyu of Mathira, Nyeri County 1981-2014.

1.6 Justification and Significance

Studies in masculinities have increased globally. In Africa and Kenya, scholars have studied masculinities among the Luhya, Zulu, Xhosa, Shona, Abagusii, Kipsigis, and Lele. Such scholars include Uchendu (2014), Kabaji (2008), Shire (1994), Sabella (2010), and Margrethe (2002). In their unpublished thesis, Kimani (2014) and Murangiri (2014) look at masculinities from the circumcision point of view. In Nyeri County, masculinity has been fragmentally studied alongside other emerging issues like drug and alcohol abuse. Little has been written on the role of mothers in the construction of masculinities, especially from the *Mau Mau* era to current trends in the formation of masculinities in the region of Nyeri. Available literature discusses masculinity in the pre-colonial period, and even with such studies; little has been given on the changes that masculinity has undergone over time specifically in Nyeri County. For example, Kiruthu & Mbataru (2014) have studied masculinity in Nyeri in relation to coffee economy and globalization, noting that the decline in Kenyan economy on the onset of colonialism played a key role in the frustrations of males.

This study was justified as it incorporated the role of women in the construction of a man for better understanding of gender issues. Through the matriarchy approach, it was possible to reveal the dynamics that could have been ignored by the former; therefore, the attainment of gender parity will be easily achieved. In addition, many scholars have neglected the role of mothers in the construction of masculinities yet mothers are the people who interact much with the children than their fathers before even circumcision comes in.

Nyeri County was ideal because it has is a patriarchal society inhabited mainly by the Agikuyu community whose men were very vocal as far as *Mau Mau* war of independence was concerned. On coming back, they found women had taken over their roles both in productive and unproductive labour. The sub-county of Mathira was chosen because it has a high population both in rural and urban areas, thus provided a good site for a comprehensive study.

Findings from this study are vital to gender scholars or stakeholders in relation to gender issues in understanding the plight of the boy-child in Nyeri County. It also added knowledge to the existing studies on gender relations in the globe.

In addition, the findings have added knowledge to the history of African women and their vital role in the society because women's role in raising a boy child has been given little attention. It has provided a new methodological and theoretical framework to interrogate the issue of gender violence in Nyeri County.

1.7 Scope and Limitation

The study focused on matriarchy and the transformation of masculinities in Nyeri County, Mathira Sub County in the period 1952 to 2014. The year 1952 provides a good starting point because it was the year when the state of emergency was declared by the colonialists leading to formation of *Mau Mau* movement in Kenya. Men who had earlier been the providers left for the forest leaving women to engage in both productive and reproductive duties. Their young sons who were to become *aanake* in future were left with their mothers. This had a great impact on how their manhood developed. Despite

settling on the above study period, information from the period before this was used to capture aspects of masculinity prior to colonialism.

On the other hand, the year 2014 provides a historical period to end the study because the year registered cases of men being battered by their wives in Kenya for example in Western, Nairobi, Nyanza, and Central parts of Kenya among other regions. This drew the researcher to establish the forces behind such trends in Nyeri.

Central Kenya was chosen because of cases of weakening masculinities that have been awash in the news. Additionally, the study narrowed down to Nyeri, Mathira sub-county because despite the fact that it is a patriarchal society, several cases of men being humiliated and beaten by their wives in public have been witnessed in the region as indicated by police reports in the region. In addition, Mathira men were very vocal in Mau Mau thus went to the forest in large numbers leaving their sons under the care of their wives.

A study on femininity and masculinity is a sensitive one. At a time, when media is awash with cases of violence against men, this study faced even greater resistance. Men in particular were reluctant to respond to most of the questions, but the researcher, on explaining to them on the nature of the research was able to gather information. Tracing of respondents especially the *Mau Mau* war veterans was difficult for the researcher. Chiefs who aided in tracing the respondents dealt with this challenge. Some of the respondents especially the elderly would digress in the course of giving the information. It required a lot of patience from the researcher in order to acquire information. Further,

some respondents did not want to give the information on the changing trends in masculinity because they felt it was against their religion to do so. In addition, due to the sensitivity of some aspects in this topic, names were withheld. Through assurance that the research is for academic purposes the researcher was able to overcome the challenges.

1.8 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.8.0 Introduction

In this section, the researcher reviewed the existing works, and identified gaps that propelled this study. It also contains the theories that guided this work

1.8.1 Review of related literature

Hartley (2012) asserts that feminization age emerged in the 20th century. She notes that in this era women make up over 60 % of the world population, thus their role in shaping societal aspects should not be looked down upon, it should be embraced. She informs this study as far as the roles of women are concerned in the current society. Her emphasis on women to be included in all aspects of the society was paramount to this study as far as women recognition in the construction of a man and the changing trends was concerned.

Ratele (2008) defines 'ruling masculinities' as fluid practices of power, which are context specific. Power is a major component of masculinity and men who do not occupy positions of power are facing a masculinity crisis. This work is relevant to this research because it clearly unveils masculinity is in crisis. However, he does not give a broader reflection of the crisis such as factors aiding the crisis. Furthermore, he does not address anything to do with matriarchy and masculinities. This study filled this gap among the Agikuyu of Mathira Sub County.

Ampofo, Beoko-Betts& Osirim (2008) point out the new interest in masculinities in African-centred gender scholarships. In their work, Ampofo & Beoko-Betts focus on the

new interest in masculinities left out by colonial legacies. The ideas of these authors are relevant to this study because they point out on emerging interests in masculinities. They, however, do not point out about how and why these interests have emerged, and the current study fills this gap. They also do not address the role of women in the construction of a man, which was one of the goals of this study.

Morrel (2001) focuses on the changing masculinities in South Africa. He explores different forms of expressing masculinity among men in South Africa, how masculinities are changing through the influences of gender inequalities. His work on the transformation of the South African man in relation to masculinity is relevant to this study because he focuses on ways of expressing masculinity among men in South Africa that is very similar to this research through focusing on Agikuyu perception of masculinity in the springboard chapter. His work, however, is different because the current research focused on masculinities in Kenya, specifically among the Agikuyu in Mathira sub-county.

Uchendu (2008) discusses masculinity in various African countries. He notes that among the Zulu of South Africa, masculinity is observed in men unrelenting discipline. As Uchendu notes, at the age of 13 years the boys' ears were pierced in a ceremony called *qhumbuzaizindiebe* (Ear piercing ceremony among the Zulu). The oldest man in the society taught the initiates on their daily conduct. This marked the first step to manhood. The first nocturnal emission was a sign of entering manhood thus a very important ritual was to be performed the *thomba* ceremony. This event took place for one full week and ended up with an early morning bath to wash away childhood habits and assume

manhood. The young man was then attired as a man. Full manhood among the Zulu as attained at the age of 33 years after 15 years of military service. Zulu masculinity was thus to be expressed in militarism.

It is also important to note that Zulu masculinity had the foundation laid in childhood when boys served their fathers. It was the responsibility of fathers to produce strong, healthy male children, who could replace them when they are dead (Uchendu, 2008). His ideas were relevant to this study because he looked at the transformations in masculinities among the Zulu, which is a similar focus of this study through focusing on Agikuyu. However, he only considers fathers as the shapers of boys into men while this study addressed the role of mothers in the making of a man among the Agikuyu of Nyeri County. Additionally, he only looked at the changes in masculinity from the colonialism point of view while this study looked at the changes from the colonial era into independence and post-independence era.

Studying masculinities among the Xhosa of South Africa, Ndangam (2008) is emphatic that *ilwaluko* -circumcision marked a step from childhood to manhood. To be a man, the young boys had to go through circumcision in the bush together, and they had to endure cutting of the foreskin without any aesthetic application. This taught them to be enduring and disciplined men in the society. He also notes that the journey to manhood was a difficult one and whoever succeeded in it was considered a real man in the society. In seclusion, there was no drinking water and the main food taken was hard food only. For the Xhosa man, the circumcised penis is integral to his masculine identity. Cultural asset grants him status among men in the community. Uncircumcised men are referred to

as*inkwekwe* (boys). However, his study presented a geographical gap that this study filled. This is because he focused only on the Xhosa while this study targeted the Agikuyu in Nyeri County. He also did not provide the changes that masculinities have undergone, which were the primary objective of this study. Furthermore, as many other scholars reviewed here he does not address matriarchy in relation to masculinity.

Shire (1994) studying masculinities among the Shona of Zimbabwe notes that in the Shona society, circumcision was vital in the making of a man. She also provides the traits that were associated with men. Furthermore, the author says that colonialism affected in a negative way on African masculinities and notes that the present economy has left the traditional African men with no potency. Women are becoming more powerful than men are. This way, she agrees with Uchendu (2008) and expounds that colonialism replaced the traditional masculinities in DRC with patriarchal Christian tendencies. Her ideas were very relevant to this study because she explored the determinants of masculinities, the impacts of the present economy on African masculinities and the changes that African masculinities have undergone over time. However, Shire (1994) carried her study among the Shona while this study was carried out among the Agikuyu of Mathira Sub County, Nyeri County, Furthermore, she does not address masculinities in relation to matriarchy, which was the focus of this study.

Cooper (1983), Kitching (1980), Van (1975), and Stichter (1982) observe that Kenya has undergone a fundamental shift in its social constructs and ascribed gender roles from pre-colonial and post-colonial Kenya. For example, the traditional gender roles have changed with men taking women roles such as cooking and women taking men roles such as being

the sole breadwinners. Manhood was defined as the state of being an adult male after undergoing an initiation ceremony such as circumcision. On the other hand, masculinity was seen as the embodiment of manhood that boys learned to be adults. However, the modern day sociologists and observers have often remarked that despite men having gone through the initiation, most of them still lack masculinity. This study aimed at researching on the fundamental changes in masculinity among the Agikuyu in Mathira sub-county to reinforce what the above authors had indicated. In addition, given that these authors have asserted that boys learned their roles from their adults this study interrogated the role of mothers who are also adults in the construction of a man among the Agikuyu of Mathira Sub County.

Kabira and Masinjila (1997) focus on gender responsive politics. Women in Kenya through gender movements have been able to take part in politics, especially vying for political positions. In this work, they look at how women had been under-represented in the civil service bureaucracy, and the government had taken less consideration of women in elective politics. Their work was relevant to this study because they were addressing gender issues, particularly women empowerment. However, this work differed from their study because their focus is only on women in politics while this study focused on matriarchy and the transformations in masculinity in Nyeri County.

Kiruthu (2014) notes that globalization has played a key role as far as gender issues are concerned. He points out on the emphasis put on in empowering women, resulting in women who are coming out of the domestic spheres and joining men in fields such as politics. Further, he asserts that globalization has resulted in economic difficulties that

have put men in crisis as far as masculinity is concerned. For example, due to the introduction of SAPs, the nature of community gender relations changed, men lost their jobs, and their masculinity as far as family provision is concerned. Kiruthu's ideas were relevant to this work as they shed light on challenges men face in the global era. However, this study differed from his work as it focused on matriarchy and masculinity in Nyeri County.

Lamphere et al. (2012) note that mother's confinement to home, made them to seek to environment to cater for the family needs in terms of food. This was because men alone could not be able to fend for the family from hunting. This aspect made mothers, not only caregivers, but also made them powerful family providers in terms of food. Women gained powerful economic value in the patriarchal richness. This therefore implies that in the current century where men are defined by economic value, women have a key role to play in the making of a man given their agricultural role as the producers of labour. This was the idea this study interrogated among the Agikuyu of Nyeri County, Mathira sub-county.

Lamphere et al. (2012) further explains that women originally owned power until men succeeded in overthrowing them out of their secretive lodges. In a way, they explain the transition from the rule of mothers to the rule of fathers after being overthrown. However, they do not tell us what impact this transition had on the construction of masculinities because initially the mothers ruled the family. This gap is what this study filled with a keen eye on the Agikuyu community in Nyeri County, Mathira sub-county.

Wanyoike (2002) articulates that among the Agikuyu society, patriarchy emerged in the second half of the 19th century. Agikuyu myths indicate that men rose over women when they realized that the women rule was brutal to them. They therefore made the women leaders pregnant, thus making them weak. However, to date clan names are matriarchal in nature. Her study was relevant to this study because she addresses matriarchy and provides the story of a woman leader in the Agikuyu society. She also explains how a patriarchal culture replaced the Agikuyu matriarchal society. However, she does not handle the role of matriarchy in the construction of man, which was among the focus of this study.

Dimandja (2004) points out that despite whatever the sons became mothers had and still have a privileged relationship with their sons. In most cases, the sons listen to their mothers more than they listen to their fathers. Even in times of conflicts, boys first seek the advice of their mothers before doing so from their fathers. Dimandja study informed this study of the close relationship between the mother and the son. He, however does not tell us whether this relationship plays any role in the shaping a son to become men in the society and whether this relationship has changed over time and its impacts on masculinities. This study filled this gap among the Agikuyu in the sub-county of Mathira.

Adhunga (2014) holds the view that among the Agikuyu the child identifies with the mother. A man is identified as a son not only to the individual person, but also of the clan of his mother's name. For instance, Men are happy to be referred as the son of Wambui. His work informed this study as far as the role of mothers in the identity of a

son is concerned. He however does not provide any information on the changes that such identity has undergone over time and the impacts it has on masculinities construction. This study filled this gap.

Mama (1996) gives an overview of changes in gender relations during colonialism. For example, men went to work in the plantations leaving women to take care of tasks such as milking that were initially meant for men. She addressed cultural studies in Africa and points out that women have been the bearers of culture and men the articulators. Mama further asserts that colonialism led to inferiority among men and the power of men was eroded during the colonial era. This study differs from her ideas by focusing on the changes in gender relations and their effect on masculinity. Masculinities and femininities are changing over time, and Amina Mama does not address the implications of this shift in gender studies. As much as she asserts that women are the bearers of culture, she does not give their role as far as the masculinity construction is concerned. This study filled this gap.

Kabaji (2008) studying masculinity among the Luhya community notes that the men use a bull to define their sense of masculinity. This explains why Luhya politicians have to get a bull or other masculine icons as their symbols. A man is supposed to be strong. A sick man is told that a bull dies with grass in the mouth, thus, he should be strong. Kabaji (2008) notes that the last animal has to be a bull in dowry payment, it signifies a symbolic prayer for the woman to get male children. Within the Luhya community, a bull is also used in the *isheremb*a ceremony (burial of a warrior). Warriors are considered men if only they have killed a man in a war situation, a warrior who kills an uncircumcised man

or a woman is not considered a man, nor a hero, thus, cannot be accorded this ceremony. Bull fighting is also a ritual of masculinities that involves only those with male egos.

To bellow *(Khukumula)* in Luhya society is a masculine activity. It is an act of authority, force, relevance, and power. This explains why the bull has to bellow in the pre-contest night. Kabaji's ideas are relevant to this study because he provides the traits and factors that determined masculinity among the Luhya, which is almost similar to the case this study examined in Nyeri County by focusing on factors that determined masculinity among Agikuyu. However, this work differed from his study because he only focused on the Luhya of Western Kenya while this study focused on the Agikuyu in Nyeri County. Furthermore, his work was entirely masculine while this study connected matriarchy to masculinity.

Saleeba (2010) studies manhood among the Abagusii of western Kenya. He notes that circumcision was the first determinant of manhood in this community. An uncircumcised man was called *Omoisia*, meaning a boy. One also had to marry to be considered a full man. The author also writes that giving birth to boy children added weight to one's manhood compared to a childless a man or one with girls only. Men were breadwinners and head of the family. More cattle, land, many wives also defined a man. In addition, self-control and dignity were attached to manliness. This study differs from his study because he only looks at the determinants of masculinity and fails to address the dynamism in masculinities over time, which was the focus of this study.

Margrethe (2002) observes that there are many female-headed households in Kisii in the 21st century. She associates this situation to colonialism, which she claims eroded the prestige giving activities. Elimination of cattle camps took place, and men had to look for alternative jobs in the cities. Her ideas inform this study as far as the impacts of colonialism on African masculinities are concerned. She, however, fails to provide the determinants of masculinities among the Abagusii. Her study also was based in Kisii County while this study was based in Nyeri County.

.Murangiri (2014) in an unpublished thesis on the social construction of Chuka masculinity, points to the need to explore on how changes in the construction of masculinity have affected both male and females. This is because from 1963, colonialists left legacies in the respective colonies. Newly formed independent states, Kenya being among them, went through new ways of defining masculinities; for example, through education people defined masculinity differently from the norm of traditional definitions such as boldness in killing animals. Her ideas are relevant to this study because she shed light to this study as far as the changes in masculinities are concerned. However, her study focused in Chuka and concentrated more on circumcision while this study focused on Nyeri County and masculinity in relation to matriarchy.

Kimani (2014) in an unpublished thesis studies the transformations in circumcision and masculinities among the Agikuyu of Kiambu County. She asserts that circumcision was the main indicator of entry into manhood among the Agikuyu people. She also demonstrates how masculinities have changed over time in relation to circumcision. Her ideas were relevant to this study as far as the transformations in masculinities are

concerned. However, she addresses masculinities only in relation to circumcision while this study addressed masculinities in relation to matriarchy in a different locality from her work.

This review indicates that the study of masculinities has received attention in substantial measures. However, there are many gaps identified that needed further scholarly attention. Much of the existing literature looks at masculinities in relation to the circumcision rite of passage. In addition, many scholars have attributed the changes in masculinity to colonialism. This study, therefore, made use of several related sources in the field to fill these gaps by analysing matriarchy from the pre-colonial Agikuyu society and the transformations in masculinities among the Agikuyu of Mathira sub-county, Nyeri County during the period 1952-2014, through incorporating the role of mothers in shaping masculinity.

1.8.2 Theoretical Framework

There are a number of theories that have been used to explain the construction of masculinity or femininity in the African set up. Such include social learning theory, Gender theory, theory of masculinity and the functionalist perspective.

The social learning theory demonstrates that through observation and imitation, children pick up concepts from their caregivers and the environment. The environment includes prevailing micro-systems at home such as how the father and mother interact at home and how they deal with daily challenges and macro-system outside the home such as the community culture. In a child's prevailing environment, they learn about the gender roles

assigned to them based on sex and adopt attitudes and biases mirroring those around them. This environment surrounding the child triggers both positive and negative responses that the child will react with even as adults. This theory relates to this study because it recognizes the role of caregivers in shaping a child, which is the focus of this study of mothers and the making of a man. However, it fails to recognize other factors that aid in shaping a child in the society apart from the caregivers only.

Bem advanced the gender theory in 1981(Cherry, 2016). The theory demonstrates that in the itinerary of enculturalization, the individual initiate internalizes the divergent dissection of relations created for him or her by the society as innate and unavoidable. However, in criticizing the theory, Carey (2007) notes that gender theory focuses on certain rituals in the enculturalization processes and construction of men and women. In this way, it was not be an adequate theory for this study because this study pays no attention to any rite of passage.

Given the weaknesses of the above-mentioned theories, this study made use of two theories; the functionalist theory and Connell's theory of masculinity. Functionalist theory was proposed by Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, and Robert Merton. The four scholars compared the society to living things that have parts, which are interrelated. Each of these parts plays a key role in the life of these organisms (Crossman, 2016).

For this study the family, the society and the boy child himself comprise of the parts that contribute to the construction of a man. The family is composed of both parents, and

children. Given the connection between mothers and masculinity in this study, this study picked on the mother. Mothers are the primary caregivers of children. They stay long with the children who learn much from their mothers as early as childhood. How a boy child grows to be man depends on how his mother socialized him as a child. In the absence of father figure as it was during Mau Mau, the mother plays the role of a man in a house. Failure by mothers to nurture their boys to be men from childhood results into a masculinity crisis in adulthood.

