



COLONIALISM AND ITS IMPLICATION ON THE AFRICAN FAMILY STABILITY IN EMBU NORTH SUB-COUNTY OF KENYA FROM 1895 TO 1965

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Abstract

This study sought to explore the colonialism and its' implication on the African family stability in Embu North Sub-County of Kenya from 1895 to 1965. The study employed a descriptive research design. Data were obtained from oral, archival and secondary sources. The researcher interviewed 50 respondents who were purposively sampled using a snowballing technique. The study corroborated data from oral, archival and secondary sources to ensure the validity and reliability of the study. Cultural Evolution theory was used to examine colonialism and its implications on the African family stability in the area of study. The study findings indicated that the family values among the Aembu were authentic and ensured a well-organised rhythm of life before the advent of European imperialism in 1895. However, there was a disruption in the traditional religion of the Aembu with the establishment of the Kigari mission station in 1910, the modes of dressing, eating, language and education were changed to suit a western value system. This study has contributed to the colonial historiography of the Aembu of Embu North Sub-County, Kenya.

Key terms: Colonialism, African family stability, traditional family values, Aembu.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

By the time the Europeans arrived in Africa as either colonialists or missionaries, there was much order in the way family life was carried out because of the solid established structures. Ojua et al. (2014) observes that these value structures or systems were used to ensure and promote order of socialisation and morality in African society. This social harmony was depicted in marriages, family relationships, legal systems, and religious, economic, and political structures. Inglehart (2018) observes that a people's values and behaviour are shaped by the degree to which survival is secure, a reason some Africans welcomed the Europeans and received western education, medical care and many other European provisions as others put up a bitter struggle to reject the foreign influence. Mesoudi (2011) posits that the best cultures are those that survive and get transmitted over the inferior cultures, as the European culture overtook the African culture.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The family value of communalism was destroyed as every family now had other civic and family responsibilities to execute, like some members going too far off land to get money for taxes and upkeep. According to Sykinner (2015), the western culture brought a change in dressing that leaves women half-naked in many African towns exposing them to male lust, rape and exposure to diseases. Meinertzhagen (1957) records that the British engaged in military expeditions and the Aembu resisted. Kariuki (2021) notes that the British Colonialists took political control and taxed the Aembu families. All grownups paid the taxes, but women paid tax through their husbands. ACK Diocese of Embu (2010) records that the missionaries established the Kigari mission station in 1910 and started provision of western education, healthcare facilities and religion, which was met with utmost resistance by the Aembu, who were keen on retaining their traditional value systems. The missionaries finally succeeded in establishing their culture over the Aembu. It is against this background that a study on colonialism and its implication for the family stability of the Aembu was carried out.

3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Cultural Evolutions brought about by Colonialism on the African Family Value System in Embu North Sub-County, Kenya, in the Period between 1895 and 1965

Mbiti (1975) observes that from 1895 when Kenya became part of the British East African protectorate, Europeans embarked on a process of executing their political mandate among their African subjects alongside promoting their culture. Though the missionaries previously executed the promotion of European culture, now more than ever, they were supported by Britain, their mother government, through protection against the Africans who fought to resist any western influence on their culture. Moreover, when Kenya was declared a British colony in 1920, the British had a lesser geographical area to govern, and this served to further hasten the process of traditional African cultural evolution.

In their quest to establish colonialism in Embu North, the British engaged in military expeditions, and the Aembu resisted. One of the well-known British officials records this account during the exertion of colonial authority in Kenya, Meinertzhagen (1957), who led a military expedition against the Aembu. From his diary on 10th March 1904, he records; "I moved camp today further into the heart of the Embu country and built a strong zariba on the left bank of the River Ruringazi. From our camp, we get a fine view of Mount Kenya. I remained in camp this afternoon, sending out strong patrols in every direction. The people of Embu are showing a considerable amount of fight and, in two cases, have charged right up to our bayonets. They

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must have lost heavily. We lost 3 soldiers and 11 levies, all killed except 4 levies. We captured only 7 head of cattle and 22 goats the whole day. The Waembu are a branch of the Wakikuyu, whom they closely resemble, but they speak a different language and have different customs. Their huts are mostly made of banana leaves and not of grass. They have two types of knobkerrie, one being long (about 2 feet 6 inches) with a ribbed head, and the other a much deadlier weapon, having a round stone lashed to the end, the whole being bound with leather. Their dancing shields are also unique, being thin and narrow. Their spears are mostly of the bay-leaf type but smaller and more elegant than those of the Wakikuyu. The Waembu have curious wicker jars for storing food...they are astonishingly heavy, and one which we rolled down a slope went crashing into a banana grove and demolished several trees before it was checked".

Meinertzhagen records in his diary that he marched into Fort Hall, and the Embu expedition came to an end on 17th March 1904;

"To my mind, the people of Embu have not been sufficiently hammered, and I should like to go back once and have another go at them. During the first phase of the expedition against the Embu, we killed 250 people and took 498 cattle and 1,500 goats and sheep".

