THE MANDALA OF A MARKET:

A STUDY OF CAPITALISM AND THE STATE IN
MURANG'A DISTRICT, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

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This study takes the market-place as a focus for looking at the changes which have taken place during the course of this century in relation to the development of the state and capitalism. The market-place is viewed in terms of the relationships between four main trading groups. These are maize and beans, clothes and manufactured goods, fruits and vegetables, and livestock and bananas. The first section of each chapter begins by locating each trading group in terms of its demographic and economic features; gender, age, marriage status, education, church membership, capital, scources of capital, mobility, assets investments and so forth. It then develops the characteristics which individuate each group with reference to cultural and historical data from the community of which the market is a part.

Together, the data from the market and from the surrounding community allow the uncovering of four ontological perpectives each with a dominant ethos and dynamic. The next two sections of each chapter utilise these four ontologies as theoretical frames from which to examine the processes of state and capitalist development in the areas in which the market is located. Each chapter finishes by returning to the market-place where the ontological dynamics which have emerged are contextualised in the transformative process of action and agency in the lives of individuals.

The treatment of the market as a site of ontological resonance allows for the development of a set of theoretical models which are informed both by my own background and anthropological understandings and by the understandings of the people among whom my fieldwork was based. This leads to a theoretical framework which goes some way towards transcending the dichotomies of theory and practice, of objectivity and subjectivity, with which social anthropology has, for sometime, been concerned.

In addition, the holistic nature of the ontologies which I uncover allows me to account for their power to shape historical action. This leads me to a critique of some currents in postmodernist anthropology which, in deconstructing cultural and theoretical 'wholes', often fail to deal with powerfulness of human experience and action in the world. At the same time the plurality of the ontological constructs which have emerged through my research has led me to avoid taking an essentialist view of the relationship between system and subject and hence of the process of state and capitalist development. I understand the properties of both holism and plurality at the level of ontology to stem from its connection to an overall principle of the universal. It is the invocation of this principle which informs the analysis, subject matter and method of my thesis.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is dedicated to my mother and my father and to all those who participated in the research.

GLOSSARY

baba: father (of)

biashara: business

cucu: grandmother (of)

debe: cooking fat tin

githaka, ithaka (pl): uncleared land

guka: grandfather (of)

gurario: thanks-giving feast, part of marriage
    proceedings

harambee: self-help group or fund-raising

ikundi: self-help group which is not just associated with
        money

kiama, ciama (pl): council of elders

kiondo, ciondo (pl): basket

mama: mother (of)

maraya: prostitute

matatu: minibus-taxi

mbari: subclan

mdoze: boss

misheni: mishion boys

mugunda, migunda (pl): farms/gardens

muthamaki, athamaki: important person

mutonga: rich or fat person.

muiritu, airitu (pl): young woman

mwanake, anake (pl): young man

nyumba: hut/home

riika, mariika (pl): age grade

rungu: club

ruracio: bridewealth

shamba: farm/garden

sukuma: type of green vegetable

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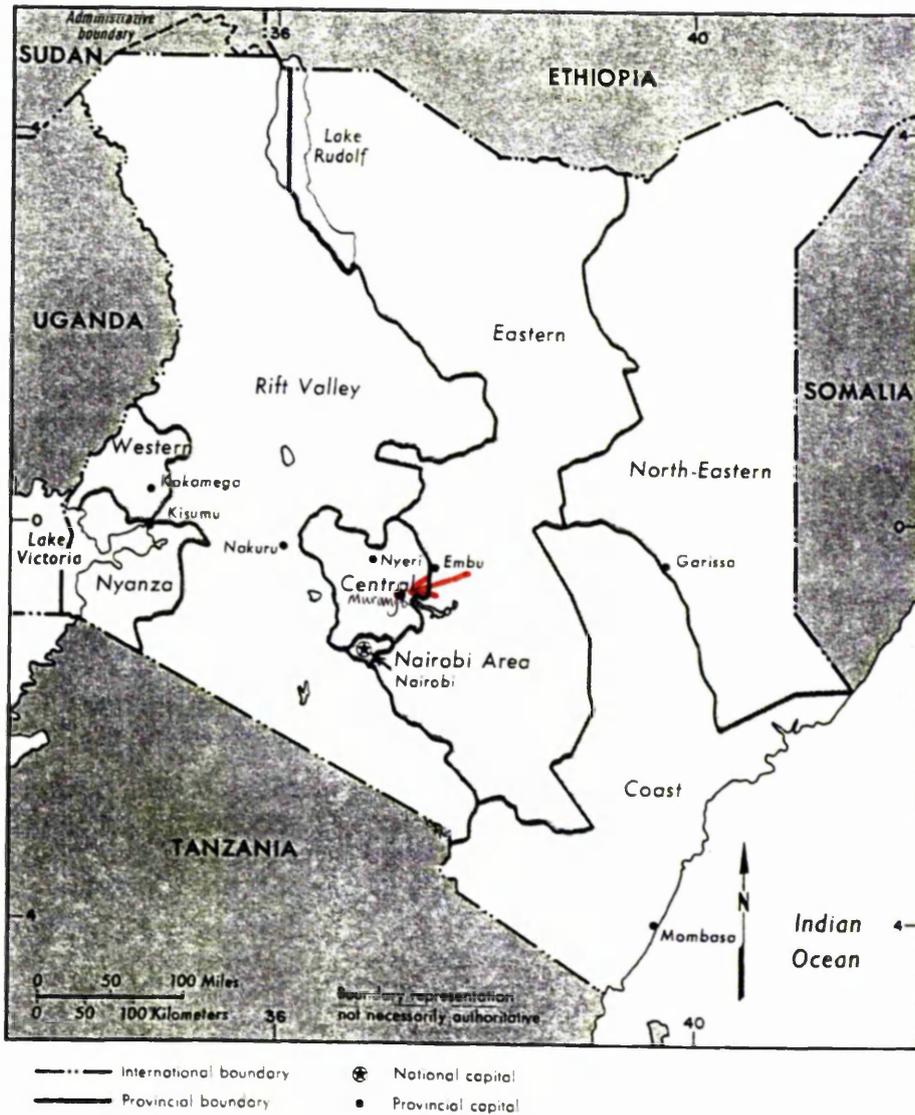
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MYSELF AND MAMA MUREGE, A MAIZE
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INTRODUCTION

'How did we plan this ndumo and not sing?'

SECTION 1: THE INSPIRATION BEHIND THE STUDY

This thesis is a study of the development of capitalism and the state in Kenya. The study is centred in a rural market-place in Murang'a district which is a Kikuyu speaking area in Central Province and is located about 80 kilometres from the capital, Nairobi. The dynamics of the market-place provide a lattice through which to understand the distinctive developments of state and capitalism in Kenya and, more importantly, to see how these have shaped and are shaped by the lives of the people therein. The study is both descriptive and theoretical where the theoretical models are developed with reference to the ways in which the state and capitalism have been constructed in a particular spatial and temporal context; in this case with reference to Kikuyu speaking peoples. In uncovering theoretical models of the state and capitalism as they have emerged at a micro level from the ontological engagements of persons in their lives, the study also proposes a general theory of action and suggests that this may be brought to bear on an understanding of human relationships to their worlds.

I chose to do a PhD on Kenya because I am Kenyan, born in Nairobi in the first decade of Independence after Kenya had become a new nation-state. To be Kenyan is, from the start, to be part of a plural identity where plurality has become a distinguishing feature of Kenyan nationalism which is expressed among other things through the politics of ethnic difference.

      "Nairobi is a half-caste city"
a young man said to me. He was half Kamba half Kikuyu. I myself am, by blood, half East African-Asian, and half English.

Increasingly, especially in metropolitan cultures, people must deal with a plural sense of themselves which is integral to their identity defined in relation to the great force-fields of our age which include nationalism, race and ethnicity. At the same time as the experience of plurality at the heart of identities such as nationality (Black-British, Asian-Canadian and so forth) there is a corresponding quest for what might be termed 'authenticity'. Authenticity is an experience of wholeness, of rootedness, of

depth, of power and empowerment. It is all the more consciously sought because of the way in which plurality is often experienced as fragmentation[1]. The question of how we can reconcile our sense of 'routes' with our sense of 'roots' (Gilroy 1992) is a burning issue of the contemporary age.

I) HOMOGENEITY AND DIFFERENCE IN THE GLOBALISATION OF MODERNITY

It was in relation to the experience of plurality and the quest for authenticity in the context of being Kenyan that I decided to focus on the nation-state and capitalism. The globalisation of state and capitalist development situated Kenya within a discourse of 'modernity' which described at once that which connected a newly imagined 'Kenya' to the rest of the world and at the same

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[1] Charles Taylor (1991) has written on the relationship between plurality and authenticity in the context of 'modernity'. Taylor describes authenticity as a specifically modern quest. Authenticity, according to Taylor, comes from a need to define one's subjectivity from within. Difference is a primary value of a culture of authenticity since it premises that each individual is unique and must discover their own uniqueness. Thus in many ways a culture of authenticity has produced a culture where forms of difference proliferate. However difference does not exist and cannot exist in isolation. It is meaningless unless it exists within a shared cultural frame where it becomes *different from* something else. The construction of difference and the construction of the whole from which it emerges is a dialogical process and is thus inherently social.
To experience a sense of authenticity in the context of 'modernity' is thus to connect with horizons of being which define both the uniqueness of self and the relationship between self and others. This connection not only counters an experience of difference as fragmenting, but also directs the project of asserting difference towards a shared project which may be undertaken consciously with others. In this way the quest for authenticity becomes a moral project which deals ultimately with the discovery of common values. This in turn may be empowering of collective action and has implications for the formulation of a politics from below in the context of democratic states.
Authenticity is often confused with narcissism and thus seen to encourage social trends such as atomism and instrumental reason. However Taylor's argument stresses the inherently social and collective nature of authenticity. Relationality, argues Taylor, does not negate authenticity. This is because an experience of authenticity is attained through the connectivity to horizons and wholes within which that relationality actively takes place rather than being attained through a narcissistic focus on the self. Like authenticity, political structures such as democracy have been weakened in relation to the counter possibilities which a culture of 'modernity' presupposes. However the innate properties of authenticity and democracy do not, in Taylor's view, automatically imply a political culture based on atomism, narcissism, and instrumental reason.

time illuminated the manner in which Kenya has asserted its difference. Thus to focus on nation-state and capitalism provided an axis from which to look at experiences of difference and holism in relation to being Kenyan and in relation to the world.

In the context of 'modernity', the relationship between difference and universality addresses itself among other things to the extent to which the globalisation of structures such as the nation-state and capitalism have subsumed local societies and have led to cultural homogenisation. This is not only of relevance to Kenya in terms of its situation within a global political economy, but also of relevance to anthropology which has traditionally constructed itself as a study of cultural difference (see Parkin 1993). In this context the question must be addressed of whether or not the globalisation of 'modernity' has led to the homogenisation of cultures. If on the contrary, difference can be seen to be proliferating in direct relation to the structures of capitalism and the state, then what implications does this have not only for our understanding of the nature of capitalism and state development, but for our understanding of 'modernity' itself?[2]

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[2] Several theorists, including Harvey (1989) Miller (1987), have argued that the proliferation of difference in relation to globalisation is a direct product of capitalist development. Miller for instance looks at the way in which a shift in global capitalism from production to consumption leads to a proliferation of cultural difference as a result of the proliferation of commodities. The emphasis of cultural difference is an off shoot of this because of the specific relationship which capitalism engenders between persons and things: the act of consumption, argues Miller, involves a definition of personhood in terms of an identification with a series of reference points which are embodied in the thing consumed. Thus, in the dialectical relationship between goods and persons, ever-expanding ranges of goods generate ever-diversifying expressions of social identity and vice-versa; capitalism itself produces diversity.
Others argue that the plurality of 'modernity' results from the fact that capitalism itself is
"inherently conflictual and changeful, incapable of realising or of stabilising itself" (O'Hanlon and Washbrook (1992) cited in Vaughan 1993).
Vaughan continues;
"Unable to pervade or exhaust all human experience, modern capitalism then produces strategies of 'resistance emancipation and difference'."
Marshal Sahlins on the other hand, argues that it is the interaction between global capitalism and local culture which produces difference. It is not culture which is subsumed but rather capitalism itself: For Sahlins, of key importance is the way in which
"indigenous peoples strive to integrate the world system into something which is logically and ontologically more inclusive: their system of the world." (Sahlins 1988).

Beyond this, the proliferation of cultural difference in relation to the hegemonic power of the state and capitalism raises questions as to the power of social systems to constitute social subjects and of the capacity of agency and action, often structured through cultural forms, to transform social constructs such as capitalism and the state. This issue is of central relevance to the Kenyan experience of state and capitalism where the assertion of difference and the mobilisation of cultural constructs become the means through which individuals transform and control the hegemonic structures of capitalism and state which otherwise threaten to subsume them.

II) CENTRE AND PERIPHERY IN THE GLOBALISATION OF MODERNITY

In the context of 'modernity', the tension between plurality and authenticity both within and between nations is compounded by the tension between 'centre' and 'periphery' to produce a global discourse of power. Dominant discourses turn easily into discourses of dominance thus rendering the experience of plurality again into one of disempowerment or fragmentation rather than the opposite. In the constructs of 'First' and 'Third' world' for example, the plurality of historicity and of the inter-relationships between nations is negated (see Haugerud 1995 and Bayart 1993). These two caricatures which have emerged in the definition of centre and periphery, dominance and subordination, have come to assume global proportions.

The projection of dominance and subordination as binary and global, negates the reality and importance of difference in the operation of material and political power and certainly negates a discussion of individual empowerment. One illustration of the subsumption of plurality within dualisms of dominance is that the image of the starving woman and child has come to define half the globe: as Vigdis Broch-Due remarks

> "This is an image which resonates within a long-standing European tradition of poverty imagery in which women and children are powerless, dependent and therefore innocent- absolute victims worthy of our pity and aid...It goes without saying that in many African contexts, women are not the poorest of the

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The interaction of capitalism with culture according to Sahlins would explain why capitalism has taken root with such speed in some parts of the globe whilst it has been staunchly resisted in others.

poor and may in fact have central roles in the local
economy." (Broch-Due 1995;1)

Concepts of power defined in relation to the dominant fictions of
our age are rife with paradox in relation to the experiences of
individuals. Furthermore they may often engender the inequalities
which they seek to define. In relation to gender for example there
is a paradox which became evident to me in a discussion with
Sheila Wamahiu, a lecturer at Kenyatta University. We were both
struck by the fact that Kenyan women are often conceptualised in
(Western) academic discourses as 'exploited'. However many of
these women, particularly Kikuyu women, seem on the contrary to
exhibit a strong sense of empowerment. Dubisch comments on a
similar situation in classical Greece;

> "many Greek women seem to possess a strength of
> character and a firm sense of self in what to the
> outside observer seems a restrictive society."
> (Dubisch 1986:31).

Images of the so called 'oppressed' defined in relation to
dualistic categorisations of experience, far from exposing the
pernicious injustices of power serve rather to mask a real
understanding of power and even to contribute to the
'powerlessness' of those who are portrayed in this way. Patricia
Stamp comments on this again in relation to perceptions about
women and the 'Third world':

> "Especially in the third world, women have been
> treated as passive targets of oppressive practices and
> discriminatory structures. Such a conceptualisation,
> far from contributing to women's emancipation,
> colludes with existing ideologies that construct women
> as naturally inferior, passive, and consigned to a
> private a-political world." (Stamp 1991;825).

These paradoxes call into question a consideration of power based
solely on material or political parameters. People may become more
individually 'empowered' when they are economically or politically
oppressed, and indeed the opposite may also be the case. This is
not to deny considerations of power as imposition of force and so
forth, it is rather to provide a broader understanding of power
which redeems the quality of experience even when it is subject to
'subjection'[3].

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[3] Broch-Due makes a similar point in relation to discourses of
poverty in the context of 'modernity'. Poverty, he writes, is
defined as,
"a thing of coins and calories and nothing more. That is so
because economists and their models dominate the discourse of
development." (Broch-Due 1995;1).

In this light I felt it necessary to attempt an understanding of
power which transcended the dualism of dominance/subordination and
to address a more general notion of power and empowerment in the
context of human action. I went back to looking at questions of
being and authenticity. What is it that empowers individuals and
societies in relation to their experience of the world? Or at what
moments are they empowered? These questions are of central
importance, especially when considering the nature of material and
political inequalities. They may also help to explain how
individuals who are categorised as 'exploited' may yet possess the
capacity for powerful and radical forms of action and may possess
a greater sense of dignity and personal empowerment than those who
are supposedly in positions of dominance over them. This has
applicability not only to the situation of women in many parts of
the world but also to the construct of First/Third world and its
concomitant realities.[4]

Such a simplified concept of poverty may in fact hinder attempts
to address the real issues involved and may thus distort attempts
to alleviate suffering.