The society forms the second component in this structure, this case it was the Mathira community. In traditional African setting, a child belonged to a community. The community played a role in shaping girls and boys into men and women through various ways of initiations included. Boys could learn men behaviours from the community sports, competitions, and tales. The society constructed genders, which were the base of masculinity and femininity in the society. The economic and political situations of the society also are paramount in determining manhood. This is in terms of power, money, and employment among others.

The man himself plays a key role to manifest his masculinity. How they agree to societal socialization and family teaching is entirely their choice. This explains why we have transgender and gays in the society. Men can choose to act feminine or masculine and disagree with the set social gender norms.

This theory was used to explain how masculinity is constructed not only from the societal rites of passage only, but also from other aspects like family caregivers (mothers),

political economy, and individual characteristics. Given the dynamic nature of these aspects, the theory was used to explain the transformations in masculinity among the Agikuyu of Mathira sub-county, Nyeri County.

The second theory that was used in this work was Connell's theory of masculinity. Raewn Connel developed the theory of masculinity. This theory provides a critical feminist analysis of historically specific masculinities. The theory also acknowledges the varying degrees of men in reproducing the masculinities and that there is no unchanging form of masculinity (Connel, 1987). In a modern society, Connel points out that a man does not need to possess the qualities of culturally accepted masculine traits. Connel observed that hegemonic masculinity is constructed in relation to women and subordinated masculinities. This theory was applied in this work to show how hegemonic masculinity among the pre-colonial Agikuyu community is changing. Additionally, the theory was suitable since it incorporates femininity in constructing masculinities thus was used to show how mothers constructed masculinities among the Agikuyu of Mathira.

1.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.9.1 Research Design

The researcher employed historical research design. By employing historical research design, the researcher was able to provide chronological narratives regarding the issue of the transformation of masculinity. Thus, to provide a comprehensive study of the phenomenon, qualitative approach was the main methodology to allow for an in-depth collection of data in terms of opinions, attitudes, and feelings of the identified participants.

1.9.2 Site of the Study

The study site was in Mathira Sub County, Nyeri County. Nyeri County is located on the foothills of the Aberdare ranges, with the majority of the population being the Agikuyu. Farming is the main economic activity in this region due to the rich volcanic soils. The populace, grow crops such as tea, coffee, maize, large scale flower-farming, tomatoes among others. In addition, dairy farming is practiced both small scale and large scale. Further, the site is the home of the second largest market in Africa after Addis Ababa, known as Karatina market. The study area also hosts quite a good number of *Mau Mau* veterans.

1.9.3 Target Population

The study targeted the Agikuyu of Mathira sub-county, Nyeri County. Clan elders who are society leaders were a target because they had knowledge regarding the transformation of masculinities because some of them were born during the colonial era.

As such, they have a possibility of understanding these transformations better. Gender activists in this region were also a target group as they contained crucial information about the topic under study. The study also targeted chiefs, county commissioners, clergy, *Mau Mau* war veterans, women leaders, and politicians.

1.9.4 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

The researcher used purposive and snowballing sampling techniques. Depending on the participants' knowledge of the study, phenomena purposive sampling was used for example in interviewing elders. Snowballing was used as the knowledge of the insider such as the *Mau Mau* war veterans were required to get information such as effects of *Mau Mau* on trends in masculinity.

Out of about 148,847 people in Mathira, a sample size of 100 people was chosen for this research. One hundred and six people were interviewed in this study through purposive and snow balling techniques. This number comprised of 32 oral interviews, and 11 KII were conducted. In addition, nine focus group discussions were carried out with each consisting of six participants. These participants were obtained depending on their availability and knowledge on the subject matter. Gender representation was also an important aspect while selecting the participants.

1.9.5 Data Collection

Both primary and secondary data was used in this research. Primary data was derived from direct interaction with participants through oral interviews, focus group discussions, and consultation of archival sources. Generation of secondary data was from

analysing written literature such as journals, newspapers, thesis, and dissertations and relevant books. The use of libraries such as the Kenyatta University Post Modern Library was vital in evaluating and analysing the written literature.

1.9.6 Data Analysis

The first step in analysing the data was transcribing information from the tape recorders, and the second stage entailed the translation of data from mother tongue to English language. After this, the information was coded thematically according to major themes. Analysis of secondary data took place by allowing positive criticism to enhance accuracy. Narratives and first hand quotations were used in presenting the primary data from the field.

1.9.7 Data Management and Ethical Issues

The researcher conformed to the principle of voluntary and informed consent, allowing the participants to participate willingly in the research. The researcher obtained a permit to allow carrying out of the research. The purpose of the research was explained to the respondent through a sample letter in clear and simple terms, and information obtained from the participants during the interviews was handled with utmost respect and confidentiality. Acknowledging of any relevant sources was important, and honesty was observed in the submission of the research findings.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 PRE-COLONIAL SOCIO, ECONOMIC & POLITICAL ORGANISATION OF THE AGIKUYU

2.1 Introduction

A stint at the pre-colonial period will help us to understand what it meant to be a man in the pre-colonial Agikuyu society in order to understand the transformation in masculinities. Social, political, and economic aspects of a community are intertwined and thus this chapter begins by discussing various aspects that defined manhood among the Agikuyu. In this section, the researcher provides other determinants of masculinity apart from circumcision among the Agikuyu.

2.2 Agikuyu Social-Economic and Political Organization

2.2.1 Becoming a Man in Pre-Colonial Agikuyu Society

a) Birth and Naming

Manhood among many African societies begins at birth. Among the Agikuyu during birth, the number of ululations indicated whether a child was a boy or a girl. Five ululations signified the birth of a boy child while three ululations signified the birth of a girl child. At birth of a child in Agikuyu community, the child identified more with the mother and was dependent on her until the next rite of passage, which was known as re-birth ceremony at the age of five. Education of infants was in the hands of the mothers who taught their children the correct manner of speech at infancy. This implies that the approach of life was founded based on the mother's traditions, beliefs and rules, and the

re- birth ceremony introduced the child as an individual with responsibilities in the family, this makes the application of functionalist perspective applicable**.** The family was the basic unit of Agikuyu social organization, and a vital organ as far as important religious and social ceremonies were concerned, and these ceremonies were not valid if any member was absent (Bottignole, 1984). The immediate family was known as *mucii*, where the members executed love and friendship, which would be extended to the greater family *nyumba* (Matigari, 2013). In addition, naming of children would start from the father's side, whereby for example the first son would be named after his grandfather from the father's side (Louis, 1977; Mugo 1982). This implies that boys were given special treatment and in a way, giving birth to a boy child was considered a big honour.

When a boy child was born, the men would celebrate through drinking beer, since the birth of a boy child symbolized continuation of the family and the clan. This explains why boys were valued as Kenyatta (1938) indicates, and if a mother begot only girls, the family was considered incomplete. At the family level, education of the children was through informal ways, whereby the fathers would spend time with their sons while mothers spent time with their daughters. This way, sons were taught male chores such as herding and defending the community while the daughters learnt household chores such as agricultural roles. An old woman interviewed noted that in the traditional Agikuyu society, girls were taught by their mothers and boys by their fathers and the main traits emphasized on were respect and obedience (Elderly woman, O. I. 4/7/2016).

A male would be termed a man through respecting his family, and disobedience to a father was worse than a curse from a mother. In addition, upon the birth of children, a traditional Agikuyu man would do anything for his children and deny himself so that his children would have better lives, and not become a source of ridicule from their contemporaries. An archival source revealed that, a man could therefore portray his masculinity by providing to the family, clothes, food, and protection (GP572.967LEA). Further, a child would never be abandoned, and if the parents died the family would take care of the child. The only time a person would be disinherited was when he or she failed to subordinate their plans to the family, missing important occasions or in case of sickness such as small pox.

An old man in, Karatina noted that from the father and classificatory fathers, a son learnt the rules of life, and manhood was achieved through acknowledging roles of males as fathers, husbands, uncles, grandsons, grandfather and sons (O .I. with an old man in Karatina,5/7/2016). The home was thus the first place a man was recognized as a man (GP572.967 LEA). From the family, therefore a man was one who respected his family and took part in the family responsibilities (MAC 967.6203).

b) Circumcision

Circumcision then became the next rite of passage and was viewed as the most important rite of passage. Scholars such as Kimani (2014) & Murangiri (2014) have concentrated on the actual cut, but apart from the cut itself, there were other ways that men became men among the Agikuyu such as ownership of land among others. These

scholars also assert the rite has undergone various transformations, which have influenced masculinities in various ways. From the field, a focus group discussion with clan elders revealed that circumcision was important in marking transition from childhood to manhood although other important aspects had to be considered for one to be regarded as a man (FGD with clan elders 17/7/2016). This agrees with other scholars who note that the Agikuyu circumcision is an integral part of the Agikuyu traditional culture as it informs the society on meanings and purposes of becoming a man (Mbito, 2011).

This ceremony was carried out at the age of 14-15 years after the coming of Europeans, unlike in the traditional pre-colonial Agikuyu society where boys were circumcised at the age of 17-18 years, and some up to 22 years (Louis, 1977; Mugo, 1982). Initiation practices for boys started with preparations such as participating in various traditional dances. The preparations were practical in order to prepare initiates in doing things practically rather than theoretically. The father of a son had to prepare for a warrior to be the sponsor to his son, by providing moral and physical support to the initiate (Leakey, 1977).

In addition, the father of the initiate had to give a goat as a way to seek permission for their son to be circumcised (*Mburi ya kuhoya irua*) to the elders as a part of circumcision preparations, and get beer for fixing the initiation day ready. Men would take the beer as they deliberate on the best day to circumcise the boys. This demonstrates that men were central in preparing the young boys into manhood (Mugo, 1982). Further, during the day before the initiation, the father would be questioned on the availability of

initiation items and be warned on the things that the initiate was not supposed to do or not do. The initiator (*Muruithia*) had also to sacrifice a goat three days before the initiation in order to ask for blessings in the coming ceremony. All the preparations ready, the parents and senior members of the family would bless the son in the morning of the initiation day, and the boy would then proceed to the initiation venue (Muriuki, 1974). The boys would bathe in cold water to numb the nerves, and they were supposed to portray masculine traits during the initiation such as being brave and no shedding of tears, because traditionally a man was not supposed to cry.

After the initiation, the initiates were secluded for seven days, and during this period, they would get teaching and advice from the elders on the ways of the tribe (Kenyatta, 1938; KNA, MSS/7/3; Cagnolo, 2006). The Agikuyu circumcision thus was detailed in terms of preparation and after initiation practices; it was meant to make boys to men so that they would get married, own land, ascend to leadership positions, and have children (Lambert, 1956).

A clan elder in Mathira noted that despite the boys being circumcised, circumcision in itself was not enough to make a man. Lessons instilled to the initiates made them real men as initiates were taught on matters pertaining to sex, and rules governing sexual indulgence(O.I 12/7/2016). This agrees with scholars who note that there were rules governing sexual relations, through the *ngwiko* ceremony, a method of intimate contact without penetration, and women were involved in the preparations of this ceremony (Kenyatta, 1938).The *ngwiko* ceremony was meant for leisure and not intercourse, thus the initiates grew as sexually responsible individuals minimizing the instances of pre-

marital affairs. Respondents in a focus group discussion noted that it is from the *ngwiko* and regular visits of a girl to a man's *thingira* that friendships developed into marriage, as during the dances the man would choose a lady who fascinates him maybe in terms of dressing and making the hair as well as other physical attributes (FGD with elders, 7/7/2016).

In addition, from this ceremony, the young men learn to be generous through sharing of food, and gifts brought to the man by the woman as no man was supposed to enjoy the gifts alone. The physical activity of circumcision therefore is for preparing the initiates for the tasks that await them in the community such as defence of the community. Circumcised boys would offer defence to the community after joining a council of warriors known as *njama ya anake a mumo* (A group of young initiated men), and later after twelve rainy seasons from the time of circumcision, the warriors would be promoted to senior warriors *(njama ya ita)* war council (Kenyatta, 1938). Marriage would later grant the young men eldership into various councils later in life.

c) Marriage

Marriage was considered an important rite of passage for a traditional Agikuyu man, and it was one of the powerful means of becoming fully a man among the Agikuyu. An oral interview with an elder asserted that the marriage was not an individual affair but involved kin's men who would arrange on matters pertaining to dowry (O.I with an elderly man, 2/7/2016). It is important to note that, marriage was supposed to be factual and not theoretical calling for one to take their time without the last minute rush. As

such, marriage preparations began with both parties inviting each other at their parent's home. A boy would invite a girl she liked to help in digging his mother's farm, and if the girl loved the young man, she would in turn invite him to her parent's home, and cook some good meal. If the parents of the girl accepted the young man, he would go and reveal the news to his parents for the marriage preparations to begin (Mugo, 1982).Later the families could exchange goods that acted as bride wealth after which the bride would move to her husband's home (Gikuyu, 2016).

The patriarchal residence of the bride is an indication that it is a man who married and not a woman. Through marriage, an initiate acquired the title of *muthuri* (the one who chooses), while a married woman was known as *mutumia* coined from *gutumia* translated as "keep silent". This means that a man was the one to choose and the sole decision-maker at home while a woman was supposed to be obedient and listen to her husband. According to Brinkman (1996), "women have no tribe." This Twasna proverb might have truth in it as Brinkman notes. An old woman at Mathira noted that, it was through marriage that women were able to have their ethnic identity, this means that married men in traditional Agikuyu society were moulders of identity (O.I with an old man at Mathira, 2/7/2016). This concurs with Kenyatta (1938) who notes that, a man with a household would be able to have a say in political , judicial and religious matters, and portrayed their success in managing a home and taking care of the children.

The first marriage of a man among the Agikuyu was more celebrated than the *ruraacio* (bride wealth), because it made an initiate a full man. Through marriage, a man acquired new responsibilities to his wife and children, but also had other responsibilities to his

mother and siblings. These responsibilities included; assistance in paying of dowry and communal fines, giving cultivation rights and construction sites. Further, a married man had responsibilities for the clan (*mbari*) and village (*itura*) such as hospitality and defence, without forgetting his responsibilities at the family level, which were the most important (GPS 572.967 LEA). Therefore, a traditional Gikuyu man could not run away from responsibilities.

The Agikuyu traditions allowed polygamy as long as the man could be able to provide. A *Mau Mau* war veteran pointed out that, polygamy was mainly encouraged as an avenue of having more children, affirming masculinity as the number of wives a man had determined his position in society, for example a man with eight or even fifteen wives was a sign of wealth(K.I.I with a Mau Mau veteran, 15/7/2016). This concurs with Karemi, (2016) who notes that Agikuyu men married as many as ten wives. Despite consultations between a first wife and a husband on bringing another wife to the family, polygamy created envy among the wives as they sought attention from the man. Having many wives thus denoted power among Agikuyu man.

Sharing of personal property in polygamous marriages among the Agikuyu existed, but the man is the head who belong to all, and all belongs to him. Agikuyu male children brought up in polygamous families were supposed to cultivate virtues of extending love to several women, as the man does in a polygamous family (Kenyatta, 1938). This implied that it was right for a man to have many wives, while the woman with many husbands was a taboo, thus not allowed among the Agikuyu. The girls in polygamous

marriages are socialized on the importance of sharing the love of their husband, and this situation ensured women remained subordinate to their male counterparts.

Incidences of divorce were rare as wives were considered the foundations upon which a marriage is built (Kenyatta, 1938). The husbands consulted their first wives in decisions such as disposal of property like sheep as they were for family use. This implies that there was cooperation, friendship, and companionship in the marriage. In an interview with an old woman at Magutu it was revealed that, there existed a strong connection between the mothers and their sons even when the latter had married (O.I with an old woman at Magutu, 8/7/2016). Male elders negotiated the bride price in form of livestock, and a man had authority over the wife through bride price. If a man had not paid bride price, he had no obligation to ask anything from the wife, therefore paying of bride price portrayed masculinity. Bride price was paid in good faith as a way of thanking the bride's family and for compensating them for the labour lost, and affirming a woman's worth (Afrikan Eye, 2007). As such, bride price was not for commercial purposes neither was it used as a way of determining the worth of a woman. The payment of dowry was in form of sheep, goats, and cows meant to legally bind the wedding, make children born out of those wedding legal members of the family, and stabilize the marriage. If a man does not have enough sheep for dowry, the friends and relatives would assist in paying of the dowry (O.I with an old woman at Magutu, 7/7/2016).

In addition, there existed widow inheritance, which portrayed masculinity in terms of provision of necessities such as food and clothing, and not necessarily sexual rights. Cases of infidelity were rare due to the heavy fines that the community had put in place

to curb unfaithfulness. It is important to note that only a married man could be entrusted with conducting family affairs, implying that married men were considered more masculine than those who were not married (GPS 572.8963 CAG).

d) Land Ownership and Inheritance

There was a sacred attachment to land among the Agikuyu men, and ownership of land was controlled by *mbari*, a sub-clan that constituted patrons as asserted by scholars such as Mugo (1982), Muriuki (1974) among others. A Gikuyu man was the owner of a home (*mwene mucii*) and the woman was the custodian. By owning land, a man could keep livestock, and a man with large herds of livestock felt equally important with those who had large amounts of money, arguing that a shilling does not bear another but a goat does (Kenyatta, 1938). Money thus had little significance among the Agikuyu traditional men, unless it was for buying livestock.

From the findings an old man in Mathira revealed that land ownership was a core determinant of masculinity among the men in Agikuyu community (O.I with a clan elder, 4/7/2016). These views agree with scholars who note that due to importance attached to land, the land tenure systems were laid down clearly. Men got land mainly by inheriting it from their fathers, but they could not sell the land without consulting other relatives (MAC 967.6203). In an FGD with elders at Iriaini, it was noted that men were the main land inheritors, and the father at his deathbed granting young men their dreams of owning land and starting a family granted inheritance rights (FGD/7/2016). These views are in conformity with scholars who note that a man who had no land was known as

*ndoikanie (*Landless), and receives no admiration (Dutto, 1975).In an oral interview, a respondent pointed out that a man could not become a man without land. He wondered, "How can fathers remain men if they have no land for their sons or sons become men without marriage?" (Clan elder, O.I, 7/7/2016)

An oral source revealed that lazy men could not manage the land even after inheritance. This was because for a man to be helped in clearing a vast piece of land he had to show the initiative by starting to clear the land himself, then if stuck he would call for help from his friends (O.I, 4/7/2016). Laziness was therefore a vice, and norms and traditions encouraged hard work. Sons would have their own gardens as young boys, given to them by their fathers, and they would cultivate men crops such as black beans, yams, and sugar cane. Moreover, from the sale of produce from their gardens, they owned goats, sheep, and cattle.

A son would therefore be termed a man by owning land and livestock in large quantities, such a man would be highly respected in the community. Therefore, hardworking men who owned land were more respected than those who did not own any (Dutto, 1975). Therefore, fathers socialized boys to be men through various ways such as herding, clearing land, and farming.

e) Children

A man in the Agikuyu society would not be complete without having children, and not only children but sons because sons would perpetuate the family name (Gikuyu, 2016). Many children gave the father a place of honour in the society, and continuity of the

family lineage (Waiyaki, 1993).A woman who had sired sons was highly respected, and it is notable that sons loved their mothers a lot, maybe due to the connection they had from childbirth with the mothers. This agrees with remarks from a respondent who notes that, sons were considered the most important. This is because they perpetuated the family name; while girls would be married off, however the girls were not mistreated but on the other hand barren women were a source of ridicule and sometimes could become outcasts (An elder, O.I, 9/7/2016). The more children a man had the more he climbed the social ladder. An old man interviewed lamented:

> I never had the privilege of being a complete Gikuyu man simply because I did not have baby boys. Who would carry on my family name if I had no children especially sons, because my daughters would get married? Although am grateful to God for giving me beautiful daughters, I think I would have been happier if I had a son. Having boy children made us men (Elderly man, O.I, 7/7/2016).