After the Embu were subdued, the western rule was imposed on them. The above account was supported by Munene (2021) who notes that the British killed hundreds of Aembu warriors and confiscated their cattle. Some of the British soldiers even raped the Aembu women, which was culturally unacceptable. The Aembu finally lost the war because the British guns could not be matched with the Aembu weapons. When the Aembu warriors were finally quelled, they had to be disarmed and forced to return their arms to Ngûirî near Nembure, a place above Mount Karûe. They surrendered their weapons, which comprised Ngo (shields), Matumo (spears) and Mbiû (swords) and thereafter, they were marched to Nthithiarî, the old name of Embu town, also known as Kîrîmaarî. The word Nthithiarî came from a tree called Mûthithia. The defeated Embu warriors were to clear the bushes as a punishment and uproot the many Mûthithia trees at the place. This was a show of surrender and defeat, and thereafter the white man established his settlement at Karue but later moved to Embu town, which was safer and more central for easier control of the Embu country.

According to Kariuki (2021), the British Colonialists took political control and taxed the Aembu families. All grownups paid the taxes, but women paid tax through their husbands. Those without a husband had their brothers pay the tax on their behalf. Men in family life paid the tax, too. Since the tax amount was 4 shillings, almost equivalent to a total month's earnings from European jobs, which was 6 shillings, many men paid tax and were left with little money for their other family expenditures, a life of big struggle. It was even worse for men of little means who had polygamous families and had to pay taxes for all their wives. This money economy very quickly changed the family dynamics as men left their homes to go to towns and European farms for casual labour. This meant that men had to relinquish their responsibilities to women.

During the outbreak of World War 1 in 1914, some young Aembu men were taken away to fight in the Kings African Rifles. Most of these young men left young families and young children behind. Some who died rendered their wives widows and their children fatherless. These widows would be remarried or stay as single parents and bring up their children alone. This changed the traditional role of women in the

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family from feminine to masculine, where they became primary caregivers in their households. This situation became much expounded during the colonial period (Gicuko, 2021).

Kimani (2021) observes that the British soldiers disregarded traditional customs by defiling African women and even whipping them as they asserted their political authority on the resistant Aembu people. Defiled women found it difficult to form families as the Aembu men considered it a bad omen, Mûgiro, to marry someone who had a history of being raped by a white man. Again, the white men engaging in such atrocities set a bad cultural example to the African young men that women can be defiled with little consequence. This served to destroy the family values that were geared towards the protection and preservation of vulnerable people among the Aembu. With time during the colonial period, cases of rape and molestation increased.

Kimanthi (2021) agrees that it is due to the harshness of the European colonial rule that the Mau Mau war broke out in 1947 to 1952. Men went to the forest to fight while the women and children were restricted in enclosures to avoid contact with the Mau Mau. Many men, in protest of the forced labour and taxation, joined the Kikuyu neighbours to fight the white man. This situation left women with bigger family and civic responsibilities. The women now had to support their men who fought the guerrilla warfare against the whites with food, weapons, medicine, clothes and information, as well as take care of the home setup. This put a huge strain on the women, as providing was difficult with little resources and unfriendly circumstances. (Njagi O. I, 2021) further adds that at this same time, the Africans were restricted in reserves and persevering horrible conditions with the state of emergency and with little social amenities and supplies, there was a locust invasion, which destroyed crops. Due to the food shortage that ensued, the Aembu would collect the locusts, Ngige, from trees into pots, fry them and eat them. Mothers would prefer to serve their children the scarce food and stay without. The family setup was now thrown into disarray, and the values that were the yardstick of family life evolved abruptly. Gender roles were reversed, and the patriarchal society was now reorganized into one where women consequently had more responsibilities and power.

The coming of missionaries tampered with the Aembu traditional religion and practices that were greatly valued, like sacrificing and communal worship on which family values of reverence for God and ancestors were anchored. The missionaries at Kigari Mission Centre fought female circumcision, and according to a male respondent Magu (2021), this destroyed the respect-married women had in marriage for their husbands. For instance, married women would not eat meat in the presence of men. This level of respect got lost, and his opinion was female circumcision was supposed to be supported or, in the absence of the physical cut, women at a given age needed to be taken through vigorous training on the value of respect as they got in the marriage institution.