[4] In providing a broader understanding of power it may be possible
to challenge some of the ways in which inequality and injustice
are in fact perpetuated through ascribing to a dualistic model of
power. The essentialisation of difference in the context of a
dualistic understanding of power is not simply a conceptual
process. It has become a destructive and operational reality of
our world. It is within a discourse of dominance/subordination for
instance that the Aid game between 'West' and 'Third World' is
engaged. (Aid incidentally, in the layman's terms, is deliberately
conflated in Kenya with the scourge of AIDS, both of which are
seen to stem from the West and to be debilitating of Kenyan
people.) In the context of Aid, the palliatives offered through
governments and Non Governmental Organisations to remedy the
realities of exploitation do nothing to address political and
economic difficulties which continue to persist, and in fact these
may mask the real mechanisms of exploitation which are inscribed
in 'First' and 'Third' worlds alike.
"The alternative to development politics is not debates about
ideological questions but individualism and despair. Apathy is
found especially in areas where highly centralised patronage
systems coincide with low levels of agricultural surpluses and is
connected to the experiences of dependence upon purely external
resources and over reliance on a handful of patrons to capture
them and distribute them. Contrary to what might be expected from
much of the academic literature, the role of NGO'S has probably
strengthened rather than weakened these tendencies." (Kanyingi in
Gibbon (ed) 1992;118)
By contrast, addressing issues such as control of global
investment and terms of trade among what must be considered as
'co-subjects' (Fabian 1991) could work both for the mutual
benefits of the partners involved and in the process alleviate a
situation which has worsened through a discourse of
domination/subordination, the remedy for which has all to easily
been accepted in the form of a dubious philanthropy. It is hoped

III) HOLISM AND DIFFERENCE IN ACTION AND EMPOWERMENT

It is out of the experience of pluralism and authenticity in the context of 'modernity' that I have been led to look at the importance of both relationality and holism as fundamental components of human action and of the relationship between the two as generative of power. Power may be seen to emerge in the antagonistic and differentiating nature of constructions (this is explored in the work of Michel Foucault). Once difference itself is essentialised and subsumed into dualistic antagonisms power becomes a totalitarian force which is negative not positive. However power may also be seen to emerge in the ability to engage with that which transcends the differentiating nature of construction; to engage with the horizons of being wherein difference is resolved in relation to the principle of the whole. In this light, the quest for authenticity may be viewed as an attempt to engage with experience of holism.

In dealing with power I was led to ask the question of what, if anything, motivates or compels human action and how is this constitutive of and constituted by the constructs which form the realities of our worlds. It is to this end that I am concerned with the concept of holism. Engagements with the whole may be seen to be operational in the 'transcendent' dimensions of human action. At the level of the social, these dimensions present themselves in the form of ontologies. Ontologies are constituted through social interaction and may be understood as dynamic models of the relationship between holism and difference.

Along with Kapferer, I view ontologies to be fundamental to the nature and power of human action in the world. In this study, I explore relationships to the state and capitalism in terms of four ontological dynamics. In engaging ontological dynamics in their lives, individuals actively transform and are transformed by constructs such as capitalism and the state. Thus an exploration of ontology is fundamental not only to an understanding of the nature of state and capitalist development and the significance

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that a project which aims to address pluralism and authenticity and the nature of power, especially in the context of the globalised structures of nation-state and capitalism, will not only serve to de-centre some of the cruder fictions through which the experiences of individuals in places such as Kenya are currently understood, but will also open up potential avenues to challenge the power of these fictions to constrain the lives of individuals therein.

which these have achieved in peoples lives. It is also fundamental to an understanding of agency and power.

Ontologies encode foundational dynamics which are realised in both people's ideational and practical realities. Ontologies thus inform people's theoretical understandings of their worlds as well as being engaged through action. This is true of anthropological practice and theory as much as it is true of the practices and theories which anthropologists study. Thus rather than imposing on my data theoretical constructs which have derived from ontological models that have developed elsewhere, I have based my analysis of the state and capitalism in Murang'a district upon ontological models which have emerged from the situation wherein they were explored.

Thus this thesis has two overall aims. Firstly it attempts to understand state and capitalist development organically through theoretical models which emerge from the ontological engagements of persons in a particular context. Secondly it attempts to convey the power which individuals may command through the transcendent dimensions of action of which engagements with ontology form a part. In both these respects, the thesis aims to re-centre an analysis of state and capitalist development in Kenya with reference to theories and practices which have emerged in the Kenyan context rather than those which are imposed from outside. In so doing, the thesis aims to contribute to a global understanding of 'modernity' and to propose a general theory of action and power in the context of humanity.

SUMMARY OF THE INTRODUCTION

The introduction to this thesis is primarily concerned to explore the relationship between holism and difference and the nature of power. In section one of the introduction I have discussed the reasons for my interest in these themes in relation to my own experience of being Kenyan.

Section two sets out the parameters of the study in terms of its general argument and subject matter at a macro level. The discussion emphasises the *plurality* of 'modernity' in terms of its constitution within a *framework* of state and capitalist development. I argue that the development of the state and capitalism cannot be understood with reference to an overall model because of the manner in which both the state and capitalism are structured in an historical setting. In the Kenyan situation,

gender and communal identity in particular have been integral to the construction of the state and capitalism. These factors must therefore be analysed in order to account for the specificity of the Kenyan context in terms of its situation within a global framework of 'modernity'. An analysis of constructs such as gender and communal identity is also crucial to an understanding of agency and empowerment in terms of the ways in which individuals may transform and engage with the constructs of capitalism and the state.

Section three of the introduction explores holism and difference in relation to action and ontology. I look at the way in which action may be understood as oriented ultimately to the transcendence of the experience of differentiation. The transcendent dimension of action is creative of categories of difference and engenders their resolution in relation to the whole. As human beings, we are inherently social. Action is thus primarily social and interactive. At the level of the social, the transcendent emerges in socially created models of the engendering and resolution of difference. These I term ontologies. This section ends by looking at the ways in which engagements with ontologies may empower action in the context of the world with particular reference to the subject matter of the ethnography.

Section four of the introduction relates my discussion of holism and difference in human action to the specific instance of anthropological practice. I briefly summarise the main trends in anthropology as they relate to present concerns within the discipline. I look at the legacy of the deconstructionist critique of anthropological practice in view of a return to the search for universals. I discuss this in relation to recent debates around the notion of comparison in anthropology. I then move on to consider the model of alchemy in terms of its specific concern with relationality, with subject and object, and with holism. I suggest that alchemy, as an alternative model of enquiry which has preceded and existed along side modern science, may offer a way forward in anthropology. Section five on the mandala offers a methodological suggestion for the incorporation of some of the precepts of alchemy in the practice of anthropology. It is through the use of the mandala that I have been able to uncover the ontological models which provide the theoretical constructs through which my analysis of capitalism and the state has been effected.

The introduction closes with a brief description of the setting and of the overall lay~out of the ethnography.

SECTION 2: 'MOVING THE CENTRE' [5]

> "The debate on what it was to be a man or a woman defined more than any other what it was to be Kikuyu."
> (Lonsdale 1992;315)

The universality of capitalism and the structure of the nation-state have often been cited as the key parameters which make possible a global discourse on 'modernity'. This study which focuses on Kenya with particular reference to the development of the state and capitalism, places Kenya within a global discourse and at the same time challenges the parameters of this discourse in relation to the distinctiveness of the Kenyan context. The study highlights the contradictions which have emerged from the relationship between capitalism and the state in Kenya and suggests that these contradictions have structurally connected capitalist and state development to other factors such as communal identity, gender, and micro-level relations of kinship and alliance. These latter now form an integral part of the manner in which both capitalism and the state are structurally operational in society at large. In looking at these factors, the study aims to understand the workings of capitalism and state at a more general level and to highlight the importance of individual agency in the transformation of these structures.

I) THE PARAMETERS OF THE STUDY

I chose to focus on a Kikuyu-speaking area of Kenya in part because the historical engagement of the Kikuyu with the nation-state and capitalist development has arguably been, in the span of a single life-time, one of the most powerful anywhere in the world. Their engagement with the state and capitalism places the Kikuyu at the 'centre' in relation to these concerns and in this sense their experiences both amplify and re-define a global discourse of 'modernity'.

The centrality of the Kikuyu experience of 'modernity' stems from their unique historical engagement. From the turn of the century the Kikuyu became intimately involved with the development of the state and capitalism in Kenya through their relationships with the

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[5] The reference here is to a book of the same title by the Kenyan academic/author Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1993).

colonial regime. The Kikuyu were well placed geographically in terms of their proximity to Nairobi and in terms of their occupation of some of the most fertile agricultural land in Kenya to ensure that they would be brought into close engagement with the colonial government, the white settler farmers and also the missions which were connected to both.

The income generating opportunities offered by the state and the development of infrastructure opened up Kikuyu enterprise principally through (male) investments in farming and (female) investments in urban property. At the same time, particularly in relation to land and agriculture, the state curtailed Kikuyu enterprise in view of the threat of competition to white settler agricultural markets. This provided the incentive behind the overwhelmingly Kikuyu political movement which culminated in Independence in 1963. It was not only Kikuyu grievances which honed their political aspirations, but also their exposure to education which gave them a political language with which to successfully contest state power. In addition their experiences of the Second World War added military expertise to the struggle and contributed to its ideological inspirations[6].

The intense relationship of the Kikuyu with the state and capitalism was cemented after Independence when Kenyatta, himself a Kikuyu, became the first president of Kenya. Through the organs of state the Kenyatta government promoted Kikuyu (male) capitalist interests with a zest equal to that with which the colonial government had tried to contain them. The Kenyatta government lasted from 1963 until 1978 and during this time the Kikuyu rose to their economic and political zenith. The entrepreneurial bias of the Kikuyu responded in full to the opportunities opened by the political climate of the Kenyatta government and the climate of the world economic boom of the 1960's and 70's. Since this time the Kikuyu have established new economic concerns not only all over Kenya but all over the world. The prominence of the Kikuyu in business has remained largely unchallenged to this day despite their political demise with the ascendancy of Moi, a non-Kikuyu, to the presidency.

Since the death of Kenyatta in 1978, the Kikuyu have been 'excommunicated' from the state and once more their intense

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[6] For example, J.D. Kali, a prominent figure in the independence struggle and in the post-independence state, remembers attending some of Gandhi's prayer meetings while he was in India.

relationship to the state has been effected through an oppositional political culture. In this context, the relationship of Kikuyu-speaking people to the state has continued to remain powerful whilst re-defining the parameters of this engagement with significant implications not only for local communities but also at the level of the state itself. The 'excommunication' of the Kikuyu from the state as well as the downturn in the economy makes the resilience of Kikuyu capitalist enterprise and the development of new social institutions of particular interest in the light of relationships between the state and capitalism in the context of both national and global arenas.

In the case of the Kikuyu, history has seen to it that practices and constructs which have been formed at a micro-level have become amplified to dominate the national stage. The extent of the involvement of the Kikuyu with state and capitalist development in a national setting thus provides a unique opportunity to explore the dynamics of capitalism, state, communal identity, gender and microlevel relations as these interact at a macro level. This opportunity is not only unique from the point of view of understanding how the dynamics of capitalism and state interact with other constructs which have developed in a local setting. It is also unique because it allows capitalism and the state themselves to be contextualised in an historical and cultural frame where they form part of an on going definition of the relationship between society and wealth across time and space.

Having decided to do my research among Kikuyu-speaking peoples whose experiences have been at the 'centre' in terms of many of the issues I wished to explore, I then had to chose a practical fieldwork site from which to collect my data. I decided to base my research around a market-place in the Kenyan Highlands. I chose to look at a market-place because of the importance of small scale entrepreneurship in the context of the Kenyan state in the present day. The market place, Muthithi, is in a coffee growing zone in Murang'a district which is a Kikuyu-speaking area about 80 kilometres from Nairobi. The research originally focused on the businesswomen who traded in the market. However the importance of gender in structuring relationships to both state and capitalism was such that the research was broadened to embrace the market as a whole. To provide a counterpart to the study, I also conducted my research in a nearby market at the district headquarters, Murang'a town.

The decision to base my study in a rural zone was, among other things, to avoid restricting a discussion of issues connected with 'modernity' to the metropolitan experience where they are obviously resonant. In addition, in the case of Kenya, it has been the rural areas and particularly Central Province that have been at the centre of the most radical developments in relation to the growth of the state and the development of capitalism during the course of this century. This scenario arises partly from the fact that the economy largely derives from its agricultural base. Thus the majority of the population live in the rural areas although they remain intimately connected to the urban areas partly through the need to generate the capital on which their agricultural enterprises depend. However the inter-relationship of rural and urban is such that one cannot consider them independently.

The rural-urban relationship runs through the study as an underlying theme whose dynamic interface is of crucial importance to the construction of both and to the consideration of wider issues connected with state, capitalism, and gender particularly in a country like Kenya. The two markets around which my fieldwork was conducted themselves articulate a rural/urban dynamic. Muthithi, the market which provides the centre of my analysis, is located deep in the rural areas. Mukuyu, the other market which I have researched as a counterpoint to Muthithi, is located in the nearby town at the district headquarters, Murang'a town.

The data from these markets and from the surrounding communities have provided a micro-level context for looking at the developments which have taken place during the course of this century with particular reference to the growth of the state and the incursion of capitalism. The study explores relationships to entrepreneurship and land as well as the relationship between rural and urban, formal and informal sectors. These relationships have been structured in terms of, among other things, kinship and marriage, and through the construction of communal identity both at the local level in institutions such as the church and clan, and at a national level in terms of political relationships with the state.

Overall the study highlights responses to the state and capitalism in the light of a concern in the communities in which I worked with the relationship between wealth and the definition of the 'social'. This underlying dynamic contextualises the changes which relationships to the state and capitalism have undergone during the course of this century. In addition it has enabled a

connection to be made with pre-colonial understandings of the relationship between society and wealth where these understandings have had, and may continue to have, relevance to contemporary processes.

II) GENDER AND COMMUNAL IDENTITY IN THE STRUCTURES OF THE STATE AND CAPITALISM IN KENYA

From its inception, the colonial state embodied two major contradictions in its relation to the development of capitalism. Firstly the state was drawn into protecting the interests of the white settler farmers who used their political and cultural muscle to lobby the state to act in their interests even at the expense of the economy as a whole. Secondly, as Louise White's study of Nairobi in the colonial period has shown (White 1990), the state's power was curtailed by the fact that it could recruit but not maintain wage labour. The inability of the state and the economy to support the reproduction of labour contributed to a crisis in peasant and pastoralist households which jeopardised the security of women. At the same time it created a niche in the cities where the demands for reproductive activities (sex food and housing) by a male wage-labouring class created an entrepreneurial opportunity for women which allowed them to support themselves independently and also in some cases to support their impoverished kin in the rural areas.

Through a combination of prostitution, provision of food, and other forms of small-scale entrepreneurship, women, particularly Kikuyu women, created the beginnings of an urban 'informal' sector. It was in this alternative 'underbelly' of the state that women were able to accumulate and invest their wealth particularly in property, and many became powerful and wealthy landlords. According to White, the success of these efforts was due in part to the fact that the colonial state could not control the urban areas thus enabling urban-based entrepreneurial activities to flourish under their own terms of trade. The emergent 'informal' sector was thus to develop a resilient relationship to capitalism. This acted as a counterweight to the state's relationship to capitalism enacted through formal sector agriculture and wage labour and realised principally through the persons of men.

During the colonial period, the state and the economy were indelibly linked to gender and communal identity through the emergence of an informal economic sector on the one hand and state

protectionism for white settler agriculture on the other. The link between communal identity, gender, state and economy was to reproduce itself in the context of the nationalist movement. The nationalist movement was primarily fired by male (Kikuyu) bourgeois interests. Men, who were in a position to earn incomes through wage labour in the context of the state, were at the same time unable to invest these incomes productively in land and agriculture due to the state's protection of white settler agriculture. In addition their incomes were indirectly feeding into the much more productive investments of female capital in urban property and entrepreneurship. The strength of the (female) informal sector provided a political, cultural and economic challenge to the association between masculinity, economy and state. It was this scenario which was to provide a catalyst for nationalist political activity.

Under the umbrella of nationalism, Kikuyu (male) bourgeois interests were to consolidate themselves culturally through the construction of 'tribe' out of a combination of clan and ethnicity as they existed in the nineteenth century. This gave them a constituency from which to contest power over the state and, after Independence, to preserve this power as a means to acquire wealth in the hands of a privileged few. After Independence, the link between the formal economy and state as a protected arena for the acquisition of wealth and power, which had been cemented in the colonial period through white racism, continued to be cemented during the Kenyatta period through Kikuyu chauvinism. In both cases, communal identity was employed to shore up the partisan acquisition of power and wealth in the hands of a minority group.[7]

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[7] The political language of ethnicity and its importance in Kenya today is part of a more general phenomenon which pinpoints the importance of the relationship of communal identity to capitalism and state. Abner Cohen (1969) was one of the first to emphasise the importance of ethnicity as a direct result of state and capitalist formation in the context of West Africa. For Cohen, tribalism in the context of the modern state
"...is essentially a phenomenon of the distribution of and struggle for economic and political power." (Cohen 1969;24)
John Lonsdale has contributed a detailed analysis of the importance of ethnicity in the case of the Kikuyu as a language through which relationships to the political economy during this century have been debated and transformed. Among other things he looks at the way in which the language of external ethnicity masks internal divisions of class in the interests of competitive access to state resources. At the same time the language of internal ethnicity becomes the means through which the challenge of class formation is modified and made morally acceptable. Lonsdale looks at the way in which the structural links between capitalism, state

The legacies of the formal/informal divide in terms of the relationship between production and reproduction in the state's control over labour have also continued to be important in Kenya in the present day. The literature on the 'informal' sector, a term first popularised by the ILO Mission to Kenya in 1970, has been extensive and diverse in relation to Africa. Janet MacGaffey describes the informal economy thus:

> "The second economy is made up of economic activities that are not only unmeasured and unrecorded but are also in varying degrees illegal. This illegality makes these activities an essentially political phenomenon." (1992;224).