Children coupled with other factors such as number of livestock and initiation made a Gikuyu man to get a chance in joining an influential council of elders, as only married men could be allowed into such councils. A man with many children was viewed as more responsible than the one who did not have any.

f) Other factors determining masculinities among Agikuyu

There were other factors such as the ability to make decisions from the family level to the community level that made a Gikuyu man to be viewed as masculine. Such decisions included religious, judicial, and economic. These were decisions mainly concerning the whole community. For example, the fathers are the ones who determined whom their

sons would marry, and further the male elders negotiated the bride price (Clan elder, O.I, 8/7/2016). However, if the mothers rejected the bride, the boys could not proceed with the marriage. At the family level, a man together with his wife would make decisions concerning disposal of property such as cattle and giving land for cultivation for those in need. However, the final decision lay with the man as the head of the family (Kenyatta, 1938). An indecisive man would become a source of ridicule not only to his family but also to the society. Such a man would not sit with other men as he was viewed as a child who could not manage his affairs through making of decisions (Brinkman, 1969). Therefore, a decisive man was more masculine than the one who could not make any decisions.

In addition, the ability to keep secrets determined masculinity. In a key informant interview with an elderly man, it was explained that men unlike women were supposed to be secretive with the secrets of the community (*kirira*), and only men could be trusted with the *kirira.* In addition, traditions such constructing maturity with pain through circumcision for men enhanced masculinity, and that a man becomes a man from childhood but for a woman her womanhood did not change (Elderly man, K.I.I, 8/7/2016).

A respondent who is 86 years old noted:

> In those days, a real man was never to disclose any secret to anybody who was not supposed to know it not even his wife. That was a sign that one was now a full man. Women could not sway our minds to let our mouths off with the community secrets (Elderly man, O.I, 8/7/2016).

On his part another 86 years old man noted:

> Enduring pain was one aspect that tested the maturity and masculinity of man. Men were never to shed tears anyhow even if their loved ones died. Real men bought their manhood through pain. Painful experiences were like an examination. If you could not endure pain then even a woman was seen to be more mature than you are (Elderly man, O.I, 8/7/2016)

This simply means that in Agikuyu traditional society, women needed guidance just as children did, and the husbands were the ones to offer this guidance. Men were thus seen as agents of guidance, and a man who would offer such guidance was viewed as masculine.

In addition, wife beating portrayed masculinity and was necessary. If a man never beat the wife, he had to do it in front of the elders so that his children can be initiated. Failure to adhere to this rule would result in curses for the man (Brinkman, 1996). In an oral interview, a respondent observed:

> When our first son was about to be initiated, my husband was forced to beat me in front of elders because he had never beaten me before. Failure to which he could not be recognized as a man and our son could not be initiated. Wife beating Portrayed not only love but also masculinity for our men. He had to beat me. (Elderly woman, O.I, 8/7/2016)

Moreover, mobility for a man was a sign of maleness, but it was wrong for a *mutumia ngatha* (a responsible woman) to loiter aimlessly. A man who stayed in the homestead all day long was seen to be more of a woman. Such a man was seen to have been bewitched by the wife (A former detainee, O.I, 4/7/2016).This observation concurs with

Afrikan Eye (2007) which notes that for men mobility was allowed but for women it was not allowed in order to control the sexuality of women. Mobility of women was seen as a way of promoting immorality among them, leading to indiscipline. African patriarchs thus controlled the mobility of women. Men were supposed to be out in the public spheres breadwinners, and real men were not supposed to be in the domestic sphere. In case a man confined himself to the homestead, it was considered a sign that something is wrong with him. In many cases, their wives were to be accused of bewitching them, and such men were seen as having women traits.

From the above, it is evident that a typical Gikuyu man was constructed right from birth, circumcision, marriage, and during ownership of land. In a way, one stage led to the other, and thus none could stand-alone as a measure of masculinity.

2.2.2 Becoming a Woman among the Agikuyu

2.2.2.1 Birth

Mugo (1966) noted that in the traditional Agikuyu society, all births were presided over by an old woman referred to as *muciarithania* (midwife). The midwife was trained on using *rwenji* (a razor-sharp knife) used for female circumcision, cutting the placenta, and shaving. After birth, a baby would cry and the women in the room would ululate with the number of ululations depending on the sex of the child. Scholars have differed on the number of ululations with Ahlberg (1991) noting that for a baby girl the women ululated four times while for a boy the ululations were five. This implies the boy child was given an upper hand despite the claims that all children were treated equally. After giving birth, the woman would be assisted in household chores like collecting firewood.

2.2.2.2 Circumcision

Kenyatta (1938) explained that circumcision among the girls marked a stage from childhood to adulthood. Two weeks before initiation the girl takes black beans (*njahi*) to avoid loss of blood during the initiation process. Just like the boys, the girls had a sponsor (Mutiiri) to support them during the initiation process.

In a focus group discussion with elderly women in Karatina market, participants remarked that a Gikuyu traditional woman was not complete without going through female circumcision. An uncircumcised woman was ridiculed, and called names such as *Kirigu* (Uncircumcised girl).Additionally, in most cases, such women could not get suitors since they were considered immature (FGD with respondents in Karatina, 16/7/2016). This concurs with Kenyatta (1938) who notes that the Agikuyu female circumcision was an important rite of passage that made girls into women, and thus initiation of girls was not complete without female circumcision.

Kiruthu (1997) noted that in Nyeri female circumcision was severe unlike in areas like Kiambu. He further notes that, uncircumcised kikuyu girls were seen as immature, and men saw them as a target for White men who would use them as a bridge of getting land. This is because the White man was against female circumcision that is why they would be interested in the girls who were not circumcised. During initiation process, girls were taught on being responsible mothers and wives. In addition, after initiation, a Gikuyu woman was taught on virtues of hard work to prepare them for marriage. For example, a Gikuyu traditional woman from Nyeri was termed as muscular, thus had the energy to

work hard, carrying heavy loads in Nyeri hills. This woman as described by Mukuyu (2015) had the ability to fight a weak man down.

In addition, women in traditional Agikuyu society portrayed their hard work by engaging in trading activities like selling bananas, and would till the land the whole day growing food crops such as arrowroots. Further, the initiates were taught on good grooming as indicated by the well shaven heads (Mukuyu, 2015). These women as noted by respondents, could do anything to keep their families together through working hard even in the absence of men; a woman is the moulder of the home according to Agikuyu culture (Clan elder, K.I.I, 19/7/2016).Circumcision thus became an important bridge to motherhood.

2.2.2.3 Marriage

Kabira (1995) points out that marriage earned women respect in the community since a woman would then give birth and acquire the title of motherhood that was highly respected among the Agikuyu. An oral interview with an elderly woman at Kirimukuyu revealed that a real Gikuyu woman in a patriarchal society, would only get an identity through getting married, and submitting to the man as women had no ethnic identity(O.I with an elderly woman at Kirimukuyu,8/7/2016). The woman remarked that's;

> I was referred to as daughter of Kiarie before I got married, but after our marriage, the titles changed, and I was referred as wife of Ngunjiri and had to drop the title, daughter of Kiarie. Further, my first child who was named after my husband's father gave me the title as mother to Kariuki. (Elderly woman, O.I, 8/7/ 2016).

This remark agrees with Mukuyu (2015), who notes that women were referred as *Mundu wa nja* (an outsider). Another name for feminine gender was *mundu muka,* implying the 'one who came. Additionally, a wife was supposed to keep her husband's name by being obedient, silent, faithful, with a quiet sense of confidence, and active in the gardens. A woman with the above traits was known in Kikuyu as *Ngatha,* and she was the ideal Gikuyu woman.

A real Agikuyu woman who was viewed as the one who had given birth to sons. The society considered a woman who would not bear children especially sons as an outcast or bewitched. In such instances, a witch doctor would be consulted to cast the spell preventing her from getting sons (Kenyatta, 1938; Mugo 1982). An oral interview revealed that, getting children, especially sons made a Gikuyu woman be respected (Professor, O.I, 11/7/2014). This view agrees with that of scholars who note that women who bore sons were more respected than those who did not since the community believed in sons continuing of families by carrying the family name (Gikuyu, 2016)

2.3 Women & Their *Ndundus*

In a key informant interview, a woman clan elder revealed that the Agikuyu political organization started right at the homestead where members of one family group formed *ndundu ya mocie* (council of the homestead), headed by the father (O.I, 7/7/2016). From the family there were villages headed by *kiama gia itura* (village council) comprising family heads. In addition, the extended family was the basic unit of the society, and was made up of several clans headed by a council of elders known as *kiama,* who would resolve disputes arising in the community.

It is important to note that in the Agikuyu society, women were involved in leadership through a council of women elders known as *kiama kia aka* or *ndundu ya atumia.* This council had numerous roles ranging from economic, juridical and social functions such as; condemning men who assaulted women, deciding when the girls were to be initiated, providing dates for *ngwato*(sexual ceremonies), punishing immoral behaviours, and organized team agricultural work (Clan elder, O.I, 8/7/2016).

Further, the women council bestowed economic power on men through the involvement in land transfer ceremonies, and rituals of purification with the rules that these women had respected by men. In matters pertaining to morality, the council would punish immoral behaviours of society. For example, men would be punished by paying heavy fines in the form of cooking pots, gourds, and wives withdrawal of services. This implies that despite the Agikuyu society being patriarchal through most issues such as land among others resting on men, matriarchy existed although subtle, and played a crucial role in shaping the society (Robertson, 1997). Bottignole (1984) who observes that there was notable domination of the matrilineal system in the Agikuyu social organization also echoes the same views.

2.4 Women as the Founder of the Agikuyu Clans

Muriuki (1974) explains that the Agikuyu society is located in three distinct areas namely Nyeri, Kiambu, and Murang'a. By 19th century, the society was considered patriarchal. Traditionally, they trace their origin to a woman known as *Mumbi*, wife of *Gikuyu* who is the father of *Ruriri. Gikuyu* was given *Mumbi,* by *Ngai* at the top of *Kirinyaga* where he build a house. Together they had ten daughters from which the

Agikuyu clans originated bearing female names: Acera, Anjiru, Ambui, Angui, Angechi, Ambura, Agachiku, Angari, Aichakamuyu, and Airimu (Kenyatta, 1938; Leakey, 1952). However, despite the actual number of daughters being ten the Agikuyu consider them nine as number ten was a bad omen, leading to the connotation of *kenda muiyuru* or nine full (Kenya Facts in History,2013). In an oral interview with a clan elder, it was explained that each clan had similar traditions and were scattered all over the Kikuyu land, with marriage from one's own clan prohibited since related families are the ones who made up the clan (O.I with a clan elder, 7/7/2016).

In addition, the clans were united as one house known as *nyumba ya mumbi* (House of Mumbi) in honour of the mother of the Agikuyu who is *Mumbi.* The most crucial classification in identity of the Agikuyu was thus the clan with unique features and similar rules that governed the community's rituals like circumcision and marriage. This identification was feminine in nature with the clans bearing feminine names such that a clan name *Anjiru* for example, was named after a female name Wanjiru (Mugo, 1982). From the clans the house of *Mumbi* known as *Ruriri* (community) emerged. This implies that the Agikuyu people had a connotation that was feminine although the issues of the tribe rested in the hands of the male members. Women therefore were at the centre of the Agikuyu shaping of identity right from the nuclear family where a *nyumba* (house) was feminine, and the homestead members identified themselves with the mother's *nyumba.*

Echoing the same views, Adhunga (2014) notes that among the Agikuyu, a man was identified as a son not only to the individual person but also to the clan of his mother’s

name. The needs of family members are thus traced from the centre of the house as indicated by the structure of the *nyumba* in which women cooked from, while other family members waited for the food in the periphery (Mukuyu, 2008). With the names of the clans being given under the matriarchal system, this suggests that the ancient Agikuyu society was originally matriarchal, and women played a key role in shaping the identity of the community (Mugo, 1998).

2.5 The Role of a Mother in a Boy's Life

Ouzgane and Morrel (2005) pointed out that women influenced masculinities among their sons right through their lives from birth to adulthood. At birth, the child was more connected to the mother and dependent on her until the second birth. Mothers, as noted by Strayer (1975) guided their sons in learning the ways of the community through stories and lullabies. This is because in infant years, sons and children generally interacted more with the mothers than fathers did. In addition, at infancy the mothers in Agikuyu traditional community taught their children to master the language in order to express themselves, names, and events of the community as they grew up. Further, Kenyatta (1938) explains that the mother is a nurse who interacts closely with the children than the fathers at a young age. She clothes and feeds the children and when in trouble the children consult the mother first.

A mother in traditional Agikuyu community was called *maito* (mother), and when a woman becomes a mother, she earned respect from the children and the community at large. Further, a mother took part in the second birth ceremony of a son through giving the news to the son on the day when his second birth will take place (Nderitu, 2001). In

addition, the mother and the son during the day of second birth was the centre of attention as the ceremony was carried out while she held her son on the lap just as she did when he was a small boy. The midwife tied intestines of slaughtered ram around the stomachs of the mother and the son to signify the connection through umbilical cord. The mother would then groan in pain as the child mimicked the cry of a baby upon which the midwife cut the umbilical cord. The second birth ceremony was aimed at putting away childish behaviours as one prepared for initiation and ushered a child to the outside world (Mugo, 1966).

During the circumcision, Kenyatta (1938) notes that the mothers only escorted the boys to the river where the circumcision was taking place, after which they would not see their sons until the seclusion period was over. At this stage, the fathers would take over in instilling lessons to the initiates on the ways of the tribe as now they had become men. After circumcision, the initiates would be allowed to marry, and as an oral source, revealed mothers played a crucial role in advising their sons on the choice of bride. If a mother did not like the bride chosen by his son the son would not marry that lady in most cases due to fear of upsetting their mothers (Elderly woman, O.I, 8/7/2016).

Concisely, the Agikuyu boys and girls were made to be men and women differently through socialization by the parents and the elderly (GPS 72.967 LEA). However, men were seen as patriarchs and heads of the families although the Agikuyu society had aspects of matriarchy as indicated in the founding of Agikuyu clans, connection of mothers and sons from birth, and women *ndundu's*. As indicated in this section, women

traditionally were confined to the domestic sphere while men were powerful in terms of land ownership, control of means of production, making family decisions among others.

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, we sought to examine the socio, economic and political organization of the Agikuyu during the pre-colonial period. In so doing, we examined the traditional Agikuyu criteria of defining a man. Such measures included; circumcision, the number of children a man had, number of wives, ownership of land, mobility, wife beating, marriage, maintaining secrets ,family provision, ability to make decisions and wife custodianship. It was established that apart from circumcision other aspects like land, marriage and number of children one had were used to define man, additionally, it was noted that traits like hard work, decisive and being enduring were used to define a real man in this society.

For women, the society noted that such measures like the number of ululations during birth, circumcision, marriage, and giving birth to sons. Additionally, women played a key role in the life of a boy child. It was also apparent that right from birth, the mother played a role in moulding the manhood of her son, and this was demonstrated from the second birth ritual that was mandatory for every first-born boy in the Agikuyu culture.

In addition, it was revealed that the Agikuyu women played a great role in the leadership of the society through their women *Ndundus*. In this organization, women condemned men who assaulted women decided when the girls were to be initiated as well as provided

dates for the sexual ceremonies. In this way, it was revealed that women were not totally excluded from the construction of the social life of a child through adulthood.

Further, the chapter revealed that women were the founders of Agikuyu clans that emerged out of the nine daughters of *Mumbi* and *Agikuyu*. Accordingly, it was noted that the men from the Agikuyu community in many cases identify themselves with the names of their clans, which are feminine in nature.

The next chapter will discuss how colonialism influenced masculinities among the Agikuyu of Mathira.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 COLONIALISM AND THE CHANGING GENDER ROLES AMONG THE AGIKUYU OF MATHIRA TO 1963

3.1 Introduction

The chapter interrogates the impacts of colonialism on manhood among the Agikuyu. In so doing we discuss how various aspects of Colonial rule such as migrant labour, land alienation, and *Mau Mau* war impacted on the masculinity of men in Nyeri County.

The history of colonialism in Kenya dates back to the Berlin conference in 1885 when East Africa was divided into spheres of influence by the European powers. The British government established the East African protectorate in 1895 and began to open the fertile highlands to white settlers. Rodney (1972) articulates that the colonial political economy was marked by exploitation of Africans through forced labour, and plantation agriculture that implied large tracts of land were needed for settler agriculture.

The British presence in central Kenya shuttered the Agikuyu society economically, socially, and politically as discussed herein.

3.2 Land Alienation: A Threat to Masculinity

Land was a significant resource among the Agikuyu people, acting as a link between them and the ancestors, and as a measure of masculinity as discussed earlier in this study. Before the coming of the Europeans, a seer by the name of *Mugo wa Kibiru* had predicted the coming of the white man in Kikuyu land (Kenyatta, 1938). However, as explained in an oral interview by an elderly man in Mathira, the Agikuyu believed in prophecies but they thought the white man was a visitor to their land whom they would welcome as

he passed by (O.I with an elderly man, 2/7/2016). Kenyatta (1938) explains that the community would give land to visitors upon request and even allowed them to cultivate. The Agikuyu regarded such people as *ahoi* whose eviction from the land would only be done through consultations of the *muramati* who were the custodians of the land. That being the case, the Agikuyu believed and perceived the White man as a *muhoi* who would later return the land given.

Wamue (1988) asserts that the missionaries never returned the land as the Agikuyu people had expected but instead settled permanently, while lying to the community that they would elevate them from drought by growing of better crops. Scholars such as Kenyatta (1938) explain that central Kenya was the ideal place of the Europeans to practice settler agriculture in the "unoccupied lands." However, it is vital to note that the lands were left fallow to regain fertility, and for the purposes of serving the community as the population grew. Despite this, the colonial government gave the settlers title deeds and the Agikuyu people were slowly evicted from their ancestral homes. Due to the eviction, the Agikuyu became squatters, and children born in that era had no hope but to dream of becoming squatters just like their fathers (Wamue, 1988).

Sandgren (2012) observes that history of land alienation in Nyeri can be traced from around 1940s when the cattle were being taken to cattle dips to prevent tick fever. When the cattle started dying, Nyeri people saw it as a mechanism by the colonialists to deplete their high-grade breeds. In 1946, the colonial government suggested that a number of the population in Nyeri be moved so that the soil would regain its fertility. In the same year, there were rumours that the colonial government had an agenda of reducing

population growth in Nyeri by introducing birth control measures. Further, in 1949 through the Beecher report, education of children in Nyeri was limited up to class four (Sandgren, 2012). All this happenings, made the people of Nyeri especially men feel that their lives were under threat politically, economically, and socially. Although resistance to colonial rule began as early as 1896 with the Nandi uprising, the decolonization process in Kenya became more amplified after the Second World War (Maloba, 1993).

