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ORAL LITERATURE AND THE COMMUNICATION OF CHANGE AND

INNOVATIONS IN KENYA

By

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This thesis is submitted for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in the School of Languages and Literatures.

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

2003

Table of Contents

Declaration.....	(iii)
Acknowledgements.....	(iv)
Abstract.....	(vi)

CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO STUDY

1.1 Statement of the problem.....	1
1.2 Objectives	2
1.3 Motivation.....	2
1.4 Scope.....	3
1.5 Hypothesis.....	3
1.6 Literature review.....	3
1.7 Theoretical Framework.....	15
1.8.0 Methods of data Collection and data analysis.....	23
1.8.1 Data Collection.....	23
1.8.2 Data Analysis.....	26
1.9 Operational Definitions.....	27

CHAPTER TWO: SOCIAL-CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL AND BACKGROUND.....	28
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CHAPTER THREE: COURTSHIP, MARRIAGE AND FAMILY.....	40
3.1 Courtship.....	41
3.2 Marriage.....	56
3.3 Family.....	66

CHAPTER FOUR: THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER.....	77
4.1 Communal Gender Consciousness.....	78
4.2 Indigenous Feminist Frame.....	91
4.3 Innovations and Change in Gender Constructs.....	101

CHAPTER FIVE: ORAL LITERATURE, POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE.....	112
5.1 Prophecies, Curses and the Circumcision Controversy.....	115
5.2 Olenguruone and the Mau Mau.....	125
5.3 Kenyatta and Uhuru.....	136
5.4 Post-Kenyatta Era.....	145
CHAPTER SIX :ORAL LITERATURE AND HIV/AIDS COMMUNICATION.....	155
6.1 HIV/AIDS Background in Kenya.....	156
6.2 The Kikuyu, Illness, Disease and Pestilence.....	157
6.3 Proverbs and a Saying: Warnings against the Virus.....	161
6.4 Behavior Change and Voluntary Testing.....	166
6.5 Religion, Orality and HIV/AIDS.....	171
6.6 Gender Dimension in Song and HIV /AIDS Communication.....	174
6.7 Folk Drama and HIV/AIDS Communication.....	179
6.8 Stigmatization and Living Positively.....	184
CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION.....	186
APPENDICES 1 MAPS.....	1-3
APPENDICES 2 TEXTS.....	1-140
APPENDICES 3 INTERVIEWS.....	141-155
APPENDICES 4 GLOSSARY.....	156-157

Declaration

I hereby declare that 'Oral Literature and the Communication of Change and Innovations in Kenya' submitted by me for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Cape Town is my original work and has not been previously submitted in its entirety or in part for examination in any another university. I further declare that all the sources I have quoted have been indicated and duly acknowledged by means of a complete reference.

Signed by candidate

ZACHARY NJOGU WAITA

DATE 6.07.03

Acknowledgements

I am greatly indebted to my supervisor Professor Sizwe Satyo for his inspiring guidance and for the academic as well as the intellectual insights that he provided while supervising this study. I wish to thank him immensely for his thorough and devoted attention to the work and his support in motivating funding for the project. I would also wish to thank Dr. Abner Nyamende for his very useful comments and suggestions on chapter one of this study.

This study has been possible due to the funding from the University of Cape Town Postgraduate Scholarships Office. I wish to acknowledge with deep gratitude the generous financial support I received in form of International Students Scholarship Award, the Lestrade Award in African languages and the Postgraduate Travel Bursary Award, which made it possible for me to live and do most of the writing in Cape Town.

This work could not have been possible without the contribution of the many artists, storytellers and respondents whose performances and interviews form the analytical base of the study. To all of you, I say, thank you very much.

I cannot forget the warmth and comradeship provided by colleagues at the University of Cape Town: Jama Zukile, Dr. Sekoh Lee at the Department of African Languages and Literatures and fellow Kenyans; Anthony Sang, Fred Ndege, Jack Ogembo and Justus Mbithi which made life away from home in Cape Town quite bearable.

I would also wish to thank Kariuki Njoka for his assistance during the initial fieldwork conducted for this study.

And to my wife, Catherine Wanjiru and children Waita Njagi, Nyakio Wangithi and Wanjiku Muthoni and my parents Florence and Wilfred Waita for their forbearance and untiring support during the three years that I worked on this project.

Finally I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Professor Emilia Ilieva, Head of the Department of Literature at Egerton University and the university administration for granting me leave to complete this work.

University of Cape Town

Abstract

The major object of pursuing this study was to understand how oral literature has been used in the communication of change and innovations in Kenya. The study focuses attention on Central Province of Kenya. In the work, oral literature has been studied as a literary media delineating the genre's communicative role in relationship to messages in social-cultural, political and health fields.

In this study, we begin from understanding the traditional context and the literary content of the study sample and proceed to analyze and discuss the new and innovative messages communicated by the genre. In the course of the work, oral literature emerges as continually changing and adapting to the social, historical and health challenges that confront the people of the Central Province of Kenya.

The primary sources of data used for analysis in this study have been from the Kikuyu people of Central Kenya. Oral texts were recorded and sourced from oral artists, composers and storytellers during fieldwork in this region. Oral narratives, oral poetry in the form of songs, proverbs and oral dramas constitute the main data used for analysis in this study. We have also used in the analysis a few texts from secondary sources. The texts are analyzed as literary genres that are culture-bound.

Interviews provided useful collaborative and augmentative data for the study.

We have four broad categories of classifying content in our analysis. These include: (i) courtship, marriage and family, (ii) social construction of gender, and (iii) politics and governance and (iv) HIV/AIDS communication.

Oral literature among the Kikuyu emerges in this study as a genre that continues to communicate normative values while at the same time exploring new contradictions that have affected the various institutions of courtship, marriage and family.

The study also indicates that oral literature continues to play a visible role in gender socialization validating disparate roles for men and women. The genre contributes to

the gender debate by extracting a multiplicity of standpoints on gender relations. At the same time, it emerges a medium of contesting not only traditional gender values but also the emerging modernist positions.

Over the last century, oral literature also emerges as having played a key role in communicating change and innovations in the politics and governance of Kenya. The resilient nature of the genre is further demonstrated in this study by the way oral literature has responded to HIV/AIDS epidemic in the country. In confronting this relatively new phenomenon, oral literature becomes a tool that helps the people in conceptualizing and protecting themselves against the disease.

The conclusions that we draw from this study is that oral literature continues to play a significant role in social communication in spite of various technological and literacy changes that have taken place in Kenya. The genre is constantly being created and recreated to serve specific needs and to respond to the crises of the moment.

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Oral literature as a literary mode of communication primarily relies in the spoken word for actualization and transmission. The nature of oral literature also demands that there must be a living culture to carry on the creative tradition.

As a traditional media, the content of oral literature demands conformity. But at the same time the artist is expected to rise above the traditional. The artist can use traditional material but has the freedom to modify them to suit the audience, the time, place or the social need at a particular time. This way, the oral artist becomes a modifier of traditional material. Through his/her creative ability, the new is integrated into the old and henceforth it can exist as traditional material (Lord: 1965:29).

It is in the above context that this study seeks to understand how oral literature has been used to communicate change and innovations among the Kikuyu people in Central Province of Kenya. Our quest in this study is two-fold. In the first instance, the study seeks to unfold the role oral literature is playing in social communication in Central Kenya. Secondly, this study seeks to understand the contribution of oral literature in the communication of change and innovations in diverse social-cultural, political and health institutions in the selected area of study.

The study assumes significance because it explores the rich forms of cultural communication in Kenya and how they have responded to rapid social and physical changes in the world today.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The broad aim of this study is to understand the content messages communicated through oral literature in Kenya. The specific objective of the study is to document, analyse and discuss new and innovative messages communicated through oral literature in both informal and formal settings in Central Province of Kenya.

1.3 Motivation

Oral literature today remains a major means of social communication in Kenya and in other parts of Africa. It is to a large extent still part of the traditional learning process in a rapidly changing social and physical environment. However, this functioning of oral literature in contemporary society in Kenya has received little attention in literary scholarship. Most of the studies done so far have focused on the traditional components in oral literature. They have confined themselves to the analysis of traditional content, themes and images prevalent in oral literature in Kenya. This study seeks to map out new paths from this general trend by investigating the communicative function of oral literature in a world that has changed and transformed.

By focusing on the role of oral literature in the communication of change and innovations, this study seeks further to confirm continuity and perpetual nature of African oral literature despite the onslaught by foreign cultures and the effects of globalization. The study further brings to the fore the role of oral literature as an alternative media where conventional mass media is inaccessible or ineffective. It explores and confirms the communicative and educative roles offered by oral literature. These roles are cardinal to the community's social and physical survival. The study then provides an important basis of understanding and evaluating oral literature as a communicative tool by those who wish to use it in development communication.

This study is hence expected to make a significant contribution in locating the place and the relevance of oral literature in Africa at the beginning of the Twenty First Century.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study was carried out among the Kikuyu people of the Central Province of Kenya. Due to temporal limitations imposed by this kind of a study, it was not possible to cover the whole of Kenya's forty one speech communities. However it is our hope that the area selected will serve as a model for the rest of the country.

The study has restricted itself to four categories of oral literature in our analysis. These include song/oral poetry, oral narratives, proverbs and oral dramas.

1.5 Hypotheses

This study was guided by the following hypothesis:

- (i) Oral literature plays an important role in social communication among the Kikuyu people of Kenya.
- (ii) Oral literature has been an effective tool in the communication of change and innovations among the Kikuyu of people of Kenya.

1.6 Literature Review

This study as we have already noted is essentially on the role of oral literature in the communication of messages. The study specifically focuses on the genre's communication of new and innovative messages in response to the changing physical and social environment in Kenya. This section attempts to give the study its broad academic and scholarly context. This will be done through a sample literature review covering definitions, concepts, approaches and various analytical models that are relevant to the study.

Our general operation premise in this study is that imaginative literature in time and place has existed in written and unwritten forms. In its unwritten form, literature is primarily expressed through word of mouth. That is what we refer to as oral literature in this study.

Different scholars have over time used different terms to refer to oral literature. Terms such as 'orature', 'traditional literature', 'folk literature' and even 'folklore' have been used to refer to unwritten literature. However oral literature remains the most commonly used term when referring to literature commonly delivered through the spoken word (Okpewho: 1992:3).

Ruth Finnegan insisted that oral literature is by definition dependent on the performer who formulates it in words during a particular occasion (1970:2). At this point in time, Finnegan argued that there was no other way oral literature could be realized as a literary product. The context, the occasion and the audience were viewed as prerequisite variable in the definition of oral literature. Oral material also qualifies to be oral literature because they utilize literary conventions in the communication of themes and messages (Finnegan: 1970:24).

Other attempts to define oral literature include that by Bukonya and Nandwa who define oral literature as 'those utterances, whether spoken, recited or sung whose composition and performance exhibit to an appreciable degree, the artistic characteristics of accurate observation, vivid imagination and ingenious expression' (1983:1).

Oral literature has also been defined as a constituent part of folklore studies. Folklore itself is a broad concept, which has defied definition and attracted the attention of a host of cultural disciplines. The field as we know it today has been formed and defined by a variety of approaches (Bendix: 1997:3, Toelken: 1996). The eclectic approach in folklore can however be reduced to three basic approaches. These constitute the humanistic, the anthropological and the psychoanalytical approaches. According to this distinction, humanistic approaches are literary, while the anthropological ones are functionalist.

The psychoanalytical derive from the followers of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. In this approach folklore material is studied in so far as it expresses the hidden layers of human consciousness. In this context, scholars have explored the relationship between fantasy,

dreams and the unconscious in the creation of oral literature (Wilson: 1979, Bettelheim, 1967, 1975).

Recent approaches have viewed folklore as denoting 'expressive forms, processes and behaviors' (George and Owen: 1995:1). In their expansive book, *Folkloristics*, these authors also view behaviors that are learned customarily and taught and utilized during face-to-face interactions as folklore. Folklore is judged to be traditional material based on known precedents or models. Folklore is further seen as pervasive and as the antecedent and bases of literary themes and plot structures used by modern writers. They identify three ways of studying folklore. The first one is to study folklore material as individual items and forms such as folktales, folksongs and folk genres. The second way is approaching folklore material as specific disciplinary sub-fields such literary, psychology, linguistics or historiography. The third approach is to regard folklore as a product or a possession of certain groups, making them and their traditions the subject of folk study (1995:22-23). The authors recognize folklore as both contemporary and traditional and always functional (1995: 269).

Our study recognizes that the definitions and approaches in the study of oral literature keep on shifting from one scholar to another or even for the same scholar over time. We take into consideration recent assertions that disciplinary boundaries that define oral literature are more relative than absolute (Bukenya: 2000, Finnegan: 2000, Furnis: 2000.). The concept and terminology 'oral literature' will remain the guiding principle in this study. We shall regard oral literature as a creative art that is a product of imagination actualized through language usually in an oral performance context. However we do acknowledge that materials of oral literature have been the subject of study in other disciplinary categories.

While the study of oral literature can be traced to ancient times, the study of African oral literature in modern times can be traced to the nineteenth century. The study began as ethnological studies of human cultures by European missionaries, linguists and colonial administrators.

They collected a variety of oral texts but as several scholars have observed there was little attempt to relate the texts to the contexts or evaluate their literary significance.

The interest in African oral literature by the 'early collectors' was then much more part of the colonial activity, which sought a better understanding of African languages and ethnography in order to evangelize and colonize effectively (Finnegan: 1970:28, 1992: 7-8).

Evolutionism was the dominant theoretical orientation of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the study of African and other non-European societies. Following the work of naturalist, Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, social evolutionists assumed that the direction of social evolution was similar to biological evolution. Society was assumed to evolve upward from 'primitive' to the 'civilized.' The 'civilized' was assumed to be equivalent to contemporary Europe. By studying oral literature and traditions of the Africans, these scholars wished to glimpse into the world of their ancestors. Scoresby and Katherine Routledge underscore this intention in their study of the Kikuyu at the beginning of the century:

The great interest of the subject lie in the fact that the Agikuyu of today are in their civilization and methods at the point where our ancestors stood in earliest times. ...the life of our Saxon forefathers become a living reality
(Routledge: 1968 (1910) (xviii))

In this context, oral literature was regarded as the literature of primitive societies and as a product of communal consciousness and group authorship (Finnegan: 1970:36). The position taken by the evolutionists in regard to the study of African oral literature served more in the justification of European colonial interests in Africa than in advancing genuine oral literary scholarship.

This period also saw the development of diffusionism and its application to the study of oral literature. The diffusionists were interested in the study of the geographical spread of

items of culture. In the study of oral literature focus was in the origin and the subsequent spread of tales (Finnegan: 1970:39). The Scandinavian school of folklore also known as the historical –geographical school is the best representation of the diffusionists. Stith Thompson's six- volume, *Motif-Index of Folk Literature* has been considered as one of the best testimonies of the efforts by the diffusionists.

Using the concept of 'motif' Thompson in this work attempts an elaborate classification of traditional literatures of 'the world'. The motif is loosely defined as 'an aspect' or elements of detail out of which the fully-fledged narrative is composed. This aspect could be a character, an action of a character or even a circumstance within a tale. To achieve their goals the diffusionists were mainly interested in the content and ignored the other literary aspects of the tale. They paid little attention to aesthetic, literary function and even other genres of oral literature apart from the tale (Thompson.1955: 9-11).

Foley J. Miles categorizes the diffusionists and the evolutionist's approaches to the study of oral literature as 'diachronic.' They were primarily involved with the historical reconstruction of a story. On the other hand he further classified as 'synchronic' studies interested in investigating functions and forms of oral literature (Foley: 1988: iv).

The functionalist approach sought to understand the contemporary relevance and purpose of oral literature in the society. In studies carried out by pioneer functionalist, Bronslov Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown the significance of the text to its social context was considered. The main interest in oral literary analysis became the sociological value of such texts. We shall outline the Malinowskian thrust further in our discussion of the theoretical framework of this study. We can however note that functionalism has had many followers over the over the years.

One of the best early examples of Malinowskian followers in Kenya was Jomo Kenyatta who in 1938 published *Facing Mount Kenya*. This was a pioneering academic work on the Kikuyu by a local scholar. Kenyatta records and discusses aspects of the traditional life of the Kikuyu people mainly from his own personal experiences.

In the book he provides an African's perspective on African culture and life, which he defends against encroachment by colonialism. Malinowski in an introduction to the work described it 'as an excellent monograph of African life' (Kenyatta: 1978 (1938): xiv). In this book, the author uses oral literature many times to argue out his anti-colonial stand against British domination of the Kikuyu.

Interests in the compositional elements in the study of oral literature emerge with the works of Vladimir Propp in Russia and that of Albert Bates Lord in Yugoslavia. Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale*, was completed in 1928 and translated into English in 1958. Propp can be regarded as a member of the Russian formalist movement, which flourished briefly in the early part of the last century in the then Soviet Union.

In this work, the form and structure of the tale is described following the chronological order. Allan Dundes views Propp's approach as 'syntagmatic, empirical, and inductive' as its resultant analysis can be replicated (In Propp: 1968: xi).

After analyzing one hundred Russian fairy tales, Propp came to the conclusion that the functions of the *dramatis personae* are the constant element in the tale. He defined 'function' as an act of a character defined from the point of view of the significance of the course of action.'(1968: 12). From his analysis he developed four laws applicable to fairy tales. He stated that the functions of characters serve as the stable elements in a tale. They are the fundamental component and their number is limited to 31. He concluded that the sequence of the functions is always identical.

This study by Propp was in a way a response to the limitations of the diffusionists especially in their use of the motif as a basis of classifying oral literature. He viewed the diffusionists approach as artificial (1958:20) and presented the function as a more stable alternative. Propp's analysis provides a valuable means of narrative analysis and can be applied cross-culturally. However it is limited by its formalistic concentration, which in the end ignores the context, thematic and other literary and aesthetic concerns in the fairy tale.

Albert Bates Lord in *Singer of Tales*, (1965 (1960)), can be viewed as an effort by the scholar to analyze oral literature through an understanding of actual performance. Through this analysis, Lord also sought to understand the creative process in oral literature. Building on earlier works by Milman Parry, Lord studied the composition, learning and transmission processes of the Slavic epic and applied these principles to Homeric texts. Following Parry, Lord defined the 'formula' and 'theme' as the basic building blocks that an artist uses in the creation of oral poetry.

He defined the formula as 'a group of words regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea' (1965:30). The theme was defined as the group of ideas regularly employed in telling the tale in a formulaic style (1965: 68). In this study, Lord came to the conclusion that the artist who creates oral poetic narratives is at once the tradition and its creator. Lord in this work recognizes the artist as a creative individual who uses traditional material to create a literary text.

Ruth Finnegan's work on African oral literature builds on some of concepts discussed above and she proposes a focused literary approach to the study of oral literature in Africa. Her literary orientation is prevalent even in her earlier work, *Limba Stories and Story Telling* (1967). Based on fieldwork among the Limba people of Sierra Leone this study explores the context, the content, form and styles of oral narrative literature of this community. Her later work, *Oral Literature in Africa*, (1970) confirms the place of African oral literature as a literary discipline.

The study attempts a definition of the subject and analyses various genres of oral literature found all over Africa. She dismisses the erroneous notions about African oral literature proposed by the evolutionists and criticizes late nineteenth century and earlier twentieth century approaches for their lack of regard for the literariness of oral literature. While this work is an important contribution to the theorizing and criticism of African oral literature, it is limited by relying too much on secondary data. This leads the author to make erroneous judgments about the existence of certain genres of oral literature in Africa.

The study of African oral literature was for a long period dominated by European scholarship. As we have mentioned, the subject was studied within folkloristic and anthropological contexts. Okpewho observes that the scholarship of the subject suffered greatly during this period. Most of the texts were reduced to bare summaries with little regard for the literary and the aesthetic. The functionalists did indeed benefit the study by insisting on the application of texts to the social environments. Nevertheless, most of them had analytical limitations. As scholars from outside Africa they were handicapped by lack of adequate understanding and feeling for African languages. This made it difficult for them to fully appreciate African oral literature as a literary and a social product (Okpewho: 1992: 9-12).

Major advances have been made in the study of African oral literature in the later part of the Twentieth Century. The period has seen an increasing contribution to the study by African researchers studying their own oral traditions. They have approached the study from advantaged linguistic and cultural positions. In the process they have made remarkable contributions to the justification and recognition of the genre as a major constituent of world literature.

S.A. Babalola's, *The Content and Form of Yoruba Ijala* (1966), was one of the early works to cover oral literary space as a consciously Afro-centric contribution. As the author states, he sought to correct notions about the existence of unwritten literature in Africa and in particular sought to demonstrate the prominent place occupied by oral poetry. This was a genre largely neglected by earlier studies (Babalola: 1966:v). Working within his Yoruba community in Nigeria, the author records, describes and discusses the religious content, occasions and training in the performances of the *Ijala*. The work also explores the language and various stylistic devices in this genre.

D.P. Kunene publication of the *Heroic Poetry of the Basotho* in 1971 also provided an analytical work on this previously neglected genre of African oral literature. In the work, which is also descriptive, Kunene discusses the role of the oral poet. He isolates the

various literary features that define Sotho oral poetry. The study further covers literary technique and pattern, the concept and context of Sotho heroic poetry.

The works of Isidore Okpewho provide an example of recent Afro-centric contributions to the study of African oral literature. The publication of his book, *African Oral Literature* (1992), consolidates his earlier contributions in, *The Epic in Africa: Towards the Poetics of Oral Performance*, (1979) and *Myth in Africa*, (1983). In this study, Okpewho attempts a comprehensive analysis and discussion of key elements that constitute African Oral Literature. The study covers aspects of the creative tradition including the role of the artist and the centrality of performance. Apart from discussing various literary qualities, Okpewho also attempts a generic interpretation of African oral literature and outlines the interactive aspect between the oral and written in modern African writings.

The study of oral literature is today well established in many African universities. In East Africa, the introduction of oral literature into the syllabus in the university and in secondary schools is credited to efforts by Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Owuor Anyumba and Taban Lo Liyong. In 1968, they championed the introduction of the subject in the then Department of English at the University of Nairobi. They argued that there was need for African literature to take center stage in the department, so that other cultures could be studied in relationship to it (Wa Thiong'o: 1972:145-150)

Their focal point was to make African studies central, enabling the students to understand the world from an African perspective (Taban: 1973). Okot p'Bitek's case in favor of African oral literature dated even earlier. He wrote a dissertation on Acholi oral literature in early 1960's at Oxford University. p'Bitek also argued for the need to redefine the term literature so that it does not exclude unwritten literatures of Africa (p'Bitek: 1973:25).

From these humble beginnings, the study of oral literature has flourished and is taught in at least eight universities in Kenya. In secondary schools, it is taught as a compulsory component of language both in English and Kiswahili based studies. Over time there has

emerged what we can refer to here as the 'Kenyan' school of oral literature, which finds expression in various publications between 1970 and today.

Most of the work appearing during this time adopted the functionalist frame in discussing the oral literature of the different speech communities in Kenya. The authors were mostly scholars working within their own communities. Among the well-known studies are Rose Mwangi's *Kikuyu Folktales* (1976), Naomi Kipury's *Oral Literature of the Maasai* (1986) and Wanjiku Kabira and Karega Mutahi's *Gikuyu Oral Literature* (1988). Others are Wanjiku Kabira's *The Oral Artist* (1983), Ciarunji Chessaina's *Oral Literature of the Kalenjin* (1991) and the *Oral Literature of the Embu and Mbeere* (1999) and Okumba Miruka's *Studying Oral Literature* (1999).

In most of these studies the authors discuss the content and the themes in the various genres of oral literature from specific communities. They also highlight various stylistic features and attempt some classification models. These works indicate that oral literature is still part of a living culture in Kenya. The upsurge of publications during this period tried to meet the demand for oral literature textbooks for schools and in the process brought to light the existence of a diverse but still common oral literary heritage in Kenya. Some of the studies were however, still victims of erroneous notions that oral literature is a traditional commodity that is about to perish and needs to be preserved (Mwangi: 1976:52, Kipury: 1986:vii). Kabira's study in the *Oral Artist*, distinguishes itself from the general functionalist approach adopted by the other scholars. The author in this work recognizes the need to study oral literature from the perspective of the contribution of the individual oral artist.

The 1990's saw the rise of interest in theoretical and methodological issues in the study of oral literature in Kenya. Peter Amuka (1990) argued that all literature is first and foremost oral. Following Walter Ong's, Amuka argues that culture is always articulated orally and that writing is a secondary stage of cultural and literary communication. A further argument in this study is that even in its written form, literature retains most of its orality.

Other contributions by Amuka during this period include 'Oral Literature and the Constituents of Knowledge' (1994) and 'The play of Deconstruction in the Speech of Africa: The Role of Pakruok and Ngero in Telling Culture in Dholuo' (1992). These two studies appear in *Understanding Oral Literature*, edited by Austin Bukonya et.al and in *Reflections on Theory and Methods in Oral Literature*, edited by Okoth Okombo and Jane Nadwa respectively. The author here advances his debate on orality and literacy and the communicative network that oral literary forms create. He argues that changing social and environmental perceptions do modify or generate new oral literature and that genres keep on generating one another. Genres usually stand for a larger literary culture, which in turn contributes, to a body of knowledge (In Bukonya et al.: 1994: 4-15, Okombo and Nandwa: 1992: 66-86).

Wanjiku Kabira in her study of 'Gender and the Politics of control: an Overview of the Images of Women in Gikuyu Oral Literature' (1994), attempts to evaluate the gender dimensions in Kikuyu oral narratives. She discusses the perception of women in oral narratives as mothers, girls and wives. She comes to the conclusion that oral narratives perpetuate a negative image of women, which legitimize the need to control them in the Kikuyu society. Her position in this study is further developed in a study entitled *Images of Women In Gikuyu Oral Literature* (1994) in which she proposes that individual artists are responsible for shaping gender ideology in oral narratives.

Inge Brinkman in her study, *Kikuyu Gender Norms and Narratives*, (1996) rejects stereotypical approaches that view African oral literature as fixed. She argues that there is a dynamic interaction between literature and society and that African literature is able to express divergent normative imaginations (1996:13-15). In this study, Brinkman found out that gender norms are linked to marriage sexuality and politics among the Kikuyu. Men and women are shown to interpret gender norms and change in different and sometimes opposite ways.

She concludes that women do not necessarily subscribe to male imagination and gendered norms (P.115-168). Narratives by male and female narrators can proceed from different imaginations.

These studies by Brinkman and Kabira contribute to the conceptual frameworks of understanding gender from the point of view of individual artistic creation. They move beyond the discussion of the images of women in literature to showing how individual orientation influence the creation of those images. The studies provide us with a useful framework for our discussions in later chapters.

This study views oral literature as a communicative media. Communication has been perceived from at least three main perspectives. The first perspective emphasizes the aspect of sharing whereby communication makes common to more people what was previously the monopoly of a few (Gode: 1959, Schram: 1971).

The second perspective views communication as persuasion. In this context, messages are transferred in order to modify the behavior of others. Communication here is meant to elicit a response from the receiver (Horland: 1971). The third approach views communication in general terms as all procedures by which one mind may affect another (Weaver: 1949).

As a form of communication oral literature can have specific communicative goals on the intended audience. While literary communication may have certain peculiarities, it is effected in the same way as any other communication. The artist is the sender of messages, which are addressed to an audience that gives some feedback in one way or another (Segre: 1988: 3).

The efficacy of oral literature as a communicative media has been established by several studies. Ugboajah (1985) views oral literature as part of the symbolizing codes of oral tradition that are used in communication and maintaining social structures in Africa.

Oral literature as part of the indigenous culture plays a significant role in education and initiation processes. As part of the folk media, Ugboajah contends that it is a more effective tool of communication because it is directly linked to the people's belief system.

Leonard Doob (1961) has also identified oral literature as a serious form of communication in the transmission of information and education and societal values. In his analysis of creative communication Doob argues that because oral literature will use well-established motifs it attracts the attention and induce people to absorb the messages (1961:76). Oral literature as creative communication is also a direct media. The performed texts will help transmit to each generation the factual information about the society and many of its values. Oral artists are also well situated to add new communication and induce people to perceive new ideas. Doob further asserts that the occasion and the participatory nature of oral performances break barriers between the communicators and their audiences. Doob's perspectives on oral literature provide our study with an important conceptual basis of oral literature as a creative communicative media.

Our review of the sampled literature above indicates that African oral literature is currently an established scholarly discipline. Our discussion of the genre's role in the communication of change and innovations in the chapters that follow will take place against this critical background.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

This study will be guided by a number of theoretical frames. In the first instance we shall adopt the functionalist theory as we seek to understand the functioning of oral literature in a changing society. The functionalist theory is based on the premise that all aspects of a society; institutions, roles and norms serve a purpose that is important or indispensable to the long-term survival of the society.

All cultural and social phenomena are assumed to have a positive function in the society. Our study adopts this framework with an awareness of its changing interpretations and varied applications over the years.

Bronislaw Malinowski (1939) presents culture as an outgrowth of three human needs: the basic needs, instrumental needs and the symbolic and integrative needs. Culture in its various manifestations allows man to satisfy biological requirements. Culture is a 'conditioning apparatus' through training, the imparting of skills, the teaching of morals and the development of tastes, amalgamates the raw material of human physiology and anatomy with external elements, and through this, supplements the bodily equipment and conditions the physiological process.' (*American Journal of Sociology*.44: 946-947). Every institution is viewed as contributing to the integral working of the community as a whole and at the same time satisfying the basic and derived needs of the individual (*Ibid*: P.962). Following Malinowski, Bascom (1954) identifies four functions of folklore. He enumerated these as amusement, validation of culture, education and the etiological function.

A.B.Radcliffe-Brown (1935) focused on social structure and posited that a society is a system of relationships that function together in the maintenance of the social whole. In his article, 'On the Concept of Function in Social Sciences', he defined 'function' as the contribution, which a partial activity makes to the total activity of which it is a part. Radcliffe-Brown views the functioning of a particular social usage as the contribution it makes to the total social life in the functioning of a total social system. He adds that all parts of the social system work together with sufficient degree of harmony or internal consistence, which he refers to as 'functional unity.' (*American Anthropologist*: 37:394-402). In this context, oral literature can be viewed as structural element that contributes the total social whole through its communicative function.

The early functionalists were criticized for dealing inadequately with historical circumstance and failing to provide for change and conflict in society (Colomy: 1990:

(xxxix). However our study will embrace the contribution of later day functionalists. These functionalists have demonstrated that the theory does and can account for social change in various social processes that are the concern of our study (Parson: 1951. Parson and Shils: 1951, Colomy: 1990).

The function of literature in society has been debated since classical times. In this study we shall follow Welleck and Warren (29-37,94-195) and recognize oral literature as a social product utilizing the medium of language and oral performance. The artist as a member of the society uses the traditional literary devices and what he produces has a social purpose. The artist as a member of the society is an integral part of the community he is producing for and is influenced by the society as he/she attempts to shape it through artistic productions. In this context then, oral literature will be studied as a creative art that plays a significant role in the communication of change and innovations.

Our study also takes into account feminist and gender theories and approaches to the study of society. Rosemarie Tong has observed that there are many and varied approaches to feminism. But despite the diversity, they all attempt to describe women's oppression, explain its causes and consequences and prescribe strategies for women's liberation (1992 (1989): 1). As a concept feminism refers to ideas and movements that have sought to challenge and transform roles traditionally ascribed to women. It is a constituency of eclectic views and approaches that seek to explain the relationship between the sexes and the differences between men and women's experience (Landry and McLean: 1993: 2, Ramazanoglu: 1989: 8).

Ramazanoglu identifies characteristics shared by feminism. Among them is the recognition that the existing relations between the sexes in which women are subordinated to men needs to be changed. Feminism also challenges much of what is taken for granted as natural, normal and desirable in society raising fundamental issues on the history and the future of human social organization. Beyond that feminism seeks to change the world and transform the relations between men and women. Feminist ideas

then constitute political practice aimed at giving women control over their lives. Feminism finally implies a radical critique of reason, science and social theory raising the issue of why some forms of knowledge are seen as more valid than others (Ramazanoglu 1989:8-9).

Another aspect key to feminism is the analysis of the concept of patriarchy and its place in the oppression of women. Feminists generally agree that patriarchal oppression of women throughout history has been profound and multifaceted (Hall: 2001:202).

While there are varied meanings ascribed to feminism, there are a number of terms that have evolved over time to describe specific feminist positions. Liberal Feminism describes and subscribes to the view that women's oppression will end once women have achieved legal equality and equal opportunity with men (Landry and MacLean: 1993:2).

Liberal feminists have focused their campaigns on the improvement of rights and opportunities for women. Operating on a platform of justice and equality, they have sought the redistribution of resources, equal pay, equal civil rights, and equal access to education, health welfare and political processes. Liberal feminists acknowledge that women are widely discriminated on because of their gender. They have however been criticized for failing to identify the role played by the interaction of sexes and gender power relations in the oppression of women (Tong: 1992 (1989): 12, Hall: 20001: 200, Ramazanoglu: 10-11).

Radical Feminism on the other hand argues that women's oppression is the most fundamental form of oppression. The key to women's oppression is man's power over woman. This power is embedded in all social structures. They further argue that the concept of legal equality in redressing the problems of women is ineffective. They reject liberal strategies of gaining justice for women and propose that all existing political and social institutions need to be uprooted and replaced. Radical feminists call for a common political interest of women. They view women as universally oppressed, as 'sisters in oppression' in a world owned, controlled and physically dominated by men. Extremist

radical feminists call for a separation of men and women, whereby women would establish their own communities and institutions apart from men (Tong: 107, Ramazonoglu: 11-13, Landry and MacLean: 2, Jagger and Rothenberg: 1989:186).

Materialist, Socialist and Marxist Feminisms draw from the rise of capitalism and its compounded impact on the oppression of women. Materialism has two distinct philosophical orientations. In the first place it posits that the origins of all forms of existence including human activity can be explained in terms of physical being. Secondly it 'is a critique of idealism, the belief that ideas underlie reality' (Landry and MacLean: 1993:3).

Materialist feminism then involves a materialist analysis of culture, informed by, and responsive to the concerns of women. It is an intellectual approach and movement aimed at the revolution of social reality and consequently a revolution of knowledge. Materialist feminism takes the critical investigation of artefacts of culture and social history to be a potential site of political contestation (Delphy: 1981:75, Landry and MacLean: 1993:x-xi).

Socialist Feminism on the other hand claims that unless class inequalities and class oppression under capitalism are specifically addressed there can never be liberation for women. Socialist feminism further views women as a sexual class that is divided by economic, class and racial differences (Landry and MacLean: 1993:2,4, Esenstein: 1984:149).

Marxist teachings play an important role in Marxist feminist thought. Marxist feminists hold class contradictions, class analysis and class struggle to be central in understanding and resolving gender oppression. Male dominance and patriarchy are associated with the rise of private property. The elimination of capitalism is hence a pre-requisite to the liberation of women (Tong: 49,65).

Marxist feminists are also more conscious of class divisions among women. They are also conscious of the effects of imperialism and colonialism on women. In their analysis they project the realization that women from dominant races and ethnic groups play a role in the domination and suppression of women from subordinate groups. Marxist feminists challenge as narrow various versions of Western feminist assumptions that mask the lives, work, struggles and suffering of non-white and non-Western women. They are also critical of the fact that women from imperial nations and those from advanced capitalistic societies engage in and benefit from the exploitation of non-white and third world women (Landry and MacLean: 1993:116-141).

This position has led to the critical differentiation of the struggles of African women compared to their white/Western counterparts. African Feminism/Womanism represent the efforts by African, African-American and Caribbean scholarship to distinguish the particular context and struggles of women in these cultures from the western notions of feminism. The approach takes into context the realities of neo-colonialism, race and class in Africa and other third world countries. African feminist/womanist analysis further takes into account the significance of and respect for certain features of traditional African culture. Beyond this, African feminist/womanist literary criticism has focused on the development of a canon of African writers and an examination of stereotypical images of woman in African literature. Other areas of concern include study of African women writers, the development of an African female aesthetic and an examination of women and oral tradition/oral literature in Africa (Davies and Graves: 1986: 11-14, Verba: 1997: 1-2).

The position taken by African feminism/womanism essentially then challenges the notion of the existence of a universal sisterhood of oppressed women as proposed by radical feminism.

Other notable feminist approaches include the existentialist, the psychoanalyst and the postmodernist approaches.

Existentialist feminism is closely associated with Simone de Beauvoir and especially her analysis of women's oppression in *The Second Sex*. In this work de Beauvoir argues that from the beginning man has named himself the 'self' and 'woman' as the other (de Beauvoir: 1974 (1953): xxxiii).

De Beauvoir's analysis recognizes a 'self' (in the woman) that man has defined as the 'other' and controlled through the construction of myths about her. In the mythical control of women 'man wants from the woman everything that he lacks' and woman is portrayed as 'a chameleon whose being is as mutable as nature.' The only way the woman can stop being the second sex is by overcoming her circumstance, have her say and her way as a man has, by seeking economic liberation (Tong: 205, 210-211).

Psychoanalytical feminisms have developed from the revisions and reinterpretation of Freudian psychoanalysis. This psychoanalytical orientation argues that gender is a product of sexual maturation. The basic argument is that if boys and girls adjust properly to their sexual maturation, they will end up displaying their expected masculine and feminine traits. The process of sexual maturation is attained by successfully passing through the pre-oedipal stages ('oral, anal'), Oedipal stage ('phallic') and post-Oedipal stage ('genital').

During the phallic stage children have to resolve their Oedipal and castration conflicts. If the boys overcome the conflicts successfully they develop the 'superego' and become normal men. The girls experience the Oedipal and castration complexes differently from the boys. They eventually overcome the Oedipal complex by substituting their feelings for their fathers with the acceptance of other men as husbands. They overcome the castration complex (their lack of a phallic extension) through child bearing. Feminists regard Freudian thought as liberating because of the way it probes the female psyche but nevertheless they feel that it does not provide a total explanation of female subordination (Tong: 147-171).

Postmodernist feminism has been best represented in the works of Julia Kristeva, Helen Cixous and Luce Irigaray. Their writings have been described as feminist and profound and 'offering women the most fundamental liberation; freedom from oppressive thought' (Tong: 223-231).

While postmodernist feminists differ in approach, they share the common ground in criticizing the dominant order, especially patriarchy. They valorize the feminine woman, as the 'other'. Postmodern feminism also seeks to escape from the binary oppositions that hold and oppress women 'by tapping into a pre-linguistic essential femininity' that drops language and the power manifested therein. They desire to think 'non-binary, non-oppositional thoughts, 'the kind that may have existed before Adam was given the power to name animals; to determine the beginning and the end of things' (Halls: 201, Tong: 233).

The concept of gender has been used to designate psychological, social and cultural aspects of maleness and femaleness. The term gender is also used to mean culturally determined behaviors and personality characteristics that are associated with but not determined by biological sex. Gender role is a sociological concept meaning a set of prescriptions and proscriptions for behavior appropriate to one sex. The meaning of the term gender has evolved as differentiated from the word sex to express the reality that men's and women's roles or status are socially constructed and subject to change (Hare-Mustin and Marecek: 1990: 4, Kessler and Mckenna: 1978: 7-12, Howard and Hollander: 1997: 11-12, Strobel: 1994:88).

From a constructivist point of view the term gender has also been used for the explicit purpose of creating space in which socially mediated differences between men and women can be explored separately from the biological differences. The assumption that gender is culturally constructed has also stimulated the production of feminist knowledge challenging scientific notions about the relationships between men and women (Unger: 1983, Ramazanoglu: 1989:59-60.).

Various versions of feminist/gender approaches may have different weak and strong points. They may also adopt different political strategies. But all of them aim at changing and transforming the inferior position of women. Beyond that feminist and gender theories constitute a form of critical consciousness, which enables us to understand the existing social arrangements as patriarchal (Ramazanoglu: 1989:140).

These frameworks will be particularly significant as we seek to understand the different roles oral literature has played in communication of change and innovations in courtship, marriage and family, in the social construction of gender and in HIV/AIDS communication in Central Kenya.

1.8.0 Methods of Data Collection and Data Analysis

In this study, we have relied on a combination of ethnographic and literary approaches in data collection and data analysis.

1.8.1. Data Collection

I conducted library research at the libraries in the University of Cape Town, South Africa, University of Nairobi and Egerton University in Kenya. Additional library data was collected at the Kenya Medical Research Institute Library in Nairobi and the Kenya National Aids Control Council Resource Center at Kenyatta National Hospital in Nairobi.

Data was gathered from a variety of sources in Central Kenya. Oral literature material was sought in actual and enacted social settings in different localities. Some of the songs /oral poetry, folk dramas and a number of narratives were recorded during public performances in Nyeri, Kirinyaga and Kiambu districts. Some songs and dramas used in the study were sourced from well-known popular and folk performers and preachers from Murang'a, Kiambu and Kirinyaga districts. A number of oral narratives were also

recorded from two well-known oral artists, Alice Wanjira Rukenya from Baricho and Njagi Njuki from Gitumbi in Kirinyaga district.

The narratives were performed in the afternoons and early evenings after appointments with the performers. The sessions attracted a sizeable number of children and few adults in the homesteads creating an ideal atmosphere for oral narrative performances.

Participant observation was the main strategy used in fieldwork data collection. I collected most of the data with the help of a research assistant and a recording technician in instances where there was audio-visual recording. This study took the advantage of the fact that I was a Kenyan student researching in a community I am familiar with. I was not faced with any language barriers and was familiar with the geographical terrain of the area where the study was carried out. After explaining the educational value and intention of the fieldwork most of the respondents were willing to deliver the materials or participate in the interviews. During public gathering it was easy to blend with other participants in the performance processes.

Our study also relied on interviews as a method of data collection. The interviews provided valuable material used in the preparation of the chapter on the social –cultural and historical background (Ch.2). The interviews were also very useful in collaborating and augmenting our analysis of the texts in the other chapters. I attempted to make the interviews as informal as possible. Following some basic guideline questions, the respondents were allowed to dictate the pace of the interview. I approached the respondents as repositories of knowledge and exploited the traditionally accepted mode of seeking knowledge (*Kuhoya/kuboya Kirira*) with the elders interviewed.

In this process, a younger person normally puts himself at the disposal of the elder while seeking information or guidelines over a particular issue. The elder dispenses with the information and knowledge at his own pace and terms. This method was especially fruitful with elderly respondents like Kaiguri Njagi, Wilfred Njogu and Kinyua Nunu.

This study also benefited from biographical interviews. Once again the process emphasized informality. The respondent was encouraged to outline their life story from before the time they were born to the present.

Group discussions with women groups were also used in data collection. The discussions were planned to coincide with these groups' meetings. The women were encouraged to outline and present their views on various issues of gender concerns, which we eventually incorporated in our textual analysis.

The ages of performers and interviewees varied. Young, middle aged and the elderly were sought as respondents. Most of the productive literary performers were the younger and middle aged while the elderly provided important background information on the history and traditional values of the Kikuyu people.

A few texts used in this study were sourced from previously recorded and published sources. In the study these are treated as recorded versions of oral literature and are used for comparative and augmentative purposes.

Most of the recording during fieldwork was done on audio and audio-visual cassette tapes. This was augmented with note taking through which observations and sometimes whole interviews were recorded. I transcribed the material from the tape and did the translation from Kikuyu to English. In the translation the aim was to provide a semantic equivalent, which retained the content messages and aesthetic nuances of the original as much as possible. But as many experts have observed it is impossible to transcribe and translate material from the original oral performances without losing some aspects of the original version.

Various aspects of language such as tone pitch, onomatopoeic expressions and expressive aspects in dramatic performances cannot be captured in the texts appended to this study

1.8.1 Data Analysis

Transcribing and translating was indeed the beginning of analysis of the texts in this study. This processes provided the opportunity to understand meaning in the original language and to categorize the texts for analysis depending on the manifest content. Over one hundred texts were selected for analysis. The bases of selecting the texts were purposive. The basic criterion was their relevance to the research questions and artistic merit as oral literary texts.

In the study, we analyze content for various messages communicated guided by the categories we have set out. Oral literature is approached, as literary genre that is culture bound. Content and contexts are treated as evidence of the various variables that we seek to understand in the study. We have four main categories of classifying content, which translate into the four main chapters in this study (Ch.3-6). In chapter two, we provide the social-cultural and historical background to the study. The chapter also contains a geographical description of Kikuyu country where the study was carried out.

Chapter three analyses and discusses the role of oral literature in the communication of change and innovations in courtship, marriage and family. Chapter four examines the role of oral literature in communicating various aspects of gender relations and gender constructs at both the traditional and the new and innovative levels. In chapter five the study deals with the communicative role of oral literature in politics and governance in Central Kenya over time. Chapter six examines the role oral literature has taken in confronting the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

The texts used in this study have been appended as appendix no. 2 in English translation. They are numbered according to the order in which they appear in the analysis for easier reference.

1.9 Operational Definitions

In this study the term oral literature will be used to refer to the oral compositions performed in the form of song, oral narratives, oral dramas and proverbs among the Kikuyu people of Kenya. 'Song' and 'oral poetry' will be used interchangeably to refer to oral poetic compositions that could either be sung or recited with or without musical accompaniment. These will include traditional folk songs, topical and popular songs.

Oral narratives will be understood to refer to traditional oral fictional tales and their various adaptations. In the study oral narratives will also include myths, legends and oral biographies. This category will also embrace the naratological sermons and public expositions used for analysis in the study. Oral dramas will refer to the unscripted or originally conceived as unscripted dramatic performances used in the communication of various social issues in Central Province. Innovation will be regarded as a new variation of an existing cultural pattern that is proposed and accepted by at least some members of the society (Nanda: 1987).

In the following chapter we shall present the historical, social-cultural, historical and geographical background of the Kikuyu people.

CHAPTER TWO

SOCIAL-HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND

This chapter introduces the social –historical and cultural context of the Kikuyu people among whom the study was carried out. In the section we provide the traditional and the neo-traditional context in which oral literature is produced today. This background information is important to our study because it gives the contextual basis of our analysis in later chapters.

The Kikuyu people today number over six million, and are scattered all over Kenya but primarily live in Kirinyaga, Nyeri, Nyandarua, Murang'a and Kiambu districts of Central Province. The Kikuyu country is dominated by Mount Kenya, which rises to 5,199 metres above the sea level and the Aberdare range of mountains, which also rises to over 3,999 metres above sea level. The permanently snow covered peaks of Mt. Kenya are revered as the abode of the Kikuyu God, *Ngai, Murungu, Mwene Nyaga*.

Kikuyu is a Bantu language. It distinguishes sixteen consonants, two semi -vowels and seven vowels. The latter is used in both short and long forms, in some combinations coalescing or harmonising (Brinkman: 1997:26). There at least five discernible dialects among the people who refer to themselves as Kikuyu. These include Kabete-Metumi, Gaki, Mathira, Ndia and Gichugu. Culturally and linguistically the Kikuyu are closely related to Embu, Mbeere and Meru speakers. These communities have been classified as the *thagichu* speakers (Muriuki: 1974:57-58, Castro: 1995:19). This linguistic affiliation has been used to describe and refer to this group as GEMA.

The Kikuyu are said to be their own neighbours. There is a sense in which they have never conceived themselves as one people. There appears to have existed distinct regionalism, which is apparent even today. The distinction is based mainly on the areas of geographical occupation (See Map appendix no. 1.b) and the fairly distinct dialects.

Differences are also perceived in the idiosyncratic cultural practices of each dialect group and those groups' involvement with other people, usually their neighbours, who were not perceived as Kikuyu (Brinkman: 1996:35).

To the South and the Northwest, the traditional neighbours of the Kikuyu were the Maasai. Folklore on the relationship between the Maasai and the Kikuyu dwell a lot on warfare and cattle rustling between the two groups. However these groups interacted in many other forums. They traded with one another inter-married and even created clan alliances. Although they were from distinct linguistic groups they shared many cultural values such as initiation, age sets and religious concepts (Ambler: 1998: 13, Muriuki: 1983:98-100).

The Akamba people are the Kikuyu neighbours to the East and South East. The Akamba are of Bantu stock and their language and Kikuyu language are mutually intelligible. They live on the drier Yatta plateau and the Ukambani plains. Traditionally, they were hunters, traders and pastoralists livestock. They interacted with the Kikuyu extensively especially in ivory, pottery and cereal trade. During periods of prolonged drought and famine, Akamba women and children sought refuge among the Kikuyu and would eventually be assimilated and integrated (Castro: 1995: 19).

Historical and oral sources indicate that there were indigenous people before the Kikuyu groups settled in the present Central Province. These people were known as *Athi*, *Ndorobo* or *Agiki*. They were hunters and gatherers who lived in the forests. They ceded most of these forests to the Kikuyu for agricultural cultivation and most of them were finally assimilated into the Kikuyu. As late as the later part of the nineteenth century, the Kikuyu were still buying land from the Ndorobo in the Southern districts of Kiambu (Kenyatta: 1978 (1938): 28; Muriuki: 1974:). Scattered populations of these very early settlers now live in the diminishing forests on the Mau escarpment in the Rift Valley Province and prefer to be known as Ogiek.

Contact between the Kikuyu and foreigners before the nineteenth century was limited to Swahili and Arab traders. These traders from the East African coast came to the area in search of ivory and slaves.

They brought ornaments, cloth, salt and even cattle and exchanged them for the ivory (Muriuki: 1974:136). With the establishment of the British protectorate in Kenya in 1895, the Kikuyu came under colonial rule. This meant a reorganisation of the social, economic, cultural and political life of the people.

Like in most colonial processes, the domination of the Kikuyu people began with their pacification. The missionaries and the colonial administrators followed the explorers and the conquerors that were in turn followed by the settlers. The white settlers and the newly established city of Nairobi became new neighbours of the Kikuyu (Brinkman: 1996:36).

The social-economic and cultural setting began to be gradually affected by these new changes. However the pace of change picked up with the end of the Second World War. By then there were heightened demands for self-rule by the Kenyan people. The outbreak of the Mau Mau war of independence and the declaration of a state of emergency in 1952 saw traumatic changes in Central Province where the Kikuyu live. They were herded together in concentration villages and most of the men were detained in concentration camps. Cultural and social life was severely curtailed. It was not until 1961 when the people were allowed to go back and live on their land, which was by then demarcated into individual small-scale holdings. The British granted self-internal rule in June 1963 and full independence in December 1964. The impact of these colonial and post-colonial dynamics, which manifests themselves in the oral literature texts, will be discussed in chapter six.

There are at least three mythical traditions relating to the genesis of the Kikuyu people (Wachege: 1992:6-9). One tradition describes the Kikuyu people as belonging to a common ancestry. Their origin is traced back to Gikuyu and Muumbi, the father and mother of the nation. The two were created by God on the top of Mt. Kenya and were given the fertile land on its slopes to cultivate.

According to the myth, Gikuyu and Mumbi journeyed from the top of the mountain and settled at the Mukurwe wa Gathanga in the present day Muranga. There they were blessed ten daughters: Wambui, Njeri, Wanjiru, Wairimu, Wambura, Wangari, Wangui, Waitera, Wakiuru and Wamuyu. As the girls grew up, their parents were faced with a predicament.

There were no men to marry them. They went back to God and sacrificed to Him. Some young men appeared and Gikuyu agreed to marry off his daughters on condition that the men would live in his homestead under a matriarchal system. From those daughters then descended the ten ('nine full clans') of the Kikuyu people.

The second mythical tradition traces the origin of the group to Ethiopia. This version has been documented since the early days of colonialism. It proposes that the Kikuyu migrated from Ethiopia, passed through Meru before eventually settling at Mukurwe wa Gathanga in Murang'a. Recent studies indicate that there are still members of the society who subscribe to this version of origin. A third version explains that the Kikuyu originated from a hole at the Mukurwe wa Gathanga and dispersed to other districts.

The first version is the most popular and universally accepted in the community. It is this version that relates directly to the social, political, economic and environmental concerns of the Kikuyu. It is the version that forms the bases of the Kikuyu collective consciousness. Firstly, the version gives the people their name (Agikuyu) and their language (Gigikuyu). The folklore and oral literature of the Kikuyu has its base and beginnings derived from this myth. Today this version provides a referential base that the community calls upon when it has to accept or reject change or innovations as the 'house of Mumbi' (*Nyumba Ya Mumbi*).

Mythical sources point towards an earlier matriarchal social arrangement among the Kikuyu (Kenyatta: 1978 (1938): 5). After marriage, the ten daughters developed households, which later expanded into the nine 'full' clans of the Kikuyu. The clans were named after the matriarchs. As the community evolved the clans became more of a symbolic family rather than a filial one. Today they are spread out throughout the geographical area covered by the study and beyond (Wanjau: 1960: 8). The clans then and now form the bases of political unity. In totality the ten clans will refer to themselves as the 'house of Mumbi' (*Nyumba ya Mumbi*). They will invoke this oneness in times of real or imagined threats to their social, political or economic interests.

It is the sub-clan (*mbari*) that lays claim to blood relationships among the Kikuyu. The *mbari* system seems to have overtaken the earlier matriarchal system, moulding new

patriarchal structures whereby power and resources were transferred from the female to male parents. The popular lore of this male transference of power still exerts an irresistible influence in the social construction of gender in this community today.

The myth describes the climax of matriarchal rule. Women were the heads of the households and they controlled all the resources including children. The myth says that women became domineering and dictatorial. Men were subjected to humiliation and injustice and performed all the menial tasks. The women also practised polyandry and men could be condemned to death if they were caught in an adulterous relationship (Kenyatta: 1938: 6-8, Nunu: Interview). Men became indignant and planned a revolt. But since women were stronger and better fighters, the men had to tread carefully. An ingenious plan was called for. The men decided that the only way out was to impregnate all the women at the same time and when they were heavy with children, take over power. Their plan succeeded and they were able to take over power and change the polyandry system into polygamy.

In the areas where this study was carried out, the sub-clan remains a strong social force. Members of the sub-clans still regard each other as relatives and marriage within the group is a taboo. The sub-clan then forms the larger extended family. Currently there is a concerted revival of the roles of this group as a means of social and economic security amidst difficult economic times.

The nuclear family (*nyumba*) traditionally consisted of the patriarch, his wife or wives, his sons and their families and unmarried daughters. The preamble to having a family is marriage. In the Kikuyu community a family belonged to a man and a woman who were married. Marriage was a pre-requisite to the attainment of any social position for both men and women. All members of the society were expected to get married and build their own family groups (Kenyatta: 1978 (1938): 163).

Published and oral accounts (Kenyatta: 165 Gathingira: 1934: 13, Nunu: interviews) indicate that young men and women had the freedom to choose their prospective spouses. The choice was however subject to sanctioning by the parents who could veto a proposed marriage on a number of grounds.

Some of these grounds would be blood relationship or blood enmity between families, practice of witchcraft or the prevalence of genetic diseases. Marriage processes would only be sanctioned for those already circumcised.

After undergoing the circumcision rite, the youth would enjoy relative freedom and leisure. Apart from warrior duties for the men, both genders were involved in communal work, visits, and dances, which provided excellent opportunities for courtship. After the dances the girls would follow the men into their bachelor's hut and engage in *nguiko*, a form of limited sexual play. It involved sleeping together and fondling but not full sexual intercourse. The girls had to make sure that their underpants (*miengu*) were properly secured to avoid any possible penetration. Men would also know the limit. It was taboo to untie the *mwengu*. They feared exposure and ridicule and it was not until marriage that full sexual intercourse was allowed (Nunu: interview).

Traditional marriage was an elaborate process that involved some eight stages. After the marriage proposals were mutually accepted the prospective groom and a friend would shepherd an ewe and a female goat kid into the house of the girl's mother. That would be a sign that bride wealth negotiations would commence the following day. The negotiations determined the number of goats, cows and sheep the in-laws would pay. Once the number was determined and part of it was paid, a bloodletting (*ngurario*) ceremony was performed. This involved the slaughtering of a fat lamb in the homestead of the father-in-law.

The groom would then start preparing land for the bride and once the land was ready, preparations for the wedding started. The wedding process began with the 'capture' of the bride. The groom's age mates would ambush the bride and carry her shoulder high to the groom's mother. On capture the girl would resist and scream as she is taken to her mother – in –law. Once there, she would start singing lamentation songs, *kiriro*, in which she would mourn the passing of her girlhood. She would regret her current status mentioning the good things she would have to forfeit now that she is married.

Her girl friends would visit and lament with her. After staying in her in-law's home for a while she would return to her parents and formally bid them farewell.

She would return to her new home crying, escorted by the girl friends. On entering her mother-in-law's house she would stop crying. Her husband would then build a house for her and they start living formally as man and wife (Kenyatta: 1978 (1938): 163-185, Leakey: 1977: 748-818, Wangai: interview).

Marriage in traditional society was a binding contract between the spouses and between them and the society. Their first duty was procreation and the larger the family the more they would be esteemed in the society. The man henceforth became a *muthuri*, (a decision maker) and the woman became a *mutumia ngatha* (one with the virtues of obedience, respect and hard work). Bearing children cemented relationships between the woman and her in-laws. As the saying goes, *mundu muka uri mwana ndateagwo* (A woman who has borne a child cannot be divorced).

The marriage arrangement was exogamous. The wife went to live with her husband's family. She integrated into the husband's sub-clan although there is a sense in which she was always regarded as an outsider (*mundu wa nja*). The man was regarded as the owner of the home (*mwene mucii*). This notion formed the bases of gender relations whereby power and ownership of property rested with the man (Brinkman: 1996:65). Women were expected to conform and their power and success would remain hidden. A clear manifestation of female power was socially unacceptable. But as Clark has observed, women exercised their power in subtle ways. They had an informal sphere of influence in marriage. And despite the ideology of male dominance 'Kikuyu women emerge as actors with control over resources vital in production and maintenance of political structures of the society' (Clark: 1980). We shall explore this issue further in our discussion on indigenous feminist frames in a later chapter.

Divorce was rare but was acceptable on certain grounds. These included; barrenness, wilful desertion, and practising witchcraft. Refusal to render conjugal rights and gross misconduct were the other grounds for divorce. A woman could divorce her husband for all these except the last one. She could also divorce the husband on grounds of cruelty and mistreatment (Kenyatta: 1978 (1938) 183-185).

Colonialism and postcolonial dynamics have affected most of the traditions and practices outlined above. In the areas where we carried out this study there is an apparent breakdown of norms and rules surrounding sexual behaviour, courtship and marriage. Sexual indiscipline is common among the young and the elderly. The changes in sexual behaviour have resulted in moral crises. The crises have been compounded by the entry of HIV/AIDS epidemic into the scene. This has meant death, waste and economic regression. We shall address this issue in more detail in chapter six where we discuss the role of oral literature in HIV/AIDS communication.

These changes have also affected the institution of marriage. In the traditional society marriage provided women with the avenue to land rights and hence property rights. Education and gainful employment has changed this. Some women can easily opt for a life without marriage. Single female parenthood is an accepted norm today. There are also an increasing number of female-headed households. Inheritance patterns are also changing. Female children can now inherit their fathers' land and together with their children become part of their father's nuclear family.

The traditional political and administrative units were closely tied to the family and kinship systems. The nuclear family (*Nyumba*) translated into the basic administrative unit of a home (*mucii*). A collection of homes would form a bigger unit referred to as an *itura* (pl. *matura*). A number of these would compose the *mwaki* (pl. *miaki*). Several *miaki* would constitute the ridge (*rugongo*) and the many ridges together would constitute the country (*bururi*) (Wachege: 1992:11).

A council of elders controlled each of these units. At the family level was the family council (*ndundu ya mucii*), presided over by the family patriarch. Above this was the village council where the patriarch represented each family. This council was in turn under the council of the ridge in which all the elders participated under the direction of a committee of senior elders. At the helm was the council of the country, which was the highest administrative and political organ for the Kikuyu (Kenyatta: 1978 (1938) 200-205) Gathingira: 63-67 Njogu: Interview). This council was charged with the overall leadership and judicial duties in the land.

It is this council that made decisions pertaining to murder cases, divorce and political transition. The council of the country also took charge of religious, health and environmental programmes. From among the group was selected the 'pure' elders who were anointed to sacrifice to God.

There were some two other councils, which should be mentioned at this point. These were the councils of the sub-clan (*njaama ya mubiriga/muhiriga*) and the council of war (*njaama ya ita*.) The council of the sub-clan concerned itself with the welfare of its members. The council protected land rights and solved inter-family and intra-family conflicts. The council also kept the secrets of the clan. It decided whether or not to co-opt outsiders into the clan and had a final say on whether any of its members could be condemned to death for the two capital offences in that community: theft and witchcraft (poisoning). The council of war had members between the ages of 20 and 40 years and was responsible for the defence of the community. It operated under the directions of a council of elders and a medicine man (Kenyatta: 1978 (1938): 204-205, 214-215).

This organic network was completed by a system of age sets (*mariika*). This system determined the rights and responsibilities of each member of the society. It was an important tool for the education, social control as well as an instrument of preserving the historical records of the community (Wachege: 1992: 11, Gathingira, 1939: 4-6, Lambert: 1959: 8-39.). Those who were initiated together formed an age group crosscutting the boundaries of a descent group. When a generation was circumcised, it acquired an age set name derived from the most memorable phenomena or event that took place during that period. It could be a famine, a disease or a historical event. Through circumcision, one achieved the status of an adult and full citizenship. Before the initiation one was regarded as a child and could neither marry nor own property.

Vertical ascent in the age grade system had clear gender differentiation. After circumcision, boys would join the ranks of junior warriors. Later on graduating into senior warriors and after marrying they joined the council of junior elders. They would be promoted into the council of peace (*kiama kia mataathi*) once their children were old enough to be circumcised.

The highest status was becoming a member of the sacrificial council (*kiama kia irungu*). One became a member of this age grade when his wife or wives were past child bearing and all his children were circumcised.

Females followed a slightly different path. After initiation the girls started preparing for marriage. They were usually married off before they were 18 years. Once married they would attain the status of a *mubiki/muhiki* until one gave birth to a child. All those women with uncircumcised children were grouped together as *Kang'ei* and those with circumcised children were grouped as *nyakinyua*. The former had to respect the latter.

Women and men had different spheres of decision-making but within the patriarchal set up. Men concluded major decisions on the economy, law, military and religious affairs. The council of women made key decisions pertaining to agriculture, food, female cooperation and sexuality. These decisions affected every member of the community, but officially the power to decide was reserved for men (Brinkman: 9, Presely: 1992:22-28 Karimi: interview).

Total authority in the community rested with the elders. The younger generation ascended to power through a formal *ituika* ceremony. The *ituikia* ceremony was an elaborate ritual conducted throughout the country. It involved invoking the mythical rain god, a dragon-like creature known as *ndamathia* to come out of the river. Once out of the river, its tail or hairs would be cut and worn by the new leaders as a seal of their taking over power. The last *itwika* ceremony was to be conducted between 1925 and 1928 but was declared illegal and seditious by the colonial government (Kenya: 191-193).

Colonial rule, western education and Christianity have invalidated the significance of the age group hierarchies. Wealth, status and even political patronage have at times rendered this institution irrelevant. Change in one way or another has also affected other social-political and kinship structures discussed above. But they still play significant roles as conduits of communication of new ideas in various spheres.

Land has been the mainstay of the economy for the Kikuyu for many years. Every family group is expected to have land it can cultivate. That way it can be considered as a self-

supporting economic unit. There are two rain seasons. The long rains fall between March and June and the short rains between October and December. Farmers grow maize and beans during the long rains and a variety of millets and sorghum during the short rains. Other crops grown include; yams, cassava, sugar cane and sweet potatoes. Most of these crops are still grown today in addition to new cash crops such as tea and coffee.

Apart from farming, the Kikuyu also kept and valued livestock, especially goats, which were used as the legal tender. 'A person without goats was regarded as a very poor person' (Kaiguri: interview). Apart from their significance in marriage, goats and sheep were used for sacrificial purposes. Cattle were more a status symbol. Traditionally they were a sign of wealth and were rarely slaughtered except during very important feasts. Due to the squeeze in the size of land holdings most people now keep just a few head of cattle mainly for milk production in zero-grazing units.

Before concluding this section, let us briefly mention something about religion. The community worshipped God and supplicated to the ancestors. They believed in one God referred to as *Ngai*, *Murungu*, *Mwene nyaga* (God, the owner of the ostrich) or simply *Ngai wa Kirinyaga* (God of Mt. Kenya). The God of the Kikuyu was worshipped in sacred groves, under the canopy of huge fig trees (*migumo*). Prayers and sacrifices were offered with the supplicants facing Mt. Kenya. Worship and supplication to God took place during important agricultural cycles or when the community was faced with catastrophes such as pestilence, epidemics or prolonged droughts. Supplication to the ancestors usually involved pouring beer or even slaughtering a goat to appease their spirits.

Religion was intertwined with nearly all other aspects of social and physical life of the people. Agricultural cycles, rites of passage and some diseases were also subject to religious rites. Illnesses that seemed to defy ordinary medicine were attributed to the supernatural power of the evil spirits.

On their outbreak diviners and seers would be consulted and a ceremony to chase the diseases away would be performed. The introduction of the Christian religion by European missionaries initially sought to destroy the traditional bases of religion

discussed above. The missionaries condemned the customs and beliefs and practices of the Kikuyu and insisted that Christian converts must follow a western way of life (Kenyatta: 1978 (1938) 130-132). The height of the conflict between the traditionalists and the missionaries came into sharp focus on two occasions. The first one was during the female circumcision crises of the 1920's. The second was during the Mau Mau war in the 1950's. All the mainstream missions aligned with the colonial government against those who stood for African religious values and Kenyan nationalism. This led to the popular saying that in the fight for political, cultural and religious freedom, there is no difference between the priest and the colonialist (*gutiri muthungu na mubia*). We shall explore the treatment of these conflicts by oral literature later in chapter five.

The majority of the people in the area under study profess the Christian faith. However, Christianity has undergone change integrating and accommodating traditional religious concepts as the bases of modern Christianity (Wachege: 1992: Ngari: oral comm.). The Catholic and Anglican churches have provided venues and contexts for performances dealing with the communication of change and innovations. Some of the texts we shall analyse have been produced under these contexts. The church groups are also extensively exploiting the traditional administrative unit of *mwaki* mentioned earlier to communicate and diffuse new ideas.

In this chapter we have attempted to provide the broad background in which oral literature as a folk media genre has been generated in the selected area of study. We have also highlighted some background on specific topics, which we shall be focussing on in the following chapters. These topics include marriage, kinship and family, gender constructs, political structures and HIV/AIDS communication.

In the next chapter we shall analyse and discuss social communication as well as new and innovative messages surrounding institutions of courtship, marriage and family as manifested in the oral literature of the Kikuyu.

CHAPTER THREE

COURTSHIP, MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

In this chapter we shall analyse and discuss the various social messages surrounding the institutions of courtship, marriage and family communicated through oral literature in Central Kenya. The chapter will pay particular attention to innovations. The context in which we shall understand innovations will be qualitative, rather than in the quantitative variation of text (Barnett: 1953:7). The focus in our analysis will be to understand how oral literature is able to transmit thoughts and ideas which are not only traditional but which are also qualitatively changing over time.

Our proposition in this and subsequent chapters is that the study of oral literature today does not simply dwell on the past. Apart from analysing traditional structures and messages, oral literature will be viewed as a versatile genre that derives and interacts with other modern forms of artistic expression. Our analysis then, hopes to embrace not only the traditional, but also the emerging messages and consciousness in the oral literature that reflect the changing realities of a postcolonial condition.

Sexuality, courtship and marriage consist of an important prelude to the creation of a stable family (*mucii mukinyaniru*). These aspects are stages of critical transition in the lives of individuals in the society. Over time, the society imposes moral codes and patterns of sexual behaviour that govern these biological and social aspects. In the area where we conducted our research, oral literature emerges as the instrument of transmitting and analysing these codes and patterns.

The various oral literary genres that we analyse below are part of the conscious and unconscious strategies that help the youth to find out their identity and map out possible future roles in a family set-up. Sexuality, courtship and marriage are new stages in the lives of the youth. It is a stage of confrontation with something 'new', often a frightening situation, which the collective images in oral literature, helps them to deal with (Dickman: 1986: 17).

3:1 Courtship

Folktales, songs (oral poetry) and drama extricate the relationships between male and female youth's courtship contexts in different but interacting symbolic perspectives. As we had noted in the last chapter, courtship is an exciting stage in the lives of young women and men in the Kikuyu community. This is the only stage in life when individuals traditionally enjoyed the highest degree of freedom. It comes after circumcision and acts as a period of incubation into maturity and responsibility expected after one gets married. One of the cardinal functional roles of oral literature is to subvert this excessive freedom. At both the conscious and the unconscious plane it foregrounds the essence of this freedom articulating the limits and possibilities in the choice of a marriage partner.