In 1932, the Anglican Church of Kenya passed a decree against female circumcision. When the Kigari church announced the *irĩgu itĩkaarua* meaning the uncircumcised would no longer be circumcised, Magu (OI 2021) could not fathom the disrespect that would ensue if a Mûrĩgu would talk back at him. Therefore, he quit attending the mission church. He further observed that from this point, there was a division between those Aembu who were circumcised or willing to take their daughters through the rite, and those who obeyed the word of the Europeans. The uncircumcised were considered children and could not easily get married, and if they did, it was the Christian sons who would only marry them. Some parents sticking

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with Christianity and still wanting to circumcise their daughters took them to non-Christian friends or to their maternal grandmothers to secretly undergo the rite. In this case, this was discovered through Christian whistle-blowers, and the parents who had committed this crime would be arrested and jailed by the government for a number of months. By the time the jail sentence would be completed, the mission church would have excommunicated them from the church. Mr A. P. Palmer supports this assertion in his handing over the report to Mr P.G. Derrick, who notifies him that in 1956 the African District Council passed a resolution declaring female circumcision to be contrary to Native Law and Custom. This measure was passed without consultation with the natives, and when the circumcision season arrived, those apprehended were brought to court and fined. This brought so much discontent among the natives that they unlimitedly engaged in the activity that Mr Palmer administratively stopped any further prosecution and suggested to have only licenced circumcisers operate and only under the consent of the parents of the girl (KNA/DC/EBU/2).

Detailed observation and analysis of the western influence on African culture reveal both good and bad influences. For example, Rodee (1983) observed that the African social problems are characterised by one-crop economies, pervasive corruption, spiralling inflation, massive unemployment, overcrowded cities and destructive villages. On the other hand, the African material culture, which incorporates physically tangible and noticeable artefacts, which people invented to meet their needs, also underwent massive evolution. The farm implements, hunting and gathering tools, cooking utensils, building and construction materials and other tangible tools and weapons also evolved to ape those of Europeans that were more sophisticated, efficient, and easy to use and led to more productivity compared to the ones used in the cottage industries and homes by the Africans.

The non-material culture, which incorporates the people's psychological state of mind and their behaviour that is acquired through socialisation, includes morals and values, habits, language, religion, attitudes, knowledge and control systems that regulate human behaviour. Both material and non-material cultures of the Africans have undergone massive evolution both positively and negatively with continued interaction with the western culture. The African family value system has also evolved, as evidenced by the Western world's big women empowerment and education efforts. Cultures are naturally meant to evolve even without external interference; in the case of Africa, the biggest agent of change has been identified as European colonialism and missionarism. Other agents attributed to the acculturation of African family values include trade, migration and wars.

According to Cultural Evolution Theory on which this study is anchored (Mesoudi, 2011) observes that the best cultures are those that survive and get transmitted over the inferior cultures. The Western culture is seen to have positively impacted the traditional African family values of the Aembu. With the onset of colonialism and missionarism in Embu North, the families that anchored their family health on traditional healers, medicine men, 'Andû Ago' were introduced to Western medicine by the missionaries at Kigari Mission Centre. Before the new medical practices came, the mortality rate was very high, and many children would not grow past infancy. Maternal deaths were also many as the traditional midwives were not able to handle medical emergencies at birth or complicated health problems. Vaccination for children after birth was introduced, and the children could receive these services at sub-centres like Mbuvari, Kigari, Manyatta and Kairuri. This greatly improved family health, and many children were able to survive, unlike before. Cleanliness was emphasised by the colonialists, and the Aembu were taken through mandatory

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creation of proper drainage around their homes. The white people tasked a man named Karigûûrî at Kigari to enforce cleanliness and proper hygiene in Nginda and Ruguru-Ngandori. If he found a home, town or Duka shop dirty, he could arrest the culprits and upon presentation to the white men; the punishment was executed. People were made to dig pit latrines, unlike when they relieved themselves in the bushes and diseases like dysentery, typhoid and cholera would affect them.

The missionaries introduced new methods of lighting in homes, which greatly improved family life. Paraffin was used in tin lamps with a wick, and there was more comfort in the Aembu homes. The paraffin was also used as fuel for cooking alongside other sources of fuel for cooking and lighting. This eased the burden of the womenfolk in Embu homes, who had to fetch firewood to provide lighting and fuel Nyakio (2021). There were some Aembu practices that were deemed culturally acceptable but quite retrogressive. KNA/DC/EBU/3/2 records that if a woman gave birth to twins at the first confinement, the second to be born was thrown away and occasionally the firstborn also. Children born feet and those who cut their upper teeth first were also thrown away. This also went for a child born before the midwife was present to "receive" it, as it was also thrown away. The Europeans stopped some of these practices to much delight of the women who bore the blunt of the mean practices and lived in perpetual fear of losing their children in case their births fell under the above-specified criterion.