MacGaffey prefers to use the term 'second economy' rather than informal or parallel economy in order to embrace not only small scale entrepreneurship but also large scale illegal business and to convey a sense of the intersections with formal economic activities. MacGaffey views the emergence of the second economy and its relative strength in Zaire where she conducted her research as an organic response to capitalist development. MacGaffey's analysis of the second economy as an organic response to capitalism stresses that, although the second economy has been invaluable in sustaining the country, especially in relation to the predations of the foreign backed state, it is not inherently benign, populist or egalitarian. Rather it is the means through which the interests of the dominant class are coming to control the economy as a whole. Eventually, she predicts, the economic base through which these class-based interests are articulated will translate into overt political action which will lead to control over the state itself.

In the case of the Kikuyu, the relationship between formal and informal economic sectors emerges as a tension which has arisen specifically out of the unique and powerful engagement between the Kikuyu and the state. This relationship has been structured primarily along lines of gender, which, even more than class, has shaped the social significance of the formal/informal divide in the context of the state. The political and economic relationships of (Kikuyu) men to the formal sector and state have in many ways curtailed the 'organic development of capitalism'. At the same

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and communal identity are not simply a part of the macro level structures through which the political economy operates. They are also a key node through which political and economic change is debated and transformed by individuals and groups particularly through manipulation of cultural norms.

time, the strong relationships of women to the informal sector have prevented 'raw' capitalism from being incorporated into a definition of the social (or the political) through which class based interests may consolidate themselves.

The inability of the informal sector in Kenya, particularly in the case of the Kikuyu, to consolidate itself into a social base for the bourgeoisie, owes much to the relationship between communal identity, state, capitalism and gender. Relationships to the state in terms of 'tribe' have necessitated in the case of the Kikuyu the maintenance both of a territorial expression of ethnic identity through the investment in rural 'roots' and, at the same time, the maintenance of urban-based connections to the formal sector. This has been effected through the relationship between men and their wives where men associate themselves with the formal sector leaving rural wives to take on the guardianship of 'tribal' identity in which men invest through their literal investments in rural land.

The tension between men and their wives due to their necessary separation across the rural and urban divide is exacerbated by the inter-relationship of formal and informal sectors through the persons of men and their (urban) girlfriends. These latter siphon off men's wages thus preventing men from investing in the rural areas and potentially threatening the maintenance of the link between formal sector, communal identity and state. In a context where communal identity has become crucial to the axes of wealth and power in terms of the particularity of the relationship between capitalism and state, the significance of women's involvement in the informal sector has been constructed as a-social and even anti-social. A consequence of this scenario has been to strengthen the links between informal entrepreneurship, non-'tribal' identity and a counter-state culture.

Today there is increasing pressure on the economy which has hit the formal sector in particular. This has been exacerbated by the fact that the Kikuyu have been as it were 'excommunicated' from the state thus weakening both their economic power and their formal political base. This has led to changes in the relationships between gender, wealth and communal identity which have had ramifications both at a local and national level. In the present day, rather than male urban wages sustaining rural homes in the guardianship of rural wives and parents, the opposite seems increasingly to be the case. This is leading to transformations in

the role of wives and (grand)parents which has implications for the balance of power within households.

In the absence of male wages, rural communities are not only relying on the income earning capabilities of wives but also of returning single mother daughters. On the strength of their engagement with the more resilient informal economy, single mothers are now being reincorporated into local communities. This places brothers and their single mother sisters in competition over the control of rural resources particularly in the form of land and inheritance. Through their decisions as to whether to strengthen their bonds with their daughters or their sons, (grand)parents now take on the role of arbitration of the relative capabilities of formal and informal capital to sustain rural communities. In this they potentially alter a definition of communal identity which, as I have suggested, has been effected through a specific relationship between men and their wives cemented through the investments of urban wages in rural land.

The changing economic relationships in the rural areas have also been affected by the changing relationship between the Kikuyu and the state. The excommunication of the Kikuyu from the arenas of state is leading to the redefinition of the basis of communal identity which centres in particular around the church. In the rural areas, the churches are dominated not by men but by women. This places women in central position in relation to the (re)construction of communal identities in local communities which are no longer centred around the state. The prominence of church in recent times as the a vehicle for communal identity in the case of the Kikuyu, has had ramifications at the level of the state where the 'demonisation' of the state, particularly by the Kikuyu, is being used to challenge its power. This scenario inverts a position where local communities were subject to a particular link between economic and social identity controlled by the persons of men and effected through the organs of state. Nowadays it is the state itself which is subject to challenge by local communities through a new form of communal identity engendered through the institution of the church which is dominated by women.

Today the formal economic and political realm remains biased towards men through their links with formal sector employment and rural agriculture particularly cashcrops. This however is changing with women beginning to assume a higher profile in these spheres. Correspondingly the 'informal' sector is still associated with the primarily urban and entrepreneurial economic activities of women.

Although today these sectors are increasingly coming to be dominated by (young) men. Due to lack of formal employment opportunities, young men have expanded at an incredible rate into small scale entrepreneurship through trades like second-hand clothes.

It is perhaps in the context of the 'excommunication' of the Kikuyu from the state and the redefinition of the link between communal identity, formal sector and state, that the informal economy as a more 'organic' form of capitalism may provide the basis for the formation of a new political culture as a means to contest power over the state. Interestingly, if this does indeed happen, women, due to their longstanding economic significance in informal sector capitalism, are likely to play a central role in the establishment and definition of a new (formal) political culture. The current involvement of women in the formal institutions including those of state and church may in fact be the beginnings of an instance of the social base of informally generated capital translating into political power, as MacGaffey predicts for Zaire.[8]

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[8] The presence of institutions such as the church which exist outside the state has been the subject of much recent discussion in the debates around the notion of 'civil society'. John Keane (1988) has looked at various perspectives on the notion of 'civil society'. Civil society, rather like the informal sector in Africa, is viewed as being a development out of capitalism distinct from and in some cases in opposition to the state, which in its purest form becomes the site of bourgeois culture and articulates the interests of the bourgeoisie. It finds expression in non-state institutions comprising of various voluntary associational bodies which form distinct relationships to capital. The institutions of civil society are seen by some as an essential check on the despotic tendencies of the state and by others as instruments of private interest which must be regulated by and contained by the state in the interests of society at large. Others still, view the state and civil society as one and the same. The state being the political instrument formed around the interests of civil society as the economic and cultural base of the dominant class.
A consideration of 'civil society' as the cultural and social expression of dominant class interests renders it incapable of expressing the broader framework of social and cultural responses to capitalist and state development. Discussions around 'civil society' have thus been broadened to address the multiform associational bodies which are seen to be proliferating in the present. Many of these cannot be seen as components of 'civil society' but rather themselves may resist it. In this context the church is seen as an important institution which exists outside and to an extent in opposition to the state and which, in its breadth, must be looked at beyond the parameters of civil society defined as the base of dominant class interests.
In the context of Africa the debate around civil society, and the appropriate relation between the political and economic (between

III) AGENCY AND POWER AND THE STRUCTURES OF THE STATE AND
CAPITALISM IN KENYA

Over the course of the century, the relationship between state and
capitalism has been articulated through gender and communal
identity and this has had particular implications for Kikuyu
speaking peoples. At a micro level, relationships between men and
their wives, between brothers and sisters, between parents and
children, have been subject to the legacies of the contradictions
generated through the state's relation to capital. At the same
time it is often through these relationships that the state and
capitalism are themselves being transformed. Thus an analysis of
the relationship between communal identity, gender, capitalism and
state brings in a discussion of agency, identity and power. This
allows for a view of state and capitalist development as something

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state and capitalism), has had a direct impact on policy
initiatives for institutions such as the World Bank and the
International Monetary Fund. Here anti-state ideologies portray
African states as regressive and obstructionist to free market
forces which, if left unfettered, would provide a stronger basis
for society at large. Bodies such as the World Bank and the IMF
have emphasised the need to give more power to Non Governmental
Organisations' and to bypass the corrupt institutions of state in
the interests of democracy and free market economics. They have
emphasised the positive role of institutions such as the *harambee*
(self-help) movement in Kenya.
Their critics (see Gibbon et al 1992) look at the way in which the
harambee movement and even the churches have been co-opted by
elites to further their own interests. Kanyingi (in Gibbon (ed)
1992) is highly critical of the *harambees* and NGO's which
'decorate Kenya's countryside'. He sees these institutions as
having a common corporate form whose principle is the cultivation
of highly restricted parochial economic interests which
"leave intact divisions between localities, between decision
makers and decision takers, between patrons and their subjects
between the big decisions and the little ones. The former remain
beyond popular control and the population remains obstructed from
organising around or in relation to them." (Kanyingi 1992;27)
As the case of the Kikuyu demonstrates, the exclusion of informal
capital and by extension single women from the formal arenas of
state has been to the detriment of society at large. The
alternative to this is not to strengthen institutions outside the
state, even where such excluded groups may play an important part
in these. Rather it is to strengthen a political culture based
around the state in which the common interests of society at large
may serve to make a more powerful link between economic strength
and political control. This would :   also serve to provide a
bulwark against the interests of multinational capital in control
of the superpowers. The benefit of donor involvement in this
context is somewhat dubious. Instead, the exploration of the
potential of structures like ethnicity itself to strengthen a
political culture in which diversity becomes the means to
solidarity rather than vice versa, may be of greater value. (See
Lonsdale 1992)

which is shaped, controlled and manipulated at the local level rather than being an unconstrained force which subsumes local cultures and dictates the lives of the individuals therein.

Furthermore, an analysis of gender and communal identity in relation to capitalism and the state has implications for Kenya's situation in a global arena. For example it is in the context of the informal economy, formed as a result of a particular relation between communal identity and state, that some of the most innovative and dynamic responses to the state and capitalist development have presented themselves. Overdetermination by the global economy particularly at the level of the state which is heavily manipulated by the interests of foreign-based powers, is frequently subverted and bypassed through informal economic activities to create, in some sectors, a resilient and creative relationship to capitalism. This relationship is both distinctive, culturally embedded, and in some measure resistant to subsumption by the world economy where the exploitation of Kenya's resources with disadvantageous terms of trade continues to persist even after the colonial period.

Gracia Clark's (1994) study of market traders in Ghana also makes this point in showing how the distinctive economic activities of women in rural markets and their self-sufficiency (albeit often imposed) is what in this day and age may contribute to the strength of national and local economies in relation to the intense threat presented by global capitalism. In this light the informal economy may be seen as a positive emergence out of the contradictory relationship between state and capitalism which cushions people in countries like Kenya from the predations of a global economy. However the bypassing of the state is an unfortunate necessity in a situation where a more organic relationship between state and economy would be of much greater benefit to society at large.

An analysis of communal identity in relation to the state and capitalism also points to some of the ways in which global structures are not simply imposed but are also appropriated by individuals and groups in such a manner as to change both the nature of these structures and the social contexts in which they have taken root. In the case of the Kikuyu, ethnic identity has played an important part in relationships to the state and constructions of community in the present century.

This was true in the nationalist period before Independence where the unifying structures of ethnicity as it existed in the nineteenth century were used to consolidate opposition to the colonial regime. It was also true after Independence when the state itself became the locus of a much more parochial and highly reductive rendition of communal identity in the form of 'tribe' which enabled national and international interests to be controlled and manipulated by a minority group. Today, where the Kikuyu themselves have been subject to scape-goating in the context of the new political scenario, ethnic identity remains important to the construction of an opposition political culture at a national level. In all these cases, communal identity has been used to resist and manipulate the power of the state particularly in relation to its control over capital.

In addition, the analysis of communal identity in an historical context may point to ways in which political cultures might be modified in the context of contemporary state and capitalist development. John Lonsdale (1992) makes this point when he refers to ethnicity as a potential language of dialogue rather than competition. In the context of the nineteenth century, ethnicity was conceived of as a unifying structure within which relationships of exchange between diverse groups (the clans) could be effected. Ethnic identity provided the forum for the articulation of inter-group relationships which otherwise tended towards fission and fragmentation. The institutions through which this was effected included the ruling councils. These were organised around a democratic structure that allowed for debate across lines of difference in order to reach consensual agreements for the greater good of the community as a whole.

Today the boundaries between ethnic groups are formed to protect intra-group interests rather than to foster inter-group dialogue. Thus inter-ethnic relationships have become antagonistic rather than complementary. In the words of John Lonsdale

> "tribes [today] are like nations without a state" (Lonsdale 1992;267)

In this respect they are a far cry from the original sense of ethnicity which existed before the colonial incursion when, as Jean Francois Bayart puts it

> "Ethnicity [was] a complex relative phenomenon not a stable combination of invariables, a static a-temporal structure." (Bayart 1993;47)

According to John Lonsdale (1992), recourse to the structure of ethnicity as it existed in the nineteenth century, including its practice of democracy (see also Haugerud 1995), could render the state more accountable in the context of the diverse interests of Kenya's diverse ethnic composition. Instead the situation today is that this diversity fractures relationships to the state through antagonism and competition. This weakens the abilities of the state to resist unfavourable predations by international political and economic interests. In addition an analysis of the more fluid dimensions of ethnicity as it existed in the nineteenth century in Kenya is of relevance to a global culture of 'modernitiy'. In terms of its structuring of unity and difference, an understanding of nineteenth century ethnicity as it existed in various Kenyan societies could make a valuable contribution to the forms which political cultures may take in the context of global capitalism.

CONCLUSION

With particular reference to the state and capitalism, this thesis has attempted to interweave a discussion of political and economic developments during the course of the century into an analysis of events and processes which take place at a micro-level. In the case of the Kikuyu, dynamics which have developed in a local setting have, at certain historical junctures, become amplified to dominate the national stage. In particular, Kikuyu constructions of communal identity and gender have had resonance and force not just at the local level, but also at the level of the state itself. That, among other things, is why I chose to concentrate on the Kikuyu in writing about Kenya.

I argue that local constructions have come to acquire force in relation to the state and capitalism partly due to contradictions inherent in the development of the state and capitalism in an historical setting. In this light an exploration of the dynamics of small scale entrepreneurship, of agricultural development of relationships of kinship and alliance and so forth may help to explain the significance of other processes emergent in the unfolding of the state and capitalism at a macro-level. The structural importance of local level constructions has not only contributed to the distinctive emergence of state and capitalism in Kenya. It has also become the means through which individuals and groups operating at a local level may exert transformational power over the hegemonic structures which influence their worlds.

SECTION 3: ACTION AND POWER AND A THEORY OF HOLISM.

In the last section I outlined those of the macro-aspects of my research interests which were focused around the global parameters of nation-state and capitalism. This provided me with a comparative standpoint from which to situate my study and allowed me to re-centre a discussion of 'modernity' from a new perspective. The justification for this was more than one of perspective. I have described the way in which Kikuyu experiences of the state and capitalism have been more intense than most. Thus an analysis of state and capitalist development in the Kikuyu context is a contribution to a global understanding of 'modernity'.[9]

This section now turns to the micro aspects of the study, the parameters of which did not so much inform the fieldwork as emerge from it. To explore the micro aspects of the study I move away from the global and towards the universal. At this level I am interested in exploring agency and ontology. This involves going beyond the specific and relative considerations which provide an, albeit crude, framework for understanding 'modernity', to uncover that which informs (human) orientations to their worlds. The centrality of the Kikuyu experience of 'modernity' in this light can be seen to stem not just from people's historical engagement with capitalism and state but also from the peculiar resonance which these have achieved in relation to (Kikuyu) ontologies. The particular force with which Kikuyu ontological formations have engaged with state and capitalist development again makes a study of such ontologies especially important to a study of 'modernity'.[10]

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[9] This is not to say that cultures and societies which are more peripheralised in relation to this specific historical experience have less to contribute. On the contrary, analyses of cultures and groups which exist at the periphery are invaluable because they point to the more radical ways in which the project of 'modernity' may be and is being modified. However at this point I have chosen to base my analysis on this re-located 'centre' in order to provide a better understanding of that 'centre' and to question the way in which it is currently construed.

[10] I understand ontology to be a broad term which embodies a sense of the deepest orientations of being, at the level of the social, to its widest horizons or possibilities. In this sense ontology is beyond any divisions into the cultural, the material, the political and so forth, all of which may become and must become, if they are to have relevance for human societies, manifest in relation to ontological ground but which are nonetheless non-reducible to ontology or vice versa. In the context of this work, I use a relative expression of ontology as it emerges at the level

I) THE STRUCTURE OF DUALITY IN SOCIAL SCIENCE THEORY

This section aims to outline my perspectives on the motivations for, and power behind, human action. Hence I wish to deal with agency, ontology and construction. To understand the principle behind my discussion of agency and power in relation to ontology it is necessary to invoke a third dimension. This third dimension is the principle of the universal or holism. An exploration of holism in particular is timely in view of the fact that the structural importance of the whole has been under-emphasised in Western theoretical models. This in turn may be seen to be the product of a specific ontological engagement in modern Western societies where difference has become radicalised such that holism has been altogether suppressed (see Dumont (1986) and Anderson (1983) on hierarchy and individualism).