Secondary resistance movements emerged whose main agenda was to ensure that Africans were given back their land. Among the movements was *Mau Mau* that was the most vocal mainly because of Agikuyu loss of land to the white settlers. As explained by a *Mau Mau* veteran from Mathira, the British response never killed their determination to get back their land. He noted:

> We were put in detention camps and life was not easy. It was a matter of life and death. We could stay for days without even drinking water. We were made to squat the whole day. I was electrocuted for eight hours to surrender but I never surrendered. An African man endures pain (O.I, 2/7/2016).

His words are a clear indication that despite the torture these fighters had the spirit to pull through. They were full of determination; determination for their land, and setting their people free from the oppressive colonial rule. From the above, it emerged that men in Kenya, and Nyeri were ready to die for their pieces of land as it made them men in the pre-colonial Africa, and with their land alienated they felt less of men (O.I, 12/7/2016).

3.3 Taxation and Migrant Labouring

Land alienation came with migrant labour due to the introduction of taxes. The first "hut taxes" provided for in the East African Hut Tax Ordinance were introduced from around 1903 implying that migrant labour began in Kenya from 1903(Dewees, 1915). Africans had to look for jobs in plantation European farms as well as in the urban centres in order to pay the taxes, which were paid annually. According to the colonial reports of 1948, African poll tax was levied annually to all adult males alongside the hut tax that was paid for every homestead a man had. This implied that the more wives a man had, the more he would pay taxes. The institution of polygamy was under threat by the introduction of taxes meaning that the power of men through polygamy started diminishing.

Able African men between the ages of fifteen to forty years were forced to offer their labour at two rupees per day in the plantations. The major ethnic groups that provided labour were mainly the Agikuyu, Luo, and the Luhya (Stitchter, 1977). Scholars note that from the 1930s, fertile agricultural land in central region of Kenya had been put under the Europeans. Colonialism suppressed African peasant agriculture leading to Africans to practice farming in Europeans farms, and in exchange offer Europeans labour (Dewees, 1993). Emerging urban areas facilitated migrant labour through formal employment with men being the ones who offered labour in most cases (Gachihi, 1986). For example, as Gachihi (1986) points out, in 1947 48% of Nairobi's population was African males who comprised of young unmarried and married men. Most men worked as gardeners, cooks, drivers, and cooks under colonial masters. In the traditional

Agikuyu society, it was unlikely for the men to cook as the household duties such as cooking were meant for women (Cagnolo, 2006).

Kiruthu (1997) noted that forced labour in Nyeri began as early as 1902 when Africans particularly those from Nyeri were used in the construction of Fort Francis in Nyeri. He further explained that Consolata missionaries affected in a great way on wage labour in Nyeri through acquiring a farm below Nyeri Hill in 1904. Under the Consolata missionaries, Africans provided labour under the supervision of a priest. Men were the most targeted because the colonial system was male dominated leading to rural households being increasingly headed by women. Among the men who participated in migrant labour were for example Itote Waruhiu who worked as a farm labourer, and a houseboy (Ogot, 1981).

In addition, Kiruthu (1997) explained that juveniles in Nyeri, especially boys were also involved in migrant labour. This led to lack of parental love and guidance as they grew rendering them as socially unstable. Majority of the migrant labourers were thus men who earned very low wages. Chiefs like Ndioni in Nyeri coordinated provision of labour to Europeans within Nyeri region. However, as Kiruthu (1997) notes acquiring labour from Africans within Nyeri was difficult since majority of the populace were concerned with food production. As a result, the government introduced the hut and poll taxes as discussed above.

One can thus argue that colonialism especially taxation reduced the masculinity of men since most of them could not be able to keep large families due to hut tax, land alienation

and the low wages. An oral interview with an elderly man revealed that colonialism was reducing these men not only to women but also to boys who needed guidance just as a father guided a son in the traditional Agikuyu setting (Elderly man, O.I 10/7/2016).

3.4 Migrant Labour and Women Responsibilities

Women were admitted into colonial labour later where they would work together with their children (Dewees, 1993). Gachihi (1986) observes that in 1940s in central province, women were involved in communal migrant labour where they would work for long hours, and were the most affected compared to men. White (1991) points out that some women due to little wage labour from their husbands engaged in prostitution. These women had to work to support their husbands and their children and not necessarily for personal interests. Further, White (1991) notes, there were those who practiced prostitution for accumulation of wealth, and were known as *Malaya* (prostitutes). This category of women also provided domestic services to men. Other women known as *watembezi* (walkers) walked in the streets looking for men at a fee. The third category worked at fixed prices and did not provide domestic services other than sex to men in the urban centres. In addition, as White (1991) notes that this third category accumulated property for their families. However, at some point, women who had migrated to the urban centres were repatriated to their rural homes through the argument that the place of a woman was at the rural home. In the rural areas, women would bear, and rear the children alone while at the same time attending to other chores in the home such as milking the cows, a role that was meant for men before advent of migrant labour (Clan elder, O.I, 12/7/2016). This view agree with scholars such as Stitchter (1977) who

explains that those women who remained at homes practiced agriculture and trade in order to subsidize their husbands incomes besides other chores such as rearing children. These tasks were burdensome to African women as noted by Boserup (1977).

Additionally, with men moving to towns, migrant labour distorted the African culture and gender roles with women left to take care of the children as men worked in the urban centres (Throup, 1988). In addition, institutions and societal political and economic organization of the Africans was affected in a negative way, as women had to perform tasks previously done by the males in the community such as milking cows (Sorrenson, 1967). An oral source revealed that, men had to be away from home to construct the Uganda railway, leading to separation of families (Clan elder, O.I, 5/7/2016). An elderly woman remarked:

> My husband went to Nairobi to look work for the *mzungu*, so that he could pay the taxes. He left me home with my children for whom I had to fend. I would work in the European farms for some hours, and when I was free, I would cultivate my small piece of land where I grew vegetables. It was not easy for me to bring up our eight children alone, as my husband would only come home occasionally (Elderly woman, O.I, 5/7/2016).

This observation agrees with that of scholars who assert that during the colonial era women were responsible for their families as men took part in migrant labour (Kabira & Nzoki, 1993). The same views are echoed by Ndeda (1991), who focuses on the impacts of migrant labour on rural women in Siaya. She asserts that migrant labour interfered with division of labour in Siaya district, as women had to do the "male roles," at the same time take care of the children. Additionally, scholars hold the view that the

ideology of "two households" can be traced back to the migrant labour where a man had a household in the urban areas where he worked, and another household in the rural area left under the care of the wife (Stitchter, 1977). Moreover, Abbot (1979), observe that 67% of adult men went to work in the cities leaving women with a cumbersome burden of family responsibilities. The author adds that men in urban areas visited their rural households once in one or two months, and stayed only for a few days, meaning that these men participated at a minimal level in child care especially of the boy child.

As women were left with greater responsibilities, depression was inevitable. When depressed men would beat their wives, but a woman would never beat her husband because of the traditional values of respecting their husbands, and being the homemakers. However, an oral interview with a male farmer indicated that this is not the case in 21st century in Nyeri, as some wives can now raise hands against their husbands, implying that they might have been depressed for long and cannot hold it anymore for men who neglect them , and their families (Male farmer, O. I. 10/7/2016). This remark may explain the few incidences of violent femininities and masculinities in some regions in Nyeri. Further, the foregoing findings are a clear indication that women supported their families during the colonial era, taking care of their children both boys and girls thus took part in shaping their masculinity. Mothers had new roles of socializing their sons into men in the absence of their fathers, a role that was traditionally associated with the men. Consequently, the harsh conditions of migrant labourers and land alienation forced the Agikuyu to take arms in fight for their land through *Mau Mau*, as it will be discussed later in this work.

3.5 Colonial Education and Western Culture in Mathira

Colonialists offered basic education to Africans in form of reading and writing. However, for an African to be educated by the colonialists, one had to embrace Christianity and western culture. Kanogo (1997) noted that some Africans were not ready to abandon their cultures and thus they established their own independent churches and schools. The launching of independent schools in central Kenya started at Gituamba in Murang'a headed by people like Johana Kunyiha from Nyeri (Kiruthu, 1997). Hornsby (2013) observes that 44 independent schools existed in central Kenya by 1936. Such schools include the Africa Teachers' Training College at Githunguri, Alliance High School at Kikuyu among others. These schools laid the basis for leaders such as Jomo Kenyatta, who became the first president of independent Kenya.

In Nyeri, Kiruthu (1997) pointed out that the Italian Consolata Missionaries started a school at Mathai, Nyeri in 1905 where the community members were taught how to read and write. Gachihi (1986) observes that the independent schools brought awareness to young men and women who were referred to as *athomi* (Christian converts). These women and men got an upper hand compared to their colleagues who did not know how to read and write. For example, a woman known as Cinda Reri from Mathira was a standard four drop out but her little education enabled her to be recruited to Mau Mau (Gachihi, 1986). Field Marshall Muthoni from Nyeri had also acquired reading and writing skills from colonialists enabling her to be recruited to *Mau Mau*

By 1920s, the desire for colonial education in Kenya was on the rise with most schools being run by the missionaries. Strayer (1975) observed that education started becoming

a means of climbing the social ladder with those acquiring education desiring to have jobs provided by the colonialists. This education acquired during the colonial era would later enable the Africans to form their own political organizations, and hold positions in the government. For example, Jomo Kenyatta was educated in a Presbyterian mission school and worked for the government as a court interpreter (Strayer, 1975). The traditional ways of defining manhood were at threat with a new man emerging. Hornsby (2013) points out that colonial education led to the emergence of a new man who had acquired education, and of great value compared to the traditional African man. In addition, the notion of women being confined to the homestead began changing when some parents decided to take their daughters to school. For example, in Nyeri Wangari Maathai was educated by her father who was a tenant farmer (Bio, 2016). Men were at the forefront in search of education other than waiting for the time that they would inherit their fathers' lands. For example, during this era, men who received education in Nyeri included Wariithi Clement, Duncan Nderitu among others (Ogot, 1981). In an oral interview, an elderly man from Mathira claimed to have been educated during colonial era (Elderly man, O.I. 2/7/2016).

Strayer (1975) noted that colonial education went hand in hand with Christianity with majority of people converted while seeking education. Kiruthu (1977) observes that various missions were established in Nyeri and were agents of cultural change such as campaigns against female circumcision. He further notes that for example, the church of Scotland taught against female circumcision in Nyeri, and those who supported this ideology were known as *kirore* (thumbprint) while those against it were known as

Karing'a (pure kikuyu). Nyeri women compared to other women from Kiambu for example greatly embraced the ideology of doing away with female circumcision an act that was seen as defiant to male supremacy (Wanderi, 2014). This meant that the Nyeri women were starting to fight for their space and colonialism was bringing them out from the male dominated cultures thereby posing a threat to masculinity among the Agikuyu men. It is important to note that due to colonial education, Kenyans were enlightened and the fight for independence began, as it will be discussed below.

3.6 Masculinities in Mathira at the Dawn of *Mau Mau*

3.6.1 *Mau Mau* Uprising

There exists substantial literature on *Mau Mau* from scholars such as Sandgren (2012), Kinyatti (2000), Barnett &Njama (1966), Rosberg & Nottingham (1966), Throup (1988), Leakey(1952), Gachihi (1986), Kanogo (1977) among others. Most of this literature except a few like Gachihi (1986) discusses *Mau Mau* focusing on men as having played a key role in the *Mau Mau* war for independence. However, women just like the men played a vital role not only in the war but also in moulding their children as their fathers went to fight.

An archival source revealed that, the uprising took place from 1952 through early 1960s, and the fighters were based in the Aberdare forest and Mt. Kenya (MAC 323.2 MAJ). In Nyeri, there existed a committee for Mount Kenya region whose members included veterans from Nyeri such as Dedan Kimathi, Waruhiu Itote (General China), Stanley Mathenge wa Mirigu, Ndung'u wa Gicheru (Patron of the *Mau Mau* War Veterans Association), and Theuri Njue (General Kimbo) among others (Githinji, 2014; African

Tribute 2002; Mukubwa, 2011). In addition, Gachihi (1986) notes that the first *Mau Mau* villages were built in Nyeri particularly in Mathira and Tetu. Further, Nyeri region has *Mau Mau* memoirs for example in Mukurwe-ini, a handful of general trenches, caves among others implying that *Mau Mau* activities were concentrated in this region (Mukubwa, 2011).

A key informant interview with a *Mau Mau* veteran revealed that Nyeri was the *Mau Mau* headquarters, and majority of the fighters came from this region(Mau Mau veteran, K.I.I, 4/7/2016). This view agrees with that from an archival source that points out that the Agikuyu community was majorly involved in fight for freedom through *Mau Mau* movement (GP 967.6202 GAK).The movement began taking shape when very radical Agikuyu militants were invited to the Kenya National Union (KAU), which was the Kenya's nationalist party at the time (Ochieng & Janmohammed, 1977). These activists replaced the peaceful constitutional agenda with a more militant one. It is important to note that *Mau Mau* had both men and women fighters with men being the majority. These activists began prescribing oaths throughout the Agikuyu land some through intimidation and threats, the outcome of breaking the oath was death (Wamue, 1988).

The *Mau Mau* war officially began in 1952 with the declaration of state of emergency in Kenya (MAC 323.2 MAJ). The Agikuyu men went to the forest where they could hide and attack the European home guards, and other collaborating allies. *Mau Mau* movement was so violent and as a result, the British government responded through sending troops to round up *Mau Mau* fighters (Leakey, 1952).An archival source revealed that, some fighters like Dedan Kimathi of Nyeri were hanged and others put in

detention camps, where deep trenches were built and sparks put in them (K967.62 KAR). These sparks as a *Mau Mau* veteran revealed were commonly referred to as *nyambo*. The main purpose of *nyambo* was to prevent these men from escaping from the camps. A *Mau Mau* veteran revealed that detainee's labour was used in the digging of these trenches (Mau Mau veteran, O. I. 12/7/2016).

3.6.2 Mathira Men during the *Mau Mau* Uprising

In the forest, the fighters could attack the Europeans and kill them despite the latter having superior weapons. The fact that they lived in the forest without fearing attack by wild animals is an indication that these men were strong hearted, bold, daring and risk takers. A *Mau Mau* fighter interviewed noted that they had various tactics and even sometimes would dress like the European soldiers in order to defeat and confuse them. In addition, to ensure that the Europeans did not comprehend their conversation the fighters used coded form of communication. For instance, *Gishuguma* was used to refer to a newspaper in order to know the updates of the colonial government (Mau Mau veteran, O.I. 4/7/2016). If a *Mau Mau* fighter was to be arraigned in court for questioning about a place such as Mombasa, they would try to confuse the judge by talking of another place like Nairobi. This strategy would irritate the judges who would end up giving them a lesser punishment or acquit them. A former *Mau Mau* fighter recalled:

> To win the British soldiers we sometimes dressed like them. We would steal guns after attacking their police stations, and escape with their police uniforms. This helped us to hide our identity so much; it was all about being wise (Veteran, O.I. 4/7/2016).

The above verbatim is an indication that *Mau Mau* fighters were strategic in their fighting. They devised all tactics to stay in the forest and win the battle against the colonial masters. The *Mau Mau* veteran revealed that there was a lot of teamwork among the fighters. He stated that there was no self-centeredness in the forest and fighters cared for each other despite the fact that they came from different regions of central Kenya and other parts of the country. He remarked:

> I cannot compare the teamwork of those days in the forest to that of the young men of the current generation. The current generation is full of individualism. I doubt if they could even go to the forest to fight for freedom if Kenya was under colonial rule today (Veteran, O.I, 2/7/ 2016).

However, cases of conflicts and disputes among the fighters under different majors such as *meja* general Kirini of Mathira could not be assumed. Despite the disagreements, fighters could still assist each other with cigarettes, food, and weapons. This portrays a great sense of teamwork and support for each other (Wife of veteran, O.I 12/7/2016).

It is noteworthy that the main operation base for *Mau Mau* fighters was the Aberdare and the forest around Mount Kenya (Kanogo, 1992). From this region, it was easy for them to carry out guerrilla warfare. The forest thorns stung them to an extent that their legs became so hard that they could not feel it anymore. The life was full of agony but perseverance had to be exercised. An ex-fighter observed:

> "It is during our stay in the forest for eight years that we remembered the teachings gained from our fathers after circumcision. A man had to persevere and remain strong. This childhood socialization kept us moving forward in the fight for our land (Veteran, O.I, 5/7/ 2016).

One distinct trait that the fighters possessed was that of embracing hard work. A *Mau Mau* veteran noted that, during his eighteen months stay in prison he learnt a technical course of shaving, and he would shave the inmates and some police officers. He further noted that idleness was not his thing because the more he kept himself busy working and fighting in the forest, the more he would stay longer to fight for his country (Veteran, O.I, 5/7/2016). In addition, these fighters were religious and God fearing as noted by Kanogo (1992). The fighters usually worshipped under a *mugumo* tree while facing Mount Kenya. A veteran *Mau Mau* fighter echoed the views by revealing that in times of difficulty and when the fighters had no option, they usually surrendered everything to *Ngai*. He notes:

> One time when we were in the forest, I had stolen police uniforms and I was being sought after. When I was running away, I saw three police officers at the top of a hill looking at me and if I was not wrong, they had binoculars. At that moment I left everything to my God and started walking towards them because with the binoculars they would eventually catch me, I had to trust in God and surrender. After approaching them we engaged in a physical fight with them and I ran away (Veteran, O.I, 4/7/2016).

Although the *Mau Mau* was eventually crushed by the end of 1956, it was not until the first Lancaster House conference in January 1960 that Native Kenyan majority rule was established and the transition towards independence initiated. Notably, the violent resistance that the *Mau Mau* fighters mounted against the colonial government caused the British government to grant independence to Kenya. The activities of *Mau Mau* had paralyzed the economy and colonial administration in Kenya (Kahiga, 1980). This led to two constitutional changes that granted Kenya her independence in 1963 with Mzee Jomo Kenyatta as the president. A key informant interview revealed that, after the *Mau*

Mau war, the fighters had to go back to their homes, where majority found themselves landless (Veteran, K.I.I, 17/7/2016).

3.7 Womanhood and the Gikuyu Man During *Mau Mau* Uprising

3.7.1 Mathira Women during the *Mau Mau* Uprising & Female-Headed Households

Having looked at the *Mau Mau* war in relation to the traits that the fighters possessed, we proceeded to study the effects this war had on masculinities. From the research conducted, it was noted that, the *Mau Mau* uprising affected the masculinities of Mathira men in Nyeri County adversely. Probably Mathira men were the most affected as the *Mau Mau* headquarters were located in Mathira, and majority of the veterans were from Mathira (Gachihi, 1986). It is important to note that women participated actively during Mau *Mau* war. Likimani (1984) asserts that women were unsung warriors that many scholars do not talk about. Women such as Muthoni wa Kirima commonly known as Marshall Muthoni from Nyeri, was among the women who took part in the actual fighting, and the last among the veterans to surrender during *Mau Mau*.

Gachihi (1986) notes, some of these women rose into leadership positions while in the forest including Grace Nyaguthii and Wamuyu Gakuru from Mathira, Nyeri. These women participated in the fighting just like their male counterparts. For example, Wamuyu Gakuru was a woman leader of over 200 women in the forest, and had mastered the use of a gun (Gachihi, 1986). Traditionally throughout the Agikuyu community, war was associated with masculinity. Thus, women entry to *Mau Mau* was a setback to traditional forms of masculinity among the Agikuyu. For example, women such as Muthoni did not only take part in the war but also funded the activities of Mau Mau

(Kiragu, Onyancha, &Matheka, 2016). Being a woman trader, Muthoni was very influential and had business relations with traders in Nairobi that enabled her to contribute financially to the *Mau Mau* affairs. As noted by Kiragu, Onyancha & Matheka (2016), males even feared Muthoni due to her boldness, and prowess with the gun.

