

THE FUTURE OF AFRICAN FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ANALYSIS ON TRADITIONAL AKAMBA MARRIAGE: IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

DR. PAUL M. KYALO
KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES AND PHILOSOPHY
P.O. BOX 43844 – 00100
NAIROBI, KENYA

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the traditional Akamba marriage with a view to establishing the relevant and useful values that can enrich the modern marriage. Three objectives guided the study namely: -

- (i) To examine the positive aspects in traditional Akamba marriage with a view to utilizing them to strengthen Christian marriage.
- (ii) To explore the causes of marital instability.
- (iii) To discover and emphasize the need of premarital instructions involving all the stakeholders.

The paper is part of a research conducted in Kitui District targeting sample population of 210 people. The subjects were between the ages of 19–98 years old. The research used probability sampling. The data was obtained from the youth, parents, elders, pastors and professionals.

The four hypotheses brought the following findings: -

- (i) The longer the duration of marriage, the lesser the danger of its dissolution.
- (ii) The presence of children especially young ones contribute in prolonging the life of an unhappy marriage.
- (iii) Parental involvement in the preparation of the offspring marriage was found to be one of the major determinants of marital instability. This is because of parents experience in marriage life, the wisdom, guidance and counsel to the young ones.
- (iv) Extra-marital sexual permissiveness was strongly disapproved since it causes unfaithfulness in among spouses and it has serious consequences on the families concerned.

More findings on the causes of marital instability were given. Third parties who bring words of hearsay and rumours have been mentioned as a threat to the stability of marriage. Forced marriages especially where a young man has to marry a girl because he has impregnated her was seen as a cause of disruption in marriages. Parental interferences especially where they would like their sons or daughters to assist them with material things or in monetary terms was given as a serious cause of marital instability.

In brief, the main objectives of this study are fairly achieved. First, some of the positive aspects of traditional marriage that can be utilized or incorporated into Christian marriage have been indentified. Secondly, the causes of marital instability have been established. The emphasis on the need for proper pre-marital preparation, instruction involving all stakeholders has been laid.

ANALYSIS ON TRADITIONAL AKAMBA MARRIAGE: IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

The Different Marital Unions among the Akamba

The study has established that there are about five types of marriages in traditional Akamba community. These were monogamy, polygamy, ghost, child and *maweto* marriages.

Robert J. Cummings writing on polygamous marriages among the Kamba says:

In Ukambani, marriage is basically an economic question, for the number of wives a Mukamba has is a measure of his personal importance as well as his wealth. The more the marriages the more children one can potentially produce. (1976:101)

Cummings assertion underscores the fact that there were factors to polygamy. One had to be wealthy enough to afford bride wealth for more than wife. Polygamy among the Akamba was a sign of social prestige and wealth. However cumming erred in that he confuses social ststus of a person with economic status.

It is ostensibly misleading to say marriage is basically an economic question among the Akamba. It is literature like this among others that made the researcher to undertake this study. Cummings among other people, was writing about Akamba for legal and historical purposes.

The other types of marriages among the Akamba are the ghost, *maweto* and child marriage. Of ghost marriages, Mbiti writes:

“...If a son dies before he has been married, the parents arrange for him to be married in absentia; so that the dead man is not cut off from the chain of life which is supreme and most important.” (1969:144).

Traditionally ghost marriages were rare in Ukambani. As Mbiti rightly says they occurred only when a young man of marriageable age died before getting married. *Maweto* are women who are socially married to other women for purpose of procreation. In the Akamba traditional society the woman who married an *Iweto* (singular) was herself a married woman, who was either barren or had given birth to daughters only. After initial consultations between her and her husband, they choose the girl whom they want to incorporate into their family. The wife, in her husband's

After initial consultations between her and her husband, they choose the girl whom they want to incorporate into their family. The wife, in her husband's presence or in the presence of one of the elders from her husband's family, designated or pronounced the girl to be the wife of her son who was never born. Then negotiations began if the proposal was accepted. In all marital unions consent of all parties was highly sought. The duty of looking for genitor (the man with whom the *iweto* will bear children) fell on the woman's husband. The genitor preferably was a relative of the woman's husband. Closely related to *maweto* were the child marriages. The marriages were arranged in cases where an elderly couple bore an only son in their old age. The father of the boy chooses a girl for his only son. And they proposed to the family. The girl was given to one of the male relatives to act as a genitor on behalf of the young son. This was done to make sure that before the father died his son would have children to remember him. The father of the boy could not act as a genitor for this could be equal to incest. When the boy grew up and underwent initiation, his wife was officially handed over to him. These marriages were very rare in Ukambani. The author gathered sufficient information on this marriage from one of the chief respondents aged eighty years. (June 2002).