For our analytical purposes we shall begin with a discussion of two sets of folktales from our field sample. In the first set we shall analyse folktales that focalise on the female character. In the second set, we shall analyse those that focalise on the male character in courtship situations.

One running characteristic in the two categories is the stereotypical gender characterisation contrastive. Male or symbolic male characters are depicted as substantially different from their female counterparts in human terms. The girls participating in the courtship game are fairly normal human beings. But there is always something abnormal about the male character. He could be an ogre (*Irimu*) or an animal character. When he is a real human being, he is an incomplete male. He is poor, crippled or uncircumcised.

These contrasting images are also prevalent in the oral poetry and the dramatic pieces that we shall analyse later in this chapter. The fictional sets consist of what Jay Edwards refers to as binary oppositions (Edwards: 1991) in the traditional structure of the tale. The structure tends to be definitive making the story memorable and content communication easy to transmit and retain (Lesser: 1962:169 -170). Secondly, this contrast articulates the psychoanalytic and the social significance of the narratives.

There are a number of variations and versions of folktales in which ogres woo girls. The most common arena of the first encounter is usually at the dances. The ogre comes to the dance disguised as a handsome young man. He is a very attractive and a very good dancer. In most stories he is new in the particular locality. He also speaks 'well' and at the end of the dance he wins the hearts of many of the girls. He is a *kiumbi* (elegant, eligible and attractive) and as he leaves, a group of girls insist on accompanying him 'so that they can go and see his home' (text no.1).

On the way, the girls following from behind notice something odd about the handsome young man. When he jumps over trenches, a second mouth is visible at the back of his head through which he occasionally swallows flies. One after the other, the girls excuse themselves and flee. They go back home feigning excuses that there are some tasks they had been assigned by their mothers and they are yet to complete performing them. One adamant girl remains. She follows the ogre despite the warning (*gukunywo*) from the others. In some stories she simply does not notice what the rest of the girls observe about the physical features of the young man. She is finally led to the ogre's house where she is held prisoner in readiness for the day when she will be eaten.

In some versions all the girls follow the ogre and end up in captivity (no.2). An ugly sister, usually a hunchback, or an uncircumcised boy follows them against their wishes. Eventually, this boy or the hunchback watches over the girls at night deterring the ogre from eating them. This character also devises an escape plan saving the girls.

The pattern in the story of the lone girl who adamantly follows the ogre is slightly more detailed (no.1). Once she is left alone in the ogre's house she attempts to escape. She digs a hole, gets out but on her way home it starts raining heavily. She seeks shelter on top of a tree from where she is unfortunately recaptured by the ogre and his son and taken back into captivity. She is given two options. She either agrees to be their 'mother' so that she can be cooking for them or she is eaten. She opts for the former and remains in the ogre's homestead cooking for them whatever they hunt, including human beings.

One day they bring back infant twins after killing and eating the twin's mother. While cooking, the woman secretly substitutes the boys with a pair of rats.

The gullible ogres eat the rats despite protestations from the ogre-son that that meat was bitter. The woman brings up the boys secretly and acquires weapons for them. When they are of age, the boys, assisted by their 'mother' kill the ogres. They then take over the home and convert it into a normal human abode.

In another text (no.3) the female character tempts or transgresses on the ogre. The ogre is initially presented as a tree stump on the path, which injures the girls as they go to collect firewood. One girl decides to uproot it with a machete. On their way back home, the uprooted stump has already turned into an ogre. He seeks revenge on the girl who uprooted him and has to be pacified with one breast. The ogre also warns the girl never to reveal who ate her breast. Unfortunately, she is too traumatised and one day she reveals the truth. The ogre immediately appears in their home where he swallows everybody and all the animals as he seeks the girl, who, meanwhile, is hiding in her grandmother's house. The grandmother fights the ogre, overcomes the beast and retrieves all he had consumed by cutting the 'little' finger.

The other related version tells a story of the girl who falls in love with a young man she meets near the river while drawing water (no.4). The girl invites the man to her home to meet her parents. He is reluctant but she insists. The young man warns her that if he visits the home he might ruin it. She insists. He agrees to go but turns up as an ogre and true to his word he ruins the homestead. He swallows all the livestock and everybody except for a younger brother who was away visiting his maternal grandmother. The boy grows up in his grandmother's home and she procures weapons for him. He goes back home, confronts the ogre, kills him and retrieves his lost family.

In all the versions summarised above, the ogre symbolically represents the young male in the courtship game. He is not only the image of a deceitful man but also a signification of male sexuality and, as Brinkman observes, a threat of sexual violation on the unmarried female (Brinkman: 1996:138).

The practice of a group of girls following the eligible bachelor and engaging in *nguiko*, was common and socially accepted as we mentioned in the last chapter.

According to Kinyua Nunu (Interview), the group could follow the bachelor into his hut and collectively engage in *nguiko*. The man would lie on top of each of them in turns and finally settle for the night with the one he had chosen as a possible spouse or his known lover. But as the fictional tale intimates, this could be a risky situation posing the danger of sexual penetration. In reality, if the man became too aggressive and the girl was at risk, she would pinch (*gukunya*) the one sleeping next to her who would in turn pinch the next one. This way the threat would be communicated and they would rise and resist the man collectively.

This possibility is articulated in the stories when the group of the girls is following the ogre and notices the mouth at the back of his head. The signal, warning of the possible threat of being eaten, is communicated through pinching one another. Once the communication is perceived, the girls excuse themselves one by one and go back home except the lone girl who refuses to heed the warning. The story, at this stage, points at the beginnings of the consolidation of a common feminine consciousness in confronting the male world and the possibilities of sexual violation. It points to the necessity of female cooperation in matters of courtship (Brinkman: 1996:139). Female solidarity becomes a protective measure. The girl who refuses to co-operate or who wishes to act independently does so at her own risk.

The threat of the girl being 'eaten' by the ogre then can be interpreted as a threat of possible sexual violation. And it can happen as in the story of Wanja (no.3). She provokes the ogre by cutting the stump, which the others avoid and she has to pay dearly with her breast and a possible destruction of her own family.

These narratives then are dealing with the question of individual choice in courtship. The focus is on the female character. They tend to subvert the freedom the girls enjoy during courtship by proposing the possible negative consequences of that freedom. The story reinforces the idea of patience in the choice of spouses and particularly warns against strangers.

Essentially, the narratives are abstracting on the choice of an ideal husband, a husband who will not turn into an ogre who in real life would be 'greedy, irresponsible and stupid' (Brinkman: 139). At the same time the stories do not discount the possibility of one being courted and eventually being married by a man who is an 'ogre'.

The narratives appeal to the psychology of the youth because they analyse these problems optimistically. They do not give in to defeat no matter how critical the situation may be. The motif of the helper, either in the ugly sister, the younger brother or the grandmother, always provides an acceptable resolution to the predicament. In the versions by the younger generation (e.g., no.5) by Irene Wanjiru, (17 years), the girl character plays a greater role in her own release. She escapes without the assistance of the helper.

The psychological and social message that these stories impart on the youth is that courtship has its associated problems and difficulties. That these are unavoidable and if one does not shy away and confronts them it is possible to emerge victorious (Lewis: 1966:36-73). This is a significant element of communication in the folktales and other forms of oral literature. It forms the backbone in the building up of psychosocial skills among the youth to protect them against the pitfalls of adolescence.

The stories of *Nyanjiru* and *Nyokabi* (No.6 and 7) project a more contemporary perspective of the contradictions of courtship in a changing social environment. *Nyanjiru*, narrated by Alice Wanjira (57yrs.), tells the story of the girl who is courted by all sorts of men. First, comes along Hyena, whom she accepts. He brings beer to her family as a sign that he is ready to open marriage negotiations. Members of the clan drink the beer signifying that the negotiations can begin. Beetle then comes along to woo Nyanjiru. She accepts him and he also brings the beer to the people. They accept it in spite of having taken the offer from Hyena. Hawk finally enters the scene. He appears richer than the other two. He offers to pay dowry in the form of chicks. Nyanjiru decides this is her man and she marries him. They go off to live in Hawk's nest up the tree. But Hawk is an ogre. He mistreats her as he bides his time waiting for the day he will invite the other hawks so that they can feast on her. Fortunately her brother saves her. She vows that she will never again marry animal suitors.

In the story of *Nyokabi* by Irene Wanjiru, the girl has two suitors and cannot decide which one to marry. She decides to subject them to a test in order to determine who is hard working and can take care of her. She uses the premise that, whoever consumes more food, must be the better worker. She offers the two sweet potatoes. After they have eaten she goes to check on the peelings. She decides to marry the one whose heap of potato peelings is more. But this is where her mistake lies. The hardworking suitor is also modest. He thought it bad manners to eat too much. He even placed most of his peelings on the heap of his competitor. Nyokabi marries the wrong man. After marriage she discovers her mistake. The man she has chosen is lazy and greedy. She is unable to bear this relationship. She runs away and seeks the other suitor who she gladly marries.

Nyanjiru's story portrays a rather anti-ethical proposition. She has multiple suitors and she lets her relatives accept beer from all of them. Under normal circumstances, a girl cannot give her parents and relatives the green light to accept beer from a suitor unless she is sure she would marry him. Before the beer is drunk, it is poured into a horn and given to the girl who passes it to her father. He regards the horn of beer, then asks her clearly so that everybody gathered for the ceremony can hear,

"Mother, if I drink this beer, will I ever vomit it?"

If the girl answers "no", then, the father can proceed and drink from the horn. It means she has accepted to be married by the suitor. The horn is refilled. The girl is asked to take a sip and then pass it on to her suitor so that everybody at the ceremony can 'know who he is.' Once that identity is established, it is an impossible sacrilege to come up again with another lover (Kinyua Nunu: Interview).

Nyanjiru's story defies this ethic. She not only brings in one lover after another but her relatives willingly drink from all of them. The *gitiro* song the women sing as they consume the beer, sarcastically approves the deviance:

This beer we are drinking

Is Nyanjiru's beer

People say she was just roaming

But she was not roaming

She was looking for beer

The characters in the story do not directly condemn Nyanyiru for her unbecoming behaviour. But the story does. She ends up suffering because her choice of the husband is motivated by greed. She accepts all but takes the richest. Eventually, she suffers but learns her lesson. This story captures the setting of opportunistic materialism in courtship in contemporary society. The girl is said to be 'roaming all over', alluding to prostitution that is common in most of the provincial towns in the area where our research was conducted. By implication this story is also critical of the complacent community, which is as corrupted as Nyanyiru and seems to accept creeping moral decay.

The story of *Nyokabi*, while portraying a similar situation nevertheless projects a new perspective. Narrated by a younger generation, the story seems to suggest that, traditions and practices should not be adhered to at the expense of individual fulfilment. The girl character knows what she wants, but because she has made a mistake, she doesn't have to live with it. She has the power to reverse her misfortune and seek happiness in marriage with the right partner.

The male character who is the subject of courtship in many traditional folktales is usually conceived with negative connotations. In the stories we have analysed so far, he is presented in the image of an ogre. In the stories that we discuss below the suitor is presented in the symbolic image of an animal character or he is a disadvantage human being.

A common story of animals going courting that we recorded during the fieldwork, was the story of Spider, Hare and Chameleon (no.8) and its version by Jecinta Mbute (no.9) of Spider and Hare. The three go courting in heaven or the upper world. Spider is the richest of the three. He owns a car. During the first visit, they drive in it to the girl's home.

They are welcomed and served with food. The girl falls in love with chameleon. But the others are not happy with this.

On their way home, they propose that whoever arrives there first the next time will register the wedding with the girl. Spider makes it easily with his car and asks his two friends to be the best man and master of ceremonies respectively during the wedding. In other versions of this story (no.9), Hare is already married and it is his friend Spider who is seeking a bride. But Hare is a false friend. He spreads malicious rumour about his friend and tells all the girls how ugly Spider is with his eight legs. He tells them that each leg requires huge quantities of water to wash. Spider realises this and decides to go courting far away in heaven where Hare cannot go since he doesn't have a car (web). Hare tricks his way up there and ensures that the girl refuses Spider. These stories tend to emphasise the traditional themes of male competition, deceit and jealousy in courtship situations.

The disadvantaged suitor in our sample is sometimes the poor, ugly and jigger-ridden young man like Kabindura (no.10). He could also be the uncircumcised boy (no.11). In either case, the young man intends to marry the most beautiful woman in the village. This girl has refused to talk to all the handsome and rich young men, vowing that if she ever talks to any man, even if it is an overgrown boy (*Kihii/kibii*), she would marry him.

Kabindura is poor and the narrator in the story refers to him as 'useless'. In the words of the artist he has crooked jigger-ridden feet 'because he has nobody to take care of him'. His age mates completely disregard him, but he alone knows what he is capable of. He bets with them that he can win the girl who has refused to talk with them. If he wins her, they promise to give him the goats and cattle with which he can pay for her bride price.

Technically, the narrator uses song as the instrument through which the young man wins the bride. He goes to woo her in the fields where she is scaring away birds from her mother's millet farm. He tricks the girl into speaking to him by singing to her and uprooting millet at the same time. The girl is puzzled about this 'madman' who is singing and uprooting her mother's millet.

She asks him what he thinks he is doing. This becomes her undoing. She has talked to the man and has to marry him. Kabindura wins a bride and the bet.

The other young men pay what they promised and he has enough to pay for the bride price. The story of the uncircumcised boy follows a similar pattern. The boy tricks the girl by requesting her to come and help his 'father' who is in the pangs of labour pain and is about to give birth by the roadside.

"But since when did men start giving birth?" Queries the girl, too late to realise that she has spoken. She has no alternative than to marry the boy. The boy wins the bet, gets circumcised and marries the girl.

On the surface these stories are commenting on obvious moral messages. They invert popular perceptions of individual ability and worth. They project the folk psychology, which tends to sympathise with the weak and the poor projecting an alternative to the status of the underprivileged (Zipes: 1992:17, George and Jones: 1995:163). Everybody in the community is expected to marry or get married whether they are poor or ugly. The overgrown boy is not circumcised because his father is poor. He and Kabindura can only acquire the necessary 'wealth' to go through these rites of passage through their own wit and courage. One of the messages in these stories then is that poverty should not be an impediment to self-actualisation. The two characters are able to marry this virtuous girl (*muiritu winyititie*) and in a symbolic way confirm the Kikuyu idiom that, *umbani ni wa kiruka* (courting ability is a family trait).

On the other hand, the stories provide social criticism of the girl who refuses to take up the challenges of girlhood. By being closed and refusing to participate in the social activities she puts herself in a volatile situation. By fearing the 'ogre' she risks marrying a man who is not necessarily the best.

A deeper analysis of the folktales discussed so far in this chapter present what Bal refers to as 'the vision of the fabula, (Bal: 1985:100,105) in Kikuyu folktales.

Apart from the messages discussed above, the stories present the audience with an external focalisation, which is overwhelmingly feminine. Whether it is the male or female artist who narrates the stories, the perspective remains feminine.

The arrangement of the symbolic images tends to favour the female in the courtship as the positive, dynamic and central character. The image of the male suitor either in the ogre, the spider or Kabindura, is of someone in need of redemption. We shall pursue this issue in a later chapter that discusses gender constructs. Suffice here is to note that this underlying ideological position is derived from the dominant performing gender. While men also perform folktales in the area covered by our research, women are the predominant performers (Kabira: 1992). Over the years, the tale seems to have evolved a feminine vision that acts as a balancing and cathartic force against patriarchy.

Modern adaptations of the traditional courtship motifs found in oral literature continue to analyse and communicate the social changes mainly at a qualitative level. The predicament of the male character is similar to that of Kabindura. He aspires to penetrate a higher class through marriage. To achieve this, his weapon remains deception. An analysis of *Ndamanu* (no.12) and 'Daughter of Jakubu' (no.13) by Dumenico Githingithia, a popular folk dramatist and storyteller, clearly shows the appropriation of these traditional motifs in communicating contemporary equivalents.

Ndamanu is a poor mechanic who wishes to marry the virtuous daughter of a Christian elder. He decides that the only way he can get through to this girl is by joining her father's church. He joins the church and although it is obvious he is poor he becomes a very devoted believer. When he makes his move and proposes to the girl, she accepts him. Her father and the entire congregation allow him to marry this girl although he cannot afford the bride price. They shower him with contributions and gifts. After achieving his goal, *Ndamanu* rivets back to his true self. He stops attending church and goes back to his carousing habits. When a delegation from the church comes to find out what went wrong he tells them the truth. They insist that the Holy Spirit had been upon him as he even used to speak in 'tongues'.

He however demonstrates exactly what he used to say when 'possessed' by the 'Holy Spirit'. He would utter the names of motor vehicle components in quick succession: "*Cokomsoba, kabureta, otanita, piston, ngasket...*" ("Shock absorber, carburettor, alternator, piston, gasket..."). Spoken in quick succession these words would make the

character sound as if he is speaking in tongues. But he is just mentioning the names of parts of motor vehicles with which he is familiar with as a mechanic. They would sound very much like the spiritual language others were speaking.

In the story of the daughter of Jakubu, the young man wins the girl by playing God. He climbs to the roof of Jakubu's house at night and using a powerful torchlight, he pretends he is God. He instructs the old man to make sure that his beautiful daughter is married to him after which she will conceive a messiah. The old man follows 'Gods' instructions and marries off his daughter to this pretender. After achieving his mission, the young man lapses into drunkenness and he lets the cat out of the bag. His wife leaves him and goes back to her father.

Apart from criticising the hypocrisy, that has become common in churches, the modern versions allude to alienation and dehumanisation of modern courtship relations. The changing social and economic realities in the country make it difficult for the poor youth to have meaningful relationships in both courtship and marriage. We shall continue to explore the artistic communication of this condition in our analysis of oral poetry (songs) below.

In the areas where this study was conducted, traditional forms of oral poetry are performed alongside their modern popular adaptations. In a historical context, the modern derives a lot from the traditional in terms of content and even structure. It presents a continuum in which we are able to have abstractions of new experiences and ideas on courtship. We shall begin by discussing the *Muthunguci* folksong, (no.14) which provides the bases and a springboard of understanding and evaluating change and innovation in the more current forms of oral poetry.

Muthunguci is performed in a dance where both men and women participate. The song is essentially a courtship game. It is replete with teasing, challenges and euphemistic messages that explore the process of courtship from getting acquainted, through *nguiko* to marriage.

The song begins with the male persona introducing his background alluding to the renowned sexual virility that runs in his family:

In our family
we are born with huge navels
Wamunyor, And I inherited one

The girl's reply to this assertion is that she even had two huge navels when she was born. She gave one as a present to the midwife who attended to her birth. She then challenges the man to come closer, if he is really interested in her. But she maintains she will dance to the rhythm with her shoulders leaving the foolish girls to swing their hips. The man then rises to the challenge declaring he is capable, and can cultivate her two 'farms'. He is offered the upper farm:

Cultivate the upper one
Cultivate the upper one
Wamahua
The one below belongs
To the owner of the goats

The lower one can only be accessed by the man who will take goats to her father alluding to marriage. At this point, the song presents the girl's rejection of the possibility of pre-marital sex, but agrees to *nguiko*. In the discourse that follows the man accepts the challenge to take the courtship process to its logical conclusion in marriage. But the woman is still sceptical about his manhood. She still wants to confirm his potency (possibly through *nguiko*) and an assurance that his 'gun is indeed loaded with bullets'. The man gives this assurance confirming that he can indeed sire a child:

We shall dance twice
Only twice, and get Njeri
To be sending to the river.

Through its poetic licence, the song provides the courting couple with the chance to explore the physical and social qualities of each other. By alluding to the presumed or real

weaknesses in the other partner, the song gives the context for one to prove otherwise before finally settling in marriage. The marriage should then ultimately lead to procreation.

The song then, is not only about the proper choice of marriage partners but also emphasises the proper process. An ordered process that leads to marriage and the raising of a family. Beyond that, this song is an example of oral poetry that struggles to provide a balance between the process and expectations from courtship.

The song discussed above provides the traditional antecedent to the modern oral poetry performed mainly as popular songs in our sample. These songs contain messages that reflect the disruption of the possible order and consistency proposed in the antecedent. This is consistent with the erosion of moral codes best reflected in the courtship relations between older women and young men on one hand and older men and young girls on the other. The young male/female is trapped in a relationship in which he/she becomes a willing victim of material attractions risking a termination of self-actualisation.

The songs *Nyina wa Njoro* by Maina wa Nyaguthii and '*Mutumia Murogi*' by J.B. Maina (no.15 and 16) communicate the possibility of this predicament. The two songs analyse the theme of courtship and possible marriage between a younger man and an older, materially endowed woman. The woman exercises her hold over the man through her wealth or through magical herbs, which make him subservient. The modern courtship setting becomes a reversal and even subversion of normal expectations. The woman matrilocates the setting of the cohabitation and the young man is unable to extricate himself from her jaws. Only God or the community can save him.

The picture that emerges is of a man who is vulnerable hence the warning (song No.16):

Pray hard to God
Before thinking of marriage
Women today
Are more wily than Delira
She will swallow you
As she calls you my sweet heart.

In the two songs discussed above the man ends up being a sexual object for the older woman. But the young woman also risks falling into the same trap if she agrees to be courted by an older man described by the singer of song no.17 as a ruffian:

Old men have indeed become ruffians

I saw 'my father' wearing trench coat

With a sword in its sheath

Going out to court a woman.

The girl may be attracted to the old man because he has the economic power to solve her pressing monetary needs. But she is engaging in an illegal relationship, which leads to conflicts with the man's legally wedded wife. As a 'sugar girl', she is a phenomenon of the neo-traditional society that is constantly defying legal matrimony. In the competition for the scarce resources she faces the risk of assault or even being killed by the legal wife. But this song is also an indictment of the disintegrated morality among elderly men. In its hyperbolic image the song decries the risk of an old man eventually seducing his son's bride.

How can it be old man,
An old man who is now a father-in-law,
Brings beards to a new home,
When you should call from the gate,
And wait there for your daughter (in-law)
To come.

Traditionally it is taboo among the Kikuyu for fathers to casually enter into their daughter-in-law's house. If the old man wanted to say anything he would stop at the gate and loudly call out the name of the daughter in-law. She would then go out and listen to what he had to say. This symbolic distance safeguarded the mutual respect and ensured that boundaries of sexuality were clearly adhered to.

One of the obvious consequences of the disintegration of traditional courtship patterns is pre-marital parenthood. The girl who finds herself in this situation lends herself to social condemnation. She has fallen short of the expectations of her parents and the clan.

In the idiomatic expression she has 'wasted the clan's beer' (*guita njobi/njohi ya mubiriga/muhiriga*). It is the conflict that arises from such a situation that Lady Wanja addresses in her song, *Ndukamutue Kionje* (no.18). The singer in this song deplors the traditional attitudes towards girls who have children before marriage because it is a reality of the neo-traditional society. For the singer the current situation calls for new strategies and new understanding because the community lives in a situation, which is neither traditional nor completely modern. The father who physically punishes his daughter should come to terms with the new reality. The artist reminds the father that even in the traditional society once a child is born, it can never be disowned or thrown away (*mwana muciare ndateagwo*). As she puts it, his daughter is not the first to transgress:

In our family there are seven sisters
Each of them had a child before marriage
...All families are now 'smoke'
You can never be sure
Which one is on fire

Our analysis so far demonstrates that various genres of oral literature existing in Kenya's Central Province reflect the social changes and propose new approaches of dealing with them. However the reflection and the innovative proposals have their own inconsistencies. They are not uniform and they vary from one artist to another.

Even within the productions of individual artists, the affected areas of culture are still striving to achieve new stable relationships. They are, in the words of Forster, 'attempting to strike a balance between the stresses and strains that are inevitable consequences of social change' (Forster: 1965:19).

3.2 Marriage

As observed in this and the previous chapter, marriage is a very revered social institution among the Kikuyu. Like courtship, the institution has also been affected by colonial and postcolonial dynamics.

Oral literature as a serious form of communication has continued to discuss, evaluate and suggest on these changes. The people as the folk performers and creators of this literature have continued to determine the relevance of the oral art forms. They determine the orientation of content and style of the folktales, the songs and other genres because they find them meaningful, relevant and appealing (George and Jones: 1995:78).

One of the most appealing stories in our sample is the narrative of 'Wagaciiri' (no.19). This is a popular and a very well known story in the area where this study was conducted. The thematic motif of the story has over the years crossed generic boundaries manifesting itself in song, popular music and proverbs.

This is the story of a man who goes to work in a smithy and leaves behind a pregnant wife. When it is time for her to give birth, an ogre delivers the baby. In the versions of the stories that we recorded, the ogre initially is disguised as a human being who pretends to be the benefactor to Wagaciiri. But she mistreats the newly delivered mother, denying her help and food when she needs them most. The woman becomes malnourished and is on the verge of death. She approaches a friendly dove who she sends to the forges to call back her husband. The husband comes back home and finds his wife in a terrible condition. She briefs him on what has been happening. He then hides in the firewood platform (*itara*) and awaits the ogre to come back home.

She comes back with a load of firewood that she drops noisily on the ground. She insults Wagaciiri as she normally does, ignorant of the presence of the husband.

Ogre: Wagaciiri, may you drop to the ground like that load of firewood!

Wagaciiri: May you also drop down like that load.

Ogre: Wagaciiri, who are you answering back like that?

Wagaciiri: Who are you also talking to like that?

Ogre: Wagaciiri, how are you speaking today? You are talking as if those
Who went to smith have come back?

Wagaciiri: You are also talking as if they have come back.

Ogre: Wagaciiri, you are so rude, today I will kill you!

As she rushes into the house to attack Wagaciiri, the husband comes from his hiding place and kills her.

He stays at home taking care of his sickly wife and child. When they are strong enough he goes back to the smithy to collect his tools. As the narrator puts it, 'from then henceforth, he never went to work very far from home'.

A number of sources propose that this story is a relatively recent creation or adaptation among the Kikuyu people (Brinkman: 1996:126, Ngari Njuki: Interview). Its interpretation is more consistent with the recent colonial history in Kenya. In order to ensure a constant supply of labour in white settler farms the colonial government introduced various systems of taxation. Men were then forced to travel and work far away from home either in the coffee farms in Kiambu and Makuyu or in the dairy and wheat farms in the Rift Valley to be able to pay the tax. With the development of urbanisation, men also started moving into the major urban areas of Nairobi and Mombasa where they would stay for prolonged periods working at the docks, railway stations or as servants in white households.

The prolonged absence of the male as the head of a household did present a real threat to the family unit. Traditionally, the family would rely on the patriarch for protection against external competitive forces. The fictional conception of this threat is in the image of the ogre. But beyond this the story is a protest against the prolonged absence of the husband who leaves his family at the mercy of other forces while working for other people. By extension, the story becomes protest against colonialism and the introduction of new capitalistic labour relations that threaten the family structures. The resolution in the story is a rejection of such labour relations whereby the man works not for the benefit but at the expense of his own family. After resuscitating his wife and the newborn child, the husband

goes back to the forges to collect his tools. The narrator tells us that he never again went to work far away from home.

Apart from reflecting on a concrete historical reality, this story is also an exploration of the relationships between co-wives in a polygamous household. The ogre symbolises the co-wife who contravenes the traditional ethic of female co-operation and responsibility. By refusing to assist the younger wife, the co-wife is threatening both the family unit and the concept of female solidarity.

Co-wives always have conflicts between or among themselves in their competition for love and attention from the husband. But this conflict was traditionally balanced by interdependence and the common suffering under patriarchal authority. It was not uncommon for co-wives to conspire against their husband and even dupe him into some activity, which would be of their mutual benefit. In cases of male transgression women could express solidarity by denying their husbands sexual favours (Kenyatta: 1978: (1938): 10). Women of the Nyakinyua age group aptly capture this solidarity in the *Gitiro* song (no.20):

Let my co-wife drink

She is my co-wife

Let her have a drink

It is she who took care of me

With hot water and a torch

This beer belongs to my co-wife

It is not like the one, you purchase with money.

This song emphasises the respect due to the co-wife who co-operates with the other woman. Taking care of the other with 'hot water and a torch' alludes to the midwife duties she performs when the baby unexpectedly comes at night. The co-wife deserves respect because she is the immediate help to the other in times of need. The ogre in the story discussed above is the co-wife who refuses to rise to this ideal of co-operation. Her refusal

can lead to suffering in the family. Hence her rejection by the society which is symbolised by her death.

Modern oral narrative and poetic forms continue to appropriate the motif of the two women characters. However in these texts, Wagaciiri and the co-wife have mutated into a spectrum of other characters as reflected in our analysis below. In the song, *Magerio ma Mwedwa* (no.21) by J. J. Muoni, the husband goes to the urban areas in search of work in order to be able to support his family. Back home members of his family and friends turn into the modern ogre. They persecute his wife instead of supporting her during his absence. They even suggest that she goes back to her parental home. They allege that he would never come back. As the singer puts it, 'if problems were a disease, he would have found her dead by the time he returned home'. She perseveres and finally he comes home to rescue her from the financial and social problems she had been facing.

In the folk drama, *Kurumwo ni Ng'unda*, (no.22) by Dumenico Githingithia the ogre co-wife metamorphoses into a mistress. In this hilarious piece, the husband acts in cohort with the second woman. Gichamba, the male character agrees to go out for the weekend with the mistress who is interested in him because he can provide financial support. Gichamba cheats his wife that he has to travel upcountry to visit his mother who has been mauled by a donkey. Unfortunately, through an ironical twist of fate, his mother decides to pay his family a visit.

As he is enjoying his illicit communion at a resort outside town his mother is knocking on his door. Her daughter-in-law is surprised because she has no visible injuries as alleged by her husband. She also confirms that her son never went on a visit to the rural home. The folly of the husband is heightened through dramatic irony.

When he comes back home, his mother hides in the kitchen. Gichamba then proceeds to lie to his wife about his journey upcountry to visit his mother. The story reaches an anti-climax with the exposure and humiliation of the husband as his mother emerges from the kitchen.

The ogre co-wife figure finally mutates into the common prostitute who ensnares Kiaumbui (song no.23) at the expense of his own family. Kiaumbui is indeed a transgressor:

Kiaumbui, you are a sinner
You are a transgressor
and you don't even know
You neglect your wife
because of a prostitute
When the prostitute disappears
Who will ululate for you

The man in the original tale of Wagaciiri is a positive character in that he is able to redeem the situation. However the communication of that motif in the modern adaptations shows the man in the modern family as a willing transgressor. He allows the 'ogre' to ruin his family. Most of the elderly members of the community interviewed during this study express resentment to these changes that have adversely affected family units. They blame the money economy, modern parenting and 'new' brands of religion which in the words of Muthoni Irungu (Interview) 'make people do whatever they want'.

This moral disintegration is captured graphically in the sermons of the preacher J.J.Gitahi. His sermons, which dwell on various social issues, use oral literary techniques and narrative forms to communicate messages illustrating moral decay. In one of his recorded sermons, he narrates the story of 'the promiscuous couple' (no.24). When the wife is away at work, the husband comes back home and seeks sexual favours from the domestic worker. One day when the husband is absent, the wife does the same with the charcoal seller. Their young daughter is however the silent witness to all that is happening. As they sit at table in the evening, the daughter who has just mastered how to speak innocently wants to reveal this conspiracy:

Daughter: Daddy, daddy, can I tell you something? Mummy today did...

Father: What is it my daughter?

Mother: You, don't...

Daughter: Do I tell? Should I really tell you?

Father: Tell me, tell! Tell me!

Daughter: Today, today, daddy, mummy did with the charcoal seller
what you do with the house girl (She giggles innocently.).

The power of this anecdote lies in its possible impact on the congregation. The realistic hyperbole ruthlessly drives home the message on moral decadence in the modern society. It may produce some mirth or even laughter from the audience. But this laughter is just an effort to hide the shame in this behaviour, which members of the congregation may recognise in themselves. The stylistic device that uses the innocent toddler as the instrument of revelation makes the story a very effective means of communication.

In his analysis of sexuality and socialisation in Shona praises and lyrics, Chimhundu (1995) observes that women are depicted as the symbol of beauty and family stability. In most forms of oral literature married women are accorded the highest status as mothers and caretakers who are contrasted with the 'others' (ogre-wife, the mistress or the prostitute). This is evident in our samples of oral poetry; especially those recorded during wedding occasions. These songs appropriate traditional folksong structures to communicate ideal moral codes for the contemporary society.

In the song, *Gikeno*, (no.25) by Mugwandi singers, marriage is welcomed as a momentous occasion when two people come together to raise a family. The thrust of the song is in the creation of a Christian family whereby the couple is chosen to become the glory of God and the pillar of the church. Traditional Kikuyu images are used to reinforce the concept of monogamy; *wa mundu ni umwe, kiu kingi ni kirindi* (yours is one, the rest is just a crowd). This is emphasised by the authoritative sayings attributed to the founder of the tribe. 'Gikuyu made no mistake when he said, "ya gwithurira ndiri ihindi" ("A piece of meat of one's choice has no bones").

This song and '*Ngemi Ciumaga na mucii*' (no.26) by the same group play on the central role women play in the modern family. In building a firm and prosperous family there must be a reversal of negative perceptions and attitudes.

The singers communicate this message in the imagery of the proverb, *Micii ni ndogo*, literary meaning 'homes are smoke'. This saying views the home as a centre of conflict and confusion. A place where all sorts of rivalries and infighting occur. This is an image consistent with what happens in many households, especially the polygamous, in the competition of resources.

But the song reverses this traditional attitude, which is negative and pessimistic. It recognises the potential of the woman to overcome this circumstance. She has resources, which can reverse the saying. She is intelligent and cannot involve herself in the activities that might destroy her family. She is a woman who will not just sit there and say 'homes are smoke' but will act to prevent her home becoming 'smoke'. This way, the woman becomes the pillar of the home (*gitugi kia mucii*).

In our analysis so far, it is clear that oral literature in its traditional and modern adaptations advocates for the ideal in the creation and maintenance of family units. Nevertheless, oral literature recognises the process is faced with many difficulties and impediments. The traditional genre of oral poetry that ushered women into marriage is *Kihiro* (no.27). *Kihiro* literary means crying. This song views marriage as a rite that opens up new crises in the life of a woman. It compares favourably to marriage songs from Mauritius, which, as Boodhoo indicates, are meant to ensure that the individual is psychologically prepared for the new situation as a wife and mother (Boodhoo: 1994). The songs lament what Simone de Beauvoir refers to as the 'high price' a woman has to pay for marriage because she now has to be confined in a restricted space (de Beauvoir: 1974 Trans.: 502-503).

Traditionally only women performed this genre. They sang the songs immediately after the wedding during the first eight days in the new matrimonial home. During this period the new bride was aloof and would even refuse to eat anything unless she was enticed with gifts and presents.

She would then spend the day outside her mother-in-law's house crying and singing. Her female age mates would visit to comfort and lament with her. She would weep and lament the loss of her maidenhood, the loss of her family and freedom now that she is married. She would decry her new state of life in which she is under the command of her husband:

I told you I am all alone
I am the only child of Wangari
But now I Waceera
I am no more
Able to wander
You hear

The protest in *Kiriro* songs also marked the woman's acceptance of the subordinate position she would now occupy in marriage. Despite its strong protest against the new power relations, its function was geared towards the acceptance of the traditional position of woman in the family.

Offshoots of this genre in topical and popular songs, especially those performed by women tend to confirm that, in its development, oral literature and popular culture in general, have the ability to destabilise and consume the stereotypical. Literary forms can challenge cultural attitudes, and even promote change. The song, 'Ndukanjikire heho', (no.28) by female artist, Lady Wanja, best signifies this new form of protest, a protest that refuses to be complacent. Indeed the song expresses the woman's rejection of the cultural norm that defines her roles against those of male domination. She refuses to accept the over-protectiveness of the man and even presents it as treacherous.

The initial situation in the song reflects a philosophical and social comment on human nature. That blind adherence to cultural attitude can overshadow perception of the reality of the times. The singer then proceeds to narrate the story of the song. When they fell in love, her partner was unemployed. She secured a loan, which enabled him to start a family business. The business thrives and now that the man is well established, he wants to reassert his patriarchal position by trying to domesticate his wife. He demands that the wife should stop working in the office and stay at home as a housewife.

He even accuses her of possible unfaithfulness. But the woman in the song stands her ground. She refuses to be emasculated:

Now, why do you interfere,
interfere with my career,
After all I have done for you,
You want to subordinate me,
Make me feel useless,
I cannot stop working,
I cannot allow you
To emasculate me.

This song is an example of the role oral literature is playing in changing perceptions as social-economic contexts change in Central Kenya and in the rest of the country. Originally, formal employment was the domain of the man. But currently the situation could be either way. The new setting calls for new types of relationships that lead to an inversion of cultural practice and attitude. The song then advocates for the understanding of this change. It also portrays the woman as able to resist tradition. The genre emerges as dynamic and resilient reflecting the dialectic of tradition and innovation (Chiwome: 1991). It continues to embrace the topical potential of its pre-colonial past and is able to analyse and propose new concepts and practices.

The sermons of J.J. Gitahi discussed earlier explore the conflicts between men and women in marriage by using analogies that are comical and border on the absurd. The messages in the narratives that he relates are communicated through the magnification of the trivial. In one incident a man and his wife are not in talking terms although they live together (Text no. 29). The man is unemployed and is desperately searching for a job. And this is the core of the conflict. One day the man attends an interview and qualifies for a job but in order to take up the position, he has to be at the place of work at six o'clock in the morning. When he arrives home, he realises that he needs to be woken up early the following day. Since he doesn't speak to his wife, he leaves her a note on the bedside table with the message; 'wake me up at six'. His wife sees the note before going to bed.

In the morning when it is six o'clock she writes a note, 'wake up it is six o'clock'. Of course the man oversleeps and misses the job.

This female protest is taken further by the same preacher in his story of the argument between a man and his wife over salt. The woman prepares food and serves her husband who complains about the salt.

Man: Wife, this food has too much salt in it.

Woman: No, you are mistaken. That food has just the right amount of salt.

Man: No! There is too much salt in the food. I can taste it.
I am the one eating the food.

Woman: No. That food is not salty! I am the one who cooked it and I should know.

Man: But nevertheless, the food is salty.

Woman: No. It isn't!

Man: I say it is!

This argument turns into a serious quarrel and ends up in a fight. The wife runs off back to her father. Later her husband follows her there. They discuss the case with the elders and everybody including the couple is surprised at the trivial nature of their problem. They agree to go back to their home together. On their way home they stop over at a cafeteria for a cup of tea. As they take the tea they start reflecting on the problem:

Man: Mother of my children, I can't even understand what we were
Quarrelling about.

Woman: I also cannot also understand.

Man: You see, I never even intended to slap you.

Woman: But you did slap me

Man: And it was only because you disagreed when I said
the food was salty.

Woman: But that food wasn't salty. It's me who had cooked it.

Man: It was salty!

The argument picks up and the fighting starts all over again. The wife runs off once more.

In his religious discourse, the preacher blames the quarrel on the fact that the two were not 'saved' enough as Christians. However, hidden in the absurdity of this rhetoric, is a power game between the two. She disagrees with what could be obvious because 'she cooked the food'; an expression of her resentment of the husband's interference with her sphere of influence. The repetition of the quarrel gives us the hint that the matter may be not as trivial as it appears. That it is a microcosm of a greater confrontation between a husband and a wife over spheres of influence within the family set up.

3.3. Family

Before we conclude this chapter we shall discuss the communication of messages in two other important aspects of family life. These are the extended family kinship relations and the psychological communication.

The extended family kinship system among the Kikuyu community has always been a source of strength and security for its members. The solidarity of the extended family is however under constant threat due to the consequences of colonialism and now globalisation. As Barnett noted long ago, major shifts in the economic livelihood are almost always followed by significant changes in the nature of family organisation (Barnett: 1940: 29).

Some of the major factors that have facilitated transformations in the area where the study was carried out begin with the shift from subsistence to a monetary economy. Others are individualisation of formerly communal land holdings and the effects of western education, religion and mass media. This has led to the weakening of the extended family structures. But the role played by the extended family is still necessary today. More so because of the increasing economic hardships that require that the vulnerable group get assistance from other members of the community.

Oral literature continues to articulate this reality. It analyses the situation and advocates the renaissance of these values. In their productions oral artists have attempted to draw the attention of their audiences to the forces that tear them apart and those that can draw them together. In essence they recreate traditional values to deal with a worsening social reality.

The song '*Menyerera mucii*', (no.31) stresses the common perception of the eldest son as a key figure in preserving the extended family. In the absence of the father, he is the father (*mwana mukuru no ta ithe*). He has to ensure that there is family solidarity and his first duty is to take care of the elderly parents. Children should remember that their parents are the genesis of their current status. The musician Joseph Kamaru in his song '*Ngemiciumaga na mucii*, (Ululations originate from the home) (no.32) criticises the new generation that neglects their parents. He casts negative aspersion to those who live in affluence while their elderly parents wallow in poverty. Kamaru further projects the breakdown of extended family values in the negative forces that are tearing kinship ties apart. This is captured in the song '*Muirungu*' (no.33) that exposes the competition over resources as the main cause of filial conflicts.

The subject of the song is the subdivision of land, which today is a major source of family conflicts in the area where we carried out this research. People as the singer notes are using unorthodox ways to disinherit their kinsmen. They are selfish and even fraudulent. They have discarded the traditional process of property subdivision, which ensured fairness and justice:

You have discussed and decided,
Sons of my father,
That you consume me from the edges
Like hot *ugali* (mealie),
While this land belong to us all,
Will I perish like the sugar cane,
That perished because of its sweetness.

The singer goes on to condemn his affluent but corrupt brothers who still want to disinherit him of his small portion of land. They can do that now but he warns them that there can be retribution as 'even the barber gets shaved':

This is not the end of the world,
Sons of my father,
Because the root stem,
of the camphor tree,
Cannot be reached by the wood carver,
Unless he first removes the outer rings.

The lament in this song is that the house (*nyumba*) discussed in the previous chapter is no longer the centre of family relations. This reality has forced people to seek the security of the 'house' in other associations.

Our study so far indicates that oral artists do not passively inherit artefacts of culture. They actively use the cultural heritage as a resource. They are able to personalise the various folklore resources and utilise them to achieve different ends (Georges and Jones: 1995:264).

Apart from the texts discussed so far, the performances of Njagi Njuki are a good example of this cultural appropriation. Njuki is around 65 years old, and regularly performs narratives to audiences in his homestead. The audience mainly consists of his children and grandchildren.

The key to the communication of innovative ideas in his stories lie in his use of commentary and interpretation as stylistic devices. His story of 'The Children left at the old homestead' (no.34) is about an inversion of commonly accepted values of parenting. The two parents decide to abandon their children and start life afresh. They leave their two children, a boy and a girl in the old homestead and go off to a far away place. The children left behind do their best to manage on their own. They take over the duties and roles of their parents. One day they decide to take the livestock to the salt licks. This was normally done periodically to replenish the mineral supplements in livestock. On their way home from the salt licks, it gets late and they have to seek accommodation from any well wisher. Coincidentally, they seek overnight lodge with their lost parents.

The parents cannot recognise them at the first instance. As the children watch over their animals, the mother recognises them. She informs her husband of her discovery but at first he insists that she is dreaming and that the children must have died by now. On his wife's

insistence, he verifies their identity. A re-union follows because as the narrator puts it, 'the children still longed for their parents'. The father is remorseful and they all agree to go back to their original home

The story can be interpreted as an expression of the deep unconscious fear of the possibilities of the practice of abandoning children during periods of hardships. However, Njuki turns it into a parable of neglect in modern Kenya. For the artist, this is a story that teaches responsibility in the face of mounting economic hardships in the country. It is all a question of being wise enough to be able to deal with these issues. The two parents in the story are foolish and according to the narrator 'even one foolish parent is dangerous enough for a family'. The narrator condemns the male character for misleading his wife. It is he who suggests that they go away. But the wife is also foolish for agreeing to be misled.

The narrator uses the content of this story to address the common problem of either parent abandoning his or her children because they cannot confront the problems of raising them.

The relevance of this story is in the way it addresses a common problem in the area where we carried out the study. It is not uncommon for one parent, either the father or the mother, to abandon the children for long periods. This has led to the emergence of street children in the urban centres. The narrator condemns these types of parents. He views them as people who lack teamwork and the ability to confront problems and solve domestic conflicts

The narrator suggests that during the current period of heavy monetary demands from children, parents should develop skills to face them rather than run away from them. It is inhuman and cowardly to neglect children. As the story suggests at the end, parents who do this also relinquish the right to be protected or to benefit from the children when they become adults. When the girl in the story is eventually married, it is her brother who receives the bride price although the father is still alive. We can then experience this story not only as an expression of the communal unconscious, but also as an avenue of the individual artist to communicate innovative means of dealing with a new social problem.

The story presents a continuum of experience for the artist, as he is able to make it relevant and meaningful to a new generation.

Before we finally conclude this chapter, let us discuss the psychoanalytic value of folktales in the society. The stories continue to hold on the imaginations of the performers and the listeners because they are still relevant to the psychological need of a peasant neo-traditional community. They still play a role in the critical reflection of the limits in filial relationships and conflicts within the family. Oral literature continues to be necessary now as before because it remains the most potent instrument of resolving unconscious psychological conflicts between children and their parents and between siblings. To paraphrase Azuonye, oral literature continues to serve as a powerful means of ideological prohibition (Azuonye: 1995). We shall demonstrate this value in folktales by analysing the messages in the story of *Nyaga* and that of *Muthoni* (no.35 and 36).

The cathartic conclusions in the story of *Nyaga* continue to evoke fear of conflicts within the family. In the story, Nyaga is a member of a polygamous family unit. The initial conflict in the story is the lack of food. There is a drought and a famine ravages the country. Women spend most the time foraging for wild vegetables along riverbeds while the males go out hunting to sustain the family.

One day, Nyaga, his father and half-brother go out to hunt. They trap an animal, *njengei*, somewhere up a tree. Nyaga is asked to climb up the tree and retrieve it. But when he reaches where it is, the animal begs Nyaga to release it. He feels pity upon it and lets it escape. But Ngari realises what has happened. When they go back home, miserable, hungry and empty handed, Ngari contrives of a scheme to blackmail his half brother. He threatens to report to their father what Nyaga had done unless he forfeits to him a portion of his food every time they are served.

When one day Nyaga is unable to give in to the blackmail, Ngari reveals to their father what he had done. Some time later, the father punishes Nyaga by crucifying him on the same tree from which he let the animal escape. He is left there to die. But through a turn of luck, the animal he released finds him on the tree and releases him.

The animal becomes his benefactor. It gives the young man a home and wealth on condition that he takes care of it.

The animal also sounds an interdiction that it should never be slaughtered until it is very old and is blind. As the story unfolds, Nyaga's sisters accidentally see him across the gorge as they forage for vegetables. He invites them to his home, feeds them and gives them some extra food to take to their mother.

Later, he invites all of them to come and live with him. To cross the gorge, he provides them with a rope ladder. They cross over, one after the other. His father is the last to cross and when he is in the middle of the gorge, Nyaga lets go the rope ladder and the old man perishes in the river below. The rest of the family live with him, enjoying his wealth. But he warns them against ever touching his benefactor, the *njegei*.

One day, while Nyaga is in the plains herding his livestock, his half-brother Ngari decides to slaughter the animal. This triggers the ultimate tragedy in the story. The scent of the roasting meat of his benefactor floats to Nyaga. He hurries back home and confirms his benefactor is no more. He sharpens his machete and starts singing in a dreamlike state. In extreme anger and sadness he starts wiping out everything he has. He starts off with the livestock, then the houses then the people and after that he kills his favourite bull. Finally he drives the machete into himself and dies.

This narrative and its versions render themselves to Freudian analysis. While it can be a story about many other issues in the family, it primarily communicates the threats that Oedipal conflict can pose to a family. It dwells on the dangers and the pitfalls of the negative emotions of greed, fear and anger and warns that competition between fathers and their sons and sibling rivalry can lead to catastrophic results.

First and foremost, the story establishes the father as a dominant patriarch who resents the possibility of any form of disobedience. The father wishes to confine the son. In other words he attempts to prevent him from growing up and challenge his patriarchal and sexual dominance. By crucifying him on the tree, the father wants to halt the son's 'normal course of time, leaving no place for the younger generation' (Gorog-Karady:

1995). But the father's wishes are confronted with obstacles. The son violates his interdictions, and even benefits from that violation.

At one level, the story suggests that fathers should be able to abandon power and accept to be succeeded by their offspring.

The narrative is further an expression of possible sexual rivalry between father and son. In the throes of Oedipal complex, Nyaga resents his father for standing on his path. In a way this story expresses the son's unconscious wish to destroy his father and inherit his wives and resources. Nyaga demonstrates this possibility by first disobeying his father. He then makes it a reality when he lets go the rope ladder and his father plunges to death. This conflict is compounded further in the story by that of sibling rivalry. The plot of the story is developed by this rivalry between Nyaga and Ngari. Ngari harbours unconscious wishes to destroy his brother. This is initially manifested in the blackmail and the subsequent report to his father, and finally when he slaughters Nyaga's benefactor.

The main message in this story focuses on the problems of human nature analysed over time in literary images. In psychoanalytical discourse Oedipal conflicts and sibling rivalries can lead to impossible desires and catastrophic consequences. If they are allowed to flourish the results may be an irreversible traumatic destruction of the family. These forces of destruction and division must then be balanced with the opposite forces of loving and sense of belonging within the family.

The folktale of *Muthoni*, analyses similar conditions but from a feminine perspective. On the surface this is a story of a brave girl. Her mother has a wound, which has defied all medication. When her father and brothers consult the medicine men, they are told that the only cure is leaves on the top of the *munyenyia* tree. This tree grows in the middle of the ogre's compound. They dread going there and hence they keep on seeking alternative prescriptions. Other medicine men prescribe the same leaves. One day as they seek yet another medicine man, Muthoni discreetly follows them. She discovers the truth and offers to go and fetch the leaves. She is warned of the risks but she nevertheless insists on going.

The psychoanalytical dimension adapted in analysis of these folktales emphasises their contemporary relevance. The neo-traditional family units have to contend not only with the traditional tensions but also with new antagonisms brought about by post-colonial experiences. The folktale continues to provide the social space where controversial issues may find legitimate expression. The narrative subverts the common perspective but they do so in order to direct the tastes, manners and actions of the members of the society. Beneath the surface then, tales have deeper meaning relevant to the socialisation of the family in the changing social environments in Kenya.

In this chapter, we have analysed and discussed messages communicated in cross-section of oral literary genres. We have focussed on messages pertaining to the institutions of courtship, marriage and family. In the process we have highlighted the innovative and contemporary messages that oral literature continues to communicate in the Central Province of Kenya.

Our study so far demonstrates that oral literature continues to play a significant role in communicating normative values in the area the study was carried out. Traditional and modern versions are constantly analysing new contradictions and experiences in the institutions proposing conformity, resistance and adaptation in dealing with new situations. This is achieved both in the content presentation and the development of new narrative strategies. The artist is not only the articulate commentator but also an interpreter of tradition.

In the narratives of Alice Wanjira Rukenya, Njagi Njuki and Louise Muthoni and the drama and oral poems by Dumenico Githingithia, J.J.Gitahi and Lady Wanja, we have artists who create and recreate new ideas and new characters projecting a contemporary opinion on courtship, marriage and family. The chapter so far demonstrates that oral literature continues to assert the interests of a people. It is innovative within traditional production parameters and continues to serve the society in a period of changing social circumstance. (Opkwewho: 1992:106, Vuuren: 1992).

The aspects of innovations in oral literary communication discussed in this chapter will become more apparent and explicit in the following chapters. In the next chapter, we

shall discuss and analyse the role of oral literature in the communication and the social construction of gender.

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER

In the last chapter we analyzed and discussed the cardinal role oral literature plays in the communication of messages surrounding the institutions of courtship, marriage and family in the Central Province of Kenya. In the analysis, we also focused on the communication of innovations and change in these institutions through the oral literary media. In the chapter we demonstrated that oral literature not only continues to communicate normative values but also explores and analyses new contradictions and strategies pertaining to the institutions of courtship, marriage and family.

From our discussion, it emerges that the existence of these social institutions in both the traditional and the neo-traditional societies is to a large extent based on the intricate and sometimes delicate balance of gender relations. This chapter proposes to explore this aspect in greater detail by analyzing the role oral literature plays in the social construction of gender in the area covered by the study.

Gender has emerged as an important category of understanding social reality in the last part of the twentieth century. As a concept, gender has become increasingly helpful in constructing our knowledge of men and women within social institutions and other sectors of the society (Hare-Mustin and Merecek, 1990:2, 45). In this chapter we shall understand gender as the socially or the culturally constructed and assigned attributes of men and women as opposed to their sexual or biological attributes. Gender, as a concept will signify the cultural meaning attached to the sexual identity and as the cultural definition of appropriate behavior of sexes in a given society at a given time (McConnell-Ginet: 1980:16, Learner: 1986:238).

In its differentiation from sex, the term gender then expresses the reality that men and women's roles and status are socially constructed and subject to change (Howard and Hollander: 1997:12).

It is generally recognized that cultural systems give authority and value to the different roles that men, women, boys and girls play in the society. The systems are reinforced through agents of socialization. In this chapter we will view oral literature as one of the potent agents that plays a central role in the social construction of gender in the area where the study was carried out.

Our study in this chapter will discuss and analyze the social construction of gender in the context of both Western as well as African feminism and womanism. Aspects of Western liberal and radical feminism are particularly relevant to the section in this chapter that analyze change and innovations in social gender constructs. These approaches provide important grounding in the discussion of oral literary texts that propose gender equality and equity. The approaches are also relevant to texts dealing the empowerment of women and the recognition of the worth of characteristics associated with women. Other aspects of Western feminisms outlined in detail in chapter one (P 17-22) also provide a general framework for our discussions in this chapter.

African feminist and womanist criticism further raises issues critical to our discussions here. These approaches recognize a feminine consciousness as necessary in the analysis of African societies but assert that such an analysis should be situated in the context of the realities of life facing women in Africa. African feminism/womanism as a developing theoretical ground will be viewed in our discussion and analysis as critical in addressing gender issues in Africa. This is in recognition of the fact that gender issues in Africa are not always the same as those in Western European countries.

Our discussions in this chapter will build on aspects key to African feminist/womanist criticism noted earlier in chapter one (P. 20). These include the role of woman in African

oral tradition and oral literary production, the images of women in African literature, and the development of an African feminist aesthetic.

Both Western and African feminist thought acknowledge the universal place of patriarchy in determining the social construction of gender. Our discussions and analysis embrace the attitude that patriarchy and male dominance form the bases of the creation of a communal gender consciousness (Sunday: 1981.) Our study in this chapter shall begin with an examination of the role oral literature plays in the creation and communication of the dominant communal gender consciousness.

The exercise of female power within the confines of patriarchy constitutes a process within which women develop their separate identities enabling them to resist and subvert patriarchal oppression (Halls: 2001:203-205, Tong: 96). We shall explore the complex forms of resistance and subversion that are evident in different kinds of oral literary data when we discuss the indigenous feminist frameworks later in the chapter.

Finally, the chapter will explore the key issue of innovation and change in gender constructs as communicated through oral literature in Central Province. Our texts of reference will include oral narratives, proverbs, oral biographies, as well as song and oral poetic performances.

4.1 Communal Gender Consciousness

In chapter two, we had noted that the mythical tradition of origin of the Kikuyu people forms the bases of their collective communal consciousness (p.25). In our discussion of the myth below we are proposing that this Kikuyu myth of origin also provides the people of Central Province with a basic framework of communal gender consciousness.

Mythic symbols are tied to the desires and drives basic to human beings. These desires could be of an ethnic, national, racial, class or even a gender grouping (Janeway: 1991, Kabira: 1994.). Although mythic thinking could be illogical in its social context, it is

authoritative and is always taken as an account of fact. Myth never denies anything. In its functioning it talks about things making social issues innocent and giving them a natural and eternal justification (Barthes: 1972: (1970): 109).

It is in this context that we wish to discuss the symbolic significance of the Kikuyu myth of origin as an important base for understanding gender constructs in that community.

The symbols in the names of the progenitors of the Kikuyu nation do project a patriarchal motif, which associates the male parent with territorial ownership and the female parent with procreative role. The name of the female parent, Mumbi, literally means the 'one who creates or moulds alluding to her as the great or the original mother, from whom the nation derives its physical existence. On the other hand, the name of the patriarch, Gikuyu, derives from the environment associating the male parent with *mikuyu* (sycamore trees), symbolizing territorial existence. As the story develops the patriarchal motif is relegated with the birth of the nine (ten) daughters to the couple. Husbands had to be procured from outside and were allowed to marry the daughters only if they agreed to live under a matriarchal and matrilineal family system (Ch.3: 16-17).

The myth at this point presents an originally matriarchal society in which the female descendants of Gikuyu and Mumbi control the territorial inheritance from their parents. They are the heads of the households and the descending clans are named after them. Their reproductive role also gives them the right to own the children and to establish matrilineal clans. At this stage it is apparent that the women also derive their dominant gender role from their sex roles. They wield political, social and economic power. In the mythical history, this was the period of women's rule (*wathani wa aka*). Men play subordinate and subservient roles and as we had mentioned earlier women practised polyandry to emphasize their dominant positions. The story presents women at this point as a cause of unbearable stress to men forcing them to seize power in order to combat the oppression (Kenyatta: 1978 (1938): 6-7).

The process of the take-over described earlier in chapter two presents the principle of a reversal in gender power relations that shifts power from female to the male members of

the society. Initially, women derived power from their ability to give birth. But in the take-over, this base of female power is inverted into a weakness that allows the men to impregnate all the women at the same time and take over power. Once men are in power all other values associated with women's rule are also inverted. The clans are no longer the nerve center of social organization. The new rulers establish male-headed sub-clans and households, polygamy replaces polyandry and patriarchy is instituted as the dominant bases of social gender relations.

In the fictional truth of this myth, we can draw two conclusions. In its analysis of the gender power relations, the myth recognizes them to be transient rather than natural and permanent. There can be an interchange of power between men and women. Secondly, in terms of validation, as a myth of genesis, it affirms and justifies patriarchy and male dominance as the preferred order. The tone and point of view of the story is overwhelmingly masculine. The perception we get is that the changes instituted during the 'revolution' were progressive and have created a more just society.

It has been observed that once men have acquired symbols of power, they go to extraordinary lengths to prevent women from taking them back. They must be on constant guard lest women take power back (Sanday: 1991:40). While this is reflected in other aspects of oral literature and traditions that we will discuss later, the myth of *Ndemi* and the legend of 'Wangu wa Makeri' demonstrate the persistence of communication of the dominant communal gender consciousness within the traditional and the neo-traditional society.

The myth of *Ndemi* is a myth of about a 'lost' generation or the generation that went into oblivion (*Ni yorire*) because it submitted to the rule of women after the 'revolution' (Text.39 and 39). *Ndemi* is one of the well-remembered generations among the Agikuyu after Tene and Agu (Kenyatta: 1938:85,135). This generation is remembered for instituting agriculture as the main economic activity many generations ago. Members of this generation painstakingly cleared the forests and cut the trees hence their name *Ndemi*, which, literally meaning 'those who cut.'

The main message communicated in the story of *Ndemi* is that although it was a generation that did so much, it lost posterity by accepting the principle of going back to maternal rule. It is a re-affirmation of the necessity of patriarchy and male dominance in gender power relations. Brief as it is, the story highlights the pitfall of going back to matriarchal rule after overcoming it. Adherence to the old pattern can only lead to destruction.

The story of Wangu wa Makeri presents an even more perceptive understanding of the use of oral literature in the creation and perpetuation of a dominant gender consciousness. The story, which has evolved over the last century into a true legend, appears in many versions in the Central and Eastern Provinces and even in other parts of the country. In the course of our fieldwork, it was apparent that this is a popular story, which every other person is familiar with. There also exist dramatic versions as well as sculptor and paintings that exploit the dominant motif of the story. The common visual motifs in sculptor, painting and even in dramatic performances is that of Wangu, the female ruler, sitting on the back of a male who is on all fours, as she presides over a council of women elders.

In the story Wangu has succeeded in bringing back women's rule. Like the women rulers of the old she is depicted as a despot whose main goal is to lord over men. An objective analysis of this story leads us to the conclusion that, it is a social reinvention of the earlier myth, used in the colonial and the postcolonial periods to justify the exclusion of women from social and political power in Kenya. This is ascertained by the fact that Wangu wa Makeri is a recent historical personality. She was an assistant chief to Karuri wa Gakure in Weithaga location of Murang'a district at the beginning of the last century (Cavicchi: 1977:110-115). She was renowned for her beauty and charisma. She was however tricked out of power when she agreed to participate in a *kibata* dance. This was dance performed only by men while naked. By participating, Wangu broke a taboo of exposing her female nakedness. After the dance, the shame was too much and she had to be deposed (Brinkman: 1996:120).

The story of Wangu as we have it today, has lost its historicity. Many of its narrators are not even conscious that she lived in the twentieth century. In its many versions it is a product of imagination, a history that has undergone literary transformation.

Its existence as literature serves to emphasize the need to maintain the traditional gender power relations. The literary mode becomes a vehicle of reinventing tradition in a period of rapid social change. In communicating the dominant gender ideology, it rejects the sharing of political power between men and women. It serves to ensure that women 'do not blow their trumpets' and that for men to remain powerful, masculinity must be separated from femininity (Sanday: 1981:189).

In our discussion of the myths and the legend above, gender power relations emerge as a central theme. The struggle over who is to control power is overt. However, in the fictional tale it is more covert and its ideological dimension is subtle. But the construction of a dominant male gender consciousness remains the main objective. In the etiological tale, '*Mburi Ciaka*', ('Women's livestock', text no.40) by Njagi Njuki, the story justifies the dispossession of women. As we shall see in our analysis of the story below, this denies the women property rights ensuring that they play a subordinate role in domestic and public fields.

Friendrich Engles (1845) observed that the domestication of animals and the breeding of herds were a major determinant in the shift from matriarchy to patriarchy. The herds became a new source of wealth and since men controlled the animals there was a shift of power in their favor. Among the Kikuyu, traditionally, men owned all livestock. Goats and sheep were especially important in the transaction of various social, medical and religious obligations. Indeed the goat was the official legal tender. The richer members of the society owned cattle and the herds were a status symbol. Cattle were rarely sold or even slaughtered (Kenyatta: 1938:64-67). Members of the community who did not own any livestock were regarded as extremely poor. They could not expand their parcels of agricultural holdings neither could their sons get married (Kinyua Nunu, Kaiguri Njagi:

interviews). Apart then from the provisions derived from the animals their significance lay in their economic power.

Women in reality had access to livestock but in ideology and practice they were denied ownership. According to Julia Wangai (Interview) women owned livestock given to them as presents by their brothers and their fathers. And as we had noted in chapter two, before marriage negotiations could begin the bride's mother was presented with an ewe and a goat's kid. But the narrative, *Mburi cia aka*, negates this possibility.

In the story, women in a distant past owned livestock. One day the women slaughtered a goat. As they feasted on the meat together with their children, their livestock wandered off into the bush. If the children attempted to go and herd the animals back, their mothers would ask them to finish eating the meat first. Meanwhile the livestock wandered off deep into the bush and became wild animals. In the etiological conclusion of this tale, the narrator tells us that, wild animals were once women's livestock. That is the reason why women today do not own any livestock.

This seemingly innocent etiological tale depicts women as instinctively maternal and hence unable to shoulder the responsibility of livestock rearing. In its literary transformation the narrative becomes the proverb *Gutiri mundu muka wi mburi* ('There is no woman who owns livestock'). This saying is consequently used to give authority to the male ownership of all livestock within a household. According to Wilfred Njogu, (interview) if a woman openly declared she owned livestock it was her husband's obligation to slaughter that animal before nightfall. Beyond this, the story is also institutionalized in the taboo that no woman can slaughter animals. In the traditional community women could never slaughter animals and when men slaughtered them, women would be given specific parts such as the large intestines.

In the creation of a communal gender consciousness, the narrative above defines the realm of ownership that in turn dictates the gender that can access and accumulate

economic power. And in the end this relationship is expressed by the use of a simple proverb that woman and cattle are not friends. (*Aka na ngombe matiri urata*).

In the discussion of the literary productions so far, it is apparent they propose and justify a dominant position for men in gender power relations. In the world of the oral literature man seeks to define himself as the 'self' and woman as the 'other'. The woman in the stories is presented as a threat to the Man. If man wishes to remain free from her oppression she must be subordinated (De Beauvoir: 1974: xxxiii).

The images of men and women in oral literature play an important role in communicating gender constructs and perpetuating the subordinate place of woman. In the images we can understand the stereotypical representations that negate the feminine image and emphasize the role of man as the partner in power and leadership both in the domestic and public spheres. Below we shall analyze text no.41, *Mwari Umwe* (The only daughter) by Alice Wanjira Rukenya, no.41 *Wacici and Wamweru* by Gladys Wakiathi and no.42 *Mutumia wa Ngararii* ('then argumentative wife') by Rev. John Kangangi.

The story no.40 *Mwari Umwe* is commonly known as the story of the 'ostrich girl'. This is a popular narrative in the area where the study was carried out. In the version we recorded, the main characters are a man who is a hunter and his wife who is barren. In his hunting rounds the man collects an ostrich's egg, which he takes home. It is kept in a pot and eventually hatches into a girl. This girl grows up but she cannot perform more than one task in a given day. Her foster/step mother is asked by the husband to observe that interdiction but she overlooks it repeatedly. When the girl refuses to perform more than one task, the mother keeps on reminding her that she hatched from an ostrich's egg that was collected in the fields. The girl attempts to run away several times and finally succeeds despite the pleadings from her father that she comes back.

The negative image of the female character in this story is set forth by her barrenness. Like in many African communities, a family among the Kikuyu is not complete unless there are children. In most cases the failure to have children is directed to the wife rather

than the husband. "She would always be regarded as a useless person who failed to perform an important requirement that was expected of her life" (Mugo: 1982:6). The negative aspects of the female character are accentuated by the narrator's description of her as a lazy person who could not work. The husband in the story is depicted as consistent hard working and innovative. He brings the hunt back home. He is also able to procure the child his wife could not conceive. In contrast the female character in this story fits into the stereotypical category of a Kikuyu woman who is portrayed as unreliable, disobedient, forgetful, irresponsible and lazy (Kabira: 1994).

When the daughter finally disappears into the fold of the other ostriches in the plain, her 'father' is devastated. "Where shall I get another egg and that one has been forced to leave?" He asks himself. After she has left and turns back into an ostrich, the man goes back home. He beats his wife thoroughly. In some versions of this story the wife is killed and the man acquires another one.

The story of *Wacici and Wamweru* (no.42), by Gladys Wakiathi and no.43, 'The argumentative wife,' By Rev. John Kangangi also emphasizes this negative image of women in oral literary samples. In the former, Wacici's mother dies and a stepmother brings her up. She has a stepsister, Wamweru. The mother plots to kill the stepdaughter because she is attracting more suitors than her own daughter. She buries the girl in a burrow and leaves her to die. But she survives and is rescued by her father. The woman is punished by death.

In the story by John Kangangi, the narrator presents the wife as a very disagreeable woman character. She never agrees with anything that her husband tells her. She is always doing the opposite of what she is instructed to do. When one day she goes to fetch water in the river and disappears the husband surprises the search party by proposing they search for her upstream. As the husband puts it she was so argumentative she must have argued with the river and forced it to drown her upstream.

In the three stories outlined above the image of the woman is presented as the opposite of that of man in a negative way. In terms of gender relations the woman emerges as what has been described as the negative of the opposite and not in her own right, “the different other” (Felman: 1975). In the creation of the communal gender consciousness the stories continue to be part of cultural conditioning that favor male dominance.

The consolidation of this ‘otherness’ of women in oral literature is also aptly expressed in the proverbs of the Kikuyu community. As part of the people’s cultural heritage proverbs confirm societal norms and values. In creating the communal gender consciousness they reinforce the images and roles ascribed to men and women. They legitimize the roles and the functions of men and women in society presenting men as conceptually different from women. In the proverbs, *Arume ti Aka*, (Men are not women), *Kirema Arume ni Kigariure*. (That which defies men, has been struggled with) *Arume ni Mwaki*, (Men are fire) and *Maitho ma arume ti mairang’a*, (The eyes of men see far), the conceptual superiority of men is projected in indirect comparison to that of women. The proverbs assign women the domestic realm while men are assigned the wider public responsibilities as is the case in the proverb, *Atumia makaaga micii nao arume makaaga nyumba* (Women foster homes while men foster sub-clans).