The Europeans also introduced a new mode of dressing differently from the traditional Aembu dressing. Mwaniki (2021) opines that the trousers the women were introduced to be far better than the traditional ones as they covered more skin, thereby more modesty. This view was supported by (Kaumbuthu, 2021), who observes that the Embu traditional dressing was scanty where the young girls in puberty went around with bare chests as their breasts were not considered as nakedness. They also wore a Njuri, a small piece of goatskin that was used to cover the backside only. This exposed them to cold in the cold seasons and at night. The old men and women's dressings Kîgoori were descent as they were long robes that covered most of the body parts and kept them warm. The two respondents' opinions agree that the Embu traditional dressing was not entirely decent, but the clothes brought by the white men were more decent and warm. Mwaniki (2021) also notes that the white people improved the Aembu dressing by introducing footwear like shoes that were non-existent in the past. People used to traverse long distances barefooted, and accidents of being pricked by thorns or hitting a tree stump or a stone caused injuries on the feet, where many people lost their toenails through such accidents. Europeans also brought beds, mattresses and blankets that brought more comfort during sleep, unlike the Mîârîro, makeshift beds with crisscrossing tree branches that the Africans used, or the bare floors with animal skins spread across.

The views of the two respondents were disputed by Ngige (2021) who opined that the white people tampered unfavourably with the Aembu dressing. Some of the dressing that was introduced were very short for women; for instance, the miniskirts and the short dresses were seductive to the men as they covered little skin and left much of it to the imagination. When asked why the traditional dressing was not seductive, yet the unmarried girls walked bare-chested, he said that a naked mad man or woman in the marketplace does not have many eyes on their body, as when the whole body part is uncovered, there's nothing more to imagine, but when a woman covers half of her breasts or thighs with European clothes, someone is curious to see the rest. He further observed that some of the Aembu dressing like Kîgoori was decent wear. From the above divergent opinions, it can be argued that some of the Aembu attire were

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considered to be decent and promoted the cherished value of decency. Likewise, some attire brought by the Europeans promoted decency while others did not.

The Europeans also brought western education that improved the family values in terms of understanding the different better ways of family life. As a result, people were enlightened and able to manage their family affairs better. KNA/DCEMB/1/14 notes that village agricultural education was introduced through the Agricultural Department in Embu District. In this project, there was better care and improvement of stock, production and use of manure, increased crop populations and introduction of vegetables as food and cash crops. By the end of 1956, it was further noted that over 2,500 standard pattern cattle sheds had been built, representing a manure production of at least 152,000 tonnes per year; 2,000 calves, sheep and goat sheds had been constructed. Most villages had nippier grass plots for supplementary fodder, and swamps around villages were successfully converted into healthy vegetable gardens. Twelve villages had cut all their male stock and introduced Sahiwa/Boran bulls in their place. These measures improved food security and provided families with a stable agricultural-based economy that improved the Aembu family life. The British also introduced new food crops like rice, maize, pineapples, groundnuts, wattle and sunflower, which supplemented the Aembu traditional foods. Coffee and tea were also introduced and earned the people some income that improved family economic and social status in later years of colonialism.

Kiambati (2021) notes that Christianity advocated for monogamy. Many people in Embu North attended the mission church at Kigari, and since there were requirements for continued membership, those in family life had to act in certain ways like exempting their daughters from clitoridectomy, marrying one wife and abandoning traditional religion and practices that the missionaries were opposed. Christianity improved family life by preaching peace and harmony in marriage, equality between men and women and mutual concern for married partners. It also outlawed degrading practices like clitoridectomy. Wife battering, which was a very common practice, also was minimised as family members were taught about the need to treat each other with respect and utmost love. Due to emphasis on monogamy, domestic violence meted on women reduced as fights in a monogamous family were fewer with less conflict.

With the execution of colonial land policies, the Aembu no longer had the luxury of communal land ownership. The British colonial masters recommended and executed policies that ensured land was divided among the people according to their villages and current locations that they occupied, a process that was executed through the imposed colonial chiefs and headmen. After the division, each person was expected to put a clear demarcation; Mûkûmbû and the people did this by planting live or dry fences on their portions of land. This broke the communalism that was previously in existence as people helped each other to plant, weed and harvest when there was no individually owned land (Kivogo, 2021).

An 81 years old male respondent Kamunjiga (2021) observes that the Europeans forced the Aembu into forced labour that was done in different parts of the country. The Aembu were taken to work in European farms in Murang'a, Juja and other places so as to raise money to pay taxes, Kûthûkûma. The men were recruited into forced labour, and the women were left caring for the homes. As they marched to Kikuyu land on foot to the European plantations, they carried Kîmere, porridge, to drink on the way and went as far as the coast. When these men were released from European labour, they returned to their homes to resume normal family lives. This practice was an extension of the Victorian ideal that was propagated by

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the British, where men tackled hard jobs and provided for the family as the female folk did house chores and took care of children. The ideal was productively executed in Europe, but the Kenyan model only served to preserve women and girls from the harshness of forced manual labour while exposing them to psychological and emotional trauma when their menfolk went away only to return several months later or never to return at all. The women became burdened with bringing up families with scarce resources alongside persevering the brutality that colonial officers meted out on subject people. The family value of communalism was destroyed as every family now had other civic and family responsibilities to execute, like some members going too far off land to get money for taxes and upkeep. Communalism was also destroyed as many members would be away from the village life serving European interests.