I will begin by attempting to show how my perspective differs from those which are rooted in a structure of duality. The structure of dualism has informed much of the thinking which has emerged in the context of Western social science theory since the Enlightenment. In this context, due in part to the lack of a structural concept of the whole, difference is either conceived of as seamless; as an endless plurality which is primarily disempowering; or as oppositional and antagonistic. Where holism is invoked it is often at the level of the relative where it is characterised as stasis (for instance the models of the social which informed anthropological discourses in the early half of the century) or, in relation to power as totalitarianism.

The dualistic models which have emerged in the context of the social sciences are themselves broadly divided between the material and the ideal. The materialist and idealist perspectives may be summed up with reference to the theories of Marx and Hegel. Both Marx and Hegel have discussed the relationship between differentiation and the resolution of difference but I would argue that neither have engaged the concept of the whole as I understand it.

In Marx and Hegel, the experience and enactment of difference emerges at first in the objectification of the world as a result

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of the social. Ultimately the concept of ontology must address itself to the concept of the universal. However if one is to explore ontological ground at a deeper more universal level, then certainly anthropology is inadequate to the task.

of consciousness. Objectification (see also Miller 1987) stems from the consciousness of self in relation to the world where the world is viewed as object in relation to the self as subject. It is accompanied by the corresponding recognition that to conscious others, one's self is viewed also as object. This objective understanding of the world and the self is an externalisation of what was previously an internalised and unconscious existence *in* the world. For Marx and Hegel there follows a process of attempting to reunite the objectivised self with a subjectively experienced self where the latter is holistic, absolute and undifferentiated.

In Hegel, the re-connection with a holistic experience of self must lie in connecting with that which is beyond both self and world, and which is the essence or spirit of both. For Hegel the distinctive feature of human consciousness is the ability to recognise the existence of a unifying factor which lies above and beyond the world. This essence exists in opposition to the world just as the spirit exists in opposition to the body. There follows a process of realising one's connection to this super-conscious condition through conceptual work upon the world. Construction in this sense is the construction of self in relation to an ideal.

Unless the realm of the transcendent is illuminated through divine revelation however, access to it can only be achieved through the consciousness of that which it is not; i.e. the 'world'. Thus an understanding of the transcendent aspects of self is reached only through an understanding of that which lies in opposition to the transcendent which is the world. The legacy of the Hegelian perspective has been to understand construction as directed to the realisation of a primarily abstract sense of self and in this sense particular constructions may be viewed as illusory. For Nietzsche, the illusory nature of construction is the only means available to humanity to transcend its baser nature and is thus ultimately positive:

> "The falseness of an opinion is not for us any objection to it: it is here, perhaps, that our new language sounds most strangely. The question is, how far an opinion is life-furthering, species-rearing;...the falsest opinions are the most indispensable to us;...without a recognition of logical fictions (etc.) man could not live." (Nietzsche 1989;8)[11]

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[11] Following on from Nietzsche, philosophers such as Anthony Appiah have also argued that the ultimately fictive nature of human expressions of themselves in the world is positive in that

Nietzsche follows Hegel in perceiving that these fictions, this positive transcendent sense of self can only be realised through a sense of that which it is not. Thus for him good is dependent on evil. The existence of the superman is dependent on the dehumanisation of others; the existence of the master is dependent on the existence of the slave.

> "What if good arises out of evil, generous deeds out of selfishness ...what if the two are intimately crocheted together...what if in fact they are identical." (1989;7)

For Marx on the other hand, the positing of an external 'essence' is untenable, as is the idea of human consciousness as a purely conceptual process of self realisation. For Marx the resolution of differentiation comes about through action upon the now objectified world and is thereby determined by the conditions of the world in which we find ourselves. Action upon the world both changes the world and is at the same time the fulfilment of self such that the world becomes both subjectively and objectively experienced. The act of ploughing the soil is a positive transformative act which transforms both nature and self. This ability to embody the fruits of one's labour upon nature such that they become the 'new nature' in which an aspect of self is ingrained, is thus the reinternalisation of a subjective sense of self in relation to the world. In this context objectification becomes not just alienating and differentiating but also enhancing of the subject and therefore empowering[12].

Marx's vision was fundamentally humanist. The spirit which Hegel saw as existing external to world and to humanity was, for Marx, humanity itself. However humanity could only realise its true human potential once it had transformed the world such that its basic needs were met. Before that time, humanity would by force of circumstances, only be able to internalise a sense of self and world in relation to its neediness and the satisfaction of its

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we can expose de-humanising ideologies such as racism for the fictive constructs they are. Furthermore it allows us to chose in a positive way how we wish to be human:
"we can chose, within broad limits set by ecological, political and economic realities, what it will mean to be African in the coming years." (Appiah 1992;286).

[12] Thus, in the context of capitalism, the commodification of labour such that it can be abstracted from the person is alienating because it prevents the completion this process of self expression as action upon the world and the re-internalisation of the fruits of this action as a newly subjectivised world.

needs[13]. Eventually, Marx predicts, the world becomes an entity which automatically satisfies basic needs and leaves humanity free to fulfil not its basic needs, but the highest possibilities of which its nature is capable. Ultimately then, human beings achieve awareness of themselves as pure 'humanity' rather than as animal-like creatures who are oriented purely to a doctrine based on instrumental reason. This is the point reached in his communist utopia.

Both the Marxist and Hegelian perspectives stem from a consciousness of self which is defined only in relation to the world. Consciousness is thus at first experienced in relation to a sense of self as dependent and needy, filled with desires, and of the World as the means of satisfying those needs. If the world is now viewed as external, the subject, correctly perceiving that its Self is the source of its power to act, will attempt to control and define that Self as something through which it can satisfy the needs for which it is dependent on the world. It is here that will and Self become coterminous as ego. Self then, in relation to the extreme desire to satisfy needs, must become all powerful, knowable, controllable. Thus begins the process of definition of a sense of Self as unified, knowable and positive.

There is no other way to create a knowable and controllable and powerful Self except as a consequence of negation; that is in relation to a knowable and controllable sense of that which the Self is not. This is to create the 'other' (world) as the negative antithesis of Self such that the 'other' becomes not just different but can come to be all that the Self is not. It is in relation to the world as that-which-the-Self-is-not that the Self becomes known. It is in relation to the world as that-which-the-Self-can-dominate-and-control that the Self becomes positive[14]. It is in relation to the world as difference that the Self becomes unified. In other words the emergence of consciousness in relation to the awareness of Self as needy and of the world as the source

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[13] Capitalism is the ultimate expression of humanity as needy, as desirous for material fulfilment. This is ultimately expressed in the class of the bourgeoisie, who are deluded beyond all others as to the true nature of their humanity because even when their basic needs are more than satisfied they see their humanity only in relation to the concept of need. It is in this context that the construction of 'human nature' as instrumental reason has come to be an ideological reality.

[14] The world as 'other' must then be imprisoned and controlled-witness the attempts to control the world through technology.

of the satisfaction of needs, creates holism and difference not as open-ended parameters but as closed controllable domains. Power here becomes a function of the 'will' to control, know and dominate.

Neither the Marxist nor the Hegelian perspectives can address the tripartite implication which is central to my definition of ontology as the 'beyond' which is also 'within'. Both are basically caught in the dyadic world- view which is central to Western ontological engagements. In Marx, consciousness exists purely in the relationship between self and world and is confined to the parameters of that relation. In Hegel human consciousness is equally defined in relation to the world wherein the transcendent is constructed with direct reference to the world in terms of that which the world is not. I suggest that both these dyadic formulae have emerged from a definition of consciousness defined in relation to the fulfilment of needs with self as ego as the definitive parameter.

Where holism becomes synonymous with self as ego, defined and known through world as 'other', power is externalised and experienced only in so far as it is exerted over others. It is this relative and fragile understanding of power- which indeed has operational reality in our world and is often, due to its fragile nature, shored up through the use of force thus rendering it extremely visible- which is expressed through a particular understanding of the word 'construction' as the function of negation. In this context power is necessarily relative, short-lived and subject to inversion as may be seen in the construct of Master/Slave. (See also Becket 'Waiting for Godot' (1965), Sartre 'Anti Semite and Jew' (1974 , Fanon 'Black skin white Masks' (1986), Nietzsche on the superman.)[15]

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[15] In the context of Western egalitarianism/
individualism, the stage of consciousness which is associated with the definition of self in relation to world has become the dominant expression of a social ontology. The understanding of personhood as 'Individual' entails a totalised concept of the individual as an ontological entity. (Furthermore, this individual is conceived of as being primarily defined by instrumental reason, by the desire to satisfy its basic needs.) In the context of an egalitarian/Individualist ontological plane the subjective experience of difference and diversity is thus understood as fragmentation and becomes an attack on personhood. The result of this is that a positive and unified sense of Self is redeemed only through the externalisation of difference, through the subordination or repression of the 'other within'. Nations in this context may be seen as Individuals writ large. In nationalism, the nation is the embodiment of unity; of that which is

II) THE PRINCIPLE OF THE UNIVERSAL

A dualistic model of the subjective experience of the world may be transcended with reference to a concept of the universal. If the subject no longer feels itself to be constrained by the extreme power of its desire to satisfy its needs and its sense of its dependence on the world to do so, there is no longer any need to understand its relationship to the world in totalised terms. The subject can then accept the possibility that it exists in relation to something the parameters of which will always be beyond its comprehension, knowledge and accessibility. This dimension is the realm of the universal, and it allows the subject to conceive of itself as existing in a realm of infinite possibility as well as infinite actuality.

> "Since we cannot possibly know the boundaries of
> something unknown to us, it follows that we are not in
> a position to set any bounds to the Self." (Jung 1953,
> para 247 quoted in Swartz-Salant 1995;16).

Thus the subject has the possibility of seeing itself as a differentiated expression of a true universal which it can never encompass, but to which it is now, at last consciously connected. It is only when selves can be apprehended as differentiated and subjectivity becomes allowable on a differentiated plane that the true universal is engageable as a concrete facet of existence which is not fragile, relative, and subject to inversion, but which is sure, strong and forever. Otherwise the continual fight to realise this universality subjectively at the level of the

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undifferentiated. Difference is allowable only between nations where, in the context of the construction of 'Self' and 'other', it is not only allowable but essential. Internally then, difference becomes an attack on the unity not only of the nation but of the (ontologically defined) subject and it must therefore be suppressed or excluded.
Where nationalism and Individualism coincide, they reinforce each other. In the context of nationalist thought which seeks to engage the unity of ontological ground through an extreme form of reduction or closure of ontological possibility, the sanctioned form of subjectivity is itself highly reduced. Most if not all individuals will thus at some level experience a sense of fragmentation due to their deviation from the 'norm'. This sense of fragmentation is denied and externalised as the 'other within' due to the definition of the subject as unitary (individual), and is projected onto an 'other without'. At a societal level, it is this which may give rise to features such as anti-semitism, and racism which Dumont (1986), Kapferer (1988) and others have argued is endemic to Western egalitarianism/Individualism.

known self and the impossibility of doing so, results in
alienation, anomie, fragmentation and despair.

In the sense in which I use it, the universal is the transcendent
aspect of existence. It is a dimension of existence, it is actual,
not abstract. In terms of existence, it is primarily manifest as
potentiality. Potentiality may be known to consciousness as the
ultimate trajectory of experience and thus the ultimate trajectory
of action. The universal becomes the transcendent possibility of
all action but is never fully realised through action which is
itself a differentiated dimension of being.

The universal exists in tandem with that which I refer to as the
existential which is the differentiated and differentiating
dimension of being. Construction is the engagement of both. There
is ultimately no division between the existential, the universal
and constructions upon both. All three are germane to being. None
exist before or beyond being. Being, as Sartre suggests, does not
create itself. Nor is it created; it is itself

> "It is full positivity; it knows no otherness."
> (Sartre 1967; Lxvi)

With respect to consciousness, the universal and existential may
become differentiated and conceived of as two forces analogous to
centrifugality and centripetality. These forces are engaged
consciously in that human beings have conscious relationships to
their worlds, but they are not confined to consciousness[16].

To understand the universal in the sense in which I use it, it is
necessary to see beyond the relative and yet to understand that
experience itself remains relative. In the form of the concrete,
the universal is already relativised and therefore the existential
plane has force and power, because the relative is its domain.
Material conditions are not simply powerful in that they constrain
us, they are also powerful because it is through them that we
engage the universal. That is why we shape them and transform

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[16] I must stress at this point that, in my view, an awareness of
the universal/holistic dimensions of existence would not be
possible if holism, like differentiation, did not have reality and
force outside human understandings of it. 'Nature' has reality
outside human perceptions of it, and this reality has both
holistic and differentiated dimensions quite apart from our
ability to perceive them as such. If this were not so, the world
would exist either in a state of stasis or of chaos. The
importance of both the holistic and relativising dimensions of
existence lies in the fact that they are continually active upon
on another and continually transformative of materiality. It is in
this sense that the formation of a theory of holism is important.

them, where transformation is a transcendent act oriented towards the universal. It is in this sense that the concrete experience of the universal, which emerges through the act of transcending the relative, has existence as potentiality rather than actuality.

Like the existential, the universal is consciously engaged, through the outcome of action. It is thus only ever immanent and does not, as in Hegel, exist prior to its uncovering. It may be known only through engagement with the existential as the manifest or differentiated aspect of being, but it does not, as in Marx, confine itself to the parameters of that engagement. Thus the universal as a dimension of existence is the 'beyond' which is also 'within'. Action and power stem from the engagement of both the universal and existential dimensions of existence rather than one or the other conceptualised as material or ideal.

> An interesting example of power in terms of connectivity to holism may be found in David Parkin's book 'The Sacred Void' (1991). Parkin looks at the way in which the sacred site of the Kaya which lies empty for most of the time, is called into operation as a zone of empty homogenous space capable of unifying the fragmentary relationality of East and West through which the Giriama live through and express their connection with 'modernity'. East and West, literal geographical zones, are also metaphorical zones, the one connected to a radical incorporation into the structures of 'modernity' through its connection to capitalist enterprise, tourism and so forth, the other constructed as the repository of 'tradition' which may be viewed as a resistance to the fragmenting nature of 'modernity' but which is itself therefore equally defined in relation to it. Both together are operational in Giriama responses to 'modernity' which is empowering of some and disempowering of others.

> At points of heightened antagonism between this relationality or of heightened threat from outside, the Kaya is called on as a way of unifying these opposites and asserting the essential unity of Giriama identity through its connection to something which is beyond this identity, beyond the external threat to this identity, and beyond the relational expression of this identity. In this sense the great cleansing rituals undergone periodically at the Kaya which 'wipe the tablet clean' so to speak are a social attempt to re-connect with an ultimate sense of empowerment in terms of their connection to the universal. At this level power as connection to the universal is manifest at the level of the social. However in this respect it can exist only in the context of empty homogenous space. As Eric Hirsch writes:

> "The purest form of potentiality is emptiness itself."
> (Hirsch 1995;4)

INFINITE ABSOLUTE

PLANE OF
THE
UNIVERSAL

ONTOLOGICAL
PLANE

THE
SELF

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONS

'WORLD'

PLANE OF
THE
EXISTENTIAL

INFINITE
RELATIVE
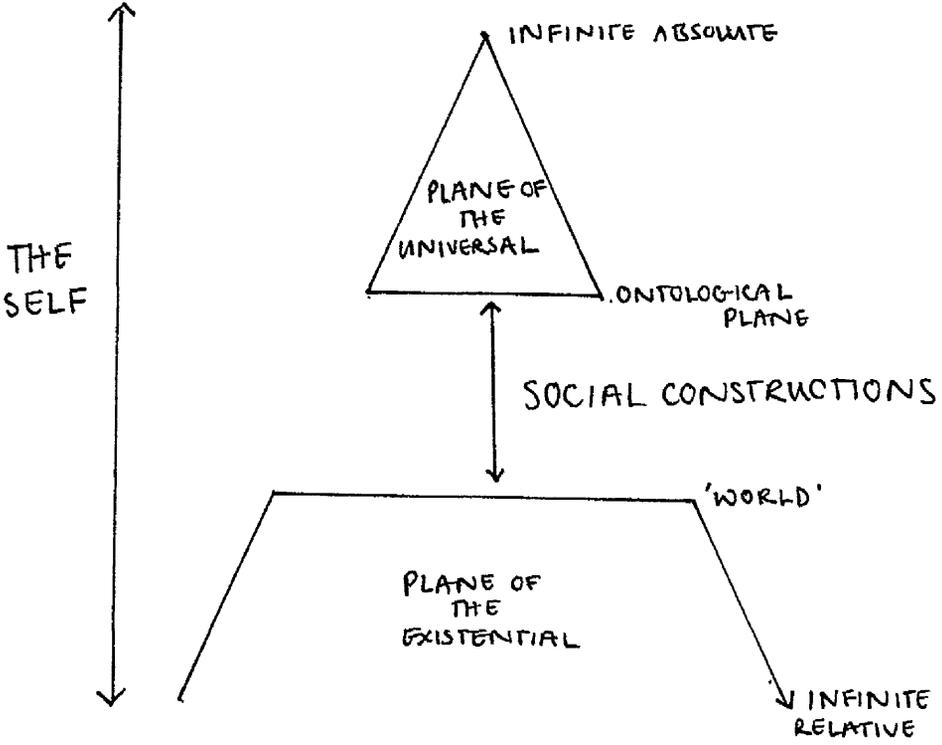
figure ii : the principle of the universal.