The underlying factor in this marital union was that the Mukamba was explicitly at pains trying to perpetuate the family name, and the social continuity was paramount. It is worthy to note that all marital unions except for monogamy were an exception rather than the norm. Monogamous marriages were the norm. It is preparation for the marriage rather than the nature of these marriages, which is relevant to this study. Gerald R. Leslie in his book, The Family in the Social Context discusses ways of establishing unions and provisions of terminating them. (1973:14). It is in the light of this that procedures followed for payment of bride wealth, traditional method for termination of marriage and spouses coming together are important aspects in this research. It is imperative at this point to look at the way the Akamba prepared people for this institution.

Preparation for Marriage

Every step in the life of the unmarried Mukamba was part of preparation for marriage. It started with actual physical birth, for the individual was called to self fulfillment and completeness in marriage. Actual birth was followed by acceptance of the child into the society, thus making it a social being; initiation rites, the betrothal, the payment of bride wealth and the wedding ceremony. Each of these steps was marked with a ritual, thus making marriage both a ritually clean and desirable institution. Of these rites Mbiti says.

“...Then that initiation is a ritual sanctification and preparation for marriage, and only when it is over many young people get married. Since the whole community participates in the initiation rites, it is therefore the entire corporate body of the society which prepares the young people for marriage and family life.” (1969:135)

The naming ceremony was the initial step in making the Mukamba a social being. The child was not only given a human name, but also given an ornament, which cut it from the spirit world and made it a Mukamba. The initiation rites followed after seven to ten days. These are meant to prepare the Akamba people both for marriage and life within that society. During this time as Mbiti underscores above, both girls and boys were instructed on how to become respectable members of the family, the clan and the society.

These rites also introduced the youth to matters of sex, marriage, procreation and family life. The researcher was able to obtain information on these traditional rites from one of his chief informants. (28th May 2002). At circumcision (*nzaiko*) the boy's foreskin of the penis is cut while a small portion of the girl's clitoris is removed. Mbiti argues that among the Akamba the sexual organ attaches the child to the state of ignorance, the state of inactivity and the state of potential impotence (a sexuality). Once that link is severed, the young person is freed from the state of ignorance and inactivity and is born into another state, which is the state of knowledge, of activity and of reproduction. (1969:123). Before the cutting off of both the foreskins of the boy's sexual organ and clitoris from the girl, marriage was not allowed among the Akamba, and therefore no reproduction. Another argument is that the penis was a powerful instrument that gave the Akamba society its continuity. Before this instrument could be utilized by the society for purposes of procreation it had to be purified. This purification took the form of shedding of blood. Through this, the youth joined himself to the ancestors, and forged ahead to work on the third time dimension, the yet-to-be—born. From then on the youth could look for a mate.

Choice of a partner

There were different methods of choosing a marriage partner. One important fact, however, was that the families of both the boy and the girl were actively involved. Often parents made the choice of the partner. There were different reasons for this, one, it could be that the two families had been friends for a long time and they wanted to strengthen their friendship through the marriage of their children. Two, a given family may have had reputation for producing well groomed daughters, and the parents of the boy were keen in procuring one daughter for their son. Instances abound, however when the young man was allowed to choose a partner; his parents listened to his wishes, his choice, but still had the final say. In instances where parents of the boy chose, not actually the girl but the family of the girl, negotiations started early. The major aim of the boy's family was to have the girl. Prepare her gradually to become a member of the family.

A chief informant elaborated to the researcher that the whole process of the preparation was psychologically done since the girl grew up with a clear knowledge that in the end, she would be assimilated into the family of so and so. She therefore did her to mould her character to fit in that family. A chief informant also narrated to the researcher that a young man prepared himself to become an in-law to his future wife's family. This long process ultimately contributed to the stability of among the Akamba. The researcher was able to gather that while the negotiations were going on, the two families grew closer and formed a bond which, if the two young people broke they would be guilty. The bond, which the two families formed, was held in high esteem. From the foregoing it is clear that the Akamba prepared their youth for marriage, which was not between them *pc se*, but also between the two families. The period of courtship helped bring the parents of the two families and the two kinship or clans together. It is these factors that strengthened marriage bond in the traditional society of the Akamba that made the researcher embark on this study.