Family values were a product of a successfully planned and executed marriage union. Among the Aembu, the foundation of family values, marriage was not a process taken lightly. It was systematic and involved three phases through which a solid union would be built between different people involved, as elaborated in detail by an 82-year-old male respondent Mutwiri (2021). The first phase was to request friendship, *kûria ûthoni*. When a man had identified his bride, he would inform his parents. They would thereafter organise a visit to the girl's parents. Five to ten trusted and close people would attend. The agenda was to report the love relationship. With the coming of colonialism, the strict traditional laws of paying bride price before marrying no longer restricted young men and women; some would agree and move in together. This was known as *gûkîria*, and the young man intending to legalise the marriage would go to officially report. Among the gifts brought, *Mûratina* wine had to be present. After that, the young man could be accepted or rejected. Rejection would usually be due to family ties or mere unwillingness of the girls' parents to get associated with the family because of a previous incident of blood spilling, *Njaviû*, incidences of premature death, stealing, abnormal diseases or genetically related conditions.

If accepted, the following was requested:

Nthenge ya Ngusu- a He-goat to be eaten by the girl's brothers and friends to appease them. Going forward, they would provide the man somewhere to sit when he visited. *Nthenge ya Mûvîrîga*, a He-goat to be eaten by the clan. *Mvarika ya gûtongoreria nthenge*- A she-goat to lead the he-goats. This remains in the homestead. *Ndûrûme*, a male sheep. Only if the girl had a baby prior to this negotiation.

This phase ended there with the man's family having now been accepted as *kanyanya*, in-law, and they set a date for the next phase. The second phase is known as slaughtering, *kûthînja*. On this day, the man brings the aforementioned items. On this occasion, he had to take with him enough *mûratina* wine alongside the men to slaughter the animals.

The meat was divided as follows:

One front leg is taken to the girl's firstborn uncle on the mother's side.

The man getting a wife is given one front leg, *gûcokerua guoko*, for appreciation. The lady getting married is also given some meat, *nthio*, and the buttocks. Hide legs and *ngunguro* are eaten by women. Skinners leave generous flesh on the skin to be extracted and eaten by village uncircumcised boys. Old men, *athuri* eat the liver, lungs, spleen, and all the soft parts and ribs. Cooks may taste the kidneys for salt as they cook. Young men, *anake* eat the neck. Intestines are shared. The slaughter men take an unnoticeable piece from every part. This is cooked as *ûthînji*. There is a special way the chest is skinned to leave a small skin. The girl's father eats the chest. He has also given the testicles and the penis, *mûraagi*. The man intending

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to marry only took the best, fattest, castrated he-goat to his in-laws. Otherwise, he could be fined. The ndûrûme, 'a male sheep' is later eaten by the girl's mother and father. At this point, ûthoni or a marriage relationship was officially initiated.

The third phase of dowry negotiations, is kwarîrîria rûraio. This could be done on the day of slaughtering. A team of select men from both sides enter a prepared room for the negotiations. The following compulsory items were requested:

Fifteen goats, 2 cows, 2 bulls, A huge he-goat for lowering the bushes for the goats to eat, Kîthembe kîa ûkî, 20 litres of honey, Mvuvu inyanya cia mûratina, to mean 8 twenty-litre Jerry cans of mûratina wine, The girls' father coat, walking stick and a hat, Mother's dress, head scarf, 2 lessos and pullover and 2 blankets.

In addition to the items requested above, a huge water tank and a thavuria, aluminium-cooking pot would be asked for. Since these changes in dowry payment and wedding were part of the evolution after the coming of Christianity, it was noted that those interested in a church wedding were to buy full wedding suits for the parents. The man would also cater for other costs associated with a church wedding. He, however, was not expected to pay everything in full at once. When he eventually finished paying, his firstborn son is entitled to a cow from his mother's parents or their representatives, Ng'ombe ya ndumbutho, and he should carry a goat as he goes to receive his cow.

A female respondent (Wanginda, 2021) fully agrees with the sentiments of Mutwiri and further adds that all the above occasions were accompanied by ûcûrû wa mûkio, gruel, potatoes mashed with cereals and vegetables, and nyenyi cia njûgû among other Embian assorted delicacies. Mûratina wine is only served to responsible adults in the evening, where the more the supply, the merrier the party was. Song and dance may erupt at any instance. Everybody would go home happy, and arrangements to come and pick up the daughter unceremoniously through waylaying, capture and delivery to the grooms' house would be executed. This communal involvement in marriage ensured few instances of divorce as it was seen to be embarrassing to break marriage after taking the entire community through the rigorous process.