The practice of exogamy is entrenched in oral literature and defines the status of a woman in a patriarchal family. She is viewed as an outsider (*Mundu wa nja*) both as a wife and as a girl who will be married off at some stage. Proverbs such as *kabii/ Kahii ni mubirigo/muhirigo wa nyumba, kairitu ni nyumba yene* (The boy-child is the fence of the owner’s home, the girl-child belongs to another’s home), denote the status of the female as an outsider. As the ‘other’, ‘the outsider’ in the patriarchal family, the female member is not to be trusted: *Aka na iguru Matimenyagirwo*, (Women and the weather are unpredictable) and their discourse has to be weighed carefully before it is accepted: *Kia mundu muka gitikagio kiarara* (You believe a woman only after sleeping over what she tells you).

These proverbs summarize the distance that male power wishes to create in its interaction with women. In determining the different spheres of men and women and in emphasizing the difference, some proverbs are even derogatory or overtly demeaning. In the spheres of knowledge and intellect, the proverbs portray man as the sole possessor and transmitter. Hence the boy child who is bright and competent is always as clever as the father is (*kabiilkahii kogi ta ithe*) and the one who does not measure up to the expectations is as crude as the mother (*mundu mukigu ta nyina*).

A man who does not strive to associate with and learn from men as he grows up will never have access to knowledge as expressed in the proverb *Murerwo ni aka ii, kirira angiruta ku?* (The son brought up by women, from where will he access knowledge?).

Proverbs that discuss gender relations then emphasize the conceptual difference between men and women. They portray the woman positively only when enhancing her domestication. The clever woman (*Mutumia Muugi*) then is the one who is first and foremost obedient to her husband, takes care of the children and doesn't joke with other men.

Physical and conceptual separation of men and women in traditional society permeated nearly all aspects of social organization. The division of labor along gender lines was institutional in the traditional society. Domestic duties were and still are the realm of female members. Men traditionally performed grazing duties. Young girls and boys could, however, graze calves and goats nearer the homesteads. While both men and women participated in agricultural production the various duties were sharply divided. As noted in the narrative of *Mwai Umwe* discussed earlier, men broke the ground but the women cultivated and weeded. Men would also grow certain crops with specific attachment to their gender. These included sugar cane, yams and bee keeping.

The separation can further be seen in the spatial occupation in homesteads. The woman's house is the 'house' while the husband lived in a separate house known as *thingira*. This separation serves to enhance the communal gender consciousness. Men and women must

live in two separate spheres where the sexual separation creates the two worlds; one male the other female (Cagnolo: 1933:288). In order for men to remain dominant and to control women they must exist separately.

Our discussion so far indicates that oral literature is an instrument that attempts to neutralize, overturn or even banish the notion of women's power in the community. In our analysis above, female power is presented as destructive to the preferred order. It has been argued that the dominant symbol of female power and threat to male dominance is female sexuality. It is an uncontrollable force that can strike against male power and become a source of social disorder (Rousseau in Pateman: 1989:17-21, Sanday: 1981:17,19,35). In oral literature the fear of female sexuality is expressed in the ability of the woman to acquire secret powers over their male partners. The process, as we shall observe in the texts analyzed below, is achieved through the administration of powerful potions to the man without his knowledge. While female control is initially achieved, the consequences could be very tragic.

In the song, *personnel* (no.44), by Peter Kamau Kinyagia, the poet begins by impressing on the audience that what he is presenting is indeed a true story.

This is not a story I am narrating
What I am telling you happened
It is a story of a man who was highly learned
A man who got married to a saved woman

In the song we learn that Personnel has a good job. He is generous and highly respected by the people. But his wife is scheming and suspicious. When he starts arriving home late because of pressure of work, she suspects that he is seeing another woman. She seeks love potions that can control him. On consuming the herbs, Personnel becomes submissive. He stops going to work and starts behaving like a child. The woman is eventually unable to bear the burden of taking care of her children and husband and commits suicide. This song continues to emphasize the running theme that women are not to be trusted even when they profess to be morally upright ('saved'). In its target on the female psyche, this song also attempts to invert the male fear of female power by

showing that a challenge to male power is wrong and can lead to the physical destruction of the woman.

The songs *Wendo wa Ngoma* (no.45), by Sam Kinuthia and *Cecilia* no.46 by Karanja David, present the morbid fear of female sexuality as personal experience. In Kinuthia's song, the persona is married to a woman who bides him with herbs and love potions. The key word in the song is that the wife creates a fool out of him (*kuritio*).

In its wider meaning the term alludes to the emasculation of male power. He is 'confused' through the power of the spell that has been cast upon him. He takes up the subordinate roles in the household. The woman is characterized as powerful, 'with the fierce eyes of the leopard'. The man (the husband) is helpless when confronted with her power.

Cecilia, by Karanja David further explores the nature of the 'fatal woman', who monopolizes on sexual cannibalism (Praz 1951:9). The woman in this song derives her power over the male through both her sexuality and age. The warning in the song is that the woman especially an older woman can lead a male lover into a life of pain and hardship, into a trap that is difficult to emerge from. Like the other persona in the first song, once the man is exposed to the sexuality of this woman he becomes a 'fool.' He doesn't know what she gave him (to eat or drink) because he has now become her slave. In his words, 'she has put him under her armpit'. The man cannot extricate himself from the powers of this woman:

I once complained
Saying we should separate
Because she is not my age
I wouldn't know where she went
To acquire more powers over me
After two days, I became more confused
A real fool.
Today when she sneezes,
I rush to her service

Ironically, only another woman can save the man from these clutches. He appeals to his mother to bring along his brothers to help him out of this predicament so that he can get married to the right or good girl. In the two songs analyzed above, it is apparent that even if the enslaved man is delivered from his predicament, he can never escape the greater power of woman. In the words of Wolfgang, 'She is the beginning and the end'....

And in her essential capacity of nature, and of
the unaware, unconscious processes and forces
she is still the ocean on which man's little vessel
of self-awareness and individuality floats precariously
(Wolfgang: 1968: 250)

The oral literary texts discussed so far present us with conscious and unconscious strategies that defend male dominance as the priori in gender relations. But this is in recognition of the existence of powerful forces of female power that exist in the community.

In the social construction of gender, oral literature, in creating the communal gender consciousness, constantly negates the element of female power. Women who seek this power like Wangu wa Makeri or those who display it over men (like in the songs discussed above) are depicted as evil and as people who rely on witchcraft. The literary images at this level depict male dominance as the preferred order and at the same time they become a process of self-definition for the male gender. But the process that can only be actualized by seeking power over the female. This is a process that presents its own internal contradictions, which shall emerge as we continue with our analysis below.

In our analysis and discussion, we have so far viewed oral literature as playing a significant role in the validation of male dominance and patriarchy in the creation of a communal gender consciousness. The texts justify the need to control women. On the surface level they project the image of the woman as subordinate and subservient to man. This then becomes the dominant ideology emerging in the texts. However a dominant ideology always begets resistance from those it wishes to suppress. Artistic productions can also operate against a dominant mainstream in search of equilibrium in social relations (Kabira: 1994).

In this context we can be able to understand oral literature as contradictory and full of retaliatory discourse with which women fight for social space both in the traditional and neo-traditional societies. Our contention in the discussions that follow is that, subjected to deconstructive analysis, oral texts in our samples, present an indigenous feminist frame that acts in opposition to the ideology of male dominance.

4.2 Indigenous Feminist Frames

In our discussions in chapter two, we had observed that despite the overt manifestations of male power, women in traditional Kikuyu society did exercise power in subtle formal and informal ways. We also observed the existence of stereotypical gender characterization contrastive in oral narratives and the external focalization of the tales as overwhelmingly feminine (p.35, 44). We wish to develop our discussion on these aspects further in this chapter. In our discussion we shall view this structural and thematic evolution of the tale as the basis of the indigenous feminist consciousness. In the discussion we emphasize that women, as cardinal storytellers, have integrated the manifestations of female power in the performance of oral literary texts.

In this context we shall view performance of oral art as a process of female empowerment (Bukenya: 2001) in the traditional and neo-traditional society in the Central Province of Kenya. It is our hope that this analysis will provide an important basis of understanding and discussing innovation and change in the social construction of gender later in the chapter.

We shall begin our analysis by going back to the story of 'Manga and his father' (no. 1), by Alice Wanjira Rukenya. Earlier we had discussed the narrative in the context of sexual symbolism. In our analysis at this point we want to view the fictional tale as a literary strategy that communicates the staying of female power in oral literature in the face of male dominance.

When the two ogres, Manga and his father, catch up with the escaping female character in the tale, she is given two alternatives. She has to choose either to be eaten, or agree to become their mother so that she can be cooking for them. She opts for the latter. She cooks for them whatever they hunt but refuses to partake in the ogre's meals. At this point in the story the female character adopts what Petchesky refers to as accommodation strategies as a way of negotiating her space in the male world (Petchesky and Judd: 1998:19):

Narrator: Now anything they hunted, she would cook for them. If they caught squirrels, she would cook for them. But she was not eating them.

Audience: no

Narrator: If they caught human beings she would prepare for them
To do what?

Audience: To eat

Narrator: Now they were not bothering her.

The accommodation strategies of the female character at this point enable her to transcend her position as a victim. She becomes a survivor. As the story develops, she is able to become the controller. As the controller, she is able to save the twins brought in as hunt by the two ogres by substituting them with rats. She hides them in a pot until they finally mature despite suspicions by Manga.

At this point her level of control is even greater. She is able to willfully make the ogres participate in a game, which is their death trap. She convinces them to join her in a test of strength. In turns, they are pegged under a hide and attempt to release themselves. When it is the ogre's and the son's turn under, she secures the hide so tightly that they cannot get out. At that point she calls upon the boys she had been bringing up secretly and they kill the ogres. It is interesting to note that this is a story of one woman and many men. Significantly then, this story demonstrates female power over the life of males. Her capture and enslavement by the male ogres is just but an illusion of their visible male power. It is the woman who has the power over life and death. She can nurture it in the twins and dispense with it when it comes to ogres. At the end of the narrative, the female

character is the determinant in resolving the conflict. She determines the way in which the society is going to be organized once the ogres are dead. At the beginning of the conflict, the woman is the victim. In the resolution of the conflict the woman emerges the victor and a symbol of the powerful 'great mother figure who is the source of knowledge' (Kabira: 1994:134).

In the story of 'Muya and Cinji' (no.47), man without woman is depicted as helpless. Muya and his sister Cinji are orphans who live alone. Muya is always going out to dance leaving the sister alone. Despite her repeated warning to the brother that there are male marauders who want to kidnap her, Muya does not heed her advice. She is afraid that once these men take (marry) her, Muya will have nobody to take care of him. She warns him:

You will be left suffering. Now that our parents are dead,
Who will cook for you? One day you will find me gone.

The prediction is fulfilled when Cinji is forcefully taken away to be married. Her brother attempts to follow her but he gets lost on the way and gets employment. But without the sister or the mother to take care of him, he is famished and attacked by jiggers. He finally stumbles into his sister's homestead years later. She cannot even recognize him. She did not know it was her brother because he had become 'haggard'. When she eventually recognizes him, he is rehabilitated. The jiggers are removed and the sister helps him to get a wife because as the narrator puts, without a wife he was a:

Useless person who cannot be called son of
so and so. He is called this man.

The sister reinstates his humanity. 'He became like his sister's son'. He is assisted in building his house and starting a home, establishing his identity as a man.

The feminine focus finds even greater expression in the motif of the grandmother who helps salvage society in the face of extinction in stories, no.5 by Jecinta wangithi and no. 48 by Marion Mwaniki. In the two narratives, the community is threatened with

annihilation by an ogre. It is only the grandmother who can harness resources and skills to neutralize and thwart off this threat. In the stories, the uncontrollable greed and sexuality of the male, symbolically represented by the ogre, pose a threat of destruction and annihilation of society.

In Jecinta's story the ogre eats up everything and everyone during a visit to his prospective in-laws. This is a visit normally required by tradition. Within the Kikuyu community young couples are free to choose whom they want to marry. But parents always require that they 'see' the prospective groom before negotiations of the marriage begin. This 'seeing' of the prospective groom (*kuona mugurani*) is a crucial vetting process. After knowing who the prospective groom is, parents can vet the marriage on several grounds. Among the accepted grounds are blood relationship and blood enmity. The others are the practice of witchcraft, and a prevalence of genetic diseases in the family of the prospective groom (Julia Wangai, Nunu: Interviews). All these factors are feared because they can lead to the extinction of a family line. In the two versions above the ogre is an epitome of all these and more. In Jecinta's version it is only the boy, Mwangi, who had sought refuge with his grandmother, who escapes. The grandmother brings him up, prepares him and gives him the necessary resources to kill the ogre and retrieve back his family.

The narrative of '*Mwathi*' by Marion Mwaniki, exhibits the same pattern and principle but the details are slightly different. Here we have a man who rears a dog that metamorphoses into an ogre. The man is warned early but does not heed the advice.

When told:

'Old man your dog is eating goats kids'. He said, 'the dog is mine and the kids are mine.'

Then the next time the dog ate a cow. The man said the dog Belonged to him and the cow belonged to him.... The dog became Big, it became fat; it ate people in that country and almost finished them off.

The ogre consumes everyone except the neglected wife who lives with her grandson in the backyard overgrown with bush. The grandmother prepares the grandson to one day confront this animal but only when he is fully-grown. But one day the ogre gets hold of Mwathi and after a struggle defeats him and carries him off. The grandmother comes to his rescue. She cuts off the legs of the ogre with a secret weapon and rescues Mwathi. The people it had consumed are also retrieved after its index finger is cut.

The point of view, tone and perspective in the two stories are feminine. The artists project the view that it is within the ability and the experience of woman to save society from the threat posed by the vices of male dominance. She is capable of blocking, reversing or controlling the destructive elements. She can do this by applying the use of secret weapons and by nurturing the male child in such a way that he can conquer the elements of greed and dominance in himself. By conquering the ogre through the help of their grandmothers, the two young men are conquering the traits of excessive greed and dominance in themselves and that way, subjecting themselves to female power.

The women in these narratives, like the mother in the story of Manga, emerge as the gender with power over life and death in the community.

The other significance of the feminine focus that we can point out in these stories is the role of the maternal home as opposed to the patrilocal home where children normally grow up. The maternal home becomes a sanctuary. The grandmother becomes a protector and source of knowledge and resources that can restore the community after a period of crises.

The other strategy and context in which female power was exercised was in ritual related performances of oral literature. This was especially so in the oral poetry performed by women during circumcision and marriage ceremonies. In the previous chapter, we had discussed how the *Gitiro* songs performed during marriage ceremonies are used by women to express co-operation and female solidarity. But as we shall demonstrate in the

analysis below, this genre was also an expression of women's resentment against patriarchy and the cultural norms that define them.

Song no.49, *Kanyanya Ngutindike* (*Kanyanya, Let Me Escort You*), presents the feminist consciousness by protesting subordination and the lack of a voice for the women. The context of the song is the function in which bride price is being paid (*Kuracia*). The song was sung after the agreement on the number of animals that would be presented to the bride's family had been agreed on. The two parties would then relax outside to drink the ceremonial beer brought by the groom's family. It is in this setting that the women after drinking the beer they would sing and dance the *Gitiro*.

In the version that we recorded, the mother of the bride is sending her *Kanyaya* to the men in her family. *Kanyaya* refers to the mother of the woman's son-in-law. She is indeed addressing the men by pretending to send her *Kanyanya* because they are present during the occasion. She demands to be given a full grown, fat he-goat. She wants to feed on it and as poet puts it smear its fat on her 'painful thighs', alluding to the pain of childbirth.

In the following verse, the poet expresses resentment against men who know nothing about the woes of childbirth. They were neither bothered nor concerned about the pain she went through while giving birth to this child, whose bride price they are now receiving. They were out there relaxing in the yard as she went through the motions. They could neither hear her groans nor sympathize with the trepidation:

When I gave birth to the child
You men relaxed in the yard
You never heard
My painful mounds
My pushing, my weeping

The protest becomes sarcastic in the following verse as the woman protest the husband's appropriation of the child she has given birth to. She resents the fact that the husband has taken over, giving her instructions of what should be done:

It is only now, after, I had the child
That I get a husband to lord over me
Telling me that the men are coming
That I prepare fermented beer
And I answer him back
I won't ferment the beer
Go and get ridiculed by your men folk

At this point the song becomes rebellious and even challenging. In the traditional setting it is taboo for women to openly disobey their husbands. This was one of the transgressions that would surely fetch her a beating from the husband. The other two according to Kinyua Nunu (Interview) were deliberate refusal to give her husband food and failure to gather vines for goats or sheep penned in the homestead for ceremonial rites.

The singer proceeds to sing praises to a certain woman, a woman named Kabobwe who was brave enough to challenge men in a manner that made them run away and hide in the bush:

Who is the owner of this cleared land?
It belongs to the woman called Kabobwe
The woman who made men disappear into the bush
Would you know why that happened...?

The singer does not give the reason but alludes to it. In the allusion we deduce that men live in constant fear of the power of female sexuality. This power is symbolically ultimate in the activity of giving birth. The song here is alluding to the only curse that can subdue men and make them run when confronted by women. This is the exposure of female nakedness or the curse of a naked woman (*Kurutirwo Nguo*).

This song further expresses the female resentment of the practice of physically separating men and women. The separation ensures that women's share of resources will always be less compared to the share partaken by men. The singer asks for her share of the beer as it is being taken to the men who sit separately in the compound. She says that once the beer

is placed before the men it will be problematic to get her share, as she cannot be able to argue with them. She is not ready to be asked questions (*Gucirithio*).

The final verse celebrates her achievements in the context of the ceremony. She is proud of herself because she is able to have brought up the girl who is now being married. This is the girl who has made it possible for the beer to be there. And this is all because she was never a lazy woman.

Whose beer is it we are drinking
This beer belongs to the child (daughter)
It does not belong to the lazy woman

As this song ends the singer asserts her responsibility of working so that her children can have food as nobody else is expected to come and take care of her children.

This song and others like *Thauthi* which were sung by women during the circumcision of their sons, provided the women with a license to publicly criticize male dominance and express their resentment towards gender oppression. The songs also provide the women with the opportunity to reassert themselves. The songs act as a warning against extreme patriarchal oppression reminding the male world that women still have their female power. As a rendition of the indigenous feminist consciousness the genres serve to reassert women authority and consolidate symbolic female power.

Before we conclude our discussion on indigenous feminist consciousness let us briefly highlight an incident in the biography of Ben Muchiri (no.50) that indicates direct subversion may exist in the struggle for gender power. Muchiri (52) is a prominent peasant with substantial land holdings (12 acres) by local standards. He is also the chairman of a local micro-hydro electricity project sponsored by a Non-Governmental Organization. Towards the end of his biography, Muchiri narrates an incident of conflict between him and his wife that baffled him. His wife had been agitating for greater control of resources accrued from the farm. But according to Muchiri, this was unnecessary because all the benefits accrued went into catering for the family welfare. In time, Muchiri discovers that his wife had been inciting the female workers not to pick tea. Tea

is the main source of cash from the farm. This had baffled the respondent. He had been very prompt in paying the workers their wages. As far as he was concerned proceeds from the tea benefited everybody in the family.

On reflecting on the experiences of the respondent it becomes apparent that the behavior of the wife is feminine strategy of resistance against patriarchy. This strategy has been identified as the 'sitting on men' and the deliberate 'spoiling of a man's property' (Sanday: 1981:138). As Mrs Grace Wakera Karimi put it during a group discussion in Thaita, "the man who refuses to co-operate with women denies himself the glory" and as a form of protest, women will say things that reduce his esteem and subject him to ridicule.

From the foregoing discussions in this chapter, we are also able to observe genderised perspectives in generic constituencies. While the perspectives may not be mutually exclusive it is possible to delineate the obtrusive masculine vision and worldview in myth, legend and proverbs while the feminine vision is more prevalent in folktales and song. At this stage of the study, we can only explain this dichotomy as resulting from the fact that the performance of the first corpus of oral literature is mainly a male domain while the second rests more with female members of the society. However a detailed abstraction of this phenomenon may be beyond the scope of the current study.

In the performance of oral literature we are also able to observe an aspect of ideological dissonance in the communication of gender constructs. Social construction of gender is not entirely one that propagates male dominance and the subjugation of women. Rather in genre and content, oral literature presents an interactive opposition between ideologies of male dominance and strategies of feminist consciousness.

The position we have arrived at in our analysis so far provides a context and a springboard through which we shall seek to understand innovation and change in the social construction of gender as reflected in the oral literary performances.

4.3 Innovations and Change in Gender Constructs

Innovation and change in the social construction of gender in Central Province like in most parts of Kenya has been influenced by the social historical and economic changes that have occurred in Kenya in the last century. As we had noted in chapter two, the introduction of Western education and capitalistic economic structures have changed social cultural institutions and practices variously resulting in the creation of what we refer to as a neo-traditional peasant community. Women over the years have had increased access to education and literacy, which has provided them with access to individual incomes.

Changes in population patterns and the shrinking of land holdings have led to increased participation of women in non-formal income generating activities. This has also resulted in a sharp decline of male livestock holding. The migration of men to seek work in urban areas has also given a number of women greater freedom in the management of domestic affairs.

The combined results of these factors have tended to alter the position of women as viewed in our discussion on the creation of a communal gender consciousness. While this situation has tended to decrease the traditional bases of male dominance it has provided women with a platform of greater assertiveness. Other factors that have raised awareness on the need for changes in gender power relations include direct campaigns by women's organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations and even deliberate efforts to engender oral literary performances (KOLA Reports: 1994).

In the analysis and the discussion that will follow below, innovation and change will be understood against the backdrop of the dominant gender consciousness discussed at the beginning. In a way the new content messages react directly to that position. Nevertheless, the existence of a feminist consciousness in oral literature provides the precedent. Social-economic and cultural changes give the artistic performers the motivation and justification for the new content. It is in this light that we hope to

understand how women artists have use 'oral literature to constantly redefine the term by which they are signified' (Furniss and Gunner: 1995:147-197).

Earlier in our discussion we had observed that traditional protest genres currently find expression in topical and popular song performances. These new forms are openly rejecting traditional gender status quo as well as practices and values that oppress women. We shall demonstrate the position adopted by these songs by analyzing and discussing three artists. We shall begin our analysis by discussing song no.51, titled *Niwathire Ukindiga ptt. 2*, by De'Mathew sisters.

In this song, the singer has separated from her husband because she can no longer bear being mistreated. The song begins by rejecting traditional relationship status between men and women that insist on the acceptance by the woman of a subordinate status once married. The singer rejects perseverance as a virtue expected of a married woman. She negates the attitude that the woman who does not persevere and runs away from the matrimonial home is the offending party. She indicts the male partner of oppressive behavior, which led to her running away. She refutes the notion that there is a 'hyena and a small hyena' in gender relations, that the woman is the source of all evil (Schipper: 1992).

She further rejects the male definition of her as a sly snake:

A hyena calls the other a small hyena
That it is me, you have labelled all over Kenya
Saying I wriggle and slither like a snake
... While it was you who mistreated me
Until I decided to leave.

In the second verse, the singer attacks traditional notions of parenting that define child rearing as the domain of the mother. In the Kikuyu society men perform negligible roles in the rearing of infants and young children. Traditionally this was restricted to participating in cleansing rituals, or providing goats for sacrifice in such rituals when the child was sick (Gathingira: 1933:22). It was the duty of mothers and the older siblings to bring up the children until they were old enough to keep their father company in his

thingira (house) in the evenings. Usually until the children had undergone the ritual of second birth, men had very little to do with them.

In the song the singer overlooks this tradition. She insists that a child belongs both to the mother and father. Since the man has made it difficult for her to live with him, it is now his turn to rear the child and experience the rigors of parenting:

.... I left you with the baby
To bring it up
So that you can realize
Rearing children is difficult

Compared to our analysis of the song *Kanyanya Ngutindike*, the singer here goes beyond creating awareness of her feminine position. She takes action to compensate for her cardinal reproductive and productive roles that she feels have not been accorded their deserved importance by the male world. The singer then proceeds to flaunt her new awareness that empowers her to reject traditional gender roles and submissiveness that made her accept routine physical abuse. She alludes to the women's conference in Beijing, China in 1995 to symbolize this awareness:

We women went to Beijing
Where we were taught our rights
Who can tolerate these daily fights?
It is better when I am aware
And take my own path
Wherever it will take me

Apart from protesting the spite she has undergone, the song also rejects the structural manifestation of power in polygamy, which in traditional society was the rule rather than the exemption.

Your women (mistresses)
Are straddled from Kabete to Gaturi
...So that you could be like the biblical Solomon

This singer wants to take drastic steps to emerge from patriarchal control even if she has to sacrifice the male protection found in the patriarchal family. In the final verse she expresses her resolute determination to undo their relationship by invoking divorce. In the traditional society divorce was highly discouraged. It was even more difficult for a woman who had borne a child to be divorced (Kenyatta: 183-185). But the singer here alludes to the final act of divorce in the Kikuyu society, which involves the return of the bride price. She dares the man to enumerate what he paid for her bride price so that it can be returned:

Enumerate what you paid as bride price
We will pay you back
You married me as a woman
It is not a drum that was sold to you

J.B. Sisters in their song, *Yes ni Yes* (no.52), expose an even more radical and explicit rejection of the dominant gender consciousness. Their song begins with equating the preferred gender relations today with the multiparty system of politics adopted in Kenya in 1992. By implication, the dominant Gender consciousness is equated to the single party era in Kenya when the Kenya National African Union (KANU) was the only political party allowed to operate in the country. As we shall see in the next chapter the party had entrenched dictatorial policies and practices forcing everyone to live under its shadow. It was only in 1992, after bitter struggle with the citizens that the KANU government conceded to the re-introduction multi-party politics in the country.

The Song, *Yes ni Yes*, attacks what the singers view as the dictatorship of communal gender consciousness. The song rejects the subservient roles assigned to women in traditional society in the past 'when a woman was there to be seen and not to be heard.' A period when 'if a man coughed or sneezed the woman would make haste to his service.' The song views the subservient and demeaning tasks performed by women as a means of indoctrinating the woman to fear the man so that his every wish is her command.

In a bold move the singer also advocates women's control of their sexuality and will entertain no other position on the matter. She also laments the triple roles of production, reproduction and other chores that she has to perform:

It is no longer the single party era
When I say No, it is No
When I say yes it is yes
When you want a child
I carry it for nine months
And you don't assist me
While I am pregnant
You still demand I cook for you

In her quest for self-assertion the oral poet in this song seeks equity. She wants to be treated humanly by the male partner. If that does not happen she has no alternative but to rebel and reject the signification of her oppression which includes carrying off her drunken husband to bed, cooking for him and being used as a sex slave.

The two songs discussed above communicate innovations and change by espousing new gender constructs, which are in direct opposition to the communal gender consciousness. The artist adopts a new liberal position that changes the traditional definition of her gender roles and rejects the acquiescence of the indigenous feminist framework. In essence, she is trying to do what De Beauvoir calls transcending the 'otherness' and becoming 'self'. That in order to extricate herself from male dominance, the woman must overcome the definitions, labels and essences that limit her existence (Tong: 1992 (1989): 208-211).

The texts we have discussed so far on innovation and change in the social construction of gender basically subvert tradition. The artists deliberately seek to overthrow gender stereotypes confirming the artistic intention to map out an alternative terrain when reacting to a dominant ideology (Zipes: 1986: (v), (ix), Makgamatha: 1991).

The two songs discussed above promote an alternative to the current status quo in gender relations proposing a new operational ethic. In their topicality these songs also

demonstrate the critical power of oral poetry and its potential to serve in changing social circumstances.

Modulation and the reinvention of tradition are two major devices used by artists in communicating innovation and change in the social construction of gender. In a previous chapter we had alluded to this device when we discussed the story of *Nyanjiru* and that of *Nyokabi*. In these two narratives we noted how the female artists modulated traditional content and contexts to communicate ethics of a society in transition and to champion individual female fulfillment. We shall explore this aspect in greater detail below by analyzing the songs of Queen Jane (Jane Wambui.).

The post-independence era in Kenya has seen an increased number of female oral performers composing and performing genres previously in the domain of male artists. In the process, new artistic identities and positions of gender relations are being constructed. Queen Jane is from Kiaumbui in Murang'a. She is a well-known singer in Central Province. Apart from performing in the local urban areas, she is today an established recording artist. In her songs she emerges as an artist who while operating within traditional structures ensures that the female voice and perspective is predominant. Her songs are characterized by new renditions of traditional forms that deliberately modulate, invert or overturn stereotypical images of women. In the process she creates space for herself as a female singer and for women in general in the search for gender equity. We shall discuss two of her songs, *Nindoka*, no.53 and *Kumbukumbuku*, no.54 to illustrate these aspects.

Both songs begin with a defiant tone, which expresses the artist's awareness that, by performing *Mugoiyo*, she is intruding in a genre previously performed by men. In this genre men praised themselves, flaunted their male prowess and sang praises for their mothers. In *Ni Ndoka*, The artist begins by metaphorically forcing herself into the genre:

I have come, open for me
Open for me I have come
If you feel bad about me

May you set together with the setting sun
May the soil reject you

The last three lines in this verse express defiance, assertiveness and threat at the same time. They express finality that she cannot be stopped from entering into this genre and invokes the concept of curse (*kirumi*) to anyone who would wish to stop her. The concept of *kirumi* in the society serves as an interdiction to those who wish to harm others and as punishment to those that willfully transgress on others, especially on the weak and aged. The impact of the curse is expected to be more devastating if the ill has been committed against one's parent.

In the next verse, the singer proceeds to invert the favored relationship that exists between mothers and their male children especially first-born sons. The singer snatches this coveted position for herself. She requires that the horn is blown and the mother ululate for the girl. The song attempts to remove the traditional glorification of the male-child and transfer it to the girl-child. In the earlier days, the ululation welcomed young men arriving back home from a successful cattle raid on the neighboring Maasai. But in the modern context bringing home the spoils from the raid (*Kuinukia Itaha/itaba*), refers more to the monetary package one brings home after working in the urban areas. By substituting the subject of the mother's ululation, Queen Jane is also expressing a new social and economic reality; that women are also increasingly bearing the burden to support members of their extended family through earning in formal and self-employment in urban areas.

The artist in this song also re-visits the issues of female solidarity and rejects to be defined by local domestication terms. She intends to break the limitations of local barriers and get married in Europe 'where money is measured in drums and big tins':

My co-wife let us get our shaving blades
Let us sit and shave one another
So that others cannot say
That we do not love each other
My co-wife, we do love each other

This song celebrates the female heroine, who is now at the center rather than the periphery. She is the one now arriving back home in the motorcar, which was once the preserve of the white colonial District Commissioner. Her homecoming, is significant, it should be noticed:

When you hear it coming (the sound a car)
Do not ask whom it is carrying
It is carrying Queen Jane
...When we arrive ululate for us

As she ends her song, she expresses confidence in herself as the ideal in the society. In the concluding images, she blows her own trumpets as someone whose resources (artistic) should be carefully protected:

Let us escort Queen Jane
Escort her slowly
That she may not bleed milk
Bring forth a torch
We light the path for Queen Jane.

The discourse in this song deliberately creates a new identity for the woman, which is more consistent with the changing social circumstances. In the song, *Kumbukumbuku*, the artist creates images and content that modulates the traditional derogatory insinuations in the conquest of female sexuality. The singer also reinvents imagery deleting those that portray the woman in negative light. In a way she reduces and resolves the confrontation in the original version whose images are gender biased. Below is the traditional version:

If you insult me,
If you show me insults
I will insult you and then after
Go and insult your mother

Which way did you pass through?
As you came which way did you pass through?
And I did not see you coming
Which way did you follow?

I followed the path in the valley
The path in the valley
Through your sister's pubic hair
I followed the path in the valley

In her rendition of the same text Queen Jane creates the following text:

If you insult me,
If you show me insults
I will call my mother
To deal with you
If you insult me

Which way will you pass?
Which way will you follow?
So that I can meet you
With milk from a young cow
Which way will you pass?

I followed the road
I followed the road
The road that belongs to the government
The road without stumps

Compared to the traditional version, this song promotes a positive image of women stressing co-operation rather than conflict. In the inverted image the path taken by the antagonist becomes the smooth road without stumps. This reminds us of the stump we had encountered earlier in our analysis of narrative no.3 (Ch.3). The stump symbolizes the ogre, whose macro symbol is the threat of male sexuality to girls. In Queen Jane's song, this threat has been removed making it possible to welcome the man 'with milk from a young cow'.

From the discussion of the performances of Queen Jane above, we can conclude that she does indeed present to the audience a feminist perspective that endorses female experience. In the texts discussed above, the artist presents what Marilyn French views as the feminist aesthetic (French: 1993). In the songs, Queen Jane challenges the dominant gender ideology by transforming age-old traditional literary conventions and content.

In our discussion and analysis in this chapter, we have understood oral literature as a gender socialization tool that first and foremost validates the roles of men and women in society. However, we have at the same time viewed the social construction of gender through oral literature as a continuously evolving process. In our discussion we have been able to delineate the existence of a multiple standpoints on gender relations in the oral literature of the people of Central Province of Kenya.

In the study, we uncovered at least three aspects of the social construction of gender in the literary performances. In the first instance, it is clear that oral literature has traditionally sanctioned and justified male dominance and patriarchy as the preferred patterns in gender relations. We analyzed this as the overt literary manifestations in our samples and observed that it is strongest in myths, legends and proverbs.

Our study in this chapter however also demonstrated that apart from widely accepted dominant gender ideology there exists a feminist position and consciousness in the oral literature of the Kikuyu people. This position, we have argued, operates in constant opposition to the 'officially' sanctioned ideology of male dominance. In the texts analyzed, the woman does not emerge as wholly passive and submissive to the dominant ideology. She expresses resentment at the cultural norms and attitudes that define her as inferior. The songs and narratives analyzed do project the feminist consciousness. This can be observed in elements of feminism in the thematic content. These include the awareness of a wrong, sense of sisterhood, female solidarity and the feminine vision (Learner 1986: 238).

Our discussion in this chapter finally leads us to issue of innovation and change in the communication of gender constructs in oral literature. During the post-independence period, we are able to observe challenge and modification of the dominant gender values in the society. This is mainly by women oral performers. In the creation of new genres and in the reinvention of old ones, oral artists are able to communicate changing perceptions and preferences in gender power relations.

In the compositions of Queen Jane, J.B. Sisters and De'mathew sisters, we have artists who reject the traditional gender relations, attitudes and stereotypes provoking a new thinking in a period of change and transition.

In the communication of innovations, the discussion in this chapter demonstrates that oral literature is constructing new messages. These messages promote the positive images of women, understanding of women's oppression, gender rights and the empowerment of women. In the following chapter we shall explore the role that oral literature has played over the years in the communication of innovations and change in politics and governance in Central Kenya.

CHAPTER FIVE

ORAL LITERATURE, POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

In our study in the last two chapters, a number of important aspects of oral literary communication in Central Kenya emerge. One is that oral literature continues to communicate significant normative values and moral codes surrounding the institutions of courtship, marriage and family and in the social construction of gender among the Kikuyu people. Secondly, oral literature emerges in the study as a medium that analyses and processes the conflicts within these social institutions. The literary genre is also communicating and reflecting change, new contradictions and innovative positions of social relationships in the institutions.

In chapter four, our discussions led us to the conclusion that the oral literary medium is challenging and modifying dominant values in the social construction of gender in Central Kenya. Artists in their performances are communicating changing perceptions and preferences in gender power relations.

This chapter analyses and discusses the role oral literature from the Kikuyu has played in communication of change and innovations in politics and governance in Kenya since the advent of colonialism towards the end of the nineteenth century. Our focus on central Kenya in this chapter will be against the background of the wider Kenyan nation-state. In our discussion and analysis we shall view oral literary productions as historical and dialectical. Once they operate within historical contexts they become a political forum that expresses various aspects of political reality (Lihamba: 1994). We shall also in the chapter analyze oral literature as a dynamic discourse about society and the relationships that exist between individuals, groups and classes in the society (Furnis and Gunner: 1995:1).

Folklore credits the generations of *Ndemi*, *Mathathi* and *Iregi* with the introduction of democratic structures in the Kikuyu society. The *Iregi* generation is credited with having insisted that all those who have gained maturity must have a responsibility in the governance. The *Ituika* ritual ceremony was instituted to ensure that there was a periodic transfer of power from one generation to the next (Kenyatta: 1966 (1942): 1-12).

Generations lasted in power for a period of roughly 30-35 years, the time it took another generation to form. Succeeding generations took the alternative names of Mwangi and Maina/Irungu.

A period during which male circumcision was stopped (*Mubingo/Muhingo*) for nine years ensured that all adult males belonged to one age set (Njogu, Kaiguri: Interview, Cavicchi: 1977:4-5,9; Murray: 1974:216). The generation to be initiated into power paid a fee to the ruling elders in the form of goats, sheep and oxen in installments over several years. Most of the goats were eaten in ritual feasts but some were used for sacrifices to God and the ancestors. This payment of fees (*Ibaki / Ihaki*) as Castro observes, provided a context for negotiations and induction of those aspiring for power by the retiring generation (Castro: 1995:112-113).

During the advent of colonialism in Kenya in the 1890's, the Maina generation was ruling but the *Ituika* ceremonies were going on in readiness to pass over power to the Mwangi generation. Despite the colonial entrenchment in Central Province, the Irungu/Maina generation started preparing for the *Ituika* ceremony around 1925 to mark the end of the rule by the Mwangi generation. However the ritual was declared illegal and seditious by the colonial government in most parts of Kikuyu country (Kenyatta: 1978 (1938): 196). In Kirinyaga (Ndia and Gichugu) and in Nyeri there were attempts by the missionaries to control the process (Murray: 1974: 217).

Colonial transformation for the people of Central and other parts of Kenya was a violent process. From the beginning it involved the pacification of the people through the force of arms.

Armed resistance was met with punitive excursions, which led to many deaths among the Kikuyu people between 1895 and 1905 (Edgerton, 1989:6-9, Meinertzhagen: 1977:135-147). The brutal killings that Meinertzhagen details in the *Kenya Diary* are still recounted today by the elderly. Their parents who were of the warrior age grade at the time narrated the experiences of this conflict to them (Wilfred Njogu, Kaiguri Njagi: interviews).

Coupled with the force of arms was the imposition of the myth of European superiority through missionary religion and education. As Lihaba (1994) has observed, the main goal was to disrupt the people's perception of themselves, their culture and their history. But beyond this, the object of the violence and cultural negation was the acquisition of Kikuyu land and other resources. Oral literature produced over time in the area covered by this study reflects and rejects the progression of this process.

It is this reflection and rejection that forms the basis of our discussion of the communication of change and innovations in politics and governance in Central Kenya through oral literature in this chapter.

5.1 Prophecies, Curses and the Circumcision Controversy.

The story of the prophecies of Mugo Wa Kibiro has become one of the most enduring legend in the communication of change and innovation in politics and governance in Central Kenya since the advent of colonialism. There are many versions of the prophecies of this seer, who in folklore is variously referred to as Mugo wa Kibiro, Muru wa Kibiro, Chege wa Kibiro and even sometimes as Mugo wa Hinga. However the most consistent reference to him is Mugo wa Kibiro which we shall use in our discussion in this chapter.

Oral versions of this story are well known throughout Central Kenya. Oral artists, as we shall see in the course of our discussion, continue to draw from the legend as they abstract politics and governance in Kenya.

The legend has over the years also been committed into writing and woven itself into permanence in historical and fictional discourse (Kenya: 1938, Leakey: 1977, Ngugi: 1965,1967, Sicherman: 1990).

Mugo wa Kibiro was a medicine man (*Mundu Mugo*) and a prophet (*Murathi*). In the traditional Kikuyu society, a prophet was always a practising medicine man with a higher calling. The first step of becoming a prophet was 'dreaming and publicizing the dreams' (Leakey: 1977:1210). The status of the prophet was established by the accuracy of his predictions. They were consulted for divination on private and domestic matters as well as public affairs pertaining to war and pestilence in the society (Leakey: 1977:1150 - 1152, Kaiguri: interview). In this chapter we shall adopt the elaborate version of the story of Mugo wa Kibiro by Jomo Kenya (Kenya: 1978 (1938) 41-43) together with other versions appearing in our analytical samples.

Kenya presents the story of Mugo wa Kibiro in a typical oral narrative tradition. He gives the story a fictive rather than historical setting:

Once upon a time there lived
in Gikuyuland a great medicine man
known as Mugo wa Kibiro or Moro wa
Kibiro whose duty was to foretell future
events and to advise the nation on what
was in store (P.41).

According to this version, Mugo woke up one day trembling and unable to speak and after elders slaughtered a sacrificial goat he narrated to them the revelations that God made to him in a dream. In his vision of a near future he warned of strangers who would come to the land from the direction of the coast. Their bodies would resemble the color of a certain kind of a frog (*Kengele*) and they would wear clothing resembling butterflies.

They would also carry sticks that would vomit fire and would bring along an iron snake with many legs like those of a millipede (*Maguru Maingi ta munyongoro*). Mugo wa Kibiro warned that these strangers would covet Kikuyu land and the people should be wary of them.

Other notable predictions attributed to this prophet, outside the version by Kenyatta, is the death of the Kikuyu leader, Waiyaki wa Hinga, in the hands of the colonialists. We shall discuss his curse and prayers shortly in this chapter. The other prophecies were the building of a stone house at Kawairera in Githunguri and the fall of the *Mugumo* (Fig tree) in Thika town when Kenya attains independence.

Historian, Godfrey Muriuki rationalizes the legend of Mugo wa Kibiro by viewing him as 'a man of undoubtful foresight' who derived his predictions from his wide travels in Gikuyuland and reports from his clientele, some of whom had traveled to the coast (Muriuki: 1974:137).

However, the significance of this story lies more on its literary value rather than its historicity. Like most forms of oral literature, the prophecies of Mugo wa Kibiro continue to transform through embellishments and modifications. Over time, the community and artists have used the legend to confront the colonial and the neo-colonial political realities in Kenya. Over the past one hundred years the story has been a cardinal literary basis of building consciousness against colonialism and poor governance in the post-independence era.

The prophecy begins with a dream. This dream makes Mugo wa Kibiro tremble in muteness in its vision of a future of loss and suffering and one that mutates into recurring cycles of oppression and resistance in the colonial and post-independence experiences. The fulfillment of the prophecy begins with the coming of European explorers, adventurers and traders who arrive in Kikuyu country in 1885. The construction of the Uganda railway (1895-1901), which passes through the Kabete area of Kikuyu country, fulfilled the prophecy of the coming of the iron snake with many legs. The formal establishment of Kenya as a British colony in 1895 consolidates the initial phase of the prophecy. The building of a stone house at Kiawairera in Githunguri, would signal the beginning of the de-colonization process. The fulfillment of this prophecy that appears in our sample in text no.55 and 56 by Joseph Kamaru and Albert Gacheru respectively has been subjected to different but related contextual meanings.

The first fulfillment of this prophecy was the establishment of a teacher training college for Africans by Mbiyu Koinange, which opened in 1939 (Sicherman: 1990:139). The prophecy is again fulfilled in the building of a house at the same college for Jomo Kenyatta by the Kenya African Union (KAU) when he returned from England in 1946. In the post-independence era, the song by Gacheru refers to the building of the house in futuristic terms. It is when the house is built and completed that Kenyans will achieve true democracy.

In all its various conceptions the value of the prophecy lie both in its symbolic and literal representation. Literally it becomes a marker of a point in time that inspires the nationalistic spirit against colonialism. It becomes the inspiration of a decisive political action, as was the case in the rise of KAU in the 1940s and that of the Mau Mau in the 1950s. But on the other hand, the physical artifact becomes a symbol of a new house, a new country that is different from the colonial one.

Mugo wa Kibiro in this story emerges as what Ogude refers as a 'proto-nationalist'. He is a person who goes beyond the boundaries of time and space. He has the courage to look beyond the current context of life and hence become the one selected by God to save the people in an hour of need' (Ogude: 1999:17-18). By articulating the reality of the impending conflict, he gives the people adequate warning of what is to be expected in the future.

The other important literary function that we can delineate from this prophecy is its provision of the connective consciousness between the pre-colonial, the colonial and post-independence Kikuyu society. It is a discourse that 'imagines cultural restoration' and helped nationalists in Kenya to reconcile themselves with colonial rule as well as map out a future beyond colonialism (Gikandi: 2000:49,59).

The innovativeness of this prophecy lies in the way it perceived change and became ingrained in the liberation consciousness among the Kikuyu people. Its power in communicating change is manifested in the threat it posed to continuation of British

colonialism in Kenya. In an effort to counter the prophecy the colonial authorities tore down the buildings at Kiawairera in November 1952 and built the first execution gallows to hang members of the Mau Mau on the site (Sicherman 1990:139). The Kenya government recently acknowledged the historical significance of the prophecy by declaring the gardens where the tree heralding independence fell in Thika town, a national monument (Standard Newspaper, 20:5:02).

The prophecies of Mugo wa Kibiro according to oral tradition begin to be fulfilled in the fate of Waiyaki wa Hinga. While Waiyaki was a historical figure, his story like that of Mugo wa Kibiro belongs to the literary domain. It has been transmitted orally from one generation to another and many versions of it exist. Oral versions of the story still exist today although there are several recorded versions. We shall refer to some of them in the discussion below.

Waiyaki wa Hinga was already a leader (*Muthamaki*) when the first Europeans started arriving in Kikuyu country between 1885 and 1893. Initially Waiyaki befriended the white men and even gave them land to erect a post in 1890. When they started demanding more land and become provocative, Waiyaki understood their deception and protested. The struggle between Waiyaki and the pioneer colonists that ensued was a result of the white people's demand for land and their negative attitudes towards Africans (Sicherman: 1990:45, Leakey: 1977:75-84). When he protested, the colonists arrested him and decided to deport him to the coast, some five hundred kilometers from his Kikuyu country. He died midway at Kibwezi where the Kikuyu believe he was buried alive.

Mbugua Njama (In Sicherman: 1990) offers us an oral version of the story of Waiyaki, which according to him was collected from an elder who was a companion of Waiyaki. He committed this story into writing in 1952 under the title, *Mahoya Ma Waiyaki* ('The Prayers of Waiyaki'). In this version, the author foregrounds Waiyaki as a patriot who loved the people and the land. The people were very happy with him because of his resistance to the appropriation of their land.

When the Europeans realized this they set out a plan to arrest him under the pretext that they wanted to negotiate a settlement over the land. They invited him to their camp and when he arrived, a servant denied him entry. He forced his way in, and in the commotion that ensued, he was wounded and bound by the Europeans. He was held captive for two days and on the third day he was driven towards the coast, dying at Kibwezi. In this version, the narrator tells us that Waiyaki restrained his warriors from attacking the Europeans because he knew they would be wiped out with the guns.

As Waiyaki died he prayed earnestly to God to resurrect him. Since God loved his people he resurrected him in the reincarnation of Jomo Kenyatta 'who would lead the Kikuyu people back to their land and freedom'.

In the oral versions of the story, Waiyaki's significance, like Mugo's, lies more in the literary rather than the historical discourse. The story takes an anti-colonial position and depicts Waiyaki as a paragon whose virtues and actions should be emulated in the struggle against colonialism. The version outlined above which was recorded during the Mau Mau war seeks to immortalize Waiyaki's symbolic value of resistance in his reincarnation into Kenyatta, who led Kenya to independence. In oral literature Waiyaki becomes the original of the tripartite poles that consolidate the actual nationalistic resistance. He is the first 'cock crow' in the struggle that eventually brings independence to Kenya as expressed in this independence song, *Tugucira na Karamu* ('We will Reason with the Pen'), by H.M. Kariuki (Text no.57.):

The cock that crowed,
Crowed three times
It crowed three times
The first cockcrow was Waiyaki

The second Harry Thuku
The third was Jommo
Who told the Europeans
To pack and go home,
To leave Kenya alone
It belongs to the people and God

Waiyaki's symbolic permanence is also attained by the figure of the curse in his legend. The curse is a recurring motif in most oral discourse on Waiyaki. Before he died, he is said to have uttered a curse against selling to or letting strangers acquire land among the Kikuyu. A curse in the traditional Kikuyu society is an irreversible interdiction. One has either to abide with the interdiction or suffer the consequences of the curse. The consequence in most of the cases is degeneration in one way or another. The belief in this curse has been used over the years as rallying point of Kikuyu nationalism. It has been a rationale for the struggle against colonial dispossession and post- independence deprivation of the Kikuyu people.

The *Muthirigu* song/dance was an innovative form of oral literature, which developed in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Its rise is associated with the arrest of nationalist Harry Thuku, the female circumcision controversy and the general suppression of the *Ituika* ceremonies discussed earlier in this chapter. Harry Thuku is represented as the 'second cockcrow' in text. No.56 discussed above. After Waiyaki, he became the embodiment of the rising political consciousness and demands for militant action against colonial occupation.

Thuku, who worked as a clerk in the post office formed and became leader of the Young Kikuyu Association and its successor, the East African association. He led protests against forced labor, taxation; land grievances and the introduction of pass laws (*Kipande*) in the 1920's. Thuku's activities progressively build on the prophecies of Mugo and the resistance of Waiyaki. His position was more radical, rejecting British rule and demanding political change (Murray: 1974:84-85).

Just like in Waiyaki's case, his demands were met with repression. He was arrested in March 1922. The following day members of his association gathered outside the police station demanding his release. The demand was calm and peaceful until a woman, Mary Muthoni Nyanjiru, challenged them into action. She asked the men to remove their trousers and hand them to the women if they couldn't force the release of Harry Thuku. The crowd surged forward, police opened fire. 'After the pandemonium 56 lay on the

ground dead.' Thuku was exiled for many years in Kismayo in present day Somalia and his association proscribed (Presley: 1992:112-113).

After the arrest of Harry Thuku, cultural symbols and festivals surrounding rites of passage became the foci of the consolidation of nationalist political consciousness. Colonial authorities targeted these rituals especially those that surrounded female circumcision so that they could not be used as a rallying point for opposition (Murray: 1974:110). By 1926, the colonial government began a campaign to outlaw female circumcision. The government had a willing ally in the Christian missionaries who in 1929 prohibited their converts from circumcising their female offspring. Members of congregations and those attending missionary schools were forced to sign agreements that they would cease to participate in female circumcision. According to Presley 90 percent of the congregations and 80 percent of the pupils and their teachers refused to sign the agreements and opted to leave. This led to the establishment of Gikuyu independent churches and schools (Presley: 1992:89,93).

The *Muthirigu* songs developed as a reaction to this political reality. They communicated the people's opposition and protest to cultural imperialism. The songs at times used obscure language but were basically defiant and sought to increase the awareness and unity of the people. The version by Hosea Mwai (Text no.58) provides a good example:

When they asked who and who
Can dance/sing muthirigu
I raised up my hand
The mountain, the mountain, this mountain
Is called Kirinyaga (Mt. Kenya)
Who will pass the message
So that you can know
I am giving you all the information
But you have blocked your ears
The mountain, the mountain, this mountain
Is called Kirinyaga
You ask what is finishing us
You clan of *atiriri* (Kikuyu)
When we become united
God will have mercy on us
And we shall cross the valley

In this rendition Mt. Kenya becomes the symbolic and euphemistic center of the territorial claim by the Kikuyu people. The repetitive emphasis and the tone in the original is a shrouded meaning, which only the participants in the song/dance could understand. The last part of the chorus, 'this mountain is called Kirinyaga', insinuates and alludes to more than the obvious meaning. This is because everybody including the colonialists obviously knows the name of the mountain. In the context of the song the mountain becomes the expression of a fundamental claim to territory, which the British assume they can appropriate.

The song then expresses the impossibility of such appropriation, which incidentally had already taken place. In its idiomatic reference, the expression asserts the willingness of the owners to fight for the land. The message is firstly addressed to those participating in the song and simultaneously to the colonist who is not present and not expected to even understand the threat communicated in the song.

The *Muthirigu* song/dance was also used to criticize and ridicule those who had accepted the colonial government and missionary position on the ban of female circumcision. The circumcision for men and women in Kikuyu society as in many African communities had greater significance beyond the physical operation. Among the Kikuyu, it was in the first instance a process of purification through which one earned the full status or full membership into the community. One ceased to be viewed as a child. He/she was initiated into adulthood. It was a sign that one was ready to assume full productive and reproductive roles in the society. Through circumcision the 'individual and the communal drives were merged. As 'an inscription on the flesh the history of the tribe and one's place in it were written on the body (Gikandi: 2000: 55, Shaw: 1995: 65).

Both sexes could not attain rights to property, marriage or procreation unless they were circumcised. To underwrite the significance of female circumcision, people generally believed that uncircumcised girls could not conceive or would give birth to deformed offspring. Procreation by an uncircumcised mother was also regarded as an abomination (Lambert: 1956:66, Julia Wangai: interview).

The song's criticism and ridicule focused on the inadequacy of the uncircumcised female adult touting her as unclean and casting aspersions on her ability of motherhood:

There is a foul smell
A foul, foul odour I smell
Of passing uncircumcised girls
The uncircumcised girl is indeed foolish
When a banana chokes the baby
She falls on herself with laughter (Text.59)

By skipping initiation, she denies herself the chance to be initiated into the skills and duties pertaining to motherhood. The uncircumcised girl fails to recognize the emergency in the choke and by implication wouldn't know how to deal with it. In its ridicule of the uninitiated the song also becomes sarcastic:

I will marry one (uncircumcised girl)
If she is unable to work on the farm
She can be climbing castor trees

The second line in the song is a negation of the stated intention of marrying the uncircumcised girl. A hard working girl in the farms was traditionally the coveted bride for any male. Men would spy on the girls as they cultivated their mother's farms to ensure that their prospective brides were hard working. In the expectation of the singer, this girl will not be able to work. She will be prancing like children who accompany their parents to the farms. They while away time playing and climbing castor trees.

The *Muthirigu* songs discussed above should be understood in the context of nationalism and resistance to cultural imperialism in a colonial situation. The practice of female circumcision is virtually non-existent today in the area covered by the study. The importance of *Muthirugu* as a literary mode of communicating innovations lies in its manifest opposition to cultural and political domination.

Its content and context became tactics of spreading disaffection against colonialism (Lihamba: 1994). The colonial powers recognized its subversive power and had its performances banned in 1930.

In our discussion and analysis so far, we have studied the narratives of Mugo wa Kibiro, Waiyaki wa Hinga and the *Muthirigu* songs as an oral literary discourse that communicated change and innovations against the background of the imposition and entrenchment of British colonialism in Central Province in particular and in Kenya as a whole. This discussion provides us with a background of understanding oral poetic compositions surrounding the Mau Mau armed resistance to colonialism.

5.2 Olenguruone and Mau Mau

The Olenguruone land crises in 1948 stimulated the beginning of the creation of a corpus of oral poetry of resistance, which has come to be collectively known as Mau Mau songs. The crisis has also been viewed as the prime indicator that the armed struggle against the colonial government was at hand (Throup: 1987:120-130, Furedi: 1989: 80-104, Wanjau: 1971:29-31).

The crisis had its roots in the displacement of the Kikuyu people from Central Province to give way for European settlement. In 1941, some 4,000 people who had been displaced into Narok district were moved to Olenguruone settlement in Nakuru district. These people thought they had been given this land in compensation for the ancestral land they had lost in Central Province.

However the government insisted that they were squatters and they were expected to follow laid down rules and regulations of farming and to plant specific crops. They defied these rules and in November 1949, the government forcefully evicted 2,000 of the peasants who had refused to abide to a court eviction order. Their crops were destroyed and their livestock confiscated. They were transported in caged lorries to the dry land of Yatta some three hundred kilometers away where they were detained.

These experiences were articulated in new oral composition, which etched a place for themselves in the corpus of Mau Mau songs. We shall analyze and discuss text no.60 *Kenyatta Ni Agathirwo* ('Kenya was Praised'), No.61, *Uhoru Uria Mwaiguire* ('The news you heard') and no.62, *Tugakena Muno* ('We Shall Truly be happy').

One of the immediate stylistic appeal of the songs is the depth of their emotional ethos. They evoke feelings of empathy from the audience portraying the Olenguruone people as a deeply wronged party for insisting on their rights. Nevertheless, the songs are not just lamentations from subservient beings but statements of defiance full of hope and promise. The opening of song no.60 illustrates this:

Kenya was hallowed
By the children and the women
As they were taken to be detained in Yatta
When they arrived there
Heavy rain fell accompanied by thunderstorms

Around this time Kenyan nationalist, Jomo Kenya had returned from England. He assumed the leadership of the Kenya African Union (KAU). He became, as we mentioned in the discussion on the prophecies above, a symbol of the future hope for the liberation of the Kikuyu and Kenya in general. The song opens by voicing this hope and confirms it further with the rain that falls when they arrive at Yatta 'to be detained'. Yatta in the Eastern Province is a dry place where rain rarely falls. For the Kikuyu people, rain is always regarded as sign of blessing. The song then begins by foregrounding the images of hope before relieving the suffering, loss and tears that flowed when one of them, Josbaini, died and was buried in Yatta.

The tears that flowed
After staying for three days
All the children cried together
One girl died
After eating Buffalo meat
...
Tears flowed
When we saw her clothes
Being given to her sister

And when we called (Kenyatta) back
We replied that our only sorrow
Was because of Josbaini's burial (death)

In their suffering and mourning they are however sustained by their solidarity and love for one another:

The Love that was there
Of women and children
When a bean fell to the ground
They would divide it amongst themselves

The socialist image in the sharing of the beans lightens the stoic perseverance of the woes of colonialism. The brutality is balanced with love and togetherness in a moment of crisis. The second Olenguruone song, (no.61) 'What you heard with your ears', builds on the theme of suffering but adds new religious dimensions. The song rejects the Christian God and proclaims the greatness of the Kikuyu God. This rejection of missionary Christianity is recognition of its role in sustenance of colonialism. In this rejection we can understand the genesis of Mau Mau's anti-Christian and anti-European sentiments. For the Mau Mau there was no difference between the colonist and the missionary (*Gutiri Muthungu na Mubia*).

The name of the God of Kikuyu
Is holy and sacred
He told Kikuyu that the name
Should never be uttered in vain
Because it is powerful

By going back to the God of the Kikuyu, the song attempts to cushion the victims against their losses and give them the hope of regaining their land. Their God is a flexible God who caters for them in this moment of crisis. He allows them to break taboo and feed on wild animals and wild strawberry when the government agents destroy their crops:

When the maize was destroyed
God saw the suffering of his Children
In Olengurueoni
He blessed the wild strawberry

And the wild animals
And told us to eat them

The third song in our sample (no. 62), 'We shall indeed rejoice', narrates the journey to exile in Yatta through Nairobi and Thika towns. The song highlights the futility of the notion of racial dominance as a rationale of subjugation in colonialism:

The laughter we suffered in Nairobi
When white children laughed at us
They thought we would surely be vanquished
That we would never be seen
In Kenya again

The subsequent messages in this song reject the perception of the oppressor and emphasize solidarity of the people. It draws inner faith for the oppressed from the mythical parents of the tribe expressing the hope that the people will surely regain their space and forever live in Kenya. The song shows an awareness of detention as a dehumanizing process meant to breach the spirit of resistance and one's self worth. Towards the end of the song, lays a pointer to the impending crisis of armed conflict. The oral poet uses idiomatic and euphemistic language to hint at the impending insurrection. Again, like the message in the *Muthirigu* song discussed earlier, the message is presented as a hint targeted at a particular audience who would be its only decoder:

We have suffered in this world
Our abode has been destroyed
And our bodies' further wrecked
Do not now be afraid
The moment you were waiting for
Has now come

The message here denotes readiness for further sacrifice in the forthcoming war. Apart from their patriotic position, the Olenguruone songs also became a symbol of anti-colonial resistance and generated a melancholic discourse that was vital in stirring up nationalist emotion and the initiation of the armed struggle (Wanjau: 1971:31, Gikandi: 2000:5).

The 'group of 40' has been credited of being the main catalyst of the armed struggle in Kenya. The group consisted of young men who were circumcised in 1940 and some of whom had seen action in the Second World War fighting for Britain in foreign lands. The war had demystified the myth of white superiority for them. On their return to Kenya at the end of the war they were demobilized. But while the white soldiers were rewarded with farms and jobs, the black ex-soldiers got nothing. In its disillusionment, this group was ready for violent action to achieve independence in Kenya (Barnnet: 1963:115, Edgerton: 1989:37).

When the state of emergency was declared in October 1952, Kenyatta and other leaders of the Kenya African Union (KAU) were arrested and later jailed for seven years with hard labor. At the same time thousands of young men started disappearing into Mt. Kenya and Nyandarua forests from where they waged the war for independence. Despite massive British intervention between 1952 up to the late 50s the Mau Mau war completely upset the colonial relations in Kenya in a manner that colonialism could not be constituted again. The Mau Mau movement has been credited with facilitating a faster phase in the de-colonization in the country and the rest of Eastern and Southern Africa (Guy: 1974:110).

Oral literature played a central role in articulating and communicating this phenomenon. The Mau Mau song genre builds on the Olenguruone experiences discussed above. In this chapter we shall study the songs as an innovative communication of a consciousness and the need for action to end colonial domination in Kenya. We shall discuss a sample of six songs focusing on the communication of innovations and change in several categories. These will include the creation of a Mau Mau consciousness and the quest for a transformation of power relations, the symbolic value of Kimathi's leadership and the experiences in detention centers.

The liberation consciousness in the Mau Mau movement recognized the need to increase education opportunities for Africans as basis of organizing the future society (Guy: 1974:122).

Text no 63, 'From Nдеми and Mathathi' insist on this need even as the people fight for their land. The song begins by recognizing the changes that have taken place in society. The youth will have to play a different role compared to the ones they played in the traditional society.

In the olden days, parents used to present their warrior sons with oxen to feast on in recognition of their duties of defending the community against incursions by outsiders. The country is now faced with the social economic changes whereby even livestock is depleted. Economic advancement and the defense of the people will now depend on education:

Brave warriors today
What they require is education
....
Oxen are no longer there
The number of goats is dwindling
I won't ask for feast oxen
Brave warriors today
Have all united together
So that they can protect the land
Mother, Father, I just want an education
As there was no time
When fools ever acquired wealth

At the same time this song is also a rallying point for the creation of awareness of the struggle. It is a challenge to those who are yet to join the ranks. It urges them to take arms and protect their wealth:

How come your are not considering
To volunteer with your spear and shield
Brother, do not let go our wealth

In the creation of a new consciousness, the Mau Mau songs rooted for a black aesthetic by recognizing the God of *Kirinyaga* as the basis of the identity for the black people. Just like in the song (no.61), which we had discussed earlier, song no.64, '*Mwene Nyaga We Pray Thee*', appropriates the Kikuyu God as the protector and the ultimate salvation of the people:

God beloved protector of the army
Who accepts the sacrifices

And offerings of black people
When in front of us, God
The enemy can never defeat us
Mwene Nyaga, we pray unto thee

This new consciousness that is re-emphasizing the authentic Kikuyu identity seeks a unity of purpose from the people in order to achieve liberation.

The sustenance of this unity is sought through the evocation of emotive feelings of merging the self with other in the larger Gikuyu Embu and Meru grouping. This is expressed in the reference, 'From Ngong to Karimatura' (Garbartura). It is only in this unity, that the veil of sadness and suffering that currently engulfs the country can be removed. In this song, like in most Mau Mau songs, Jomo Kenyatta remains the symbol of the light at the end of the tunnel.

He is the embodiment of the object of the creation of this new consciousness, which is the attainment of independence. He is also referred to as 'beloved of the nation'. Mbiyu Koinange, the first African in Kenya to obtain masters degree embodies the crucial role of education identified in our discussion earlier:

We pray for love and respect
And deep empathy with the beloved of the nation
The unity of Gikuyu and Mumbi
Mwene Nyaga (God) we pray thee

We pray that we shall all meet
From Ngong to Karimatura
That time our sadness will end
For the freedom fighters and our parents
Hurry Kenyatta and bring us independence
And Mbiyu bring our share of knowledge
Our country is full of tears
Wondering when our freedom will be attained.

Like most other Mau Mau discourses, this song identifies the role of indoctrination, which has led to the creation of a loyalist group that is opposed to the struggle. This group known *Kamatimu* (spear bearers) fought on the side of the Europeans. Its members were known for their brutality and ruthlessness towards the civilian populations. Mau

Mau songs decry the ignorance of these people. They are presented as a group operating on a warped logic governed by greed. For by fighting their own people they fight themselves in order to become even better slaves:

Kamatimu you fight for slavery
While our heroes fight for the country
Our heritage from Gikuyu and Mumbi

The loyalists are people to be regarded with scorn but also with understanding. The understanding that they have been brainwashed to a degree that requires sympathy. In the battle of *Rui Ruiru* (song no.65) where the Mau Mau fighters trapped a group of European soldiers and their African loyalists, the Mau Mau General gives an order that the black loyalists be spared:

The General gave a firm command
That we only target European soldiers
And let the black ones escape
As they are guided by foolishness

Going to fight in the war was a duty and a sacrifice expected of the young men. The song, *Uka Murata Twaranirie* ('Come Friend, Let us reason Together'), no.66, psychologically prepares the recruits for war and even possible death as freedom fighters. The song's implied setting is a place where the young men are being inducted into becoming freedom fighters. The song views the armed struggle as the only alternative to the liberation of the country. It expresses the awareness that despite the depth of suffering in the process the outcome will be for the benefit of the younger generation. But participation in the struggle is voluntary, a duty that cements relationships between the fighter, his parents and siblings and the society:

The first word young men
You have to agree with your parents
And even when you later suffer
You should bear the suffering
Because in the end
It is you who will benefit
And once again young men
Note this very carefully
That it is only the bodies that will separate
But the hearts will move together

The unity of the souls (hearts moving together) is a necessary precondition for one to become a fighter. In 'the last word,' he has to commune happily with those close to him before departing for the forest. And this has to begin with his sisters. Traditionally a special bond exists between young men and their unmarried sisters:

The last word young men
Let each one of you go back home
And greet your sisters
And your father and mother in happiness

Up to this point in the song, the discourse is presented in second person. It re-confirms the Kikuyu (African) identity of the fighter and his impending mission to lift the veil of darkness (colonialism) from the face of the country. Up to that point the song is pedagogy. It is an instructive discourse from an elder. In the last verse however the song smoothly switches from the second person plural to a first person singular which commits the young men into accepting duty and destiny. In this final verse, the young man has been transformed into the warrior ready for the emotional communal farewell. He departs into a realm of a struggle from which he might not emerge physically. In the expanded image of the skin garments that he adorns himself with and the oil he smears on his body, he is ready to be a sacrificial lamb for the sake of the liberation of his country:

When I go back to our home
I will adorn myself with a skin garment
I will wash and smear myself with oil
And all my beloved, will congregate at our home

The Mau Mau war can be regarded as the apex of anti-colonial feelings in Kenya. The main quest of this movement was the need for a transformation of political power brought about by the colonial social- economic condition (Maughan-Brown: 1985:166, Edgerton: 1989: 244). The songs reflect and articulate the aim of the movement as the repossession of the material and human status of the black man taken away by colonialism. The main agenda of colonialism is clear to everyone. It is to oppress and exploit the African people and this is the situation that must be reversed.

Dedan Kimathi wa Wachiuri was one of the central figures of the armed struggle. Between 1950 and 1954 when he was captured, he emerged as the overall military leader of the Mau Mau forces in Nyandarua and Mt. Kenya forests. He was sentenced to death and hanged at Kamiti prison near Nairobi in 1956.

The literary representation of Kimathi in the struggle displays a mythical magnificence of the hero as the chosen one and the inspiration of the movement. In the song *Riria Kimathi Ambatire* ('When Kimathi Ascended the Mountain') (No.67), Kimathi's ascent of Mt. Kenya draws a parallel with Moses going up Mt. Sinai and Jesus on the Mount of Olives. Kimathi ascends the mountain alone from where he is given courage and strength to defeat the Europeans:

When our dear Kimathi ascended
Up on the mountain alone
He was bestowed with strength and courage
To defeat the Europeans

The opening of this song seeks to establish a close relationship between Kimathi and the God of the Kikuyu, *Ngai, Mwene Nyaga*. By going up the mountain, he retraces the steps of the birth of the *Gikuyu* nation. The climb, symbolizing an act of going back to primordial genesis of the people, is a justification for the fight against colonialism. As we had noted earlier in the Kikuyu myth of origin, this is the locus where God gave the Kikuyu people their territory. By going up the mountain he is seeking the rebirth of the nation, which has been destroyed by colonialism. But beyond this the ascent also stands for the indestructible nature of the human spirit.

The mountain, whose Kikuyu name is *Kirima Kiri-nyaga*, is in a way synonymous with God. As Amuka observes, it concretizes the communal unity and continuity of the Kikuyu people in its physical and permanent presence (Amuka: 1990). By climbing up this mountain Kimathi moves to the 'center of the Kikuyu universe' (Ogude: 1999:89), which also makes the mountain the symbol of the enduring spirit of resistance.