III) THE TRANSCENDENT DIMENSIONS OF ACTION

At the level of the subject, the concepts of universality/ holism and difference/relationality are dynamic not passive. They are primarily emergent in action where action is directed to the creation and resolution of difference. Each can be seen in attempts to bring into actuality an engagement with the infinite- both in relation to the absolute, and in relation to the relative. Ultimately action is oriented towards the transcendence of relationality. In this respect it engages a concept of the whole.

The act of creating difference must precede any attempt to resolve that difference and difference itself must logically exist within a higher ordering concept which is not differentiating, but is holisitic: Duality must exist in a bounded space to remain dual. The creation and the resolution of difference both engage the dynamic of the whole where the whole is both a prior unity and a transcendent dynamic oriented ultimately to the universal as the absolute resolution of difference.

The transcendent dimension of action may be conceived of in relation to the concept of potentiality, or, metaphorically, in relation to the concept of the 'future'. In this sense action is at one level an engagement with the unknown where the unknown contains both chaotic and holistic properties. The subjective engagement with the unknown is both dangerous and, especially in its connection with the universal, it is empowering as it allows the subject to engage with that which is beyond itself and infinitely expanding of itself. This engagement connects the subject with both the existential and universal planes and is effected through the process of differentiation and the resolution of difference.

Action takes place in the world and, as human beings are primarily social beings, it takes place particularly in the context of social relationships. Social life, as Marylin Strathern describes in relation to Melanesia, is thus a constant movement

> "from a unity...to that unity split and paired with another." (1988;14)

Action creates difference out of unity which is then known symbolically. For instance in the case of gender Marylin Strathern describes the way in which the body must first be conceived of as androgynous in order to be conceived of as dual in its possibilities and thus ascribed the categories of male and female. Gendering androgynous bodies (in the Melanesian context) then

becomes a process of suppressing one half of this dyad in order to emphasise the other; gender is an action rather than a state where the action is conducted in a specific context and is to an extent determined by that context.

> "..the basis of the classification does not inhere in the objects themselves but in how they are transacted and to what ends. *The action is the gendered activity.*" (Strathern 1988;xi, emphasis mine))

'Male' and 'female' are thus operative as the symbolic imaging of differentiation and unity enacted in various processes, for example, in the process of production and exchange. In the Melanesian society where Strathern did her fieldwork, difference and holism are not viewed as attached to the subject as they are in Western societies Thus male and female may be activated variously in various situations. In one situation a body may be classified as female and in an other it may not. This classification is the outcome of action which is itself a response to a specific situation and an orientation towards the unknown. Classifications and constructs are thus the results of action. (Where action is consciously engineered to confirm these constructs, they may also be directly engendering of action.)[17]

In this light, production and the division of labour may be seen not simply as a response to basic needs, but are part of the transcendent quests (as the engagement of parts and wholes) of human beings in engagement with their worlds. The division of labour as an aspect of production entails differentiation; the

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[17] By their nature, symbols engage relationships to the universal at their deepest and most ephemeral levels. Symbols transcend the limits of human understanding and may often be seen to resonate through non-human as well as human worlds. Particular numerical relationships may be cited here, shapes such as the circle, as well as concrete images which also have active meaning in our worlds. Symbolic and metaphorical constructs may thus encapsulate the essential unity of the antagonisms which appear as irreconcilable at certain levels of understanding.
Action is effected through symbols where these symbols themselves contain active properties. In Strathern's terms the active properties contained in symbols encode a theoretical and practical relationship between subjects and the conditions of their existence and are engendered primarily in social interaction. In my terms I would add that symbols also encode a dimension of the unknown which is ultimately connected to the universal. The engagement with symbols may thus be differentiated from the more specific engagement of constructs which do not necessarily encode this third dimension. (For further discussion of the symbolic as I understand it see de Cirlot 1962)

creation of difference resolved through exchange as the creation of a whole. Thus holism and differentiation are interdependent.

Constructs are dynamic and continually transforming and, while they are formed through the imaginative connection between universal and existential, these dimensions only emerge as understood, known, and creative as a result of action rather than before action.

> "Actions are known by their effects and outcomes. These constructs are thus also a theory and practice of production ." (Strathern 1988;16)

And, I would add, a theory and practice of holism and difference.

Action in the world as an engagement with holism and difference is transformative in that the act of engendering and resolving difference changes both subject and world. In Marxist terms action in the world creates a 'new' world. In my terms the transcendent is a dimension of this process. In this sense action invokes the principle that 'the whole is greater than the sum of its parts'. The constructs to which the act of engendering and resolving difference give rise, not only transform subject and world but actively realise a connection to the universal which is the ultimate form of empowerment which the subject may experience in the context of existence.

IV) HOLISM AND DIFFERENCE IN SOCIAL ONTOLOGIES

As I am using them here, both the existential and the universal are dimensions of being. They exist independently of our knowledge of them. What is important to the act of construction, is the way in which we conceive of them at the level of the social. As beings whose subjectivity is constructed by and large at the level of the social, connection with the universal and the existential will emerge most powerfully in social interactions.

At the level of the social, the act of creating and resolving difference becomes not just a series of responses to material conditions. Instead this process itself becomes externalised and concretised as a 'model' which goes beyond individual actions and defines the social in relation to the engagement of parts and wholes. Thus this 'model' emerges as a consequence of and precursor to action and is informed in part by its connection to material conditions and in part by the dimension of transcendence present in action which is oriented ultimately towards the universal. The structuring of the relationship between the

creation and resolution of difference into an orientational mapping of the engagement of parts and wholes may be termed ontology. Ultimately the resolution of difference must transcend any social concept of it. Hence at the level of the social, ontologies are already relative and this is why social ontologies are many.

At the level of the social, ontology represents "the unity of diversity" (Kapferer 1990;5) and thus it exists at the most fundamental level of social experience. At this level, an ontology as a model of the relationship between holism and difference, becomes, in itself, an holistic statement. In terms of its relationship to the transcendent quests of human beings, the ontological may be seen as the attempt to engage the universal at the level of the social. Thus at the level of social foundations the ontological may be equated with the universal. It is in this sense that the engagement of the ontological as a model for the creation and resolution of difference is the foundation of power and empowerment at the level of the social.

Whilst ontological engagements are oriented towards the universal and experienced as universal, they are also the level at which the most radical forms of difference are engendered as Kapferer and others suggest. This is partly due to the fact that although oriented towards a quest for the universal, ontological formulations as holistic statements about the relationships between parts and wholes, are embarked upon on the plane of the relative; i.e. in the 'world'. Because of the conditions in which they are engaged, these foundational quests engender 'radical' difference by the very fact that they attempt to engage with the foundations of being.

This implies that cultural differences may, in their connection with ontologies, engender radical difference between cultures. At the same time, as ontology transcends culture, the relationship between culture and ontology may also engender radical difference *within* cultures[18]. The ontological thus becomes the deepest foundation of difference between persons in so far as they are socially constituted. The universal here emerges in the quest for the universal, or what I call the transcendent quest rather than

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[18] Henrietta Moore's discussion of multiple subjectivities also explores the manner in which radical difference is engendered within not only cultures but also within persons in so far as they are culturally constituted. (Moore 1994).

in the form of social ontologies which are themselves already relativised expressions of the universal.

V) ONTOLOGY AND CONSTRUCTION

In his work on nationalism Bruce Kapferer has used the concept of ontology more or less as I am trying to do here. Kapferer discusses ontology in terms of the ways in which different societies *orient* their experiences of their worlds. In this sense ontology works as a 'dynamic', a force, rather than a set of principles.

This sense of ontology as an orientation is also captured by a phrase which Suzette Heald and Ariane Deluz employ when they describe the common attempt in both anthropology and psychoanalysis to

> "grasp something of the *internal dynamic* of a world view." (1994;1) (emphasis mine).

To uncover ontological ground, one must turn to its manifestations in lived realities and it is to this end that Kapferer is interested in nationalism. In his view, just as nationalist ideology is particularly suited to the discovery of ontological ground, so nationalism may only be properly understood in relation to ontology. In his study, Kapferer explores the distinction between Australian and Sinhalese nationalisms in ontological terms through the structures of, on the one hand, egalitarianism, and on the other hand, hierarchy.

In relation to the 'flat plane' of egalitarianism, difference is suppressed and excluded. In relation to the encompassing structure of hierarchy, difference is ordered and hierarchialised. Both give rise to distinct possibilities for the articulation of the wider tensions in society in terms of the way in which they deal with difference. These tensions may be exacerbated by material conditions but are not reducible to them. In developing his analysis Kapferer draws on the work of Dumont (1986, 1980) and Anderson (1983) both of whom address nationalism and particularly the possibilities inherent in nationalist thought including racism and fascism as exclusionary relationships to difference.

As with Parkin (1993) and Miller (1995), Kapferer implies that ontology, for all its depth, is not immutable nor does it exist in some way prior to the experiencing of it. The discovery of ontological ground thus is not available in and of itself because it does not exist independently of reality:

> "ontology has existence only in lived contexts and is simultaneously embodied in person AND in practice. It has no significance outside human action and experience." (1990;22)

Ontology is thus essential but not essentialist, it operates at a fundamental stratum of being, but it is ephemeral because it is continually immanent and does not pre-exist or pre-determine its uncovering.

In uncovering ontological ground, one must look at the constructions through which ontology emerges, bearing in mind that these constructions are irreducible to ontology and vice versa. In Kapferer's words

> "...the ontological ground for the interpretation of experience is only available through limited and restricted manifestations of ontological possibility, through its overt realisations- interpretation, ideology, social practices etc. " (Kapferer 1990;5)

Constructions are formed imaginatively where imagination is an ACT of engagement between ontological and material planes; one creative of the ideational and practical realities through which human beings live their worlds[19]. Imagination as an act may be likened to the Marxist concept of labour whereby human beings create their humanity through the act of labour which is a (self)conscious engagement of the world (nature). However the materialism towards which Marxist theory tends, perhaps as a result of its reaction to Hegelian idealism, reduces the broader scope which the concept of imagination may evoke.

Although constructs such as nationalism are not amenable to analyses which root themselves in material determinism, the ability of nationalist ideologies to resonate right through the material realities of existence is in part responsible for their power. In Kapferer's view, this again is a function of their

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[19] Benedict Anderson (1983) has explored the imaginative construction of collective identity in relation to the emergence of nationalism in Europe. He looks at the way in which nationalist identities were constructed in relation to ontological ground as a specific understanding of the relationship between parts and wholes. Similarly, in my work, I look at the way in which 'The Kikuyu' as an imagined community are a construct upon ontological ground(s).
The interesting thing about imagined communities in Anderson's and Kapferer's senses is that they address themselves specifically to the uncovering of ontological roots and the definition and control of those roots. Thus they may appear synonymous with ontology itself but are in fact (both physically and imaginatively) reductive of the ontological possibility with which the people they embrace may connect in their social worlds.

connection to ontology. As the foundation of the social, ontology itself resonates through the realities of the person's who engage it. This includes not just their conscious ideological interpretations of the world, but also everyday practices and subjective experiences[20].

In their conscious orientation to ontological ground, ideologies may be seen as theoretical constructions of ontological understandings and must be taken seriously in and of themselves. Thus they cannot be reduced to a mystification of material realities.

> "...ideologies have force in the interpretation of the reality which they offer and not merely as a function of their rhetoric, or of what some may regard to be their performative suasiveness, or of processes connected with a context or material world which is somehow external to the realties which are ideologically imagined. This possibility of ideology or of interpretation is a dimension of its foundational ontology." (1990;6).

Although the power and reasoning[21] of ideological constructs such as nationalism may be understood with reference to their ontological connectivity, ideology, in Kapferer's view, is nonetheless non-reducible to ontology or vice versa. Rather

> "..it is the power of ideological interpretation within ontology that I stress." (1990;6)

The constructs which form the realities of human lives such nationalist ideology, capitalism, and the state, must be taken

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[20] Pierre Bourdieu's work (1977), which also attempts to connect the realm of subjective experience and everyday practice to the more conscious organisational aspects of human societies, makes a similar point. However Bourdieu and Kapferer differ fundamentally in that for Bourdieu the ordering principle behind this connection is rooted in material conditions whilst for Kapferer it is located at the level of ontology, at the level of people's deep orientations to their worlds which react with and often engender their material conditions.

[21] Naomi Quinn in Fernandez (ed) (1991;91) cites Johnson and Lakoff who assert that
"rational thought is bound up with metaphorical reasoning and hence defies analysis in objectivist terms."
This is similarly applicable to ideology which, in its relation to ontology, expresses more than a rational statement about a particular situation or view. The metaphorical power of ideological reasoning again stems from its relationship to ontology which itself is evocative in its capacity to resonate at all levels of existence. This echoes Kapferer's argument about nationalist rhetoric; its arguments must be taken seriously not only in their rational aspects, but also in their engagement of metaphor which may help to articulate their ontological roots and may greatly add to their social power.

seriously in and of themselves and cannot be reduced either to one of their number as determinant (i.e. capitalism as determinant of ideology and state) or to some process which lies outside them (i.e. the 'material'- or the 'divine'). These constructs acquire an independent force due to their form (see also Simmel 1978) and due to the fact that they are created in relation to multiple ontological orientations which then interact and impose themselves in contexts which may be external to the ontological ground wherein they were constructed.

Thus in the Kenyan context, the state and capitalism can be understood to have independent force in that they have 'form'; they have an independent dynamic. They can also be understood as independent of those who engage them in a specific context with respect to their partial grounding in diverse ontological formations. However, despite these independent elements which themselves have the power to resist and shape, constructs by their very nature cannot exist outside their continual (re)construction. This construction is a continual process of imaginative engagement between ontological and existential planes, where the existential includes that which appears to have an independent dynamic. Because of the process of construction, capitalism and the state cannot be understood as independent dynamics. They must also be understood in terms of their engagement with the ontological contexts wherein they are manifest. It is for this reason that capitalism and state in Kenya cannot be understood without reference to ontological ground, which itself must be uncovered at a micro-level.

VI) ONTOLOGY AND POWER

So far I have looked at ontology at the level of the social as a dynamic oriented (in my view) towards the universal, one which is engaged imaginatively in conjunction with the existential plane to engender the constructs which form the realities of our social worlds. There is another reason for my interest in ontology, and here again I follow Kapferer. Kapferer's interest in ontology stems partly from his concern to explore the 'force' of nationalism; its capacity to generate violence and altruism, its capacity to motivate extreme forms of human action. In this sense he is dealing, as I wish to, with power and empowerment.

In the context of ontology as Kapferer uses it, three kinds of power emerge: the first is the active and directed sense of power

which emerges through the constructions themselves. Constructions, although born of the imaginative acts of human beings in connecting the existential and ontological planes, are necessarily reductive of both these planes and this capacity for 'closure' is constitutive of power. In their ability to render ontological formulations in a visible sensual and tangible way, constructions empower people to act in the world with reference to ontology. Inversely constructions themselves become powerful in relation to the human beings who engage them, because of their connection to ontology. Thus, like nationalism, they acquire power 'over' people.

This leads on to the second sense of power as a limiting factor, one which entraps individuals in their own constructions and impedes the ability of individuals (and groups) to transcend them in relation to the wider breadth of ontological possibility. In this way the constructs of human beings, imbued as they are with positive power due to their ontological connectivity, may over-reach this power and be transformed into negative and external forces which act repressively in relation to those who inhabit them. This restriction may become all powerful in cases where constructs explicitly address themselves to the definition of the limits of ontological possibility. It may thus come to totalise and essentialise the openness and resonance which are the primary and most empowering qualities of ontological connectivity. As a consequence of this capacity to present a construction upon ontology as ontology itself, ideologies such as nationalism may be channelled to motivate extreme forms of human action such as mass genocide.

> "The danger of ideology is precisely in its constriction of meaning, its totalistic closing of interpretational possibility, its insistence on the interpretation which it presents as indeed the meaning of the ontology within which it is grounded. Nationalism is often an extreme example of what I am suggesting. Ontology in my usage has no meaning independent of interpretational practice or outside the existence of human beings in lived realities. Nationalists would appear to argue differently for they often seem to insist that their assertions and interpretations about reality are prior to its experiencing, that experience is the validation of a world already known to consciousness." (Kapferer 1990;6)

Kapferer continues;

> "in the suppression and totalising of ideological meaning other meaning potential of ontology can be drowned out and thus ideology becomes determining." (1990;23).

Ideology may thus present itself as the ONLY possibility of ontology. Here again, its reductionism may be its undoing:

> "..the fact that myriad interpretations are potential in ontology can be a factor in the emergence of alternative and resistant ideologies. In other words, the suppression and totalizing of meaning in ideological development can be a force in the change and transformation of ideology and meaning." (1990;23).