Ubani (2007) observes that among the Igbo of Nigeria, it was the parent's duty to get a marriage partner for their children and do all marriage preparations. The sons and daughters getting married were only supposed to be present and obey their parents' decisions. Founding a family was, therefore, a communal responsibility where all members living or dead, were involved. This made the couple avoid all collisions that could lead to the end of their marriage, and the community offered support in terms of marital guidance to keep family units from breaking down. This situation changed due to cultural evolution; men started being responsible for finding their spouses, in which case there were mistakes witnessed when the enormous responsibility got bestowed upon the young inexperienced youths. In Ubanis' opinion, this has led to high divorce rates and single parenthood in Africa, a situation that was rare in traditional African families. Sykiner (2015) supports this assertion by noting that the western culture brought a change in dressing that leaves women half-naked in many African towns exposing them to male lust, rape and exposure to diseases. Under such circumstances, when a woman falls pregnant, the man responsible known or unknown is likely not to take care of the resultant child, and the woman ends up a single parent for the child. The two authors observe that these two changes have brought family dynamics of divorce and single parenthood among the Africans. This similar state of affairs was recorded as present in Embu

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North and increased immensely during the colonial period and even after, as observed by a female respondent Wanginda (2021).

Though the taking of the local brew, tembo, was a common social activity among the Aembu prior to colonialism, during the colonial period, it became the most abused drink. KNA/DC/EBU/3/4 records that there was a directive given to chief Mbogori and chief Kiambati to ensure control of the vice in their locations of Ngandoni and Njuri since it was noted that even on early mornings, it was possible to find even women hopelessly intoxicated with the excuse that life was difficult with the new colonial order. Some of the stressed-out puppet chiefs had also become addicted to the drink, and it was difficult for them to govern. D.R Crampton, the District Commissioner of Embu in 1925, noted that at a Local Native Council meeting, a resolution was passed that forbids women and members of certain "Rikas" from drinking the fermented liquor and prescribed penalties for the breach of the law. This was arrived at because both the young and old, men and women, were finding solace in alcoholic intoxication due to the nature of the things that were happening around them with colonialism. This shift in behaviour largely affected the traditional family values as family members became reckless, and morality was especially difficult to uphold with the new changes in the African social, economic and political ways of doing things. The culture was evolving into a situation of disorder, and the Europeans had to work very hard and quickly to stabilise the family set-up and salvage the African family values of the Aembu.

Ngari and Mbuko (2021) notes that Aembu abhorred sexual relationships outside of marriage. An adulterous person, Kîthûngîrîri was considered not to have a conscious as he deliberately hurt others, hence the saying, Kîthûngîrîri gîtiicî nguû ya mwana. Missionarism started the gospel of salvation where a priest, a pastor or a male clergy in the process of evangelisation would listen to people's wives marital distress in the guise of religious consultation and prayer to solve their problems and would end up having sexual relations with them. One woman from Ruguru-Ngandori was said to have gone through this and even sired a daughter out of such a situation with a white clergyman from a mission church. Another Embu man married his sister, a mûgiro previously unheard of in Embu land and since the colonial power did not incorporate disciplinary structures that would cater for such misconduct, the elders had to let the matter go, as the only thing they could do was chase the two out of Embu land. Missionaries in Kikuyu land, where they received shelter and managed to live, accommodated the couple. So were it in the olden days; the two were ripe for the punishment of being stuffed in a Mwatû and rolled off a cliff to drown in River Ruringazi. These two instances show that colonialism served to disrupt traditional family values that the Aembu had held on to for centuries and replaced them with their own systems that did little to shield family values from erosion and negative interference.

The Europeans disrupted the Aembu economic life that shaped the values of hard work and resilience and ensured families thrived. The Aembu previously undertook several economic activities like agriculture, animal husbandry, fishing, beekeeping and barter trade. The colonialists brought land adjudication, meaning there was no more communal hunting, fishing, farming or cattle keeping with land being made individual or state property. Thumi (2021) notes that the Aembu men started participating in a trade like the Akamba neighbours, with some going as far as the Kenyan Indian Ocean Coast where they bought beads, porcelain and other commodities as they sold those from Embu land like honey, Columbus monkey skins, ivory and tanned leather from animals. This was also due to the money economy, without which family life was difficult to sustain. This new way of earning a livelihood disrupted the family value of

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oneness and communalism and replaced it with individualism and self-centeredness that was beforehand not witnessed in family set-ups in Embu North.

The colonial forms of administration of justice neutralised and slowly replaced the Embu system of councils of elders and organised social groupings like Mîvîrîga. Ngige (2021) noted that during the colonial period, Mîvîrîga persisted in handling matters like coming together for rites of passage. Still, the more important and weightier matters were only handled by the European-established judicial system through the law courts. This increased social crime since it took time for some heinous crimes to be investigated and justice served. Cases of child negligence by parents, abandonment of own family, violence, stealing, rape and murder became commonplace among the Aembu, which had not been witnessed before. Imprisonment of offenders was also a new scenario that robbed their members' families. This was not welcomed, as a means of punishment because the elders' argued that if an offender is a man who killed the brother and were jailed for a lifetime, it is to mean the family loses two brothers at a go, one to death and the other to jail. The man killed was not to benefit anyone by being jailed, but if he had been allowed to give two bulls as blood wealth to the deceased's family, then some loss would have been recompensed.