Betrothal

This is the period between engagement and the marriage itself. It was during this period that rituals were performed and gifts were exchanged. Bride wealth negotiations were also done in this period. Rituals were very important to a Mukamba. Every stage was marked with a ritual and since marriage was essential to the society, it too was marked with rituals. Since marriage was a process, the first rituals connected with it were those performed during initiation rites. On the night of circumcision the parents of the initiates performed a ritual of sexual intercourse. This was to pacify the spirit of the ancestors, and to ask for their healing power so that their child's wound may heal first. From then on, the parents kept vigilance over their growing son or daughter so that when the time came for the paying of bride price or for the wedding, none was taken unawares. During the paying of bride price, several rituals were performed. Before goats were taken to the family of the girl, the father of the young man slaughtered a goat. This goat was a sacrifice offered to the spirits of the girl's family. Prayers were offered asking the spirits to make her fruitful. After this, two live goats, which were to be taken to the girl's family, were tied with a strap. The leather strap was to be left together with goats at the girl's home. If the girl's family accepted the boy's family, on the night of arrival of the first goats, the parents of the girl performed a ritual coition. Informants told the researcher that this was the formal acceptance of the family of the boy and that the ritual coition was also meant to purify the daughter so that no evil will befall her (*Kuona una*). On the following day the leather strap was returned to the boys family as a sign of Consent. Following this the parents of the boy or his clansmen brewed beer and sent it to the girl's family.

Three elders who acted as witnesses to the contract accompanied this beer. Beer drinking continued and blessings were directed to the girl. Before they finished drinking beer, the elders, each in turn, spat on his chest and stomach as a sign of blessing the young people. After this ritual of beer drinking, the bride price was fixed. Bride price was an open token of gratitude from the family and clan. This token was to thank the family for having brought up the girl, and also for allowing her to become a wife in that given family. William Goode says that bride price was important for it meant that the individual learned how to depend on their relatives, kinsmen and at times clansmen. (1964:202). This was a lesson in group involvement. This group involvement was the extent to which spouse's two kin groups had a stake in the marriage. The two individuals who were getting married were least involved in the process of bride price. It was upon the two families to make sure that while the paying of the bride price was going on the two young people, who were getting married had both economic skills and emotional maturity.

Another important aspect of bride wealth was that it could not be paid twice for the same individual. Of bride wealth Dundas says:

“one of the main principals of marriage which is rarely disregarded is that a woman can never be married twice in the same sense that she is paid she is paid for twice except in the following cases 1. If her husband died before she had born children. 2. In Ukambani a woman who cannot be married is lent as a mate to another man. But if she leaves him and goes to a third man, her brother-in-law or son, as the case may be, may consent to accept “dowry” for her from that one, and she is lawfully married to him. A lawful marriage may be said to exist only when the man to whom the woman is given has full claim to all her children” (1913:287).

The expectation underscored by Dundas is in regard to men who died before producing children. In such cases the woman was given alternatives, one could stay with her late husband's family and produce children for him. The other alternative was that she could get another man and marry him. In this case the man had to pay bride price to the family of the deceased man. Immediately after bride price was paid the woman ceased to belong to her late husband's family. Respondents told the author that the woman, after her husband's death, was given a relative to produce children in the name of her late husband. If such a woman left the genitor and went to live with another man, her son, or a brother-in-law could claim bride price from the man who was living with the woman. Once this was paid, she ceased to her late husband's family. If such a woman had grown-up-sons, the Akamba society allowed the sons to decide which family they wanted to belong. In most instances such sons decided to stay with the family of their late father.

In cases where the woman died before she had borne any children, and died in her husband's home, if bride price had only been paid in part, the family of the deceased could not claim the rest of it, and the remainder of the debt was cancelled. The issue would be different if the same woman had gone back to her parents because of disagreement with her husband and she died while at her parent's house. If such a woman had children, her husband retained them. If she had no children, her kinsmen had to return the gifts to her husband and compensate the loss. In cases where a man divorced his wife on valid grounds, bride price had to be given back to him if he so wished. However, in order to be entitled to it he had to return both the woman and her children to family. If she had run away with another man the husband had to follow her and return her to the family before claiming back his gifts. In case he wanted to retain the custody of the children, he had to declare that he did not want the bride wealth back.

Upon making the decision that he does not want the custody of the children, but his gifts back the man approached the elders and made his intentions known. The elder would convene later and deliberate on the issue. Bride wealth was not given back immediately. The man had to wait until the woman was remarried. He was however, given a token by the family of the woman to show, first that his marriage to their daughter was terminated, and second, his gift would be refunded in due course. The family therefore gave him a goat at once, which had to be slaughtered as soon as he arrived back at his home. Respondents told the researchers that this goat was significant it marked the termination of the marriage and the beginning of another process of *Kuela* (contributing) towards another bride price. This goat was therefore known as *Mbui ya Maelo* (goat of contribution. literally, divorce goat). The goat was also symbolic of the ram, which was slaughtered to seal the original bargain and beginning of marriage. The man no longer had claim of his children and wife. Dundas work among others makes the researcher carry out a research of this nature with a view to establishing how such stabilizers of traditional marriage like bride wealth may be incorporated in contemporary marriage.