The theme of suffering in the struggle alludes to the imminent death of Kimathi. In a language that relives the last days of Jesus Christ on earth before he was crucified, Kimathi urges his followers to accept suffering in the struggle as the means to the end:

He said, all the footprints
That I have implanted
On them yours will be implanted
And you will drink from the same cup
As me
...
Do not fear repression
And to be detained
Or even dispossession and being killed
Our God is in front of us

Like in most other Mau Mau songs, this song on Kimathi also summarizes the themes of perseverance and that of separate identities and heritage between the colonizers and the Kikuyu people.

Detention, which is mentioned in the verse quoted above, is a common theme of Mau Mau songs. The song communicates the dehumanizing experiences of those who were incarcerated in the camps. Detention during the state of emergency in Kenya was a horrific experience. It is estimated that more than 100,00 men and women mostly from Gikuyu, Embu and Meru communities were rounded up in the detention camps during the period of emergency in Kenya (Aseka: 1992:38.). Most of these detainees did not return home until the late 1950s and early 1960s. Like in the Olenguruone song (no.60), which we had discussed earlier, the songs express defiance to detention:

We are not afraid of being arrested
Or of being jailed and detained on islands
As we shall never cease fighting for independence
Until there is light in the country (Song No.68)

But the repression was nevertheless a routine factor in detention. Detainees were forced to work for up to twelve hours and were often beaten until they were unconscious or died (Edgerton: 1989:90).

Our discussion above illustrates the role of oral literature, especially song, in the communication of important aspects of the Mau Mau movement as an innovative phenomenon. The movement created a space, which merged the aspirations of the people with international concerns and brought about vital changes in politics and governance in Kenya. Before the revolt, the European settlers in Kenya aimed at some form of self-rule, independent of Britain. However the Mau Mau intervention forced them to call in for British military support that effectively ended their political domination of the country (Edgerton: 1989:239).

The songs represent a dynamic interaction between oral literature and social change in the society in a particular historical moment. The Mau Mau movement is represented as an imaginative discourse of liberation; a theme embraced by many postcolonial writers in Kenya, notable among them is Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1964, 1967).

5.3 Kenyatta and Uhuru

The release of Jomo Kenyatta from detention in 1961 heralded the coming of political independence in Kenya. Over the years Kenyatta had emerged as the symbol of nationalism and liberation in the country and especially so for the Kikuyu. His political career emerges in 1929 during the female circumcision crises discussed earlier. He was then elected the secretary-general of the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA). By this time Kenyatta was already calling for self-government in Kenya (Aseka: 1992:4). Kenyatta traveled to England twice to present the grievances of the Kikuyu people on land, labor and political representation to the British government.

During his second visit, he stayed in Europe until 1946. When he came back, he took over the leadership of the newly created Kenya African Union (KAU).

On the outbreak of the Mau Mau, Kenyatta and five other leaders of KAU, Paul Ngei, Achieng Oneko, Kung'u Karumba, Fred Kubai and Bildad Kagai were arrested. They were transported to Kapenguria some four hundred and eighty kilometers from Nairobi to

face trial. On April 1953, they were found guilty of managing the Mau Mau, conspiring to force people to take oaths and for inciting disaffection against the government. They were imprisoned for seven years each with hard labor (Bailey: 1993:58).

In the oral literary texts in our sample, Kenyatta is represented over the years as the collective wish for the de-colonization of Kenya. He is a reincarnation of Waiyaki and the fulfillment of the prophecies of Mugo wa Kibiro. In the literary presentation he transcends realism and becomes a mythic figure while still alive. His folkloristic representation even corresponds to the heroic pattern proposed by Lord Raglan (de Vries; 1963 210-216). This pattern can be discerned from the song, *Riria Kenyatta Aciarirwo* ('when Kenyatta was born') (no.69) and general folklore surrounding Kenyatta.

The heroic plot pattern generally ascribes divine origins to the hero. The hero is then exiled after which he returns to his country of birth, conquers his enemies and establishes benevolent governance of his people. The song attempts to assign Kenyatta a divine destiny even as he is born:

When Jomo was born (conceived)
By his father and mother
He was born a *Muthamaki* (ideal leader)
And even his father and mother did not know
Only God knew

In the song Kenyatta starts to fulfill his destiny from an early age. When he goes to 'exile' in Britain he is there as a seeker of truth which will eventually liberate his country:

Jomo grew up and as he matured
He began to think
How this country Kenya will be
In days to come

In other songs discussed above, Kenyatta is represented as 'the promise of God', the 'beloved of the nation' (*mwedwo ni iri*) and the hero who will deliver the country from British rule and bring independence (Songs no.60, 63, 64). His depiction in oral literature idealizes his nationalistic consistency and his life becomes the embodiment of the political struggles in Kenya during the colonial era. Even in detention Kenyatta attained

the status of the undisputed political leader in Kenya. During his last months in detention he is said to have 'become a god-like figure' (Aseka: 1992:58).

The Kenya National African Union (KANU) was formed in 1960 when political parties were allowed to operate legally for the first time since the declaration of a state of emergency in October 1952. After his release from detention in 1961, Kenyatta took over the leadership of the party. He retained the leadership until his death in 1978. The party led the country into internal self-rule in June 1963 and full independence on 12th December 1964 with Jomo Kenyatta as the first president of the republic of Kenya.

Independence was met with jubilation and with praises for Kenyatta and KANU. In 1965 leading opposition parties merged with KANU making it the dominant political organization in the country.

With the outlawing of the Kenya People's Union (KPU) in 1969 and the detention of its leader Oginga Odinga, Kenya became a *de facto* one party state. Further legislation was made in 1986 making KANU the only party allowed by law to operate in Kenya. The party ran the country until the re-introduction of multiparty politics in 1992.

The expressions of disillusionment with the gains of the liberation struggle began to appear in oral compositions soon after the attainment of independence. In song no.57 by H.M. Kariuki, the singer attempts to come to terms with the emerging post-independence state. The title of the song, 'Kenya, Let us reason with the Pen', alludes to the need for a non-violent means of solving the problems creeping into the country. The song's literary presentation identifies these problems as the lateral and vertical divisions engulfing the country soon after independence. The song further understands the creation of the class and ethnic groupings as a deliberate effort from certain sections of the society, no doubt its leadership. While stating everyone's entitlement to the state, the singer expresses his disillusionment in the strong language he uses to condemn the architects of the divisions:

Kenya belongs to us, all of us
And now some are saying that
We divide it into pieces

May the divider of Kenya (ns)
Break his backbone?
And may his children be smitten by leprosy

The divisions that emerge are condemned in the song as individualistic pursuits that neglect the common good and ignore the needy members of the society. The song identifies the needy as the orphans alluding to the neglect of the children whose parents died while fighting for independence:

You creators of disaffection
You seem to be very happy
When your children feed on buttered bread
While the orphans are crying of hunger

The disillusionment and the condemnation of the current social setting finds its heightened expression in the curses that the singer utters and his invocation for divine intervention, and the curse of the Mau Mau as the possible deterrent to those who are dividing the nation. The reference to the walking stick leaves no doubt that the singer is addressing those in leadership:

May his walking stick lose hold on the ground
And may his children inherit the curse
And may the great curse be upon him
The curse of those who fought
For the country with their blood
And those are the Mau Mau, who spoke and said
May the divider of Kenya be cursed by the soil

The curses in this song express the bitterness of unfulfilled hopes and dreams and the last lines calling upon the curse of the Mau Mau hint at the feelings of betrayal. As an understanding of the post independence reality, this song in early 1960s communicates changes, which would become a reality for many years in the country's future.

The understanding of these new realities also finds expression in the existentialistic abstractions in the religious discourse of the performances of P.C.E.A Gathaithi Church choir. This group has performed in Kiambu district since the 1970s and recorded many songs. Two of their compositions, *Mai Ni Maruru* ('The Water is Bitter') text no.70 and

Ng'aragu ya Ngoro, ('The Famine of the Heart') No. 71 present an interpretation of this disillusionment from a religious perspective. In the innuendoes and insinuations of the texts, there is an apparent vindication of the post-independence leadership for abandoning the original aims and ideals of the struggle against colonialism and leaving the people in a state of hopelessness.

In the first song, 'The Water Is Bitter', the performers begin by re-visiting the deliverance theme. It recalls the experience of Moses and the children of Israel as they journey towards Canaan from Egypt. At one point on their journey in the desert they have no water to drink and the only water available is bitter and unfit for human consumption (Exodus: 15:22-25). God instructs Moses to dip his staff into the water to cleanse it for the people drink.

In the leadership images that we have discussed elsewhere in this chapter, Kenyatta was viewed as the Kenyan Moses who would deliver the masses. He would deliver them from the Egypt of colonialism and lead them to the Canaan of plenty in independent Kenya. But the process towards the achievement of the economic and social Canaan seems to have stalled. The Kenyan Moses apparently has refused to dip his staff in the water to remove the offending taste:

Even Now the water is still bitter
From homes to work places
From the children to the adults
The water is bitter
What shall we drink?

The song goes on to enumerate the social ills that have percolated the society. It begins with the domestic front where husbands and wives are 'quarrelling over minor things 'because the water is bitter'. The song then moves on to discuss the public sphere where corruption is rife and social evils rampant.

When you go to the office in need of help
You find the officer is morose
If you try to enter, he says he is busy
Because the water is bitter

The song further decries increasing promiscuity, theft and robbery with violence, which have become common features in the post-independence society.

The other song, 'The Famine of the heart', articulates the anti-thesis of the people's expectations in the image of the heart that suffers famine. Dwelling on the existential plane, the song translates into a commentary on the dispossession of the people both at the material and the spiritual level. The song sets out to recognize the existence of this lack in spite of efforts to conceal it:

Now that this famine has become all pervading
And it has been baptised many names
So that people may not know
There is the bread of Jesus

Just observe and see what is happening
To the rich and even the poor and children
They are staggering all over
Because of the famine of the heart

The song moves on to attack the vanity of the rising African middle classes, which has concentrated on hoarding money for themselves and grabbing land. The unraveling theme of the song is that self-interest and greed existing in post-independence era is anti-human and can lead to the possible annihilation of the society. The ultimate image of the possibility of this human ruin is in the three women. The two Samaritan women ate their children because of hunger and the other woman salvages the hammock instead of the child being swept by the river.

In essence these songs are an attack of the rising middle class and the way they perceived the realities of independence. Their priorities are a logical negation of the kind of society the country sought after independence. In the new setting, human value is replaced by material accumulation and the song views this as the wrong perception; the lack of knowledge and the truth that endures:

Two Samaritan women
They ate their children to ward off hunger

They refused to acknowledge
The glory of Children
Because of the famine of their hearts
One woman salvaged the hammock
While the child was swept by the river
If we lack wisdom (knowledge)
We will never have it
To accompany Jesus to heaven

The meaning and messages in these two songs are cleverly shrouded in quasi-religious images and suggestive christological solutions. Their euphemistic representations are however clear to the local audiences in that they articulate the moral, material and spiritual dispossession of the people after independence. They allude to a journey that was never completed. They indict the Kenyan middle class leadership and seem to suggest that the solution to the arrogance and the corruption of those in power is another Moses who can free Kenyans from these problems (Chekwony: 1987: 186).

The theme of dispossession and betrayal finds even more explicit expression in the oral performance of the late 1970s. From our sample, we shall discuss and analyze the song, *Kiuru* (text no.72) by Joseph Kamaru and the play *Ngahika Ndeenda* (I will Marry When I Want) by Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Ngugi Wa Mirii.

The play, which was first published in 1980, was initially conceived and presented as an oral performance in Kikuyu language. According to the authors the play was a collective effort between them and members of the Kamirithu Community Education and Cultural Center (Sicherman: 1990:11). The play's content and form was greatly influenced by the actors making it an important form of oral expression that integrates the community and the individual in artistic presentation (Meyer: 1991: 1-3).

The song and the play follow an uncannily similar narratological pattern. Both texts end with the poorer party being dispossessed of the only piece of land he owns by his rich employer. In Kamaru's song, the rich man, Kiuru, employs the man, his wife and his daughter. He also employs the brother of the persona in the song as a chauffeur. Ironically, the brother and the rich man were at Makerere (university) at the same time.

But the former was detained at Manyani presumably due to his nationalistic activities. In spite of his hard work, the persona in the song is unable to raise fees for his child who is going for further studies. He seeks help from his employer who directs him to a bank where he borrows money with his land as security. He is eventually unable to repay the loan and the same rich employer buys that piece of land from the bank.

The story in *Ngahiika Ndeeda* follows a similar plot. Kiguunda, the main character, is employed by Ahab Kioi as farm worker. When the play opens, Kiguunda and his wife, Wangechi are anxiously waiting for a visit from Ahab Kioi and his wife. When they arrive we discover that their mission is to convert Kiguunda and his wife into their church. For that to happen Kiguunda and his wife have to stop 'living in sin' and marry in a church wedding ceremony. In the ironical progression of the story, the poor couple agrees to this scheme. They do so under the illusion that the rich employer wants this to happen because of the relationship between their daughter, Gathoni, who is going out with the rich man's son, John Muhuni. They assume their wedding would be a prelude to that of their daughter and Muhuni.

The wedding would cost money and Kiguunda approaches Kioi who, like Kiuru in the song, directs him to the bank. But the wedding was not to be. Kioi's son impregnates their daughter, Gathoni, and jilts her. In the ensuing confrontation, Kiguunda threatens his employer and he is dismissed from his job. He cannot repay the loan and the bank auctions his piece of land, which is bought by Ahab Kioi.

Both the song and the play depict the consolidation of classes in the country using the Central Province as the microcosmic setting. Those who were loyalists during the struggle for independence have replaced the colonial settlers. Those who fought for independence continue to live in unending dispossession. Even the little they managed to salvage is taken away from them. Although both Kiguunda and the persona in the song are acutely aware of their exploited situation they cannot resist the trappings of the propertied class. This is reflected in Kiguunda accepting to have a church wedding and the need to educate the son in the song. This leads to the loss of the remaining symbol

(land) of what they fought for. In a way what they fought for is presented in the play as having been reconstituted into a utopian illusion that can only lead to even greater oppression. Both the play and the song however end on a positive note. In the song, the son has returned from abroad with a degree and the singer presents him as the possible salvation from the current mundane existence:

My son has come back, Kiuru,
With a degree (*ndigiri*) to repulse you
I understand he will be
The manager in your workplace
Take back your pick and shovels, Kiuru

In *Ngahiika Ndeenda*, the play ends with a rallying up of workers consciousness, which might possibly consolidate into action against their oppression and exploitation.

Ngahika Ndenda, which was first performed at Kamirithu in Kiambu district in 1977, can be viewed as a milestone in the use of the oral literary forms in the communication of change and innovations in politics. As Gikandi observes, the play was an innovation both at the stylistic and the discourse level. Through its oral publication, it was able to overcome the gap that separates art from politics by communicating directly to the intended audience. As an oral performance in Kikuyu language the play achieved a degree of subversion that Ngugi had not achieved with his earlier works in English (Gikandi: 2000:188-186).

The second achievement in *Ngahiika Ndeenda* is the way it exploits traditional Kikuyu genres of oral literature to interrogate the contradictions of the post-independence period. Through flashbacks that bring to life various past anti-colonial song genres, the play reconstructs the historical experiences that have led to the current political situation. Some of the songs incorporated in the play have been discussed elsewhere in this chapter.

In our analysis and discussion in this section, we have illustrated the response of oral literary performances in song and drama to the changes that took place with the coming of independence in Kenya. The discussion here demonstrates the topical sensitivity of oral texts. Oral texts were able to respond to development of new social political

conditions as a reversal to the expectations and hope of the anti-colonial struggle. While some of them may seek naïve solutions to the problems of neo-colonialism, to which they essentially are reacting, they do articulate the fact that the loss prophesied by Mugo wa Kibiro has yet to be recouped. The following section continues to analyze these contradictions but within the context of a new relationship, which further accentuates the loss.

5.3 The Post-Kenyatta Era

The final aspect in oral literature, change and innovation in politics, which we shall discuss in this chapter, surrounds the post-Kenyatta era between 1978 and 2002. The section will particularly focus on oral literary productions dealing with issues leading to the re-introduction of multiparty politics in Kenya. The section derives its analytical material from an oral narrative, topical and popular songs by various composers from Central Province.

Lonsdale has observed that during the reign of Kenyatta, state power was more dangerous to those who wielded it than the subjects. After his death state power threatened those who dared to criticize it. Freedoms continued to diminish and the state became increasingly authoritarian and could not tolerate any level of criticism or dissent (Lonsdale: 1992:13-14,26). While most other forums of political expression including the press withdrew into conformity and self-censorship oral literature continued to communicate the political realities of the time. This literary media also supported the few courageous activists who dared to stand up against state repression and demand human and political rights for Kenyans. The artists in the songs address the political issues as they affect the people of Central Province in particular and Kenya in general. Among the political issues that these songs communicate are political repression, oppression, corruption nepotism and tribalism. It is against this background that the artists also voice

the need for cohesion and demands for political change in multiparty politics and constitutional change.

The song, *Thina wa Kamiti* ('The suffering at Kamiti') no.73 by Sam Kinuthia relives the unexpected woes a man suffers after innocently attending an illegal (unlicensed) political meeting. The meeting was on the seventh of July 1991, a date politically referred to as *Saba Saba* (seven, seven). The persona in the song is an ordinary citizen who goes to attend the rally convened by opposition leaders demanding the re-introduction of multiparty politics in the country. The police break up the meeting and the man is arrested. He is falsely charged with 'throwing stones at policemen' and jailed for six years. He is incarcerated at the Kamiti maximum-security prison.

In the imagination of the song it is from his incarceration that he is sending a message to his mother and wife to reassure them that he is still alive. In reality scores of people who attended the rally on that day were shot dead by security forces. The song communicates the reality that Kenyans cannot wish away the political problems of the time. It would be like trying to avoid fate or an accident. Any moment you utter the truth you become an opponent of the political system. For this singer, the solution to the political problem can only come through a cleansing process by the God of Kenya:

God of Kenya let it rain
Let rain fall everywhere
Even where witches and wizards live
For Kenya has become a punishment arena
Like hell
If you speak the truth
You will be killed or if you are not killed
You end up in Kamiti (jail)

The artists during this era attacked the increasing levels of repression and poor political leadership and governance that inverts values and social economic priorities. This as the main theme finds further expression in the song, *Kiria Mali*, ('Eater of Wealth') no. 74 by Joseph Kariuki.

The title, *Kiria Mali*, semantically translates into an image of one who consumes in large proportions. Kiria Mali is also the name of this character depicted in the song as a leader. The song analyses the pitfalls of this leadership. Apart from impoverishing the population by stealing from them and exploiting them, in the song, his leadership operates on an inverted and contradictory principle. The song refers to the leadership of Kiria Mali as the opposite of the ideal of 'The Good Shepherd' who ensures the welfare of the entire flock. Kiria Mali is a discriminative shepherd who leads some of the sheep to choice food (salt licks) while others are left on barren rocks with nothing to feed on:

The good shepherded makes sure
All the sheep are grazed
And none is hurt
But this shepherd takes some
To the salt licks, and leaves others
On top of barren rocks, bleating in hunger

But this leadership even does worse than simply neglecting some of the flock. It destroys some of the best of its flock and claims that it is the hyena that has eaten the sheep. The song rejects this leadership that reverses its role from the protector of the sheep into the predator:

We refuse your leadership
You select the one that has fattened
And then cheat us that
A hyena ate it

This stanza also alludes to the systematic destruction of any emerging leaders who might oppose those in power. But the singer reminds the leadership that 'its days are numbered'. The song uses the expression that 'they are forty days' which is the mythical number it takes the lucky thief to be apprehended or discovered. The image of the river that is swollen refers to the possible eruption of people's power against the dictatorship of Kiria Mali:

Believe God is powerful
This river will sweep you away
Like it swept off
The horsemen of the pharaoh

In song, *Tiga Kiunuhu*, ('Stop This Malice') no.75, the singer continues to analyze the state of leadership in the country. The song condemns the leadership for thriving on the creation of fear and despondency among the population. It is depicted as a leadership, which is always preparing for war with its citizenry. In the words of the text, it is always 'carrying clubs' 'sharpening spears' and 'preparing shields'. It is a leadership that seeks to deny its own people chances of self-fulfillment and blocks their attempts at material advancement. In the idiom of the shaving razor and the rain in season, the leadership is depicted as contradictory and even malevolent:

You refuse that I get shaved
While the razor does not belong to you
Nor does the beard shaver belong to you
If you were the one who
Makes the rain fall
It would never fall on our farms

The songs reveals the intention of those exercising powers as to vanquish the people by ensuring that they are denied access to resources. In this song, the artists confirms the political leadership as the hyena that apart from eating the sheep in song no.74, prevents the goats from licking the salt which is of no value to it:

Hyena, move away from the trough
So that the goats can lick the salt
Why do you block them from licking the salt
Which is of no value to you
Let them lick, stop being malicious

The message in the image of the hyena is further extended to illustrate the proportions of greed in the new ruling class. In the words of the singer, it is ready to eat both the 'honey and the hive' and will 'milk the cow until nothing remains in the udder.' The song presents the greed in a hyperbolic extent that goes beyond that of the proverbial hyena:

Who is this new hyena
That chews all the bones into smoothers
While others do not

The innovative significance of this song in our study lies in its understanding and reflecting the invention of a new ethnicity in post-independent Kenya. The song further

The ruling classes ensure that tribal identity and kinship provide the individual with his only hope of opportunities and material survival.

In the story, Kiumi, the narrator removes the protagonist from the traditional setting and places him in the contemporary political and social environment. This version follows the structure and the motifs of the original traditional story but is adjusted to fit the narrator's thematic exposition. Kiumi, the hero in this version is a great eater just like the one in original versions. The ogre in this story is characterized as Kiumi's mother, which is a departure from the traditional versions.

In the overall image of this text, the mother can be read to mean Kiumi's tribe. Kiumi is also portrayed as an outsider from the other tribe who comes to the community with sinister intentions. He is a spy who seeks employment here as a cover to his true intentions of stealing these people's resources and taking them back to his people. He joins the guild of young men and when they buy oxen for a group feast, Kiumi suggests they should eat the animals in the plains without flies. But instead of leading the young men to the plains, he leads them towards where he came from. He also secretly carries flies trapped in his quiver. Every time they slaughter a bull, he secretly releases the flies and the meat is abandoned. They would move on and after some distance Kiumi would pretend that he has forgotten something and would go back and feast on the meat and leave the rest for his tribesmen.

He does this repeatedly ensuring that his fellow-tribesmen eat all the meat. The members of his guild become so hungry that they start feeding on wild bushes and some of them become too weak and even die.

When there is only one bull remaining and it is slaughtered, Kiumi leads the other young men to their death by sending them to fetch fire from his mother's hut. The ogre-mother kills them. Only two other men survive the journey. It is only after they manage to escape and are back home that they realize Kiumi wanted them all dead so that it could be easier to steal their resources.

The narrator in this story has consciously embellished it with the theme of tribalism in the post independence and post Kenyatta era in Kenya. While he does not explicitly situate the theme, his allusions are clear. He narrates the story from the point of view of the community, which Kiumi victimizes. Kiumi can also be interpreted to refer to the ruling class, which dispossesses the people of their property, taking it for themselves and leaving some for their fellow tribesmen. The adaptation of this story to the contemporary situation in the area where this study was carried out once again confirms the continued use of oral literature to abstract and communicate change and the contradiction of the post-independence era.

It is these contradictions of a lost ideal that drive singer Albert Gacheru in song, *Ndi Mukenya* (I am a Kenyan) (no.77), to seek solace in the possibility of a dream creating a single Kenyan tribe. In this song, the artist adapts the melancholic tune and structure of the Mau Mau song no.66 (*Uka Murata twaranirie*) discussed earlier. He attempts to recreate and reclaim the political ideal and spirit of the anti-colonial struggle in Kenya. He begins by titling the song 'I am a Kenyan' (*Ndi Mukenya*), which derives from the substitution of *Ndi Mugikuyu* (I am Kikuyu) in the chorus of the original song. In a series of appeals to recreate a nation that is now fragmented, the artist views the eradication of political tribalism as the first step. Such a process recognizes the strength in the diversity of linguistic differences:

The first thing people of Kenya
We begin by ending tribalism
Let everybody know that they are Kenyan
...And know that different language
Is not the deterrent
For the nation to be united

The appeal in this song attempts to create an all nation inclusive discourse as opposed to the exclusive political practice of post independence leaders who have emphasized the vertical divisions of the society. He attempts to recapture the spirit of the Mau Mau oral poet and embrace a wider national space that is Kenyan and African:

Let everybody glance sideways
And see that all your neighbours
Are fellow Africans
The Europeans were visitors in Kenya
Come friend let us reason together
That the darkness in our country
May come to an end

The fulfillment of the possibility of Gacheru's romantic ideal of a Kenya devoid of political tribalism can be the only justification of the loss and suffering that people endured during the struggle:

When we defeat tribalism
I will wear a Kenyan garment
I will wash and smear myself with oil
...Then never will I weep again, Knowing that
I never sacrificed my first born-sons in vain
When I believe that I am a Kenyan

The significance of the song's search for the Kenyan ideal is the realization that it cannot be achieved within the parameters of colonialism and the post-independence inheritance. The basis of rejuvenating a Kenyan identity lies in recognizing the strength of African traditional values if the current problems of tribalism are to be solved. By appealing to the Kenyans to go back to their cultures and traditions in order to deal with current ethnic problems the song understands the current forms of tribalism as a creation of the same forces that the people fought during colonialism:

The last thing Kenyans
Go back to your traditions
Your Kenyan traditions
And Stop following Western cultures
Traditions and culture make a people
If you neglect your culture
Darkness will never end in this country

In song *Tondu wa Minyamaro* ('Because of the Suffering') No.56, parodied once more on an earlier Mau Mau song, reflects the feelings that the solutions to the current problems of governance and leadership in the country can be rectified through

constitutional change. While the country may have riveted back to the multiparty politics, ethnic discrimination continues as before. In the current neo-colonial situation, the song understands the ruling class as a combination of the colonial hegemony and the loyalist class that is transient:

This clan of grabbers
They are visitors
From Leadership
I wonder
Where they will go
When a new constitution is put in place

The song hence recognizes the cosmetic changes that were brought about by the introduction of multiparty politics in 1992. It concurs with the observations of Throup and Hornsby that the advent of multiparty politics did not alter the Kenyan life profoundly. 'Alternative centers of power emerged creating a climate in which there was freedom without substantive changes at the structure' (Throup and Hornsby: 200:593). It is in this understanding that the singer seeks inspiration in the prophecies and curse of Mugo wa Kibiro and Waiyaki respectively to propose that a new constitution can be the bases of true liberation. In envisaging the new constitution, the song rejects the house that was constructed at independence (for Kenyatta) as the fulfillment of the prophecy of Mugo wa Kibiro. The song insists that, that house has to be re-built in the form of a new constitution that will presumably protect all Kenyans irrespective of ethnic origin:

So that darkness in the country
Can come to an end
The house at Kiwairera
Must be rebuilt again
And a new constitution put in place

The feelings that the consolidation of multiparty democracy can only be achieved through a change in the constitution finds even more explicit expression in the song by Sammy Muraya's song *Gatiba Ni Icenjio*, ('Change the Constitution') no.78. The song begins with recounting the repression that met the agitation for multiparty politics in the late

1980s and early 1990s. It recalls the sacrifice of those who died but points out that despite the attainment of the multiparty status there were no structural changes in the society. It equates the status to the attainment of an illusion that the people were craving for. As the song puts it, multiparty was like being told, 'if it is food you want to eat, take it and eat while in reality there is no food'.

The song also views the demand for multiparty as a national rather than an ethnic need whereby everybody in Kenya wants the constitution to be changed in order to create true 'independence and justice' and a conducive working environment for all. The song further voices a major criticism of the opposition parties' failure to unite if they wish to win an election in the country. This song by Sammy Muraya, in a way concludes the communication of innovations and change in politics and governance in Kenya for our study. As this study continues a new leadership has come on the helm and the review of the constitution still remains a major issue of contention. A commission to review the constitution has been in place and its results are eagerly awaited.

In spite of the limitations of the multiparty politics reflected in the oral literature discussed above, its introduction broadened democratization and levels of social freedom. Political awareness and freedom of political expression increased compared to the period of single party politics. The songs discussed above reflect on these realities. While on the whole they convey an accurate picture and critique of the political situation during the post- Kenyatta era, they tend to see the solution to the current impasse in a return to the ideal fought for by the Mau Mau.

In our discussion and analysis of change and innovation in politics in this chapter we have broadly situated oral literary productions and performances within specific historical contexts. In each context oral literature has emerged as the cultural product and artifact that wrestles with the realities of the time. As we have seen in the study, the texts in our sample link thematically with each other. Recent compositions draw from the earlier ones exhibiting a thematic continuity from the prophecies of Mugo wa Kibiro to the songs of multiparty politics a century later.

The study also confirms the notion of literature (art) as a form of consciousness (Lihamba: 1995). Over the last century, as an embodiment of a consciousness, the oral literature from Central Kenya emerges as a resilient instrument of resistance to cyclic episodes of oppression and domination. In the texts, the resilience rests on the hope of the realization of a future restoration, even when it is repeatedly overturned.

In the next chapter, this study will explore the role oral literature has played in the communication of change and innovations in the field of health specifically focusing on its role in the communication of the different aspects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Central Province.

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CHAPTER SIX

ORAL LITERATURE AND HIV/AIDS COMMUNICATION

In our study so far, oral literature has emerged as a literary genre that continues to communicate change and innovations pertaining to key social, cultural and political institutions in Central Kenya. In the preceding chapters, the texts we have discussed and analyzed confirm oral literature as a resilient literary medium. Apart from playing its traditional role of education, information and entertaining, the genre is analyzing new experiences, projecting contemporary opinions and stating new positions.

We have so far analyzed the communicative role of oral literature in diverse issues including courtship, marriage and family. Others are gender, politics and governance in Central Kenya. In the process we were able to recognize oral literature as a 'cultural product that wrestles with the realities of the time' (P.148).

In this chapter we intend to advance this discussion further by interrogating the role oral literature is playing as a communicative discourse in combating the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the Central Province of Kenya. We shall embrace the postmodernist notion that knowledge is not only scientific. It is also a construct of the literary and cultural imagination and that through (oral) literary discourse it is possible to empower individuals and communities to confront the HIV/AIDS epidemic (Pitt: 1996). We concur with Wilton that through literary discourse the cultural significance of the terminology, 'HIV/AIDS', becomes more apparent, communicating the clinical, social and psychological shades of meanings of the disease (Wilton: 1997:xii). We shall further view oral literature as an effective agent against the disease because of the inherent power of the spoken word. Through the use of oral performance it is possible to understand and abstract even the most difficult phenomena of life (Olawale: 2000).

Our fieldwork experiences in the area covered by the study indicate that oral literature is an accessible media that communicates messages in a language easily understood by the audiences. Most of the artists discussed in this chapter employ interactive and participatory strategies in their performances. They normally use the local language (Kikuyu), which caters for the needs of the audiences. This makes it easy to pass on the messages. This dissemination of the messages has also been augmented by the recent introduction of Kikuyu language community FM radio stations, which have been broadcasting some of the performances in the Central Province.

In the context of our study then, the oral artists become the vehicle of transmitting new information and education. Through oral compositions they assist the society in understanding the danger posed by HIV/AIDS and promote behavior change. At the same time they help those who are infected in coping up with the predicament. In this chapter we shall discuss and analyze oral poetic compositions including popular and topical songs, the use of oral narratives and proverbs as well as folk (oral) dramas in HIV/AIDS communication. Before we proceed with textual analysis we shall briefly outline the background of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Kenya and contextualize our study in the Kikuyu conception of illness, disease and pestilence.

6.1 HIV/AIDS: Background in Kenya

HIV/AIDS is the new pestilence facing the people of Central Kenya as well as the rest of Kenya and Africa. According to recent UNAIDS report two thirds of the HIV positive persons in the world are in Sub-Saharan Africa where only nine per cent of the world population lives. The same report indicates that Kenya is one of the nine African countries hardest hit by the epidemic. Fourteen per cent of the population in the country is infected and life expectancy has dropped from 59 years in the 1980s to 49 at present (UNAIDS: 2001).

The first AIDS case was observed in Kenya in 1984 and by 1995, 63,179 cases had been reported. It is estimated that around 1.5 million people have so far died from the disease

and another 2.2 million are infected. The prevalent mode of transmission of the disease is through heterosexual contact accounting for ninety per cent of the transmissions. Eighty percent of the infections are within the 15-49 year age bracket. This is the most economically active group and most of the individuals in the age set are also rearing young children. There are currently about 1.5 million AIDS orphans in the country (Source: Ministry of Health: 2001:1-2,11,15, Mungai: 2002:5).

The epidemic in Kenya is no longer viewed only as public health crises. It has become a personal, community and national development catastrophe. It has had a negative effect on the economy, reducing the size of experienced work force, increasing levels of health expenditure and reducing levels of savings and investments. The government declared AIDS a national disaster in 1999 describing the disease as 'a tragedy of devastating proportions' (MOH: 2000). It is now generally accepted that apart from confronting the disease medically, the epidemic requires social and community mobilization if the spread of the virus is to be stalled.

Communication programs have been identified as key intervention in fighting against the disease (MOH: 2002 (1): 4,8,13, MOH: 2002 (2): 20, MOH: 2001:15). In this study oral literature is discussed as one of the most important communication resource in HIV/AIDS communication in both planned and unplanned social contexts in the Central Province of Kenya.

6.2 THE KIKUYU: Illnesses, Disease and Pestilence.

The Kikuyu country covered by this study has been regarded as one of the healthiest areas of East Africa. This is mainly due to the high altitude mountain climate and a topography that provides an excellent drainage pattern. However from time to time illnesses, disease and epidemics did afflict the Kikuyu. Traditionally, ill health and disease were attributed to a variety of causes some of which were medical and others supernatural (Kenyatta: 1978 (1938): 290, Leakey: 1977:888).

The treatment of the disease depended on whether the cause was natural or influenced by the spirits of the dead, witchcraft or the breaking of taboos. Illnesses and diseases due to natural causes could be treated with herbs. However those caused by evil or ancestral spirits and those that defied herbal treatment called for extra-medical healing processes.

While common illnesses could be treated at the family level, the treatment of any serious disease revolved around the institution of *Mundu Mugo* (The medicine man). The medical profession was usually inherited within the nuclear or very close extended members of the family. It involved a long period of training and apprenticeship. This usually began with the invitation of the young prospective candidates to be the bag carrier for the experienced elder medicine man (Njogu, Kaiguri: Interviews). As we had mentioned earlier (p.140), The prospective candidate had to declare his intentions of joining the profession by publicly expounding on his dreams/predictions (*iroto*). If these were found to be true, they would confirm his suitability. The prospective candidate was also expected to exhibit evidence of possession by the spirits (*kuumwo ni ugo*) and proof that he indeed possessed some unusual talent to be accepted into the medical fold.

To participate and to be recognized as a practitioner, the candidate had to be ordained (*Gukunurwo Ugo*) in an elaborate ceremonial ritual. During the ritual he was given the medical powers to overcome disease, evil spirits and evil eyes and protect homes and the community through appeasement and sacrifice to the spirits (Cagnolo: 1936:133, Njogu: Kaiguri: interviews). In the traditional setting, medicine men were highly respected, renowned for their honesty and willingness to serve the community. They were expected to intervene and in consultation with the elders alleviate pestilence and epidemics that scourged the Kikuyu country from time to time.

Some of the most dreaded epidemics that have ravaged the Kikuyu country before the advent of contemporary western medicine include *Mutung'u/mutukia* (small pox) *Muchari*, (yaws) *Mangu*, (Leprosy) *Muthanduku* (chicken pox) and *Githuku* (measles). These diseases are highly infectious and medicine men tried to control their spread through several strategies. They would begin with sacrifices to God of Kirinyaga in

specially designated holy grounds, the sacred grooves, where the medicine men together with the elders would sacrifice a goat of one color and without blemish. The hide of the sacrificed animal would be shared among the elders who would bury them at the entrance of their respective villages to ward off the epidemics (Njogu: interview). Amulets and charms would also be buried by the medicine men outside homesteads to protect individual families.

The community also took practical public health steps to contain these diseases. Collectively they tried to control flies and those people with highly infectious and fatal diseases such as small pox and leprosy were isolated. Temporary shelters were built for them in the bush where only people who had previously recovered from similar infection nursed them. Vaccination (*Gucanja*) was also practiced in the case of small pox with serum from those who had shown evidence of recovering from the disease (Leakey: 1977:891, Njogu: interview).

The final option of intervention in the face of the persistence of epidemics within the Kikuyu community was to communally exorcise them from Kikuyu country. This constituted a ritual performed to expel the evil spirits causing the disease from the country. This involved the entire community in an act known as *Kuingata Murimu* (driving out the disease). The ritual took place in the evening preferably when the full moon was emerging.

It usually involved the entire country and took place on a day appointed by the council of elders. Men, women and children would turn out on the appointed evening carrying clubs sticks and firebrands and proceed towards the rivers/streams. They would beat the sticks together in a rhythm at the same time shouting and screaming. The blowing of war horns coordinated the activity across the ridges. On arrival at the stream or river, the people still screaming and shouting would throw the clubs, sticks and firebrands into the river. They would ask the river to sweep away the evil spirit causing the epidemic as far away as possible from Kikuyu country.

The screaming would be picked up from ridge to ridge spreading all over the country and the evil affecting the people would be expelled from the country. The people would then go back home singing, contented they had banished the disease (Kenyatta: 1938:260-265, Cagnolo: 1936:187, Leakey: 1977:903-905.).

HIV/AIDS scourge in the Central Kenya has come to be regarded as the modern version of the epidemic diseases outlined above. From our fieldwork samples, the epidemic has been characterized as yaws, a disease without cure (*muchari utari kahonia*) text no.79 by Mugwandi choir). It has also been referred to as small pox (*mutukia*) text no.80) by Christopher Mbute. The latter song also describes the new disease as 'a pestilence' (*mugiro*), 'the disease that hates friends' and as 'the disease of death.'

Evidence from our field samples indicates that the community has realized the need to conceptualize the disease as an epidemic and to adapt the traditional concept of 'chasing away the disease' (*kuingata murimu*) (text no.81). Addressing an HIV/AIDS awareness campaign meeting at Kagumo in Kirinyaga, Central Kenya, Christine Ngari identifies the appropriation of this traditional method as the most effective way to fight the spread of HIV/AIDS. She argues that this will be done in a symbolic rather than a literal manner. While the concept ('chasing away and screaming at the disease') remains traditional, the techniques adapt to the realities of the time. She calls upon the audience to scream and shout at the epidemic and chase it away from the society through different strategies:

We need to scream and shout at the disease.
We shall do so in different ways by creating
awareness about the disease. We are going
to scream and shout through cycle competitions,
through drama, through campaigns against drugs
and alcohol and through counseling so that people
may change their sexual behavior.

By symbolically adopting the traditional process, the communicator is mobilizing the community to adopt a method that does not give in to despair and despondency caused by the AIDS epidemic. This method gives hope in that it is the ability of communal

consciousness and spirit to fight the disease that is called upon. By adopting a communal method as an intervention the fight against the disease also becomes a concern of everyone. All members of the community are actively involved in the campaign against the disease. Below we shall proceed to analyze the various ways through which oral literature has been used to 'scream and shout' in order to 'chase away' the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

6.3 PROVERBS AND A SAYING: Warnings Against the Virus.

During the HIV/AIDS awareness campaign referred to above, Kinyua Mbui uses the proverb, *Igego rithekagia itimu*, (The tooth smiles at/laughs with the spear) to reinforce his messages about the epidemic. In our discussions in chapter four we noted that, proverbs as part of a peoples cultural heritage preserve their cherished societal norms and values. They are used as an effective communicative strategy to caution, warn and advise in situations that the communicator feel ordinary direct speech does not adequately communicate the seriousness of an issue.

They reinforce the effect of messages because they are pithy. In their expanded imagery they are memorable and applicable to a wide range of issues. In HIV/AIDS communication proverbs are appropriately used to reinforce messages on the risk of infection and to emphasize and advocate values and patterns of behavior that can protect people against HIV/AIDS.

In the proverb cited above, 'The tooth smiles at/laughs with the spear', HIV /AIDS epidemic is first and foremost characterized as a spear. In the context of this proverb it is the spear of an unknown enemy. In its traditional interpretation, the proverb refers to the possibility of unknowingly engaging with and entertaining the enemy. Specifically indicating that you may laugh and casually relate with someone who harbors evil intentions against you without being aware. In the Aids awareness campaign at Kagumo, Kinyua Mbui uses the proverb to emphasize the fact that one may intimately be involved

decides to follow both paths at the same time. He ends up breaking his legs and that why he limps up to this day.

In HIV/AIDS communication this folktale and the proverb derived from its literary transformation highlight specifically the risk posed by promiscuity and greed in contracting the HIV virus. The text appeals to the need for people to use 'common sense' and refuse to be foolish and greedy. In text no.82, *Niwatumire nde Network* ('You made me lose my network'), Peter Kigia evokes the image of this hyena to explore the warped relationship between the song's persona and his girlfriend. This is a relationship that provides potential for infection with HIV virus. The song, which borrows the terminology of its title from modern cell phone networks, intimates that the craving for the meat in the two different locations will lead to infection.

The woman character in the song plays a 'hide and seek game' with the boyfriend as she goes out with other men. The singer warns her of this 'love that she distributes to different men who consume it like grains from a maize comb.' Stretching the image of the greedy hyena further, the singer explores the issue of ignorance and lack of awareness as the major tragedy:

Don't you know that these days
Things are not as good
A fool is really an ignorant person
That sucks the breasts of a dead mother

In the verse quoted above, the depth of this foolishness and ignorance is emphasized by the idiomatic expression on the fool that suckles the corpse of the mother. The singer here is equating the knowledge of his girlfriend to that of an infant who continues to suckle on its mother's breasts without realizing that she is dead. By ignoring the HIV/AIDS reality the woman in the song is behaving like the infant. She is indeed ignorant at a time when the new reality of HIV/AIDS has made life a 'threatened journey.' The singer then refuses to be party to this ignorance and greed and invokes the need for wisdom in the journey of life:

Take care of your life
Do not be led by the stomach
This journey these days
Will only be completed
By the wise person

While the artists acknowledge that one can be an innocent victim of HIV/AIDS, they also tend to regard the disease as self-inflicted through reckless behavior, uncontrollable desires and greed for money. These are potential victims referred to as *mbari ya mwenda njeru, mbari ya mugwa hari* (Those who love that which glitters, those who camp where there is money) (Kariuki, Wangithi: interview).

Another figure of speech that is extensively used in HIV/AIDS communication in Central Province is the idiom *Mbebe ni ndoge*, ('the maize has been infected with poison'). Artists use the figure frequently in their exposition on HIV/Aids. Apart from use in oral texts, this figurative expression is commonly used during various occasions, which use oral communication.

On the literal plane, the image refers to green maize that has matured but is still in the fields waiting to dry and subsequently be harvested. During this period this maize becomes a favorite food especially for stray dogs. To forestall the destruction of their crop by the canines, farmers usually infect some of the combs with poison to get rid of the stray animals. Once the animals start dying, word passes around that the maize has been infected with poison and people with stray dogs put them on the leash.

Artists have adopted this metaphor to act as the constant reminder that HIV/AIDS is a reality that threatens the people with death. This information is presented by the singers as common wisdom or folk knowledge, which should not escape the attention of anybody as in Joseph Kariuki's, *No Ngainukia Itaha* (I will return home with booty), no.83:

I heard them saying
That the maize has been
Infected with poison
That you lock up your dog
Lest it feeds on poison

Or in John Ndichu's, song no.84, *Sarafina*:

I look at you with sadness, Sarafina
When I remember the maize
Has been infected with poison
And when told to lock up your dog
It is just a laughing matter

The symbolic representation of sexuality in this saying is in the image of the dog and sex in the image of the maize. At one level, the representation refers to both male and female sexuality, which individuals need to control and put on the leash. Through the use of the metaphor derived from common experience in the area, the artists are warning against desire (the dog in everybody) for that (maize) which might be infected with the HIV virus. The metaphor also alludes to the illegality or illicit nature of this poisoned delicacy that may turn out to be a trap of death.

On the second level, the warning in this metaphor can be understood in the context of masculinity practice within the society. It can be understood to refer to the practice and even cultural expectations of male sexual behavior. It is accepted for men to exhibit their virility by having multiple sexual partners. This is aptly expressed in the proverb that *Gutiri njamba ya mwera umwe* (there is no cock that has only one hen).

The use of the metaphor of 'poisoned maize' seeks to overturn this proverb and the attitude it creates. Sexual engagement beyond one partner is equated to seeking the poisoned maize comb in somebody else's farm. The owner of the dog (the wife) should be frightened enough by the message of the poison to put a leash on her husband.

The effectiveness of the use of proverbs and sayings discussed above lie in their derivation from the people's cultural and physical environments. Their efficacy is heightened by their textual constitution, which allows them to be used repeatedly in different texts and contexts by artists and in ordinary oral communication. This way, the traditional is reconstituted to respond to a modern crisis. The significance and innovative value of communication is in its appropriation of traditional knowledge and experience as

an intervention to motivate behavior change. This knowledge is processed and presented, as folk wisdom, which will eventually, become the main preventive measure once the messages are embedded in the general social consciousness.

6.4 Behavior Change And Voluntary Testing

Change in sexual behavior has been identified as a key component in the control of HIV/AIDS in Kenya (MOH: 2001:6). The change of behavior logically follows from the awareness of the risks posed by the current social and physical environment. Oral literature in our sample has addressed this problem by encouraging responsible sexual behavior and promoting positive values in the face of threats posed to the community by urbanization and the outbreak of HIV/AIDS epidemic.

In song no.83, *No Ngainukia Itaha* (I will bring the booty home), discussed earlier and *Mami witu* (Our mother), no.85, both by Joseph Kariuki, the city is identified as the 'enemy' of man and a deterrent to the possibility of self-actualization. It is viewed as the genesis of the HIV scourge and a place where true love is impossible to experience. It is in this locale where girls are like 'broken pots' that are interested in monetary gain rather than true love. The problems in the city call for divine intervention:

God, you are my only hope
For me to emerge from Nairobi
This is a deep pool
That has swallowed many

The city is the place where the 'maize has already been infected with poison.' This demands new defensive mechanisms especially from the young and unmarried. Unless they adopt the new strategies they might end up being victims of the city which 'defiles, 'consumes' and even kills the young:

In Nairobi, you plant a banana
It grows into a wild banana
You arrive into the city pure
You depart from the city defiled

In this song the artist raises the now well-documented fact in Kenya that rapid urbanization and its consequences of modernization have been a major contributor to the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS (Gathece: 2000:). However, he identifies the process of contracting the disease as resulting from one's extremely risky behavior, which is nevertheless possible to overcome. The singer identifies sexual temptation and engaging in sexual acts as the greatest risk. Succumbing to these is like provoking bees in the hive 'by throwing stones at them' knowing very well that the moment they come out they will surely sting'. In a language shrouded by metaphoric images, the singer promotes abstinence as a positive value and the solution to adopt:

I refuse to smear myself with old oil
While I can get new oil
I will not eat anything I find along the path
While I know the maize
Has been infected with poison
Mine is still on the way coming
The bus to bring her home
Is yet to arrive

Epha Maina in song *Gucamacama* (Tasting, Tasting) (no. 86), like the singer discussed above uses memorable images and figures to promote faithfulness to one uninfected partner as the sure way to protect oneself from the HIV infection.

Promiscuity, casual sex and careless behavior are identified as core to possible infection. Such engagements are like 'driving a car that has no breaks' and the consequences will surely be disastrous. The solution lies in overcoming the temptation and an awareness of the consequences. The singer uses the image of a special type of meat, *rukuri* and that of the bee sting to communicate the danger in the temptation and the consequence in the infection:

Tasting, Tasting, this tasting
Be aware even the *rukuri*
Is infected with poison
The one that breaks from the shed
This season
Will surely get a bee sting

This special type of meat foregrounds the longing for the delicacy and the temptation for the 'sweet' (*Kindu Ki Murio*). *Rukuri* cannot be directly translated into English. It is a traditional delicacy of cured meat preserved with honey and herbs in a container made of cow-hide (*Kihembe/Kithembe*). Elderly men usually practiced this meat preservation skill. The preserved meat would be consumed in bits over time usually shared with favorite friends or children. An invitation to share *rukuri* was irresistible. *Rukuri* in the song becomes the metaphor for highly desired sexual excursion outside marriage that can now lead to infection.

The choice of words and the communication strategy in this and the previous song however do derive their communication impact from the narrative world of the Kikuyu. The words 'tasting, tasting' and the theme symbol of *rukuri* in this song, and the expression, 'I have never eaten anything that comes along (the path)', (Text no.84) evoke the key image in narrative of the 'two sisters and their father's gourd'. This is a well-known story, popularly known as *Kanya ka Baba*. It is a story of two contrasting sisters. One was obedient and the other disobedient. One day, the obedient one goes to fetch water from the stream in her father's special gourd. This is the gourd in which fermented milk is usually kept for the father. Unfortunately the strong current sweeps away the gourd. The girl follows, determined to retrieve it.

In the journey that follows she encounters many delicacies, which are preparing themselves cooking or roasting themselves and inviting her to eat them. She resists all of them. On each invitation she declines saying 'I do not eat those that eat themselves'. Eventually she retrieves the gourd with the help of a benefactor. She is rewarded by the benefactor and by her father when she gets back home.

Her disobedient sister tries to borrow her beautiful ornaments but she refuses with them. After telling her how she acquired them the disobedient sister throws the gourd into the river and follows it downstream. This girl encounters the same sweet and delicate things: sweet potatoes, meat, yams, and sugarcane, roasting, cooking and peeling themselves. She succumbs to the invitation and eats them all. After indulging in these delicacies she

ends up contracting *mangu* (Leprosy). She is expelled from home by her father and condemned to a life of isolation.

The images of the delicacies which in traditional society represented the threat of male sexuality to virgin girls (Ch.3) today represent the risk of HIV/AIDS infection. These messages in the songs and the narrative attempt to control sexuality by showing those actions that individuals choose can either lead to reward or punishment.

The song *Gucamacama*, also proposes the confinement of sexuality to a limited space in order to control and protect oneself from HIV infection. This is alluded to in the image of the cow shed. As the singer puts it, 'the one that breaks from the cow shed this season will surely get a bee sting'. The singer here is introducing 'Zero-grazing' a relatively new figure of speech that has been appropriated by the artists and the community in HIV/AIDS communication.

Zero grazing in the literal sense refers to a mode of animal husbandry. It is a relatively new practice in the area under study. With the rapid depletion of grazing land due to over-population, zero grazing is now the accepted mode of cattle rearing by most peasant farmers in Central Province. The cow sheds are designed in such a way the animals are fed, watered, milked and waste disposed without them ever leaving the shed. In HIV/AIDS communication this term has been accepted to refer to 'restricting sexual activity to one partner whose only partner is you' (MOH: 2002 (2): 76).

Daniel Kamau, in his song, *Zero grazing*, no.87 adopts the figure of zero grazing as the title and the main message of his composition. The singer accepts the strategy as a new way to deal with a 'modern' problem. He associates HIV/AIDS with modernity and laments the breakdown of traditional values that provided the community with adequate codes of behavior for protection against such an epidemic. Zero grazing then should be adopted as a protective and preventive intervention:

We are told to zero graze
You stick to one partner
Before this disease of AIDS
Finishes people
Before this disease of immorality
Finishes the people

Zero grazing, as an intervention will save lives because this disease is a risk that lurks everywhere. The song uses the traditional idiom, *Ni kigambu mbwe* (There is a jackal prowling the bush) as a warning against this invisible catastrophe. The idiom also emphasizes the factuality of the situation implying that this is not the period to take things lightly.

The emergence of HIV/AIDS epidemic has also overturned courtship values and patterns in the community discussed earlier (Ch.3). As George Wanjaro puts it in his song *Twimenyerere Mukingo*, (Let be aware of AIDS) no.88 the situation is 'hotter than the unknown' (*Ni kuhiu kwi mbere*). This calls for a change in certain social practice. Despite being of age and the complaints by his mother over his continued bachelorhood, he has to delay marriage. He cannot risk a marriage before both parties are tested for possible HIV infection. But the prospective partners do not share his view hence his continued single status:

What do girls want these days
Whenever we fall in love
And I request we go to the hospital
For HIV tests
They 'jump' up and refuse
Saying we would rather end the relationship

George Wanjaro in this song is advocating for voluntary testing for HIV/AIDS as casual observation cannot indicate infection. As he puts it in the song, the one who appears beautiful and is desirable could be the 'matchbox' that will inflame the bodies of the others. It is those that look handsome and strong that could be the carriers of the HIV virus. Marriage before undergoing the HIV test can have terrible consequences. These include the risk of infecting the partner and the unborn child of the proposed wedlock.

The singer has no recourse but to adopt the traditional notion of positive cowardice when confronting HIV/AIDS. He accepts the concept, *kwigita ti guoya* (To be defensive is not cowardice) applying the saying that the 'timid one goes back home to the mother unharmed' (*Ke guoya kainukagira nyina muigana*).

By advocating voluntary testing, the singer is communicating a very significant response to the HIV/AIDS scourge. According to research carried out in Kenya and other African countries, voluntary testing and the knowledge of one's infection status, encourages people to shun risky behavior. Knowledge of one's HIV status can assist the infected to seek supportive medical and social services. It can also ensure that they do not spread the virus. For the uninfected the knowledge helps them to strive to retain their status (MOH: 2002(2): 1).

The efficacy of the messages communicated in these songs once again lie in the artist's ability to appropriate the creative capacity of the people and their popular culture and to use these as an awareness and behavior change intervention against HIV/AIDS. Through these messages that appeal to individual and communal psychic consciousness, people are persuaded to modify lifestyles and cultural expectations that put them at risk.

6.5 Religion, Orality and HIV/AIDS

Religious experience has always been an integral part of social-cultural and physical existence of a people in time and space (Adade: 1998:63). As indicated earlier in our discussion, in times of pestilence, disease or drought, the people had to supplicate to the God of Kirinyaga. They would sacrifice a goat of one color and without blemish to God in order to be saved from the catastrophe. It was after this act that they would resort to the communal act of chasing away the disease.

In the data collected, we have a sample of oral communicators and composers whose performances on HIV/AIDS, while deriving from traditional Kikuyu religion, are

strongly influenced by the Christian religion. Most of the songs that we shall analyze below project the HIV/AIDS epidemic as the 'metaphor for the evil principle' (Cabrera: 1996:1, Sontag: 1989). The disease is presented from an eschatological perspective as the doomsday epidemic that will wipe out humanity.

The song *Muchari Utari Kahonia* (Yaws without cure) no. 79 by Mugwandi choir begins by equating the disease to yaws, a common pestilence of the past. Yaws was highly infectious and fatal unless treated and cured during its early stages. Those suffering from the disease were shunned by the society. They could not share beds, eating or drinking utensils with anybody. No one would knowingly sleep on a bed ever slept on by someone suffering from the disease.

While titling the song on HIV/ AIDS as 'yaws without cure', this song interprets the disease as an eschatological instrument in the hands of God.

During Noah's time
Because of sin and evil
People were wiped out with water
In Sodom and Gomorrah
They were wiped out with fire
Now in our times
Because of sin and evil
God is about to wipe out the world (with AIDS)

This song regards the epidemic as a blemish, which is a result of transgression. In the traditional Kikuyu society a person could acquire this blemish through individual transgression or that of one's parents. The blemish could be cleansed by the medicine men through the use of herbs or through the sacrifice of a goat in severe cases. However in the Christian ethos of this and other songs this unclean condition that has come to the society through the HIV/AIDS infections can only be solved if the people agree to repent and enter the ark or salvation. The killer disease is the devil's disease, which is a result of going against God's commandments. Adultery is of the devil and it causes AIDS. This is one of the incurable diseases that will afflict people during the last days as prophesied in the bible (Wangithi: Interview).

The main transgression identified by the religious HIV/AIDS discourse in the above song is immorality and specifically breaking of the seventh commandment:

I will reveal to you
What God has said
That do not commit adultery
But because you cannot listen
A disease without cure
Has come to the world.

This song eventually proposes adherence to monogamy as the only protection against HIV/AIDS.

Always follow one path
That leads to your home
Shepherd only one ewe
And never long for another's sheep

The preacher, Rev. John Kangangi in his narratological sermons (text no.89) attributes the spread of HIV/AIDS on one hand to corruption in the country. He also treats infection as matter of individual responsibility and attitude. He elaborately uses the parable of the ten bridesmaids. Narrating the biblical story in as manner that appropriates local experience, Reverend Kangangi talks of the five maidens who took the whole issue of carrying extra fuel casually: "Never mind," they said, " we shall know what to do when the fuel runs out". But the groom takes longer to come than they had expected. They run out of fuel and their other five colleagues cannot spare any for them. The best they could do according to the preacher was to offer to lend the other five money to go and purchase fuel. When they are gone the groom turns up and they are locked out.

Reverend John Kangangi is renowned in the Anglican diocese of Kirinyaga for the extensive use of oral narratives in his sermons. He used the parable quoted above while presiding over a funeral ceremony to communicate the need for psychosocial skills in the fight against HIV/AIDS epidemic. His thrust was that awareness is cardinal and everybody should always be prepared to confront the disease. Members of the community should have the fuel with them and keep their lamps burning all the time because if they do not do that HIV/AIDS will overcome them. However in the end, the

preacher, like the song, seeks a moral solution to the epidemic. In the sermon he proposes moral fortitude and salvation and religiosity as what the people need in order to escape the HIV/AIDS scourge.

The significance of religious based oral performances on HIV/AIDS lie on the fact that they reach large audiences usually in funerals, churches or weddings. They are repeated by preachers in various rural areas of Central Kenya and have become more like outreach activities in the fight against HIV/AIDS (Nyaga wa Wangai: Personal communication). They exhort celibacy and fidelity as cardinal in the fight against the disease. The religious messages also tend to regard the disease as self-inflicted and a result of sin or moral irresponsibility. It is our contention in this chapter that these messages can go a long way in influencing people to take responsibility and change their behavior in confronting HIV/AIDS. This is so especially when the messages are received as a matter of faith by the audiences.

But at the same time the fight against HIV/AIDS needs to move beyond moral contention because in most cases moral positions tend project the old age phenomena of 'blaming the victim'. Moral positions might also lead to the creation of a false sense of security whereby many people at risk may not perceive themselves as such (Ahmed: 1998:5, Evan and Schirink: 1990:71).

6.6 Gender Dimension in Song and HIV/AIDS Communication

In chapter four of this study, we have extensively discussed various aspects of the social construction of gender through oral literature in Central Kenya. In analyzing various texts in this chapter it has become apparent that there is a gendered dimension in their communication of HIV/AIDS messages that we cannot ignore. We shall briefly discuss this component before proceeding to examine examples of the contribution of folk oral dramas to HIV/Aids communication.

Texts in our sample tend to conform to patriarchal perceptions and attitudes discussed in the first section of chapter four. In delineating the different ways in which HIV/AIDS affect men and women, most of the images and messages apparent in the texts depict women in the discourse as villains rather than victims of the disease. The women tend to be blamed for being infected with the virus and in turn for infecting men and their newly born children. More often than not it is the women who are called upon in the texts to change their behavior in order to combat the HIV/AIDS menace.

The 'problem' with women, which a number of the artists highlight, seems to begin with their physical beauty and sexual attractiveness. Beauty is listlessness (*uthaka ni mwithua*) and 'a beautiful woman is trouble (*muka muthaka ni magambo*). Beauty makes the women apparently compromise their morality exposing them to HIV/AIDS. Sam Kinuthia and Peter Kigia in their songs *Sabeta* no.90 and *Niwatumire nde network*, no.82 present female beauty as the initial danger to both the woman and her partner. In *Sabeta*, it appears that it is her beauty that leads her to become a loose woman:

Sabeta, when you first arrived
You were famous than Winnie Mandela
You were praised as miss universe
But when you became Red Cross
You ended up being useless

The singer further portrays the woman in the song as ignorant of the consequences of casual sexual relationships that she now engages herself in. The song brings out the promiscuity in images that allude to her sex life. *Sabeta* is described in derogatory terms. She is characterized as 'the city council tractor' that collects garbage and labeled 'the mother dip' and 'firebrand' that can infect men. The singer depicts *Sabeta* as a woman who misuses her beauty and warns her that she could die of AIDS:

Remember things are bad
One of these days you will wake to realize
Your cheekbones are protruding so high
You can hang a basket on them
As you decided to consume everything

Assuming the body will never show
Forgetting even too much sweetness
Can make you sick

The depiction of the woman in Kigia's song, *Niwatumire nde network*, discussed earlier follows a similar grain. The girl in this song plays hide and seek with her lover and goes out with other men. When she is out with the other men she switches off her cell phone making sure she is not available on the network. The singer believes she is mistreating him and seeking other men because she is beautiful and desirable:

It is me you put on hold
Teasing me with half portions of love
Which I take in bits
Giving it to me in measured doses
Like medicine
Because you are beautiful
And you are desirable
Always trying to demean me
In order to make me feel useless

In this song, the woman partner is presented as deceitful, going out to parties while the man waits for her at home. The singer likens her to the hyena discussed earlier. She is a person who thinks 'she can eat her cake and have it', someone who has taken to 'drinking a soda with two straws'. Her behavior as we had observed earlier may lead to infection and consequently death.

Two other songs in our sample also depict the woman as the villain. *Wari Wakwa* (no. 91), by Maina wa Nyaguthii and *Muthoni Kifagio* no.92 by Newton Karish the woman is presented as a victim of greed and promiscuity. In the first song, the singer uses the image of locomotion to expose the extreme promiscuity of the female character. When he is away, his home becomes a parking lot where:

All types of vehicles
Tractors, lorries, taxis, buses
Personal cars, motorcycles and bicycles
And even those on foot
Competed for parking space

The woman's behavior led to her expulsion from the matrimonial home. Now after refusing to heed the advice that 'the maize is infected with poison' she has succumbed to the disease, which 'is like a gas fire breaking out in a house'. Nothing can be salvaged. Muthoni Kifagio in Newton Karish's song is both greedy and unfaithful to her husband. Despite being provided with all the material things she still indulges herself in illicit sex. The singer labels her a 'broom', and refers to her as 'dangerous and useless'. He regards her as a potential AIDS victim and would wish to be separated from her:

Muthoni it is not my wish
To follow you in death
I do not want to be
Wrapped in a polythene bag
Take care of your life
There is retribution here on earth
If you are not hit by a car
AIDS will hit you

It is true that in Kenya and other Sub-Saharan African countries women and girls become ill and die of AIDS in greater numbers than men. Women and girls represent 58 per cent of people living with HIV/AIDS in Sub Saharan Africa. In some countries women and girls are seven times more likely to be HIV positive than their male counterparts. Women aged between fifteen and twenty-four years are more than twice likely to be infected than men in the same age group. In Kenya nearly 25 percent of teenage women are living with HIV/AIDS compared to only 4 per cent males (Csete: 2004, COVAW: 2004).

The prevalent blame of women as the villains in the songs discussed above tend to contradict various studies which indicate that due to various cultural and economic factors it is men rather than women who tend to control the path that the disease takes. On average, men have more sexual partners than women and women are always vulnerable because culturally and socially, they are subject to male domination. It is men who usually engage in sexual activities outside matrimony or marry extra wives. Objectively then, it is men rather than women who are more to blame for the spread of HIV/AIDS (Mbuti, Wangithi: interview, Foreman: 1999: viii, ix).

We can attribute the tendency to blame women as culprits in HIV/AIDS communication in the songs discussed above to traditional patriarchal attitudes and gender power structures entrenched in the Kikuyu community. Artists like Joseph Kariuki concede anybody can be an AIDS victim irrespective of gender. Members of either gender can spread the disease. But women tend to be blamed more because they are dependent and can easily be cheated into sexual activity with money. The percentage of women who can be drawn into sex through offers of financial favors is higher than that of men. Hence women have higher chances of being infected and subsequently spreading the disease (Kariuki: Interview).

Human rights abuses committed against women because of their gender have a direct impact on the higher infection rates among women and girls. Such abuses include; rape, sexual violence, domestic violence, poverty, unequal property rights and economic dependency. Current divorce laws and discrimination in access to health and education have also been identified as having an impact on higher infection rates. Further the exploitation of girls and women and their inability to negotiate safe sex are all directly related to the higher prevalence of HIV/AIDS in women and girls as compared to men in Africa (Human Rights Watch: 2003).

The texts discussed above do reflect the gender imbalance that exists among performers using song as a medium of HIV/AIDS communication. The majority are male performers. As Kariuki puts it when artist apparently link women to HIV/AIDS in their songs, it is because they are male artists and their natural reference on matters of sexuality is the female partner. There is a male perspective, which is compounded by the fact that there are more male than female artists singing about HIV/AIDS in Central Kenya. Kariuki contends that if it were female artists singing, they would focus their discourse on their male partners (Kariuki: Interview).

And finally it is also possible that the depiction of women in this negative light may simply be a reflection of the unconscious gender attitudes and prejudices in the society.

The creation of most of the songs, which we have discussed so far, reflects the spontaneous creativity in which the artist is responding to a social need. They are not necessarily planned communication but creations that take place in the context of everyday attitudes and prejudices. As we shall see in our discussion of examples of folk drama where the messages are more deliberately planned, there is a discernible effort to recast and revise this depiction of the female character in HIV/Aids communication.

6.7 Folk Drama and HIV/AIDS Communication

The advent of community theatre as part of oral artistic performances in Kenya can be traced back to the production of *Ngaahika Ndeenda (I will marry When I Want)* by the Kamirithu Community Education and Cultural Center in Kiambu district in 1977. We had discussed the political dimension of this experience in the previous chapter (p.138-140).

Despite the repression of performances produced by the community and performed in local languages by the government of the day, the concept persisted. With the reintroduction of multi-party politics and more political tolerance after 1992, artists have used community-based dramatic performances to communicate diverse social, political, environmental and health concerns in Central Province and in the rest of the country. Like in the previous chapter, we shall conceive these performances as oral literary productions mainly because they are grounded on indigenous art forms communicating in the local language and are usually dramatized stories.

The use of oral performances in HIV/AIDS communication has been done mainly by locally constituted groups. These groups are based in local community centers and churches. As an intervention strategy, the performances target to communicate specific HIV/AIDS information and education messages. The performances usually take place in market places and schools attracting large audiences. In our sample, we have the example of *Pigo* (no.93) by the ACK Mutira youth group and *Mbuca* by the Karatina community drama group.

Pigo was performed by Mutira youth group mainly in schools and churches. According to the chairman of the youth group, Benson Murimi Mwai, (interview) the play was very popular in the area and each performance became a community event. The performance is basically a story exploring the themes of greed, hypocrisy and lust among church leaders and how this can eventually lead to HIV/AIDS infection and finally death.

The play attracts the audience to its message by using a corrupt church leader, Inuka, as the main character. By inverting the church leader into a villain the play suggests that it is one's behavior and actions that determine the possibility of infection with HIV/AIDS. The church elder in this performance is married but is unable to resist Selina a girl who has recently arrived in the village from Mombasa (town). His wife Fumilia comes to learn about her husband's intentions and confronts him. She cautions him on the danger posed by HIV /AIDS but he ignores her and throws her out of his home so that he can cohabit with the younger woman.

In the performance the illicit sexual relationship between Selina and the church elder is dramatized as a game in which the two play with a ball, which the elder retrieves from between his legs. They throw the ball to each other in a slow motion exercise that ends up being the most memorable action in the performance. Through the game, the actors are able to dramatize a sex scene with acceptable visual image without being pornographic. The movement and visual expressions in this game that end with Selina falling to the ground depict it as a game of death.

The message the game underlies is the fact that sexual contact is the main method through which one can get infected. In time, Selina dies and after seven years the church elder starts to show signs of the disease. The performance ends with the shocked Inuka realizing that he is now going to die. While the play tends to regard HIV/AIDS infection as 'the wages of sin' it communicates to the audience that it is more a matter of individual choice that determines whether one gets into the pitfall of the sin or not. The

drama also tries to rally the community into collective action against the disease by appealing to the audience to be united in their fight against HIV/AIDS.

The performance of *Mbuca* (no.94) is a good example of how folk drama has been used to communicate various issues about the epidemic. This play was performed in various parts of Central Province as part of HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns. The drama focuses on prevention of the spread of the disease as the main message.