KNA/DC/EBU/3/2, in support of this assertion, records that in 1912 the old Kiamas' were reconstituted and given a certain measure of power by the government. The principal role of the Kiamas was to hear and adjudicate civil claims among the natives. They were also granted criminal powers but not easily exercised. There was no doubt that the Kiamas were unprogressively corrupt and lacking in the essentials of justice as Europeans understand it. The Embu Kiama was disbanded in 1923, and a new one was constituted to sit for litigation once a month. It was further noted from the archival sources that the Kiama's frequency of meeting was reduced to once a month as the European court system took root. The District Magistrate Court recorded the number of civil cases to have increased from 8 to 21 from 1923 to 1926. The judicial system of the Europeans was therefore seen to impair the administration of justice and was inferior to the structures previously put up by the Aembu councils. This is because the Aembu elders felt that the Kiama was being disabled cunningly over false allegations by Europeans, with the motive of making them lose credibility and thereby pave the way for the "more just and efficient" European judicial system. It was, however, evident that civil cases were going up in the absence of the Aembu judicial structures.

With the coming of westernisation, family life among the Aembu became an individual affair. During the colonial period, every man stood for himself and his immediate family. This was because of the disintegration of the social-economic, political and religious structures and practices that brought people together. Nyakio (2021) observes that the rites of passage, like the elaborate circumcision ceremonies for girls, were threatened, and this meant people would not often meet unless under very special circumstances during the colonial period. With scarce resources, sharing became difficult. Divisions started among the people due to the new ways of life like changes in religion and the introduction of education. There are those who followed the missionary and colonial recommendations and took their children to receive western education. Others became Christians and abandoned traditional religion, did not subject their daughters to clitoridectomy, used western medicine, food and clothing and were consequently shunned by those who decided to stick with their traditional ways of family life. This divide made the Aembu individualistic in the sense that when a given family became westernised and their neighbour traditional, there was a little commonality that would bring them together. Again, with individual land ownership, a person would fence their land with a hedge, and this isolation further fuelled individualism.

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One was able to plant what they wished and use their land as they decided without communal involvement that existed there before.

Kiverege (2021) observes that some Aembu residents were deployed by the British to other places like towns as workers or administrators. This scenario led to the growth of small towns. There were some people who went and established residences in towns and left the rural areas and their relatives there. In these new settlements where the Aembu had to stay, they lived with people from other neighbouring areas, further isolating them from communalism with fellow Aembu. In the towns, every person was concerned with their immediate family and personal issues, and this further made them individualistic.

KNA/DC/EBU/3/2 indicated that Dr and Mrs. Crawford occupied the Kigari Mission Station in September 1910. Dr Crawford retired in 1913, and the mission was closed until Rev. J. Comely and Mrs Comely arrived in 1915. The mission school had an attendance averaging around 50. Teachers were also being trained at Kigari, as there were few educators. Elementary medical services were also rendered, but there was no qualified medical practitioner. By 1927, only Rev. J. Comely and Miss Wyatt carried out all the work at the centre. However, Rev. J. Comely's uncompromising attitude about female circumcision had made many desert studies and religion by 1936. In addition, a teacher Ndegwa son of Njigoya, had been sentenced for two years with hard labour under the penal code for his name was found to be in records indicating that he was part of the Executive Committee of the Kikuyu Central Association. This did not go well with the locals, who felt the punishment was too punitive. These events added to the shortage of personnel in the mission schools, mismanagement, and very limited finances meant that many of the Aembu children who acquired western education ended up dropping out and returning to their homes.

Kiverege (2021) further notes that Missionary education further widened the gap between the literate and illiterate among the Aembu. Education served to create separate social classes for the learned who felt more superior to the majority uneducated masses. Parents with mission-educated children encouraged them to mingle with those of their own kind. This broke the oneness previously existent among the people. Westernisation led to permissiveness in society and this ultimately destroyed family values. With the responsibility of guiding the youth being left to the parents and no longer a communal affair, the young educated youth were free to exercise sexual vices without abandon because they were mostly out of their parent's surveillance. They aped what they saw on television and from their peers. The old grandparents give the advice and moral guidance, and elderly members of the society lost their space in the new social order. Even after the achievement of independence in 1963 and the consequent leaving of the British, society was already too set in the new ways to go back to traditional moral values. Western education exposed the ones who received it to cultural vices and sexual impurity through engagement in homosexuality, prostitution, fornication and adultery, which were previously unheard of among the Aembu community. Inversely, western education also empowered the Aembu into better ways of life with more enlightenment. The age at which girls were traditionally married went up as more women pursued education and delayed the age at which they got into marriage or childbearing. Family life was therefore thrown into disarray, as the colonial situation was quite unstable. This situation did not change even with Kenya begetting independence, people became more individualistic, and family matters became a more private affair with only the concerned persons participating and executing family values that they deemed okay with their set of beliefs.