It is clear from the foregoing argument that bride wealth can be looked upon as one of the major stabilizers of Akamba marriages, since the whole family, kinsmen and women were involved in the process of paying bride price. The family tried to mould the young people, so that they could fit in the society. Informants have already told the researcher that the cows, goats, Foodstuffs, honey and ornaments, which were given as gifts to the girls family were easily converted to children and the more the children, the more stable was the marriage.

Actual Wedding among the Akamba

When the suitor's family was ready to claim their bride, they brewed the beer called *Uki wa Kuitya Miitu* (beer for claiming the girl). This beer was taken to the parents of the girl, but it was not necessary that the girl be married on the day the beer was brought to her home. If the suitor decided, however that he had to marry her on this day, would walk with her quietly while elders drank their beer. The researcher has also gathered that a few women normally two would be waiting at the gate of the homestead to accompany the bride. The women walked ahead of the bridal party, which consisted of the bridegroom, and a few of his age-mates and friends. On arrival at the bridegroom's home, the girl was welcomed into the family by her mother-in-law. On the first day no coition was allowed between the bride and the groom. On the second night coition took place. A key informant told the researcher that on the third day, all friends of the married couple came for *maio* (weeping ceremony). This weeping ceremony was a curious mixture of joy and sorrow. The friends came to bring gifts and also bid the married couple goodbye. To the Akamba, this ceremony marked the transition from single life to married state. It was this celebration for marriage, which showed people that the two individuals, their families, clans and kinsmen had been united in a covenant for the perpetuation of the Akamba society.

Penwill, D. J, Kamba customary law, (1951) is another source. Penwill was an administrative officer in Ukambani. He wrote his book for administrative purpose. Akamba customs and traditions were described by him but from his perspective.

The rituals are mostly subjectively described lacking religious and social implications. He used Anthropological, Historical and Sociological methods. The researcher contrary to penwill, has gone deep to ask why such rituals described therein were done and why they were done that way. Bearing in mind that Penwill wrote in 1951, the literature has undergone external influence and may not address changing situations. The customary law and customs of the tribe are bound to change. It is due to this time factor, changing situations and the gaps mentioned above that the present study compliments works like this one of Penwill.

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA

Table 1: Distribution of respondents and informants by age interval

Age	Parents		Youths		Pastors	Total
	Men	Women	Boys	Girls		
70 yrs & above	7 63.6%	3 27.3%	–	–	1 9.1%	11 100%
60 – 69 years	22 61.6%	10 27.8%	–	–	4 11.1%	36 100%
50 – 59 years	41 68.3%	12 20%	–	–	7 11.7%	60 100%
40 – 49 years	11 30.6%	20 55.6%	–	–	5 13.8%	36 100%
30 – 39 years	9 31%	8 27.6%	6 20.7%	6 20.7%	–	29 100%
18 – 29 years	7 18.4%	9 23.7%	8 21.1%	14 36.8%	–	38 100%
Total percentages	97 46.2%	62 29.5%	14 6.7%	20 9.5%	17 8.1%	210 100%

The statistics of the table above show that the greatest number of the participants in this research was married people. The young people also participated for they are the potential couples. Indeed some of the youths are undergoing preparations for marriage. Pastors are the marriage counsellors, the ministers and instructors and therefore their contribution is virtually important. There were also research assistants. An elderly man by the name David Mbuu was one of the chief informants.

To describe the frequency distribution technically the arithmetic mean was used to measure central tendency.

$$\text{Mean} = \frac{\text{sum of the scores}}{\text{Total number of scores}} \quad \text{or} \quad \bar{X} = \frac{\sum FX}{\sum}$$

We got the total sum of scores, the mid points and percentages.

Table 1b

Age	f	Mid points (x)	fx	X-x	(x-x) ²	%
70 yrs & above	11	74.5	819.5	27.32	746.3824	5.23
60 – 69 years	36	64.5	2322	17.342	299.9824	17.14
50 – 59 years	60	54.5	3270	7.32	53.5824	28.57
40 – 49 years	36	44.5	1602	-2.68	7.1824	17.14
30 – 39 years	29	34.5	1000.5	-12.68	160.7824	13.81
18 – 29 years	38	23.5	893	-23.68	560.7424	18.09
	∑f=210		∑fx=9907	12.92	1828.6544	100

$$\text{Percentage} = \frac{11}{210} \times 100 = 5.24\%, \frac{37}{210} \times 100 = 17.62\% \text{ etc}$$

$$\text{Mean} = x = \frac{\sum fx}{\sum f} = \frac{9907}{210} = 47.18$$

Using the mode as the measure of the central tendency, the simple visual inspection would give us 54.5 as the mean but mathematically, the man is 47.18 and mean age is between 40 – 49 years.