In its first and second senses, power becomes operative as a function of the 'closure' entailed through construction (discourse). Michel Foucault similarly sees constructions (discourses) as constraining and restrictive. This is positive in that power is positive. It is empowering, it renders people capable of action. This is also positive in that the power exerted through discourse it makes it visible and can thus be resisted;

> "...discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it." (Foucault 1978; 101 quoted in MacNay 1992).

However although they may render individuals capable of action, discourses impose their own restrictions on that action independent of the actors who can only define themselves in relation to the parameters of the discourses they are forced to inhabit. Discourses may thus acquire definitive power over experience because of the way in which they are 'embodied' and are ingrained at the deepest levels of experience. In this way, Foucault's definition of discourses makes them appear as unassailable constructs, embodied at a fundamental level, which individuals cannot escape.

For Foucault then, power is primarily negative and discourse is conceived of as violence:

> "We must conceive of discourse as a violence that we do to things or at any rate as a practice we impose on them." (1972;229)

The negative concept of power in Foucault and the imprisoning quality of his discourses stems primarily from the fact that he does not conceive of anything which exists beyond discourse. His position on the nature of power can be seen to stem from a particular understanding of construction. Kapferer and others have argued that this has itself been defined from a specific ontological engagement rooted in Western egalitarianism/ individualism.

As with the conception of the individual, construction becomes self-referential and antagonistic. Where it is defined in relation to something which exists beyond itself, this is also conceived of as external to itself (for instance the 'material'). There is no 'beyond' which is also 'within' as is the case with ontology. Thus there is no positive power in terms of connectivity to that which is 'potential' in relation to experience or in terms of that which may unify the differentiated emergence of experience (but which cannot be fully realised on the plane of experience). Hence ontology viewed as synonymous with construction (as has been shown above in the case of nationalist ideology) is therefore correctly seen to be totalising, essentialising and constraining; the ultimate manifestation of negative power.

In contrast to this, for Kapferer ontology goes beyond any construction upon it, and this leads to the third sense in which engagements with ontology become empowering. Individuals and groups are never able to exhaust the potential which ontology holds, and are always able to transcend the limitations of these constructions (discourses) not simply with reference to the existential or chaotic, or through counter discourses, but also in terms of their connectivity to a greater horizon of potential which is located at the deepest foundations of being. It is in this respect that ontologies ultimately have a greater power than constructions upon them. For Foucault, a concept of ontology would be too much akin to discourse itself. Thus for Foucault the only alternative to the restrictive power of discourse is

> "to celebrate the peculiar and esoteric as evidence of the redeemable otherness in human nature rather than to locate those deep structures which ultimately organise the diversity of human culture." (Foucault, quoted by Turner in Fardon (ed) 1985;197).

VII) POWER AND TRANSCENDENCE

As engagements between parts and wholes, ontologies are universally communicable and not commensurable with cultural difference. Thus it is possible for more than one ontology to exist within one socio-cultural frame. Equally it is possible for the same or similar ontological orientations to emerge in quite different cultural scenarios across time and space. The propensity of ontology to go beyond culture, points to the possibility that connections may occur across a variety of cultures, not just at a

superficial level, but at the deepest stratum of humanity[22]. My position on ontology stems ultimately from the fact that I do not view the social to be the foundation of the human experience of being. Thus I would argue that not only do local ontologies transcend the parameters of socio-cultural experience, but also that they themselves may be transcended in the wider context of being. In this respect my view, though strongly sympathetic to Kapferer's, can nonetheless be distinguished from his.

For Kapferer ontology is to a great extent bounded by culture in that people relate to their worlds through one ontological frame which presents the deepest engagement of holism and difference at the level of the social. In my understanding, the fact that ontologies are social means that they emerge most powerfully through the social, but that does not mean that the two are synonymous or that they share the same parameters. Societies and social ontologies are mutually engendering. That is all. I would argue therefore that it is possible for persons to transcend cultural boundaries and engage with each other at the level of ontology which itself is a product of social engagements emergent in terms of the logically understandable though culturally experienced relationships between parts and wholes.

Engagements with ontology are fundamentally empowering of humans as social beings because ontology is the most fundamental level of engagement with holism and difference at the level of the social. The ultimate form of power stems from a connection to the true universal of which constructs and social ontologies are but trajectories. In this sense engagements with social ontologies and constructions upon them are empowering in that they are, in a relative sense, connections to the true universal which may be understood as potentiality. The notion of power in relation to holism then emerges both in the context of connectivity to ontological ground as social connection to the universal, and in the context of action which is ultimately oriented to the transcendence of relationality and which may go beyond the social. The two are connected in that social action is at its most powerful when it engages with ontology as the social structuring of holism and difference. Ontology may thus be seen as the

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[22] This would help to explain why the structures of capitalism and individualism, which have emerged in relation to specific ontological ground, have also taken hold in Kenya, particularly in the case of the Kikuyu, at such a fundamental level.

transcendent at the level of the social. In this sense persons may be seen not only to be caught up in dualistic and repressive notions of power but in a notion of power which is ultimately positive and which, particularly through the engagement of ontologies, gives them active power in relation to their conditions.

Foucault could not conceive of the transcendent as an aspect of existence. For Hegel it remained unrelated to the world and yet knowable in a concrete sense. In Marx the transcendent emerges as an evolutionary and definitive point which human consciousness is capable of embodying; the creation of heaven here on earth. In the context in which I use it, the transcendent is the underlying motivation for human action and its primary and most empowering quality is that it is never relativised in terms of being subsumed by the differentiating aspects of existence. Ironically the differentiating plural aspects of existence are our primary routes to engaging with the universal and thus these too take on an empowering quality. The power of the universal however, remains in its manifestation as potentiality. In that the universal cannot be encompassed and realised in the context of existence, existence is always capable of transcending itself.

VIII) ONTOLOGY IN THE ETHNOGRAPHY

In my analysis I have looked at the presence of at least four (ontological) orientations within one cultural frame all of which may be seen as connected but all of which at the same time may be considered as separable. The ontological planes which emerge in the Kikuyu context as dynamics or structuring forces can be conceptualised as 'roots', 'routes', ascendance, and mediation. Through the activation of these ontologies, persons and groups connect with the state and capitalism both diachronically and synchronically. Like Kapferer's ontologies, these orientations articulate particular dynamics between parts and wholes and relate to the cosmological significance of experience.

'Routes' in my study involves an understanding of reciprocity as the relationality of boundaries within a whole which lay behind the economic and social relationships of the nineteenth century involving the Kikuyu and their neighbours. In the context of 'routes', boundaries between groups are engendering of inter-group relationships which may be both complementary- as in exchange, marriage etc.,- and antagonistic- as in inter-group warfare. In

this sense intra-group identity such as that of clan is primarily relational rather than being exclusive and essentialist as is nationalist identity in the West. These inter-relationships are activated through exchange and warfare and are always bounded within a higher concept of the 'whole'. The whole, which I refer to as the 'ethnic whole', is in this sense encompassing and transcendent of the relationality of which it is comprised. A concept of the 'ethnic whole', I argue, existed in the nineteenth century and bound together the Kikuyu and their neighbours (the Maasai, WaKamba especially) into an interdependent system defined through the cross-cutting structure of age, manifest particularly in the shared institutions of initiation.

Elements of 'routes' continue to manifest themselves in the twentieth century, for instance in the responses of rural wives to entrepreneurial opportunity. In this context, 'routes' makes a connection between the engendering and investment of wealth through the relationship between trading practices and the home/clan. 'Routes', as the defining principle of nineteenth century ethnicity, also has great relevance in the context of the twentieth century state as a potential direction for the transformation of a political culture where the ethnicity, in the new form of 'tribe', still acts as a structuring force.

By contrast, 'roots' emerges through a centrifugal dynamic which gives rise to a different construction of boundaries as inviolable rather than transmutable. In terms of relationships to the state, 'roots' finds its primary expression today in the transformation of ethnicity into 'tribe' as an exclusive bounded entity where relationality is suppressed in the context of a unitary 'whole'. In this respect, 'roots' has evolved into a structure which is more similar to modern-day nationalism/individualism as it has emerged in the West; where 'tribes' may be seen as structurally equivalent to nations. 'Roots', I argue, was also a part of nineteenth century social organisation, but was suppressed by the principle of 'routes' as the dominant ethos of the time. 'Roots' in the nineteenth century was conceptualised through a particular understanding of clan with reference to concepts of pre-social personhood and productivity.

I argue that both principles are still operational today, but that in the context of the twentieth century 'roots' has become dominant over 'routes' and has powerfully engaged the structures of capitalism and state in a particular manner with consequences which reach far beyond the confines of the Kikuyu. The insular

structure of 'roots' has achieved contemporary significance in the structuring of relationships to the state through the communal identity of 'tribe'. In relation to capitalism, 'roots' connects nineteenth century concepts of essence and productivity with the ethos of individualism as it emerges today in certain forms of entrepreneurial practice.

As counterparts to the ontological dynamics of 'roots' and 'routes', two more dimensions emerge; 'ascendance' and 'mediation'. 'Ascendance' or 'conquest of frontiers' relates to the concept of the 'ethnic whole' referred to above and is manifest in the urge towards the expansion of that whole. This accounts in part for the expansionary push of nineteenth century Kikuyu communities (see also Lonsdale 1992; vol 2). It also emerges as an internal dynamic in the form of the expansionary or idealist possibilities embodied in the existence of age grades. This may be seen, for instance, in the ceremony of initiation and the governing councils of the Kikuyu which transcended both the individual interests embodied in clan and the reciprocal dynamic embodied in inter-group exchange. During the twentieth century the dynamic of 'ascendance' has achieved significance in relation to the unifying ideals of nationalism as well as in the concept of 'progress' through which young men in particular have connected with both capitalism and state.

'Mediation' serves to articulate the relationship BETWEEN 'routes' and 'roots'. The concept of 'mediation' is especially powerful in its ability to make the connection between inter and intra group identities. In the nineteenth century it was through the activation of this principle that the notion of value was primarily manifest. Today the notion of mediation between 'roots' and 'routes' is especially pertinent in view of the political and economic demise of the Kikuyu in relation to capitalism and state and the consequent weakening of the organisational prominence of 'roots'. 'Mediation' today has relevance in establishing new connections between wealth and society particularly through the development of a new basis for 'civil society' which exists in some senses in opposition to the state. Today is a time of transition and this could have both positive and negative implications which themselves may be dictated by the ability to engage with the particular force and meaning of 'mediation' in the context of Kikuyu ontology as a relation between wealth and the definition of the social.

In uncovering ontological ground as manifest through the constructions upon it, I follow Kapferer in taking a phenomenological approach which allows me to look at diverse arenas of human construction and experience both at micro and macro levels.

> "A phenomenological orientation asserts the authority of the ethnographic context and does not subordinate it to the theoretical predilections drawn from some other contexts of experience.
>
> I must add that such an orientation, at least in my usage, is automatically holistic. That is it does not compartmentalise human experiences according to the canons and divisions of normal social sciences." (Kapferer 1983;xix)

Thus in uncovering ontological ground, it is necessary to take a wide ranging approach to the collection of data. In my own research I have looked at, among other things, interpersonal relationships, at kinship, at entrepreneurial practice, at people's statements about their world view, at specific moments in the history of political engagements with the state and so forth. The resonance of ontology demands such a wide-ranging approach, and together these diverse strands help to weave a veil through which the deeper glimmerings of ontological orientations become visible.

The ontological dynamics I present have been uncovered in the context of the present and my interpretations of them have been formed in relation to my experience of that present. Thus my ontological dimensions are both immanent and mutable. They have emerged through the practices and ideas of the people (including of course myself) who participated in the fieldwork and they exist- or existed- in the time-frame of that fieldwork.

Ontologies emerge through the context of action and in this sense they are always dynamic. At the same time, through their form and their historical embeddedness, they empower persons to transform their worlds. The historical resonance of ontological formations brings dimensions of past experience into their 'actuality' and this becomes an aspect of the manner in which they are imbued with power in relation to the people who engage them. In this context, time and space may themselves be viewed as dimensions of ontology as well as being fixed within the parameters of the historical and geographical.

For example I have used data on pre-twentieth century institutions such as the clan and age-grades not so much to record historical

material, but to reach a deeper understanding of ontological dynamics. These dynamics may indeed have been operational historically in the context of the nineteenth century. Certainly they help to understand the continuities between that time and the present. However their historical resonance does not essentialise them or give them the status of 'cultural templates' which order experiences of reality. The depth which rests within these ontological frameworks does not lie in the fact that they encapsulate experience through time and space. Rather it speaks to the depth within human experience itself. This depth is central to human experience and may go a long way to*towards* accounting for the nature and operation of power.

CONCLUSION

In this section I have discussed a theory of action and empowerment with reference to a concept of the universal. I argue that power cannot be understood in terms of a model of dominance/subordination. Equally it cannot be understood as seamless and plural. Power, in my view, implies holism. In that holism is engaged on the plane of the relative, power also implies plurality. My position is at odds with a view which understands the relationship between system and subject to determine the parameters of action and experience. It is equally at odds with a position which sees both system and subject as ultimately determined by pre-existing external structures such as material conditions. By contrast, the concept of holism emerges as an encompassment of the relationship between system and subject which is constituted from within. It finds expression in the transcendent dimensions of action.

In its engagement with the universal, I have argued that action is oriented towards the resolution of relationality. In this sense it is transcendent. As part of the process of transcendence, action is creative both of difference and of holism. Difference and holism are encoded symbolically in persons and things, and activated in the interactions between them. Through the activation of symbolic constructs, for instance in the form of gender or age, persons negotiate the resolution and engendering of difference in their active relationships to their worlds. At the level of the social, the activation of holism and difference emerges most powerfully in the context of ontologies.

In my usage of the term, ontologies operate as underlying dynamics that can be called on in the process of action. In that they are

socially embedded, ontologies empower action in society. A fundamental dimension of the power of ontologies is the component of holism. This stems from the fact that ontologies are ultimately directed towards the 'unity of diversity'.

At the same time I suggest that multiple ontologies may be experienced at the level of the subject and the social. This does not compromise their holistic quality. However it allows for an understanding of the plurality inherent in social action and thus serves to de-essentialise the notion of ontology as ultimately constraining of the subject. The ability of the subject to engage with more than one ontological dynamic stems from the fact that the social, although fundamental is not, in my view, the foundation of human experience. Action, experience and subjectivity may be engendered beyond the level of the social in direct relation to the universal. This dimension of action may be understood in relation to the concept of potentiality.

In my study I uncover four ontological dynamics all of which are empowering of action in various ways. In many of these contexts, it is the interplay of ontologies which renders them powerful in relation to social action. At the same time their internal coherence, their 'holism', remains the prime quality of their power in the process of action as transcendence. In that persons may engage with a particular ontology in direct relation to the existence of other ontologies, they engage simultaneously with relationality and holism both of which are germane to power and empowerment at the level of the social.

SECTION 4: HOLISM AND DIFFERENCE IN THE PRACTICE OF ANTHROPOLOGY.

I) UNIVERSALITY, RELATIVISM AND THE POST-STRUCTURALIST CRITIQUE

Anthropology, as the study of 'other cultures' (Beattie 1966) has from its inception been concerned both to uncover and understand 'radical difference' (Parkin 1993) and at the same time to explore the ground of "what it is if anything that we share" (Moore 1994). The consideration of difference and universality in anthropology has found expression at a number of levels. In its subject matter it is concerned with the ontological engagements of peoples. In its theoretical interests it emphasises the quest to understand both the extent and basis of universality and difference at the level of the social. In its practice it results in the creation of holistic statements out of the inherent relationality of field research.

The concern with universality and difference has in turn marked the fault-lines of the theoretical disputes within the discipline. The effort to locate a universal dynamic behind human societies and cultures has informed much of so called 'modernist' anthropology and has given rise to various broad theoretical perspectives including functionalism, structuralism, and Marxism[23]. These theoretical perspectives have all attempted to understand culture and society in terms of an underlying dynamic in relation to which different societies may be compared.

The universalist claims of anthropology have been challenged from the outset from the perspective of cultural relativism which sees socio-cultural horizons as incommensurable and irreconcilable to universal planes. In the context of cultural relativism the project of anthropological research is directed to 'getting inside the native's head'. Anthropological analysis becomes a process of translation between two entirely different but equivalent cultures

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[23] Attempts to understand society in relation to a universal dynamic have ranged from the functionalism of Malinowski, who looked at human social relationships as primarily motivated by the satisfaction of basic needs, to the structural functionalism of the Radcliffe Brownian school where societies were seen to organise themselves in relation to maximum internal coherence, to the structuralism of Levi-Strauss which looked at social forms in relation to the propensity of the human brain to order and schematise the world.

which are seen to be incomparable in relation to a universal schema.

The universalist and relativist positions on society and culture are themselves drawn from particular understandings about the relations between parts and wholes. In the context of relativism, cultures and societies can be seen to be essentialised as themselves comprising an holistic schema. Thus difference is seen to lie between cultures and to be absolute. This, as Kapferer (1988b) and others have argued, bears marked similarities to nationalist and individualist thought which understands national boundaries as the markers of absolute difference thus presupposing some sort of internal coherence within boundaries. The universalist perspective of the moderns on the other hand hierarchialises difference in relation to a perception of the universal drawn from a dominant socio-historical moment. From this perspective the universalist claims of anthropology have been criticised as ethnocentric, as formulated in relation to a dominant system of knowledge which has no necessary claim to be able to stand above all other forms of knowledge.