An oral interview with a woman *Mau Mau* veteran revealed that, the women realized that men could also be weak at some point. The fighting in the forest with women reduced masculinity of men since women engaged equally with men in fighting (Veteran, O.I, 2/7/2016). These women could not respect men as they had before the fighting given that their active participation in the war had made them bold, a situation that made these women consider themselves almost, if not, equal to men. Consequently, the idea that men are naturally strong while women are weak had been crushed since at some point women fighters appeared stronger than the male fighters did. (Kiragu, Onyancha & Matheka (2016). This was a big blow to traditional perspectives of masculinity.

However, women who went to the forest were few in number implying majority were left at home doing domestic chores and raising the children. Bruce-Lockhart (2015) observes that rehabilitation programs during *Mau Mau* sought to make women better wives and mothers that is why they were confined into villages. In addition, women became the heads of the families i.e. Female-Headed Households emerged (FHH). An oral source revealed that a Nyeri woman was accommodative to the western cultures such as doing away with FGM, and resistance to male domination (Elderly woman, O.I, 5/7/2016). This view agrees with Wanderi (2014) who notes that the Nyeri woman had

long time ago as early as 1920s embraced western culture and stood against male domination. Thus, it can be argued that *Mau Mau* gave the Nyeri women a chance to head their families and be independent.

Ideally, in the traditional African society, men were the heads of the family, owned and controlled the land use and were the final decision makers (Kenyatta, 1938). In a focus group discussion, it was established that on coming back from *Mau Mau*, these men found colonialists had redistributed their ancestral lands that was a main indicator of masculinity (Veterans, FGD 17/7/2016). The respondents noted that, *Mau Mau* veterans were not given land simply because they had opposed the colonial government by fighting colonial oppression. Additionally, with men fighting in the forest, women had more duties, and in a way, the Kenyan society from where the fighters originated was slowly becoming matriarchal in nature. Gachihi (1986) notes that, women told their children the importance of keeping secrets during the state of emergency, in order to keep the secrets of the *Mau Mau*. Women would also coordinate the children especially boys to run errands for *Mau Mau* such as spying. This showed that family separation led to mothers educating their sons on politics, especially on evils of colonialism (Gachihi, 1986). A woman respondent noted that, women had to work in the plantations, take care of the children as well as provide food to the fighters in the forest (A woman respondent, O.I, 12/7/2016). As a result, the manly roles in the community were slowly becoming women roles.

In a focus group discussion, respondents noted that the initial picture on the strength of an African man had begun declining in the face of women. Further, the children who

remained at home with their mothers especially the boys were brought up by the mothers (Traders, FGD, 17/7/2016). Socialization from a father therefore became minimal, as mothers had to socialize them into manhood. A key informant interview with a *Mau Mau* veteran known as major Kirini from Mathira revealed that this was the genesis of confused masculinities where the boys embraced some feminine traits from their mothers (Veteran, K.I.I, 15/7/2016). However, it is worth noting that some mothers were very strict and socialized their boys into men in a culturally accepted manner.

An oral source revealed that, by the time these fighters came out of the forest they found things had greatly changed. Some found that their wives had gotten children out of wedlock. In such instances, some men decided to run away from their matrimonial homes again leaving the children to be taken care by the mothers (Wife to a veteran, O.I, 8/7/2016). This was never the case in the traditional African set up. Ideally, men could not move out of their ancestral home and most importantly their matrimonial homes because it was against their traditional culture (Kenyatta, 1938). In case of any disagreements between a wife and a husband, the wife was sent way to her parents awaiting the case to be resolved. This indicates that the authoritative nature of the males within the family declined when they went to forests in order to fight colonialists.

A key veteran fighter from Mathira noted that none of his sons could listen to him simply because they never grew up knowing him as their father as he had left home and gone to the forest to fight when his sons were still young. However, upon his return he could observe and see the boys listening to their mother more than they would listen to him. He could not command them to do a task as a father. They could challenge him through

consulting their mother first, and this depicted mothers as the final decision makers within families. The veteran remembers that it was as if he had become another child in that family, but he had no option other than to adopt and cope with the situation he found himself in after the war (Veteran, K.I.I, 15/7/2016).

From the above findings, it was evident that *Mau Mau* played a key role in the shifting masculinities witnessed in the 21st century, a trend that perpetuates like a generational curse. This is because Mau Mau distorted gender roles, changed socialization of boys to men and placed women as the primary caregivers. This led to construction of varied masculinities depending on the individual attributes of the mother who instilled values to the sons.

3.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, we discussed the evolution of decolonization process in Kenya and eventually the formation of *Mau Mau* as a secondary resistance movement. Findings revealed that colonial penetration in Nyeri County affected negatively on masculinities. It is notable that with the introduction of wage and migrant labour men went far away from their homes leaving women behind. Left alone with children, the women decided to take up the male roles thus the genesis of female-headed households. Additionally, land alienation to pave way for the White settler agriculture took way from men the most important asset that defined their masculinity. In this way, men began losing their plight in the society as controllers of the major economic assets of the community.

What traditionally made a man among the Agikuyu was slowly undergoing various changes. In the eyes of the European masters, the Agikuyu men were nothing but servants. This explained why some men took up jobs as *shamba* boys and others cooked for the white men. Traditionally, domestic chores were a preserve for the women but colonialism altered this.

Further, the findings indicated that colonial oppression that was perpetuated by the colonial political economy forced Kenyans to take up arms and fight for their freedom. The climax of this resistance was marked in 1952 when the *Mau Mau* movement was born in central Kenya led by men from Nyeri County and more specifically within the sub-county of Mathira.

It is noteworthy that *Mau Mau* fighters and men generally in Kenya had experienced land alienation and this was their first grievance to the colonial government. The movement was made of both men and women with the former as the majority. From the discussion, the characteristics of a traditional African man came out. Such characteristics include being bold, wise, Godly, hardworking, persevering and risk takers. `These are the characteristics that made these fighters to go into the forest and fight for their land. They were never self-centred and they embraced teamwork.

Mau Mau war affected men tremendously, and paved way for mothers to shape masculinities of their sons. Once men left for the forest to fight, women became the heads of the family and took up the men roles. FHH emerged and women fighting together with men in the forest reduced masculinity as equal to femininity which was

not the case in the traditional African set up. Some children who were brought up by their mothers could not respect their fathers. This was a blow to the authoritative nature of the traditional African men. Others even decided to run away from their matrimonial homes due to their wives immorality and disrespect from their children. This was never the case in the traditional African society. Concisely, the *Mau Mau* uprising affected negatively the masculinities of some Nyeri men as it demonstrated that what men could do women could also do it in a better way.

The next chapter discusses how independence affected masculinities among men in Mathira.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 KENYA'S INDEPENDENCE: A CURSE OR A BLESSING TO MASCULINITY AMONG THE AGIKUYU OF MATHIRA? 1964-1980

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, we discussed how *Mau Mau* war affected Agikuyu masculinities in Nyeri County. It is important to discuss the impacts of the war on the men but it is more instructive for a historian to study the nature of the same masculinities after independence. This is because the main goals of the *Mau Mau* uprising were mainly to secure the African land, which traditionally was used to gauge masculinity among the Agikuyu men. As such, it was expected that after independence, the dream of males to have their land back could be realized to enable them to exercise the masculinity that had lost during the colonial era. Masculinities after independence were affected both positively and negatively depending on factors such as education and political allies as it will be discussed in this chapter.

4.2 Kenyatta and Land Re-allocation

Kenya remained a British colony until December 1963 following the general elections in which K.A.N.U. won in May 1963(Gavaghan, 2013). However, the nation was to be declared a republic from 1964, when self-rule officially begun (South Africa History Online, 2012). The fighters who had spent more than eight years in the forest fighting for freedom came out and even participated in the flag raising ceremony of independent Kenya. In a focus group discussion at Karatina the *Mau Mau* veterans such major Kirini of Mathira noted that they were part of the flag raising ceremony (Veterans, FGD, 19/7/2016).At this time, Kenyans had hoped that the government would get back the

land occupied by foreigners, and allocate it to the landless and the poor. Among the groups that had this hope were the *Mau Mau* freedom fighters (Strayer, 1975).

Shiroya (1992) notes that after World War II veterans had hoped for better situations like ending the ban in livestock control, being involved in government matters, building more schools for Africans among others. It was such situations after World War II that fuelled nationalism in Africa with many ex-service men desiring independence from the colonial governments.

However, as Odinga (1995) explains it was not yet *uhuru,* as what the fighters were fighting for they never got it. Land was scarce after independence and had to be shared among many people in the family with each getting at least about four acres (Ngurukie & Kabira, 1997). In addition, the leaders who took over after independence did not dismantle the coercive colonial machinery, but rather perpetuated it. Likimani (1984) notes that, European bourgeoisie departed and were replaced by an indigenous bourgeoisie. Further, the government under Kenyatta campaigned against the *Mau Mau* terming the movement as a disease that needed to be eradicated (Kinyatti, 2000).

The elites on the contrary were busy amassing wealth, and acquiring large tracts of lands under the policy of "willing seller, willing buyer." This left the veterans struggling to get necessities; their fight for independence became a betrayal and false promises (Kinyatti, 2000). Therefore, the fight for independence, the local leaders who took over did not change the situation that existed under the colonial government. These views agrees with a key informant interview with the wife of a *Mau Mau* veteran at Mathira who revealed

that only the political allies of the elite who took over power benefited from the land redistribution after independence (Wife of a veteran, K.I.I, 15/7/2016). The same views are echoed by the national land accord (2013) which reports that despite the fight for freedom, the *Mau Mau* fighters were not given back their land and this remains unfortunate that has continued to affect their generations to date. For example, a son of a veteran known as Ndung'u wa Gicheru from Nyeri accused the government of neglecting his father who had lost his land after joining the *Mau Mau* (Murumba, 2013). In addition, a report by Valiente (2013) indicated that veterans from Nyeri County claimed non-inclusion in the compensation list by the British government.

The Kenyan president by then embarked on the slogan "*uhuru na kazi*," translating to let us build the nation. Maloba (1993) explains that those who participated in *Mau Mau* were not given a chance in governance, and that land resettlement programs mostly benefited the political elites, the political allies, and close associates. The efforts of the men who were in the forest were reduced .According to Kanogo (1987), the *Mau Mau* fighters reaped small-scale benefits compared to the elites. These views agree with those of one *Mau Mau* veteran who stated:

> I came from the forest thinking that I will get what made me a man before but the White men invaded our nation. Land was the main asset that defined us as men, and that is why we were fighting for it. However, the fact that I never benefited from the resettlement and felt like my manhood had been taken away. I felt more of woman since I had nothing to control, and I had to live in the *Mau Mau* villages (Mau Mau veteran, O.I, 12/7/2016).

From the remarks, it was apparent that the *Mau Mau* veterans who never got land felt intimidated, and consequently less of men. However, scholars note that some of the

veterans got land but not as a form of compensation and they had to pay for it in the form of loans (Ngurukie & Kabira, 1997). It is apparent that those who benefited from the resettlement felt elevated and exercised their masculinity to the maximum through the planting of coffee.

One beneficiary noted:

> I was given a new land and a title deed where I grew coffee. This coffee was later on to elevate my status in the society as a man as it fetched high prices after we gained independence. Once more, I felt that the manhood I had lost to the colonial masters during the colonial era had been replenished. I felt a complete Gikuyu man with the land I had to control although it was a small piece (A coffee farmer, O.I, 4/7/2016).

The above verbatim indicate that those men who had land even it was a small piece had their masculinity affirmed through coffee proceeds. Additionally, men not only in Nyeri but also generally in Kenya were given title deeds and thus had an overall control of the land (Afrikan Eye, 2007). Masculinity was therefore, strengthened through the acquisition of the title deeds at a loan, and men could now sell their lands without consulting their wives. In pre-colonial Agikuyu society, this was never the case as men discussed with their wives before dispensing property such as land (Afrikan Eye, 2007). From Nyeri there were men who benefited not only in land but also through various awards. In Nyeri, people like General Kimbo of Nyeri received two presidential awards for exemplary sacrifice during the fight for freedom (Githinji, 2014). Most fighters as Githinji (2014) observes, are old and dying in misery instead of enjoying fruits of their sacrifices.

Accordingly, during this era land became the main source of economic power to the Agikuyu men. In a focus group discussion at Magutu, participants noted that, even for those who lost their land some were still strong and hardworking despite the small pieces of land in the *Mau Mau* villages (Veterans, FGD, 8/7/2016). A *Mau Mau* war veteran gave an example of how he was able to raise up his eight children from a hundred coffee trees that he planted in one of the *Mau Mau* villages. This is an indication that still the spirit of hard work was within these men (Veteran, O.I, 12/7/2016).

An interview with a former politician in the county revealed that, with land taken away the society became that of the survival for the fittest, reducing the masculinity (*Undurume*) of men (Former politician, K.I.I, 18/7/2016). These views concurs with scholars who note that, land was key as far as becoming a man was concerned among the Agikuyu, and one who did not own land was known as *Ndokanie*(landless), and he received no admiration (Dutto, 1975). In addition, even if a person was educated and had a good job, without land he was never satisfied , the brave, hardworking men who owned land after independence were respected just like it was in the pre-colonial Agikuyu society (Dutto, 1975).

Accordingly, land became not only a measure of manhood but also a source of conflicts in Kenya. Those who had it entered into conflicts with those who did not have a chance to access it. Despite the efforts of people like Bildad Kaggia who proposed free land redistribution for the fighters, nothing fruitful seemed to be gained. Real men (those who had land and economic power) silenced the second-class men (those without land) and their supporter. For instance, the government silenced Kaggia when President Kenyatta

wrote him a letter warning him against interference with the activities of the ministry of land (Likimani, 1984).

Accordingly, after independence, the psychological torture of not receiving land that they had fought for played a role in reducing male productivity, with many feeling discouraged, exhausted, and even emasculated. This explains why a *Mau Mau* veteran noted that before independence he was a man but after that, he felt less of a man especially after the government denied them compensation (Veteran, O.I, 12/7/2016).

The above being the case, the *Mau Mau* veterans had to try to find other jobs within the informal sector in the urban centres such as Nairobi. Those who worked for the government or had formal jobs were considered as real men, since they dressed well especially those in white-collar sectors such as the government clerks (Dutto, 1975). A focus group discussion with a group of men in Iriaini, revealed that dress code became a way of defining real men after independence (Men, FGD, 7/7/2016).

4.3 Formal Education and Masculinity

After independence, there was an insatiable demand for education as an essential driver to formal positions leading to an increase in education enrolments in 1969 (Mugo, 2005; Hornsby, 2013). It was notable that after independence, the government laid more emphasis on basic education in order to promote development. This explains why sons of loyalists' educated majority who were educated in schools like Alliance High School during colonial era took over positions of power because they had received education (Likimani, 1984). In Kenya, the people who got educated during the colonial era, and

became leaders were like Jomo Kenyatta, Mbiu Koinange, and Julius Kiano among others. In Nyeri, these educated loyalists included Isaiah Mathenge, Duncan Ndegwa, Joseph Githinji, and Matu Wamae among others (Hornsby, 2013).

In addition, some men would affirm their masculinity through educating their children, whether male or female. Some men in Nyeri for example were educated in schools that were initially detention camps during *Mau Mau* like Mweru Secondary school in Mukurwe-ini. Mukubwa (2011) points out that the veterans educated their children as a way of ensuring that their sons have a better future. People who got education in these schools include Ibrahim Muruithia who is seventy-three years old (Mukubwa, 2011). In an oral interview an educated elderly man from Mathira pointed out that he was educated during the coffee boom era from coffee earnings (Elderly Man, O.I, 12/7/2016). Mbataru (2014) writing on the coffee economy in Nyeri asserts that children educated during this era, especially girls, could later on challenge masculinities as discussed in chapter four of this research. Respondents noted that, during this period emphasis shifted to education, and education was regarded as the vehicle to economic development (Professor, O.I, 11/7/2016). Those with higher education levels took over leadership and controlled the economy, and the uneducated men became almost insignificant. This explains why white-collar jobs became fashionable at that time. It is worth noting that some fighters were never educated, thus once they came out of the forest without education they had no say in the society as they traditionally did.

In the towns where the young educated men went to look for jobs due to decrease or lack of land, these young generation never had the elderly to give them advice anymore. They

became confused especially given the fact that life in towns had its own problems (Ochieng, 1995). A gender activist interviewed noted that prostitution had its role to play. Men had to pay for sex and with sex becoming more commercialized, men's control over women reproductive labour diminished (Gender activist, O.I. 11/7/2016). Men now only had control over the women whom they had paid for commercial sex. This was never the case in the traditional African society.

An oral source revealed that ideally, in the traditional Agikuyu society, men had total control over female productive and reproductive labour. Women could not deny men what they termed as their rights. A woman was supposed to be submissive in all aspects including in reproductive issues (Clan elder, O.I, 5/7/2016). However, with prostitution and free movement of women unlike during colonialism, the men could no longer command women sexually as money had taken it all. These remarks agree with scholars who note that there was alteration in social organization after independence leading to more prostitution (Dewey & Kelly, 2011).Further, it is of note that social currents such as urbanization, industrialization, and tourism led to increase in prostitution. The uncertainties of urban life forced many men to leave their families when they went to the urban centres, and as a result, they engaged in prostitution due to the dilapidated houses in slums that facilitate weak controls of sexual behaviour (Dewey & Kelly, 2011)

4.4 Masculinity during the De facto One Party -State Era

Christina, (2000) note that after independence, KANU and one party state system shaped Kenya politics where politicians relied on networks from their allies. Positions that initially were hereditary became elective with positions that needed wisdom and capacity

to rule being given to individuals on basis of ethnic group (Adar, 1998). In a key informant interview, a former politician observed:

> At this era, political positions became a way of defining a man rooted in the ethnic group of a person. Ethnic groups turned to glorify even the youths who had gained political power at the expense of the old and wise men. Wisdom was no longer a trait to define a man. Those with political power had all the praise and glory as real men (K.I.I, 15/7/2016).

One's ethnic group became a way of defining a man. In this regard, it is worth noting that at some point Oginga Odinga was regarded as a *kihii* by members of the Kikuyu ethnic group who were opposing him (Abadejo, 2006). Such sentiments were based on the view that the *Luo* tribe does not circumcise their male children, thus the Agikuyu held the view that uncircumcised men were not supposed to have a say in politics, as they were not real men. However, scholars note that such remarks aimed at defending personal interests on ethnic basis. In 1969, Kenyatta banned the opposition parties, Kenya became a one party state, and freedom of expression, and the media became under censorship (Throup & Hornsby, 1998). Nobody could speak against the government, as both men and women had to sing to the KANU tune for fear of being detained or assassinated. In Nyeri for example, men like Waruru Kanja, Wanyiri Kihoro, and Mark Mwethaga were detained without trial for attacking the government on corruption and land grabbing (Hornsby, 2013). A clan elder at Karatina noted that the brave African men became silent. He remarked:

> After I was released from prison, I did not want to question even a small boy who was pro-KANU. The torture and suffering I went through while in the cell, reduced me to a defenceless man. I

> decided to remain silent like a woman to protect my own life because KANU was not a joke (Clan elder, O.I, 7/7/2016).

These sentiments echo scholars who observe that the KANU regime was so dictatorial such that those who questioned and criticized the government died in cold blood (Anassi, 2004). This is an indication that the KANU dictatorship under the reign of Kenyatta and Moi contributed to the decline of masculinities with those who were allied to the politics of the ruling party being considered as real men.