$$\text{The variance } S^2 = \frac{\sum(x-x)^2}{N} = \frac{1828.6544}{210} = 8.708$$

The most efficient measure of dispersion is the deviation (S.D). the formula for calculating the standard is S.D = $\sqrt{S^2} = \sqrt{8.708} = 2.95$

Measure of Dispersion of Respondents

The above calculations and illustrations show that the standard deviation (S.D) is far from the man (47.18) implying that the respondents were not from one age group, but they are scattered in age.

Distribution of Respondents based on their view on marital stability today

The question was on whether marriages are long lasting or last for a short time today. The question was closed and was meant to establish whether the problem of marital instability that is at the core of this study is real.

The Table 2 below Shows problems put forward by informants or/and respondents, problems believed to be causes of marital instability.

Question: What causes marital instability	Married people		Pastors	Youth		Professionals		Total
	Men	Women		Boys	Girls	Men	Women	
	N%	N%	N%	N%	N%	N%	N%	
1. Lack of preparation, elopement	16 26.2%	18 29.5%	5 3%	1 1.6%	2 3.3%	9 14.75%	10 16.4%	61
2. Economically well to do economically badly off	13 30.9%	7 16.7%	2 4.8%	1 2.3%	2 4.8%	9 21.4%	8 18%	42
3. Frequent of quarrels, fights and misunderstanding	27 50%	13 24%	1 1.8%	1 1.8%	1 1.8%	6 11%	5 9.3%	54
4. Unfaithfulness: Polygamy, concubinage, adultery and prostitution	14 40%	12 34.6%	1 2.8%	1 2.8%	1 2.8%	3 8.5%	2 5.7%	35
5. Drunkenness, drug addiction and neglecting the family	7 15.2%	9 19.6%	12 26%	-	-	8 17.4%	10 21.7%	46
6. lack of mutual love, respect and co-operation	3 27.3%	2 18.2%	-	-	-	4 36.4%	2 18.2%	11
7. Parental interference, parents want their sons, daughters to take care of them	3 23%	4 30.7%	1 7.6%	-	-	2 15.3%	2 15.3%	13

Key N = Number

The table above presents problems that are believed to cause marital instability in a summary from. One thorny problem that many informants vehemently believed to have brought marital instability is double homes. Such a problem is common today among employees. Mostly, one home is found in town where husband works. The more permanent home s in the rural areas where the unemployed wife lives with children. The husband comes home rarely, either goes to rural farm once or twice a year. Consequently, this brings about unfaithfulness. Informants (4%) also attributed marital instability to the spouse’s incompatibility. Three informants cite the lack of spouse’s assessment of the progress of their marriage as a cause of material instability. They argued that after marriage the partners mostly fail to follow up so as to make their marriage function properly. It should never be assumed that once spouses are married, they know all what marriage entails. The spouses need to constantly invest in enriching their marriage by learning through their everyday experiences in marriage, soliciting for advice and wise counsel of those who have passed through marriage or seeking professional advice from those with technical knowledge. Oral informants, who were 57%, supported all the reasons in the above table as causes of marital instability. They added also other factors namely laziness, failure to be satisfied by marital things, lack of tolerance and forgiveness, forced marriages especially where a boy has to marry a girl because he has impregnated her, involvement of third parties who peddle words of hearsay and rumour mongering.

Distribution of respondents in relation to the presence of dependant children as a barrier to marital instability

We asked whether the presence of young children contribute to life or unhappy marriage.

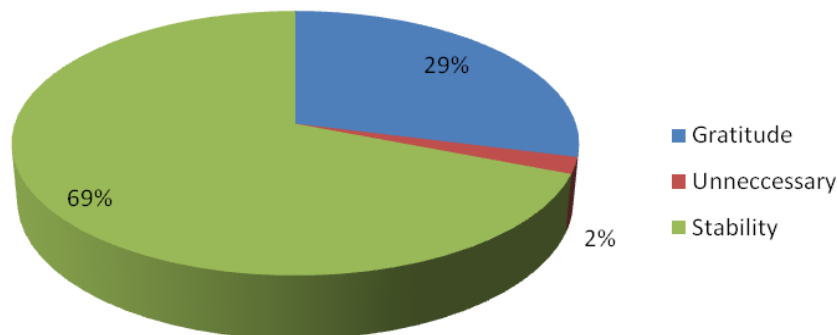
Table 3

Respondents	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Total
Men	12	11	13	1	-	27
Women	9	31	-	-	-	40
Pastors	4	1	-	-	-	5
Total	25	43		1	-	72

The table depicts the situation where women seem to have a lot of love for their children. The women respondents greatly expressed that it is probable for a childless wife to divorce than a mother regardless of the magnitude of marital problems.