Both universalist and relativist perspectives have been challenged in relation to their essentialisation of difference between cultures. The work of Johannes Fabian (1991) for example looks at this tendency in relation to the use of time in anthropology. He claims that on the one hand time is used to distance the object of study by locating cultures in states of timeless suspension in relation to anthropological discourse itself which remains in the active present. Anthropological knowledge thus becomes the marker from which other cultures may be understood. On the other hand, in the context of cultural relativism, time is pluralised such that all cultures are seen to exist in different time frames and to use different concepts of time itself. This equally serves to create a distance between the time frame of anthropology and its object. In both cases the distancing function of time absolves anthropology from recognising its coevalness with its subject matter thus lending anthropological knowledge an air of objectivity. This in turn is seen to legitimise the authority anthropology to 'represent' other cultures.

In Fabian's terms, objectivity and distance become coterminous in the context of anthropological representation. Order is created and suspended out of flux so that it may be encapsulated, frozen, and acted upon as an instance of the creation of knowledge as a project of domination; specifically the domination of the 'Rest'

by the 'West'. Fabian suggests that the tendency in anthropology to distance its object comes from the notion of culture itself as the essential parameter of anthropological subject matter. He concludes by demanding that anthropology recognise its coevalness, co-presentness and co-subjectivity with its subject matter even with all the discomfort which such a recognition may entail.

The critiques of anthropology which have emerged from within the discipline over the last two decades have been concerned to understand how anthropological knowledge and practice is constructed and the implications which this has held among other things for its claims to objectivity. Since the time of Malinowski anthropology has authenticated its ethnographic presentations through its claims of 'objectivity' under the cloak of the 'scientific method' through which anthropological research is supposedly conducted. Anthropologists' claims as to the objectivity of their method have been challenged in view of the fact that scientific practice may itself be seen to be culturally constituted. The objective status of scientific presentation is also questioned in relation to the failure to take account of the dominant position of the anthropologist in the construction of ethnographic and theoretical statements.

The practice of anthropology has come under serious critique in recent decades with respect not only to its claims of objectivity and its claims therefore to be able to represent 'other cultures', but also in terms of its ethical position. The formulation of anthropological theory and practice in the context of colonialism and imperialism is seen to lend a spurious power to its discursive claims. In this context, it is alleged that the objectification of others through anthropological discourses has contributed to their oppression in real terms.

The ethics and objectivity of anthropology have been subject to criticism through a specific position on the construction of knowledge. In the post-structuralist view, the objective discursive parameters of the 'civilised' academy wherein anthropology and anthropologists are located may be understood as such through the creation of uncivilised non-objective 'primitive' others. These 'others' become the subject matter of anthropology; those who are 'studied'. Thus the creation of other people's as 'other' in cultural terms serves only to elucidate the qualities of the culture in which the anthropologist locates him or herself. Seen in this light objectivity itself becomes a fictive understanding of a cultural practice we call science. This

position, which views knowledge both as fictive and as part of a practice of power, is exemplified most cogently in the work of Michel Foucault. Anthropology is here seen as a process of self construction through the creation of fictive other(s) and this is understood, as is all knowledge in Foucauldian terms, as a project of domination. (See for instance Said 1978).

The deconstructionist critique of anthropology has led among other things to detailed examination not only of the practice of anthropological research but also of the practice of ethnographic writing (See Marcus and Clifford; writing culture 1986). It has left questions about the validity of anthropology itself and about what might replace the discipline's claims to understand or translate other cultures. In place of an objective project have emerged a series of experiential and experimental texts which have transformed the understanding of anthropological knowledges as fictions into a validation of fiction itself as a legitimate means of ethnographic presentation. Equally these approaches, having invalidated anthropology as a means of understanding the 'other', seek to re-validate it as a legitimate means of understanding the 'self'. This has produced a glut of subjectivist writing which authenticates its subject matter not through recourse to the now lambasted claims of objectivity, but through the authenticity of the (subjective) experience of the anthropologist him or herself.

This powerful critique of anthropology as an attack on the status of its knowledge(s) and practice(s) has itself come under attack in part for exacerbating the tendencies which it has tried to eliminate. One of the concerns of the deconstructionist movement in anthropology has been to eliminate the distance between the 'them' and 'us' of anthropological enquiry and to go some way towards dissolving the structures of power inherent in anthropological knowledges. However, replacing objectivity with subjectivity, fact with fiction, and over-emphasising the subject position can be seen to encode a more insidious form of power than the one it purports to challenge.

Kapferer (1988b) understands the current trends in anthropology which are labelled as reflexive or postmodernist to stem from a tradition of cultural relativism which rests on the notion of foundational or original difference alluded to above. The recasting of anthropology as a project of understanding the 'self' and the emphasis of the subject position of the anthropologist may be viewed as a radicalisation of difference and thus an extreme form of distancing. Furthermore, unlike modernist anthropology

which is open to critique in terms of its framing within a set of common parameters, post-modern anthropology as both 'fictive' and 'subjective' cannot be critiqued on the basis of the statements it makes about others. It can only be assessed in terms of its stylistic and presentational aspects in the same manner as a work of literature. Poststructuralist anthropology is thus seen to have a tendency to be even more totalising and essentialising than other forms of anthropological enquiry.

In his article 'Nemi in the modern world; return of the exotic?" (1993) David Parkin addresses the problematisation of cultural difference in the light of the deconstructionist critique arguing that poststructuralist attempts to eliminate the us/them distinction threaten to do away with the concept of cultural difference altogether. He argues for the retention of a notion of 'ontological difference' as a methodological starting point without essentialising difference as original and 'a-priori' (see also Miller 1995). Parkin stresses that the exploration of ontological ground

> "allows one to think in terms of transformable rather than intrinsic human distinctiveness." (Parkin 1993;96)

In David Parkin's view, anthropology should concern itself to understand difference in terms of the way in which persons

> "personify, separate from, struggle and identify with the materials and images of their environment" (1993;96)

such that difference is not conceived of as *between* peoples. Rather difference arises in the context of the specific ways in which persons relate to things and thereby produce theories about themselves through their relationships to their environments. This capacity is universal to humanity. But the way in which it is engaged is productive of foundational difference.[24]

The focus of post-modern anthropology on the construction of self through negation and through the over-emphasis of the subject

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[24] In this light, the globalisation of capitalism and consumerism does not necessarily entail the globalisation of ontological assumptions. In terms of the endlessly transformable relationships between persons and things, the proliferation of goods enters into a field where relationships between persons and things are productive of wider ontologies of being that
"subvert our own, challenge our Liberal quest for global homogeneity and jar us into re-considering the now discredited notion of exotic difference." (Parkin 1993;90)

position have seriously threatened the aims of anthropology not only to explore radically different theories of humanity across time and space but also to make any pronouncements at all. The deconstruction of the social parameters of anthropological discourse has delegitimated all knowledge beyond the subjective. The deconstructionist project has continued to challenge itself on its own grounds in relation to the deconstruction of the subject itself.

> "Post-structuralist and deconstructionist readings of the subject emphasise that the 'I' does not author experience, and that there is no single essence at the core of each individual which makes them what they are and which guarantees the authenticity of their knowledge." (Moore 1994;4)

The deconstruction of the subject would seem to invalidate agency and to threaten what remains of the anthropological project which has

> "traditionally based [its] knowledge of another culture on [the anthropologist's] experience of that culture." (Moore 1995;4).

The recognition that plurality is a feature not only of other cultures but of the culture, subjectivity and practice of anthropologists has led to a new search for authenticity.

II) COMPARATIVISM AND THE RE-ASSERTION OF THE MODERNIST PROJECT

Following the critiques of anthropology in recent decades in the context of the deconstructionist movement, attempts have been made to retrieve the project of anthropology as a quest for the universal. This project has at certain stages been central to anthropological discourses and has been reformulated in the light of the deconstructionist critique. To this end the practice of anthropology as a comparative science is reasserted with the aim of

> "de-centring the position of the analyst" (Kapferer 1990;4)

and using the parameters of anthropology constructed across the boundaries of 'them' and 'us', to further the understanding of both. The term 'reflexive anthropology' is thus re-defined as being

> "constantly to recast ideas and analytical concepts in terms of the light they may throw on each other rather than to document the personal self-understanding that may be gained from fieldwork, as seems to have become

the general sense of the term." (Parkin quoted in Hirsch 1995;2).

Comparative anthropology as it has emerged in the light to the post-structuralist critique, has attempted to grapple with the relationality of anthropological knowledge and at the same time to transcend this relationality. In this context, the broad open-ended quest of the modernist project is re-asserted in the attempt to transcend cultural boundaries in order to formulate a more general understanding of the relationships between socio-cultural forms. Thus cross-cultural boundaries become not barriers, but demarcations of difference. These boundaries then enable an exploration of, for example, the constitution of culture itself.

Marilyn Stathern has argued that comparative anthropology, in taking account of its constitution within a particular cultural logic, can nonetheless utilise this logic to articulate the differences which emerge through anthropological research. Strathern suggests that if Western ontology is constructed around a particular concept of difference which is engendered through duality, through the construct of the negation, this construct can itself be utilised to understand other people's ontological formulations of difference.

> ..."creating a kind of mirror imagery gives form to our thoughts about differences". (Strathern 1988;17)

She writes

> "the intention is not an ontological statement to the effect that there exists a type of social life based on premises in an inverse relation to our own. Rather it is to utilise the language that belongs to our own in order to create a contrast internal to it." (Strathern 1988;16)

This project requires that the nature and status of anthropological practice itself must first be understood. The practice of anthropology which is constructed with reference to a concept of 'self', automatically places its subject matter in the status of 'other'. This serves to locate an 'other' culture in relation to a concept of the anthropologist's own and thus to internalise both in relation to each other.

> "...to write about Melanesian culture as *another* culture is already to imagine it as a counterpart to Western culture." (Stathern 1988;310 emphasis mine.)

The ontological structures of the anthropologist's own culture may then be used to formulate the differences between the two. In this way comparative anthropology can challenge the assumptions of the

anthropologist with reference to those of other peoples and further an understanding of general concepts.

The relationality of anthropological practice as constituted across cultural difference, forms the primary framework of the comparative method. However, with the increased globalisation of social interactions, the constitution of anthropological knowledge across lines of cultural (as opposed to other) forms of difference must itself be questioned as a viable method.

In anthropology the distinction between 'them' and 'us' which has demarcated the field of study has been broken down. Anthropologists today frequently locate their studies within their own cultural fields. Thus difference becomes a dimension, not of their object of study, but of their own experience which then emerges as a central aspect of the practice of anthropology itself. This is not to deny the importance of relationality in the construction of anthropological knowledges but rather to argue that this relationality does not have to be constructed across a cultural divide. Just because anthropologists privilege the status of culture in their subject matter does not mean they must use its parameters in their theoretical and practical constructions. As Wendy James writes

> "The Greeks claim to have a richer vocabulary for most things than do the English but they do not have a word which matches the contemporary Anglo-American 'culture'; as a description of achievements its slightly patronising liberalism could scarcely be acceptable to the people who actually founded civilisation long before the English language was born." (1995;12)

To remove culture as the key marker of difference challenges the project of anthropology to direct itself to wider forms of understanding. In this respect the values of 'civilisation' as opposed to the variations of culture may once more form the backbone of its goals and interests.

III) HOLISM AND RELATIONALITY IN THE ALCHEMICAL MODEL

The practice of anthropology must concern itself not only with difference but also, in my view, with holism. Recapturing a sense of the whole as that which unites and connects all processes, transformations and actions is important in a cultural schema where the supposition that the world is created mechanistically or coincidentally, is generally thought to be the case.

Modern science has hitherto relied on a privileging of difference-using parts to understand a part- which suppresses the principle of holism[25]. Transformation and process are thus understood in isolation. However, in the field of cosmology for example, recent trends in scientific enquiry are leading once more to a concern with wholes as well as with parts. These trends could well be expected to emerge in the context of anthropology and related disciplines. This is so especially because the components of holism are already integral to anthropology. To point towards the ways in which the recognition of this aspect of anthropology might shift the practice of its theory and method, I will turn now to a discussion of alchemy[26].

Alchemy has been described as a 'sacred science', concerned from the outset not only with understanding physical processes, but also with understanding the way in which these can incarnate the underlying processes through which the world and selves connect with the universal. Alchemy involves the transformation of physical matter in parallel with the transformation of the self to reach a state which is closer to God. The person of the alchemist is central to this process. His work with matter closely linked to the illumination and vision which he has attained in his inner work upon himself.

> "This outer or mundane work with materials was intimately linked with the inner or arcane work on the human personality. For example, the alchemical fire, which often called the secret of the 'opus', is clearly a physical fire, controlled within an actual vessel, but it is also the heat producing quality of meditation and imagination." (Swartz-Salant 1995;2).

The alchemical method relied on illumination and visions. It relied on the ability to experience a psychic death and to be reborn such that one's whole perspective on the world was changed. It was believed that the illumination of the self could then inform the chemical experiment and so bring it closer to its goal which was ultimately to create precious metals out of baser ones. The process of transforming lead into gold was thus connected to

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[25] The post structuralist movement takes this to extremes whereby difference is radicalised and universality becomes a (fictive) totalisation/essentialisation of the basic reality of the chaotic. Ironically in this context it becomes impossible to discuss difference at all.

[26] Alchemy has recently been the subject of renewed interest, and its significance in modern science, both historically and in the present, is now beginning to be recognised.

and symbolic of the process of transforming the base matter of the self into a purer self which was imbued with and closer to God. In this process the self could also become more conscious of its own nature.

A major difference between alchemy and science, between alchemy and the 'one God' religions in the last 2000 years, is that alchemy founds its practice upon a concept of union which differentiates it from what Swartz-Salant refers to as

> "patriarchal forms of insight and vision" (Swartz-Salant 1995;10).

Alchemists conceived of change in terms of the union of substances which reacted with one another to form a third higher substance. The two substances were symbolised as male and female, as *sol* and *luna*, and together their union produced the *mercurius*. The expectation that this transformation was possible was based on the premise that all substances contain the same basic matter in different compositions and can thus transform into one another. In this sense alchemy was fundamentally concerned with the nature of both relationality and holism.

The form of the chemical process through which the union of two substances could lead to the creation of a third, was described in the formula of Ostanes:

> 'A nature delights in another nature. A nature conquers another nature. A nature dominates another nature.' (Swartz-Salant 1995;8)

For example in the case of lead, it had first to be liquefied so that its properties could become loosened and subject to change. This involved fire, 'heat'. The result was a blackened liquid in which the new potentialities were actively present. This was called the *prima materia* and symbolised the primal state of chaos. Next a bridging metal was added which had affinities with both lead and with the higher metal towards which lead was to be transformed- ultimately gold. Through the similarities between the two substances, both became attracted, 'a nature delights in another nature'. It was this initial attraction that allowed the *prima materia* to respond and react to the new elements in the bridging substance.

The 'delight' or sympathy between the two substances altered the balance in the *prima materia* such that it was transformed towards a higher level which resulted in a new substance, 'a nature conquers another nature'. The new state then had to be stabilised

so that it could provide the basis for the next transformation. To this end a stabiliser was added; 'a nature dominates another nature'.

The implications of the alchemical emphasis on transformation through relationality involves the presence of a third element which can be characterised as a whole.

> "It was such 'third areas' that were a major concern of alchemy. Like the notion of the ether, they were left behind by scientific thinking, but it is possible that even in science they may have to be re-introduced (Bohm 1990). And if we are to gain a true sense of what relationship is... then such 'third areas' must, I believe, definitely be re-introduced." (Swartz-Salant 1995;5)

Increasingly, as science moved away from alchemy, focusing on the parts to a smaller and smaller degree, it obscured the whole altogether. In the words of Carl Gustav Jung:

> "The causalism that underlies our scientific view of the world breaks everything down into individual processes which it punctiliously tries to isolate from all other parallel processes. This tendency is absolutely necessary if we are to gain reliable knowledge of the world...Everything that happens, however, happens in the same 'one world' and is a part of it. For this reason events must possess an a-priori aspect of unity." (Jung 1963, para 662 quoted in Swartz-Salant 1995;13).

The principle of the whole in alchemy operated as the starting point and goal of any experiment. Alchemists supposed that there was a fundamental connectivity between all forms of matter because they emanated from a basic source (modern cosmology has tended to confirm this). This connectivity led to the assumption that it was possible for all forms of matter to be transformed into each other. This could be effected through the application of processes such as heat and of ingredients which, through both sympathy and difference, could compel a substance to alter its state. The active participation of the alchemist in the experiment was also considered to have an effect on the materials according to the extent to which the alchemist was him or herself illuminated. In alchemy, the 'a priori aspect of unity' was thus manifest in the supposition that subject and object were linked and could influence one another.