Mbuca is the story of a rich man, Mbuca who has recently lost his wife. He now wants to re-marry and is eyeing the young daughter of his relatively poorer drinking mate, Wakini. Wakini is struggling to make ends meet. His daughter is currently a student at the university and he is finding it difficult to raise fees. When the performance begins, Wakini is lamenting on how the rich people have messed the economy of the country through theft and corruption making it difficult for people like him to educate their children. Nevertheless, he strongly feels that educating his daughter is probably the only way out of his financial problems.

Mbuca broaches the subject of marrying Wakini's daughter as they drink in the bar. He proposes to share his wealth with Wakini, promising to give him three of his lorries and cash if he agrees to marry off his daughter. The temptation is too strong for Wakini and he promises to talk to his daughter about the issue. The daughter initially resists the move but finally gives in when her father threatens to kick her out of his home. She agrees to marry his rich friend on a 'minor' condition, that he agrees to an HIV test.

It is from this point in the performance that the drama draws the attention of the audience to HIV/AIDS related messages. The audience learns that the rich man who wants to marry this girl is a well-known adulterer in the village and his wife most probably died of AIDS. Finally at the hospital Mbuca is exposed as HIV positive and arrested for trying to deliberately spread the disease.

This performance raises and discusses several issues associated with the spread of the disease in Central Province and the rest of the country. Firstly, is the issue of cultural

attitude and accepted traditional practices of marrying off girls by their parents. In the performance we have a father who deliberately uses his parental authority to force his daughter into marriage for material gain. But in doing so he is putting the life of his daughter at risk. The performance is here challenging a practice that makes some people in the society vulnerable.

By accepting her father's verdict, the play cleverly overturns the daughter's dilemma into a chance to explore the need for safe sex practices in the face of the HIV/AIDS threat. In the process, the action builds the character of a girl who is self-confident and has the ability to negotiate a safer position with a prospective partner. By insisting on HIV test before marriage the play demonstrates that there are alternative ways of responding to cultural or social pressure in the face of HIV/AIDS.

This drama further raises the issue of the link between HIV/AIDS and poverty in Africa. It suggests that poverty may be a major cause of the spread of the disease in Africa. The daughter in the play becomes a target victim because her father is poor. And in his monologue he indicates that forces beyond his control deliberately cause the poverty. The finger here points at problems of governance and corruption, which diverted incomes from cash crops from the farmers to some corrupt individuals. The performance here is stating that the economic situation in the area is also contributing to a vulnerable situation.

Finally, the significance of the symbolic value of the name of the rich man cannot escape the attention of the audience. Mbuca in the local language means a weevil, a pest that bores maize grains and can have devastating effect to a harvest. The pest destroys the grain from the inside leaving out the surface shell intact. The destruction may not be easily noticed until it is too late. In the context of HIV/AIDS, Mbuca evokes the image of the virus, which is not possible to detect through casual observation but fatal once it attacks the victim.

The informal nature of the performance in public places and the use of the people's form of oral communication and cultural expression provide a suitable setting for the

communication of messages during these performances. As we have noted, the actors also utilize incidents close to the experiences of the audience providing very familiar background for the messages. Beyond this the performances are highly entertaining employing hyperbole and exaggeration as strategies that sustain the attention of the audience.

6.8 Stigmatization and Living Positively

Persons living with HIV/AIDS are subject to stigmatization and discrimination. The stigma associated with HIV can be very strong. It can lead to victims being abandoned and ostracized.

However, artists in the texts and in interviews express the position that it is wrong to stigmatize the disease. They propose that members of the community should be friendly and warm to those infected. The family and social institutions especially the church should reach out to the afflicted and create a conducive atmosphere for the infected members so that they can live positively with the disease. As Reverend Kangangi puts it, once people have succumbed to the disease, it is necessary to advise them on how they can live positively. Christians should take care of the patients so that they may be happy (Text no.89).

This position is also reflected in the story of Domonic Warutere (text no.81) and in song no.88, by George Wanjaro. Warutere appeals for the acceptance of those infected because nobody wants to be a victim. He also feels that it is through love and acceptance for the infected that we can be able to overcome the disease. Wanjaro also appeals for sympathy and understanding, as that is the divine wish:

And you friends who are AIDS free
Take care of those with the disease
Help them to feed properly
When we get to heaven
God will repay you

Artists interviewed in the course of the study feel that people hide the disease because of stigmatization. They feel it is better to be open and remove the stigma in order to allow people to live positively and openly with the disease. They argue that it is wrong for people to hide the disease because they end up spreading it. Accepting the disease is the beginning point of living positively with HIV/AIDS. People then, should not fear or discriminate against those already infected with the disease. This will ensure those infected live longer, positive and productive lives (Kariuki, Wangithi, Mbuti: Interview).

In this chapter we have discussed the role oral literature is currently playing in HIV/AIDS communication in the Central Province of Kenya. The epidemic is viewed here as a threat and a major problem not only in the areas covered by the study but also in other parts of Africa. In our discussion, it is apparent that oral literature has responded to the epidemic, which is a relatively new phenomenon. The genre has characterized the HIV/AIDS as modern-day version of the epidemics that swept through Kikuyu countries in the past. Oral literature has also taken up the traditional role of 'screaming out' the disease (*kuingata murimu*) by creating awareness of the disease and promoting behavior change and preventive measures. In the communication of innovations then, oral literature in this chapter emerges as a conceptual tool that is used by the community to understand the new disease and at the same time a means of combating it.

In our analysis of the medium and the messages communicated, this chapter identifies oral literature as an effective media of HIV/AIDS communication in Kenya. The efficacy and power of oral literature is derived from communicating information and messages within culturally familiar contexts and in a language easily understood by the community.

In confronting the HIV/AIDS epidemic, oral literature is also challenging people to rethink about the nature of the world around them. The communication challenges certain notions surrounding sexuality and suggested new perceptions such as 'zero-grazing' and 'safe sex' because as Adade puts it, 'the risk involved may very well mean individual and social survival' (Adade: 1998: 67).

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

This study set out to investigate the role that oral literature has played in the communication of change and innovations among the Kikuyu of the Central Province of Kenya. Of particular focus in the study, was the role of the literary genre in communication of change and innovations in key social-cultural, political and health field in a society that has been subjected to rapid social and physical change over the last century.

Our discussion and analysis in the chapters outlined above has unfolded the cardinal role that oral literature has played in the communication of change and innovations in the fields of courtship, marriage and family, social gender constructs, politics and governance and HIV/AIDS communication.

In our interrogation of various texts in chapter three, oral literature among the Kikuyu emerges as the instrument of transmitting and analysing moral codes and patterns of sexual behaviour that govern courtships, sexuality and marriage as a prelude to the creation of stable family units. Oral literature as a media that operates at the conscious and unconscious planes communicates the guiding principles viewed by the society as essential to the process. This is achieved through symbolic representations in the performance of oral texts that provide interdictions, and awareness of dangers and negative consequences of uncontrolled sexuality before and after marriage.

The structural and stylistic constitution of oral literature renders the communication effective making the images memorable and easy to perceive. In its traditional role of communication of messages, oral literature becomes the tool for interpretation of individual choice. It confirms that through perseverance the youth can experience an ordered courtship that will lead to the establishment of a stable family and the raising of

children. The texts suggest that ultimate human fulfilment is in marriage. Everybody should get married. Man without woman can never attain redemption from his various aspects of lack and deformity.

The texts analysed in this chapter further reflect the changes that have affected the institutions of courtship, marriage and family in Central Province. Various social, cultural and economic changes are presented as creating predicaments and new problems and leading to a reversal in gender roles in courtship and marriage.

At the level of communicating innovations, texts display the change of perceptions of marital relationships in a changing social-economic entity. The texts analysed in the chapter advocate the need to come to terms with change and to strike a balance when dealing with problems that emerge in the neo-traditional society. While oral literature condemns the disintegration of values surrounding the institutions, it is clear from the texts and performances analysed that the society has the fortitude to confront negative aspects of change and advocate for the creation of the ideal family unit.

Oral literature also emerges in this study as a significant unit in the social construction of gender among Kikuyu. While the genre recognizes gender power relations as transient rather than natural and permanent, it nevertheless roots for patriarchy and male dominance as the preferred social order. In the study we are able to perceive the creation of this dominant gender consciousness in the reinvention of myths, use of proverbs and in the performance of etiological tales. In both the traditional texts and new creations, there is an attempt to banish female power. Female power emerges in the texts as a threat that can consume male dominance and destroy the preferred order.

Our study however identifies existence of a strong indigenous feminist frame in oral literature that constantly acts in opposition to the dominant gender consciousness. In our discussion, we view the structural and thematic evolution of oral literature as the basis of the development of the indigenous feminist consciousness among the Kikuyu people.

Women, as the cardinal storytellers, have integrated manifestations of female power in the oral text. Through them, they are able to resist patriarchy and reassert themselves.

Innovations and change in the social construction of gender are in this study understood against the backdrop of the dominant gender consciousness. Female artists use oral literature to reject certain cultural notions and attitudes that allow for their continued oppression on gender basis. They use oral literature to re-define their position in a changing social, cultural and economic environment. In the process they demand recognition for their reproductive and productive roles. They also seek to overturn current gender power relations in favour of greater equality and equity. In this chapter oral literary communication achieves innovation through its subversion of the ideology of male dominance and the transcendence of the indigenous feminist frame.

Innovations and change in gender constructs are further communicated through the artist's reinvention and modulation of tradition, which attempts to create a new identity for the woman by endorsing her experiences in the neo-traditional society.

Our discussion of the role of oral literature in the communication of change and innovations in politics and governance reveal a consistent commitment over time in confronting colonial and postcolonial realities and their effect on the Kikuyu people in particular and Kenyans in general.

In the prophecies of Mugo wa Kibiro and the narrative of Waiyaki, our study reveals how oral texts have been used in Central Province to resist foreign political domination and repressive governance over the years. The two texts foregrounds for the Kikuyu people the loss and the suffering that they would undergo under colonialism long before the actual experience. Our discussion in this chapter further reveals that the creation of oral literature can arise spontaneously depending on political need and expediency. The creation of *Muthirigu* and Mau Mau songs respond to a contemporary need at a particular historical moment. They are a means of analyzing and understanding moments of critical contradiction in the colonial state. The creations also offer direction towards the solution to these contradictions. At the innovative level they create and transmit a new liberation

consciousness and the need for the transformation of power relations in the country. The texts present a dynamic interaction between literature and social change.

This interaction is apparent in the disillusionment that creeps into themes and messages communicated in the post-independence oral texts. In our analysis and discussion we are able to delineate the critical stance of the texts and their suggestion for the creation of better and more just governance during the postcolonial era. Oral literature in the communication of change and innovations in the politics of independent Kenya becomes a fore instrument in the fight against dictatorship and in the search for a new paradigm in politics and governance. It is not only a weapon of resistance but also the agent for agenda setting for change in the political realm in line with the aspirations of the people.

In the previous chapter of our study, we identify and confirm the resilient nature of oral literature by discussing its response to HIV/AIDS, a new phenomenon that threatens the social and physical existence of the Kikuyu people. In our study, we are able to view how oral literature has become a conceptual tool in understanding this new pestilence and a major instrument of creating awareness on preventive and protective measures against the disease.

The study in this section discusses the use of various genres of oral literature on different occasions to create awareness against the disease. The significance and innovative value of oral literature is understood in its ability to appropriate traditional knowledge and experience and effectively use these as intervention against the HIV/AIDS epidemic. In the study then, oral literature responds appropriately and emerges as an indigenous social institution that can influence positive change in society. In a way, oral literature becomes an exploration of new means that harmonizes the process and the messages transmitted in the provision of health education.

Our study then brings to the fore what Zipes recognizes as the emancipatory power of oral literature (Zipes 1992: (1979): 17-18). The genre as part of the folk media has many advantages in reaching out to the community. It transcends the problems of illiteracy and

requires little in terms of material inputs (Warren: 1998:55-57). As we have observed in the study, oral literature material easily functions through repetition and provides equal opportunity of access to communication especially when performed in public arenas.

Through our discussion of oral literature, we are able to delineate new insights of knowledge, attitudes and perspectives of benefit to the society faced with the contradictions of social change. We agree with Brinski that art (such as oral literature), which is related to performance, can provide a wealth of cultural resources that can be tapped for the well being of individuals and the community (Brinski: 2001).

In the course of this study, it has become apparent that as a genre of literature, oral literature has continued to flourish in new contexts in the changing world of the Kikuyu community. Apart from the traditional story telling in domestic spheres and formal occasions, traditional genres have also adapted into new forms such as topical and popular songs and oral dramas. The new forms however continue to play critical functional roles in society as evidenced by this study.

Our study then confirms the contemporary value of oral literature and in essence signifies its continued place and relevance as a literary discipline in the study of African literature.

This study finally suggests that further research be conducted into these new adaptations and genres of oral literature in their various functional capacities in Kenya. Other areas that require further research include the issue of genre and gender among the Kikuyu and other communities in Kenya. Research and evaluation also needs to be done on the use of oral literary genres in planned development communication in the country.

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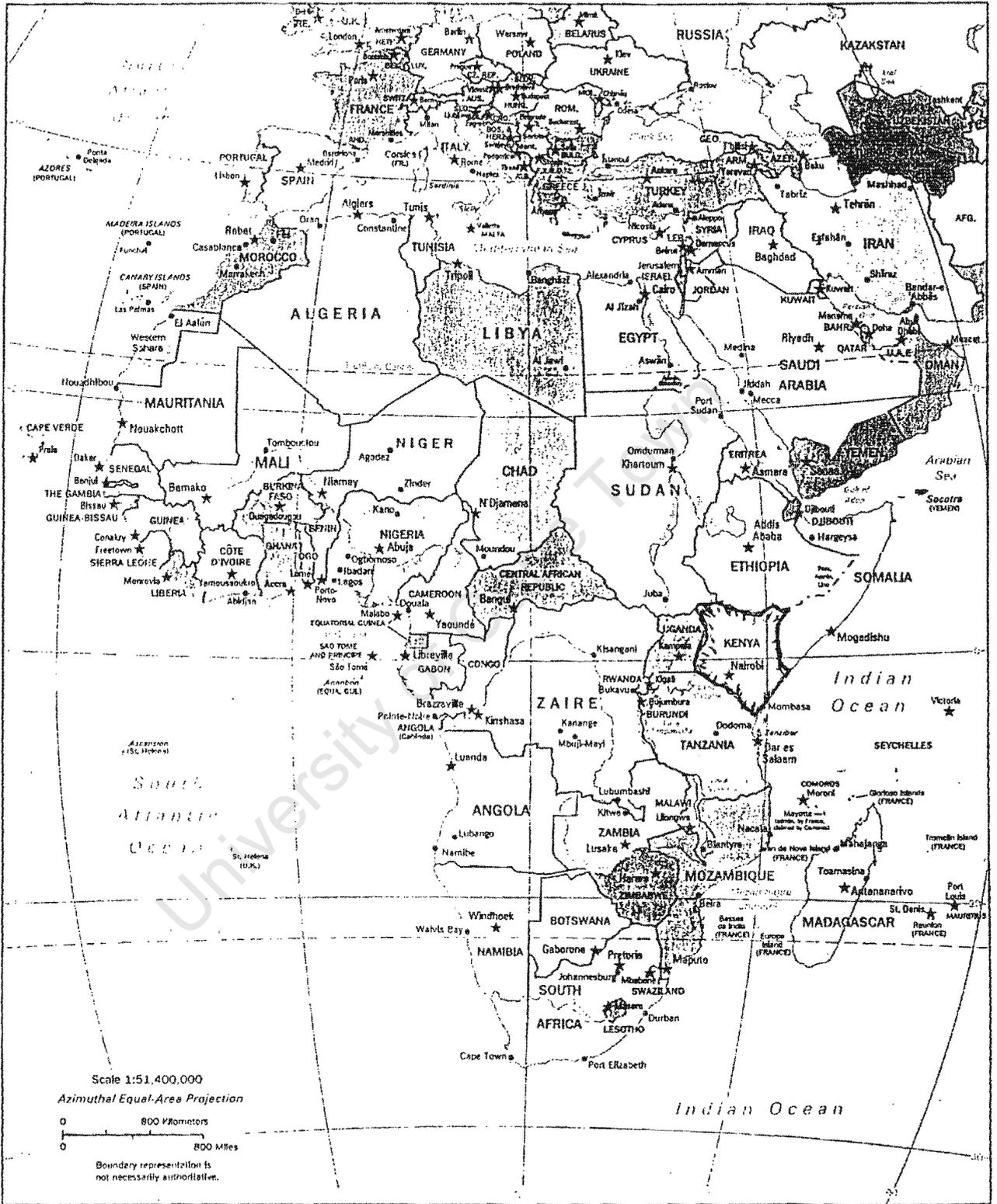
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Appendix 1

Africa

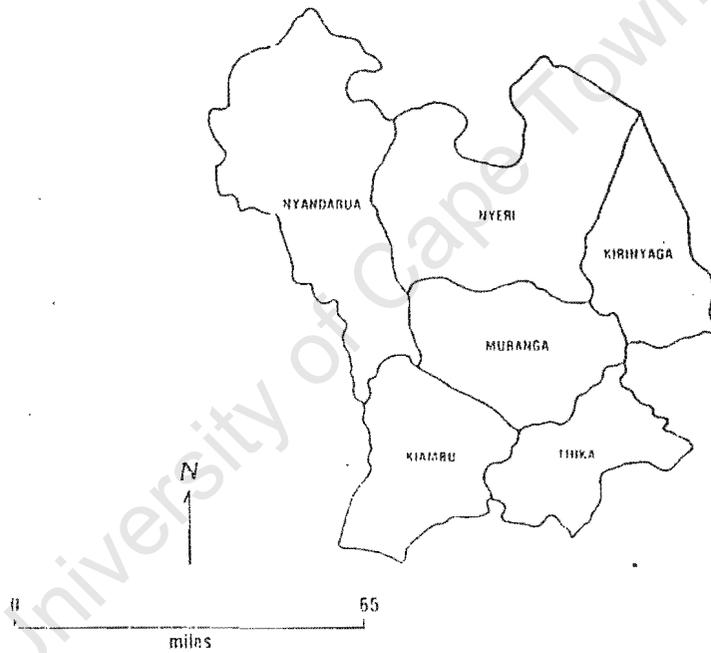


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PROVINCIAL AND DISTRICT BOUNDARIES OF KENYA



CENTRAL PROVINCE OF KENYA



APPENDIX 2.

1. Manga and His Father

Narrator: Alice Wanjira Rukenya (57years)

Narrator: Say *itho*.

Audience: *Itho*.

Narrator: Long. Long ago, there were girls who decided to go for a dance. They were a big group that went to the dance. At the dance there was a very handsome young man. He was so handsome that every girl hovered around him. They had refused to dance with the other young men. That young man was also dancing well. Now any time these other young men tried to dance with the girls, the girls would decline. That time people used to change partners as they danced. Men would dance with a girl, let her go, move on the next one and so on. Now this time all the girls wanted to dance with this young man.

He is really handsome, extremely handsome. When you looked at him, you could see yourself as you do in a mirror. And it is because of eating human flesh. That is why he is shining that way. His face was very smooth because of eating people. And remember he was an ogre. When the dance ended, the girls started saying they would not go home. "Thurutia, Mahua, Wacai we won't go home," they told one another.

During that time, girls were not calling each other their real names unless they were agemates. If for instance you called me my real name, we would fight because that is spiting me. Those are the names they had baptized one another. Now, one would not even know the real name because when the girls met they would greet each other using nicknames.

Audience: Yes.

Narrator: If you were given a five-cent piece you would be called, 'Wagacendi' when you met your friends. Those who called one another Wandago were cases where one supported the other during circumcision. Now, these girls called each other that way, and decided to follow the young man. He was definitely pleased. You know they surrounded him and he was in the middle as they walked. That is what used to happen to attractive men. The girls almost hoisted him shoulder high. He was hoisted up, the girls were very happy with him. He was in the middle and they started their journey.

As they were walking, one girl noticed that the young man had another mouth at the back of the head. She saw him swallow a fly. "Wagacendi," she called one of the girls and told her that she had been asked to draw water from the river and she could not go with them. She went back. Another noticed the mouth and said, "Wacai, I had been told to collect firewood and mother will not like it if I do not do that."

That one would go back. "Mahua, I too had been told to draw water and have not done so". The ogre did not realize that they were going away in his happiness now that he had plenty of meat.

Another girl would say, "Kabuteni, I had also been assigned the duty of grinding the millet into flour. Let me also go back." *Haya*. "Hee, *Kiumbi*, I also have to go back. Our child was expected to come back by now and I have not gone to see whether he is back." Now only one girl was left.

Audience: Only one.

Narrator: The one whose name was Wandago has been left with the young man. Wandago has been left behind. *Haya*. Wandago was left following her lover. She was left by the others holding his hand and going with him. When they were near the home of the ogre, the ogre told the girl, "Let me first go and tidy up the house. You follow me later."

The ogre has gone to remove the bones and remains of the people he had eaten. He went and swept. He cleared the place, took out the meat and the bones. The girl had not so far seen the second mouth. They went into the house. The house was clean. The ogre now told himself, "I have got some meat. I will go and call the others."

He went out to call the others. Now, a skull that was on the *itara* told the girl, "run away, escape, the ogre has gone to call the others so that they may come and eat you. He came to clean up the place when you were left behind." The skull told Wandago, "Run girl, he has gone to call the others so that they can eat you. Even some bodies have just been removed."

The girl went out. She did not doubt. She started running. She ran, she ran. She went, she went. That skull had told her, "If it rains and there is a tree nearby do not climb it for shelter."

She ran, she ran. Now when she got near a big tree, it started raining. She forgot that she had been warned not to climb what?

Audience: The tree.

Narrator: That tree. She went and climbed that tree. She sat there as it rained. When the rain subsided, the ogre came. He was accompanied by his son. They had followed the girl. As they were passing under the tree, the son told the father, "There is someone up the tree."

"Manga you are very troublesome, you are very greedy. Let us go."

"Father, there is something up there. Let me climb and check. He climbed and found the girl. She was brought down. Then she was asked, "Do you prefer we eat you or would you rather become our mother so that you can be cooking for us after we have come from hunting?"

"Let me become your mother." She said.

She was taken home. Now anytime they went hunting she would cook for them. If they caught squirrels, she would cook for them, but she was not eating them. If they hunted human beings, she would prepare for them to do what?

Audience: To eat.

Narrator: They would eat. Now they were not bothering her. One day while they were hunting, they found a pregnant woman. They killed her. They cut her and retrieved two babies. Two baby boys. They wrapped them with banana leaves. They carried one each, holding them like meat. Like they had each

brought home a kilogram of meat home. The boys were alive. They took them to the woman. She was told, "Take this meat and prepare it as it is. Do not unwrap it, just cook it as it is."

Hi, the woman unrapped the meat and found the babies. Two baby boys who were crying. She put them into a pot and covered it. She then trapped two rats and cooked them. She served them on a plate. "Your food is ready," she told them.

After every bite Manga would say, "These things are not the same size as the ones we brought. And these ones are bitter, they are bitter."

His father told him, "Since they were not big, that is why they are bitter. They get bitter when they are cooked. Let us eat them as they are."

The following day they went hunting. After they had gone, the woman fed the babies. She fed them then oiled them and put them back in the pot. Manga and his father brought their meat as usual. She prepared the meat for them and they ate. Now the woman had started being alert. She would always check on what they had brought home before cooking. The boys grew up. Now, during the day, when the ogre and the son were away, the woman would bring them out of the pot and they would play outside. After playing they would be hidden again. She would tell them. "Get back to your hiding place lest you are found out. If you are found out, we will all be eaten."

The woman looked after them. She looked after them, providing them with all necessities, until they grew up into young men. Now, these ogres would bring weapons home. If they killed a person who was armed, they would bring those weapons and tell the woman, "Keep these weapons for us". She would keep them, knowing well that one day, they shall be used by who?

Audience: Those boys.

Narrator: One of the boys would be given a spear to practice throwing. And the other would practice with a sword. Now they are big. She had dug a hole in which boys hid and slept. But the ogre's son was clever. When these children spent the day playing outside, he would come in the evening and ask, "Father whose foot print is this and this and this other one?"

His father would tell him. "Manga, I think you are foolish. My foot prints as I go and come back, your mother's foot prints as she goes and as she comes back, aren't those enough foot prints to fill this compound? And yours too, all these foot prints, are they not many?"

But Manga always felt the presence of other people in that home. Manga and his father continued hunting. If they brought a human being, the woman would cook for them. But she was not eating their food. Anytime they came home before it was dark, Manga would say, "There are so many foot prints on this compound father."

His father would tell him. "Manga, didn't I tell you the other day these are my foot prints, your footprints and your mother's."

Haya, they stayed. Now one day Manga was told by his mother, "Manga, we are going to do a test, we shall have a test, the three of us." Now, they looked for a cowhide, a big hide that could cover a person while lying down and still allow for pegs to be fixed on the sides.

"We shall have a competition and I shall be the first one in," the mother said.

"You peg me down under the hide and we shall see whether I can release myself." Manga said, "Yes we shall start with you mother." *Haya*. She was tied, pegged under the hide and then told, "Release yourself now."

She tried and tried but couldn't make it. Then she said, "If I can't release myself, untie me since I am still older and weaker than you."

"Now it is your turn Manga." Manga was put under the hide. He was tied tightly and then was told, "Release yourself." He released himself.

"You have released yourself because you are strong." She was still planning how she could get both of them pegged under the hide. Manga then said, "Now it is your turn father."

The father was tied. He tried to get out but could not. He said, "If I cannot release myself, you untie me since, since I am also old." He was untied.

"Now we shall try tying two people at a time." The mother said. "Manga and I will be the first ones."

They went under the hide. They called on the old man. "Now, father you tie us and we see whether we can release ourselves or not." The old man tied them. He tied them then said, "Release yourselves now."

"They tried and tried and managed to free themselves. "You see we have managed because we were two," the mother said.

Now it was the turn of Manga and his father. They got under the hide. The mother tied them. She tied them tightly. Manga said, "*ai*, you have tied us too tightly mother."

"Oh no, it is just like we had been tying each other before." The mother tied and tied and tied until they were well secured. They were told, "Release yourselves now."

The boys were each prepared with a club and a sword. They are big men now. Now Manga and his father tried to release themselves. "Mother, we cannot." They tried, they tried, and then the woman called the boys, "Come now." And they started clubbing Manga and his father. Manga shouted at his father. "Didn't I tell you father?"

"Manga you used to tell me," his father replied.

"Didn't I tell you father?"

"Manga you used to tell me."

They were killed. The young men were now free. The home became theirs. All the rubbish that was in the place, even the skulls on the *itara* were thrown away. They cleaned the place, built more houses and got married. They got wives and the woman became their mother. Did they have any other mother?

Audience: No.

Narrator: They lived like that. Their home expanded into a village. Now they had a home, were grown up and independent. That is my story of Manga and his father. May the one who does not tell stories eat *gatutu* while I feast on my father's fat lamb whose fat drips *cacacacacacacacaca!*

2. The Girls, The Uncircumcised boy and the Ogre

Narrator: Alice Wanjira Rukenya

Narrator: *Say itho*

Audience: *Itho*

Narrator: Long, long ago, there were girls. They went to dance. They found a very handsome young man. They loved him. He invited them to his home and they accepted.

In those days courtship was done in the evening before it was too dark. It was not like these days when people woo each other late into the night until you do not understand what kind of courtship it is. A man would spy on the girl when she was working in the fields. During those days, people used to check on how well the girls cultivated. Girls used to cultivate while almost naked. They would remove the upper garment and put it aside while working. They would be covered only up to the waist. The skirts that you see today used to be called *mucati*. A girl would be wearing only the *mucati* while cultivating. She would then start the cultivation. When she stood up, you could see her sharp breasts. There would be nothing covering them. You would see her swinging in rhythm as she worked. Now, the girls would be approached in the evening for courtship.

The girls agreed to visit the young man's home. They went. A young kid-brother followed them. Children used to follow the girls because they would know that their sisters might be killed. Now, the ogre took how many girls?

Audience: Four.

Narrator: How many were sisters?

Audience: Three.

Narrator: This fourth one was a neighbour. Their smaller brother followed those girls. They would try to chase him away. The girls would walk and walk and the boy would be walking behind them, out of their view. If he were seen he would be chased away. "Why is this boy following us? Are you too going to get married?" they would ask him. The boy would say, "I shall not leave you." They would continue with their journey. They are three sisters and a neighbour.

When they reached the ogre's house, he said, "House of stone, open!" The door opened and they got in. The boy was also there. The boy would hear the ogre say, "House of stone, open up". There was a place from which it opened up. It used to respond to the voice of its' master, the ogre. It knew him. The ogre was like the magician. The way the magician puts razor blades in the mouth and when he removes them, they have changed into needles. That is the way it was. Now the house opened. Those girls entered. "House of stone, close," the ogre said and the house closed.

It closed. A place was prepared for the girls to sleep. The boy never slept. He was a child of about twelve years old. As soon as the boy pretended to sleep, the ogre would start counting the girls. The ogre now began to talk in a heavy husky voice. He said, "This one and this one, whose are they?" The boy would say, "That one belongs to my father. No one can touch her. I would fight him." It is the young boy who said this, a very small boy. The ogre asked again, "This one and this one, whose are they?"

He said, "This one also belongs to my father's. No one can touch her. I would fight him."

Now you hear those are two. Then the ogre would ask, "This one and that one, whose are they?"

"This one belongs to a neighbour. Nobody can touch her. I would fight him."

"This one also belongs to my father. Nobody can touch her. I would fight him."

The ogre slept. Now the boy was telling the ogre that if he touched any of the girls, he would fight him.

Now the boy used to sleep during the day and guard the girls at night. You remember he was being chased away?

Audience: Yes.

Narrator: He has become their guard. Now that was his job. The ogre would sleep at night. In the morning he would go hunting. When he went to hunt, he killed people and came and dropped them outside.

Audience: The People?

Narrator: Yes. He would drag the people to the house and say, "House of stone, open up." It would open and he would put the corpses inside. He would then say, "House of stone, close up." And the house would close itself. He would then go near the girls and start counting them.

"This one and this one, whose are they?"

The boy would say, "This one belongs to my father nobody can touch her. I would fight him."

"This one and this one, whose are they?"

"This one also belongs to my father. Nobody can touch her. I would fight him."

"This one and this one, whose are they?"

"That one belongs to a neighbour, nobody can touch her. I would fight him."

Now it was difficult to get "these ones". They have a guard. They stayed and stayed. The girls would sleep deeply while the boy remained awake. Their leader also went to sleep. In the morning, the house would be told, "House of stone, open up." It opened up. Now the house used to close when the owner left or came in.

Now the girls asked the boy, "Muturi," for that was the name of the boy, "Why don't you sleep?"

"How can I sleep? You would all be eaten. You wanted me to go back. Now you see what your-so-called husband does to you."

The ogre asked Muturi in the morning, "Muturi, why don't you sleep?"

He said, "I shall sleep when you bring me a club and a shield. When you bring me those items, I shall sleep."

The boy was now planning how they would go home. He was also planning what to do with the ogre. That day, when the ogre came back he brought a shield and a club and a sword so that Muturi could sleep and he could eat the girls. Muturi kept the weapons. He slept during the day. The girls played around. Now the ogre came back and as usual. He came with a corpse. The ogre was once again stopped from eating the girls that night. He asked Muturi, "Muturi, why don't you sleep?" Muturi said, "I shall sleep when you bring me a bow, arrows and a spear."

The ogre went to sleep. The next day when he went to hunt, he brought a bow, arrows and a spear. Now do you realize that the ogre is getting him weapons of war? Muturi slept during the day when the ogre had gone hunting. Now do you think the girls did anything else except laugh? They are foolish. They do not know what is going on. They are so happy with this man. The boy is the one who knows how they will eventually go home.

The next day, the boy was asked, "Muturi why don't you sleep?"
"I shall sleep when you bring me a herd of goats."

Now the day the goats were brought, Muturi was in the forest making a *mururu*. Now the boy is making something that looks like a *mururu*. That day they were not going to sleep there. The ogre told Muturi, "Today I shall not go very far. I shall go nearby so that after I come back, you can slaughter the cow I brought yesterday."

Muturi knew that the girls were now to be eaten. When the ogre left he put the girls and the livestock in the *mururu* and they left. Meanwhile the ogre went and told the other ogres, "Each ogre came with a piece of wood. I have visitors in my house." But when they got there the visitors were gone. Muturi had told the girls to enter the *mururu*. Everything including the cows, anything he wanted, he put into the *mururu*. He then started rolling it. He would hit it with a staff and it would roll over. With one hit, it would roll out to as far as Murang'a.

Meanwhile the ogre brought its people. They are bringing firewood in order to eat these girls. But they are gone. They cannot even be seen. When the ogres arrived, there were no girls and so they decided to eat the ogre that had invited them.

Meanwhile Muturi is driving the *mururu* and his people towards his original home. They arrived about six o'clock in the morning when people were still asleep. Now the *mururu* had landed near a big tree like the one over there. Muturi sat on top of it. Now, in front of them were the houses. He sat there. The old people came out of the houses and lit the fire and started warming themselves. They used to warm themselves in the morning before going to work. At around nine in the morning, they would go to work in their farms. They would not come back home until six o'clock in the evening.

In those days, there were no watches. They would carry lunch to their place of work. They would carry food in the basket and porridge in the gourd. Now these people were warming themselves before going to the fields. Muturi climbed from the *mururu*. He found them outside. He greeted them. "How are you?"

"We are fine." They replied.

Now some were looking at him and saying to themselves, "Who is this that looks like Muturi?"
"Hi, I think it is him".

One of them asked him, "How come you are so big son?" In those days, the uncircumcised boys used to be called "son". "Hi, son, you are very big."

"I, I went looking for a job," he replied, "and if it were not for the fact I want to get circumcised, I would not have come back."

"Were you herding?"

"Yes."

"Now son, sit down here." He sat down.

"Now we ask you, where are the girls you went with to the dance, where did they go?"

"Now, how can I know about girls? Was I old enough to look after girls when I left? I do not know where your girls went."

"Now, they were three and the fourth one was a neighbour. Where did they go? We looked for them in vain."

Now Muturi told the man. "I want you to tell me what you will give me if I produce your girls."

The neighbour said. "If you show me my daughter, I will give her to you, to become your wife."

Audience: To be his wife?

Narrator: Yes to be his bride. Now you hear Muturi is going to get a bride?

Audience: Yes.

Narrator: The father said, "If you show me my daughters, you will eat my white bull, the one that leads the others."

Muturi said, "Stand aside."

He went to where the tree was. He rolled his *mururu* towards where the people were. He opened it and people started coming out. They all came out. The cows, the goats, the bows and arrows, shields, spears, everything he had asked for including the clubs.

Audience: *Ii.*

Narrator: Yes, now circumcision had to be arranged. He had to feed well first because after circumcision he might not eat properly because of the pain. They decided he should eat first and be strong. The white bull was slaughtered for him. The father slaughtered it for him. The people sang and danced. He told them the story of what had been happening to the girls.

Now he was given the girl for good. Now this girl would fetch the water for him as he healed from the circumcision. She was the wife. She never went back to her home. She went to Muturi's mother. Now she would look after him and the place where he slept. The boy healed and became a young man. He built a house. They stayed together. My story and riddles end there. And for the person who does not tell stories, I shall throw into the mud where the mosquitoes will generously attack him.

3. Wanja

Narrator: Alice Wanjira Rukenya

Narrator: Say *itho*

Audience: *Itho*

Narrator: Long, Long ago, there were girls who went to collect firewood. On their path was a tree stump. As they passed that stump, every girl's foot was hurt. They were five girls. After the stump hurt the last girl's foot, she said. "This stump is a nuisance. Everybody walking along this path is being hurt." She cut it off with a panga, uprooted it and threw it into the bush. They went and collected firewood and started going back home. The girl who had uprooted the stump was the last on the queue. On reaching the spot where the stump had been, they found that it had turned into an ogre. The ogre asked the first girl, "Why did you cut me with a panga?"

She replied:

It's not me who cut you
It is the daughter of Karindoria
Take this bead, and another and
Get out of my way, I pass

In those days girls used to adorn themselves with beads. The ogre let that girl pass. The next came. "Why did you cut me with a panga?" She replied:

It's not me who cut you

It is the daughter of Karindoria
Take this bead, and another and
Get out of my way, I pass."

They were giving the ogre beads. Each was giving two strings of beads.

Audience: Two strings? From where did they get beads?

Narrator: Mothers used to buy beads for their daughters. Now two have passed the ogre. Three are remaining. "Why did you cut me with a panga?"

It's not me who cut you
It is the daughter of Karindoria
Take this bead, and another and
Get out of my way, I pass.

Now only two remained, the next one was asked, "Why did you cut me with a panga?"

It's not me who cut you
It is the daughter of Karindoria
Take this bead, and another and
Get out of my way, I pass.

Then the one who cut the ogre came along, She was asked, "Why did you cut me with a panga?"

It's not me who cut you
It is the daughter of Karindoria
Take this bead, and another and
Get out of my way, I pass.

She was told, "I want you to give me your breast."

The ogre cut the breast and ate it. The girl went home without one breast. The ogre warned her that if she ever revealed what had happened to anybody, that day she would be killed and eaten. The girl never talked. She stayed at home and was sick. She was so sick that she could not eat. She would be asked, "Wanja, what is wrong with you?"

But she would not say. Wasn't she told if she ever revealed what had happened, she would be eaten?

Audience: Yes

Narrator: "Wanja are you sick?" She was asked.

She said, "I want all members of our clan to assemble so that I can tell you what I am suffering from."

They assembled. There was some beer. They drank the beer. After they drank the beer, their girl told them that it was an ogre that had eaten her breast. This girl spent most of her time in bed. Her grandmother, the mother of her father had not taken beer during that assembly. She too, was sick in bed. After the others drank beer, they went to sleep. When they slept, the ogre came. He said. "Tell me, tell me, why did you report me, why did you report the person who ate your breast."

Then the girl, who was still in bed said:

Ui, father asked me
Ui, mother asked me
They made me say
Who ate my breast

Now the ogre is coming to get her from the house and everybody is asleep. They are deeply asleep.

Ui, father asked me
Ui, mother asked me
They made me say
Who ate my breast.

"Tell me, tell me why you reported me, why you reported the person who ate your breast. "Now the ogre is at the door. He is entering the house:

*Ui, father asked me
Ui, mother asked me
They made me say
Who ate my breast.*

The rest of the people are still sleeping. And the ogre is going for the girl to eat her. Her grandmother, the one who refused to take beer, was waiting by the door. She was waiting for the ogre to enter. Now, as the ogre approached the girl, the girl's grandmother was set. She had one long nail that was sharp as a knife. She was hiding by the door waiting for this ogre. "Tell me, tell me, why you reported me, why you reported the person who ate your breast?" Now the others were still asleep. As the ogre was entering to go pick the girl, the grandmother told the ogre, "Aah! Attack me."

Then she pierced the ogre with the nail. I think the nail had some poison. The ogre died. This girl's grandmother killed the ogre. After the ogre died, the rest of the people woke up. The ogre must have had done something to these people so that they continue sleeping. Before dying, the ogre told the grandmother before he died, "Cut this little finger and this other one so that your daughter's breast can be recovered."

The girl's breast was retrieved and the people went back to their normal chores. Now, the story of the daughter of Karindoria ends there. When the parents of the girl woke up, they found she had her breast back and the ogre was dead. The ogre had been killed by the old grandmother who was not as strong as they were. The ogre's body was carried and thrown away. All people, cows and goats, which the ogre had eaten, were retrieved. The story of Wanja ends there. May the person who does not narrate eat *gatutu* while I eat my father's lamb whose fat drips *ca ca ca ca ca ca*!

4. The Beautiful Girl And The Ogre

Narrator: Jecinta Wangithi (42years)

Narrator: Say *Indo!*

Audience: *Indo*

Long, long ago there was a man and a woman who had a very beautiful daughter. She used to fetch water from the big river. There was a wide path leading to the river. One day she found a very handsome young man sitting on a rock in the river. And the young man was not human. He had seven heads, six of which were hidden under the water.

Now, that man loved that girl and told her that he would go and visit her at her home. When the girl went home she told her parents she had a visitor who will visit her on a certain day. She told her parents the day when the man would come. When that day came, they cooked food for the visitor. They cooked a lot of food and waited for the visitor. They waited. When he took too long to come, the girl went to meet him. She went to call him. When she reached the top of the ridge she sang out to him from there:

Friend of Nyakwara
Nyakwara is calling you
The feast is ready
And honey beer is brewed
You are invite, welcome

Then the young man replied:

Go and tell Nyakwara
I am on my way coming
Remove cattle from the homestead
Remove goats from the homestead
Remove children from the homestead
I am coming
I am on the Way

The girl went back home and told her mother that they should remove the cattle, the goats and the children from the homestead. They waited. They waited. They became impatient because the young man was not coming. The girl went back to the ridge to call him:

Friend of Nyakwara
Nyakwara is calling you
The feast is ready
And the honey beer has been brewed
You are invited, welcome

The man replied:

Go and tell her
I am on my way coming
I am coming
Remove cattle from the homestead
Remove goats from the homestead
Remove children from the homestead
I am coming
I am on my way

The girl went back home. The young man indeed started coming. Now, he has come with one head and left the other six heads in the river. When he arrived at the house he was welcomed. He sat down and was given food. He ate all the food He then drank all porridge and all the beer. When everything was finished this animal was not satisfied. It started asking for more:

This man, this man
What shall he eat?

The girl, Nyakwara said to him:

Why don't you eat this cow
Eat this cow
And stop singing to me
This man, this man
What shall he eat?

You know they had not heeded the young mans warning and removed the things they had been told to remove. They could not understand what type of a visitor this one was, a visitor who wanted everything removed from the homestead. Now after eating the cattle he once again sang:

This man, this man
What shall he now eat?

The girl said:

Why don't you eat that goat
And stop singing to me
This man, this man
What shall he eat?

Now when he ate all the goats he once again started singing:

This man, this man
Now what shall he eat

And then the girl sang:

Why don't you eat these children
And stop singing to me
This man, this man
What shall he eat?

The ogre ate everything and everybody. When some people saw what was happening, they ran away and left the girl alone. Now the girl did not know what to do. The ogre sang again:

This man, this man
What shall he eat?

The girl did not know what to say. She said:

Now, why don't you eat my arm
My arm
And stop singing to me
This man, this man
What shall he eat?

The ogre plucked off the hand and ate it. The ogre asked once again and the girl replied.

Now, why don't you eat?
My other arm
And stop singing to me
This man, this man
What shall he eat?

When the ogre sang again this man, this man, the girl said:

Why don't you just eat me
Eat me and stop singing
This man, this man
What shall he eat?

After eating the girl, the ogre went back to the river and hid there. Now there was a boy from that home who had gone to visit his grandmother when all this happened. When he came back home, he found nobody was there. Somebody told him how the ogre had eaten all his people. He went back to his grandmother and lived with her. He grew up there. As he grew up he asked his grandmother to provide him with a spear. His grandmother said, "Now child of my child what will you do with a spear and you are only a boy?"

"Do not worry grandmother, you will know eventually."

After sometime he would ask for a sword and his grandmother would ask him, "Now child of my child, what do you want to do with a sword?"

“Do not worry grandmother, you will eventually know.”

When he had all the weapons he needed he went to the river where that ogre lived. It was a swampy area. He built a platform there and waited on it. Now that animal used to come out of the river with all its seven heads when there was a full moon. When it came out, the boy started shooting arrows at it. He would aim the arrows at the heads of the ogre. The ogre would try to remove the arrows but would only press them inside its heads. The boy would aim at the head. You know his arrowheads are poisoned. The boy would aim at another head. Then another. He aimed at all the seven heads. The ogre started becoming weak and weaker and weaker. It fell to the ground and the boy left the platform. He started chopping off its heads with the sword. Before he chopped off the ogre’s last head, it said to him in a faint voice, “Cut my little finger and you will find your sister”.

The boy cut the ogre’s little finger. All the children the ogre had eaten, the cattle, the goats and the people, they all came out. His sister came out too.

Now the boy led the people back home. Even the people who had ran away came back when they learnt that the ogre had been killed. Now the young man was appointed to be the leader. He led the people although he was young. Now my story ends there.

5. Thenya

Narrator: Irene Wanjiru (17Years.).

Narrator: Say *Indo*.

Audience: *Indo*:

Narrator: I am going to tell you a story, which was narrated to me by my grandmother. It is a story about a girl and man who was also an ogre at the same time. At the beginning, the girl never knew that the man was an ogre. She thought he was a very handsome young man.

Audience: Tell us the story.

Narrator: Long, long time ago at a certain village there lived a very beautiful girl, a showpiece of a woman. All the men in that village desired her but she never liked any of them. Now one day a dance was arranged and it was decided that the dance would be at the girl’s village. Now young men came from other villages to attend the dance at this girl’s village. Are you still listening?

Audience: Yes.

Narrator: Now as they were dancing, the girl who was very beautiful, her name was Thenya, saw one young man who was very handsome. She went to dance with him. They danced and danced and danced and danced until it was very late in the night. When it was late at night the girls escorted the handsome man. As they escorted him, some of the girls noticed he had a mouth at the back of his head and was swallowing flies. His long hair hid the mouth. One girl saw the mouth. When they went back, the girl told Thenya what she had seen. But Thenya could not believe this. She thought that the girl was just jealous because the young man loved her and he was really handsome. You hear what is happening?

Audience: Yes

Narrator: Now more dances were arranged. They were scheduled at the girl’s village once again. When the dance started, they danced, they danced until late into the night. Now the girls escorted the young

man once more. At some point the other girls went back. But this time Thenya had agreed with the young man that they would go to his home. You hear they have arranged to visit the man's home. And this man is an ogre and Thenya does not know. And the ogre had planned to take her to his home and feast on her with the other ogres. They traveled and traveled. They traveled for a long time. Thenya started wondering about this young man's abode. She was getting tired. She asked him, "Do you live in the forest?"

And the young man told her, "No, we do not live in the forest but on the other side of the forest."

They continued with the journey. They followed a path that was becoming increasingly narrow as they proceeded. At the point where the path became extremely narrow they came upon a house. Outside the house was a boy gnawing on a piece of bone. The boy asked her father, "Aiii, father," you know how young boys speak, "How come you took so long coming back? And I am so hungry. Now this one you have brought, will she be enough for us?"

"Keep quiet," the father told the boy, "Lets go and fetch firewood."

They went to search for firewood and the girl was left in the house. Now the girl started exploring the house. She found bones and skulls, which confirmed that the place was indeed an ogre's abode. As she explored the house she remembered what her girlfriend had told her. That, this young man had swallowed flies with a mouth at the back of his head that was covered by his long hair. Now the girl started thinking. She started thinking of how she could escape from the place. She knew that when the ogres came back, they would surely feed on her. She started looking for cracks through which she could escape. As she looked around she found a shaving knife. She started digging her way out using the knife. She dug and dug until there was a hole big enough for her to pass through. She could go out through it.

She got out and started running away. She ran and ran but the ogre got wind of her and followed her. The ogre followed her. The girl ran away and came across an old woman who was working in the farm. Now when the ogre saw the woman, he hesitated. He retreated because he did not want people to find out that he was an ogre. He always wanted people to know him as a fine young gentleman. He went back. After he went back, the woman asked the girl what was happening. The girl told her everything. She told her about the bones she had found in the ogre's place and that she had found out that the young man was an ogre. Thenya went back to her home. She told the people what had happened and what she had seen. She stayed at her home until she got herself a human suitor who married her. And my story ends there.

6. Nyanjiru

Narrator: Alice Wanjira Rukenya

Narrator: Say *Itho*

Audience: *Itho*

Narrator: Long, long ago, there was a girl who was being courted by some young men. It was Hyena who started courting her. Now Hyena went to the girl's home and called the girl. After they talked, the girl then asked Hyena, "Where will you take me and yet you do not have a house? You spend your time wandering about eating people's calves. Shall we spend our time wandering together?"

Hyena said. "No I will take you to our home and leave you with my mother. Then I will be going out to look for something to eat."

She told him, "I have accepted you, go and bring beer."

Hyena went home and told his mother that he had been accepted and asked to take beer to the girl's home.

After Hyena took the beer to the girl's parents, the girl's mother asked her, "Waruguru, are you going to be married by Hyena now that we have already drunk his beer?"

"Who is being married to Hyena?" the girl asked. "But would you let something that has been found pass you by? Who would let it pass by? You drink the beer. Even tomorrow when he brings more beer, you drink." *Eeeh*, more beer was brought. They drank and praised the girl. Men and women from the clan drank the beer and praised the girl singing:

She was not roaming about
She was looking for the beer
Ariririririririririririri
Pour for me I drink
Whose beer is this?
It belongs to the girl
Called Wacanga.

And the women would say:

She was not roaming about
She was looking for the beer
Pour for me
I will drink and if
I do not finish it
I will bathe in it
Wakang'ei sold her child
For a cup of tea

Hyena was told, "Go and bring some more beer so that we may go to your home."

He went and brought more beer. The clan assembled again. There were more celebrations:

I will drink it
If I cannot finish, I will bathe in it
Wakang'ei sold her child
For a cup of tea
Whose beer is this?
Does it belong to the tree or
Those who fly in the air?
It belongs to that woman
The woman who wakes her husband in the night
Wake up, let's create
Some wealth for the future
Our people have eaten, what will your people eat?"

Hyena was escorted. Hyena went home. Then Beetle, the rhinoceros beetle, which pushes cow dung, came along. He came along to woo the girl. He came along pushing cow dung. I do not know whether the girl was disliked or whether the young men had refused her. Now, when the beetle came along, he was asked, "You go wooing as you push cow dung?"

"Oh, yes."

"If I accept you, and we go to your house, will you still be pushing the cow dung?"

"Yes, I will take you to my house and then go out to push dung since this is my job. This is my job. I do not do any other work. This is the work from which I get something to live on.

"Pushing cow dung?"

"Yes."

"Okay, go and bring beer."

That is how the suitors were being tested. He went and brought beer. They drank it and would sing as they drank the beer. Beetle went home with his people. He had already been welcomed.

Now Hawk came. He arrived in a motorcar. The cars that are used to carry brides these days. He came. When he approached he said, "*Ciriririririririririririri! Ciriririririririririririri!*"

The girl said to herself, "The one I want has come."

Hawk came and landed. They talked. "I shall take you with me," He said, "Can you see how good my car is? It is meant for you. I will carry you in it and take you home."

Then the girl told him, "We cannot just go. Set a day when you will bring something to my parents."

You know the relationship between Hawk and the chick? Hawk did not take beer. He went and hunted chicks and brought them. He told the girl's father, "These are the type of cows that I keep. These are the cows I will give you so that I can take your daughter with me."

"*Eee, iii*, you are a good-son-in-law since I will always have meat to eat." Said the father. The daughter accepted Hawk. He put her into the car. Hawk's house, you know is built on top of trees?

Audience: Yes.

Narrator: That is where he took his wife.

Audience: On top of a tree?

Narrator: On top of a tree. Hawk would bring her chicks, which she would eat. But can she light any fire there?

Audience: No.

Narrator: Where would Hawk bring the chicks?

Audience: There.

Narrator: There. The girl started getting thin. She became very thin. Now, this tree was in a valley. Hawk would always bring meat home. The girl started eating clothes. Later she started eating leaves. Then she would sing:

To whom does this land belong
It belongs to Njiru and Ndama
I got married to a beast
That lives in the air.
I am crying out to Njiru *ui, ui!*

When the hawk came back, he would ask her, "What is that you were singing?"

She would say, "Oh, I was singing:

To whom does this land belong
It belongs to Njiru and Ndama
I got married the Hawk
Who lives in the air
I am crying out to Njiru *ui, ui!*

One day, her brother heard her. He was preparing a seed bed for vegetables in the valley. Then he heard someone sing, and he asked, "Could that be my sister?" He even stopped working. Then the girl on top of tree sang:

To whom does this land belong
It belongs to Njiru and Ndama
I got married to a beast
That lives in the air.
I am crying out to Njiru *ui, ui!*

He called the girl. Hawk had not returned. That time people used to wear long coats over their shirts. He took out his coat and gave it to his sister. They went home where she was given clothes and food. At the same time, Hawk was assembling his fellow-hawks. That same day they were going to eat the woman. They were going to eat the woman after they looked for chicken and could not find any. Hawk would tell the others, "I have a visitor at my place. And my visitor is edible. If you have nothing to eat today there is plenty in my place."

When they gathered there and found nobody to eat, they turned on the hawk. Do you see how they fight in the air? They fought him and tore him apart and then ate him. They had to eat him after they found his visitor gone. They tore him and ate him. Now, Nyanjiru went back to her people. She was taken care of. She was given fat. She was given fat so that she heals and could eat. That is how the hawk ended. Beetle kept going to the girl's home. He found the girl had gone back home. He asked her to marry him. She said, "I will never accept anybody else."

After that, Hyena came along. He told the girl, "We used to be friends."

"No, you will also treat me like I was treated by Hawk." She told him.

Hyena would definitely have eaten her. Now Nyanjiru stayed at home. She waited until a human being married her. A real human being. They stayed together. She was now healthy. She had recovered.

That is the end of my story. May the one who does not narrate eat *gatutu* while I eat my father's lamb whose fat drips *cacacacacacacacaca!*

7. Nyokabi

Narrator: Irene Wanjiru

Narrator: I will now tell you only one more story.

Audience: That is okay. Go on.

Narrator: A long time ago there were two men. One was called Kimuhu and the other Gikera. They lived in the same village. And in that village there was girl called Nyokabi. And she was indeed a beautiful girl. Now, both these two men wanted to marry her and Nyokabi was confused on who to choose between the two.

Now Nyokabi thought very hard. She decided to invite the two men. One day, she invited both of them to her father's home. She already had a well thought out plan on what to do in order to choose one of them to be her husband. She decided to cook sweet potatoes for them. She decided that whoever of the

two ate more sweet potatoes than the other, would become her husband. Do you know why she decided that?

Audience: No.

Narrator: Because that must be the person who works hard and would be able to provide for her. The more food a person eats the harder he would work. As a husband he would ensure that there was enough food. Now, Gikera and Kimuhu were served with the food.

Audience: With the sweet potatoes.

Narrator: Gikere was the lazy one but he was a great eater. He ate and ate and ate. Kimuhu thought that this girl probably preferred a modest person. So he ate a few sweet potatoes and even pushed most of the peelings onto Gikere's pile. But he was a very hard working person. You know, Nyokabi had gone out to let these people eat. When she came back she found they had eaten the sweet potatoes. She found that Gikere had eaten a lot since his pile of peelings was very big. And Kimuhu's pile was very small. She decided she would get married to Gikere because he would be a better worker.

Audience: Gikere has won himself a bride and he is so greedy.

Narrator: Oh yes. Now she decided Gikere would marry her. The young men went home. After a few days the girl got married to Gikere. They went to live together. It is when they were living together that she found out how lazy Gikere was. He was not even working and because of that they did not have enough to eat. The girl weighed the situation and decided to run away back to her father's home. When she went back there she started seeking Kimuhu. And eventually they got together and she got married to him. Now, the story ends there.

And I think that is an educative story because she initially decided to choose her spouse on the bases of the amount of sweet potatoes one had eaten. But that is not what she ought to have looked at. She should not have made a judgment based on surface appearance. She made the wrong choice because her decision was based on superficial observation. Now, one needs to make a decision after a thorough observation. Now my story ends there.

8. The Spider, the Chameleone and the Hare

Narrator: Alice Wanjira Rukenya

Narrator: Say *Itho*

Audience: *Itho*

Narrator: Long, Long ago, there was Spider, Chameleon and Hare. How many young men were those? Three. The three of them went to court a girl. You know the spider has his web. His web to take him to the girl's home. He used to get to places before others. Now the others told Spider, "Spider, since you are like a person with a car, let us hire you so we all go together and see who among us the girl accepts." You see, during those days, the person who courted the girl was not necessarily the one who intended to marry her.

They got into spider's car. They were carried on the web. They went to the girl's home. They were welcomed and given seats. They called the girl and talked. Now the man who the girl liked was Chameleon. She looked at him and decided he was the best. And you know how Chameleon walks.

Like he is shaking. Now, the girl accepted Chameleon. From among the three of them, whom did the girl choose?

Audience: Chameleon.

Narrator: Chameleon. It seemed he was the most handsome. Spider told Chameleon. "*Hi abai* Chameleon, it is you we had brought. The only thing we got here was the porridge we drank. Who will bring you here another day?"

"You will bring me." Said Chameleon.

They then went back a second time. They were told next time they come, they should bring beer so that the girl's father can allow the couple to go and register their wedding. There was going to be a wedding. The wedding between Chameleon and the girl. Now, Spider, Chameleon and Hare went back another time. Chameleon told the others, "I can see you are happy bringing me here since I was accepted. Next time you will accompany me so that we may bring the beer."

They would be given porridge. Those days a prospective husband knew he was accepted by the way he was given porridge. They would drink the porridge. After drinking the porridge they were told, "When you bring beer, you will be allowed to register your wedding."

They went home. The others would tease Chameleon. "What made you win that girl? And the way you are thin, the way you shake when walking, you even have a ridge on your back..."

Chameleon would retort. "Did I decide to be loved? Let us go home."

The following day, they took their gourds of beer, they were told, "now the wedding is between Chameleon and this girl. This girl will be yours, but we are giving you the following condition. You have to arrive here before anybody else. Now here lies the matter. Spider decided that since he had a car, the others would find him there.

Audience: They would come on foot.

Narrator: Whoever arrives first will take the bride. This will be a test. They went home. Spider decided he would try to get the girl. Hare asked Chameleon, "Will you hire spider's car and get there early? Who will carry you? You will find spider there. As for me I can run, but how will you get there? That girl is lost."

Chameleon wondered, "What shall I do? This girl is going... I am losing her. She will go with spider as I watch helplessly because I cannot move fast."

Spider went home. He knew he would be the first there. He was telling himself, "By the time they arrive..." When they arrived the following day, Spider was already there settled. Hare was second to arrive, Chameleon last. They found Spider already eating and discussions underway. Things went according to the previous condition. The one who would arrive first would?

Audience: Marry the girl.

Narrator: Marry the girl. Now they settled. The wedding was announced. It is Spider who will marry the girl because he has a car. Now it was a matter of waiting for the wedding day. Spider even decided that Chameleon would be his best man. "Since you are the one who previously had the girl you will be my best man," he told Chameleon. He will be the best man. And Hare would be the master of ceremonies and preside over the cake cutting ceremony.

Audience: Yes.

Narrator Hare waited where the reception was to be held. Spider was driving the car. They were on their way to the reception. On the way, Chameleon would ask the bride, "What did you do to me, you

betrayed me, if it were not for the porridge you used to give us, I would not have agreed to be the best man. Is that what one does to her lover? Is there anything we can do to change the situation?"

The bride told him, "What can we do when I have already been married and it is only the cake that remains to be cut?"

At the reception, Hare spoke about the newly weds: "This is the wedding of Mr. and Mrs. Spider." But he was thinking, "What can I do to turn it to that of Mr. and Mrs. Hare?" He told the guests, "Now we are going to cut the cake to celebrate the wedding of Mr. and Mrs. Spider."

But Hare was still in love with the bride. Even Chameleon. Chameleon is still telling the bride, "And you did something wrong to me."

Audience: "You wronged me."

Narrator: "You betrayed me"

Audience: "You hate me".

Narrator: "You hate me, you turned me down because I did not have shoes."

Now the girl became Spider's wife. They ate the cake and later went home congratulating the newly married saying, "If only I had shoes." Hare would say, "If only I had a tie, if only I had a tie." But they never mentioned that Spider had a car. None of them wanted to confess how they walked. They were blaming other factors. They blamed their lack of ties and shoes for their failure to marry the girl. And yet their problem was how they traveled. Spider traveled faster. He would slide, slide comfortably in his car. They said they were rejected because they did not have ties and shoes. Now the story of those three young men will end there. The story of Hare, Spider and Chameleon. My story and riddles will end where?

May the one who never narrate tales eat *gatutu* while I eat my father's fat lamb whose fat drops *cacacacacacacacaca!*

9. The Hare and the Spider

Narrator: Jecinta Wangithi

Narrator: Say *Indo*:

Audience: *Indo!*

Narrator: Long, Long ago there were two friends, Hare and Spider. And they were very close friends. A time came and Hare got himself a wife. Spider also started longing for the time he would also have his own wife. But he never at any one time thought that his friend Hare was a jealous person. Anywhere he went to woo a girl, Hare would go there after he had left and say bad things about him.

He would tell the girl, "Now that you want to marry that man, have you counted the number of legs he has? Do you know that he has very many legs and to wash every leg you will be required to fetch a full *mutungi* of water? He has eight legs. You will be required to fetch eight *mutungi* of water. When will get time to fetch more water for cooking and for washing clothes and time to go and work on your farm?"

The girls would refuse to get married to Spider. Spider was really in problems. No girl would agree to get married to him. On finding out that there was no one he could marry in this world, one day he decided to go and seek a bride from the heavens. He prepared for his journey. But wily Hare was spying on him and through some bad luck Spider told him where he was going.

Now on the day Spider decided to go to heaven and seek the bride, Hare followed him stealthily. Spider had a big bag and by some bad luck he had not closed it. When he went for a short call, Hare jumped into his bag. Spider continued on his journey. He traveled and at last arrived at the home of his prospective in-laws. On arriving there he was very well received. He was shown a lot of respect. In the house there was a very beautiful girl. Spider's heart told him, "I have arrived where I have always longed to be." He was given a seat and after resting for some time, he felt an urge to go to the toilet. Hare took that opportunity to get out of the bag and seat on Spider's seat. When Spider came back, he found Hare on his seat. He was flabbergasted. "How was Hare able to come to that place". Spider got confused. He knew that Hare would now spoil his opportunity to marry the girl. He was shocked; he felt the urge to visit the toilet once again. When he went out Hare had a good chance to speak and say the bad things about Spider.

He asked the girl, "Girl, have you observed how that man is created? He has eight legs and every day you will have to fetch eight *Mitungi* of water as washing each leg consumes a full *mutungi*. How will you get enough time to fetch water for Spider to wash his body and legs and have enough time to cultivate your farm, to cook, and to wash clothes."

The girl changed her mind and when spider came she told him that she would not marry him. Spider became very angry and he picked his bag in a hurry and left. He went down back home. Hare did not have any chance to get into the bag so that they could climb down to earth together. Hare was left up there, a very worried person. He did not know how he would go back home. The old man in that home would ask the worried Hare, "Now that your friend has left, how are you going to get back home?" Hare told him, "I also do not know how I will go home unless you devise a way of how you can help me."

That old man went into a lot of trouble. He went to their chief and the local elders to seek advise on how Hare could go back home. When they discussed the matter they decided that every person in that village should contribute in weaving a rope. The rope would be used to help Hare drop back to earth. Ropes were weaved by the villagers under the supervision of the chief. Now, one very clever person said that they should tie Hare's hind legs so that he would be able to untie himself once he got to earth. Another argued they should tie the front legs. Now, yet another person who had been endowed with a lot wisdom by God said, "Let's tie up his ears so that he will be able to untie himself without any problems once on earth. Now that is how Hare acquired his long ears. They were not always like that. His ears lengthened because of the manner in which he was dropped from heaven where he had gone to spoil spiders courting. His ears stretched and stretched and became elongated the way they are.

When he got home he stayed in the house for about three days because he was still feeling the pain. On the fourth day he stood outside his house and met Spider. Spider looked at Hare. He felt very bitter when he remembered that Hare had spoilt all his chances of getting married. Now Hare and Spider never

became friends again because Hare was a hypocritical friend. Now children, that is the end of my story. When you are with your friends you should not be like Hare.

10. Kabindura

Narator: Alice Wanjira Rukenya

Narrator: *Say itho*

Audience: *Itho*

Narrator: Long, Long ago, there was a girl who had refused to talk to men of her age. Now, it was during the season when birds had to be scared from eating millet in the farms. It was also a time when the elderly used to drink very much. They would be invited to marriage celebrations. Her mother would go. The girl would remain behind to scare the birds from the millet farm. Kabindura was timing this girl. He was planning how he would get hold of her.

Now, Kabindura decided and said to himself, "I will approach you when your mother is not at home." Kabindura prepared himself. He talked with the other young men. They told him, "Kabindura, now that you have told us you want to marry that daughter of Njaamumo, how can you marry her when you have crooked feet? How can you marry her, while even girls of your age, the ones who got circumcised together with you have refused to marry you?"

You know unless one married from among his age group, he was not regarded as properly married. One was expected to marry a girl from among one's age group, so that the two could grow old together. Since they are of the same age group, they would respect one another. A man was not supposed to marry a person who was older than him. A man would approach the girl he was circumcised with at the same time. The man preferred a girl from far away to avoid meeting in-laws all the time. If you married a girl older than you, she would travel to your home screaming because she was going to be married to a person who was not her agemate.

Now Kabindura decided to lay his strategy. He argued with the other young men. "You said you are going to marry that girl and you cannot even dance with your crooked feet," they told him. After the young men had gone to the dance, Kabindura told himself, "Tomorrow they will come to visit the bride." Kabindura went to look for the girl. When he got at the edge of the millet farm where she was scaring away birds from the farm he sang:

Young girl-*rere*
You have been greeted-*rere*
By Kabindura-*rere*
Come, climb into the bed,
The bed is made-*rere*
And the house is thatched-*rere*
Young girl-*rere*.

The girl sitting on the platform wondered. "Who is that calling me?" She stood up. The platform was built like a house, which was not thatched. It was not thatched so that one could see the birds descending

on the millet. The girl stood up and saw the man uprooting millet. He was calling her and uprooting the millet so that the girl could speak to him. You know his legs were at an angle because of his crooked feet. Then, jiggers were a real menace because some of the pesticides used nowadays were not there. If one were infected with jiggers, the *ndongu* fruit would be used. The juice of the plant would be applied on the jiggers. The juice would kill the parasite. Now, if one had someone to take care of him or her, then one's feet would remain normal. If you saw someone infected with jiggers, it meant that they had no one to take care of them. Kabidura sang:

Young girl-*rere*
You have been greeted-*rere*
By Kabindura-*rere*
Come, climb into the bed,
The bed is made-*rere*
And the house is thatched-*rere*
Young girl-*rere*.

The girl asked herself, "What will mother tell me when she comes back from her drinking spree and finds the millet uprooted?" She descended from the platform. Kabindura sang even more intensely:

Young girl-*rere*
You have been greeted-*rere*
By Kabindura-*rere*
Come, climb into the bed,
The bed is made-*rere*
And the house is thatched-*rere*
Young girl-*rere*.

The girl went to meet Kabindura. She asked him, "Who told you to uproot the millet?"

Young girl-*rere*
You have been greeted-*rere*
By Kabindura-*rere*

Now his arms are outstretched:

Come, climb into the bed,
The bed is made-*rere*
And the house is thatched-*rere*
Young girl-*rere*.

"Who told you to uproot the millet? Can't you speak? Can't you speak? And you call yourself Kabindura? Kabindura son of who? Why don't you tell me you are called Kabindura son of so and so instead of uprooting the millet. What will happen to me?"

"Oh! I thought that this is how you scare birds".

"By uprooting the millet? Does one protect one's food and destroy it at the same time? Now, what have you done?"

"I thought that that is how you scare the birds. I thought I would come along and see whether the food you cook when scaring the birds is ready."

"I have not cooked. But you have really messed things up. You should have come straight to where I do my cooking. How do you expect me to give you food now after you have destroyed all that millet? Now that I have talked to you, you who calls himself Kabindura, after I had decided that the man I ever talk to will be my husband whether he has crooked feet or is infected with jiggers, you have no choice

but to take me as your wife. And now that you have uprooted my mother's millet, what shall we eat? What type of work have you done?"

"I thought that that was how you scare the birds. Since I did not know how you scare the birds. You ought to have come and told me when you heard me sing."

"Did I know what you were doing?"

Kabindura and the girl went to the platform. The girl told Kabindura, "You know I vowed that the man I ever talk to, will marry me. Now what have you done? If I go with you straight away, my mother will complain about the millet."

"No. When she comes, we shall tell her the truth. We shall tell her that I did not know how the birds are scared. But when I came, you did not tell me how it is done."

The girl told him, "This is how the birds are scared away:

Aiyayaiyaiyaiyaiyaiyaiyai

Birds of this farm,

Fly away.

You never differentiate

Between the rich and the poor.

"You should have told me that. Why did you let me uproot the millet? You are the one your mother will hold responsible. When she comes, I will tell her you did not teach me how the birds are scared away."

"For now", the girl said, "I shall become your bride, you will not leave me. I shall go to your home despite your feet being crooked. I shall be taking care of you. If jiggers infect you, I shall be removing them. I am now your bride."

Kabindura told her, "Yes, let it be so. When I first came, you should have told me that you were willing to be my bride." They decided to stay on the farm until dusk. "We shall stay here until the birds go to sleep in the evening." They stayed on the farm and discussed about their first encounter.