Distribution of respondents with regard to their views on the importance of bride wealth of marital stability

Figure 1



Out of 96 respondents 69% said that bride wealth greatly contributed to marital stability and 29% said it is a sign of gratitude to the girl’s parents. Generally both reasons were given by 90% of the respondents. Out of 96 respondents only two differed from the rest and said that bride wealth need to be replaced with contribution from the two families. 95 % of oral informants said that bride wealth is a major stabilizer of marriage and it is also for gratitude to parents. It need to be preserved but with modification to suit our times. 2% said that the practice is outdated.

51 parents out of 62 expressed their desire to have their children’s marriage blessed in the church. 17% said that the children should be free to choose which type of marriage they want to adopt. Seven pastors expressed that marriages blessed in the church are long lasting. This is because those who are married in the church do not use what we call ‘come-we-stay’ method of marriage but involve parents and other members from their kinship and are counseled and advised on expectations of married life.

Time factor and Marital Stability

The hypothesis is the longer the marriage the lesser is the chances of its dissolution. The question asked was meant to establish how long partners have stayed together.

Table 4

Duration of marriage	Still together	One partner dead	Divorced	Separated	Total
30 years and above	20 76.9%	1 3.8%	2 7.6%	3 11.5%	26
20 – 29 years	10 58.8%	3 17.6%	2 11.8%	2 11.8%	17
10 – 19 years	13 52%	2 8%	4 16%	6 24%	25
1 – 9 years	11 40.7%	4 14.8%	3 11.1%	9 33.3%	27

79% of the informants told the researcher that for the couples that have lived together for over 30 years; they are not likely to separate. They have already gotten used to staying together. They also overwhelmingly expressed the need of incorporating our tradition in marriage to redeem the institution of marriage from further abuse, ridicule and collapse. One informant told the researcher that the young people getting married nowadays ought to take seriously the advice of elders.

Parental involvement and marital stability

The question was asked whether there is any relationship between parental involvement in preparation of offspring’s marriages and family stability of the offspring’s marriage. The hypothesis; there is significant relationship between the parental involvement in their offspring marriages and the stability of the offspring marriages.

Table 5

Strongly agree	agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Undecided	Spoilt	Total
55 67.1%	-	10 12.2%	15 18.3%	-	2 2.43%	82 100%

The statement that there is significant relationship between parental involvements in their offspring’s marriage was proved right. The respondents and oral informants strongly argued that neglecting parents’ involvement in preparation for their offspring marriage is one of the major reasons for marital instability. People ignore their parents nowadays because after being educated and getting money they have a feeling that they can decide on all issues by themselves including marriage. It is only after getting into problems that they go back to their parents for advice. The attitude of youth to marriage was described by parents in the following words: that the youth prefer trial marriages many young men are not serious; some young people prefer to remain single due to uncertainties in marriages. As for the reasons preventing young people from marrying in the church, informants (mostly parents and pastors) gave the following reasons: wedding costs are too high; youth prefer doing things by themselves, a great number of the young people prefer trial marriages and lack of religious foundation from parents.

The respondents (parents, elders, pastors) in responding to the question on traditional marriages being more stable said the following; that the time for marriage preparation, betrothal and courtship – was long. That negotiation period allowed members of the two families or clans to know each other well; the character of the person to be married mattered more than other considerations emphasized today like material wealth and ones physical appearance.

Interpretation and critique of the data

The statistical data as presented has shown that married people dominate this study. Table 1 measured the distributions of the respondents and informants by age interval. The 4-point likert type scale was used for the measurement with actual scores showing a range between 18 years and 98 years. Respondent’s view on marital stability was also measured. We also measured the stability of traditional marriage in the past by using the same table. The date showed that generally, modern marriage is unstable.

The data on the stability of marriages showed the traditional marriages were firm and stable than modern marriages. The researcher also wanted to know why marriages are not long lasting. The table 2 presents some of the reasons informants gave as the causes of marital instability. This list is expounded where the researcher gives reasons the oral informants added besides those given in the table.