With the *de facto* one party system of governance, the atmosphere of corruption and political impunity cropped up. This was the major constraint to the man in exercising male responsibilities (Lwambo, 2011). Corruption in all angles became rampant and this negatively affected the poor and under privileged men especially those who had come from the forest (*Mau Mau* fighters), and had nothing to corrupt in. In an oral interview, a chief noted that the poor men who had no means of production suffered twice in the hands of the rich political elites who used their power to embezzle public funds and property and covered themselves using the political curtain (chief, O.I, 7/7/2016).

Political and economic power was co-opted by "strong men," strong in this case meant those who could corrupt, came from the same ethnic backgrounds and educated (Lwambo, 2011). In Kenya, this was never to be assumed as most men did not have military, political, and economic power and as a result, they experienced agony and resentment in their disempowered positions. In a report by Sunday, Nation on 3rd January 2016 it was reported that the people of Nyeri have always felt they contributed immensely to *Mau Mau* yet they did not get the dividends, as anyone from *Mau Mau*

became an enemy of the government. An interview with a university professor in one of the top universities in Kenya revealed that many people were then forced to enact hegemonic masculinity under increased pressure, an observation that violence was used to control threats of masculinity(Professor, O.I, 11/7/2016).

Further, in their search for money the young men of the period were drawn to quickly fixed solutions making them more susceptible to committing social crimes (Dewey & Kelly, 2011). A young man in Mathira noted that in a way there was a nexus between failed masculinities and violent masculinities that were manifested through the rise of gangs such as *mungiki* (Young man, O.I, 2/4/2016). He further blamed the frustration of young men in Nyeri on the historical injustices done to their fathers by making *Mau Mau* an enemy of the state. The same remarks were echoed by a professor who noted that *mungiki* was a product of failed masculinities in central Kenya and in Nyeri County (Professor, O.I, 11/7/2016).

Additionally, Substantial evidence from oral interviews from the field revealed that, other men sought to do technical courses to earn a living. Those who never had higher education had to seek for a way to create a balance with others thus technical education was their final resort. Poverty and political injustices by the de facto rule polarized the gender roles at the same time limiting the men's roles. Most homes broke due to economic wrangles, as the home was the only place remaining for these men to achieving their manhood.

4.5 Coffee Boom and Masculinity in Nyeri

Scholars assert that, on gaining independence and a decade after independence Kenya enjoyed economic growth mainly from the coffee economy (Branch, 2011; Mbataru, 2014; Hornsby, 2013). Studies indicate that between 1964-1973 Kenya achieved recommendable growths with a GDP of 6.6%. There was steady growth in the provision of social services, and it was *an African miracle* era of Kenya (Leonard, 2013). Further, during the era of coffee boom in the 1970s, many men abandoned their families and camped in urban centres to enjoy the coffee money (Afrikan Eye, 2007).

A clan elder at Mathira pointed out that, traditionally among the Agikuyu, men grew male crops such as the black beans, yams, and cassavas but with introduction of the cash crop economy, men embarked on coffee farming (O.I, 12/7/2016).Coffee boom thus became a saviour for men in restoring masculinity, which was distorted by colonialism. There was a shift of men from growing food crops to embracing the cash crop economy. Men controlled coffee farming and became petty bourgeoisie, as Nyeri was the first region in central Kenya to grow coffee introduced by Consolata fathers. (St. John Baptist Kenya, 2010). Scholars note that, coffee was Kenya's largest cash crop in 1964, and this resulted in prices of coffee going u. with prices of coffee up, men felt that their masculinity was affirmed (Mugo, 2005).

Further, money-based economy became more pronounced due to the sale of cash crops especially coffee, and establishment of cooperative societies. However, loyalists wanted coffee to be monopolized before 1964 so that the common *mwananchi* could not plant more coffee, and the elite would have more power from the coffee economy (Mugo,

2005). From 1964, there were campaigns on being allowed to grow coffee by activists, and everyone was allowed to grow coffee thus affirming the masculinity of men. With more money from coffee proceeds, payment of bride wealth became more commercialized with parents desiring financial advantages other than desire of creating strong family ties (Hornsby, 2013). Polygamy remained a way of demonstrating success among Kenyan men generally but only for those who had money for example Paul Ngei had two wives, Mbiu Koinange and Nyachae had four wives (Hornsby, 2013).Money economy from coffee boom thus became a measure of masculinity among men after independence.

4.6 Agikuyu Women Influence on the Boy Child

After independence, some men resorted into alcoholism as a way of enjoying the fruits of independence in the urban centres (Likimani, 1984). With men in town enjoying the coffee earnings, it meant that some of the male children born during this time lacked father figures, acquired feminine traits from their mothers, and their masculinities were shaped by their mother. In a focus group discussion at Mathira East, participants noted that the boys left behind became under the sole care and guidance of their mothers. The male voice in the family faded away and these children listened more to their mothers than their fathers did (Traders, FGD, 17/7/2016).

The above affected not only the place of a man in the family but also the masculinity of the generation that was to come. It is important to note that during the coffee boom men were ignorant of the emergence of small scale trade by women, and women would later use the savings to cater for their families during the coffee crisis in 1980s (Mbataru,

2014). Mbataru (2014) gives an incidence of a man who narrated of hearing voices of women in Karatina market as they bargained for items which mainly includes vegetables and grains from their farms, and neighbouring regions. These women also participated in dairy farming, and poultry rearing since men had abandoned such activities during the coffee boom in the 1970s. From the small-scale trade, women got into groups as their husbands relaxed waiting for the government to help them enjoy the fruits of independence (Mbataru, 2014). In these groups, women supported and advised each other while educating their children through dairy farming where they could sell the milk to cooperatives (Ngurukie &Kabira, 1997). As a result, women's economic empowerment led to shifting gender relations in a male dominated society.

In an oral interview with a woman in Karatina, it was revealed that during this time, women worked hard selling vegetables and grains in order to cater for their children needs such as education as some men had seemed irresponsible through enjoying the coffee proceeds alone in the urban centres (Woman, O.I, 12/7/2016). This view concurs with those of scholars who note that Nairobi was a male dominated region, with very few formal opportunities for women who were expected to stay at home (Bujra, 1975; Nelson, 1978).Mukuyu (2015). These authors demonstrate how the strong and tough Nyeri women who were left in rural homes could sell bananas, and other food crops in the market as security in case their husbands refused to support them financially.

In addition, after independence campaigns on women empowerment started coming to the lime light. United Nations Decade for women from 1975 was an avenue to assess the involvement of women in development (UN, 1986).

Women empowerment forums such as Massachusetts Association for Women in Education (MAWE), Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), Federation of Women Lawyers in Kenya (FIDA), aimed at improving Africa's governance and global development processes through provision of education to women. In addition, these associations aimed at advancing women's rights in Kenya through protection from harmful cultural practices. Governments started acknowledging that women were an important part in development, and thus should be integrated in the development processes (Midamba, 1990). This was in response to the Mexico world plan of action that advocated for the establishment of a women's bureau (Mwangi, 2008).

As a result, women's movements began to spur, growing in scope and numbers. Scholars note that, strategies such as the Nairobi forward looking strategies, aimed at eradicating discrimination, and violence against women, equality in social participation, equality in decision making and political participation (Susan, 1985; Mwangi, 2008). The call for women's empowerment implied that women had to be emancipated holistically; politically, socially and economically.

Further, women were acknowledged as an integral part in research matters as put forward by associations such as the Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD). In addition, findings revealed that entry of women in politics was a blow on masculinity. Muchire (2011) notes that in Nyeri women such as Wangari Maathai and Cecilia Wangechi were among the women pioneers of politics in Nyeri. Participants in a focus group discussion at Konyu noted that women politicians became tools of empowering women with some being rude and could no longer respect their

husbands. This made men became voiceless in the eyes of such women who were slowly being liberated, and taking care of their families through educating their children(FGD, 8/7/2016).

4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, we sought to interrogate the impacts of political independence on masculinities in Nyeri County. In so doing, we closely analysed both the positive and negative impacts of Kenya's political independence on masculinities.

It was established that immediately after independence the freedom fighters never benefited from the land resettlement programs. The African elite who took over power favoured their political allies at the expense of the *Mau Mau* veterans. Given their landless situations, these veterans remained in the *Mau Mau* villages where they became less vocal as men. It was also established that immediately after independence, Kenya's economic growth skyrocketed especially after the 1964 and by 1970, and the coffee boom empowered men more economically. Those who had land also had access to title deeds unlike their female counterparts, and men left their homes to the city enjoying the coffee earning alone. This led to the re-emergence of the Female Headed Households (FHH) with women opting to conduct business to educate their children, and taking part in socializing them.

Additionally, it was noted that the Kenyan government shifted its focus to education during the first decade of independence. On their part, some men invested their coffee income towards educating their children as a form of security in future; however, the

findings revealed that this education especially to the girl child was later on to challenge masculinities. With education, the most educated were considered as real men just like those with land were given glory as complete men in the community. The old, poor and uneducated, regardless of their age, wisdom, and ability to guide people were regarded as nobody.

The chapter also revealed that the women empowerment wave that hit the nation during this era affected masculinities, and entry of a few women into politics such as Wangari Maathai was a blow to masculinity since political power was initially seen as a men affair. This is because political power had become another measure of manhood in the society. Those with political power also had economic power and thus more powerful than anybody else in the society. The women politicians were even more respected than their male counterparts who did not have political power thus more powerful in the eyes these men.

The climate of corruption, impunity, and violence made it difficult for men to perform their roles. In addition, other men left to towns in search of white-collar jobs. They became vulnerable to crime thus a connection between failed masculinities and violent masculinities. With poverty, some families broke up and as a result, men's seat of power that was their homes was destroyed. In a way, it can be concluded that political independence in Kenya marginalized men and Nyeri men were the most hit bearing in mind that they were the first ones to grow coffee and had the majority of *Mau Mau* fighters. After Kenya gained independence, the fighters according to what the newspapers reported were not supposed to receive any land as they were enemies of the

White men and those who took over power were only perpetuating this trend from where the colonialists had left.

In addition, dictatorship from the KANU regime played a role in reducing the masculinity of men in central Kenya. Arrests and detentions without trails coupled with sufferings in detention camps made the once strong, men to be silent to avoid detentions. The few who attacked the government for example in Nyeri included men like Waruru Kanja, Mark Mwethaga, and Wanyiri Kihoro who suffered detentions without trials.

Concisely, the influences of political independence on masculinities in Nyeri County were multi-dimensional. Several factors played a key role in shaping the masculinities ranging from land, education, women empowerment, and political dictatorship that followed independence. The impacts of these aspects on masculinities were both liberating and emasculatory in nature.

The next chapter discusses the current manifestations of masculinities among the men in Mathira.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 FROM MEN TO 'BOYS'; 1981-2014

5.1 Introduction

The focus of this study was to examine the changing trends in masculinities among the Agikuyu of Nyeri County. In the previous sections, masculinities in Nyeri County were seen to move from an emancipatory position to emasculatory state during the *Mau Mau* war. However, at independence, masculinity in Nyeri was in a mixed state with some men being elevated while others were downtrodden. In this chapter, we discuss the drivers and manifestations of masculinities in Nyeri County. We therefore proceed to pose the following questions; what factors informed the changes in masculinity and what is the current nature and position of the Nyeri men?

5.2 Decline in Coffee Proceeds and Agikuyu Masculinities in Mathira

In his, study on masculinities, femininities in the global era, Kiruthu (2014) notes that from 1980s, conflicts in all aspects of the society in Nyeri County were inevitable. All these were linked to globalization, and decline in the coffee proceeds. In addition, from 1978 to 1988, Kenya's economy encountered difficulties due to increase in crude oil prices, and economic crisis of the 1970s. Scholars such as Ogot & Ochieng (1995) note that almost 50% households owned less than two acres of land, thus depended on off-farm production such as working in the *jua kali* sector to supplement their incomes. IMF, World Bank and other donors started implementing Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) such as import liberalization and removal of price controls. This resulted in strong inflationary pressures and decline of Kenya's currency (Ogot &Ochieng, 1995).

In an oral interview, a retired bank manager remarked that during this time, the county economy fell with the withdrawal of foreign donors in aiding the nation economically (Bank manager, O.I, 5/7/2016). The remarks agrees with those of Olukoshi (1998) who noted that, the introduction of SAPs was from early 1980s in Africa, a time that most African countries were in an economic crisis, due to the development partners and donors withdrawing their help from African countries and IMF policies introduced in countries like Kenya. The long-term effects of the SAPs were not only economic but also affected the society. Economically, there was liberalization, reduced tax on imports and devaluation of currency. Such conditions led to the reduction of family income, the government reduced its public spending, and increased taxes on home goods leading to amplified price of goods and services (Olukoshi, 1998).

A key informant interview with a coffee farmer noted that with declined coffee economy, the social fabric of Nyeri community was negatively affected and majority men were the most hit (Coffee farmer, K.I.I, 17/7/2016). This agrees with Nordiska report of 1998, which notes that the prices of exports (cocoa and coffee) were notoriously erratic. Concisely, these SAPs led to a reduction in the coffee economy due to the decline in the value of the Kenyan currency. The SAPs lacked a sense of transparency in terms of ruling and implementation. The elites in collaboration with foreigners sealed deals about SAPs and concealed the agreements into secrecy with the rule that ensured a state of silence (Olukoshi, 1998).

In Nyeri County, things were not different, and it was the hardest hit by the declining coffee economy as Nyeri people were the first growers of coffee in the nation under

Consolata farmers. Men in Mathira valued coffee farming as the source of income and with coffee earnings; the Nyeri men could control everything in their family including the production and reproductive labour of their wives. They were able to even maintain their families and educate their children through coffee farming (Mbataru, 2014). However, the decline in the prices of coffee affected the men in Nyeri negatively.

Land ownership and the products of land were used to define men traditionally among other aspects (Kenyatta, 1938). Thus, with reduced prices of coffee the men could no longer play their bread winning roles effectively. An elderly woman in a key informant interview noted that with reduced earnings from coffee poverty struck the families. Men were deprived off their noble status in the family as wrangles and conflicts were bound to crop in (K.I.I, 17/7/2016). It became difficult for men to take care of large families amid escalated poverty due to reduced coffee prices and increased tax on goods. Men became depressed and resorted to alcoholism and idling (Kiruthu, 2014). In an oral interview, a clan elder in Mathira noted:

> Without coffee to give men a source of income, men felt emasculated. As result, many were depressed and had to turn to alcohol and idleness as defence mechanism to cover their weakening status. others turned to smoking while other became brutal to their family members thus breaking the family further, while losing their family's seats of power in the process (O.I, 12/7/2016).

Further, with the decline in the coffee economy, some men lost their economic power as their main source of income that was coffee was no more. They became so selective and only wanted formal jobs, which were not easy to get, bearing in mind that most of them

were drunkards who did not have formal education. On her part, a young woman observed:

> Without a job, these men do not have a way of earning income and thus become idlers who go to *mung'etho* (idling in the shopping centres) (O.I, 5/7/2016).

As a result, these men became dependent on their wives who took up the informal jobs such as selling groceries, washing clothes for those employed, and even taking part in the construction of houses and roads. Traditionally, such jobs like construction were a male preserve. However, due to the hopeless state of their men the Nyeri women took up male roles. This further challenged the social plight of a Nyeri man.

5.3 Alcoholism Challenging Agikuyu Masculinities in Nyeri

Kiruthu (2014) points out that with land gone some men in Nyeri resorted to alcoholism and idleness. These men could no longer take care of their families and marital violence became intensified in the region (Mwangi, 2016). The violence was because of frustrations in the family due to poverty and feelings of inferiority among the men. In such a hopeless state of men, women had to seek for ways to raise their children thus women became the breadwinners and men the bread takers (Trader, O.I, 8/7/2016). With women taking up male roles, the young boys growing up associated more with their mothers than their fathers did. This is because at many cases, the fathers were absent or came home late and drunk thus never had a chance to interact with their boys and mentor them to manhood.

Alcoholism also paved the way for other forms of drug and substance abuse especially among the youth. Mwangi (2016) pointed out that as they grew up, the boys found a society invaded by alcoholism and irresponsible fathers and this continued like a generational curse. The irresponsible fathers demonstrated to the young people that women were more powerful and could perform male tasks much better. In this way, an oral source revealed these boys admired and got interest to be associated with their hardworking mothers. In an article by Artmattersinfo (2015), it was noted that the man in Nyeri is slowly loosing respect under the humiliation of their wives.

Alcoholism is a big problem not just in Nyeri but also in central Kenya, with the youths being the most victims. In addition, a focus group discussion in Mathira revealed that Alcoholism could not grant men an opportunity to have time with their families. The fathers became poor role models to the young boys. Some, boys followed their father's footsteps although there are cases of men who were very responsible in Nyeri. Further, an oral interview with a university professor revealed that majority got attracted to militia groups like Mungiki whom some respondents view as a reaction to failed masculinity and who are bitter for their land which was in the hands of the elites (Professor, O.I, 11/7/2016) . Such groups as noted by respondents were bitter, as their fathers who were *Mau Mau,* veterans did not receive any compensation from the colonial government simply because they were *Mau Mau*. However, it should be noted that *mungiki* arose around 1980s, long after independence, and its main grievances was re-traditionalization and embracing of African culture and religion (Katumanga & Nguyi 2014; Anderson 2002; Katumanga, 2005).

Additionally, *mungiki* was against corruption and bad leadership, as amplified in their flag and the colours in the flag, with Black symbolizing the Kenyans, red for blood, green for land and white for peace. To this movement, the Kenyan people are divided because of land leading to bloodshed, the reason as to why the red colour is divided by green. Given the above, it is not wise to conclude that *Mungiki* was a product of failed masculinity. As much as it is an indicator of the declining masculinity, one ought to consider other factors that triggered the decline.

Muthoni (2012) noted that alcoholic men could not make wise decisions anymore and thus they became weak and non-vocal at the family level and in society. She further asserts that in many African cultures, men beat their wives as a sign of superiority. She explained how at her rural home in Nyeri her father would batter her mother as a way of humbling her since both were earning the same amount of salary. However, with increased alcoholism the women became more opinionated in the eyes of the voiceless men who could only shout and make noise once drunk (Mwangi, 2016). A woman trader noted that when sober, such men could not utter a word, food only became bad when they were drunk (Woman trader, O.I, 8/7/2016). Such men became dirty, disorganized and ill- mannered. Women had to step in the forefront, take up roles that initially were men's, and they started fending for their children, educating them, clothing them, and in general providing all the necessities. Female Headed Households (FHH) became common.

As noted by scholars, FHH rose from 1969 whereby women (Dutto, 1975) headed 33 out of 1549 households. Women started becoming more vocal compared to their lazy

husbands, and as a result these men gained a lot of disrespect not only from their wives but also from their children who saw their mothers taking care of them all by themselves. Kobia (2011) observed that some areas such as *majengo* slums of Nyeri had many pubs, leading to an outcry from the residents on the increasing number of alcohol dens. These observations agreed with a respondent who noted that the number of pubs in areas like Karatina are more than that of the schools (Trader, O.I, 8/7/2016).

In an oral interview with a male university student at Karatina university, it was further noted that with careless husbands who resorted into alcoholism some women also decided to be "*don't cares*", and they began also taking alcohol together with their husbands, and some under the influence of alcohol would beat their drunk husbands (Student, O.I, 8/7/2016). The remarks agree with those of an article by Muthoni (2012) who noted that some men in Nyeri being beaten by their wives is a personal choice that men brought to themselves. This indicated that what a man could do a woman could do it even better. Respect for the traditional African man was diminishing slowly and slowly with Nyeri being, the most hit in Kenya probably because regions such as *majengo* became brew invaded (Kobia, 2011).