Now Kabindura married the girl. His parents took the bridal beer and reported they had stolen someone's 'goat'. Kabindura's mother prepared the beer and it was taken to the girl's clan. Members of the man's clan delivered the beer.

Now, Kabindura went back to his agemates to claim what they had promised him if he won the girl's heart. "I have come," he told them. "Come and see the bride. She is in my home. I have even taken beer. I searched for you but could not get you since you had gone to dance. As I had said, you went to dance and I got a bride. When we go out, girls compete for you while I watch. Things are different now. I have a bride."

The young men went to see the bride. They teased the girl. "Beautiful as you are, you waited all along to be married by Kabindura? And the way we tried to win you? We tried everything. We tried to sing for you so that you may speak to us in vain. What did Kabindura do to you so that you accepted him?"

Did the girl speak to them?

Audience: No.

Narrator: Now, the young men, who were three, gave Kabindura what they had promised. One gave him five goats, the other three cows, the other three goats. Now Kabindura got wealth to pay for the bride that way. He sought advise from his father on what to take to his in-laws first. You know, one starts with the cows. If you are poor, you take three cows. Now Kabindura got married. Kabindura and

his people got a bride. He stayed with his wife. His uncles, and even the aunts blessed them. Now that is the end of my story. May the person who does not narrate stories eat *gatutu* while I eat my father's fat lamb whose fat drips *ca ca ca ca ca ca ca ca ca ca ca!*

11. The Uncircumcised Boy

Narrator: Jecinta Wangithi

Narrator: The story I will tell you today is about a beautiful girls who were not speaking to young men because they had sworn that whoever they speak to, would be their husband. They stayed for a long time without speaking with men and even when they went to the dances, they would not dance with any man because they were afraid that they might end up marrying them.

In spite of being very beautiful, they would refuse to dance with any man and dance with each other. It happened that as time went by these girls would desire some men and speak to them. Whoever spoke to a man would marry him. They gradually spoke to men and eventually all of them except one got married. The one who remained unmarried was the most beautiful. She would not speak to any young man. Even when she was greeted, she remained silent so as not to break the vow she had taken that whoever she speaks to would be her husband.

Now a very young boy, an uncircumcised boy told the young men, "Now this girl you try to speak to in vain, and even if you try to woo her she refuses to speak to you, will become my bride."

The young men disagreed with him. They told him, "We have been unable to win her and we are grown men, how will you marry her?"

Audience: So he was a young boy?

Narrator: Very young. Now that young boy argued for many days with the circumcised men and insisted that that he could win that girl. Now, one day the boy was herding livestock near the path that led to the river. He saw the girl coming from the river carrying water in a gourd. The boy ran to the girl and started crying calling out to the girl. "Girl, you girl speak to me." He cried some more and said to her, "Why are you not speaking to me? Please come over and help. My younger father (uncle) is in labor. He is giving birth!"

The girl dropped the gourd full of water and ran towards the boy, "What are you saying? Where is he?" She asked. The girl followed the boy to go and see the old man giving birth. When she got into the bush she asked the boy where the old man was. Then the boy told her, "Didn't you say the man you will ever speak to will marry you? Now you will be my bride."

When the girl heard that she started crying. She cried and cried and cried. She remembered the many young men she had refused to talk to. And now she had spoken to a small boy. She lamented saying, "I refused to speak to the men because of my vows and now I am going to married by a small boy, an uncircumcised boy."

his people got a bride. He stayed with his wife. His uncles, and even the aunts blessed them. Now that is the end of my story. May the person who does not narrate stories eat *gatutu* while I eat my father's fat lamb whose fat drips *ca ca ca ca ca ca ca ca ca ca ca!*

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She had to marry that boy because of her vows. She went home picked her clothes and went to the boy's home. And the boy went to the young men who had told him that if she ever speaks to him, they would give him cattle and goats. He told them, "Now I have the girl she is in my home. Come and see." When they went and saw the girl they were astonished and they gave the boys the animals they had promised. They were used to pay the bride price for the girl. The girl got married and became the wife of that boy. And my story ends there.

12. Ndamanu

Performers: Dumenico Githingithia (37years) and Peter Njaramba (35 years)

Githingithia: How far had I gone with the story of Ndamanu before we were interrupted?

Njaramba: You had just mentioned that Sarah, this virtuous Christian girl had had been asked by Ndamanu to marry him and had agreed.

Githingithia: Now, when issues get to that stage, the parents had to be seen so that they could give the couple permission for the wedding to take place. If they agreed that would be it.

Njaramba: That is it. They are fit for each other. The shoe belongs to that foot and it doesn't even require socks.

Githingithia: The permission was sought. Ndamanu's fame on how he had become a good Christian was all over the place. The girl's parents did not hesitate. They said they would not prevent the children from anything. They would let them live together even if Ndamanu did not have money to pay the bride price. Property is in ones hands, they said, all one needs to do is to work hard and earn it.

Njaramba: He was almost given the girl free of charge?

Githingithia: Yes! That is what I am telling you. The wedding was arranged. A very big wedding. A nice wedding and they were given presents. Many presents because even members of the congregation had said that when Ndamanu became married he would be elected into the church committee.

Njaramba: Because he was now 'very' saved.

Githingithia: Now listen to the wonders that happened in that place. As there is nothing as bad as playing around with the word of God.

Njaramba: I am listening.

Githingithia: Now after they stayed together as Mr. and Mrs. Ndamanu, they were blessed with a baby boy and the congregation came over to see them. They were very happy.

Njaramba: Because of the visitors?

Githingithia: Yes. But after that, Ndamanu started failing to attend church services.

Njaramba: Too much work or what?

Githingithia: I will tell you. After some time, Ndamanu refused to go to church at all. One day the congregation came to a decision that they should visit Ndamanu so that they can know 'who removed the logs from the hearth and killed the fire.'

Njaramba: Yes. It is possible someone had done just that.

Githingithia: When they got to Ndamanu's home, they 'saw with their mouth' instead of their eyes.

Njaramba: Because they found him drunk?

Githingithia: No he was not drunk. But when they got there and told him they had come to find out why he no longer went to church, Ndamanu told them he had never been saved since he was born

Njaramba: What?

Githingithia: Indeed, one young man who was in the group had once told the elders that Ndamanu was not saved. That he does not speak in tongues. Church elders had refused to listen to him.

Njaramba: Its time for them to believe.

Githingithia: And that young man had almost been expelled from the church. The elders had said he had an evil spirit of hatred. Now when Ndamanu told the elders that he had never even attempted to get saved, they were flabbergasted. They wanted to know how come he could speak in tongues and he had not been saved.

Njaramba: Hi! Hi! Hi!

Githingithia: Ndamanu told them he does not even speak in any tongues. He just listened and heard the people speak in languages he couldn't understand and decided to invent his own spiritual language, one related to his work as motor vehicle mechanic. Those elders were so shocked they said they would like to know whether what he was saying was true or not.

Njaramba: Will they ask him to speak in...?

Githingithia: They asked him. Since they could not believe what he was saying, they asked him to repeat for them the spiritual language he had been speaking in church, so that they could hear.

Njaramba: Will he speak in the tongues?

Githingithia: Oh yes, he has no shame. He started: *Pistoni, pistoni, gasketi, stata, stata, shock absorba, spiindomita, and tamino*. He mentioned the names.

Njaramba: Of motor vehicle parts.

Githingithia: The elders were listening. They got shocked. They asked him why he did that. He told them he was just looking for a way through which he could marry that girl, the good girl Sarah. And since he had won her, he had no problem now. He could even could take some beer these days, he told them.

Njaramba: He surprises me. He is not even afraid of God.

Githingithia: If you think that Jehova waited to punish him you are wrong. After he had said that he opened his mouth like someone who was yawning and his mouth refused to close.

Njaramba: What?

Githingithia: It is God's anger that visited him. He was taken to hospital so that his mouth could be closed but the doctors could not close it. They tried to close it using forceps but the jaws twisted sideways. The mouth was only partly closed. Even today he remains that way because of joking with the Holy Spirit.

Njaramba: It is bad to play around with the word of God I tell you.

Githingithia: People should not play around with the word of God. God's word is fire.

13. Daughter of Jakubu

Performers: Dumenico Githingithia and Njaramba

Njaramba: Dumenico, is it true what I hear, that the wife of Karumba has removed her religious head garb and gone back to her parents?

Dumenico Let those stories be told by their owners.

Njaramba: How can you tell me that the story be told by their owners while everybody here is saying that Karumba has started rearing *Jinis*. And that is why his wife removed her headscarf and returned to her parent's home.

Dumenico: That is just the gossip of Mungetho residents. Karumba has reared no *Jinis*. Ask me and I will tell you ...

Njaramba: That is why I came to you, because I know you must know what happened.

Dumenico: Now, since I was there, after Karumba's father called me so that we may find out what was going on? I heard stories there that made me hear them first with the 'mouth', then with my 'nose' instead of my ears.

Njaramba: What happened?

Dumenico: When the case was put forth, it was a difficult one.

Njaramba: What was happening?

Dumenico: For Karumba to marry the daughter of that *Mukurino*, known as Jakubu, he had to play God.

Njaramba: He played God? What are you trying to tell me?

Dumenico: This is what happened my brother. Karumba wanted Jakubu's daughter badly. And because Karumba did not belong to the *Mukuriono* sect, there was no possibility that he would marry the daughter of Jakubu. At that time in that church, marriage was guided by dreams. There had to be a dream showing who would marry who. Nobody could dream of you marrying anybody from the sect unless you were a member of that sect.

Njaramba: Oh, that is true.

Dumenico: Now Karumba used a con game so as to marry this girl. Do you know what he did?

Njaramba: Unless you tell me.

Dumenico: Karumba did the following.

Njaramba: Yes.

Dumenico: He knew there were overnight prayers at the house of Jakubu every Saturday. That is the day he planned to go...

Njaramba: To Jakubu's

Dumenico: He went to Jakubu's home to try out the tricks he had thought out. He first went to a shop and bought a big new torch, the one that uses eight cells.

Njaramba: What for?

Dumenico: Now he went to Jakubu's house on Saturday night. He walked stealthily like a leopard.

Njaramba: So that he might steal this girl as they slept.

Dumenico: Hold your horses. Let me tell you the story. That time the congregation is still singing and the drumming is going on. There are overnight prayers if you remember.

Njaramba: They are singing.

Dumenico: Karumba came stealthily and climbed to the top of the house. It was a grass-thatched house. He went to the top of the house without making any noise.

Njaramba: What did he want up there?

Dumenico: Let me tell you the story. Stop asking so many questions. Let me finish telling you the story then you can ask the question afterwards.

Njaramba: Okay, He climbed to the top of the house...

Dumenico: He stayed there until the congregation ended their singing and they had slept. He removed the grass thatch at the top of the roof and switched on his powerful torch. He flooded the room with light and then started to speak loudly. He said, "Jakubu, Jakubu, it is me Jehovah your God calling you. Wake up and kneel down".

Njaramba: This man is not afraid of God.

Dumenico: "Jakubu listen carefully." Jakubu woke up shaking like a leaf of nappier grass.

Njaramba: Because Jehova is talking to him.

Dumenico: He knelt down. After seeing him kneel, Karumba spoke to him in loud voice. "Jakubu, Jakubu, today I have blessed you and your house because of your daughter Rebecca. She will give birth to a child who will be a *muthamaki* (king) to lead this country. Jakubu listened very carefully as it was Jehovah, God, speaking to him. Karumba went on. "Tomorrow, the young man who will pass by your compound and ask for drinking water, tell Rebecca to give the water to him. When he asks for some ember to light up a cigarette put your hands upon him and tell him never to smoke again in his life".

Dumenico: *We! We!* Now you are getting me worried. You are making me frightened.

Dumenico: Not yet. You will have to hear what happened first.

Njaramba: Go on.

Dumenico: Karumba told Jakubu, "after you have done that ask Rebecca to go with that man and not to look back. Lift yourself up now and start singing holy songs.

Njaramba: Now they think that God has spoken.

Dumenico: Yes, they sang with awe and when they started the singing the young man switched off the torch. You know it had flooded the room with light.

Njaramba: Because it is the big torch,

Dumenico: On switching it off he re-arranged the grass thatch and climbed down and went home. He left them singing.

Njaramba: At about what time was it then?

Dumenico: It was around three in the morning. Karumba went home a very happy man. He slept. The following day, he ironed his clothes carefully.

Njaramba: Oh yes he has already deceived them.

Dumenico: Oh yes. When it was three in the afternoon, he went to Jakubu's, home. He found the congregation still there praying. They had not gone home. They had all waited to see who would be sent by Jehovah to come and seek Rebecca.

Njaramba: Oh yes.

Dumenico: Karumba came and stood at a distant. And when Jakubu saw him, he went to him and asked, "what do you want young man?" Karumba told him, "I am Okay, I was just passing by and felt very thirsty and thought I would come here and seek some water." Jakubu instantly knew this was the man. "This is the man I was told by Jehovah!"

Njaramba: To hand over the daughter to.

Dumenico: He called his daughter and told her, "Rebecca, bring this young man water and do hurry up. Rebecca came in rushing with a flask full of water and gave it to Karumba. Are you surprised Njaramba?

Njaramba: I am. People are not afraid of God.

Dumenico: Once Karumba had finished drinking the water, he told Rebecca to give him some embers to light his cigarette.

Njaramba: He is asking for fire to light up a cigarette from this religious house.

Dumenico: Oh yes. Jakubu rushed to the young man and put his hands upon his head and told him never again to smoke. Jakubu told his daughter, "Come here Rebecca."

He told the young man, "I am the father of this girl and God has said that I give her to you.

Njaramba: To be your wife.

Dumenico: Oh yes. Karumba put on an act, pretending that he was not yet ready to get married, saying that he had no money for bride price and so forth. Jakubu told his daughter to pack up and follow that man. He told them to go and not to look back. When Karumba arrived home, his parents asked him about the girl. "Now this girl," they asked, "Who are her parents? And how have you brought her here?"

Njaramba: Let me ask you. Did Jakubu know where this young man came from?

Dumenico: Yes. Karumba had explained to him. When his parents asked him what was going on he told them he was forced to marry that girl by her parents and he couldn't let them down. His parents were not satisfied.

Njaramba: They are clever parents.

Dumenico: Yes. The following day they went to Jakubu to find out what was happening. How can their son be given a bride without any preliminaries? When Jakubu received them, he said those were his children and he had given them the green light to stay together because that is what Jehovah had said.

Njaramba: Yes.

Dumenico: The girl lived with the man. His parents also agreed they live together. Bye and bye the girl became pregnant. She gave birth to a boy. Jakubu and his people took them many presents. They thought that the future king had been born. Karumba became rich.

Njaramba: Yes. They had been told the girl would give birth to a boy who will be king.

Dumenico: Yes. But because Karumba is still a criminal, when he had all these things, he started drinking beer.

Njaramba: As he had been given the girl and added money on top.

Dumenico: Ah, yes. And even livestock. He had been given many things as he had sired the future 'king'. Now one day he came home drunk and revealed his secret. He told his wife in his drunkenness, "Rebecca, do you think it was Jehova who had spoken?" You know alcohol has no manners. He will reveal his lies.

Njaramba: He will reveal his secret.

Dumenico: "You think it was God who had spoken, Rebecca. It was me who was on top of the house. I schemed the whole thing." When Rebecca realized that was true, when she realized what had happened she just removed her religious scarf and threw it away. She became like a mad person.

Njaramba: She knew she had been cheated by the evil one.

Dumenico: She went out and ran back to her father's home. She quarreled her parents telling them how they had been cheated. Now she is at her father's home and that is why we had been called to go and listen to that case. We discussed it and it was a difficult case. But later we came to a conclusion. We decided Karumba is in the wrong. He cheated. We agreed that he has to pay the bride price and a fine because of his lies. But as for pretending to be God, we decided that was an issue between him and God. Now that is how Karumba got his wife.

Njaramba: It is true; you could not have talked on behalf of God.

14. Muthunguci

Rendition by: Joseph Kamaru (64Years)

Man: In our family we are born with huge navels

Wamunyori

And I inherited one

Woman: I was born with two navels

Wa Wanjiru

I gave one to the midwife

Man: If you want me tell me

Wamahua

Wamunyori, I do not like hidden love

Woman: Come nearer

To warm yourself

You must come near the fire

Man: Did you come to dance with me?

Wamahua, beautiful one

You dance when you are so far

Woman: Dancing is shaking the shoulder

Wa Wanjiru

Let the fool swing her hips

Man: They tease me that I am old

Beautiful one

Are breasts roasted corn

That I need to use teeth

Woman: The breasts are here for you

Wa Wanjiru, but pray

Who showed you the navel?

Man: The farms are two

Beautiful one

Which one do I cultivate?

Woman: Cultivate the upper one

The one below belong

To the owner of goats

Man: A date in the bush

Wamahua,

To that home I will come

Woman: I will confirm you can dance

Wa Wanjiru

When you dance with the baptized one

Man: Step on me and remove your foot

Wamahua

Beautiful one

You have never stepped on me in bed

Woman: Greet me and look at me

Wa wanjiru

I am a not satisfied by simple greetings

Man: So she is warm

That is why the husband complains

Woman: You came bearded

Saying a razor cannot touch you

Man: I am not asking that I sleep there

I just want to enter

And then leave

Woman: I heard rumors

That your sword

Shrunk into its the sheath

Man: I will seduce you and leave
 So that I disapprove the rumors
Woman: These Guns you see
 Some these guns
 Have no bullets
Man: The bullets are there
 It is only that
 The guns do not make noise
Woman: Do not take me for a fool
 Who dances glancing at his wife
Man: I fell with the bed
 In a naughty woman's house
Woman: You did not fall
 It is the bed that broke down
Man: I seduced the untouchable
 Wamahua
 It was like clearing the fields
Woman: So You have a whip
 That is why that beautiful woman complains.
Man: I was circumcised in the sugar cane farm
 That is why my body is full of sucrose
Woman: When dancing, glance sideways
 The seducer's wife can also be seduced
Man: We shall dance two steps, only two steps
 Then get Njeri to send to the river
Woman: If we do not get Njeri
 You will pay back my porridge
Man: The squirrel called me
 Wamunyori
 But I was unable to enter the burrow
Woman: When called by an older woman
 Do not refuse to go
 A goat's head never becomes lean
Man: Now that it is late
 Let the leopard that strikes do so

15. Nyina wa Njoro

Artist/ Performer: Maiña Wa Nyaguthii (26 years)

You employed me as your driver's turn boy
 But when I learnt how to drive
 You sacked the driver and promoted me
 Saying you like me because I am hardworking

Mother of Njoro
Take your keys now
I will not drive your lorry any longer

You gave me two jobs
Driving and the other in the house
If I complain you buy me a suit
You never want to see me speak to my age mates
But when we are just the two of us
You enjoy and laugh a lot.

You decided you are the battery
And I am the engine
You always sit in the cabin with me
While the other turn boys sit on the truck
Mother of Njoro
Take your keys
I will not drive your lorry any longer

You tricked me with maize grains like chicken
When I got trapped, you had me
You push me up, down, side and side
By the time I come down
I just say 'Amen'

Your son asked me a question
Which surprised me
Whether I do not have a home
Since I never go home
Your daughter is now calling me 'daddy'
Take your keys, mother of Njoro
I will no longer drive your lorry

Do not tell me you will increase my salary
And give me the plot of land at Githurai
I can sense danger from your children
I do not want to loose my life
I dreamt of my death
Let me go home
Be satisfied with the years I have served you
Let me go, Mother of Njoro
Take your keys
I will no longer drive your lorry.

16. **Mutumia Murogi (Lady witch)**

Artist/Performer: Sam Kinuthia. (32years)

This woman is a witch
She is just like a wild animal
Young men of my age
Before you get married
Pray to your God
Because women of today
Are more wily than Delira
She will swallow you whole
Calling you my sweetheart

This is my testimony
Let me advise you
All that glitters is not gold
Always check the sign
Before you board the vehicle
I met this girl, who was very well dressed
I thought she was beautiful
I winked at her
She talked to me in a new language
Even if you later asked me my name
I could not remember

After talking to her, she told me
Her mother had given her a body
That had everything
She invited me
That the steel rod should do its work
If it got blunt
It could always be sharpened again

Satan is powerful
Things happened and we agreed to marry
For two year I never went back home
But due to the prayers of my mother and my clan
Her spell over me waned
And I was able to go home

17. Old Ruffians

Singer: David Ngure (18years)

You say old men cannot be thugs
I saw my father wearing a sword
And a trench coat
Going into the night to court a woman

How can it be old man
An old man who is now a father-in-law
Brings beard into a new home
When you should have called from the gate
And wait for your daughter-in-law to come

Who will get me a good girl to marry
A girl to take to our home
Where she will be laying eggs
Like a hybrid hen

I will dance with this and that one
And the one sitting near the table
Girl, do not look at me, look at my guitar
Lest I swallow you whole
And I will be belching you from my stomach

My mother is tough, she could not be seduced
If she could, she could have been seduced
At Kirubuyu's
Where there are cows
That clear their throats like people

Father, get a wife for me
I am old enough
For a girl to make my bed

18. Ndukamutue Kionje (Do not Cripple her)

Artist/Performer: Lady Wanja (33 years)

Old man, a child who has been born
Cannot be thrown away
Cool off your anger, it is not good
Every home has its secrets

Do not throw your daughter out of the home

Look how you have injured her
Beating her with blows and kicks
A child once born cannot be disowned
Take care you do not disable her

Old man anger is dangerous
Do not pour it (beer)
When putting in the container
You beat up your daughter
You disfigure her
The loss is totally yours

Old man your daughter is your blood
We women have easy hearts
Even if she has transgressed
Know she is not the first one

In our home we are seven
And each had a child before marriage
Your daughter is better off
She has even finished school
While none us did.

All families are now smoke
You cannot know which pot is on fire
Other homes have similar problems
But home secrets are home secrets

19. Wagaciiri

Narrator: Njagi Njuki (73 years)

Narrator: Say *Indo!*

Audience: *Indo!*

Narrator: Long, long ago there was a man who had his own wife. He went away and left his wife. And his wife was pregnant. He left her and went to smith. After he had gone to smith an old woman came to his home. She came there pretending to be very nice but this woman was an ogre. The old woman visited the man's wife regularly and eventually she just started staying there.

Now, time came for the woman to deliver. This woman helped her deliver and after the delivery the woman stayed in the house permanently to assist the new mother. So that she could cook for this new mother, Wagaciiri. But when the ogre cooked she would eat all the food. She would tease Wagaciiri and

tell her, "Wagaciiri, here is some food, take it and eat." And before Wagaciiri could take the food she would say, "If you do not want the food, then I will swallow it."

That is when the mother found out that this woman was not a human being. That she was an ogre. Now Wagaciiri was a very generous person. Even when birds came to her homestead she would feed them with millet. Now the bird she used to feed with her millet was no longer fed. It realized this was because of this old woman who had come to that home. That woman would come home in the evening and after dropping her load of firewood she would shout. "Wagaciiri! Wagaciiri in this home, may you drop on the ground like that load of firewood!" Then she would prepare the food and instead of giving it to Wagaciiri she would tease her saying, "Wagaciiri, take some food and eat but if you do not want then I will swallow it"

Now this bird was a godsend. When it came to seek millet the new mother asked it, "Now if I send you, will you go to my husband and tell him that I have given birth? And it's an ogre, which is living here with me. This bird was like an angel. It went to the smithy and sat on a tree and started singing:

Smith who smithing
Cangararaica
Smith faster
Cangararaica
Your wife has given birth
Cangararaica
The ogre was the midwife
Cangararaica
She never eats anything
Cangararaica
She will die soon
Cangararaica

The men at the smithy heard the song but did not understand anything. They went on smithing. The following morning the bird came to the same place and sang again:

Smith who is smithing
Cangararaica
Smith faster
Cangararaica
Your wife has given birth
Cangararaica
An ogre was the midwife
Cangararaica
She does not eat anything
Cangararaica
She has a short time to live
Cangararaica

Now the smiths asked one another, "Who could have left his wife pregnant". That man said it was he. "The bird is even singing directly above your head," the others told him. He left in a hurry.

When he reached home he found what the bird had sang was true. His wife could not even stand. She was very weak because she had just given birth and was not feeding on anything. The husband cooked for her and after they had eaten, they waited for the ogre to come. The man prepared his spear and hid on the *Itara*. The ogre came back in the evening as usual and shouted:

“Wagaciiri are you still in this home?”

“Yes.”

“May you drop on the ground like that load of firewood!”

“May you also drop like the load!”

“Who are you answering back like that?”

“Who are you also talking to like that?”

“How are you talking today as if those who went to smith have come back?”

“You are also talking as if they have come back?”

The ogre hurried into the house saying, “Wagaciiri, today I will kill you.”

She went in and met the husband. He was ready with his spears. He speared her to death.

After he had killed the ogre the man stayed with his wife cooking for her and the child until she was strong enough. Then he went back to the smithy and collected his tools and came back home. From then on, He never went to work far away again.

And now that is the end of my story.

20. Gitiro

Rendition by: Muthoni Irungu (80 years)

Scoop for me with the horn
That scoops for *Nyakinyua* women
And if its texture is really nice
I will never again throw a child into the latrin

Let her drink, let her drink
She is my co-wife
She is the one who brought hot water
And a torch
Daughter of Ngithi
Who says I stay afar from you
That I am not close to you
When only it's an arms-length
That can separate me from you

I will drink it (beer)
It belongs to my co-wife
It was not bought with money
If it was bought with money
I would be away in the farm working

Let her drink, my co-wife let her drink
She is the one who was taking care of me
With a torch and hot water
When I was sick

21. Magerio Ma Mwedwa (My Wife's trials)

Artist/performer: J.J. Muoni (30 years)

My love has passed the test of problems
Since I left home and she was left alone
She had to bear it all
I was shocked when she told me
The problems she had to contend with

My brothers had told her
To go back to her parents
Telling her I had deserted her
Instead of helping her
They would add to her problems
I am grateful you have persevered

If problems were disease
She would have died
Because even friends
Were telling her that I had left her
But she persevered
Because hers was true love

Never tell me anything about Wangui
Because if problems were disease
She would have died
Whether it is hot or cold
I know she is mine and cannot leave me
I award her the degree of love
Because of her perseverance

22. Kurumwo Ni Ng'unda (Bitten by a Donkey)

By: Dumenico Githingithia and Jegeman Productions

SCENE ONE (on phone)

Girl: (on phone) Hello, hello, Can I help you?

Gichamba: Can I speak to Caroline?

Girl: Just hold on. Carol, Carol, you have phone call.

Carlo: Hello, Caroline speaking.

Gichamba: Ahh, Whats up. You are speaking too much *English* my dear. How are you?

Carol: Ahh. It is you, my sugar cane.

Gichamba: Who else? Except me your sweet heart.

Carol: I am just missing you too much. What is wrong with you? Why did you stand me up last Friday? What's wrong? I waited for you but you did not come.

Gichamba: *Wee!* Just hold it there. My wife messed me up. That I must take her to watch the Kikuyu play, '*Mugathe Mubuthi*'.

Carol: It is not *Mubuthi*, it is *mubogothi*. I know you cannot stand me up without a good reason. Anyway, sorry for that.

Gichamba: Let us stop gossiping on the phone. I will give you the details later.

Carol: Otherwise how is your wife?

Gichamba: She is okay. Running her 'ministry of home affairs' taking care of everybody and if salt or sugar is finished she lets the 'minister of finance' know.

Carrol: Are you the 'minister for finance'?

Gichamba: It is me who says what is to be done. Anyway what are your plans for the weekend?

Carol: The ball is in your court. Anything you say, goes. I am as free as a gear.

Gichamba: Let me surprise you darling. My mind told me that I could lie to the 'minister for home affairs,' that is is my wife, and tell her I will go upcountry over the weekend. I will go there because I received a telephone call and was told that the donkey has bitten my mother on her arm as she was feeding it with *thanu*

Carol: What is *thanu*

Gichamba: That is dry maize. I will cheat her that the caller said that my mother is badly injured. That way I can spend the weekend with you.

Carol: I see. You mean there are donkeys in the rural area where you come from?

Gichamba: Yes. There is one.

Carol: It appears the donkeys in your place are real mean. Get yourself a better lie or you will get yourself in trouble.

Gichamba: No. You do not know anything Carol. When a donkey is angry it can bite someone. It is true.

Carol: Are you serious? That is the first time I have heard that. But you are the wise one. On my side there is no problem.

Gichamba: That plan is watertight. Let's meet at Super Mambo at six thirty in the evening on Friday.

Carol: And remember it is month end and the landlord is waiting, you know.

Gichamba: Ahh, no hustle. Even small things like that and you want to call the police. See you darling.

Carol: Bye, bye and take care.

Gichamba: *Look you.*

Carol: *See ya.*

SCENE TWO (*Gichamba's Home*)

Gichamba: Mother of Mary how have you been?

Wife: I have been okay. Why do you look so worried?

Gichamba: I received a telephone call saying that my mother has been bitten by a donkey while feeding it with maize. Now since as you know she is quite elderly, I need to go and see her. What I will do on Friday after work is to take a public vehicle and visit her. It can be terrible when a donkey bites someone.

Wife: Why can't you go on Saturday instead of Friday? Isn't it the same?

Gichamba: No, no. On Saturday we have a meeting. Let me go on Friday and come back on Saturday.

Wife: O.K. When you go, console her. And if it is very bad, bring her here so that she can seek treatment here in town.

Gichamba: Yes. I was thinking along those lines too.

Wife: By the way did you send her the money to pay for the farm hand?

Gichamba: Oh no. But I will go with the money when I travel.

SCENE THREE (*On phone*)

Receptionist: Hello can I help you please.

Gichamba: Yes. Can I speak to Carol?

Carol: Hello, Carol speaking.

Gichamba: Ah, Is that Carol. How are Things?

Carol: Is that my sweetheart. I am just missing you.

Gichamba: It is I. As straight as a spear. Let me amuse you my dear. I succeeded. He, he, he, he. I cheated my wife and she was satisfied.

Carol: She did not suspect anything.

Gichamba: Suspect what. Don't you know I am a thorough schemer? Anyway, I didn't have much to say, just to remind you the date is tomorrow at six thirty.

Carol: O.K. Sweetheart.

SCENE FOUR. (*At Gichamba's Rural home*)

Gichamba's Mother: Abednego, Abenego, Abednego! Father of Gichamba!

Gichamba's Father: Oh. It's that *Ugali* making me feel sleepy.

Gichamba's Mother: Wake up, wake. There is something I want us to talk over. Wake up. I want to tell you that because Nyám-bura's wedding will be at the Cathedral in the city on Saturday, I think I will leave on Friday and spend the night at Gichamba's house. That way I will be able to see them.

Gichamba's Father: No you will go on Saturday. I will wake you up very early and you will arrive in time. When you get there tell that son of mine that I am not his age mate.

Gichamba's Mother: Hi, why?

Gichamba's Father: He said he would be paying the farm hand and now for three months he has not sent any money. I do not want this confusion. Tell him to give you the money. Why did he say he would be paying the farm hand and he is not doing so?

Gichamba's Mother: Don't you realize this is the period when school fee is being paid? I am sure when he gets the money he will send it. Let me go to the parcel of land near the river and dig out a few tubers to take to them.

Gichamba's Father: Give me my walking tick. I want to go to the shopping center.

Gichamba's Mother: And when you are at it bring some milking grease and some sugar.

Gichamba's Father: There is no money: We shall have to drink tea without sugar.

SCENE FIVE (*At a resort.*)

Gichamba: Oh sorry. I have not kept you waiting.

Carol: No.

Gichamba: Ha, ha, ha, I am a master schemer, do you know what she told me when I informed her that a donkey had bitten mother.

Carol: Yeah, what did she say?

Gichamba: (*Mimicking his wife*) If it is very serious, bring her here so that she can be treated here in the city.

Carol: Oh, you are a master schemer. But don't you think that one day your wife will meet with your mother and she will ask her about the donkey wound?

Gichamba: Don't you worry yourself with things that will happen in the future. Worry yourself with what we are doing now. Waiter! Waiter! Bring two plates of gizzards.

Carol: You really like gizzards.

Gichamba: I just feel nice when I am chewing gizzards. Anyway do you know that we shall spend the night here?

Carol: Is it? I did not know.

Gichamba: On second thought, since the rooms here are self-contained and have television sets, lets have drinks in our own room.

Carol: Slow down Gichamba.

Gichamba: Waiter Waiter! Take our drinks to the room.

SCENE SIX (*Taxi scene*)

Gichamba's Mother: You young man.

Taxi Tout: Say, old one, are you going?

Gichamba's Mother: Yes. I want to go to a place called Komarock. Is your vehicle going there?

Taxi Tout: Yes, oh yes, get in quickly. Hand over your bag, I keep it in the boot.

Gichamba's Mother: No just leave my bag alone. That where I keep my money.

Taxi Tout: Driver, let's go, the vehicle is full.

Gichamba's Mother: Reduce the volume of that music. You are breaking my eardrums. Reduce it.

Taxi Tout: No old one, people here love that noise.

Gichamba's Mother: Is this the generation that was prophesied about. That it would have jingles instead of ears. Now drop me at a place called Mwaiga.

Taxi tout: We are almost there. It is this stage. Go well old one.

Gichamba's Mother: Oh, my ears.

SCENE SEVEN (*Gichamba's home*)

Gichamba's Mother: (*Knocking the door*). Hodi. Are there people in the house?

Gichamba's Wife: (*From inside*) Mary, go and find out who is knocking on the door.

Mary: It's grandmother.

Gichamba's wife: Mother, how are you, How is it at home?

Gichamba's Mother: It is all right there. How are you people? You have not been to see us. Or do you want to come only when there is a problem.

Gichamba's Wife: No mother. I was even asking Gichamba the other day whether he is still sending money for the farm hand.

Gichamba's mother: Even his father told me to ask him the same thing when I come.

Gichamba's Wife: Ask him? Didn't you come together?

Gichamba's Mother: What is going on?

Gichamba's Wife: Are you telling me you came from home today and you did not meet Gichamba? Let me see your arm. Which one was bitten by a donkey?

Gichamba's mother: Hi? What was that? Bitten by what? Donkey? You people will show me wonders. What type of stories are you telling me about donkeys? Our only donkey died in January. What is all this about?

Gichamba's Wife: Now wait until he gets here. The numbers of days for the thief are forty.

Gichamba's Mother: He cheated you I have been bitten by a donkey so that he can do his mischief. The wonders children will show us these days!

Gichamba's Wife: Mother, let me tell you, on Wednesday, he came here panting and told me he had received a telephone call from home saying that you have been bitten by a donkey. He said on Friday he would come straight home to see you and then know the next step to take.

Gichamba's Mother: My God! I had not even planned to come here it is only that there is a wedding we are attending at the Cathedral and I thought, I thought it would be nice to come along and see you people. After which I will go to the church to witness the wedding.

Gichamba's Wife: Now mother, this is what you will do. Since these issues are serious, you will have to stay here for a while and we wait for him. You hide in the kitchen and let's hear what he has to say for himself.

Gichamba's Mother: I agree with you. If he could tell you I have been bitten by a donkey, I will wait and find out whether he has another mother. Show me a place to rest as we wait for him.

Gichamba's Wife: First, have some food.

SCENE EIGHT: (*At the Resort*)

Gichamba: Carol, Carol, wake up its already morning. Take a shower so that we can catch some breakfast.

Carol: Why are you waking me up so early and it is on a Saturday?

Gichamba: You say it is Saturday. Do you know I have to pass through the market and buy arrowroots to cover-up, so that it will appear as if I have come from the rural home? I will leave you here sleeping if you are in no hurry. I will call you on Monday.

Carol: But leave what I asked you for because of the landlord.

Gichamba: There is no problem. The Money is here. Let us talk on Monday.

Carol: Bye and regards to your wife.

Gichamba: Stop those jokes.

Carol: Bye, bye darling. Take care.

Gichamba: (*On the way out*) Hi! Hi! I have spent so much money. Five thousand. Let me pass through the market and buy those items so that my wife might not suspect what....

Gichamba: (*at the market*) Mama, for how much are you selling these arrowroots

Market woman: Fifty shillings.

Gichamba: Pack for one hundred. (*Leaves lamenting*) Oh the money I spent! Five thousand for one night.

SCENE NINE (*Gichamba's home*)

Gichamba: Hodi, open the door. It is raining outside. Open the door.

Gichamba's Wife: Sorry, oh, welcome.

Gichamba: Now, why do you delay so much in opening the door and it is raining heavily. I am drenched. How come you are not asking me about the rural home?

Gichamba's Wife: But it is you who has come. Give us the news.

Gichamba: Many greetings from there.

Gichamba's Wife: We accept the greetings. How is your mother?

Gichamba: Ah Ah Ah. She has not been bitted very badly. It was only the finger, which had been injured. Don't you know that as women grow old they exaggerate things? Even a minor thing and the police have to be called. As women grow old they become funny. Here are the goods she asked me to bring you.

Gichamba's Wife: Thank you. Ah there is a gift that I have kept for you. I am sure you will be very happy when you see it. Let me bring it to you.

Gichamba: Oh yes, bring it my dear.

Gichamba's Mother (*coming out of the kitchen*) Gichamba! Is it you? You little devil who said a donkey had bitten me so that you can go wherever you wanted.

Gichamba's Wife: The days of a thief are numbered.

Gichamba: Oh no, I had only dreamt.

Gichamba's Mother: You had a dream that a donkey had bitten me so that you could go wherever you wanted to go.

Gichamba: I am so sorry mother.

Gichamba's Mother: I come here to find Mary's mother in grief, telling me funny stories.

Gichamba's Wife: Gichamba, which mother had been bitten by a donkey?

Gichamba: I repent. I will never do that again.

Gichamba's Wife: Well. Well, wait until mother goes and then you will surely tell me where you were.

23. Kiaumbui

Performer: Muthoni Irungu

Kiambui son of Rungiri

You are a sinner and a transgressor

And you do not seem to know it

You went away and neglected your wife
Because of a prostitute
When the prostitute leaves you
Who will ululate for you

Kiambui son of Rungiri
You are a sinner and a transgressor
And you do not seem to know it

You left your children and went away
Because of a prostitute
When the prostitute leaves you
Who will hold your head

24. The promiscuous Couple

Narrator/Preacher J. J. Gitahi (36 years)

The many things, which are there, the problems and conflicts in homes started in the mouth of a woman called Eve. That is why you find in many homes there is no trust and there is infidelity. I was amused the other day when someone told me a story about a man. This man was going back home during the day to praise himself with his housemaid when his wife was at work. He would go back there and praise himself with the housemaid. They would spend the day together.

His wife came to learn of it. When she realized that her husband was not a straightforward person, She befriended the charcoal seller. She started praising herself with him. Now one day, the little child espied on them when they were with the charcoal seller. Now, one evening as they sat in the sitting room their young child told her father:

Daughter. : Daddy, Daddy, and can I tell you something that Mummy did today.

Mother: *Wee* do not...

Father: Tell me, tell me.

Daughter: Today, today, mummy did with the charcoal seller what you do with auntie (Housemaid).

Now listen again to this, the girl is telling her father that her mother did with the charcoal man what he does with the housemaid. Now they are both exposed. Tell me, between the two, who can blame the other. From that time their home became a 'Vietnam'. If one accused the other of anything the other one would retort. "You also did it". "Even you!" "Even you!" "You also did it! ..."

25. Gikeno (Happiness)

Performers: Mugwandi Catholic choir

It is a great day as we celebrate
For the bride and the bridegroom
Let us celebrate with happiness
As we have seen the two
Who want to start a new home

The home will be the pillar of the church
When you look up, what do you see?
You see the glory of God
In front of our eyes

The word says that
He who longs for a woman
Longs for something good
He has been chosen by God

Live together, live well
There are many deaths in this world
Some would want to separate you
But God has chosen only one true death
That should separate you
Now you groom, let her be yours
And yours only, give her your love
Let her be the only one

I hear the advice but I say
The intelligent woman builds her house
The stupid woman destroys it with her hands

I have heard your words
Let us be happy
Gikuyu said, the meat of one's choice
Has no bone
One's love is one
The rest is just a crowd
Hold on to what you have
We will agree with what Gikuyu said
Hold on to what you have
Because Gikuyu could not make a mistake

We will ask you to pray often
Call upon God often and ask for blessing

Live together, loving one another
You have many deaths to separate you
But God has only one death
That should separate you

26. Ngemi Ciumaga na Mucii (Ululations Come from the Home)

Performers: Mugwandi Catholic Choir

Hail the bride,
Ululations come from the home
Do not take things easily
The good home, the firm home
Ululations come from that home

Now *Nyakinyua*
Ululations come from the home
Where people pray together in Christ
Where there are no quarrels

Build a home, a great home
Home is peace
Hail the bride
The good home, the firm home
That home that can be smoke

We can only build the home
And be self-sufficient in peace
A foolish woman cannot build a house
A lazy woman cannot build a house
A jealous woman cannot build a house
A quarrelsome woman cannot build a house
A gossiping woman cannot build a house
A loose woman cannot build a house

Nyakinyua have you heard
Take care of the home
Kang'ei have you heard
Take care of the homes
Don't sit there and say
Homes are smoke

27. Kiriro

Performed by: Wanjiru wa Kabuagara (Adapted from Kabira and Karega: 1988:161-162).

Gichui people you came
To greet Waceera Clan
She came here
A river drowned her
When it dried up the announcer died too
There is nothing I understand
When our children come in and go out
Wacera did you leave that boy
And Njeri at home

And I am an only child
Announcers when you reach uceera clan
Greet Kigotho for me
My father I know he never came
Oh dear

Ngewa I have gone
Greet those of Njeri clan
You hear I told you I am alone
I am the lone child of Wangari
But now I will never be able to wander anywhere
You hear

I told you I am all alone
I am the only child of Wangari
But now I, Waceera, I am no more
Able to wander
You hear

O dear, well
I, Njeeri, get me milk
From my father Kigotho's cow
You hear
And now stay in peace

28. Ndukanjikire Heho (Don't Freeze Me)

Artist/performer: Lady Wanja

A Person of this world, it is true

A human being, forgets easily
He changes and forgets
All the help he has received
It (cow) is praised it had milk
Only after it has died

When we fell in love young man
You found me with my own money
My father had secured a job for me
Before he died
When we fell in love
Your love overwhelmed me
Although you were jobless
We lived on my salary

You were nice and my heart cheated me
That we could live together
I secured a loan from my work place
So that you can start some business
God blessed our business and it did well
And now you are throwing words at me
Words that shake my heart
I will not allow you to make me frigid

In my job I work through the night shift
So that I can repay the loan
You have never called my work place and missed me
And now it is you, with a clouded face
Telling me to stop working and become a housewife
That I have become promiscuous

It is not even one month
Since I finished repaying the loan
The loan that put you into business
I have never even asked you
How you spend the income from the business
And now you are interfering with my job
Because you have money
You want to make me feel useless

I cannot stop working
Only retirement will end my career
Tell me what it is you want
And do it fast as
I am returning back to work
I will not allow you

To make me feel useless.

29. The Couple that Never Spoke to Each Other

Narrator/Preacher: J.J.Gitahi

Now there was a man who was very stubborn. Even in his own home he would not speak to his wife, and that would be because of a minor disagreement. This man lost a lot because of his behaviour. Let me tell you these stories so that you can learn a lesson from them. Now that man and his wife did not speak to one another. They did not speak to one another for a long time.

One day that man saw an advertisement. He was unemployed. He saw an advertisement in a place where they needed people to go and attend an interview. He went there. He did the interview and passed well. He was told to report the following day to start work but he had to be there by six o'clock in the morning.

Now, when he went back home, before he slept, he wanted to ask his wife to wake him up early the following morning. But since they were not on speaking with each other, he wrote a note: WAKE ME UP AT SIX O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING. He put the note on the bedside table and he slept. The wife saw the note. She read that she wakes him up at six o'clock the following morning.

The woman woke up early as usual the following morning. She woke up before six o'clock and started performing her many chores. When it was six o'clock in the morning, she took a piece of paper and pen and wrote: WAKE UP, IT IS SIX O'CLOCK.

She put the note where?

Audience: On the table.

Narrator: On the table. Now isn't the man still asleep.

Audience: Yes!

Narrator: Will he read it?

Audience: No.

The man slept. He slept and slept. When he woke up it was very late. He wondered. "Didn't I ask my wife to wake me up, did she read the note or not."

As he was looking for the note he had written to his wife, he found another note written: WAKE UP. IT IS SIX O'CLOCK. He held his head in his palms. He had missed the job. Now he missed the job because when he arrived there it was after six o'clock and he had been substituted with someone else. He lost that opportunity because of something small, something minor that could have been solved and finished at home. Instead of solving problems these are people who are sending each other missives in the same house. May such things never happen in our homes.

30. The Salt Argument

Narrator/preacher: J. J. Gitahi

I always tell women to pray and to tell God what they want instead of always arguing. Arguments usually destroy homes. One day, one woman had an argument with her husband. They argued over salt. That the food had too much salt. The woman had served her husband food and after tasting it, an argument arose:

Man: Mother of my children this food is too salty.

Woman: No you are mistaken. The food has just the right amount of salt

Man: No, there is too much salt in this food. I can taste the salt. I am the one who is eating the food.

Woman: No! That food is not salty I am the one who cooked it and I should know!

Now they started shouting at each other.

Man: But nevertheless, the food is salty

Woman: It isn't!

Man: IT IS!

Woman: IT ISN'T!

Man: I will slap you

In the height of the argument the man slapped her. He beat his wife. In retaliation his wife picked up her things and went back to her parents. She stayed there until the man went there to seek her. They talked over the issue.

Audience: The salt issue.

Narrator: Yes, the salt issue. They had been separated because of the salt. Imagine that a pinch of salt would make a man and his wife, two grown up people, to separate. Arguing and telling each other "It is salty", "It isn't salty", "It is salty", "It isn't salty."

Now when the man went to fetch her back from her parents, the elders discussed the issue and said it was a small matter. They were allowed to go back home. On their way home they stopped at a cafeteria to take some tea. As they sipped their tea the husband told his wife:

Man: You know mother of the children, I never intended to slap you. It is only that sometimes you do not listen. You disagreed with me that the food was salty when it was salty.

Woman: But the food was not salty.

Man: But it was salty. It was me who was eating.

Woman: It was not salty. It was me who had cooked the food.

They started fighting all over again and the woman ran back to her parent's home. In a situation like this it is difficult to find God because these are people who are not ready to be saved....

31. Menyerera Mucii

Artist/Performer: Lady Wanja

Dear Brother, take care of this home

You are the eldest, the pillar of the home
The Kikuyu proverb says
The eldest son is like the father
Take care of this home
Lest it breaks up
As father said, we should always be together

When Father died, he left us with Grandmother
When she died, She left us with our mother
Our uncle Njoroge helped mother
In educating and feeding us
Uncle Njoroge we shall never forget you
Together with our grandmother Wachege

Father died when we were young children
Mother worked hard to bring us up
She sent us to school and remember
All that you have, came from our mother

Be aware when you get married
You never married a wife for our mother
Your wife should respect our mother
It is her time to relax
Tell your wife that mother is not her co-wife
She is like her mother

Remember that your parent
Is your second God
Even if she does something bad, bear with her
She is your parent
And god's commandment is
Honor your mother and father

32. Ngemi Ciumaga Na Mucii

Artist/Performer: Joseph Kamaru

Who is this man, who doesn't know
His father and his mother
Who is this woman who does not know
His mother and his father
And your father is old
And your mother is old

If they ask you for a blanket
You say you do not have money
And when asked for a trench coat
You say you do not have money
And you can afford a car
And can afford the movies
And you can afford cigarettes
And the club you can afford
And the cosmetics, fashionable clothes
All these you can afford
Young men and women
I want you to know that, ululations come from the home.

Your mother collects dry maize stalks
When you use charcoal
And your father drinks *karubu*
While you drink bottled beer
And it is not that he likes it
But just to forget his problems
Because when he talks to you
You tell him
That you cannot afford the money
And when your mother talks to you
You cannot listen

Young men and women listen
It is a great shame
When you visit your home with your age mates
You are afraid to show them
Your father or your mother
Your mother sleeps in a hut
Your father sleeps in the hut
Which has no goat
And a home without livestock is not a home

Young people I will tell you the truth
When they are in the car
You will hear them saying
The one who sat next to the granary
Is my mother
And the one who was sleeping on the grass
Is my father
That is why some of you are having accidents
And you cannot understand the reason behind it
Ululations come from home
Never say you have no money

33. Muirungu

Artist/performer: Joseph Kamaru

You discussed and decided
Sons of my father
That you will consume me
From the sides like hot ugali
And the land belongs to the clan
I am dying from my own sweetness
Like the sugar cane, I *Muirungu*

That group which excluded my father and mother
That group that excluded the clan elders
Who was making decisions
So that you can consume me like hot *ugali*
You got me retired and said
I should go home and work on the farm
Where do I do the farming
And it's not on your farm
That you bought through the back door.

That farm you want to take is mine
The title deed is there
It is not like the ones you keep in the bank
Remember even the barber gets shaved.

This is not the end of the world
And even the tree in the field
The wood carver can never reach its center stem
Before clearing the bark and the inside rings

Now that you have decided to disinherit me
You forget the beetle has been in the field with the ball
All the time but has never scored a goal
You will consume what is mine
But know my God will come
The year has three seasons
Those inside the body will surely return

These days there are no brothers
Your brother will kill you because of property
It is better to just have a friend
A good friend who is not a relative

34. Children left at the old homestead

Narrator: Njagi Njuki

Narrator: Now there was a time when a man got married to his wife. Why they got married, I cannot understand. When they got married, I do not know the type of thoughts that went through their minds. Now they had two children, a boy and a girl. Now they decided to abandon these children. They told each other, "When we met and loved each other and got married we did not have anything". And this is a good story you see people are these days neglecting their children. Now this man told his wife "Now wife tell me, when we met, did we have children?"

"No"

"I will show you where we shall go."

And the woman could not refuse what the husband said. So they went and left the children asleep. They even left the livestock. It was very early in the morning. After they went where they went, they built a house.

During those days a child would not have siblings until they were around five years. It was not until a child could go and herd that a sibling was sought. Now when the children woke up they found that their parents were gone. They were alone. They asked each other, "What happened to our parents?"

The boy told the girl to go to the granary and fetch maize. The girl told the boy they could not eat maize, which was not cooked. The girl said, "Now since I will be your mother and you will be my father, I will just cook for you the way mother used to do. To comfort each other these children gave each other new names. The girl was called Gachinjiriri and the boy Ruminjururu.

Now the boy went to herd the animals. When he came back he asked, "Isn't the food ready?" And since the girl could not cook as fast as their mother used to cook she told him:

Uuui Ruminjururu my dear brother
That is what you have said
And the way we were left in the homestead
Eating ashes from the hearth

When the boy heard that he kept quiet. He said it was okay. Now the food got ready and the boy was served. Even if it was not very well cooked they ate the food the way it was. They would then lock the house and sleep early before hyenas started prowling the neighborhood.

After staying for some while, they found that their animals needed to be taken to the salt licks. They agreed to take the animals to the salt licks. The boy knew the way because he used to accompany his father when he took the animals to the salt licks. Now they herded the cattle and the goats and sheep and started on the journey. As they traveled they would be separated and each would be on either side of the livestock. They would sing to each other. The girl would begin:

Uuui Ruminjururu my dear brother
Is that what you have said and asked
And the way we were left
At the old homestead
Eating ashes from the hearth

And the boy would answer:

Uuui Gacinjiriri my dear sister
That is what I have said and asked
And the way we were left
At the old homestead
Eating ashes from the hearth

They proceeded with their journey. They were both taking care of the animals. They herded them towards the salt licks. They couldn't move very fast so they took their time. When they reached the salt licks other people had already fed their animals. After feeding their herd they started their journey back home. And it was a long distance.

Now on their way home it became very late. They looked for a home where they could put up for the night. They came upon a homestead and decided to seek homage for the night there. Now it was in that homestead that their parents lived. Their father and mother had built a house there. They went to seek overnight stay there. They were afraid that they might lose their livestock. So when they were told to go into the house to warm themselves by the fireside, one of them would be left outside watching over the animals. If the one outside felt that the one inside had warmed him long enough, She would sing:

Uuui Ruminjururu my dear brother
That is what you have said
And the way we were left
At the old homestead
Eating ashes from the hearth

And he would reply:

Uuui Gachinjiriri my dear sister
That is what you have said
And the way we were left
At the old homestead
Eating ashes from the hearth

And they would exchange places. After sometime, the boy would call her. Now the woman in that home listened keenly. She heard those words. She asked her husband. "Now husbands, these children, what type of songs are they singing?"

"What?" The husband would shout.

"I hear as if they are our abandoned children."

"Go away. Do you think they are still alive? Wild animals must have eaten them by now."

Audience: Those parents had left the children so that they die?

Narrator: Yes so that they can be alone. The man had said that they leave them. Now the other one thought the girl had stayed for too long. He sang out:

Uuui Gachinjiriri my dear sister
That is what you have said
And the way we were left
At the old homestead
Eating ashes from the hearth

And they would exchange places. Now when the woman had heard what was being said several times she told her husband to go out and listen to the songs. He went out and listened and heard. When he listened the old man knew it was them. He called them into the house and he agreed that they were indeed his children. He asked both of them to come into the house and assured them the animals were

safe. The homestead was fenced. They were now re-united together. The following day, a lamb was slaughtered for the children. They ate together.

They decided to go back to their original homestead together. They went back with all their animals. Now that man was very repentant because he is the one who had caused all these problems. He had betrayed his wife and the children. And the children were helped by God to overcome their problems.

Now this story as we are told is about how people neglect their children. How it is possible to have a clever and a foolish parent. Now if I have a problem with my wife and she agrees with what I tell her and I happen to be foolish or it happens that I am not very sane, the woman will follow what I have said despite my foolishness. Now when I hear that story of what was going on, it shows that even a clever person can be led by a fool. The old man was foolish, but the woman was agreeing with him. Now God saved the situation.

Today people are neglecting the children. You find that a woman will claim that her husband has annoyed her and she goes away leaving the children. Or a man runs away from home because he is tired of his wife. How can you be tired of your wife? That is why we are having many street children. All you need is to talk and go on with life. That is why you find these days there are some men who hang themselves or a woman has hanged herself over petty domestic issues.

And some other people are quite foolish- why would a grown up like me go and drink beer and come home to harass members of my family. Such that when I am at home nobody can talk. Problems are not solved that way, the way that old man wanted to solve them. Now that is the end of my story.

35. Nyaga Na Njengei

Narrator: Gadys Wakiathi (68 years)

Narrator: Say *Indo*.

Audience: *Indo*

Narrator: A long time ago there was a man who had two wives. These two women, had a son each. The first wife's son was called Nyaga while the second wife's was called Ngari. Now a time came when there was a terrible famine in the land. There was no rain and everybody used to go to forage for food. The women would go to the river valleys and try to see whether they could get wild vegetables. The men could go to the forest to trap animals. In the evening they would all meet at home and see what each had brought.

The boys would go hunting with their father. But one day they went to hunt alone. They used to go and hunt at a place, which was near a swamp. There they would trap the animals known as *njengei*. They climbed up the tree where they trapped the *Njengei*. Ngari told Nyaga to hold on to it but the animal beseeched Nyaga to let it go. Nyaga let it slip away. Ngari told him, "It is the animal you have deliberately let go. I will report you to father when we go home. Tonight you will sleep on an empty stomach."

When they got home Nyaga told Ngari not to report him, that he would give him a share of his food. You know there is a famine and the food shared out is little. So Ngari would now be happy because he would get more food. They agreed on that and when the food was served Ngari would get part of what Nyaga was eating.

Now their mother started worrying because she noticed that one of the children was getting thinner while the other was getting fatter. She decided to supervise them more keenly when they were eating. That day, Ngari was not given his share. The following day, he told Nyaga, "Since you did not give me anything last night I will report you to father."

The following day, the boys and their father went to the fields to hunt. When they came home with a big buck it was slaughtered and cooked and as they were eating, Ngari told his father. "You know father, we are having so many problems with food and the other day while we were hunting, Nyaga released the *Njengei* we had trapped."

"Is that so?" The father asked and kept quiet.

One day they all went to hunt. They climbed the tree and trapped a *njengei*. As they descended down Ngari went down first then left his father behind. His father crucified Nyaga with pieces of sharpened wood and left him up the tree. He told him that was his punishment for letting the animal escape. Nyaga cried after his father. "Father, can you really leave me here on the tree and I did that by mistake?"

His plea fell on deaf ears. His father and Ngari went home. But they did not say where they had left Nyaga. When Nyaga's mother enquired after her child, the father said that Nyaga had gone for a short call in the bush and never came back.

Nyaga stayed on the tree. He became hungry and started eating the bark of the tree. Then those animals, the *njengei* they used to hunt, came by and the boy decided to seek their help. As each animal passed, he would say, "That looks like the *njengei* that I once trapped and let go?" He repeated that to all of them and one of them said, "Yes I am the animal you trapped and now I will release you." It lifted its horns up the tree and Nyaga was able to climb down. The animal told Nyaga, "Since you helped me, I will make you rich. I will give you many things. Uproot that plant over there."

Nyaga uprooted the plant and out of it many goats came out. He was told to uproot another one and from it appeared cattle. Nyaga was given everything he needed by that animal and told to start his own homestead across the valley. The animal asked him to be taken care of and warned that it was never to be slaughtered unless when very old and blind. Nyaga did as he was told. He now became wealthy.

One day his younger sisters came to search for vegetables near the ridge where he lived. They saw a man herding cattle across the valley and said, "That looks like our brother Nyaga, who got lost." Nyaga said:

It is me. It is me my sisters,
The one who was crucified
With eighteen spikes by your father
Take that rope and cross over

He passed them a piece of rope, which they used like a bridge to cross over. They were given food to eat and to carry home. You know the famine in their place had not ended. When they got home with the

food, their mother asked them where the food had come from. "We were given the food by a man who looked like our lost brother, Nyaga."

The following day they went back to the same place and brought in more food. The next day their mother said she would go with them and see for herself. They went. When they reached the top of the ridge they could see Nyaga herding his livestock as usual. His mother said, "That looks like my lost son Nyaga." Nyaga said:

It is me, mother
The one who was crucified
With eighteen spikes by father
Take that rope and cross over

She crossed over together with the children. They were given a lot of food and some to carry home as usual. When they went home that day, the woman even abused her husband telling him. "You are always cheating me that my son got lost in the bush while it is you who disowned him." They argued and the husband insisted he wanted to go and see him.

The following day they all went to see Nyaga. They all crossed over to Nyaga's home. The father was the last to cross. When he looked across he saw Nyaga and said, "That looks like my son Nyaga."

It is me, It is me, Father
The son you crucified
With eighteen spikes
Take that rope and cross over

As he crossed over, when he got into the middle of the river Nyaga let go the rope and his father was swept away by the river. He drowned. He welcomed the other members of his family there at his home. He told them that they could eat anything to their satisfaction. But he warned them never to touch his benefactor the old *njengei*.

One day the younger brother, Ngari, the one who was with the father when he was crucified butchered the *njengei* when Nyaga was in fields grazing his animals. He roasted the meat and started eating. Nyaga in the field picked the scent of the roasting meat and he hurried home. When he went and found it was his *njengei* that Ngari had slaughtered he screamed. He screamed so sharply that everybody including all his livestock responded. He said, "I know the good and the bad side of you all. I gave you food and now you have killed the only person who helped me. You wait there!

He took a *panga* and sharpened it. It was so sharp that when he cut a big tree it fell down. He started killing his cattle. He killed all of them. Then he killed all his goats. And then he saw the bull he loved very much and said:

My bull, my bull
What are you for
And My *njengei* is dead,
Die, die, and die

He killed the bull he loved very much. He then looked at his people and said

My people, what are they for
And my *njengei* has been slaughtered
You die, you die, and you die

He killed all of them and then turned to himself. He killed himself and that is the end of my story.

36. Muthoni

Narrator: Marion Mwaniki (70years)

Narrator: Say *Indo*

Audience: *Indo*

A long time ago, there was a woman. That woman had a big wound. The wound had refused to heal despite medication. When her husband went to see the medicine man over her wound, he was told that the wound could only be healed with the leaves of a *Munyenyia* tree. And this tree could only be found in the ogre's homestead.

Now when the man went home he did not tell the truth. He did not say what he was told by the medicine man. He said that they should slaughter a bull, the big bull called Kigotho. The bull was slaughtered. But the wound never healed. His sons also went to consult the medicine man over the wound. They were told that the wound could only be healed by the leaves from the *munyenyia* tree. The tree could only be found at the ogre's place. They were also afraid of going there so when they went back home they made some excuses.

Now, in that home there was a daughter, her name was Muthoni. She saw that her mother was suffering too much. One day she decided to follow her father and brothers when they went to the medicine man. She followed them and hid behind the house of the medicine man. She heard what the medicine man said. That her mother's wound can only be healed by leaves from the *munyenyia* tree. When they came home, her mother was told that another bull, 'Gicheru', had to be slaughtered. But the girl revealed the truth and offered to go and bring those leaves. "Do you know they are in an ogre's homestead?" her father asked her

"Yes", She replied, "Since my mother is sick I will have to go." She prepared herself and set off for the long journey. When she reached the ogre country she started meeting the ogres along the path. An ogre asked her, "Girl, girl whose visitor are you or should I eat you?"

And the girl would reply, "I am Mangeca's visitor."

The ogre would pass and say, "Mangeca is behind"

She would meet another ogre and would be asked the same question. "Girl, girl whose visitor are you or do I eat you?" She would reply, "I am Mangeca's visitor."

She met all the ogres until finally she met Mangeca. He asked her, "Girl, girl whose visitor are you or do I eat you?"

She replied, "I am Mangeca's visitor"

Mangeca took her to his home and left her there. The *munyenyia* tree was in his compound. In that home there was a small ogre called Karindingo. He asked the girl, "Now that you have come here and you will be eaten, what brought you here?"

She told him that it is the leaves from the *munyenyia* tree that she sought. Karindingo climbed the tree and picked the leaves for her. Then he advised her to smear herself with faeces and ashes and leave immediately as the ogre Mangeca had gone to call the others so they can come and feast on her. She did that and started on her way home. On the way she started meeting the ogres as they came back carrying pieces of wood with which to roast her. The first one she met snorted at her and said, "This looks like the girl we were going to eat at Mangeca's home."

Muthoni sang:

The girl of Mangeca
Have necklaces and ornaments
Does she have a body like this
Which reeks of diarrhea feaces

“Surely you are not the one” said the ogre. Muthoni passed. She met other ogres carrying firewood and after telling them that she is not Mangeca’s girl they let her pass. She sang that way to all of them until she met Mangeca who was the last one. Mangeca said, “This looks like the girl of Mangeca who we were going to eat.” Muthoni replied:

The girl of Mangeca
Has necklaces and ornaments
Does she have a body like this one
Which reeks of diarrhea feaces

Mangeca passed and after walking for a short, distance he came back and got hold of her. He called the others and told them, “This is the girl we were going to eat.”

Now Muthoni told the ogres that she can show them how they dance *kibata* at her place as they prepared the fire to roast her. She danced very well for them. Then she told them to get a rope and tie her on the leg so that she could dance more freely. She would dance and move up and down and when she was out of sight the ogres would tag the rope and she would come back. Now when she was out of sight she tied the rope on a rock and took off. She ran and ran towards her home. When the ogres tagged on the rope they thought she was still there. But when she did not turn up they went and found the rope tied to a piece of rock.

They raised dust and followed the girl. The girl ran and crossed the river that divided her home from the ogres. Some young men had come to meet her. When they had seen the dust raised by the ogres they had armed themselves with spears and swords. When the girl passed them they waited for the ogres. They attacked the first two ogres and killed them. The others ran back and escaped.

Now the girl went to her mother’s house and brought out the leaves. A lamb was slaughtered and the juice from those leaves was mixed with the lamb’s fat and applied on the mother’s wound. The wound started healing and finally it healed. Now that is the end of my story of Muthoni.

37. Liz and her Mother

Narrator: Loise Muthoni (24 years)

Narrator: Say *Itho*

Audience: *Itho*

Narrator: Long, long ago there was poor woman. She would wake up early to go and look for food. She had a child, a small child. One day she went to cultivate her farm as usual. She left the baby as she usually did on the bed asleep and well cuddled with blankets. Now as she was working she noticed a lot of smoke was emanating from her house. She ran homewards when she realized that her house was on fire, She ran to save her child.

Audience: *uuuu!*

Narrator: She went straight into the house. She did not hesitate because of the intensity of the fire. She got badly burnt on one side of her face but managed to drag out her baby daughter. She was taken to hospital where she was treated and healed. But a big ugly scar remained on her face.

The child grew up and went to primary school. Later she joined secondary school. When in secondary school she always asked herself how come her mother had such a nasty ugly scar on her face. During visiting days she did not want to introduce her mother to her friends. She was ashamed of the ugly face of her mother. One day she even asked her friend's mother to pretend that she was her mother.

Now it went on like that. Her mother would come to visit her. She would send a girl to go and call her daughter. Her daughter would hide herself. She would hide anytime her mother came to visit her. Her mother would go back home with the presents she had brought disappointed. Every time she came her daughter could not be found. She would come and go back home with whatever she had brought her daughter

One day the mother decided to ask her daughter why she was always hiding from her. The daughter told her it was because of her scars and she feared that the other girls in the school would laugh at her. Her mother then decided to tell her the truth. She told her how she got inflicted with the wound in order to save her from the burning house. When her daughter heard that she was very remorseful. She cried and cried. When she realized that her mother became ugly in order to save her. She cried and said she would never do that again. Now my stories and riddles end there.

38. **Mitugo ya Gikuyu** (Kikuyu Customs)

Artist /Perfomer: Nduru wa Gathoni

Rugwiti son of Njeri allow me
To ask this man some questions
Kamaru son of Wanjiru
Who knows everything

Kamaru son of Wanjiru get ready
There are a number of questions
That you will answer
All on Kikuyu customs
Because you say you know them well
Someone who is unclean
Tell us how he is cleansed
Under Kikuyu custom
Tell us the herbs
Which are used to cleanse him
And the names of those herbs
You, who was brought up
At his grandmother's home

Do I slaughter a goat for you
Kamaru who was brought up
At his grandmother's home
Tell us the Kikuyu generations
And give us their names
And before you do that tell us
Who ate *Kiiga* and the lungs

The house of the Kikuyu, tell us
How many rooms does it have
Tell us the names of the rooms
And tell us where the light came from
And what is used to cover the beehive

The Clans are nine
If you do not know
Tell us about the clan
Which is most well known
And tell us which clan makes rain

I have given you information
Githere, cururi, thiiya, ngunyi
and the spear with *nduthu*
Tell us the use of each one of these

The songs sang and danced by women
How many days did they dance
Let us know as you tell us your grandmother
Gave you all this information

There are two generations, Mwangi and Maina
And *Wakamatimu*, who eats left overs
Muthuru and *Mwengu* and *nguo ya ngoro*
Were all the garments a Kikuyu girl required
Tell us which soap was used to clean these clothes

39. Mitugo Ya Gikuyu (Kikuyu Customs) Part 11

Artist/Performer: Joseph Kamaru

Rugwiti son of Njeri come and do not come alone
I want you to come with nine male elders

As I answer these questions from Nduru
And nine women who have attained menopause
All the nine households from Kabete to Metumi

Nduru son of Gathoni come and approach like an elder
So that you may understand
That you seek that which is deep in the heart

To say that does not mean there is an expert of Kikuyu
But the blower of the fire without a gap in his teeth
Will never dispense smoke from the fire

For the unclean person in Kikuyu custom
There are many cleansing rituals
According to each person's blemish
Which is this blemish
And I will give the prescription
And if you are born with it
You may need very special herbs

I will mention all the herbs
Mutei, Mukenia, Muthakwa,
Mugumo Mukura and Irengi
After the vomiting
And the a charm is placed around the neck
The cleansing is completed

Rituals were many
And for every goat slaughtered
A particular ritual was performed
Which one shall I slaughter
I do so before I even inhale snuff
Is it for blessing the home
Or is for second birth
Is it for resurrecting or to appease
The spirits of the departed
Or is for the blood letting ceremony
Then let it be slaughtered

Nduru son of Gathoni, let me tell you
To bless the home
The goat was not eaten by outsiders
And the one of bloodletting let me share it out
The breast, the back and the sausage
Will be eaten by the father's close friend
Ngerima, mutiiri, kagiri

All for the owner of the home
The large intestines and the mouth
I will give the women
The heart and the lungs
I will give to the young men
And the tongue will be eaten
By the father's age mate

In the Kikuyu house,
Goats are kept at *Kweru*
And *Kiriri* is for the girls
Thegi for cooked food
In *ruuri* I keep the firewood
Water and honey containers
And the skins for the rich
Ruuri was where the adulterers hid
And there was *Kibacaini*
Where lamb fattening was done

To ask is not to be foolish but
Nduru you have pinched the wrong person
There are nine Kikuyu clans
Our clan *Unjiru* is famous for witchcraft
If we called hyenas they would flock in like sheep
And the *Mwithaga* clan is another one
That makes rain fall
A *Mwithaga* could curse a hawk or a jackal
And it would die without being hit

I won't mention all, *Muceera* was known
For eating too much
He could pluck bananas
And leave the trunk standing
Bring the beehive I close it
Fixing the lid and the cleaves
The council of women is crying
Asking to be given goats
And when they are enough
They are given to the elders
To sacrifice for the rain to fall
The council of elders ate one goat
And when dispersing
Fixed bits of its skin on their ears lobes
And rain would then fall

Bring their clothes here
I smear them with fat and then with ochre
Soap came the other day with the Europeans

Githuma is the shield to protect oneself with
Thiia is for the uncircumcised
As they wait to be circumcised
This is the spear, the edge and the tail
The wooden handle in the middle
And you there you have your weapon

Generations are two
And the breaks if you did not know
Mwangi, *Irungu*, *Iregi* and *Ndemi* and older *Maina*
Kamaru born by the *Mwangi* generation
Are now the rulers
But *Ndemi* is the lost generation
Because they agreed to be ruled again by women
Kamatimu, who eats the remains
Is not a council member

If we continue with the customs of the Kikuyu
We shall spend the night here
'House' you have heard there is nobody
Who is an expert on Kikuyu
And if there were one
I would teach it to the Europeans
If there was one, our people
You could have heard of me

40. *Mburi cia Aka* (Women's Livestock)

Narrator: Njagi Njuki

Narrator: You say you want to hear the story about women's livestock?