Cultural and religious beliefs are greatly related to marital stability

The people's religious beliefs and practices as exercised in traditional family institution undoubtedly served to uphold the sanctity of marriage. The social obligation to marry and raise in a family and the ritual process that one underwent during preparation for marriage, no doubt served as a means against divorce and separation. The traditional social sanctions like taboos, nurses and blessings are not as effective as they used to be in the past. Lack of preparation in marriage and the spouses' failure to involve religious guidance in their family were mentioned among the major causes of marital instability (Table 2). Traditionally marriage was highly valued and proper preparation was done before one could enter into this sacred institution. Earlier we enumerated steps one had to undergo during preparation for marriage. Preparation started long before the actual marriage. It started with actual physical birth, for an individual within the society was called to self-fulfillment and completeness in marriage. Each step was marked with rituals, thus making marriage not only desirable but also ritually clean institution.

The naming ceremony was the initial step. The initiation followed after seven to ten years. The naming makes a Mukamba a social being and cut him from the spirit world. The initiation rites prepared the Akamba youth both for marriage and life within society. The rites also introduced youth to matters of sex, marriage, procreation and family life. (Mbiti, 1969:123-125). Magesa expresses also that marriage and other legal sexual unions are meant to ensure procreation and the preservation of life, which is reorganized with great intensity by African religion. (1997:126). Mbiti says that some societies performed religious rites to bless couples and wish them prosperity and children. He says this is done either on the wedding day or after a child has been born out of a given union. (1973:120).

Marital satisfaction and marital stability

Erroneously many people hold the view that marital stability is brought about by material satisfaction, economic security, decent eating, good housing, nice car and so on. Marriage cannot be commercialized; material security is only a small portion of what constitutes a happy marriage. The factors that mainly bring marital disruption are unfaithfulness; lack of love, quarreling, impotence and other factors related to sex, the spouses' attitude towards sex, general cleanliness, and sexual gratification. These factors are compressed in table 2. These details were given by oral informants as the real problems though they are seldom brought to public. People normally use euphemisms or normally mention the symptoms.

Premarital and extramarital sexual permissiveness are dangerous to marital instability

According to Gilbert Emonyi premarital and extra marital sex has several consequences namely; that the action leaves a permanent scar on the mind of the person concerned; in many societies a woman who indulges in premarital sex is shunned by people (especially men. Sometimes it forces an individual into a marriage that he or she does not really desire. A spouse with outside sexual experience will often compare his/her mate with a former lover. A person may get married yet continue indulging in sexual affairs with an ex-mate. It often leads to pregnancy, hence abortions which can be psychologically and physically traumatic to a woman; it is often a bias to STDs, HIV and AIDS which affects reproductive organs of an individual and it can lead to childlessness or death in the case of AIDS. (1997:19-20).

Although premarital sexual relations were permitted in some African societies, people were encouraged to be responsible of their actions. As Magesa says:

“...ethnic groups, such as the Nuers, the Azande and to a lesser extent among the Kgutla, full sexual intercourse before marriage was not frowned upon as long as it did not result in pregnancy”. (1997:126).

Among the Akamba, Gikuyu, Luo and others pre-marital sex was not encouraged. Loss of virginity before marriage was looked upon as something ignominious and worse still, it lowered the brides' status on the day of her marriage. Extramarital sexual permissiveness has been termed as unfaithfulness in marriage in table 2.

Bride wealth and marital stability

Elders and parents explained that traditionally bride was seen as an open token of gratitude from the family and the clan of the boy to the family and clan of the girl also for allowing her to become a wife in that given family. These gifts were given over a long period of time. The paying of bride wealth is therefore a process rather than a single event. It was in bride wealth that every individual of the extended family and clan became involved in a given marriage. Earlier on we saw that once the ritual connected with bride price were performed, that is, the ritual of sexual intercourse, the beer drinking, the girl belonged to the fiance's family. Bride wealth was therefore looked upon as one of the major stabilizers of Akamba marriages. Bride wealth as practiced today was mentioned as a major impediment to church marriages. This view was strongly opposed by the youth because of its commercialized nature. Elders, parents and pastors also said that bride wealth has become much more commercialized and lost its original role and meaning in marriage.

The parents explained that the traditional cultural context of bride wealth had everything to admire. Bride wealth was a seal of marriage. The process of giving bride price in installments helped in uniting more closely the two extended families, lineages and clans. The more often the gifts were taken to the girl's family, the more chances the families had for meeting and getting to know each other better. Through paying bride wealth, friendships were formed and gifts became in a way a seal over marriage covenant. The man who paid bride wealth was the social father of children, so bride was not only a seal of marriage bond but affirmed the rights of children in a family. Bride wealth needs to be incorporated in contemporary marriages with a renewed meaning devoid of the abuses it has undergone.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