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Mutitu (2021) asserts that during the early years of colonialism and missionary establishment, the Aembu families and relatives supported each other, especially the old people. In fear of curses, relatives supported the elderly who were unable to support themselves, and in turn, the old blessed the caregivers. If the old were neglected or abandoned, they would utter curses to the family members, and this resulted in death or madness. Since the old people held wealth accumulated from their youthful days, they would leave word upon their death on the inheritance of this property. This is to mean the young or able-bodied members would be careful not to mistreat the elderly lest they get denied the inheritance. When an elder became too old to perform normal house chores, their children, who were in most cases grownups, would make a wooden Njaga (plural) or Rwaga (singular) which was a portable wooden bed. They would lay soft animal skins on it and use this makeshift bed to bring their old parent or relative to sunbathe. Then later, when the sun went down, they take them inside the hut where the elder would be bathed, oiled, warmly dressed and well fed, that is kûvirwa gwota riûa, kûvirwa kîruruû, gûthambua, kûvakwa maguta, gwîkîrwa kigoorî na kûvewa îrio. This would be done until the old died in dignity. If, for instance, this was the case of an elderly woman, her daughters or sons would not execute some of these duties, and they would identify a neighbour of the same mûvîrîga who would especially bathe, oil and dress her so that their child does not see her nakedness, atîkoonwe njaga kana ndûûrû ni ciana ciake. Food given to such people was supposed to be nutritious and easy to eat, commonly known as mûcûûi.

Sgd. In his report, I. R. Gillespie, the District Commissioner of Embu in 1938, indicated that Mrs and Ms Comely had opened an orphanage at Kigari in 1925. The Local Native Council voted money for the erection of the building to house this orphanage in 1931, and later grants were made to assist with the running of the orphanage. In 1937, Rev. J. Comely, Mrs, and Miss Comely went on a holiday, and the orphanage had to be closed down. The natives of the district were very appreciative of the work done and hoped that it would be possible to reopen the orphanage later. Towards the end of 1937, Miss H. Comely opened a small Maternity Home in the orphanage building with assistance from the Local Native Council. A small grant was made in 1938 to assist the working of the Maternity Home. KNA/DC/EBU/9/1. The emergence of an orphanage among the Aembu meant that orphaned children were vulnerable and not taken good care of by relatives, a situation that the British missionaries tried unsuccessfully to address. Before the British came to Embu, vulnerable groups of people like these were communally cared for, but with the new colonial order and individualism, it was hard for many people to burden themselves with care for the aged, orphaned, and disabled and other such people. Availing maternity services was a very productive move by the missionaries, but it was short-lived, thereby unreliable as European personnel was inadequate and not present at the station.

Gitonga (2021) observes that during the later years of colonialism, people started moving to work in far-off places, and sometimes if a family had an elderly relative, they would hire someone to be left taking care of the old. With more entrenchment of western family values, the initial care and concern given to the old became diluted as grown children dispersed to different areas and left their old parents with fewer people to take care of them. There was also improved medical care and social facilities accorded to the old from the mission stations, which made the old enjoy a fulfilling life. Some mission stations in Embu North, like the Catholic Mission station created homes for the aged after the colonial period where old people were neglected. Those children who were busy and away from home would take their parents to avoid the burden of neglecting them in the rural village alone. Many families, however, took care of their old relatives before, during and after the colonial period.

Munyi (2021) pinpointed that grown children who worked far away, like in Nairobi, would send money to their parents for upkeep due to the necessities brought by the money economy. It was noted throughout the oral interviews that best care and concern for the aged, was accorded depending on the amount of property the old person had and how well he or she had conducted themselves and the care they had accorded their family members when they were young and able-bodied. The old people, especially men who had been negligent and violent in their adult life and had unleashed terror on the family members, faced much ridicule in old age and would be neglected, abandoned, denied food or given too little or unpalatable and generally treated with contempt until they died. This, too, went to women who ran away from their matrimonial homes and left young children with their husbands. In old age, the grown children and relatives would repay them with little or no care and concern. However, since everyone knew old age was inevitable, there was a deliberate effort to do good, be hardworking, and treat other family members honourably to avoid a miserable old age.

Since some rich old people who had properties like goats, sheep and farmlands had their children and relatives take the responsibility of maintaining the property themselves. (Gitonga, 2021) confessed that his grandsons used to clean his house, and clothes, cook for him and take care of his coffee and tea farms on his behalf because his health and strength had deteriorated due to old age. This assertion was supported by another male respondent (Munyi, 2021) confessed to having helped his father when his health had failed until he died.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The study concluded that the British missionaries and colonialists greatly altered the Traditional Family Values of the Aembu progressively and retrogressively. The colonial government, through local chiefs, organised people to participate in government work and go to war in other parts of the country as well as pay taxes. Missionary work brought services like education, religion and healthcare to the people and spearheaded individualism.

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