Audience: Yes.

Narrator: Say *Indo*!

Audience: *Indo*.

Narrator: Long ago, and it was long ago, because that time women used to own livestock. They would herd the animals with the help of their children. Now, one day the women decided to hold a feast, a big feast. They slaughtered a cow and sat down to eat. There were many women and their children. And the livestock was also there.

They ate the meat, cutting small pieces for their children. As they were eating the animals continued to graze and browse. They started wandering away from the compound. They went to browse further and further from the homestead. But the women continued to feast on the meat.

Now, if a child rose to go and herd the animals back, its mother would tell the child to first eat the meat before going after the animals. Meanwhile the livestock wandered off into the bushes surrounding the homesteads.

Every time the children rose to go and herd the animals back their mothers would tell them to first finish eating the meat. All the women asked their children to first clear the meat before going after the livestock.

The animals wandered deeper and deeper into the forest. By the time the children had their share of meat they could not trace the livestock. The livestock had turned into wild animals. Now these animals you see in the forests, the buffaloes and antelopes were once women's goats and cattle. And that is the end of the story.

41. Mwari Umwe

Narrator: Alice Wanjira Rukenya

Narrator: say *Itho*:

Audience: *Itho*

Narrator: Long, long ago there was a man who had a wife. This man was a hunter. His wife could not bear children. They stayed together for a long time. This man used to go to the plains to hunt. One day he went and found an ostrich's egg, which he took home. He went and put it in a pot and covered it. He went on with his hunting business. His wife stayed there at home and would wait for him to bring whatever he hunted and they would eat it. The woman did not go to the fields to work. The woman could not work. And it is not that she was sick. She was just lazy. Even when her husband ploughed a piece for her she could not cultivate crops.

Now, that egg hatched into a beautiful girl and since the couple did not have any children they called her Mwari Umwe. When she grew up, the husband told the wife "Now that we have a daughter do not send her far off."

Now they lived like that. The woman has a girl to send around. She would tell her, "Mwari Umwe wash the utensils, Mwari Umwe go to the river and fetch water."

And you know the lazy woman was not even washing the utensils before she had this girl. The woman was not doing anything. She was delegating all her duties to this girl. When one day the girl got tired, the woman told her, "Do not be proud, don't you know you came from an ostrich's egg which your father collected from the fields." The girl did not eat that day. The husband noticed she was sad and told her not to perform more than one task in a day. He told his wife not to give the girl more than one task in any given day.

Now when they were left at home, Mwari Umwe was sent to go and fetch firewood. She fetched firewood. After sometime the woman told her to fetch water, She refused and said, "My father told me not to perform more than one task in a day." Then the woman told her, "Don't you know you came from an ostrich's egg."

Mwari Umwe ran away towards the plains. When her father came home he found she had left. He asked his wife, "Where is Mwari Umwe?" The woman said, "I told her to fetch firewood and she just disappeared."

The man followed the girl into the plains. When he caught up with her he asked her what had happened and she told him that his wife had called her an ostrich's egg. They went back home and the man beat his wife. He beat her until she said she would never do that again. The man went back to his hunting and left the girl with his wife at home. The woman told her, "Mwari Umwe go and bring in some green vegetables." She went and got the vegetables. The woman then told her, "Mwari Umwe wash the utensils."

"I was told never to perform more than one task in a day."

"You know you made your father beat me the other day when I told you, you came from an ostrich's egg."

The girl took off and went towards the plains. When her father came home he was in time to see her running away. He followed her calling out, "Mwari Umwe, my daughter come back." She replied:

I cannot come back
Your wife is bad
She called me an ostrich's egg
I am going back home
To our with the ostriches

The father managed to overtake her. He beseeched her not to go and took her back home. He went back with her and beat up his lazy wife until she promised never to say anything bad to that girl. But you think she would relent. The man continued hunting. Then one day the mother told the girl, "Mwari Umwe, go to the river and fetch water." She went. When she came back she was told, "Go and bring firewood."

"I was told by my father never to do two things at a time"

"Did you become angry because I told you, you came from an ostrich's egg?" The woman asked her.

This time Mwari Umwe decided to leave for good. She was fed up of being told she came from an ostrich's egg. She went away and after she had gone her father came in and asked where she was. His wife told him that she did not know where she had gone as she had just left. The old man followed her calling out to her to come back. She replied:

I cannot come back
Your wife is bad
She called an ostrich's egg
I am going back back
To our ostriches

This time she was determined to go. She ran towards the plains and there was a flock of ostriches. She went and merged with them and became an ostrich. Her father was overwhelmed with sadness. "Now

from where shall I get another ostrich egg like that one?" He asked himself. When he went back home he beat his wife, he beat her until she was soft like the soft banana we call *mutondo*. And that is the end of my story. May the person who does not tell stories eat *gatutu* while I eat my father's fat lamb whose fat drips, *cacacaccacacaccacacaca!*

42. Wacici and Wamweru

Narrator: Gladys Wakiathi

Narrator: Say *Indo!*

Audience: *Indo!*

Narrator: Long time ago there was a man who had two wives. Each of the women had a daughter. One daughter was called Wacici and the other was called Wamweru. Now the mother of Wameru died and she was left with the mother of Wacici. The two girls were very close friends. They liked each other very much. They went everywhere together. If they went to collect firewood, they went together. If they went to the river they went together.

It happened that Wacici's mother wanted to kill Wamweru. She was jealous of her because she thought she was attracting more suitors than her own daughter. When one day the father of the girls went on a journey, she decided to kill that girl when her husband was away. The woman gave the daughters different tasks. Wacici was sent to fetch water and Wamweru was sent to fetch firewood. The woman had already dug a hole where the girls used to collect firewood. She followed Wamweru there and buried her in the hole and went back home. But Wamweru did not die. When she did not return home her sister Wacici went to look for her the following day. Wamweru was in the hole. When she got hungry, she started eating her clothes. When her clothes were finished she started eating soil. He sister came looking for her singing:

Iiii Wamweru ii Wamweru
The joy and laughter we had together

Wamweru heard her and she said in a faint voice from the hole:

Iii Wacici ii wacici
The joy and laughter we shared together

Wacici heard her and located her where she was buried in the hole. But she was not strong enough to pull her out. She went back home in sadness and waited for her father. When her father came home she told him that someone has buried Wamweru. She took her father to the fields and sang:

Iii Wamweru ii Wamweru
The joy and laughter that we shared together

Wamweru sang very faintly:

Iii Wacici ii Wacici
The joy and laughter we shared together

She was very weak now. Her father removed her from the hole and took her home. He slaughtered a goat for her and she was given the fat. Gradually she grew stronger and was able to talk. She revealed that it was her stepmother who had buried her in that hole after sending her to fetch firewood.

When her father heard that story he was very angry. He picked his wife and took her to the fields and buried her in the same hole. Now that man was left with his daughters and he had to look for another wife. And that is the end of my story.

43. The Argumentative Wife

Narrator/ Preacher: Rev. John Kangangi (64years)

Narrator: God wants love to prevail in the family. Love has no arguments, in the house at home. When I think about the lack of agreement among people I remember the story of the woman who could never agree with her husband. The husband would tell the wife, "Let us buy a dairy cow."

The woman would disagree and say, "No let us buy a bull. A bull is better because we can yoke it"

The woman was really disagreeable. He husband would tell her, "Let us build a square House."

She would disagree and say, "No let us build a round one so that we can be moving round and round it when we are inside." The husband would tell her late in the night, "Let us go to bed now." She would say, "No, let us first watch this program on television."

Now that man was a very patient and nice man. He could bear his wife's arguments and disagreements well. That woman was full of disagreements and arguments irrespective of whether what she was told was logical or not. She argued over anything. Tell me, if its time to sleep why should she insist she is going to watch television up to midnight?

Now, the man came home one day in the evening at around six o'clock. He had gone to the shops to buy paraffin. Meanwhile his wife had gone to the river to fetch water. They used to fetch water some place as far away from here as the Rwamuthambi River. When the man got back home, his wife had not returned. He waited and it became late. The woman did not come back. He called his neighbors and asked them to help him look for her since she had not returned.

The neighbors agreed and accompanied him to the river. They searched for her but could not find her. They suggested that they should go and look for the woman downstream because it was possible that she could have drowned and the river had swept her downstream. But the husband told them that they should go and search for her upstream. When they asked why, he said, "I know my wife better, She cannot be downstream. If she slipped into the water here and the river told her that it would drown her downstream, She must have refused."

Audience: (Laughter)

Narrator: He told them that he was the one who knew his wife and she would refuse to be drowned downstream and insist of being drowned upstream. Now you can see how far arguments can go. That man who was saying this had a reason. Even though the river cannot argue with a person, that man wanted to indicate that the woman's arguments were more than those of anybody else. She could argue

with the river and even be drowned upstream. And these arguments are there because we do not have love for one another. We will even argue over good things....

44. Personnel

Artist/Performer: Peter Kinyagia (27 years)

This is not a story
I am telling you what happened
That this happened under the sun
Of a man who was highly learned
Who had married a 'saved' woman

Personnel, who was respected all over
He started following his wife
Wearing bed sheets
Kukuku words my mother used to say
Would bring tears into my eyes

Personnel was employed
In a big company and had a big post
People called him personnel
They liked him because he used to help them

Personnel got very busy at his work place
And started coming home late
His wife could not believe that he was working
She thought he was seeing another woman

His wife sought advise
And she was directed to a witch doctor
To seek 'medicine' to administer to her husband
So that he is never late

The wife did exactly that
And gave the 'medicine' to her husband
Personnel changed
And started behaving like a child

The woman's burden increased
Looking after three children and a husband
She did not have reason to live in this world
She took a rope and hanged herself

45. **Wendo Wa Ngoma** (evil Love)

Artist /Perfomer: Sam Kinuthia

Mother, I have come back home
Give me food
Then I will tell you my story
Just be happy, that at least I am alive

I met with bad luck without knowing
I got involved with a girl
Who was using herbs to bide me
She used to get them from Arusha

I became a fool
She had eyes like those of a leopard
When she looked at me
My body would loose its strength
And if I tried to leave
My legs would refuse to move

Her love was induced with herbs like Delira's
After marrying her she confused me
I moved into her house
She married me instead of me marrying her

When her love for me waned
She threw me out of the house
At three in the morning
A Good Samaritan saved me
She found me and took me to her home
Where she gave me food and took care of me

46. **Cicilia**

Artist/Performer: Karanja David (34 years)

Our people to eat badly is not ones wish
There is nobody who doesn't want to live well
But a happening can happen like the happening
That brought Cecilia and me together
And made me live a life of pain and hardship
She threw me into a deep pool
From which I cannot fathom how to emerge

This bride of mine I call Cecilia
We met at Dandora
When I had gone there with John Ndichu
We had gone to perform at Mukima bar
And when she heard I was Karanja
She went mad saying she had always wondered
How we could meet and that God is good
Now we had met

Now people, let me make you laugh
From that day I married into her house
I do not know what she gave me
I became a fool in her residence
Because when I leave after work
I always go to her home and on time
I cannot get late lest I annoy her
From that day she put me under her armpit

Lend me your ears and listen
Cecilia is forty-two years old
I am twenty-four years old
She has seven children
Her daughters have full breasts
Five live with her parents in Meru
And she lives with the youngest two in town

God is great since I wouldn't have known
I was lucky I went with her to Meru
When her mother had an accident
And had sent for her
She told me to take leave and accompany her
When we got there
I heard her being called mother
I was astonished and knew
I had lost the timber and picked the off-cuts

Our people an antelope hates those who shout after it
Because when we went back to the city
And I complained, telling her that we should separate
Because she was not of my age
I dont not even know where she went
To procure power to deal with me
After two days I became confused
I became like a fool
Today when she sneezes
I rush to her service

Mother Wanjiku, come for me
And do not come alone
Bring my brother along
And come with a vehicle
When you get to Dandora
Enquire where phase five is
Ask for Cecilia's residence
She is a famous woman
Everybody knows her
Come and rescue me
So that I can go home
And get married properly

47. Muya and Cinji

Narrator: Alice Wanjira Rukenya

Narrator: Say *Itho!*

Audience: *Itho.*

Narrator: Long, long time ago, there was a girl and a young man. They were brother and sister. The boy's name was Muya and the girl's name was Cinji. Their parents were dead. They had no relatives. Creeping plants covered their house such that only the doorway was visible. When anyone of them went out visiting, they would come back and part the creepers in order to enter the house. By and by, the boy grew into a man and the girl into a young woman. Young men began wooing her while the brother was away at dances in the evening. The young men wanted to take the girl by force. One day when the brother had gone dancing, they came to take her by force, and she started singing:

Muya, Muya, Muya
Child of my mother, come
I am spied on Muya
By three young men
Wearing skin cloaks, *ii* Muya.
Ii, Muya, *ii* Muya, *ii* Muya
I am spied on, Muya
By three young men, Muya
Wearing skin cloaks, Muya

She was calling her brother in the song. When he came, she told him. "Muya, you know that there are some young men who have been coming here and they want to take me by force? You will be left suffering. Now our parents are dead, who will help you get a wife? Who will cook for you? One day you will find me gone." The brother said, "Will you keep me from dancing because you might go? Can't you tell them you won't go?"

The next day a different group of young men came. You know when a girl is ripe for marriage many young men admire her. When this second group of young men arrived, they told her, "Now we want to

take you with us." She told them, "Allow me to call my brother first so that he may know that I am going away."

She called him. When Muya arrived he found the men had gone. Cinji told her brother, "I shall mark the route I shall take if I should go, so that you do not spend a lot of time looking for me." When these men came again, they said, "If we do not take you with us today, we shall kill you." She told them, "Please let me inform my brother. Why kill me?" The brother was still at the dance. She sang to her brother:

Muya, Muya, Muya
Child of my mother come
I am still spied on, Muya
By three young men
Wearing skin cloaks, Muya
They have knives, Muya.

In the song, Cinji had told her brother that the young men had threatened to kill her if she did not go with them. Muya said from afar:

Cinji, Cinji, Cinji
Child of my mother, Cinji
You used to tell me, Cinji
Night outings, Cinji
Should stop, Cinji, Cinji

Cinji used to ask him not to go dancing at night. The sister's journey had began even as he started singing. Cinji replied:

Muya, Muya, Muya
Child of my mother, Muya
The route I shall take, Muya
Has black beans, Muya
And finger millet, Muya, Muya

She was giving him the directions of the route they were following. She was dropping beans and millet seeds as they went along. When the seeds sprouted he would see them and remember the instructions he had been given.

Muya followed the seedlings but could not find her. He heard her singing. He said:

Child of my mother, Cinji
You used to tell me, Cinji
Night outings, Cinji
To stop them, Cinji
You were spied on, Cinji

Muya went on singing to his sister. He walked and walked. Muya had lost her. Muya went and sought employment. He got a job and was given a hut where he stayed. He had nobody to look after him properly. He stayed for a long time. He was given very little food. He was attacked by jiggers on his feet. His feet became crooked. He decided to go and look for his sister once again. He went and eventually found her home. She now had a millet farm. Her children were scaring away the birds from

the millet. She did not know it was her brother. His sister could not recognize him. He had become haggard. Prolonged hunger had changed him. He was just looking for a place to stay to see whether he would get strong again. He went and greeted his sister, "How are you woman?"

"I am well," Cinji replied.

"I am looking for a job," Muya said.

His sister could not recognise him. "I am looking for a job," he repeated his request.

"The only job I have is that of scaring birds away from my millet garden."

"Yes, that I can do." Muya replied.

"Now come and eat, then I will take you to the farm," his sister answered.

He was given food. After eating he was taken to the farm. When chasing away the birds he would say:

Cuaai, birds in this farm
Fly away, fly away
Because you don't know
The difference between
The poor and the rich.
That it is Wacinji my sister
Who serves me on a piece of a broken pot
And lets me sleep on ashes.

The man had recognized his sister but his sister did not recognise him. In the evening, he would be given food on a piece of a broken pot, and as usual, sleep on the ashes near the fire place. In the morning, he would go to the farm and as was routine, chase away the birds saying:

Cuaai, birds of this farm
Fly away, fly away
Because you don't know
The difference between the poor and the rich.
That it is Wacinji my sister
Who serves me on a piece of a broken pot
And lets me sleep on ashes.

That evening, Cinji's children told her what this new employee said each time he was chasing away birds. "Mother, the man who scares birds says:

Cuaai, birds of this garden
Fly away, fly away
Because you don't know
The difference between the poor and the rich.
That it is Wacinji my sister
Who serves me on a piece of a broken pot
And lets me sleep on ashes.

She wondered, "Could this be my brother, the one I gave directions to follow me."

The next day, she went and hid herself somewhere in the farm so that she could hear this herself. When the birds came Muya repeated the same words:

Cuaai, birds of this garden
Fly away, fly away
Because you don't know

The difference between the poor and the rich.
That it is Wacinji my sister
Who serves me on a piece of a broken pot
And lets me sleep on ashes.

She knew this was her brother. She went and told him, "Bird chaser,"

"Yes," he replied

"Come."

The bird chaser drew near. She said, "I ask you?"

"Yes."

"Are you Muya?"

He said, "Yes."

"Why didn't you reveal yourself to me?"

"When I came to ask for a place to sleep and a job I thought you would recognise me but you did not," he said. She told him, "Now you will stop chasing the birds for the moment. Let us go home." On their way home they talked about many things. Muya told her, "I followed the directions you gave me but got lost. When I finally got here I could recognize you but I knew you did not recognize me, so I decided to keep quiet," He said.

When they got home, he was bought clothes, and was fed well. A bed was prepared for him so he no longer slept on ashes. He was allowed to use a plate and a spoon instead of splinters of banana stems. He had been forced to use a banana bark splinter, as a spoon so that he would not make Wacinji's plates and spoons dirty. Jiggers were removed from his feet so his feet gradually straightened out. They told him that since he was well, he should get married. That it was necessary to get married because even today a person who is not married is not respected. He is a nobody, a useless person, who cannot be called the son of so and so. He is called, this man. In many cases people think such a man is nothing. He cannot be called the husband of so and so. Muya went and found a girl he loved. He married the girl. A house was built for him. He stayed with his wife. They loved each other. His sister's children were also growing. He became like his sister's eldest son. Eventually he got his own children. The home became his home because as you may remember, Muya and Cinji had no other relatives. My story and riddle ends there. May the one who does not tell stories eat *gatutu* while I eat my father's fat lamb whose fat drips *cacacacacacacacaca!*

48. Mwathi

Narrator: Marion Mwaniki (70 years)

Narrator: Say *Indo*

Audience: *Indo*

Narrator: In a certain country, long ago, there was a man who reared a dog. That dog started eating goat's kids. People told the man that the dog was eating the kids. The man said that the kids were his and the dog was his. Sometime later the dog ate a cow. When the owner of the dog was told about it, he said that both the dog and the cow belonged to him. The man never took any action. Anytime the dog ate something he claimed both belonged to him. The dog grew, it became big and started eating people. It ate people in that country and almost finished all of them.

That man had a wife he hated. He had built her a house in the backyard. That woman had a daughter who had died and left her with a young son. These two were neglected and an overgrown bush surrounded their house. Everybody was consumed by the dog except this woman and her grandson. That child's name was Mwathi. Her grandmother would tell him, "Mwathi do you know there were once many people in this place and they were eaten by a dog."

"What type of a dog was it?" Mwathi would ask.

"That dog was a *njimbiri*." His grandmother told him.

As the young man grew up, he would sharpen his sword and spear and spend days looking for that animal. His grandmother would warn him that he was not big enough to confront the animal. He would sometimes kill an animal and bring it home and tell his grandmother, "Grandmother I have killed the *njimbiri*. And she would answer, "No you have not killed the *njimbiri*, when you kill it I will tell you." Mwathi continued with his search and every time he killed an animal, his grandmother would tell him that the animal was not that dog.

Now, one day as Mwathi was searching for this animal, it got hold of him. They fought and wrestled and that animal defeated Mwathi. Mwathi started singing:

Grandmother, grandmother
The ogre is eating me
It is biting me
And I bite him
Grandmothers help me

He sang that song from where he was and his grandmother heard him. She realized that animal had caught her grandson. Now after being defeated by this animal Mwathi told him, "I agree you have defeated me so let me roast some meat for you to eat." Mwathi had some meat in his bag. He roasted meat and that 'Hyena' ate the meat. After eating the meat it tied up Mwathi and put him on its shoulders and started going into the forest. Mwathi continued to sing to his grandmother:

Grandmother, Grandmother
The ogre is eating me
It is biting me
And I bite him
Grandmothers help me

His grandmother heard him. She took her shaving razor, a very sharp razor and followed him. She sang:

I am following you
Mwathi bend
I aim at the ogre
I will give him two blows
Or miss
I now throw my razor *hua!*

The grandmother would throw the razor aiming the ogre. The razor would clear the forest for many miles. And you remember Mwathi is still on the shoulders of this ogre. And the grandmother is following them ready with her razor because she knew she had to confront this ogre, which had eaten everybody. Now the grandmother followed them singing. Mwathi would also sing.

When the razor cleared the trees, the grandmother would move immediately, pick it and follow the ogre. When she got near it, she threw the razor and cut its legs. It fell to the ground. She untied Mwathi. Mwathi still had his spears. He started spearing the ogre and as he did so he heard someone shouting from inside the ogre, "Do not spear me I am here."

The ogre was cut up. People, goats and the cows he had eaten all came out. They went back to their country and built their homes again. Now Mwathi became the ruler of those people. That is the end of my story.

49. Kanyanya

Rendition by: Mwangi Kagwi (39 years)

Kanyanya let me escort you *uui hiiya uui hiya*
Tell my-in-laws to bring me the hairy he-goat
For me to feast on and smear my thighs with its fat
My thighs, which are painful

May it rain, heavy rain that floods the ground
Freedom is coming

Kanyanya let me escort you, *uui hiiyauuui hiya*
When I gave birth to the child
You men were relaxing in the yard
You never heard my painful moans,
My pushing, my weeping
It is only now after I had the child
That I get a husband to lord over me
Telling me to ferment beer, his age mates will come
I answer him back, that I wouldn't do it
Even if his men friends ridicule him

Who is the owner of this cleared land
They belong to the woman called Kabobwe
She forced men to hide themselves in the bush
Do you know why that happened

Let me have my share of the beer as you pass it on
When it gets to the men that will be difficult
And I do not want a case over beer
Whose beer is this we are drinking
This beer belong to the child (daughter)
It does not belong to the lazy woman
Who sleeps outside

Our children have food, what will yours eat

Let me have my share as you pass it on
When it gets to the men it will be difficult
For me to get my share
Mumbere blow your whistle
We meet at the ford of Kathare
And go to seek food for our children
Our children have eaten, what will yours eat

50. Ben Mithamo Muchiri's Biography

By. Ben Mithamo Muchiri (54 years)

I was born on 20th of September 1949. I was born in a large family of 10 children. We are three boys and seven girls. A big family is very good. You always feel secure and have someone to talk to. When you have a large family it is a lot of fun growing up. We lived in Embu town until 1957 when we came to live in Kerugoya where my father was the chief. I started going to school in 1958 at Kerugoya. I remember the missionary teachers trying to make schooling for us as entertaining as possible. We would participate in many games and they would also give us clothes sweets and sugar. We stayed in Kerugoya center until after the emergency in 1960. That is when we came here in the rural home and I continued my studies at Waigiri primary school.

After primary school, I went to Kiangoma secondary school. It was a new school and we had to build it ourselves. But we had a very entertaining time there. We were still under the missionaries and girls' schools would come on tour to our school. We used to dance but the catholic sisters supervised the dancing to make sure that we were not embracing too tightly with the girls. If that happened, the sisters would suspend the dancing telling us that there must be some space between the girl and the boy when dancing. They said we must leave that space for the Holy Spirit.

Back in the villages we also used to dance during the school holidays. But most of the participants did not like us to join them. Most of them were illiterate and were not going to school.

After I finished secondary school I joined Kenyatta Hospital where I trained as a laboratory technician and later joined the ministry of health. I worked in many places with the ministry in programmes to control of malaria and bilharzia. But I felt dissatisfied with the job. I resigned and took a job as a farm manager at Kakuzi in Murang'a. I really enjoyed farming and was very happy at Kakuzi.

When at kakuzi I got married and now I have three almost grown up children. After working in Kakuzi for five years, I decided to come home and do my own coffee farming. For some time things were nice. Were making a lot of money until some people messed up the markets. Now things are quite difficult because of lack of coffee money. But as the saying goes a human being does not have just one side like

a *panga*. When things became bad with coffee I planted tea. Most of my farming now is tea farming and that is how I raise most of the families monetary needs.

I enjoy farming but here we had a problem of lack of electricity. When I came here I organized the people and we raised money to install electricity but the electricity company charged us lot money. They charged us 2.8 million shillings. We then had this idea that we could generate our own power because there is a river with a waterfall nearby. Some people were skeptical but by some twist of luck that is what we did. This is what happened. One day I went to attend a funeral at Othaya in Nyeri. While there, I heard that there was a person who was assisting people to install small-scale power projects. He was from the Intermediates Technology Group. I arranged to meet him and brought him here. We raised some money, a feasibility study was carried out and the group assisted us install the electricity system that serves the people here.

This project has been very beneficial. Children can now study without problems. Farmers can raise their chicken and other livestock without problems and the cost is only one hundred shillings per month. The project serves an area of 7.7 square kilometers.

Women have participated a lot in these project. They have provided labor and other resources. They also ensure that the system is well maintained and people who are not members do not steal the power. Women's power is felt everywhere these days. They are in charge of the homes and are involved in many other activities. Sometimes women do things, which are difficult to understand. The other day I found out my wife was inciting the other women working on my farm against picking the tea. I do not understand such behavior because I always pay their dues in time.

Now here we faced with many problems. Farming inputs are very expensive. It is difficult to break even. The government has to do something about this as the local people cannot do much. Our electricity group however is soon planning to venture into other development activities.

51. Niwathire Ukindiga (You Went and Left me)

Artists/Performers: D' Mathew Sisters

A hyena calls the other a small hyena
That it is me you have labelled all over Kenya
Saying that I wriggle like a snake
Knowing how you have mistreated me
Through your bad habits
Until I decided I couldn't bear it anymore
And decided to leave you

A Child belongs to the father and the mother
That one you say you saved
When I wanted to throw him into a pit
Didn't I leave him with you

After weaning him
I tried to tolerate you and found out
I could no longer live with you
I left you the baby to bring up
So you can realize parenting is difficult

We women went to Beijing
Where we were taught our rights
All those daily fights
And those cases before the chief
It is better to be conscientious
And take my own path wherever it shall lead me

Do you realize you are spiteful
How can you say that if you beget a child
Who is like me
You would throw it into river Thangana
I cannot understand a person like you
You will never again see me in your place

I used to see you only when you came to change clothes
You had women from Kabete to Gaturi
Telling them how you will marry them all
So that you could be like the biblical Solomon
I decided it is better to be conscientious
And take my own path
Wherever it will take me

That money you say you now have
Know it is not the happiness
Between a man and a woman
I would rather remain poor
Than live without peace
Even the *Ukabi* threw away
Goat heads that were fat
I do not want to live with someone
Who wriggles like a snake

You said my parents are rude
Even though you fed me and I became fat
Even a hyena protects its offspring
Enumerate what you paid me as bride price
And we shall reimburse you
You were being married to a woman
And not a drum to be beating

52. Yes Ni Yes

Artists /Performers: J.B. Sisters

My dear, this is the multi-party era
It is not when women were not allowed to talk
It is not when women were not given any chance
If the man blew his nose
The woman would come rushing in
It is not the single- party era
When I say no, it is no
When I say yes, it is yes
I will not argue

This is not the period when
When men came from beer drinking
And after sneezing from outside the house
I would rush to him
If he falls outside I carry him in
If he now falls drunken out there
He will spend the night there if he so wishes

Now it during the multi-party era
It is not like before
When a husband would come home
Find me attending to other chores
Cooking for the children
And even before I serve them
He calls me into the bedroom
And demands sex

Sometimes you men have no considerations
When you want a child
You demand that I bear the burden
I carry it for nine months
And you do not assist me carry the baby
When I am pregnant
You still want me to cook for you

Slow down, slow down
Stop your excessive speed
I am a human being like you
I have my own feelings

Treat me the way
You would like me to treat you

If you come home drunk
And decide to slump outside
Know you will spend the night there
I will retire inside and close the door

If I give you food and you say it is badly cooked
Know that you will go to the kitchen
And do the cooking yourself
If you come home drunk wallowing in mud
You will have to sleep on the floor and not on my bed

53. Ni Ndoka (I have come)

Artist/Performer: Queen Jane (36 years)

I have come open for me
Open for me I have come
If you feel bad about me
May you set with the setting sun
And may the soil reject you

Give the queen something to drink
And blow the horn for her troops
Ululate for the girl
You gave birth to me, ululate for me

Now if I ululate, for who do I ululate
I will ululate for myself
The ululations that men refused
Saying that they are bitter

My co-wife, lets get our shaving blades
Let us go and shave one another
So that the others cannot say
That we do not love one another
My co-wife we love one another

I came from Mombasa
From Wanjeri wa Kigotho
But earlier I had come from Kabukuru's daughter
Where cows refused with milk

Queen, I will marry you off in Europe
My grade cow, where money is measured
In tin containers and drums
That is where I will have you married

When you hear it coming with the ignition on
The vehicle is carrying queen Jane
Passing through Kagwi's
Until it gets to the home of Mwangi wa Nyaga
When we get there
Ululate for us

Let us escort Queen Jane
Escort her slowly
That she may not bleed milk
Or bleed blood
Bring a torch; we light the path for queen Jane

54. Kubukubuku

Artist/Performer: Queen Jane

Get out of my path
I am rough and might break your leg
Get out of my path
Lest I break your leg

I had left and gone, I had left and gone
I came back after reaching the lake near Miirithu
In our place at Kiaumbui, a new season and a new bride
A new season and a new bride

If you insult me, if you insult me
I will call my mother to deal with you
Tell Queen, tell queen that
God knows her well

Which way did you follow
Which way did you follow
So that I can meet you with milk
From a young cow

I followed the road
The road that belongs to the government
The road without stumps
Mother sing for me
The Maasai woman screamed at me

Take out the food mother
Mother take it out for me
The food you have saved for the child
And I will eat it

55. **Bururi Witu Gikuyu (Our Country, Kikuyu)**

Rendition: by Joseph Kamaru

Our people, the clever and the foolish
Who cannot feel the weight
Of this clan of colonists
And their oppressive agenda
This is our country Kikuyu
God blessed it for us
Telling us never to abandon it

Our people who are in prison
And those leaders
Who have been arrested
Do not be sad and do not cry
God is going to save you

White people are visitors in our country
One day they will leave
Where will you loyalists go
When the Kikuyu come together

Our people when Waiyaki died
And he left us with a curse
That our land we should never sell
And now we are just giving it away

Mugo wa Kibiro prophesied
That the elder's house at Kiawairera
Once it is built and completed
That is when we shall attain our independence

56. **Tondu wa Minyamaro** (Because of the suffering)

Version: By Albert Gacheru (39years)

Our people, the foolish and clever
Who can fail to see the discrimination
By the people of the clan of K
And the many things full of darkness
This our country Kenya
From Mombasa to Lake Victoria
God blessed it for us
And said we should never abandon it

Our people, all of us have problems
Brought about by the leadership
But stop crying and weeping
God is going to help us

This house of grabbers are visitors
To leadership and they will leave
I wonder where they shall go
When the country has a new constitution

When they took Waiyaki away
Before he was buried alive
He left us with a curse
That we should never sell our land
And now we are giving it away

Mugo wa Kibiro prophesied
That the elder's house at Kiawairera
Once it was built and completed
That is when the white man would leave
So that darkness in the country can end
That elder's house at Kiawairera
It must be rebuilt again
And a new constitution put in place

This clan of grabbers are visitors
From leadership, they will vacate
I wonder where they will go
When we have a new constitution

57. **Tuguciira Na Karamu** (We shall Reason with the Pen)

Artist/ Performer: H.M. Kariuki

The cock that crowed, crowed three times
The first cockcrow was Waiyaki
The second Cock crow was Harry Thuku
And the third cockcrow was Jomo
Who told the Europeans it was already dawn
Now they could go home and leave Kenya

In Kenya we shall now reason with the pen
Today we shall reason with the pen
In future we shall reason with the pen
We shall always be reasoning like intelligent people

I had not come to know but it appears you know
You from the know-it-all clan
Know about the issues that pertain to you
You will never know about Kenya

I will deliberate on Kenya during the day
But when it comes to the case of foreigners
I will do that in the evening
As I split firewood

Kenya is a country for us all
Some of you say we divide it into pieces
Whoever splits this country into pieces
May his bones crush
And may leprosy inflict his offspring

As for the one who creates conflicts
Here in Kenya
We shall pray that his eyes burst
And beseech God that he dies alone

This person who creates conflicts
It appears you are very happy
When your children
Are feeding on buttered bread
While orphans cry in poverty

When the prayers by the children
Are received by to God
I will not deceive, I will tell you the truth

Those prayers are already there
You will vomit whatever you have stolen

May the partitioner of Kenya
Break his backbone
May his staff become unsteady?
And may his children be cursed

And a great curse was left in Kenya
By those who fought and shed blood
And those are the Mau Mau who said
May the partitioner of Kenya be cursed by the soil

58. **Kirima** (This Mountain)

Rendition: by Gitumbuthi Wa Watiri (45 years)

It was asked who and who
Can sing/dance *Muthirigu*
I, Gitumbuthi wa Watiri, I raised my hand

The mountain, the mountain, this mountain
Is known as Kirinyaga (Mt.Kenya)

Who will pass this message?
So that you can all hear
I am giving you information
But you have blocked your ears

The mountain, the mountain, this mountain
Is known as Kirinyaga

You ask who is finishing you
You clan of the Kikuyu
It is only when you become united
That God will have mercy on you
Then we shall cross the valley

The mountain, the mountain, this mountain
Is known as Kirinyaga

59. **Muruki** (The foul smell)

Rendition: by Hosea Mwai (53 years)

There is a foul smell
A foul scent is afloat
From the uncircumcised girls
As they pass by

The uncircumcised girl is foolish
And for you to know she is indeed foolish
When the banana chokes the baby
She falls on herself with laughter

I will marry one for myself
If she is unable to work on the farm
She can be climbing castor trees

60. **Kenyatta Ni Agathirwo** (Kenyatta Wa praised)

Rendition: by Joseph Kamaru

Kenyatta was praised
By children and women
When we were taken to Yatta
To be jailed there
When we got there
Heavy rain fell
Accompanied by thunderstorms

Pray to God Pray
God is the same forever

Tears that flowed
After we had been there for three days
And the children were all crying
One woman died of constipation
After eating buffallo meat

Pray to God pray
God is the same forever

A White man came
With his people carrying spades
When he saw us trying to burry her
Tears that flowed
When at last her clothes
Were passed on to her sister

A telephone call came in from Githunguri
From Jomo who wanted to know
Whether we had arrived
And we told him
The only sorrow we had
Was because of Josbaini's death

Pray to God pray
God is the same forever

The love that was there
Between women and children
When a bean fell to the ground
They would divide among themselves
The tears that flowed
From women and children
When being forced to dig trenches

Pray to God pray
God is the same forever

Kenyatta the beloved
The protector of the nation
May God bless him
Mbiyu the teacher of our children
We pray you will get a helper

61. **Uhoru Uria Mwiguire Na Matu** (What you heard.)

Rendition: by Joseph Kamaru

The name of the God of Kikuyu
Is pure and sacred
He told the Kikuyu that his name
Should not be mentioned in vain
Because it is powerful

The messages you heard with your ears
And what you saw with your eyes
The ability of the Kikuyu
They could not be stopped
They did what they had planned

Children in Olenguruone saw for themselves
Cows and goats in the sheds
The priest was the witness
When Olenguruone was destroyed
The property, the savings
And the hope in Olenguruone

After being brought out of the valley
They were taken to the office
Where they were finger printed
After that they were taken to Yatta
And others to Nakuru
To be jailed over land

Do not agree to give people information
By the roadside
Do not agree to sign anything
The rights of the Kikuyu
Will be their defense everywhere

The crying that was in Olenguruone
By the babies due to the cold
Heavy rain fell
And the children cried together
As their houses had been burnt

When the maize was cut down
God saw the suffering of the children
He blessed the wild animals
And the wild grapes
And told us to eat them

School children were taken to the school
Their mothers and fathers were all arrested
And taken to Yatta, others to Nakuru
To be jailed because of the land

When teacher Kiurigo was arrested
He told the policemen
I cannot leave the children

Like the children of the wilderness
If you want to take me in
Find me at the school
And arrest me together with the children

62. **Tugakenya Muno** (We Shall be Happy Indeed)

Rendition: By Joseph Kamaru

When we left Olenguruoene it was around 4 P.M.
We found cattle in the plains,
At gandarani, many men gazed at us
As we were taken to detention

When we left Nakuru early in the morning
We got to Thika around mid-day
We were given three tins of water
And that was our breakfast

We shall really rejoice
When the House of Mumbi
Gets back its land

We are very sad House of Mumbi
We are feed with worm-infested flour
We were taken to Yatta to die
We were taken there never to come back

The laughter we heard in Nairobi
When the white children were laughing at us
They thought we would be vanquished
Never to be seen in Kenya again

The wailing that was in Olenguruone
As we tried to put our things together
We were being told to make haste
Not to forget we were under arrest
When we left we bade each other goodbye
And said we were being taken to jail
At the place of black rocks

White clan know this
You are jailing us because of our land

We shall live in Kenya forever
Our heritage from Gikuyu and Mumbi

The placid place is Kikuyuland
Here in yatta there is no rest
A place of stones and sand
We were brought here to die
A place where there is no rain
We were brought here
So that our dignity is stripped off

We have been suppressed all over the country
Our homes have been destroyed
And our bodies further violated
Do not fear, you used to ask
When will the moment come.

White people came from Europe
So that they can destroy the House of Muumbi
They have been here destroying us
What will take them back to Europe
We have to suffer in this world
And our homes have been destroyed
Do not be afraid,
The moment you were asking for
Has now come

63. **Kuma Ndemi Na Mathathi** (from Ndemi and Mathahi)

Rendition: by Joseph Kamaru

Since Ndemi and Mathathi
I have not asked for feast oxen
That is why now
I ask you for an education
Brave men these days
What they need is education
I need nothing else

Mother, Father
I just want an education
Since fools have never
Accumulated cattle (wealth)

Cattle has become depleted
Goats are becoming fewer
I wont ask you for a feast ox
Brave men today have all come together
So that they can protect the land

Mother, Father
I just want an education
Since fools have never
Accumulated cattle (wealth)

How come you are not considering
To volunteer with your spear and shield
Brother do not let go our wealth

Our great hero, Kenyatta
Beloved of the House of Mumbi
Jomo has broken the tape
Mother, father, I just want an education
Since fools have never
Accumulated cattle (wealth)

Our people, our country
Was protected by warriors
By people with shields and spears
From Ndemi and Mathathi
I have never asked for a feast ox

Mother, father, I just want an education
Since fools have never
Accumulated cattle (wealth)

64. Mwene Nyaga Twakuhoya (God we pray Thee)

Rendition: by Joseph Kamaru

God, beloved the protector of the army
Who accepts the sacrificés and offerings
Of the black people
God in front of us
The enemy cannot defeat us

God, 'owner of the ostrich', we pray thee

We pray for love and respect
And sympathy to the beloved of the nation
The unity of Gikuyu and Mumbi
'Owner of the ostrich', we pray thee

We pray that we shall all meet
From Ngong to Garbatulla
That day sadness will be lifted
From all the fighters and our parents

Kenyatta hurry up and bring independence
And Mbiyu bring our share of Knowledge
The whole of Kenya is full of tears
Longing for the day we shall be independent

Loyalists you fight for slavery
When the patriots fight for the country
Our Heritage from Gikuyu and Mumbi
'Owner of the ostrich', we pray thee

Kenyatta hurry up and bring us independence
And Mbiyu bring us our share of knowledge
God when you are in front of us
The enemy shall never defeat us
'Owner of the ostrich', we pray thee

65. Mbara Ya Rui Ruiru

Rendition: By Wa Gatonye

Listen all, I narrate to you,
About the battle of Rui Ruiru
It's me Wagatonye, telling you
The story in the proper way
Greetings to you all
Defenders of Kirinyaga
Lend me your ears
And get the information first hand
It was on a Tuesday and we were at Karuthi
Consulting after we were told
That we have been waylaid
When we heard that, we got worried
Because we had come from Aguthi
Journeying for three days without rest

A woman came to us with that information
And told us, "my children, things are really bad"
And we told her, "take courage we warriors are there"
As bullets poured over the banana plants like rain

We would shoot with shot gun (*gatua uhoro*)
And they would all go flat on the ground
And they would reply with the machine gun
And about that time we advanced near a fig tree
Long used the bren gun (*bebeta*)
And they started blowing the whistles

Ngige was the major, the commander at the battle
He led the warriors until they crossed river Ruthagati
When we got to the open ground
We found the enemy waiting
We all took heart and dispersed them

By that time the government got worried
By the power of our commanders
General Kariba said with his voice
Select only the Europeans
And leave the black people to escape
As they are guided by foolishness

The government soldiers were many
They had been brought from Nanyuki
And others from Tumu Tumu and Karatina

Many white soldiers ran off towards Kiamachingi
Where they were talking over the radio
Calling for reinforcements from Nanyuki
The one who received their radio call replied
Fight you who are there, we cannot come

It is at then that the colonial secretary
Mr. Rennie Spoke at the airport and said
*The stability of the Kenya Government
Has been destroyed by Mau Mau terror!*

We had many Bren guns and uncountable rifles
Hand grenades we had but were not using them
When Gateru was shot through the shoulder
Chui got so angry he downed the white soldier

66. **Uka Murata Twaranirie** (Come Friend We reason)

Rendition: By Joseph Kamaru

The first word young men
Agree with your parents
And even if you get into problems
Do not mind
For afterwards you will be happy
And again young men we want you to know well
That only bodies will be separated
But our hearts will be together

Come friend, come my friend we reason together
We are sad because of our children
The need to lift the darkness in the country
If you are asked whether you are Kikuyu
I would truly lift both hands up
And declare that I am Kikuyu

And once again young men
Always work for the country
And when you get problems do not worry
Later on you will be happy

The last word young men
Each one of you go back to your homes
And greet your sister, mother and father in happiness
Come friend let us reason together
If you are asked whether you are Kikuyu
I would lift up both hands
And declare that I am truly Kikuyu

When I get home
I will adorn myself with skin garments
I will smear myself with oil
And all the beloved will congregate at our home

Come friend let us reason together
If you are asked whether you are Kikuyu
I will truly lift up both hands
And declare that I am Kikuyu

67. **Riria Kimathi Ambatire** (When Kimathi Ascended)

Rendition: by Njagi Njuki

When Kimathi ascended the mountain alone
He was given strength and courage
To defeat the white man

We are crying because we are black people
We are not white and not part of their heritage
Our God is ahead of us

He said all the footprints that I have implanted
On them yours will be implanted
And you will drink from a same cup as me

Do not fear repression and detention
To be disposed and to be killed
Our God is ahead of us

We shall pray for God to help us
So that the European goes back to his country
As a tree that bears no fruit
Is never planted in the garden

Until and unless our hearts are destroyed
Jomo will never abandon us
Because he also was never abandoned
By God at Kapenguria

68. **Wiyathi Na Ithaka** (freedom and Land)

Rendition: By Joseph Kamaru

Our people, all of us
Let us unite without discrimination
This is our country and it is our heritage
God rain blessings on us

Freedom and land
Freedom and land in Kirinyaga
The land of happiness
With grooves and forests
Kenya is a black man's country

We do not mind being arrested
And to be jailed and to be detained
Or to be taken to detention on the Islands
Because we shall never stop
To clamor for independence
Until there is light in the country

The blessings of the children
The future of the nation
It's a gift from God
The foolish and the clever
The rich and the poor
All need independence

Hail father of the children
The leaders of KAU
Important heroes of the country
Why don't you search and ask with your hearts
Which direction is this country heading.

Those of you who love themselves
Know with your hearts
That this is our country
And it is our heritage
Left for us by God

69. **Riria Kenyatta Aciarirwo (When Kenyatta was born)**

Rendition: By Joseph Kamaru

When Jomo was born by his mother and father
He was born a leader
But his mother and father did not know
Only God knew

Uui There is much suffering
Hunger and imprisonment for no reason
And this land is ours

Jommo grew up and matured
And he began to think
About the future of this country Kenya
In years to come

Who are those singing loudly
On the other side of the ocean
Singing for Jommo and Mbiyu
The seekers of truth

70. **Mai Ni maruru** (The water is Bitter)

Performers: Gathaiti P.C. E.A. Choir

Moses in the wilderness
At the spring of Mera
The water was bitter
Unsuitable to drink
The crowd asked Moses
Now that the water was bitter
What shall we drink

Even now the water is bitter
From the homes to work places
From children to adults
The water is bitter
What shall we drink

Moses prayed and God told him
To dip his staff and cleanse the water
When he dipped the staff
The water was purified
The crowd drunk and it was satisfied

A wife and a husband
Are quarrelling over minor things
Telling each other, it is not you
I wanted to marry
Because the water is bitter.

When you go to the office
In need of help
You find the officer is angry
If you want to get in
He says he is busy
Because the water is bitter

Promiscuity is increasing
Murder, theft and robbery

Trying to satisfy the physical body
Because the water is bitter

Like what Moses was told by God
To dip his Staff to purify water
Let us call upon Jesus to save us
To straighten where it is bad
That we may drink the water

71. Ngraragu Ya Ngoro (Famine of the heart)

Performers: Gathaithi P. C. E .A Choir

Now that the famine is widespread
And it has been baptized many names
So that the people may not know
There is a bread of Jesus

Just look around
The rich and the poor
The children and the adults
They are staggering all over
Because their hearts are hungry

Many houses and huge tracts of land
A lot of money and high education
Cannot satisfy the heart of a human being
Only the bread of Jesus can

Two women from Samaria
Ate their children to wad off hunger
They could not consider the glory of children
Because of the hunger in their hearts

One woman only salvaged the hammock
Her child was swept away by the river
If we lack wisdom
We cannot be wise
To take Jesus with us to heaven

Everybody search your hearts
So that you do not get lost with your testimony
So that you do not continue calling him Jesus
And it's a Jesus of rumours

Our names attained the status
Ready to go to the wedding in heaven
You may eat the bread or not
Jesus will still come back

72. Kiuru

Artist/performer: Joseph Kamaru

How Lucky are you Kiuru
You employ both my wife and me
My daughter baby-sits your children
And washes your undergarments

I have been working for you for thirty years
And I have never learned how
One counts a thousand shillings
My salary, my wife's and my daughter's
All go into our stomachs

All the years at your place Kiuru
The mattock and the spade forever in my hands
My wife, the hoe and my daughter the water tin
And I cannot even afford fees for my children

When my brother was released from detention
You employed him as your chauffeur
When going to work or to your members club
And at Makerere you could not beat him

When my son was going abroad for further studies
I asked you to lend me five thousand shillings
You introduced me to the bank
Where I left my land deed
As security for the loan

After a year thing went bad
My farm was sold when I was sick
I hear when you came to survey the farm
You were all speaking in English
You bought it at the office with a pen

My son has now returned Kiuru

With a degree (*Ndigiri*)
I hear he will be the manager in your place
Take your mattocks and spades, Kiuru

73. Thina Wa Kamiti

Artist/Performer: Sam Kinuthia

Problems, problems dear mother
My love, I was arrested
On the seventh of the seventh
And was jailed in Kamiti
Tabitha my wife, this is my message
I am alive, I am not dead
I was arrested on the seventh of seventh
And jailed in Kamiti.

On that day I had gone
To Kamukunji to see Matiba
At noon, problems started
And I was arrested and jailed
It is difficult to escape some pitfalls
I was accused of throwing stones at the police
I denied the charge
And was remanded for two weeks

After two weeks I had suffered enough
I agreed to the charges
I was jailed for six years
They were merciless
Tabitha tell my young child I will come home
Show her my photograph so that she may know me

God of Kenya let it rain
Let there be showers
Even where witches and wizards live
Kenya has become a punishment arena
If you speak the truth you are killed
Or taken to Kamiti, a real hell on earth

74. **Kiria Mali** (Consumer of Wealth)

Artist/Performer: Joseph Kariuki (39years)

From Ndemi and Mathathi this land is ours
We cannot sell it
We redeemed it with blood
I refuse what you are saying
That we mortgage our country
You and your wealth
We know you have wealth
Because of exploiting others
It's the property of the people
The days of a thief old man
Are forty
When he is apprehended
That is his end

Put me down eater of wealth
Put me down
When the rivers sweeps you away
I do not wish to be there

The good Shepherd makes sure
All the sheep are grazed and none is hurt
But does not take some to the salt licks
And leaves others on top of rocks
Bleating because of hunger

Kiria Mali you decided your club
Is for killing the sheep
Rather than killing the hyenas
We refuse your shepherding
In which you choose the fat one
Then you cheat us that
It is the hyena who ate it

Put me down Kiria Mali
Do not carry me on your shoulders
When the rivers floods
I do not wish to be carried off with you

You broke the farmers arm
And said he should work

With the girth around his waist
And he can only feed
On remains from the high table

You decided all the money belongs to you
And you agreed that the devil
Should be worshipped in Kenya
The country that belongs to God

Remember King Herod Who said
All first borns should be killed
And a hero still survived
Believe God is powerful
This river will sweep you off
Like it swept the horseman of the pharaoh
Put me down
I do not wish to be swept together with you

75. Tiga Kiunuhu (Stop this malice)

Artist/Performer: Joseph Kariuki

They pretend they do not know the smith
Knowing well they will be smothered
Let the one capable of knowing know
And the one who cannot remain ignorant
Remember that we now are independent

Tell me, these clubs under your armpit
Where do you think they will take you
You are always sharpening spears
And preparing shields
Not knowing they can be ineffective

You refuse that I get shaved
While the razor does not belong to you
Nor does the beard shaver belong to you
If you were the one who makes rain fall
It would never fall on our farms

You are malicious
You carry a quiver full of arrows
You seek the piece of meat with bones

Even though you have no teeth

Hyena move away from the trough
So that the goats can lick the salt
Why do you block them from licking the salt
While you do not partake of it
Let them lick, do not be malicious

You hated the educated one
And had him detained in Manyani to die
If you want my wife you give instructions
And I am injected with air

Your curses are terrible
If you utter curse
A miscarriage occurs
The Mwithaga rainmaker is even better than you
He who blows the rain away
But it comes back the following day

You are too greedy
You want the honey and
The beehive at the same time
You cannot be endowed with all knowledge
Of cooling and mixing at the same time
Ask me and I will tell you

Among the Kikuyu
The milker leaves some milk in the udder
For someone else (calf) to milk
Who is this new hyena
That unlike the others,
Chews all bones into smoothers

You said the donkey could move
At the same pace with the horse
You decided to be the gear and the breaks
For all vehicles on the road
And while on the farm working
I am doubtful
I was once tickled in the forest
Do not tickle me now
I am no longer sensitive

Our children cannot go to school
Because of corruption

Did we in Kirinyaga do something sacrilegious
House (Of Mumbi) you hit it
Before it came out of the hole
That mole that eats from underground
Only God can trap it for us

Mwangi and Irungu put salt on the fire
The jackal is crying, howling in the bush
This one has a firebrand
And will burn everything if it is not hunted
The leopard in the compound should be trapped
And if everything fails, we call upon God

76. Kiumi

Narrator: Njagi Njuki

Narrator: I have been reading newspapers and if some of the things they say are true; they are just like the stories. This is because, just like the story goes, there was one man who was very strong. His name was Kiumi. He would eat a lot of meat. He was an ogre and his mother was an ogre too. Now this is what he did. He left home and went to live in another place. Just like you can go to Embu and live there and you get to know the people there. Once you are close with them you suggest to the young men there that you should hold a feast outside the village. During those days men could pool resources together and purchase several bulls and they would slaughter and eat them out there in the bush where there were no people.

During those days, people did not have houses built the way we have them today. In an area like this, there were no people. Even over there in Ndunguri, there were no people. That is where people used to graze their animals.

Now, this man is clever. And he is a spy. He was employed in that neighborhood just like you find people coming here from other places and getting work. And you do not know where they come from. It happened that he had been working well and had pretended to be very nice. So when he told the young men that they need to go for a feast, they agreed to purchase the bulls. They collected forty bulls. And this was not the first time. It was something they used to do it. They were warriors and that is something they used to do. They were the fighters who would protect the people incase there was an invasion. That is why the community would even give them the bulls because they were the defense force.

Audience: They protected the people's wealth

Narrator: Yes. Now that man Kiumi told the other young men, "We shall eat these bulls in the plains without flies." And they agreed.

Audience: The group of young men agreed to that?

Narrator: yes. And here Kiumi started trapping flies. He trapped flies and put them in a quiver and closed it. They started on their journey. Kiumi was leading them. He was leading them towards his

home, towards where he came from. When they reached a place where there were no flies, they agreed that was where they should slaughter and eat the bulls. They slaughtered one bull. After slaughtering, as they were preparing the fire some flies swarmed on the meat. Since they had sworn they would not eat the meat anywhere where there were flies, they left the meat. They trekked on. After they had gone for some distance, Kiumi pretended that he had forgot his knife and went back. Now, you know Kiumi's people live in this neighborhood. They have already penetrated his country. But the other young men did not know.

Audience: They did not know.

Narrator: Now Kiumi and his people would eat that meat. Afterwards Kiumi would join the other young men. They would continue searching for the plains without flies. And every time they slaughtered, Kiumi would secretly release the flies. When it became dark, they would sleep hungry or eat wild fruits. The following day they would get to another place where there were no flies and they would slaughter. Only Kiumi remained strong. I think he was confusing these people because they did not know the terrain well. So they would go in circles all over the same place. Once they slaughtered a bull, Kiumi would release the flies and he would end upon eating the meat with his people.

Now they trekked and trekked and only one bull remained. Some of the warriors had even died of hunger. Now he took them to a place where they would all be killed. Once they slaughtered the bull, he told some of the men to go and fetch water and he sent the others to a house from which smoke was emanating to go and fetch fire. Now when the first two got there, they were asked by the old woman who they found sitting outside. "It is fire you want?"

"Yes." They replied.

"Have you seen my son Kiumi?"

"Yes. We were with him just now"

"Where did you leave him? Anyway get into the house, I will give you some milk"

And you remember how hungry they are. They have not eaten for days. On seating down some men, those who were eating the meat with Kiumi came from hiding and killed the two. They were hiding somewhere in the house and they were waiting for them so that after killing them, they could go and finish eating the remaining bull.

When those two did not return, Kiumi sent others to go and fetch fire and they were also killed. Others were sent and were also killed. When only two young men remained, Kiumi went with them to his mother's house to fetch fire. When he reached there he asked his mother, "Have you seen some men here seeking fire?" His mother said, "No." He took a firebrand and as they were leaving, the men hiding in the house attacked them. They ran off. They ran off toward where the slaughter bull was. The men from the old woman's house were still following them. They ran off towards their home. But Kiumi did not follow them. He was left with his tribesmen enjoying the bull.

Now when those two finally got home, they realized Kiumi wanted to finish them so that when later they went on a raid with his people they could steal cattle from that community easily. Now let me say this; that is why you find tribal clashes in the Rift Valley and these Kalejin people have the same idea. Their leader wants to finish off the Kikuyu so that they can take their property. Now, That is the story of Kiumi. Kiumi, someone who is very stubborn. He has a heart of stone. He can live in another people's country spying on them, for a long time. He is very wily, cheating people and they agree with whatever he says. Now Kiumi went on doing his things that way and that is the end of my story.

77. **Ndi Mukenya** (I am a Kenyan)

Version: By Albert Gacheru

The first thing people of Kenya
Begin by ending tribalism
Let everybody know they are Kenyans
And other tribes are like the Kikuyu

And once again Kenyans
You must know that
Speaking different languages
Is not a deterrent
For the nation to be united.

Come friend, Come friend
Let us reason together
We are sad because of tomorrow
That the darkness in our country can be lifted

If you are asked whether you are Kenyan
I would raise all my two hands up
And declare that I am truly Kenyan

Then once again people of Kenya
Let us serve the country
Everybody do your part
And at the end, come together

Before I end people of Kenya
Glance side and side
And see that all your neighbors
Are are fellow black people
The white people were
Visitors to our country

When we defeat tribalism
I will wear a Kenyan garment
I will wash and smear myself with cream
From the milk of our cattle
Then I will know I never sacrificed
My firstborns in vain

I will never again weep
When I believe I am truly Kenyan

The last thing Kenyans
Go back to your traditions
And stop imitating Western culture
And do not leave before I tell you
That tradition and culture is the people
If you neglect your culture
The darkness in this country will never end

78. **Gatiba Ni icenjio** (Change the Constitution)

Artsit/Performer: Sammy Muraya (40 years)

During the events of the *Saba Saba*
Ten people died from beatings by the police
We have observed and noticed
That policemen are our enemies
Incase you see them
Arm yourself with stones

The seventh of seventh month
The year ninety-seven
That is the day we shall never forget
Especially when we remember
The fifteen fat policemen
Who attacked Reverend Njoya
At All Saints Cathedral Nairobi
Many people died during these attacks

Saba Saba is a day to be marked on the calendar
It was the day we were demanding
For multiparty politics to be reintroduced
Saba Saba, this year we demand that
The constitution be changed
Because if it is not changed
The police will wipe us out

You all remember the last *Saba Saba*
We agitated for multi-party politics
Many people died including Bishop Muge
We fought a good battle and now have multiparty
We shall not relent; we now want

The constitution changed

Churches are calling for constitutional change
Dictatorship should end in Kenya
This great burden should be removed
Our dream of freedom should come true
I ask again, when will this constitution be changed

In the *Matatu* taxis
Passengers are calling for constitutional change
Drivers are calling for constitutional change
Touts are calling for constitutional change
When, I ask, will this constitution be changed

The Kikuyu are saying that they are now tired
The Maasai say they are ready to go back and herd livestock
The Meru are saying they will uproot Mirraa
The Luo say they will boycott fishing
When, I ask, will this constitution be changed

The hawkers are saying
The constitution should be changed
So that they be able to sell their wares
Women are saying vegetables are going to rot
Change the constitution so that the council can be efficient
When I ask, will the constitution be changed

My grandmother is saying the constitution
Should be detained and killed
My grandfather says, kill it, I will bury it
Many do not even know what the constitution is
They are just singing change the constitution
When, I ask, will the constitution be changed

....
Just before Election Day
Let us burn our voting cards
Because if we do not burn the cards
We will be doing a useless job
Let the constitution be changed
And everything else will change
If you refuse to burn your voting cards
The constitution will not be changed
... When multiparty politics was allowed in Kenya
Everybody jumped up and celebrated
But I ask if there is multiparty politics
Why are some leaders

Not allowed to address the public

After experiencing we realize
That our multi-party is but a name
It is just like when someone tells you
Take that food and eat it
But there is no food
If someone hears, you being told
Take that food and eat it
They will go away saying
You have been fed
That is what happened with multi-party politics
That is what you were told
You can have multipartism
But there was no democracy,
The dictatorial governance continued

The problems we have experienced in Kenya
The pain and the suffering
The children crying in the wilderness
But we shall overcome this dictatorship

79. Muchari Utari Kahonia (yaws without cure)

Performers: Mugwandi Catholic Choir

During Noah's time
Because of being unclean and sinful
People were wiped out with water
In Sodom and Gomorrah
They were wiped out with fire

During these days
Because of being unclean and evil
God is about to wipe out the world
I will reveal to you
Why God will wipe you out
Unless you soften his anger
Follow his commandments
You cannot just do what you want
You forget that the slave
Has never been greater than its master
Have love that is not hypocritical

I will reveal to you
God has said do not commit adultery
But because you cannot listen
A disease without cure has come to the world
You refuse to heed the commandments
And continue to commit adultery

Because you cannot listen
A disease without cure has come to the world
Let us save ourselves from it
From this disease without cure
What do we do to save ourselves

I will give you the cure
The person in the home
Forgets his own backyard
Knowing well two scents broke the hyena's legs
Let us always follow one path
That leads us home
Shepherd only one sheep
Do not long for another's sheep.

Do not start a journey
That will make you fall
Do not steal
But you steal even from God
Do not kill
Fulfill all of God's commandments

80. Guikiria Kirindi Ndeto (Telling the Masses)

Performers: Jecinta Wangithi and Christopher Mbutu (67years)

I will throw information to the masses
If the rat fails to feed on the strap
It will eat the leather buckles

Listen to me young men, girls, men and women
There is no chance of escaping this
If you have created a back door

Listen to me
It is Jehova who told Israel

If you refuse me I will also refuse you
If you leave me
How will you ever help yourself

Take care that
You do not bring
The pestilence on yourself
I am Jehovah your God
Who brought you out of Egypt
If you reject me I will also reject you
If you leave me
You will never help yourself

Take care not to bring
The pestilence upon yourself
This disease of Death
Fever because of this disease of death
Gaunt eyes because of this disease of death
Weakness because of this disease of death

Uuuu Uuuuu ui it is here
It here, it here, take care
That you do not bring
The pestilence upon yourself
Hold me and let me help you person of God
Gikuyu said in a proverb, "pose the proverb and
Interpret it for yourself"
A bad thing has come into our world
This is *Mutukia*
Which hates friends
And the one who is about to get lost
Never meets with a friend
The crying and the screaming
That is all we hear friends

It (corpse) used to be thrown into the bush my friend
To be consumed by hyenas after death
Pose the proverb and interpret for yourself
That the one who is about to get lost
Never meets with a friend

Will we tie him with jingles
So that others would be aware
And get off the path he is following
Pose the proverb and interpret it for yourself
The only big thing that is bad is a wound

And this *Mutukia* hates friends
Oh, the weeping and the screams we hear
The weeping and screams we hear *HA!*

81. Kagumo HIV/AIDS Discourse

Speech By Reverend Father Peter Ngari: My name is reverend father Peter Ngari, and I am the priest in charge of this parish. I wish to welcome you all to this function in which we want to start our fight against the HIV/AIDS problem in this rural community. Our main aim is to empower the people so that they can be able to deal with the disease themselves. But we should assist as a church in putting up a section of the hospital, which can deal with AIDS cases. It is Gods wish that we win the war against this disease. Jesus said, "I have come so that you can have life and have it abundantly." He preached and healed the sick. He fed the poor and resurrected the dead. It is our duty to preach the example of Christ by solving the problems facing our people.

We have proposed to build a center where people suffering from HIV/ AIDS can be helped. When people go to that center they will be going to meet Jesus and have life abundantly. I am happy I can see people from all walks of life here today. I am happy because this disease also doesn't know religion, class or tribe. Everybody has to work against it. Before we start raising the funds, I want to introduce you to a number of guests who will talk to you. Let me begin by introducing Dominic Warutere who will tell you his story.

The story of Dominic Warutere: Let me start by greeting you. I am happy to be here today, I am also happy to God because of the good event that is taking place here today.

In Kenya there are many places where people have not done a similar thing. They have not realized the need to create awareness against this disease. Those who are already infected with the HIV virus pray that such functions are staged everywhere. May God help you people of Kagumo so that you may reach the end of the journey without any problems.

I have many things that I can put in the picture you but let me tell one thing only. The Bible is a good teacher. Read it because it is a better teacher than anybody I know. The play we have just watched is also a good teacher. It gives the people power and knowledge. It makes you aware that even with HIV/AIDS you can live longer. That AIDS is not a death sentence.

I tell you, as I stand here in front of you today that I am an AIDS victim. I Knew I had AIDS when I was twenty years old and now I am thirty-one. I have survived that far because I first accepted that I had the AIDS virus. My people accepted me and that was very important. That is why I tell you that Love is the first weapon against HIV/AIDS.

Even if you have awareness programs without love they will be useless. Let the people suffering from AIDS be treated like any other people. Let people know that one can live with AIDS. One way you can live with AIDS is to believe in God and to accept that you have the disease. Gikuyu said, "*Kiri Ngoro Gitihotanaga*" (unsaid words or Knowledge can never win a case). In order to be helped you must say

what your need is. A lot of people are dying because of hiding the disease. In the play that we have watched, we have learnt that it is wrong to hide the disease because if you hide the disease others will be infected.

Another important message from that performance is that we need to love one another. Without love we cannot defeat HIV/AIDS. When you now your child had HIV/AIDS, accept them. Nobody wants the disease. If you are infected, feed according to the doctor's instructions and the advice you get from the hospitals.

As I finish speaking, I want to say that AIDS is real. It is true that we will all die some day. But now that we are alive let us fight AIDS by knowing about the disease and how to live with it. Those eleven years I have lived with the disease have been trying. Sometimes I have faced many problems and even contemplated suicide. Remember always whether you would like to cry the tears I have cried. I could be talking to trees but let me say this, Oh you Jerusalem rise and shine because your glory is here. Change your behavior and you will have life and as father said, have it abundantly.

Speech By Matere Keriri: I am very happy to be here today. I want to thank Father Ngari because of spearheading this campaign against HIV/AIDS. They have been able to do this work because you as the community you have been cooperative and assisted them. Our church here is doing a lot of good work and I like the way they conduct their business peacefully. I would also like to thank the young people who volunteered to participate in this campaign. I know each came with a bicycle. You have done well. We shall spend more money on football clubs so that as you play football you will be fighting the disease.

Thank you everybody for coming. We have been told about the disease many times. I do not want to repeat but I will repeat. Why repetition. We will repeat and repeat information on HIV/AIDS. *Mundia* knows that the *Muikamba* got here because of repetition. It was constantly repeated to him that *Ndia* is not far off. He came and now he lives in *Mwea*.

Let me tell you. Now there are more deaths than births in the country. Our country is getting finished unless God creates another Adam. But since we do not know whether that can happen, let us first begin by changing our behaviour. *Murega akiathwo Ndaregaga Akibetwo* (If you refuse to be guided/advised you will not refuse to be pitied). As a parent you must take the discipline of your children seriously. You must tell them about the disease repeatedly you should not hide things the way our government does.

Our government specializes in hiding issues. People in Kenya are dying of AIDS and a whole government minister is hiding information and denying the cases of AIDS is alarming. Today this government is denying that Kenyans can be infected with the ebola and it is the same government that said there was no AIDS. There is money for HIV/AIDS projects and this money is at the Office of the President. There is a minister of health in this country. That minister is a professor of medicine. We have a permanent secretary who is also a professor of medicine. A professor is a clever person, a very clever person. Now we ask, that there is money to fight this disease what is this professor who has studied medicine doing with that money? Let the money be taken to the Ministry of Health because those are the people who know how to deal with diseases.

In this country we have a disease of stealing public funds. People are harvesting where they never sowed and this is contributing to the spread of HIV/AIDS. What we ask the government to do is to make drugs available to the people. Because the people in the government have money and they can afford medicines they do not care for the poor.