A focus group discussion with residents in Nyeri revealed that by allowing their wives to take alcohol with them is a clear indication that some Nyeri men had lost control over their wives (Elderly women, FGD, 16/7/2016). Furthermore, a man from Mathira asserted that drunken men became the victims of marital violence with their wives beating them (Man, O.I, 8/7/2016). This agrees with Nairaland report (2016) which notes that in 2013 Nyeri recorded several cases of men being battered by their wives.

The trends in these violence, led to setting up gender violence wards for men battered by their wives at Nyeri provincial hospital (Nairaland, 2016). Muthoni (2012) noted that according to Agikuyu, oral traditions men never received beatings from their wives, and it was men who beat their wives as a sign of masculinity. However, during this period, Men started being beaten like children and the society became silent about this though there are several cases that came to the lime light. Concisely, some Nyeri men became un-opinionated; victims of gender based violence, and contributed little or nothing at all to their families due to drunkenness (Mwangi, 2016).

5.4 Women Pay Bride Wealth. The End of Gikuyu man?

Women self-help groups in Nyeri started after independence. These self-help groups were known as women's *harambee* coined after the motto of the nation '*harambee*', which means pulling together (Dutto, 1975). Women began working together in *harambee* groups, but for the men there were no such groups. Some of the *harambee* groups that existed after independence from 1968 included; The Kimathi Estate Harambee Women's Group, Harambee's Women's Group, Nyeri Township, and Chania women's Group. These groups were meant to strengthen women economically through unity in cultivating lands, collecting and accumulating money for later redistribution for projects (Dutto, 1975).

In addition, these groups empowered women socially whereby they organized weekly meetings for interaction and leisure (Dutto, 1975). There also existed women's associations, and groups such as *Kamweretho*, Nyeri women's group, the Nyeri young women's Hostel Group, Nyeri *maendeleo ya wanawake(MyW)* among others. These

associations were meant to promote welfare of women, raise fund, and stimulate home industries (Maloba, 1993). A small group of European women for example, started *Maendeleo ya Wanawake* worldwide in 1950s, with the main activities being farming, and childcare (Wipper, 1975).

The most popular one among these groups is *Kamweretho*. Kinyanjui (2010) points out that the origin of *Kamweretho* can be traced from traditional mutual support groups known as *ngwatio*, which involved labour exchange. This association was initially a preserve of single women but other women later joined. *Kamweretho* among the Agikuyu of Central Kenya has membership of both married and unmarried women. Married women join this association as a way of seeking blessings from the parents and thanking them. The members bring funds together, and single women are able to pay dowry for themselves, if the husband paid no dowry for them or if the woman never got married. The *chama* members raise money through merry go rounds to enable the woman to "*buy herself*" in order to receive blessings from parents and cleansing for giving birth out of wedlock, and paving way for their daughters to pay dowry (Mukei,2015).

An elderly man interviewed in Karatina town noted that traditionally, it was the role of men to marry and therefore pay dowry. However, *kamweretho* has reversed this role with women paying their own dowry thus 'marrying' themselves (Elderly man, O.I, 7/7/2016). Because of the empowerment derived from this *chama*, is viewed, as a threat to patriarchy. It is however vital to note that *kamweretho* was a creation of patriarchy, due to the high expectations of fathers getting bride price for their daughters. If a woman

has to be paid for bride price, the single women wonder where to get the bride price from unless through the help of *Kamweretho* (Mukuyu, 2014).Majority of women feel socially incomplete if no dowry is paid for them. The women thus seek blessings from parents through *Kamweretho* by giving gifts such as an envelope containing money, household stuffs, and clothes (Kinyanjui, 2010).Songs of praise are sung to the mother making the ceremony more of a women affair, and bringing out the mother as a vital being as far as child nurturing is concerned.

Kinyanjui (2010) explained that women in *Kamweretho* felt that cultural aspects ignore mothers yet they are responsible for caring for the children while also working to earn a living. In some cases, if the woman is married the man plays a secondary role in it maybe through buying some gifts for the in-laws, and in that case, the gifts are purposely meant to invite blessings. Some of these *Kamweretho* ceremonies turn into drinking sprees in the evenings, something that have made some religious institutions to ridicule them and distance themselves from it. Others view them as a way of emasculating men who are unable to pay dowry, while others are of the view that it has made women tough headed, and as a result to disrespect their men (Student, O.I, 5/7/2016).

Kamweretho creates a new woman who is economically empowered as evidenced by the ability to hire cars for transport during the ceremony, buying gifts for parents among other things. One can thus argue that *Kamweretho* creates a new woman who traditionally as discussed in chapter two of this work was an outsider in her own family, and had no tribe. Apart from the payment of dowry in form of the gifts given to the parents especially the mothers, it also assist members in other ventures such as paying

of school fees through the merry go rounds initiatives. The ceremonies however differ depending on the region and religions (Mukuyu, 2014).

Traditionally, as discussed in chapter two of this work, fathers received gifts relating to bride wealth, but this situation is changing with women in *kamweretho* groups presenting the gifts to both parents with special emphasis to the mother. This empowerment of women through such groups like *Kamweretho* cause some men to feel threatened by the power these groups exude, leading to declining masculinities as witnessed within Nyeri County. However, as Kinyanjui (2010) reveals, some men see *Kamweretho* as a great way of building the society if only men would unite with women instead of ridiculing such empowerment groups.

5.5 Women as Agents of Cultural Change in Nyeri

Nyeri was the first region to embrace Christianity in 1903 when the Catholic missionaries of Consolata society opened a mission centre at Tetu, Nyeri. As a result, it became the first region to do away with female genital mutilation (Dutto, 1975), probably making the first step in women empowerment in Nyeri. In addition, researchers have noted that, Nyeri women have always led their counterparts in most aspects of life, beginning in 1929 when they refused female circumcision (Wanderi, 2015). This was their major act of defiance against male domination in central Kenya. Further, Muchire (2011) pointed out that Nyeri women were pioneers in academia. For example, the first woman professor of Mathematics, Cecilia Wangechi hailed from Tetu, Nyeri. These views agree with other reports which note that, Nyeri women were empowered from all angles such as education, with a Nyeri woman known as Wangari Maathai being the

first woman to earn a PHD and chair in a university department in whole of East Africa in 1971(BIO, 2016).

Additionally, women in Nyeri are active participants in merry go rounds known as *Itati* and men have no control of property acquired from the *Itati's* as the members strive to be independent, something that their men understand (Wanderi, 2015). Muchire (2011) indicated that, politically, the Nyeri woman like Cecilia Wangechi and Wangari Maathai ventured into politics long ago in 1992. Wanderi (2015) explains that compared to women from other regions such as Murang'a and Kiambu, who followed suit later in 2013 the Nyeri woman portrayed herself as politically able just like the men. In addition, an empowered Nyeri woman believes in handling a problem head on, arguing that a river does not flow upwards (Wanderi, 2015). These clearly indicates that women empowerment have challenged masculinity, especially when men are not up to the task of keeping up with the empowered woman (Student, O.I, 5/7/ 2016).

With democracy introduced in Kenya during the 1990s and the women decade, each individual freedom was granted, and women equity and empowerment, movements gave women more freedom and rights. A focus group discussion with female youths at Karatina University revealed that, the current Nyeri girls and women have confidence in themselves because they know their rights (Female youths, FGD, 8/7/2016). These remarks concurs with reports which asserts that, feminism deconstructs patriarchy, as initially women were confined to a domestic sphere as a symbol of men's status. (Nawey.net, 2011). After the women decade, women started coming together to discuss how to hold leaders accountable, something that was never the case traditionally.

Women began lobbying to get everything, from land, education and participation in politics (Nawey.net, 2011).

Participants in a focus group discussion explained that due to girl child empowerment campaigns attention drifted to the girl child. As discussed in chapter two of this work, sons were highly valued. However, in the 1990s, the once marginalized sex started receiving social, political, and economic attention that was not bad at all. There were campaigns to ensure girl child education, eliminate gender-based violence especially domestic violence with which women were the most victim (Clan elders, FGD. 7/7/2016). Women empowerment and call for equity weakened the traditional African men as with the equity women could own property, inherit land and became financially independent.

Educated wives such as Wangari Maathai climbed the social ladder higher than their husbands did (Daily Monitor, 2011). Aware of their rights, these wives could not allow the men to intimidate them or even control them anymore. Through the empowered women, things that defined a man changed and new ways of defining a man emerged. These were in relation to the amount of money one had, the level of education and properties owned such as cars. Men who were opposed of these new dimensions were regarded as poor and not men anymore. In a focus group discussion, one female youth remarked:

> I have no business to marry and respect a poor man who cannot drive me around, take me out, and treat me like a queen. I cannot make such mistake since even my own mother never married a

> poor man. Money begets money and no romance without money (Female youth, O.I. 7/7/2016).

From her remarks, it was apparent that the rich men were considered strong in the society, and thus ought to be respected. Those who are poor and are uneducated are not given space and respect like the rich men.

An oral source revealed that, a good number of husbands divorced their wives who became involved in politics, as the latter they could not allow their men to control them anymore. For example in 1979 Mwangi Maathai, the husband to Wangari Maathai sued for divorce claiming Wangari was too strong minded and uncontrollable (Daily Monitor,2011). Those who remained in marriage became the voice of the family because they had the finances to take care of their families and this made them superior to their husbands. Men became afraid of such women and became prisoners of their own in their families (Trader, O.I, 5/7/2016).

At some point the aspects of sharing household responsibilities came in, and men could now cook, wash dishes, clean the house, feed the children, while their wives were working. This was never the case in the traditional African society where a man never did household chores; the traditional African man was reduced or else reduced himself to a "wife." Men became gentle and a different aspect of being men emerged .The authoritative African man was replaced by a silent, relaxed an un-opinionated man. These implied that men had to listen more to their wives than controlling them because they had nothing to make women respect them anymore.

5.6 Globalization and Masculinities in Nyeri

With the world becoming a global village, transport and communication became easier and the penetration of European culture in Africa became rampant. Kiruthu (2014) pointed out that due to globalization, conflicts are inevitable and play a great role in restructuring the social organization of communities leading to conflicts. An oral source revealed that, television programs and other programs from the internet played a great role in the deformation of an African man in most regions in Africa (O.I, 12/7/2016). Westernization of the culture through globalization affected young men who had no role models since their fathers and mothers had resorted into drinking (Mwangi, 2016). Idle young men turned to the internet and television programs as their source of consolation. They started imitating what they saw and heard in television programs. With such, some men ended up dressing in female attires, others even began plaiting their hair and wearing earrings and jewellery like women. Fashion and modernity emerged as a force and stimuli behind men adopting feminine traits. These men during of the 21st century thus discarded the African socialization into manhood.

In an oral interview with a university student, it was explained that what some Nyeri men are experiencing is confused masculinities where men are in a dilemma between becoming a real African man and becoming a modern man. This is because modernity has become a new way of defining a man (Student, O.I, 5/7/ 2016). In addition, a key informant interview with a clan elder revealed that traditionally men were not supposed to cry before their wives as this was a sign of weakness and cowardice (Clan elder, K.I.I, 7/7/2016).

On her part, an elderly woman blamed religion on the changing trends in masculinities in Nyeri County. Religion has become the opium of the people and many people are hiding their true character in religion. This remark agrees with Kiruthu (2014) who noted that some Africans including men in Nyeri decided to form their independent churches since colonialism to hide their frustrations. In addition, wives of pastors have equated themselves to be pastors and in this way, women have started playing the men's roles. With such a perception, women no longer value their husbands and some men can no longer control their wives. A woman evangelist interviewed observed that:

> The bible says that a woman was created as a companion of a man and not as a slave. There is no way men can expect us to submit to them when they treat us like slaves. For a long time they have used the Bible to rule us but now we know and we have read the same bible. Before God all of us are equal regardless of our sex (Woman evangelist, O.I, 10/7/2016).

Despite the above view that recognized the women submission preached by the Bible, it was also apparent that the same Bible talks of equality and companionship between men and women. However, remarks by another respondent revealed that the Bible has been over-interpreted and women use it against men. God's attributes as being all-powerful over human nature has made women to see men as useless people with or without whom life can continue. She remarked:

> *Yaani kati ya mungu Na mwanaume nani mkubwa?Mungu ni muhimu kuliko mwanaume. Mume wangu aliniacha lakini sina hofu sababu niko na Mungu* (Evangelist, O.I.10/7/2016).

The above translates to "*between God and a man who is great. God is more important. My husband left me but is not worried because I have God."*

From the above remark, it is apparent that some women perceive men as being important, but not a necessity thus women can do away with men. Despite the above views, it is important to note that Nyeri women were the first to embrace Christianity in 1928, thus no doubt that they understand the equality they are advocating for. The Bible here is portrayed a double-edged sword favouring men from one side and emasculating them from the other angle.

A male respondent pointed out that, the feeling of receiving a cold shoulder from their wives drove these men into depression and some even decide to run away from their wives. This is an indication that man had become weak and someone who ran away from problems instead of solving them (A male respondent, O.I, 5/7/2016). The once authoritative man who could silence the entire family became a runway man who could not stand the wrath of their wives. Majority used the Bible and the acts of forgiveness to justify their actions as they regarded themselves as God fearing, and did not want to start up arguments through solving the problems in their homes. In a key informant interview with one man who ran away from home remarked,

> *"Mimi singempiga, nilimwachia mungu kwa sababu hata bibilia inasema tusameheane.*"(Trader, K.I.I, 8/7/2016).

Translated to, “I could not beat her; I just surrendered everything to God for even the bible tells us to forgive.”

This implies that men could no longer exercise their authority and the women reigned over them. Additionally, some men could not even attend the men meetings (barazas) as it was traditionally a custom meant to discuss progressive issues, as church groups could

not give them the chance to do so due to evangelization campaigns. Further, a new religion brought about Christianity that regarded the traditional ways of socializing a boy into a man as satanic. For instance as noted by scholars such as Kimani (2014) and Murangiri (2014), the circumcision ritual among Agikuyu and Ameru changed. Circumcision of boys began to take place in churches.

People who were to provide these young initiates with moral education according to societal norms were scarce, right from birth to initiation that was an important rite of passage for an African man. Sometimes their mothers take the boys to the hospitals for circumcision something that never happened in the traditional African society. This is affirmed by the health Kenya (2014) which notes that the traditional powerful initiation ceremonies with an increases in individualism and unity among the youth due to modernity. Lack of this kind of socialization led to "sissy boys," men who behave more like women and rely on their parents for everything. Such men depend on their mothers for things such as cigarettes implying that some mothers are reducing their sons to be less masculine.

Explaining the role of religion in shaping masculinities in Nyeri, Kiruthu (2014) notes that with such religious aspects, many churches were opened in Nyeri where men could hide their frustrations. Misery and family wrangles made the Nyeri man depressed something echoed by participants in a focus group discussion at *Karatina* market (Clan elders FGD. 7/7/2016)

In addition, poor parenting has been blamed for the changing masculinities within the Nyeri region. Traditionally, it was the role of the parents especially the fathers to prepare their boys into men. However, due to alcoholic parents and busy careers, parents no longer have time for their children. A young woman revealed that children have been left under the care of house helps leaving a parental gap in a child's life (Trader, O.I, 5/7/2016). The young boys who grow under the care of the house help knew less about the society and its customs. Many were taken to day-care centres where they spent the entire day learning western lifestyles. This led to the production of a generation that was so naive as far as the Gikuyu man attributes were concerned. They became lazy since they had been socialized that the homestead affairs belongs to the house helps.

Mothers have played a role in reducing the masculinity of their sons. A catholic priest interviewee observed:

> The men of 1990s have become mama's boys. These boys depend on their mothers for their needs and at some point their mothers even choose carriers for them and marriage partners and one is left to wonder when these type of "men" will graduate into being men. In some cases, the mothers have forced their boys to divorce their wives claiming that the wives are mistreating their sons (Catholic priest, O.I, 11/7/ 2016).

This implies that these men rarely make independent decisions and they have to consult their mothers before making the decisions. In a way, matriarchy that revived in the 1990s affected negatively on the masculinities in Nyeri County. Mothers seemed to control the entire households including the decisions made by their children, especially boys.

Communication breakdown between the parents and their boys was also blamed on the declining masculinities in Nyeri County. A respondent in Mathira narrated how his mother would discipline him when he was a young man, something that made him respect and fear his mother even when the father went to fight during *Mau Mau*. Poor communication in this era led to indiscipline in the generation that exists in 21st century can be blamed to the system of education. The old men interviewed in the chief camp in Mathira sub-county argued that during their time, they were taught the importance of discipline right from nursery school, and the school entry age was twelve years.

At twelve years, the brains of these young men were mature enough to start school (Former politicians, FGD. 11/7/2016). At school, the children were taught various subjects such as carpentry, masonry, music, and making clothes that prepared them for later tasks in life that were not to be entirely formal. However, in the 21st century, children go to school as early as three years and in most cases they are too young to comprehend learning and this is because mostly the parents are busy and the child is taken to school to be busy with the teacher.

However, another focus group discussion in Ruguru revealed the cases of indiscipline depend on individual's character, and it is more of a personal choice. Undisciplined men have become idlers and disrespectful to their parents and that explains why some were beaten by their wives (Mau Mau veterans, FGD. 8/7/2016). However, a *Mau Mau* veteran noted that the changing negative trends in Nyeri are insanity. He bitterly remarked, *"Uyu ni uguruki wokire"* (Veteran, O.I, 4/7/ 2016).This translates to *"this is*

madness." A retired teacher who noted that it all depends on individual character echoed these remarks. He stated thus:

> *Wetua kegoigoi, ugakorwo kegoigoi."Translated to, "if you pretend to be lazy you become lazy*. (Retired teacher, O.I, 4/7/ 2016).

Traditionally, child beating ensured discipline although it was used as a rare tool of enhancing discipline. If a child did something wrong, he received a reprimand and warning in front of the elders such as the uncles and aunts given that the upbringing of children was a communal responsibility. In modern society with globalization and the issue of human rights, bringing a child up has become an individual responsibility and so has become the disciplining too. This resulted in incidences of parents who instead of disciplining their children soothe them even when they are on the wrong.

A generation of undisciplined men and women who lack respect to each other has cropped up. Such a generation does not have time to listen to the elders and that explains why some go to the extent of beating each other resulting in some cases violent masculinities that at times kill their loved ones or on the other hand weak masculinities, men who are beaten up by their wives. The old men in Nyeri noted that society is tired of listening to cases of domestic violence and disagreements in the homes (Elderly men, F.G.D, 11/7/2016). With the older men giving up in advising these young men, the men no longer have people to guide them, and thus have become poor family men in terms of solving disputes and controlling their families.

An oral interview with a professor in one of the universities in Kenya revealed that Immature and failed leadership also affected the nature of African men and especially the Agikuyu of Nyeri mainly due to illicit brews, which the government was unable to control. He further noted what the Agikuyu men especially the Nyeri man lack is leadership. They lack vocal and able leaders who will stand by the truth and fight illicit brew that according to him is the main cause of failed masculinities. He stated:

> Despite the fact that Kibaki was from Nyeri, he did nothing to improve the status of men in Nyeri. He impoverished the region through his steps in buying IMF policies (Professor, O.I, 11/7/2016).