Statistical data has proved that traditional marriages were more stable than modern-day marriages. It has been proven that proper preparation was given in traditional marriages. In modern marriage, lack of proper preparation was the key reason for the cause of marital instability. One basic point was that marriage was not complete among the Akamba until the fruit of marriage was seen. This is why the Akamba sanctioned unions such as *maweto*, child and ghost marriages. The society valued children, for it was a ware that if children were not born, this meant death to the society. For the sake of social continuity and the Mukamba being at pains trying to capture his 'lost immortality' he looked for ways and means of stabilizing this institution. This is where social sanctions like bride wealth, taboos, curses and other forms become important. In brief, the main objectives for this paper have been fairly achieved. First, some positive aspects of traditional marriage that be utilized or incorporated into Christian marriage have been identified. Secondly, the causes of marital instability have been established. The emphasis on the need for proper pre-marital preparation, instruction involving all stakeholders has been laid. It is this emphasis of integrating traditional values and modern practices that forms part if this chapter.

According to the findings of this study the following recommendations are put forward as suitable and concrete proposals for forming an inculturated Akamba –Christian celebration of matrimony. Marriage is a strong Christian institution and the Church has every right to strengthen it and not undermine it. The role of the church is to guide, strengthen and build the institution. Therefore the Church has to work in close consultation and harmony with the culture but not in opposition to it. Whatever else is spiritually possible has to be done to bridge the gap between customary celebration of marriage and Christian celebration. Christian marriage today needs to inspire stability within the family structure. Modern marriages have to be stable so as to cope with the changing social structures. The proposed new approach to marriage entails reconstruction or revitalization of a community of faith in which all members are committed to a well functioning institution of marriage. Everyone is encouraged to get involved in this undertaking of preserving and promoting the sanctity of marriage.

Lastly, the paper has attempted to present the findings of the study in a summary form. Also a number of recommendations have been put forward. These recommendations are vital for enriching the Akamba Christian marriage and African Christian marriage at large. The new approach to marriages recommended through the findings of this study envisages incorporation of relevant and useful values from the traditional Akamba marriage into the Christian marriage. It is expected that this new approach if properly followed, it will undoubtedly bring a refreshingly desirable change in many marriages celebrated in the church with a view to making such marriages stable.

REFERENCES

- Emonyi, G., Preparing Yourself for Marriage, Nairobi: Uzima Press, 1997.
- Goode, William J., Readings of Family and Society, New Jersey Prentice Hall Inc., 1964.
- Hobley, C.W., EThonlogy of Akamba and other East African Tribes, Cambridge: 1910
- Kimamba, I.N., and Temu, A.j., A History of Tanzania, Nairobi: East African Publishing house, 1969.
- Kisembo et. al., African Christian Marriage, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1977
- Kraph, J.L. Travels, Researchers and Missionary Labours During eighteen years residence in East Africa, London: 1886.
- Leslie, Gerald R., The Family in Social Context, New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.
- Lindbolm Gerhard, The Akamba of British Eastern Africa, Upsalla, Appelbergs Boktryckeri Aktiebolag, 1928.
- Lonergan, Bernard J.F., Method in Theology, Toronto : USA, University of Toronto Press, 1953.
- Magesa, L., African Religion. The Moral Tradition of Abundant Life, Nairobi: paulines Publications Africa, 1998.
- Mbiti, John S., African Religion and Philosophy, London and Nairobi: Heinemann, 1969
- _____, New Testament Eschatology in an African Background, London: Oxford University Press, 1971
- _____, Love and Marriage in Africa, Nairobi: Heinemann, 1973.
- _____, The Crisis of Missions in Africa, Mukumu: Uganda Church Press, 1971.
- McIntosh, B.G., (ed) The Eastern bantu Peoples in Zamani: A Survey of Eastern African History, Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1968.
- Munro, Forbes, J., Colonial Rule and the Akamba, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975.
- Musharhamina, M.C., Traditional African Marriage and Christian Marriage, Kampala: St. paul Publications, 1985.
- Ndeti. K. Elements of Akamba Life, Nairobi East Africa Publishing House, 1972
- Penwill, D.J., Kamba Customary Law, London: Macmillan, 1957.
- Shorter, A. East African Societies, Maryknoll, New York, Orbis Books, 1971
- _____, African culture and Christian Church, London: Geoffrey Clapman, 1973.
- _____, Church and Marriage in East Africa, 1973
- Stephens, William, The Family in Cross-cultural perspective, New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987.
- Strong, Bryan et.al., The Marriage in African Experience, New York: West Publishing Company, 1977.

PERIODICALS

- Charles Dundas, "History of Kitui", In journal of Royal Anthropological Institute, Vol. 33, 1913.
- Cumming Robert J., "The Early Development of Akamba Local Trade History, C. 1780 – 1820" in Kenya Historical Review, The Journal of the Historical Association of Kenya, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1976.