Speech By Kinyua Mbui: Thank you everybody. There is something I want to begin by saying. I came here because of the AIDS disease. This disease is not a respecter of persons but it is mostly affecting the young. Today nearly every home is affected. Remember as we say, *Igego Rithekagia Itimu* (The tooth smile/laughs with the spear). You may be laughing with the spear but remember that we are burying people every day. In some families only young children are surviving. We are burying people every day but people do not want to believe that AIDS is real!

No body wants to get sick or to die. That is why when I heard that the community wants to build a center here I came. People should cooperate on this project. The project should be big and serve everybody. There is no Catholic AIDS or Protestant AIDS. When it is operational, this center will serve everybody.

There many rich people here in Kagumo and if they do not assist in this project they might die like the rich man who was with Lazarus. There is another thing I want to say. It is that there are some very bad people. These people know they have HIV virus and they spread it. The other important thing is that if you are not infected make sure you never get infected.

We need cheap drugs to treat people in this country. But we are told we cannot get cheap drugs until the constitution is changed. Now what I want ask is; is the constitution something we are we going to eat or to store it in the granary? Why can't it be changed so that the people can stop suffering? The people in the government are selling expensive drugs so that they can make money. Let the government give us the money for these projects because people are the most important resource.

Most of us know about AIDS. We even know the statistics but after knowing, what is remaining? Let me start with men. What are they doing? Men should change. But even when they are told to change their ways they just change the location where they do their things. If he was doing it in Kagumo, he moves to Karatina. They are coming from Nairobi to rural areas looking for young girls because they think there is no AIDS here.

What is required is behavior change. Those of you with boys in grade eight are having them circumcised before they go to secondary school. Once the boy is in secondary school and he is circumcised, they have their own house. Even when they come with a girl you do not ask them. Because once they are circumcised they are regarded as grown ups. But I am telling you this. That is how you fail. You should not stop disciplining and advising children on this epidemic because you think they are grown ups. If you are a teacher teach well. We should stop neglecting disciplining our children. We refuse to discipline our children and sit here and quote the bible saying that this is the generation without ears, which was prophesied about in the bible.

Let me add to what Warutere said. It is not Warutere who is in problems here. It is those of you who think they are okay and cannot get this disease and others who are infected and they do not even know.

Let the dogs be leashed with a short leash so that they cannot reach the maize because as they say, the maize has been poisoned.

Speech By Chritine Ngari: I greet you all. My name is Christine Ngari and I am a member of the HIV/AIDS control council here in Ndia. I want to say that we have been talking and talking a lot. But now is the time to help the people. It's the time to work together and fight this scourge.

Let me tell you what used to happen in the olden days when there was a disease like AIDS. People used to prepare themselves, pass the massages and get ready to scream at the disease. Everybody would come out, the small, the big, men, women and they all would scream at the disease and it went its way.

Now that is what we shall do with HIV/AIDS we shall scream against this disease in many different ways. We shall scream at the disease by way of creating awareness. The bicycle competitions that we are organizing will pass the massages. We shall scream through dramatic performances that create awareness. We are going to scream against the taking of drugs and alcohol. We should try to do away with alcohol because it is contributing to the spread of HIV/AIDS. We should also fight against other drugs.

As parents, let's also do our work at home. Let us parent and advise the young. If we do not do that we shall be making a mistake and we shall have problems. And you young people open your hearts and listen. Change your behavior. Go to church and it will help you a lot because you need to tether your desires like the cow or goat that is leashed with a short tether so that it does not destroy crops.

82. Ni Watumire Nde Network (You Made Me loose My Network)

Artist /Performer: Peter Kigia Wa Esther (39years)

It is me you put on hold,
Teasing me with half portions of love
Which you measure in doses
So that I take it like medicine
Or like petrol at an illegal fueling point
Because you are beautiful
And you are *a killer*
Planning how to finish me and make me useless

You made me completely lose my network
I do not perceived anything
When I call you I am told
The subscriber cannot be reached

When I need you I cannot get you
You switch off your phone and I am told it is

It is out of order
And that time you are out partying
As I wait alone in the house
When we meet and I ask you
Where you were late
You become fierce and
I fear you might swallow me alive

While the truth is, the previous night
You had gone out with someone else
Eating roast chicken and goat ribs
Which you drown with one-man guitar
Dancing *Mugithi*
Everyone touching what they do not have
Being told to wave hands in the air
And being asked whether you feeling highly

This love you offer
Like grains from a maize comb
That we divide amongst ourselves
Is very dangerous
You are always drinking a soda with two straws
Don't you know things are not that good
A fool is a terrible person
Who sucks the breasts of a dead mother
I will not be a party to this
I do not wish to be a victim of the worm

Don't you know that the two scents
Broke the hyena's legs
Striding at the forking path
Its legs broke apart
What type of a person are you
You are never satisfied
You eat and carry home
Because of your greed
Take care of your life
Do not be led by the stomach
These days, this journey
Will be completed by the wise person

I feel the pain when telling you
That I loved you
But cannot bear your love anymore
I cannot hanker after you
You ate yourself up

Saying that even tripe is meat
Now you are finished. Completely finished,
Bye, bye with your love

83.No Ngainukia Itaha

Artist/Performer: Joseph Kariuki

I ask myself why the misfortune
God and you know me
Traveling Southwards when
My home is in the North
God you are my only hope
For me to emerge from Nairobi
It's a deep pool
That has swallowed many

The girls in Nairobi are like broken pots
The broken pot that cannot help anyone
If you think you are in a love relationship
You cheat yourself
Because it is not love but money
That went into their heads

Oh Mother wait for me
Pray God I bring home the booty

I heard them saying the maize
Has been infected with poison
That you chain your dogs well
Lest they eat the poison
Mother do not judge me
If I remain single
There is a new disease and
To be defensive is not cowardice

I build castles in the air
But where there is hope there is a way
That is why I wake up early
And scoop locusts as they sleep
The foot that wades the dew
Is not the same as that is dusted by ash

I never prefer one hoe to another
Or even select the digging stick
As I try to see whether one day
I will eat with a spoon
And renovate my mother's house
Greater riches are God's reward.

If you can hear me
Do whatever you do well
Even when you have a degree
And no money, it's useless
The devil has spread problems
Throughout this country

84. Mami Witu (Dear Our Mother)

Artist/Performer: Joseph Kariuki

I live like a lone Buffalo, dear mother
As I do not want Conflicts with girls
Living here in this City of Nairobi

A good seed is known from the tooth
These markets are good and bad
In Nairobi you plant a banana
And it grows into a wild Banana
You enter Nairobi pure
You leave the city unclean

Most of my age mates are lost
While others have consumed the poisoned maize
As for me, I will not throw stones
To the bees in the hive
An unlucky person gets slashed
By his wives skin skirt and dies

In Nairobi the buses carry workers
Be sharp or they will sharpen you
Which place is this
They shave me without water
While they are ululating
That the mean person's goods
Are eaten when he has a ritual
And when they finish eating

Each goes their own way

Fire at a distance cannot warm anybody
One who is circumcised
Away from home never heals properly
When the elephants go to the salt licks
I will follow them
And I will get my salt

I refuse to smear myself with fat
While I can get new oil
I have never eaten anything that comes along
And now I know the maize has been infected
With poison
Mine is still on the way
The bus to bring her home
Has not yet arrived

The only thing I hate
Is drinking beer during the day
Lest I insult a prospective mother in law
As I do not know yet
Whether the one I will marry
Comes from this area.

Mother cook for me
My sister Chiru wash my clothes
Soon I will get a good girl
Whose character is sound
And my father will pay the bride price.

85. Sarafina

Artist /Performer: John Ndichu (1961-2001)

Sarafina, tell me
Why you do not want to get married
And you have enough education
You have gone abroad
And you have come back

I look at you and feel sad sarafina
When I remember the maize
Has been infected with poison
And when you are told to lock up your dog

You just laugh
And you know the maize has been infected

How lucky are you Sarafina
That you change men like clothes
You move with this one and that one
Sarafina you will eventually get infected

You have made your body Sarafina
The source of your daily food
The source of your clothes and daily drinks
And the source of your fare home over weekends

Your hair Sarafina will one day be like twangs
Your beautiful feet will one day have cracks
Even your grandmother Sarafina
Was once young and beautiful like you
And today, she scratches herself with
The long food mashing stick

I look at you and feel sad Sarafina
When I remember the maize
Has been infected with poison
And you are told many times
To lock up your dogs
And when you hear that
You just laugh

86. **Guccamacama** (Unbridled tasting)

Artist/Performer: Epha Maina (29 years)

Tasting, tasting this tasting
For how long shall I warn you Baba Kionjo
Tasting, tasting this tasting
For how long shall I warn Mama Kionjo

Tasting, Tasting this tasting
Even the *Rukuri* has been poisoned
The animal that leaves the shed this season
Will surely be stung

In heaven animals will not be accused of adultery
While they are not as clever as man

They follow the commandments of their maker
You will never find a lion
Mating with an Antelope
They do not wear clothes
They live in their nakedness
But each has its own label

You say you will eat the slippery one
The one with the colour of Cocoa
But thighs are just impressions
Beauty is the source of problems
A tractor's value is realized
In the manner it is used to plough

Be content with what you have
Even if you roam all over the world
You will never be satisfied tasting
When the alarm goes off
Come out from the farm
With what you have picked
The priest has never been admitted to hospital
AIDS has no cure
A vehicle without brakes
Why bring it out on the road
AIDS is not fiction
It is the reality

In the villages people are drinking
The potent illicit brews
Men have become impotent
And women are just crying
If you do not get blind you die early
Aging before your grandparents

87. Zero Grazing

Artist/Performer: Daniel Kamau (53 years)

This world is upside down
The things happening today
Never happened during the olden days
Has the world come to an end
Or has there been a break
In the ruling generations of Mwangi and Irungu

The promiscuous behavior with people today
Is like that of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah
People are buying diseases with money

Young men, girls, men and women
Are all unclean
Advise the youth as they think
They are already weaned chicken

Old men hide and secretly go out
Saying that the grass at the homesteads
Is not good to eat
Women are putting on shawls
Pretending they are going for Christian fellowships
Thinking they are punishing each other

When the wages of sin gets into the house
You soon hear dirges and mourning
We are told to zero graze
You stick to one partner
Before this disease of AIDS finishes off the people
Before this disease of promiscuity
Finishes off the people

Zero grazing is not a song
It is the truth
Stick to one partner
The bush is full of howling jackals

88. Twimenyerere mukingo (Let Protect ourselves from AIDS)

Artist/Performer: George Wanjaro (32 years)

What do girls these days want
Whoever I fall in love with
And I ask her we go to the hospital
For an HIV/AIDS test
They jump up and refuse, saying
May our love die

Our mother keeps on complaining
Asking what I am doing
And I tell her relationships these days

Should be taken cautiously
That there is no need to hurry

AIDS, AIDS has no cure
Take care, AIDS, AIDS has no cure
It is hotter than beyond
Young man when you see a good girl
Beautiful and well adorned
Lips and nails painted
Know very well that could be the matchbox
Girl when you see a young man
Straight and strong
Well brought up by his mother and father
It is no wonder if he has the worm

Young man when you see another young man
Telling you he loves you to the end
And asks you to be his partner
Know you have not escaped AIDS

Wa Njaro I feel sad, when I see young children
Born with HIV/AIDS
And the cause is the father or the mother

That is why my dear
When I insist we should be tested
Do not get upset
We are just being careful
The coward that is afraid
Goes back to its mother unharmed

And you friends who are AIDS free
Take care of those with the disease
Help them to feed properly
When we get to heaven
God will repay you

When you get the disease
Know that you will die
That is your end
Then we shall come to your home
And eat the wake food
And then we will bury you
In the soil where
You will sleep with the moles
And be taken care by the worms

89. AIDS Sermon

Preacher/Narrator: Reverend John Kangangi

Let me begin by saying that God created no body with a disease. The disease comes and enters the body and eventually kills the person. Now a disease has killed our brother here. As we talk he has gone to live with God.

Now, the soul of a human being can be destroyed by sin and when there is sin, there can be disease. And there are also diseases that are unnatural evils, which cause people to suffer. And now one of those diseases has come to our society. It has come in the form of a worm (virus) that is called HIV. Once it enters someone, it gets into the bloodstream and eventually the whole body. Once it is there it attacks and consumes the things called white cells, the elements that fight disease in our bodies. Once the worm fights these cells then nothing can cure the disease attacking the body. Since you cannot get healed, then you die, the disease kills you. That is how people are dying from one home to the next.

Here in Baricho where I am archdeacon, there is a record in the infection rates compared to other places. Ngurubani has been number one for a long time followed by Kagio town. Baricho where I live comes as number three. Now these numbers are bad. To be number three in HIV infection rate is bad. It is bad. It is not the same as when we are told we are number three in selling maize or number three in the people who have accepted Jesus Christ as their personal saviour. It is sad when we are number three in the HIV infection rates.

But even if this is a sad affair, it is being brought about by our not being prepared. Over ninety per cent of the infection of this disease result from the union of men and women when they sleep together. Isn't that something avoidable? You agree with me that since it is something you seek, one can avoid it. Isn't it?

Audience: Yes.

Preacher: Now, this worm is dangerous. It is worse than drunkenness. Now if it was like beer, which one drinks and later becomes sober, we can say that we are going to preach to that person so that he stops drinking beer. But with this worm, once it gets in, even if we preach to the victim, we can only preach to him so that he can prepare for death. It is sad to preach that to someone. But there is little else we can do because there is no cure and there is no medicine. We can only preach to that person how they can live better and tell the Christians how they can take care of the patient so that they may be happy.

Now for people to understand this disease, it is necessary for us to preach in gatherings like this about being prepared. People need to be prepared with their lamps lit because one day, time will run out. This is the best time for me to tell you about being prepared because from your faces I can see you have not had the misfortune of being infected by the worm. The issue is protecting yourself. That is what I want to tell you. And because you can protect yourself this the best time to tell you that because in ten or twenty years, you will still be in this country because that is the wish of God. God's wish is that you remain healthy and do his work so that when he comes for you, you will be ready.

We hear the story about the ten girls, five who were clever and five who were stupid. Today we have the same two groups and it is a matter of individual choice on which group to belong to. If you want to be in

the group of the five who were ready, those who had prepared their lamps, checked the wickets and filled them with oil, its up to you. These five knew time will elapse and the groom might take time to come. So they carried extra oil in containers just in case they had to wait for the groom. But the other five said, "Never mind we shall know what to do when the time comes." That is what they said. Now we know the bridegroom took too long to come. And their lamps consumed all the oil they had and began to wicker. Those who had carried extra fuel just added it to their lamps and they continued to see comfortably.

Now the five who had no fuel told the others, "It is better you give us half of your fuel and use half in your lamps because we all came to the same wedding."

The others said, "No, the fuel cannot be enough for all of us because as you know after the bridegroom comes we shall continue the celebrations until tomorrow."

One of them told them "Let me suggest something. The best you can do, and even if you do not have money, we can lend you some, is for you to go and buy some more fuel for yourselves. Go to the shops and buy fuel and hope for the best."

Now the five went out singing. To go and buy fuel. And it was when they were out that the bridegroom came and the doors were closed.

We are now in similar groups waiting for the bridegroom. We have all agreed that we are going to die one day but we do not know when. One group is the one that has agreed to join the church to be baptized to be confirmed and to accept Christ as their savior. The other group has refused to do that completely. They say, "I will attend the church when I want and be doing my thing when I want." But we are now being told that one day, time will run out. Because when you are sick and you are in hospital you cannot do those things that could have protected you from death. That is the time you will remember you used to be told to get ready, to keep your lamp filled with oil but you refused.

Corruption is also rife in this country. It is increasing problems and helping spread the AIDS disease. If there is someone who brews illicit alcohol, and you are the chief invested with the authority to stop it, you should arrest the culprit and confiscate the illegal brew. This is because when the people take that alcohol, they are getting drunk and once they are drunk they are sleeping anywhere. That is how they are ending up with AIDS and they die. Now when those brewing the illegal alcohol give you money, when they bribe you, you let them continue with the illicit business. That way as the chief, you cause many people to die and you will be held accountable in heaven. You will not have time to prepare your lamps because you will be waiting for the proceeds of the illegal brew.

It is only if you believe and stop doing certain things that you become a child of God. Because by accepting to stop doing these things that have brought calamity to the community we can save our young people from dying.

To end my sermon, I will say this, Noah called people just like we have been called here by Josphat. When he called them, he told them what God had said. That people have become so corrupt, very promiscuous, adulterous and exploitative. Noah told them that God had told him to build an ark and those who repent and enter it would be saved. He did his job and built the ark but when they were told to enter they refused. They said it was foolishness. He got his eight people in and the animals and

those were the ones that God saved. Today were being told to enter the ark and get saved. Once we do that we shall overcome AIDS and corruption in our country will end.

90. Sabeta

Artist/Performer: Sam Kinuthia

Am I losing my eyesight
Or is it you I am seeing
Wearing two overcoats on hot day
What happened to the world
Nyokabi my dear
If you greet me now
I will report you to my mother, Wairimu

Know that the earth has no owner
My dear Nyokabi I used to tell you
That, others will one day
Dance while you are indoors
And if you come out the
The Judge will sentence you to death
As you will no longer have any insurance
To live on this earth

Sabeta remember when you came to live here
You were more famous than Winnie Mandela
You used to be praised as Miss universe
But when you became 'Red Cross'
You ended up as second hand goods

You became like the council tractor
That collects garbage from the town
Everyone strummed you like a guitar
Calling you 'mother dip' and the firebrand

When you were young and beautiful
I used to tell you that
Beauty is the foundation of your life
Let me tell you this secret
The body is like the blossoming flowers
A day comes when
You scratch yourself with the basket

Remember things are not that good

One day you will find your cheekbones protruding
Such that you can hang a basket on them
As you decided to pick up everything
Saying the body has no debt
But remember even too much sweetness will kill you.

Since once I loved you
Let me give you a word of advice
Your help can only now come from the church
Where twelve preachers can pray for you
So that you may recover partly

91. Wari Wakwa (You Were Once Mine)

Artist/Performer: Maina wa Nyaguthii

Girl you were once mine
Before you became listless and loose
Before you forgot your own and became greedy
You became like Ruiru and Githurai Taxis
Whoever talked to you was welcomed inside

My home became a parking lot
All types of cars
Tractors, lorries, taxis, personal vehicles
Bicycles and even those who came on foot
Some lost their windscreens
Competing for packing space
You became the broom, sweeper of the village

I threw you out like a thief
With all your children
And all your things and
Sent you back to your people
I prayed that if you ever come back
You become pillar of salt like Lot's wife
Because as the good word says
Adultery is the only sin that
Can separate those who love one another

I feel pain in my heart
As you send for me from the hospital ward
That I come and give you a last word
I wish you had persevered in my home

You might not have died and
Leave your children in problems

Girl, I used to tell you that
The maize has been infected with poison
I am told when you went back to your home
You decided to pick and pick
That there was nobody to ask you
You picked passengers at all stages
Except those who wanted lifts
And those over hundred years
Accompanied by their parents

I feel very sad when I remember
The children were innocent
You were the transgressor
And after you die I will take care
Of the children who come back to me
When you die, die in peace
I told you and you thought I was joking
This disease is like a gas fire,
It cannot spare anybody

92. Muthoni Kifagio

Artist/Performer: Newton Karish (41 years)

When I remember you Muthoni
I, K. K., I sweat
When I remember you Muthoni
I shed tears
When I remember how you lived with me
And you were never satisfied
Muthoni you are useless, you are baseless
I Kariuki from Embu
Will never forget your behavior

Your life in my house
Was as comfortable as shop's cat
Every day roast beef and other delicacies
Then I discovered that when I go to work
You go into the neighborhood bars

I now regret
After knowing you are dangerous
You are a coin box to be used by every body

When I remember the date that I met you
You were thin and worn out
No man could have been interested in you
I fed you until you became fat
And now you have become unfaithful
You do not heed anything I tell you
You have forgotten the work I did
In order to give you shape

One Saturday I pretended
That I had gone to work
But I hanged around spying on you
I saw you crossing Jogoo road
You did not even check
The oncoming traffic in your hurry
You're just a taxi; you are not a personal vehicle
Whether you like it or not I have left you

Relationships these days call for faithfulness
And you are the city council broom
Muthoni I do not want to follow you in death
I do not want to be wrapped in a polythene paper
Take care of your life
There is woe in this world
If you are not hit by a vehicle
You are going to be hit by AIDS

93. PIGO

Performers: Mutira A.C.K. Youth Group

Scene one (*On the Street*)

Selina: excuse me please.

Inuka: What's up.

Selina: Which is the way to the church?

Inuka: The way to the church? Follow this direction.

Selina: Is it not in this direction?

Inuka: It is in the direction I am showing you. That is where I go to church, so I should know.
By the way, where are you from?

Selina: From Mombasa, from the coast.

Inuka: And what do they call you?

Selina: Selina, they call me Selina from the mainland.

Inuka: I am Inuka. Inuka, the big man around here. Chairman of the church development committee.

Selina: You look it. You look like somebody with nice things.

Inuka: But you also look quite nice if I have to say.

Selina: Do not flatter me.

Inuka: I am not flattering you. I have fallen for you at first sight. Be mine now and forever.

Selina: How come, and I do not even know you.

Inuka: Do you think there is more to knowing one another than this?

Selina: Well you win.

Inuka: Then be the snow of my heart and soul. And how do I see you when I need to meet you again.

Selina: I can be found at Kagumo, Kagumo, plot number twenty-three.

Inuka: I will definitely come over there. We may part now but my heart does not want to leave you.

(Inuka leaves and Selina leaves in opposite direction talking to her)

Selina: How lucky! My first day and I caught myself a man. They do not know me yet. In the village, in this town and even in the church, they will know me yet.

Scene two *(Inuka's home)*

Inuka: It is not true!

Fumilia: It is true!

Inuka: It is not true!

Fumilia: It is true!

Inuka: It is absolute Rubbish!

Fumilia: It is absolutely true. I know all about you and that harlot, that loose woman. You do not know her yet.

Inuka: What you say is not true.

Fumilia: It is obvious from your face.

Inuka: So that is what is ailing you. Now you have crossed the boundary. Since when did you become my keeper? Stop that nonsense and go to the kitchen.

Fumilia: It is true what the elders said; one who does not listen ends up breaking his legs. Inuka my husband, we used to love one another like the finger and the ring and now Inuka has decided to leave me, Inuka...

Inuka: Inuka, Inuka. Which Inuka are you calling? Haven't I told you I do not want to see your ugly face in front of me?

Fumilia: Inuka, Inuka, Remember the time of our wedding. How we swore to be together until death and now you want to leave me.

Inuka: We swore?

Fumilia: Yes we did. This is the ring.

Inuka: Now this is what shall happen. You go. Go! I do not want to see your ugly face in front of me.

Fumilia: Inuka, AIDS is a disease that has spread all over the world. One has to have only one partner

Inuka: Are you trying to say that you are my partner? Forget it. Forget it. I do not want you. You will have to go.

Fumilia: I will go but you will one day remember your one and only Fumilia, me.

Inuka: What is this nonsense? Am I not the one who roars? This woman should go. Am I not a grown up. An appointed and elected leader? This woman and that pastor all have to go. How can a frog scare away the cow from drinking water in the river? We will see.

Scene Three (*meeting at the church grounds*)

Inuka (*Addressing the meeting*) I thank you very much for coming. I have one or two things to say about development in our church. What we discuss here is confidential. We do not want it to get out beyond these walls. Now faithful people, if you have ears tell me; if a squirrel is chased into a hole does it leave its tail outside?

Crowd: No

Inuka: Now, how come you accept that a stranger comes in our midst and pretends that he is cleverer than all of you? Don't you have people here who can lead you?

Crowd: We have! We have!

Inuka: Like whom?

Crowd: Like you!

Inuka: Then how can you agree that a stranger becomes your pastor, your preacher, and your treasurer?

Crowd: NO!

Inuka: Then let us remove this pastor, for anyone who is against us, we shall give him, *Pigo!*

(*Inuka and his group leave. Enter Pastor Sego and his loyalists*)

Pastor Sego: I greet you in the name of the lord Jesus Christ. Let's pray. Our Father who at in heaven....

(*As they pray Inuka's group comes in shouting slogans in opposition to Pastor Sego.*)

Inuka: Pastor Sego, what are you doing here?

Pastor Sego: Brother in Christ, what is happening?

Inuka: I am not your brother; you are not even from my clan. Do you understand that? Today we want you to leave. We shall not wait anymore.

Pastor Sego: This is rebellion.

Inuka: Rebellion. What rebellion?

Pastor Sego: Inuka, you are a Christian and a leader of our church. You should lead the way by example.

Inuka: By example? What example? This man is talking nonsense.

Pastor Sego: Do you understand what you are saying?

Inuka: Do not preach to me. I am also a preacher.

(*Inuka and his group leaves*)

Pastor Sego: And do you study your bible upside down. Brethren, let's pray that this evil can be defeated.

Scene three (*At Selina's*)

Selina: What is keeping this man. He is late and time is flying. But I know he will be here. Oh here he comes.

Inuka: Selina dear.

Selina: Oh my dear, I love you too. May your kingdom come.

Inuka: God I pray you to help me and my darling Selina, so that we can chase away my wife and that dimunitive pastor from our church....

Selina: I love you Inuka.

Inuka: I Love you Selina.

(Removes a ball from between his legs, which they play with in slow motion, ending with the departure of Inuka and the collapse of Selina in front of the audience.)

Scene Four *(Seven years later, outside the church)*

Commentator: You can have certain desires. Desire leads to sin and sin leads to death. Inuka left his wife for Selina. Life was good for the first and second year. In the third year Selina died. And it appears she passed on the virus to Inuka. This is now the seventh year.

Inuka: People, I am dying. I do not believe I am the one *(Coughs continuously)*. Where am I heading. It is true that whoever doesn't listen to elders comes to a bad end.

Pastor: People, parents and the congregation, what shall we do to save ourselves from this disease. We need to stop being promiscuous and engaging in casual sex. We need to protect ourselves. Anybody can get this disease and the only person to be afraid of is yourself.

Member of Congregation: It was Selina who had an evil spirit. She had the evil spirit in her body. Now look what she has done.

Fumilia: I knew everything would end this way. I tried to tell him but he closed his ears.

Pastor Sego: Oh Fumilia, how are you?

Inuka: Pastor Sego, even you are here?

Fumilia: That visitor of a woman carried poison. You can see what she did to my husband. If she was here today, I could deal with her. Fortunately she has died.

Inuka: You are happy she is dead? Even you will one day die. And even you pastor you will die and you and you too. *(Inuka leaves desolate, coughing, almost crawling)*.

Pastor Sego: *(To the Audience and his congregation)*. Let us join hands together and unite against this disease. In churches, schools, and homes. Let us all come together and fight this disease.

94. Mbuca

Performers: Karatina Community Drama Group

Scene one *(Wakini's home compound)*

Wakini: Now, Now the world is coming to and end. Let me say, it is the old men who have made the world a bad place. If you travel to this side or that side, there are street children and orphans everywhere. Children born outside wedlock are another major problem. But anyway, although I am an 'old' man I have not done so badly. Right now my daughter is at the university. I will continue to educate her even if it means selling my piece of land. Including the stretch near the stream. Education will be the only solution to problems in the face of this new disease. I heard that there is a man of eighty years who died from that disease. I was surprised. I couldn't believe it until the doctors confirmed the incident. Then the letter came from the hospital. Old men should go back to drinking their old traditional beer.

Mbuca: *Hee!* How are you Wakini?

Wakini: *Hee! He! He!* I am even speaking to myself like a fool. I think we drank too much last night.

Mbuca: We drank a lot. But let me tell you. Never drink those illicit brews packed in small plastic bottles.

Wakini: Yes, instead of drinking those illicit drinks, its better to buy the new one brewed by Kuguru and mix it with the cheap one from Kenya Breweries and it is a nice drink.

Mbuca: Yes

Wakini: Did you hear about the old man who died the other day across the ridge?

Mbuca: Yes. I heard about him

Wakini: By the way what were we discussing last night. I forgot.

Mbuca: What we discussed and what we agreed was that you would marry off your daughter to me.

Wakini: Now, if you talk to her and agree it is okay with me. She attends that college so that she can in the end make money. If she can have the money now, the better.

Mbuca: Let me tell you. My wife passed away and now I have seven children to look after. Some people are saying that my children are dirty. How can they call my children street children when I have got so much money? Could I have such a big tummy if I was poor?

Wakini: Why don't they even touch the material that your suit is made of and confirm you are rich.

Mbuca: That is why I am saying I will marry your daughter. Look here. I have seven lorries. The lorries are all being used in the construction of the Nyeri road. Now if I marry your daughter, I will give you three of the lorries and all the proceeds that they make from the road construction business.

Wakini: *He! He! He!* That is really nice. You have talked well. That is why I say that, even if only one lorry is packed in my compound, when people come to bury me they will be saying that I was a hard working person. I will talk with the girl once she comes home for holiday, then you can talk with her and agree on what to do. If she agrees, give me my three lorries and go with her. Can't you see how my back is bent like a bow? Shall I eat from her when I am already in the grave?

Mbuca: When she comes, tell her about the whole issue and inform me

Wakini: I will do that. Now that you have said the lorries are seven and three will be mine....

Scene Two (*Enter Wakini's daughter*)

Wakini: Oh 'mother' what has happened? Have you been expelled from college?

Daughter: No father. It's just that we took a day off to celebrate 'Moi Day'.

Wakini: What 'Moi Day'?

Daughter: To remember the day our leader was installed as president.

Wakini: How is college?

Daughter: We are doing fine except I was told that I should go back with the full fees balance.

Wakini: Which balance?

Daughter: There was some money, which had not been paid, some seventy thousand shillings.

Wakini: That type of money may not be available. There is no money anywhere. The proceeds from the coffee are not being paid.

Daughter: How can there be no money when we have so much coffee.

Wakini: You just see the coffee bushes. But you do not know that there is no money.

Daughter: You pay my college fees father and let me have an education

Wakini: Can't you see how I have tightened my belt because of you?

Daughter: That is why I am telling you that once I finish college I will buy you many things. Remember the time I saved some of my pocket money and bought you a cap.

Wakini: I was saying that since the money will not be there I will show you a person you can talk to and probably borrow, not really borrow, you just agree with him. Will you refuse to speak to him 'mother'?

Daughter: If he has the money...

Mbuca: (*Arriving*) Coming.

Wakini: That is what I am telling you. Now this man, this is a rich man with seven lorries that are being used in the construction of the Nyeri road....

Daughter: I know him.

Wakini: What is his name?

Daughter: Mbuca

Wakini: I can see you know him. This man who owns seven lorries. You arrange with him on whether you could be blowing the fire in his house.

Daughter: I did that when his wife passed away. He used to ask me to help out in his house. Or isn't it that kitchen fire you are talking about.

Wakini: It is like that because fire is still fire. Now if you blow for him another kind of fire, because fire is still fire, you get together and you will be cooking for him. And then even if it's after three years you can go back to college.

Daughter: Now father are you saying I marry this man and you know how he behaves. He is promiscuous and people even say his wife died of AIDS. And he has so many children all over the place and even with all his money he is unable to educate them.

Wakini: Forget about AIDS. Do you know at stake are three lorries?

Daughter: I am not saying that you should not have the lorries. When I finish college and get a good job, I will buy you all that and many others and you will be very happy.

Wakini: No. I tell you. Listen to me; this man's wife did not die of AIDS. She died of coughing and sneezing.

Daughter: No father neighbors are saying it was AIDS.

Wakini: It is because they are jealous of Mbuca. Let me call him and see whether you will agree over the money.

Daughter: If he agrees to lend us the money, then I can be able to go back to college.

Wakini: College is okay. But I am getting weaker and the years are going by. Will I not eat from you before I die?

Mbuca: (*Coming in*) The rich man has come, carrying all his money in the basket. Come on Wakini, as I often tell you, not many people can have a tummy like this one of mine.

Wakini: Greet my daughter here. Daughter greet him

Mbuca: Where did you say she goes to school?

Wakini: At the university. Maseno University.

Mbuca: How are those at university greeted?

Wakini: You say, 'hello'.

Mbuca: *hello.*

Daughter: Hello to you.

Wakini: Let me go to the shops and buy some snuff and leave you two to talk. Agree to disagree and remember how to arrange things and do not forget the lorry.

Mbuca: *Hello.*

Daughter: hello to you.

Mbuca: You know I am an old man.

Daughter: I can see that.

Mbuca: And as an old man, I have a lot of property. As you can observe and see this tummy of mine is not a flower.

Daughter: I can see it is a tummy.

Mbuca: Now, I had talked with your father and we had arranged and agreed that you should be blowing the fire for me in my house.

Daughter: Blow the fire for you?

Mbuca: yes.

Daughter: Father had told me that he wants you to lend him money so that I can go back to college.

Mbuca: You know I am the rich man in this area. Do you know how many lorries I have?

Daughter: I know you have seven lorries.

Mbuca: They are working on the road to Nyeri right now. And I want to give your father three of them.

Daughter: You want to give father three lorries? Well that would be nice.

Mbuca: Even if you are young, once you get together with me you will realize that I am full of fire.

Daughter: I do not need the fire. Will I then get the money to finish college or not?

Mbuca: Why are you going to college? What will you gain in the end?

Daughter: Money

Mbuca: And since you will have 'live' money from me now, why do you want to continue with school. What you need is to live with a rich person like me.

Daughter: Like you?

Mbuca: Will this lazor shave?

Daughter: No, it will not shave. I need to go back and finish college.

Mbuca: Even after agreeing with your father?

Daughter: No, I find that difficult to happen. Because I plan to finish college and after that get married to a young man of my age and we can work for our own property.

Mbuca: A young man? Does it matter whether a man is young or old? Isn't the money that matters? Let your father come back and I will tell him that all our arrangements and agreements are null and void.

Wakini: (*Coming back*) You... eh, have you lit the fire?

Mbuca: I do not see this one lighting. I do not think you will get those lorries.

Wakini: "Mother' what is going on?

Daughter: Father, allow me to go back to college. Let me finish schooling first.

Wakini: If that is the case then, you will have to leave my home. If I cannot get the money and the lorries, then get out of my home.

Daughter: Let me finish college and I will buy you those lorries.

Wakini: I do not need that education that takes forever. You have to be married by Mbuca

Mbuca: That is right.

Wakini: By force.

Daughter: Okay father, now, let us do this, I will agree but we must first go to the hospital. You know his wife passed away.

Wakini: This has nothing to do with his wife.

Daughter: Let us first get tested before I can marry him.

Wakini: What do you want to be tested for?

Daughter: To be tested at the hospital, you know how dangerous it is these days.

Wakini: What do you want go be tested for. Do you remember I still need the money and the lorries?

Daughter: You know this disease of AIDS is very dangerous. Let us get tested first.

Mbuca: There is no AIDS.

Wakini: If that is the case Mbuca let us rush to the hospital and get the certificate from the doctor. I badly need those lorries. Will I just stay here and remain poor until I die? After taking care for you all these years. I will get these lorries for myself. Let us all go.

Scene Three (*At The Hospital*)

Daughter: How are you doctor.

Doctor: I am okay. What is going on at the university?

Daughter: It is okay. Now I came because another old man who is a neighbour has cheated my father agreeing with him that I should become his wife. Now that man's wife died recently. Now I have had an AIDS test before and these are the results.

Doctor: Okay. This medical certificate shows you are AIDS free. Which is this man who wants to marry you?

Daughter: It is Mbuca, the...

Doctor: But we do have a file on that man here. We opened it when his wife was ailing. She was our patient and died of AIDS three years ago. We advised him to be attending clinics here.

Daughter: Now what was my father forcing me into?

Doctor: A person like him should not be looking for woman. He should relax and wait for the day he is going to go.

Daughter: Call the police since they are on the way coming here. He tells my father he we will give him three lorries and a lot of goats. That all he needs is to throw a piece of stone into the flock and all those grazing within where the piece of rock lands will be his.

Doctor: I am calling the police just now. I will call the flying squad on my cell phone now.

(Mbuca and Wakini Enter)

Doctor: How are you Mbuca? How come you do not attend your clinic for examinations?

Wakini: Doctor we have come ...

Doctor: Oh, you are the father of this girl. Now Mbuca how come you no longer attend the clinic?

Mbuca: What are you talking about? Why are you spoiling everything?

Wakini: What's up Mbuca? You know this doctor?

Doctor: What is wrong with you I hear you want to marry this young woman. You want to stop her from going to school and infect her.

Mbuca: What are you saying? I will fight this man. Let me prepare myself.

(Enter Police)

Policeman: Where are they?

Doctor: There they are.

(Policeman arrests them)

Daughter: Thank you doctor you have helped me very much.

Doctor: And do not forget to preach against this disease. Tell people to get tested before marriage. Let go and give the police our statement.

APPENDEX 3: INTERVIEWS

Njagi Njuki (73 years)

Place: Gitumbi

Date: 30. 4. 2001

Interviewer: *Mzee* Njagi can you tell us about marriage in your community?

Njagi Njuki: People are not following the traditions these days. You will find that we have an old man here with girls old enough to be married and those people have not yet paid bride wealth for their wives. What I am asking now is how will their daughters get married because if that is the case, their daughters do not deserve the bride price. Their parents cannot ask for anything since they have given nothing themselves.

Now I say this because there was the case of Jakobu, whose daughter was married off by her uncle. This is the situation where you have a sister and the man who marries her refuses to bring you anything. He begets a daughter and when and when she is about to get married, the uncle opposes that marriage. So this can happen. One can marry off the daughter of his sister since the father of the girl who is his brother-in-law has given him nothing.

Interviewer: What was the place of livestock in traditional society?

Njagi Njuki: A home without livestock had many problems. Such a home could not celebrate many aspects of life. In such a home you could find a child who had grown up almost to the point of being circumcised but his parents could not dare bear a sibling if they were poor. If there were no livestock in the household people could not beget many children because a mother could not conceive a second child unless the first one is big enough and can go out to herd goats. And in order for the child to be taken from the mother there must be a goat that can be used in the ritual to make that child a grown up. This was through the ceremony of the second birth. A lamb would be slaughtered and they would eat the meat. They would eat the meat and some of the skin of the slaughtered animal would be used to ornament the child. Only people from the family would eat the meat. The same case applied to meat during the bloodletting ceremony of *Ngurario*.

So now if you were poor, you could not even marry, because you could not get a wife without goats, without paying the bride price. If you had a few goats you just had to be careful how you paid them out to your father-in-law because you must always leave some goats for yourself.

One could even get assistance from the father-in-law if he came from a poor family. If after paying the bride price one's father's wealth was depleted, the father-in-law could help you so that the child who will be born does not have any problems while undergoing initiation rituals. What the father-in-law would do is to give you a goat and ask you to rear it on his behalf. When it bears kids you give some back to him and keep the rest. That way they would multiply and you would have your own goats. When you had your own goats then your father-in-law would take back his goat. Even friends could help if one was very poor. A friend could loan you a cow to look after and he would give you one of its offspring as a reward for looking after his cow.

Interviewer: Can you tell us about some of your experiences during the colonial period?

Njagi Njuki: Let me start by telling you that before 1940 people in Kikuyu country used to have a lot of celebrations. Before 1939, people used to dance and celebrate many aspects of life. But from 1940 life began changing. People started getting employed by the Europeans. I got employed at that time. I was conscripted to go and work in Kabaru where I was paid three shillings a month. I worked for two months and left the place because the work was too much and the conditions we lived in were unhygienic. I was even infected with scabies.

When I left that place I never went back there again. I came back home and started to grow carrots, which were in great demand because of the Second World War. But after that I was again employed, this time by the colonial government to work in the forest where we were cutting firewood for fifteen shillings per month. This was still exploitative. I also worked in European farms looking after cattle. The white people there could be oppressive. They could even threaten to beat someone. But some of them were reasonable like the white man I worked for. If I did something by mistake I could tell him that it was not my fault and he could listen. Now that time people used to work in the farms leaving their families back here and I think that is why we have the story like Wagaciiri, which I narrated to you.

During that time the leader here was Njega wa Gioko. I came to know him when Kenyatta came from England. People met Kenyatta at Mombasa and it was arranged that people would go to see him at Koinange's home. Koinange was a clever person who did not agree with the Europeans. He had also been to Europe and knew what was happening in the country. So Njega wa Gioko was the leader here and he was a good leader because he refused to let the Europeans take our land in Mwea.

Wilfred Njogu (75 years)

Place: Kiaritha

Date 20. 3. 2001

Interviewer: Can you tell me how this country was like before the coming of the Europeans?

Wilfred Njogu: Before the white man came, this country used to be ruled by council of the country (*Njaama ya Bururi*). Every home had its representative there through the elders of the clan. There was also the council of elders known as the elders of *Mwangi* and *Irungu*. They used to make sacrifices to the God of Mount Kenya in the sacred grooves. In this area, there was a sacred grove where the Catholic Church is built at Kagumo. And the other one was at the present home of Mwai wa Njagi. The elders used to make the sacrifices during the dry season just like now. They would slaughter the goats and after the sacrifice, the undigested food from the goats' intestines (*tatha*) would be spread all over the country as far as the Sagana River up to the ford of Kanau (*Iriuko ria Kanau*). Different villages would exchange the *tatha*.

During times of war, there was the council of war. That was the duty of the warriors and the elders and *Mundu Mugo* (Medicine Man). Their duty was to protect the land. When a man was a grown up, his father would purchase weapons for him. He would go to the smith and order a sword and later on a spear and pay for these with goats.

When the white people came, they came through Mombasa. They came with guns and passed through Kambaland killing people. They were shown our country by a Kamba chief called Kivoi. He was a slave

trader and ivory merchant. He showed them our country here and they decided to come and settle here. They came following the river Thiba upstream up to where we were living. The ones my father told me about were white people referred to as *Maitha ma riua*. They came here burning houses and shooting people. My father was a young man at that time and I think it was 1905. My grandfather was an old man and he was blind. When they came shooting and looting, my father told me that people ran for their lives and went to hide on top of trees. He carried his blind father on his back but unfortunately as he ran away the white man saw him and shot at him. The bullet killed my grandfather but my father managed to escape and hide up the sycamore tree, which was cut the other day on the junction leading to Kang'aru's home.

Those white people had some black soldiers with them. They would capture some of the local people and force them to clear the bush and construct make shift bridges for them as they advanced eastwards. That is the way they crossed streams on their way to Embu.

Interviewer: Can you tell me something about the dangerous diseases that I hear used to be there during the olden days?

Wilfred Njogu: The most terrible disease that used to afflict the Kikuyu people here were *mucacu*, which is called malaria these days and *mutukia or mutungu* (small pox) and leprosy. These were the most deadly disease. When people got infected with these diseases, the medicine men would seek herbs that were used to cure them. In some cases like that of *mutukia* people would even try to vaccinate those who were not infected. Those who got these diseases were quarantined to some place away from the homestead in the bush. A bell would be placed near their temporary hut. When food was brought the bell would be rung but the patient would wait until the person who had brought the food had left. Even when those people died they would be buried and a stone would be used to mark their graves and no body would go near those graves. These diseases used to kill people. Famines also killed people. If the long rains failed there would be a famine and people would die. People relied on bananas, yams, sweet potatoes and arrowroots to survive the famines.

Interviewer: What about medicine men and prophets, how did they operate?

Wilfred Njogu: Prophets were medicine men but not all of them. There was one prophet here known as Kamaru and he was not a medicine man. He would predict and tell the people what to do. He would foretell famines and ask people to store adequate food. For this people would give him a certain fee. A medicine man was also a good herbalist. He would know what herbs cured which diseases. Most of the medicine used to be derived from plants. All medicine men carried their own herbal medicine, which they gave to the patients after divination. Herbs were used to cure all types of ailments and the medicine men sometimes traveled far to collect particular herbs. Medicine men were very clever people. If you were a great medicine man, many people would come from far to consult you. Muiru wa Kibura was such a great medicine man. People traveled from far to come and see him.

A senior medicine man would invite a young member of the family to apprentice into the profession. The aspiring medicine man would begin by carrying the bags of the senior medicine man and learn the profession gradually. When the senior medicine man was satisfied he would call the other medicine men and they would elevate the trainee in a ceremony at the river.

Interviewer: How was the livestock situation in the traditional community?

Wilfred Njogu: We had all types of livestock. Cattle, goats and sheep. But the Maasai had more cattle than us because they never farmed. But they could come and exchange their cattle with food from us. Even the Kamba used to come and exchange cattle with food especially when they suffered famines.

Livestock was very important. Goats and sheep were used to purchase property and for other sacrifices. Animal skins were also used as clothing and they would be bought. Usually they were bought through bargaining with foodstuffs. Men owned all livestock. Women did not own any livestock. What they had was the food they grew in the farm. If a woman became very proud with a goat or sheep given to her by her uncles, her husband could slaughter it.

Interviewer: How did the council of elders operate?

Wilfred Njogu: They solved many conflicts especially land conflicts. The land conflicts you observe these days did not start now. There were land conflicts even before. But in cases involving land, witnesses were important. Evidence was important. For instance one needed to show the grave or the skull of his ancestors when claiming land. That why a *Kithunga* plant was planted at the grave.

The council of elders, known as *mithiigi*, used to resolve these land problems. And they would be remunerated with goats for the cases. When a case was solved, the plaintiff and the defendant would each produce a goat and they would slaughter for the council of elders. These clan leaders would come and they would eat together to mark the end of the case. Then they would swear that they would continue 'to eat' the bride price of their daughters together.

The elders of the clan also ensured that the secrets and the problems of the clan were not broadcast all over the country. They had their own *njaama* to ensure the clan secrets were safe.

Interviewer: What Happened during the *Ituika*.

Wilfred Njogu: This was the change over of ruling generations. There were two ruling generations *Mwangi* and *Maina*. Our generation is *Mwangi* and your generation is *Maina*. Your generation is now taking over power. *Ituika* gave the other generation power. If it was the generation of *Mwangi*, which was taking over power from *Maina*, that generation must 'bribe' the ruling generation. They would be told when to begin and they would begin to do so by brewing beer for the older generation. And they would give the elders the gifts including goats for a long period before they could be given the staff of leadership.

There was *Mubingo* in circumcision, which ensured the age groups remained in place. During this period no circumcision would take place for a long period. The break in circumcising would be broadcast well before hand. Every body who wanted to be circumcised before the closing would follow the horn blower. Then the smallest boy among the candidates would be marked and circumcised together with the men. Then there would be no circumcision until he was old enough and ready to marry.

Interviewer: What does *Mwaki* mean?

Wilfred Njogu: These days it is more of the church group used in collecting money and running the affairs of the church. *Mwaki* referred to two things, one was the area where people were living. But is it also meant the arena where elderly men lit fires and they would relax there while advising the younger generations.

Moses Kaiguri (78years)

Place: Githioro

11 .3. 2001

Interviewer: Could you begin by telling me about the coming of the white man to Kikuyuland?

Kaiguri: My father, Njagi, told me about them and when they came. According to him, when the white men came there were circumcision ceremonies going on. They were after livestock. They came stealing people's livestock. But when the people realized that, they drove their animals into the forest. When they came, they set up tents and would confiscate people's cattle. They had guns but at first the people thought it was maize popping out of the guns. They thought they could protect themselves with shields and were saying it was maize or *bombwe*. They had to defend themselves with the spears and the clubs and arrows from treetops. That is why there was a generation called '*Ngungi* of the treetops'. But a lot of them were killed. When they realized they would be finished they ran away.

Missionaries followed these people. Then after that, a white man called Gatimu, came and set up the administrative center at Kerugoya. It was then that Njega wa Gioko became the chief and a hospital was built at Kerugoya. Gatimu also confiscated livestock from the people of Inoi and that was before we were born.

Interviewer: Why?

Kaiguri: These people were just taking our wealth. Livestock was like our money. You couldn't do anything if you had no livestock. People whose parents had no livestock would wait for years before they could get married. They waited until they had their own animals before they could even marry.

So by the time the missionaries came people were afraid and had to accept them. They had come from Murang'a. They were given that place to build at Kabare and Mutira. The one who built at Kabare was called Gatuiki and that place was known as 'the hill of the hill of poisoners'. That is where those who were poisoners would be killed by being rolled down the hill in beehives.

Interviewer: Tell me something about medicine men. Were they many and what did they do?

Kaiguri: There were very many medicine men in this area. Some were more famous than others like Muiro wa Kibura who was very famous. People consulted him from as far as Nyeri. Medicines men were important because they gave the herbs and used to make sacrifices to chase away evil spirits that brought diseases. They knew the cause of all problems. The medicineman would tell you what was needed and if it was done you avoided disaster.

Interviewer: How did one become a medicine man?

Kaiguri: That was in the family because one would begin early by carrying the bag of the medicine man. And if he persevered enough, he would be taken to the river by the older ones and made one, just like the graduation ceremonies we are attending these days.

Regina Muthoni (53 years)

Place: Kerugoya

Date: 15: 10: 2001

Interviewer: What does your association, the Catholic Woman Association do?

Regina Muthoni: We are part of the church. You know it is the church that brings people together. As women we pray together and help one another especially if one has problems of sickness. We also like

lighting the Christian fire in each other's house. It is a system of recognizing each other and that way we are able to participate in various social occasions such as weddings and christening of children.

Interviewer: Do you specifically concern yourself with women's issues?

Regina Muthoni: Of course the duty to pray for the sick is not the work of the woman only. But we do have issues that concern women more, like how to live with men and our duties and obligations as women. This is the issue we discuss. We discuss how women can create permanent homes. How to be confident in life and even how to deal with the weddings of their children and death of spouses.

In the women groups we even have loans for the women who want to work, especially in business. Women can get up to 100,000 shillings for business and that way women have advanced very much through our own solidarity. But one has to be careful because business is not good. One has to be careful not to misuse money.

Women are now participating in many activities. This includes single women who are now running their own homes without the assistance of men. Times have changed. Even in the church it is the women who are at the forefront of the development activities. Men seem to have problems, which are not clearly known, but I think they are just becoming lazy. Because you find there are men who cannot even bring up children.

Interviewer: What do you think should be the role of women in leadership?

Regina Muthoni: I think women should be given more leadership roles in politics as well as in the family. This is because not all women have more access to information. When the doctors come here to teach us, they teach us many things about how to bring up our children and how to deal with various physical problems. In our groups we also visit each other's home and we constantly contribute money to solve any problems. We buy each other utensils and this unity of women has made development possible. The money we pull together is able to pay school fees for the children and address many economic issues.

As the groups gain strength we are now purchasing television sets and solar power panel for our members. A lot of men are cooperating because they can see women are able to deal with the economic problems facing us. The only bad thing is if a man denies his wife from joining the group. But when we know a man is like that, the woman can participate secretly because the benefits are enormous. So when a man refuses his wife to participate she does so secretly until its time for to reap the benefits. Then the committee approaches the husband and after outlining the benefits we ask him to allow her to participate fully. If he still refuses we know what to do, but they usually agree.

Kinyua Nunu (67 years)

Place Waigiri

28. 4. 2001

Interviewer: Mzee Nunu, I would like to know about courtship and marriage process in the past. How did people go about them?

Kinyua Nunu: If a man attracted girls they would follow him into his bachelor's house. Usually they followed him there after dances but they would go as a group. They would all sleep in that house and have *nguiko* the whole night. Now this is what would happen. The girls would sleep in a row and the

young man would sleep on top of each one of them until he was tired. He would fondle all of them but there was no sexual intercourse, just sleeping on top of them. If by any chance intercourse took place, the girl would never leave that home. The other girls would take the girl to the young man's mother and she would become his wife. If there were a threat of intercourse during *nguiko*, the girl who is threatened would pinch the next who would in turn pinch the next one so that everybody would know what was happening and they could confront the man together.

Before the declaration of state of emergency in 1952, dancing was almost a compulsory activity for young men and women. Parents would not ask girls if they went for the *nguiko* sessions. The girl who was the man's fiancé or main girlfriend would always sleep next to the door. The man would eventually settle with her for the night after fondling all the others. This is the girl who usually led the others to man's house for *nguiko*. When the courtship is over and the two have agreed to marry, the son informs his father through the mother and if there are no objections, the boy is told to cut sugar cane to be used in brewing beer.

When the beer is ready, the young man and his friends would take two gourds to the father of the girl and an ewe and a goats kid to the mother of the girl. Then bride price negotiations could begin the following day. Before negotiations began the girl had to confirm that she was indeed ready to marry that man. Her father would pour beer into a horn as ask her, "Mother if I drink this beer shall ever vomit it?" And if she said, "no," he would sip the beer and then signal that the process could begin. After the negotiations and the payment of a good amount of the bride price, the girl would go and live with the young man's mother. One could never get married if his father was poor and did not have livestock.

The young bride stayed in the mother-in-law house until her husband built her a house. When the girl became pregnant, her mother-in-law would go to the river and select three good stones for her new hearth, present her with gourds and cooking utensils and from then on she could start cooking in her own house. She also now became a 'woman of the clan.' This woman could not be divorced after this took place unless there was a very serious problem. If the man was not satisfied with her he could marry another woman but as long as she had a baby she was recognized as the woman of that clan.

Marriage conflicts could be taken to the elders. If there was a problem between a woman and her husband the woman could be sent back to her father. The husband would go there with a lamb and tell his father-in-law what his wife had done. Then there would be a case in front of elders from both sides. If the woman was defeated in the case her father would provide the elders with a lamb, a goat and four gourds of beer. In most of these cases it is the woman who would be found guilty and her father would end up paying the fine. He would then go and beat his wife blaming her for the things he was fined, telling her that she had not advised her daughter adequately.

All women were expected to get married unless they were barren. Those who were barren would still get married and then 'marry' other women to beget children for them.

A man was not allowed to sleep with his wife after they had the first child. He had to wait until that child was big enough and had undergone the ritual of second birth. The lamb was slaughtered and the skin of the animal was cut into a sash, which was tied to the child. From then the father could share the bed with the mother.

Interviewer: Tell me about circumcision.

Kinyua Nunu: Circumcision was compulsory for young girls and young men. It was believed that if girls were not circumcised they could not bear normal children. Circumcision of the child was very important for the mother. This was so especially if it was the boy who was being circumcised. It was a promotion for the mother from the *Kang'ei* group to *Nyakinyua*.

During the circumcision there would be a big feast. The mother would cook a lot of food and the men would also have plenty of beer and they would sit there in the yard drinking. When the boy is being brought from the river where they were circumcised, the mother and other women would meet them singing, and escort the son into the compound. As they got into the compound, the woman would pick her husband's small club and if he had never beaten her, she would go to where he is seated drinking with the other elders and provoke him by hitting him with the club. She would then turn her back to her husband who would hit her four times with his walking stick. She would then allow the newly circumcised son to enter the homestead.

The following morning the woman would have all her hair shaved to mark her promotion from *Kang'ei* to *Nyankinyua*. She would never again let her hair grow.

Interviewer: Were women beaten often?

Kinyua Nunu: No. A woman could be beaten only if she was disobedient. The main reasons why she could be beaten were if she did not pick sweet potato vines for the fattening lamb or if she refused to sweep the goat's pen. She could also be beaten if she failed to give her husband food and porridge. If she refused to have sex with him, that would be the greatest crime. No body would support her; neither her father nor her mother would support this. Lack of violence in the home depended on how cunning the woman was. Today there is more violence in families because of the breakdown of traditional values. Some men are also supporting their disobedient daughters. And that is why AIDS cases are increasing because when women runs away to their parent's home they leave their husbands who are engaging with other women.

Interviewer: What were the main obligations a man had to his wife?

Kinyua Nunu: Apart from his normal duties of looking after cattle, it was the duty of a man to trap moles in his wives farm. If a man refused to trap moles his wife could get very angry and quarrel with him openly. It was the husband's duty to ensure that the woman had enough land to farm. If extra land was required he had to break it. The husband also had to renovate and build the house properly for his wife and ensure that it does not allow rain inside. And if a man refused to sleep with his wife, she could also quarrel him and even ask him to show her who she will be sleeping with.

Interviewer: Now tell me something about the Kikuyu clans.

Kinyua Nunu: Yes, the Kikuyu clans you know are named after the ten daughters of Gikuyu and Mumbi. Now all these clans have some funny traits.

The *Ethaga*, named after the daughter Wairimu love women. If there is a beautiful woman they will do anything to get her. The *Anjiru* are said to be always sitting on top of the hill. The *Munjiru* is a man who loves wealth. He has huge tracts of land and can destroy other people to aquire more land. The *Mugaciku* is a coward. Even when he has wealth and is threatened, he can leave it. Even politicians who are from that clan are cowards like Mbiyu Koinange who was a *Mugaciku* and could not rule in Kenya. It was Kenyatta who ruled. Kenyatta was a *Mumbui*. The *Muchera* is gullible. He can only befriend you when you have money but when you get broke he is no longer with you. *Mwithira andu* born of the daughter Wangechi is a very jealous person. If you marry from this clan you will never have a second wife. Both men and women from this clan are the same. They can even poison you. *Mumbui* is a two

edged person. They are very brave and courageous and can be good leaders. But they can poison others and betray their friends. The *Mungui* is the man of war. They like fighting. *Mukiuru* is from the daughter, Nyambura. These are the rainmakers, they have very good women but their men are not good. *Muica Kabuno* from Wamuyu are not good people. They can curse you especially if you cross them. Then there are the *Angare* from Wangare. These cannot travel with anyone for a long distance. Most of them have no land and have to be born into other clans with goats.

Benson Murimi Mwai (22years)

Place: Mutira

Date: 15 February 2003

Interviewer: Tell me about this play *Pigo*

Benson Murimi: We prepared this play to raise awareness on HIV/AIDS. The play has been very well received in the community. We have performed the play in many secondary schools and churches around this area and our main aim is to preach that HIV/AIDS is real and that it is spread through immorality. We also raise awareness with poetry performances.

Interviewer: How do you create the plays?

Benson Murimi. Usually we start with the concept. Once we have the concept then we develop a skeleton from which we improvise the rest of the play and performance.

Interviewer: What is the main message in the play?

Benson Murimi: That the wages of sin is death. The main character is a church elder but that does not make him desist from immorality and he eventually contracts HIV/AIDS.

Interviewer: What have been your achievements in the performance of this play?

Benson Murimi: To me this play has achieved a lot. It has made me realize that people are also changing their behavior because we performed the play to them. The feedback we have had from audiences is that the play was very educative to them. We also receive invitations from various places to go and perform. That way we know we are effective.

Interviewer: What are your future plans of performing to the public?

Benson Murimi: We shall continue to perform although we keep on losing our female actresses through marriages. But we are preparing a new play in which we shall incorporate more HIV/AIDS messages.

Muthoni Irungu (80years)

Place: Kiamaina

Date: 6: 5: 2001

Interviewer: Mrs Irungu how old are you?

Muthoni: I am old. My parents used to tell me I was born before the earthquake (of 1928).

Interviewer: I want to know about marriage in the olden days. How was it conducted?

Muthoni: Marriage? If a man wanted a woman he would visit the girl's home and they would talk. And if they agreed, the girl would make sure her father was informed. If her father had a 'problem' with that person, he would say he does not want those people as his In-laws. And the girl would bear with that and wait for another man to seek her hand. She could not go against his wishes. It is not like these days when girls are roaming about doing whatever they want. In the olden days, we would wait until one was married.

One could not go and stay with a man if they were not properly married. The groom had to finish negotiations with the girl's father. He would come in the open together with his people and they would speak. The girl would be asked to confirm whether he was the lover. And when he came he did not come empty handed. He would begin by bringing two gourds of beer. He would set his case forth. And the girl would ask for some snuff from her father and give some to the young man to confirm that he is the one. But if he does not want the man he would not give her the snuff.

After they have talked, they would drink the beer and the women would dance ululating. During such occasions we would ferment the beer and we would prepare a lot of food. We had all the foods: millet, sorgham, beans and peas of all types. When scaring birds from the millet farms we would sing. We would sing and criticize the mean woman who does not give the wife of her son anything. We would do this in the farm.

Interviewer: It was a method of control.

Muthoni: Yes. Now we had not finished on the beer. Once the prospective bridegroom has brought beer for the first time, this would be followed by several other trips as they negotiate the bride price to be given to the father of the girl.

Interviewer: Yes.

Muthoni: But if the father of the girl has not paid all the bride price for his wife, he would have to go and take the bride price first to the brother of his wife, the girl's *Nyarume*, so that he can allow the marriage to go on.

Interviewer: *Nyarume* is the uncle?

Muthoni: Yes. That's the maternal uncle. The uncle would give permission. Like my daughters, before they were circumcised, their uncle gave them something, a goat and some money.

Interviewer: And that is before circumcision.

Muthoni: When the child was being prepared for circumcision she would be given the presents. And even when they got married. And the women would prepare the boys also for circumcision. Taking them from one place to another on the eve of the circumcision. The mother of the boy would cook a lot of food for the people to eat after the ceremony. But before that the women took the boys all over. That is the boy-child. Girls were not taken all over. But once they were circumcised we would escort them singing *Thauthi*:

Ndogitwo ni mwana ndemetwo
Ngaigua uguo
Gicheru ni yuke, Kibogo ni yuke

(May the child have intercourse with me!
The pain I have felt after the cut!
Give me the heifer, 'Gicheru'
Give me the heifer, 'Kibogo')

By the time the child arrived at the gate of the homestead, her father would be there with a goat to offer the girl. She would refuse to enter until she is given a goat or even a fattened lamb. After she healed that animal would be slaughtered for her. People in those days liked their children. They could do good things for them and they would not feel they are giving them too much.

Then there would be a lot of singing and dancing and feasting. The women would sing as they waited to be served with food and beer and then they would dance *gitiro*. We would spend the night singing and dancing.

We would sing. And song was very powerful. If one did not conform, a song would be composed to criticize that person. Even during the celebrations and the dances. You know just like people today are having clan feasts, calling their relatives and eating together, we used to do the same thing. It could also be a feast of agreements or clansmen.

Interviewer: What about during harvest seasons?

Muthoni: We would also sing as we were harvesting the millet. As we harvested we would sing and after the harvesting we would be given beer and food and then dance *Gitiro*. And women could ululate. After we put all the grain in the granary, we would eat and drink. Those were good days. When there was communal work, everybody would participate and we would help each other harvest in turns.

Julia Wangai (over 90 years)

Place: Mugwandi:

Date: 21. 11. 2001

Interviewer: I would like to know how you lived in our youth and how one got married.

Julia Wangai: When we were young we used to work for our parents. But we also used to dance. We could go to different areas near our home with the young men to dance. We would dance until late but the young men ensured that we got back home. You know that time there were hyenas, which could eat someone.

Interviewer: How did you relate with a man who wanted to marry you?

Julia Wangai: If a man was interested in you, he had to show that by coming to talk to you at your home. If I liked that man I would tell my father and my father would like to know whose son he is. Once I tell him he is the son of so and so and he has no objection, then he could give me snuff to take to that young man. If my father refuses to give me the snuff I would know he does not want me to marry that person and that man would have to seek a bride elsewhere. This is because there were families, which never intermarried. Your father could refuse and even tell you that you cannot be married into such such and such family. You could not go against the wishes of your father.

Interviewer: Yes.

Julia Wangai: Now once you had given that man the snuff, he would start planning how he would repay the snuff, which would be the beginning of negotiations. The young man would brew and bring to the prospective father-in-law two gourds of beer to repay the snuff. After that his people would come to the parents of the girl and begin the negotiations. More beer would be brought to the girl's home and her father would then ask for the bride wealth. After the bridewealth was paid, the girl would still remain in her father's home until the man slaughtered a lamb for the girls's clan. After that and if he had paid the bridewealth well, he could go and seek permission for the girl to go with him and assist him in preparing some farmland.

She would do this accompanied by the young man's sister. Once the farmland was ready the young man would start building a house for the bride. From that time, the wedding would be planned so that the girl can go a light the fire in that man's. Once at the man's home, the girl got used to the home and they would live together without problems. But the man had to prepare land for her and she would work on it.

Interviewer: What other ceremonies were you involved in as you grew up.

Julia Wangai: There is the ceremony of being born again, which is no longer there these days. And there was circumcision, which has changed. Circumcision used to involve the whole clan. All the women from the clan would go to escort the initiates to the river and then escort them back to their homes. All girls and boys would be circumcised. It is not like now when girls are not circumcised or are they?

Interviewer: No.

Julia Wangai: People believed that they could not get proper children if they were not circumcised. After the initiation there was a lot of feasting. The council of women sang *Thouthi* where they would sing very abusive songs. But they would be merry and happy as they abused their husbands. They would spend the whole night singing.

Interviewer: Was there divorce in the society?

Julia Wangai: It was possible but you had to really hate one another. Because once bride price had been paid, your father would not want you to go back to his place. Once he had 'eaten' the bride price, he would insist that you go back to your husband.

Interviewer: Did women own livestock?

Julia Wangai: No. But our father would give us animals and even our maternal uncles. I remember my uncle once gave me a very fat he-goat.

Thaita Women Group Discussion

Place: Thaita

21. 11. 2001

Interviewer: Can you tell us something about the gender division of labour in the earlier days?

Mrs. Wanguru: The main work for women was at the farm. They would go and work there. Men looked after livestock. Women were not involved with cattle. Even the women of my mother's age never drank milk. Boys and girls were advised separately. The boys would be advised by the male parent and girls by their mothers.

Interviewer: Did you participate in the traditional dances?

Mrs Wanguru: Yes, those dances were there as we grew up. *Kangei* and *Nyakinyua* were there. But by the time we were growing up there was Christianity and we were even married in church.

Interviewer: Is there a similarity between the *Kangei* and *Nyakinyua* groups and a group like this one?

Mrs. Wanguru: Somehow, because we use them to help one another. Just like those groupings of earlier days when women used to work together in the farms. As women now we have a church group and a development group.

Mrs Wakera Karimi: Yes. As women now we have a church group and a development group.

The development group is for the purposes of development activities like purchasing water tanks and utensils. We also want to install solar power in our houses so that there can be light in our homes. We are a women only group. We started by purchasing kitchen utensils for each member. But this calls for cooperation and one has to cooperate otherwise you remain with your two cups. But we have cooperated which has ensured that we have what each one needs. From cups we moved to water tanks and now we want to construct zero-grazing units for our members. As a group we always want to be doing something.

Interviewer: Do you cooperate with men?

Mrs. Wakera Karimi: Yes men have cooperated because we do all these things for the benefit of the entire family. But women have to take the initiative because we are the people at home all the time. We cooperate and do things together.

Mrs. Wanguru: These days a woman suffers more than the husband so there is need for cooperation. In the olden days there was separations. Today there is more cooperation between men and women than in the past. A woman suffers more so she must tell her husband what is required.

Mrs. Wakera Karimi: These things like the tea bushes and the farm, we always say, they belong to the man. The things we do on the farm and at home make him famous. So the man who doesnot cooperate is eventually the loser.

Interviewer: Aren't men afraid that women will sit on them? Is it true that some women can control their men through the use of special powers or herbs?

Mrs Wakera Karimi: These things are there because you may find that a man who was previously normal has changed. He does not go out to be with other men and even when he is at a gathering he does not speak. It could be because of something he is given. But even if he takes the drug on his own and he becomes useless, the woman will eventually be blamed.

Interviewer: Do women have specific problems?

Mrs Rose Wanjiku: Yes women have problems, which affect them more because they are usually at home. But the relationship between men and women in terms of cooperation varies from one home to another. Some cooperate others do not and the degree of cooperation varies. But whatever type of a husband one has, the woman has to persvere because she is married and she has a home a husband who is hers.

Jacinta Wangithi (42years)

Place: Kaitheri-Kerugoya

Date: 18.12.2003

Interviewer: You remember you performed for us some narratives and a song on the AIDS disease sometimes back. What do you think about this disease?

Jacinta Wangithi: AIDS is truly a killer disease. In the church where I am a member, we are calling it the 'devil's disease.' Its victims contract it most of the times by going against God's sixth commandment. Adulterly is of the devil and this is the devil's desease. Also in the bible there are prophecies of what will happen during the last days. Humanity would be afflicted by incurable diseases. I believe AIDS is one of these deseases.

Interviewer: Do you think then that the desease is self-afflicted?

Jacinta Wangithi: Yes! There are people who get infected with the desease because of their own recklessness. There is the story that there was this African girl who met a rich white man who gave her a lot of money. After sleeping with her, she was infected with the desease and that marked the origin of the desease for us Africans. She came back with the disease and spread it all over Africa. Of course there are accidental inféctions due to the sharing of certain things. In these circumstances the desease is not self-inflicted.

Interviewer: Sometimes members of the society discriminate and avoid the company of those that are infected. What is your opinion on stigmatization of the desease? Is it right or wrong?

Jacinta Wangithi: It is wrong to stigmatize those who are infected. And they should be open and not deny that they are infected. This is because there are others who are victims of the disease and they