Traditionally, only mature and wise men could be granted leadership. In modern Kenya, those who have money are the leaders and they in most cases do not possess leadership skills. Money has become the new way of measuring masculinity even in leadership. With alcoholism, poor and individualistic child upbringing as is in the case of Nyeri and poor leadership has affected their masculinity in a negative way and most do not even value simple human acts such as working together (Professor, O.I, 11/7/2016). Individualism in masculinity has cropped up as most of the men are even against the women groups where they view such groups as avenues to discuss men, and these portrays such men are insecure about their masculinity to an extent they fear being discussed in the women groups.

5.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, we sought to examine the changing trends in masculinities and some of the factors behind the trends in Mathira from 1980 to 2014. It was noted that from 1980s,

SAPs were introduced in Kenya and this affected negatively on the coffee economy. Initially, Nyeri depended on coffee with the first coffee being grown in the region by the Consolata farmers. When the structural adjustment programs were introduced, the prices of coffee went down and the cost of living skyrocketed. As a result, the Nyeri men found it difficult to take care of their families, and this brought about family wrangles that have continued up to date.

Some men decided to hide behind religion using it as the opium of the poor and started their own independent churches. A God fearing and coward man who hid in religion emerged. Some men out of depression and nagging from their wives due to failing to take up responsibilities ran away from their homes as they had become voiceless and economically weak. Emergence of female-headed households took place as a result.

It is also noteworthy that women empowerment and the wave of feminism and democratization affected masculinities in Nyeri. The empowered woman became so overpowered than their husbands did and women who observed such women followed suit. Connell's theory of masculinity is applicable here to show haw femininity affects masculinity in Nyeri. The boy child became a forgotten subject and without guidance, it was likely that empowerment surpassed the intended capacity. The boy child became un-opinionated in the eyes of the empowered women.

Westernization and globalization also brought about new ways of defining a man, which included being gentlemen through acts such as carrying handbags for their wives, feminine dress code , being silent, having money ,properties such as apartments and also

fleet of cars. Those are the qualities that young generation in their 20s define a real man with .with this, Wisdom was no longer considered an important trait in masculinity leave alone the ability to care for the family.

Poor parenting from mothers due to presence of irresponsible fathers resulted into "mama's boys" who are dependent in almost all aspects from finances, making decisions such as careers and even choosing their spouses. Alcoholism, idleness, and laziness reduced the masculinity of Nyeri men with many spending time taking cheap liquor leaving them voiceless drunkards in their families. Laziness was demonstrated through the manner they idled along the roads early in the morning and throughout the day. These kinds of men became very choosy in the kind of jobs to do; they did not prefer informal jobs such as masonry, carpentry, as well as others that they consider lesser jobs.

The above led women to take up the men roles even in hard tasks such as construction of houses commonly referred to as *mjengo,* in order to take care of their children, maybe this explains why they are very busy to be able to bring up their children in the appropriate way. However, it is crucial to note that not all Nyeri men have undergone emasculation. Some are hardworking, vocal, and authoritative and are able to manage their families. This explains why some respondents noted that the trends in masculinities depend on the individual character.

CHAPTER SIX

6.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary, conclusion, and recommendations. In summary, the researcher gives a brief on the findings, while the conclusion is based on the research premises. In the recommendations, the researcher suggests further areas of research.

6.2 Summary and Conclusion

This study focused on the transformations in masculinities among the Agikuyu of Nyeri County in the period 1952-2014. Mathira sub-county was chosen because it had the most vocal *Mau Mau* fighters, whom upon not being compensated after Kenya gained independence suffered greatly the consequences of land alienation and passed this suffering to their sons and great grandsons.

In chapter one, the background upon which the statement of the problem was contextualized was clearly provided. The objectives, and research questions, as well as the premises were highlighted. The chapter also provided the scope of the study as well as the justification and significance of the study. Under limitation, financial constraints, and language barrier were given as some of the problems experienced by the researcher. The chapter also presented the literature review, and the gaps identified enabled this study to pull through. The theoretical framework that guided the study was also provided. Finally, the chapter provided the methodology that the researcher employed in conducting the research as well as the ethical considerations during the study.

In chapter two, the Agikuyu traditional criteria of defining a man was discussed as well as the background to the *Mau Mau* movement was given and its effects on masculinities in Nyeri, it was noted that the making of a Gikuyu man begun at birth through naming and initiation . Other aspects included land ownership and inheritance, marriage and the number of children one had. It was noted that the coming of the Europeans affected masculinities of African men with land taken away. It was noted that land was the main cause of the movement uprising, and the fighters were mainly men with women providing them with services such as nursing wounds, giving food and acting as spies. Through the discussion the traits of an African man among the Agikuyu emerged, such traits include strong, bold, persevering, wise, and authoritative men. However, as they left into the forest to fight, the women took up the male roles and formed the genesis of confused masculinities. Female-headed household emerged and the concept of hegemonic masculinity was challenged as women began equating themselves to men. Concisely, this chapter concludes that the fight for freedom by the *Mau Mau* played a great role in the reduction of masculinity among the Agikuyu of Mathira. This proves the first premise as true.

In chapter three, the impacts of political independence on masculinities in Nyeri County were discussed. It notes that after independence those who had participated in *Mau Mau* never received land compensation as they were already seen as enemies of the colonial government and the Kenyatta's government. The elites and their allies were the benefiters of land resettlement schemes, and with no land, the *Mau Mau* war veterans

had their economic power reduced. Many of them sought to go to towns to look for jobs, where they became vulnerable to crimes and engaged in criminal activities and violence.

On the same note it was revealed that the few of gained from land compensation embarked on coffee production and became economically powerful especially during the coffee boom period, many left their homes and went to the towns to enjoy the money alone leaving their wives taking care of the family through struggling means. Left behind, the women entered the world of business and invested in educating their children. This education was later on to challenge masculinity in the later decade.

After independence, the wave of women empowerment came in from the European countries, an empowerment that some saw as a tool to perpetuate colonialism through the argument that if one wanted to destroy a society they have to go through the family, with women as the easiest target. The Europeans succeeded in perpetuating their colonial rule through such empowerments despite the fact that this empowerment was a two-sided coin; it benefited women who had been marginalized but on the other hand played a role in emasculating men may be because they were not up to the task.

Findings also revealed that corruption and negative ethnicity played a great role after independence in pulling men down, such a corrupt environment where wealth lied to the elites could not allow men who had lost their economic power to exercise their authority. New mechanisms of defining a man emerged after independence, and those with political, economic, and military power were considered as the strong men of the society. Accordingly, even with wisdom, a man without education, political and military power

was more of a woman, and as noted women who rose into the political arena could not manage to be married anymore.

The chapter concluded that events after independence up to 1980 altered masculinity among the Agikuyu of Mathira. In a way, independence affected masculinity not only on Kenyan politics, but also on masculinities among the Agikuyu of Mathira. This proves that the second premise is factual.

In chapter four, the changing trends in masculinities in Nyeri were discussed. It was established that as from the 1980s, the SAPs were introduced in Kenya, and this affected negatively on the coffee economy. In Nyeri county, with decline in the coffee economy the economic power of Nyeri men was reduced, as they were unable to maintain large families leading to frustrations and depression. Others sought to move away from their homes something that never happened in the traditional African society.

The findings also revealed that the declining masculinities in Nyeri County are due to alcoholism, religion, girl child empowerment, poor parenting, self-discipline, globalization, and westernization. A good number of Nyeri men of the 21st century were brought out as being lazy, un-opinionated, weak, poor decision maker, irresponsible, drunkard and men who run away from problems. However, some are still strong, responsible and have authority. Accordingly, it was established that the loss of masculinity depends on an individual.

Chapter 5 concluded that there are confused masculinities among some men in Mathira whereby a factor such as women empowerment groups poses a threat to masculinity.

Men in this region especially the youths are struggling between being modern men at the same time being traditionalists like their grandfathers who were very bold and vocal during *Mau Mau*. However, the general observation had it that majority of Mathira men have become less opinionated, especially due to the menace of alcoholism. This proves the third premise is accurate.

6.3 Recommendations

From the findings, and in order to ensure firm and strong masculinities, there is need for self-respect and discipline between the parents so that the children whom they raise can follow their footsteps. Additionally, there is need to engage men in boy child empowerment instead of using them as bridge to empower girls at their own expense. These campaigns should be played fairly on both genders. There is need to sensitize young men on need for furthering their education instead of drowning themselves to alcohol. Further, there is need to empower the un employed youths especially men so that they don't resort into taking cheap liquor that make them victims of gender based violence. There is no single factor that can holistically explain the changing trends in masculinities as the changes are based on an interplay of various factors. Thus, to solve such issues emanating from emasculation there is need for understanding each other right from the family level and respect each other as well as own up responsibilities. The society, an individual, and the parents ought to work together in defining the identity of a child. As the functionalists argue, an individual is a product of various elements in the society, and if any of these elements fails, the entire person develops a deformity. Accordingly, for African masculinities to remain firm and strong the parents, society,

and the men themselves should play their roles. The researcher felt that the field of masculinity is not full exhausted especially in terms of the role of men empowerment groups in emancipating masculinities in the society. The study recommends further study on the role the men in re-inventing themselves to create firm masculinities.

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b) Oral Interviews

Respondent	Age	Place	Date
Bank manager	40	Karatina	5/7/2016
Clan elder	70	Karatina	5/7/2016
Clan elder	80	Iriaini	7/7/2016
Clan elder	76	Iriaini	7/7/2016
Wife to a veteran	81	Magutu	8/7/2016
A former detainee	79	Konyu	4/7/2016
An elder	83	Ruguru	9/7/2016
Ex solder	84	Karatina	5/7/2016
Woman farmer	75	Konyu	4/7/2016
Chief	70	Magutu	8/7/2016
Clan elder	78	Magutu	8/7/2016

Elderly woman	77	Magutu	8/7/2016
A wife of a veteran	81	Konyu	4/7/2016
A woman trader	70	Karatina	5/7/2016
A man farmer	77	Kirimukuyu	10/7/2016
A veteran	84	Konyu	4/7/2016
A coffee farmer	78	Konyu	4/7/2016
Chief	74	Iriaini	7/7/2016
A woman evangelist	50	Kirimukuyu	10/7/2016
A retired teacher	76	Konyu	4/7/2016
A female student	23	Karatina	5/7/2016
Student	19	Karatina	5/7/2016
A woman trader	55	Karatina	7/7/2016
Secretary	29	Magutu	8/7/2016
Trader	30	Magutu	8/7/2016
Business person	35	Mathira	12/7/2016
Clan elder	75	Mathira	12/7/2016
Mau Mau veteran	86	Mathira	12/7/2016
Wife of a veteran	80	Mathira	12/7/2016
Catholic priest	60	Nyeri	11/7/2016
Gender activist	47	Nyeri	11/7/2016
Professor	80	Nyeri	11/7/2016

i) Key Informant Interviews

Participants	**Age**	**Place**	**Date**
Civil society member	54	Karatina	7/7/2016
Clan elder	77	Karatina	19/7/2016
Clan elder	76	Mathira	12/7/2016
Clan elder	88	Iriaini	7/7/2016
Community policing member	45	Nyeri	11/7/2016
Clan elder	70	Konyu	18/7/2016
Clan elder	75	Magutu	8/7/2016
Female youth	21	Karatina university	17/7/2016
A trader	45	Karatina market	17/7/2016
Mau Mau veteran	87	Karatina	15/7/2016
Former politician	76	Konyu	15/7/2016

ii) Focus Group Discussions

Participants	Place	Date
Clan elders	Iriaini	7/7/2016
Clan elders	Iriaini	7/7/2016
Elderly women	Mathira	16/7/2016
Wives of veterans	Mathira	12/7/2016

Former politicians	Nyeri	11/7/2016
Lecturers	Karatina	17/7/2016
Mau Mau veterans	Karatina	17/7/2016
Mau Mau veterans	Magutu	8/7/2016
Mau Mau veterans	Mathira	12/7/2016
Traders	Karatina	17/7/2016

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APPENDICES

A1. INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

For the community members

Age:

Gender:

1. According to your opinion, what defines masculinity in Nyeri, Mathira Sub County?
2. Which factors enhance gender constructs of masculinity?
3. Are men in crisis as far as masculinity is concerned?
4. Yes ☐ No ☐
5. What is your take on empowerment of women groups such as *kamweretho*?
6. What do you think is the underlying factor in the rise of Female Headed Households in Nyeri, Mathira Sub County?
7. Do you think men in Nyeri, Mathira Sub County have lost their masculinity?
8. a) Yes ☐ No ☐
9. What is the basis of your answer?
10. What changes have you observed as far as masculinity is concerned?
11. How has the shift in masculinity affected the society in Nyeri, Mathira Sub County?

A2: TO THE CLAN ELDERS/ MAU MAU VETERANS

1. What defined a man among the Agikuyu?

2. How did *Mau Mau* affect men in this region?

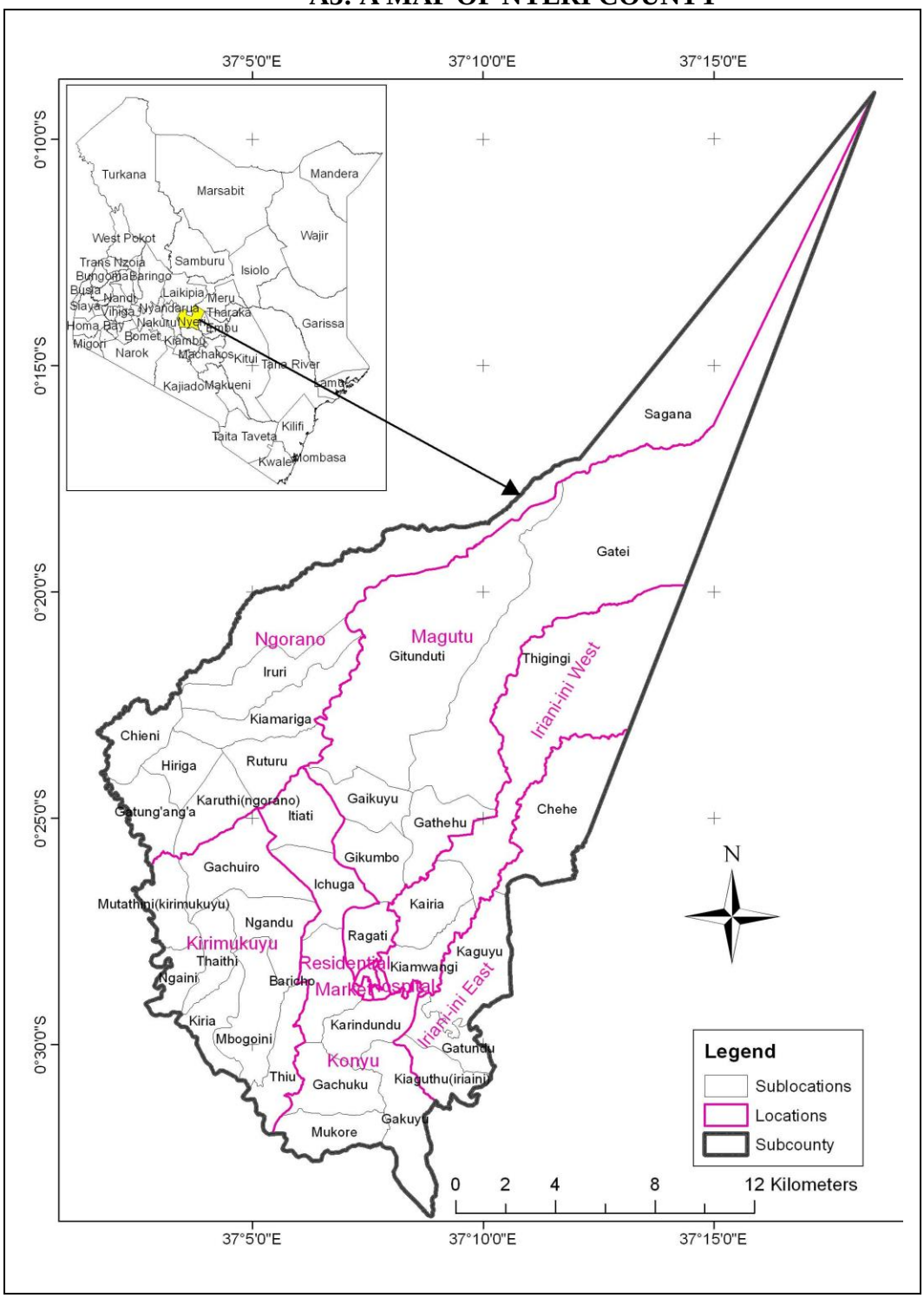
3. Did *Mau Mau* alter family systems?

4. Based on the answer above, how did the men deal with crisis of *Mau Mau*, and how were men affected?

5. After independence, what were the expectations as far as land is concerned?

THANK YOU

A3: A MAP OF NYERI COUNTY



Source: IEBC, 2013

A4: **RESEARCH PERMIT**

National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT:
MISS. GRACE NJOKI MAINA
of KENYATTA UNIVERSITY, 6-10203 KIGUMO,has been permitted to conduct research in *Nyeri County*

on the topic: *TRANSFORMATION OF MASCULINITIES AMONG THE GIKUYU OF NYERI COUNTY, KENYA (1952-2014)*

for the period ending:
4th July,2017

Permit No : NACOSTI/P/16/44097/11578
Date Of Issue : 5th July,2016
Fee Recieved :ksh 1000

.....
Applicant's Signature

.....
Director General
National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation

GLOSSARY

Aanake - Young initiates

Athomi - Christian converts

Gishuguma - A term used to refer to the Newspaper by the *Mau Mau* fighters

Gutumia - The act of being silent

Ilwaluko - Circumcision among the Xhosa of South Africa

Inkwekwe - Uncircumcised man among the Shona

Irua - Agikuyu traditional circumcision

Isheremba - Burial of a warrior among the Luhya

Itura - A term that refers to a village among the Agikuyu

Kamweretho- a Women self-help group that empower women socially and financially, through giving soft loans and contributions toward projects such as payment of dowry.

Khukumula- Bellowing as a sign of masculinity among the Luhya

Kihii - Uncircumcised Gikuyu man

Kirigu - Uncircumcised Gikuyu woman

Kirira - Secrets of community

Maendeleo Ya Wanaume-A civil group that aims to protect the rights of men

Mbari - Clan

Mburi ya kuhoya irua- A goat offered to allow for circumcision among the Agikuyu

Muciarithania- A name for a Gikuyu midwife

Mucii - Homestead

Mugumo - Fig tree

Mung'etho - Urban centres where men idle

Muruithia - Initiator

Muthuri - A name referring to a man among Agikuyu

Mutumia - A name referring to a woman

Mutumia ngatha- Hardworking, obedient& respectful woman

Mwene mucii - A head of homestead

Ngai - Agikuyu name for God

Ngwato - Sexual ceremonies among the Agikuyu

Ngwiko - A ceremony among the Agikuyu where male & female initiates spend intimate time together without sexual intercourse

Nyambo - Spikes

Nyumba - Refers to a house in Agikuyu society

Omoisia - An uncircumcised man among the Abagusii

Qhumbuzaizindiebe- An ear piercing ceremony among the Zulu of South Africa that marked the first step to manhood

Ruraacio - Bride price

Rwenji - A sharp knife used by women for circumcising girls, shaving the head and cutting the placenta during birth.

Thomba - An initiation ceremony among the Zulu that involved an early morning bath of the young men to wash away childhood and assume manhood

Uhuru - Freedom

Uhuru na kazi- Independence and hard work