However there was also an a posteriori aspect of unity which was manifest in the idea of God. In material terms this was

represented in the substance of Gold[27]. The elements in the bridging substance which had affinities with gold engendered the transformation of the lead into a higher substance which was closer to gold. In the figure of the alchemist, the extent of his or her illumination through a connection with God, engendered not only the transformation of the alchemist but also the transformation of the materials at his/her disposal. The capacity to be illuminated by the Divine was effected through the experience of the *numinosum*; a psychic death which broke down the resistance of the conscious mind. The primal state induced by the experience of the *numinosum* paralleled the liquefaction of the lead. In Jungian terms this state is the manifestation of the unconscious.

> "The empirical manifestations of the unconscious content bear all the marks of something illimitable, something not determined by space and time. This quality is numinous and therefore alarming, above all to a cautious mind that knows the value of precisely limited concepts...." (Jung 1953, paras 247-9 quoted in Swartz-Salant 1995;16)

The experience of the *numinosum* with all the blackness and despair which it entailed, eventually allowed the alchemist to

> "experience the centre of personality as existing outside the ego" (Swartz-Salant 1995;5)

The experience of the *numinosum* thus opened the alchemist to illumination through intuition and the activation of the super-conscious. This illumination then informed the alchemist's work with matter. The transformation of matter into higher realisations of itself was thus seen to parallel and connect with the transformation of the soul of the alchemist through his or her connection with the universal or God. Ultimately this was manifest in material terms in the ability to create gold out of base matter.

As the ultimate totality to which alchemy oriented its transformations and by which it was informed through the 'illumination' of the alchemist, the idea of God was mysterious. Once again we come to the valuable distinction between being mystified and being "informed by mystery" (James 1995). In other

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[27] Jung sees this 'unity' as being the Self which he conceives of as
..."a sort of atomic nucleus about whose innermost structure and ultimate meaning we know nothing." (Jung 1953, para 249 quoted in Swartz-Salant 1995;16).

words the principle of the whole need not be understood to be actively engaged with and this presupposition need not, if properly handled, involve mystification.

In alchemy

> "Everything was based on prior models, not on discerning the significance of events in the historical moment." (Swartz-Salant 1995;4)

With its supposition of the symbiosis between subject and object, alchemy was incapable of standing back and evaluating the nature of this relationship. Neither was it capable of evaluating the object as separate from the subject. Science must also answer the first charge. However in terms of the second, that of separating subject from object in order to evaluate the latter, it has certainly achieved what alchemy could not.

Swartz-Salant describes how the development of the individual ego enabled science to produce a degree of understanding of physical processes that alchemy could not achieve;

> "...an ego that could believe it was separate from other people and the world and God, and an ego that could believe in the usefulness of understanding nature as a process in historical time." (1995;4)

The goals of science and alchemy were different. Alchemy attempted to address the qualitative transformations by which substances take on new forms. In developing an understanding of parts in order to understand a part, science was much more limited in its goals. Science confined itself to the parameters of the relative whilst alchemy attempted to engage the holistic.

IV) ALCHEMY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

Alchemy is a practice which has existed alongside modern science and has preceded it in diverse cultural and historical contexts. Two fundamental suppositions which lie behind alchemy are firstly that knowledge, action, and transformation involve relationality and union rather than linear connections. Secondly that there exists a third principle which we might call holism which must form part of any enquiry. In both of these respects alchemy differs from modern science. An incorporation of some of the precepts of alchemy into scientific practice seems to me to be essential at this point where science has reached the 'objective limits of objectivism'.

If alchemy has been accused of blurring subject and object, then science may be accused of creating an artificial separation

between them. The linking of inner and outer dimensions in alchemical practice is anathema to the foremost need for objectivity which underlies modern science. Some compromise needs to be reached and anthropology with its subjective involvement of the anthropologist, seems to be a good starting point to recover an understanding of the relationship between the two.

Whether or not it is acknowledged, anthropological practice involves a subjective element from the outset. In that the practice of anthropology is also a social act of production, it has a corresponding set of 'interests' which must be made clear (Strathern 1988;16). This is the case in a more obvious sense than with other scientific disciplines where the person of the researcher may be isolated from the parameters of the enquiry.

The subjective element which compels the anthropologist to embark on his or her enquiry in the first place may be termed vision. Alchemy has been referred to as a visionary science. All science, in my view, is ultimately visionary and without this element it quickly falls apart. The visionary element of anthropology allows for the initial connection to be made between subject and object; between the anthropologist (and his or her interests and pre-suppositions) and that which is to be studied. The vision of the anthropologist thus becomes the vessel, the *vas hermeticum*, within which the anthropological encounter takes place. It is the initial aspect of unity which precedes the anthropological enquiry.

The second parallel that may be drawn from the alchemical model is the aspect of relationality which is central to anthropological research. Anthropology, more than other sciences, is directly involving of inter-relationships between the anthropologist and others which occur during fieldwork (not to mention of course the involvement of those which occur in the context of academic institutions). In this light the constitution of the anthropological project across the lines of subject and object can be seen to parallel the linking of 'outer' and 'inner' dimensions which the process of alchemy involves.

In the context of anthropological practice which involves transformation through relationality, some valuable lessons may once again be gleaned from the alchemical model. In anthropology a relationship between two bodies takes place. This interaction creates difference -i.e. that between 'cultures'. It creates categories, values and so forth from the holistic unit within which the exchange takes place. These differences are then

resolved into a final statement or text. This process can be seen to parallel the process of the transformation of matter enacted in the alchemist's *vas hermeticum*.

Firstly comes the liquefaction of the base matter, the lead. This loosens the properties of the lead which may then be transformed. The liquefaction corresponded, in the person of the alchemist, to the *numinosum*; the psychic death and rebirth which would eventually open the alchemist to the illumination attained through connectivity with that which is beyond the conscious; to God. In relation to anthropology, this stage could be seen to parallel the ability of the anthropologist to let go of the precepts and conditioning which precede fieldwork and thus to open him or herself to the transformations which fieldwork might engender. The *numinosum* or liquefaction is thus representative of the necessity to 'decentre the position of the analyst'.

Fieldwork entails the relationship between the anthropologist and those among whom the fieldwork is conducted. This may be seen to parallel the union of two substances in the alchemical process. These substances are the liquefied *prima materia* and the added substance which has affinities with both the base matter and the higher state to which it is to be transformed. The liquefaction process, as I have suggested, symbolises the need to open one's self to the potential transformations engendered by the fieldwork encounter. The added substance may be seen as being the experience of fieldwork itself.

During fieldwork, the first part of Ostanes' formula applies. 'A nature delights in another nature'. The anthropologist must be drawn to that which he or she wishes to study. Fieldwork entails first and foremost a connection with the similarities between one's self and those among whom fieldwork is conducted. This is a precursor to the ability to begin to understand and experience difference. In this context empathy ('delight') becomes the crucial quality in the ability of the anthropologist to connect with that which he/she observes. Together, the openness required for fieldwork symbolised in the liquefied lead and the empathy necessary in the fieldwork encounter, allow for the 'radical' differences which research might unearth to emerge and destabilise previous conceptions of the anthropologist.

The next process is the analysis of data. Here the second part of Ostanes' formula may be seen to apply: 'a nature conquers another nature'. It is here that the base matter begins to respond to the

different elements in the added substance which will eventually allow the base matter to reach a higher state; to become a new substance which is closer to gold. In the person of the alchemist, this stage represented the ability to connect with the whole, with God. This connection is itself transformative of the alchemist and through him or her, of the physical matter of the experiment. Thus although the whole may be viewed as ultimately mysterious it has active force in that it allows properties to connect and to transform in relation to each other.

In anthropology this stage parallels the process of analysis which is conducted after (and to an extent during) fieldwork. I have suggested that the experience of fieldwork primarily involves the quality of empathy through which the anthropologist can engage with the relationships and events which will form the basis of his or her data. Central to the process of analysis on the other hand, is the engendering of difference. Difference is not a relationship which occurs between two bounded units which are somehow magically defined as separate by a higher or deeper logic. Rather difference is created through the process of social interaction (exchange) out of that which was once undifferentiated. In anthropology, interactions between persons, between persons and things, between persons and ideas and so forth are thus constitutive of the categories of difference which will inform the final outcome of the research.

I have suggested that in human practice, the creation of difference is ultimately directed to the transcendence of difference in relation to the whole. In alchemy, the elements of difference encountered in the bridging metal (which is also an aspect of the psyche of the alchemist) contain a connectivity to the gold which is symbolic of the whole or of God. In order to allow difference to be transformative, the anthropologist must form a connection with the higher state which is embodied in the difference. Ultimately this higher state is the universal which is mysterious. The connection to the universal (the 'gold') in anthropology may conventionally be conceived of in terms of the connection to a theory or model which transforms the data into a new realisation of itself. As I have suggested, the theoretical models through which the data may be transformed should not be imposed from outside so much as emergent from the research itself. I suggest in the next section that mandalas, as structures of holism and relationality, may be used to allow the data to engender the categories of difference and holism which will

ultimately illuminate understanding thus avoiding the imposition of theoretical models developed from outside the arena of the research.

In the process of analysis in anthropology, the anthropologist must be able to form a connection both with the differences engendered through the research, and with the whole which will direct the resolution of these differences into the resulting statement or text. Analysis thus involves the act of 'transcending' as an engagement with both difference and holism. In terms of anthropology, the vital tools at this point are observation and imagination. Good science is dependent on imaginative leaps just as it is dependent on the humility required to painstakingly stand back from the data/materials and to let them inform understanding.

Lastly comes the process of creating the research into a text, an ethnography. Here the third part of Ostanes' formula may be seen to apply. 'A nature dominates another nature.' This is the point in the alchemical experiment when an agent is added which stabilises the transformative process such that it may provide a base for re-liquefaction and future transformation. In anthropology this stage parallels the creation of the text; of the ethnography itself.

Anthropology, as an imaginative engagement with difference and universality, is productive of the holistic statements we call ethnographies. Ethnographies always contain a transcendent element, a type of resolution. It is this, in my view, that makes them powerful, valid, and important. Although they may contain elements of the 'whole', the texts produced by the practice of anthropology, are, at most, approximations to that whole. Thus, like the substances created through the process of alchemy, they provide the basis for future 'liquefactions'; for future transformative processes.

CONCLUSION

The explicit concern of anthropology with both universality and difference is, as I have suggested in the last section, part of a wider human concern which formulates the 'transcendent quests' (as I understand them) of human beings in terms of the resolution and engendering of difference in the attempt to connect with the universal. Anthropology sets up relationalities, for example between 'cultures' or other categories of experience. These are

then resolved in relation to something which lies beyond them. This type of activity informs anthropology as much as its subject matter. In this respect, anthropological practice is a 'transcendent quest' and cannot be differentiated from the practices it purports to study.

> "the theories or perspectives which many anthropologists present are... also the imaginative constructions of human beings and necessarily no more or less valid than those constructions and lived realities that anthropologists study." (Kapferer 1983;xviii)

'What we share' is the 'transcendent questing' which is creative of ontologies and cultural constructs in the first place rather than the constructs themselves. It is an active rather than a passive common ground born of the imaginative acts of human beings in the process of connectivity to the universal.

In anthropology the recognition of the value and nature of holism engendered through 'union' or relationality, is crucial. It may be instrumental in salvaging the discipline from its espousal of a pure form of 'objectivity' which works only by suppressing the still present form of the subjective such that the resulting knowledges become both distorted and meaningless. Equally the recognition holism could absolve the discipline from its tendencies towards 'navel gazing' which are of little relevance to its quest to understand and connect with difference. Recent trends in comparative anthropology have gone some way to remedying this clash between subject and object. Even so they cannot give enough credence to the notion of connectivity whereby difference is truly illuminating and transcendent as opposed to being simply 'interesting'.

In my view, anthropology need not and should not loose its scientific basis. Rather it should go beyond this to see itself, like alchemy, as oriented towards the transcendent. Anthropology is an interactive process involving imagination, intuition, will, logic, humility, distancing and so forth. Ultimately however it is not undertaken in a vacuum, and the relationship between the anthropologist and the materials at his or her disposal must be oriented towards a larger visionary quest. This quest must in turn be recognisably informed both by the connectivity engendered in terms of the 'initial interest' and in an orientation towards 'potentiality'; towards that which lies beyond.

Anthropology, in my view, is not just about understanding the 'other' or understanding the 'self' but is an imaginative project

aimed, through dialogue, at uncovering the potential of humanity in relation to something beyond it. The prime tool of anthropology is thus the imagination through which connectivity incarnates holism. The ultimate 'translation' in anthropology is not into language or culture which have themselves been differentiated between the subject and object of anthropology, but rather into consciousness which is beyond both.

Alchemy has been written of as a sacred science where the relationship between the inner transformation of the alchemist and the outer transformation of matter together illuminate the connection to the universal.

> "Alchemists tried to transform matter; their ability depended on the extent to which they themselves were transformed... They failed because the external world is different from the inner one. The vessel for chemical transformation is different from the *vas hermeticum* of human transformation." (Swartz-Salant 1995;6)

Alchemy and modern science both have their limitations. The time now seems ripe for a rapprochement between the two. Anthropology, particularly in terms of its concern with relationality, and in terms of the subjective involvement of the anthropologist, might benefit from an attempt to make this link.

SECTION 5: THE MANDALA.

This section deals specifically with the process of analysis in the thesis. In the last section, I made an analogy between the process of analysis and the process of transforming matter in alchemical practice. In terms of the material of the alchemical experiment, engagement with difference as well as connectivity to the whole enables the raw substance to transform into a new one. Comparative anthropology has to some extent grappled with the relationality involved in anthropological analysis. As used by Strathern and others, the comparative method employs the dualism of self/other as a specific construction of difference to further general understandings. This relationship becomes the holistic parameter within which difference is articulated and transformed.

In the context of the present when anthropologists frequently conduct research in their own cultures, I have suggested that the articulation of difference across the boundary of them and us, of the subject and object of anthropological analysis, no longer seems valid. Furthermore I have said that I do not view cultural boundaries as obstructing of the ability to engage with and discern foundational dynamics in human societies. Thus I have attempted to use another construction of difference and holism in order to organise my data, and through this, to uncover the theoretical parameters on which my analysis is based. In so doing I have engaged directly with the construct of the whole in order to illuminate significant categories of difference. I will now go on to describe my use of the mandala in the organisation and analysis of my data.

The mandala engages a kind of comparative method wherein it creates categories of difference in relation to a centre and bounded by a whole. In my use of the mandala, the whole is constructed not in terms of the relationship between subject and object, between anthropologist and anthropologised. Rather it is created in the abstract form of a circle. This allows for categories of difference to emerge, not in terms of the construct of the negation which is itself rooted in a particular ontological dynamic. Rather the demarcations of difference emerge through the relationalities within the data themselves. As the figure of the anthropologist and the interests of the anthropologist are central to the collection of data, subject and object are already merged and present at this point.

The mandala is constructed firstly in relation to a centre. The centre in this thesis is my 'interest' in exploring the development of nation-state and capitalism. This in turn has been born of my desire to make sense of my own history and of the structures which have formed the parameters of my world (see section one of this introduction). The centre of the mandala may be viewed as the *vas hermeticum* of anthropological practice. It is the initial unity which brings together the subject matter of the enquiry and the anthropologist's relationships to that subject matter[28].

The centre provides the *a priori* aspect of holism around which the analysis (and research) is constructed. The circumference of the mandala can be seen to represent the *a posteriori* aspect of holism. The circumference of the mandala provides a boundary, a horizon, in relation to which categories of difference may be accentuated and articulated. In literal terms, the circumference of the mandala may encapsulate the social, temporal, and spatial parameters of the study. In terms of my study, this artificial whole has corresponded to an actual whole of sorts; the market-place. However this whole is primarily heuristic. It is an aspect of method, an analytical tool and is not meant to suggest that the market itself is a coherent and totalised entity.

The mandala uses the relationships between parts and wholes to define categories of difference and to uncover their inter-relationships with reference to a whole. In creating an artificial whole, the mandala invokes the force of connectivity in relation to the data. The active properties of the whole thus transform the data and make the data 'speak'. In using this whole, the analyst does not, unlike the alchemist, need to be spiritually illuminated. However, like the poet, the analyst must be able to employ his or her imagination to realise the inter-connections within the data which the structure of the mandala facilitates.

The categories of difference which emerged within the market with particular reference to my 'central' interest in capitalism and state, coalesced around certain key constructs. These were the

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[28] In the creative interplay which is fieldwork, the centre should always be open to re-definition with reference to the observations encountered. The mandala must therefore remain vibrant and organic, and must not be taken as an essentialised device. It just happened that in my case, my data reflected very powerfully the initial interests I wished to explore. Thus the centre did not shift substantially during the process of the thesis.

various trading groups, and the categories of gender and age. In addition other features such as capital, education, marriage status, and church membership also emerged as important in articulating the differences within the market.

The categories of difference which I isolated enabled me to organise the market into four main areas each of which had a specific relationship to each other and an internal coherence. To take the livestock trade as an example: the majority of livestock traders were older men, most of whom were married and had land and many of whom were relatively wealthy compared to others in the market. There was also an association between these traders and the areas around the market which have been connected to the Anglican missions where education is emphasised. Similar connections emerged in terms of the three other main trading groups. Namely maize and beans which comprised mainly of older women traders, fruits and vegetables which were traded by a high proportion of younger women, and clothes which were dominated by young men[29].

I then sought to understand the nature of these four relational categories in terms of their cultural and historical resonance and thus to embed them in time as well as in space. To this end I conducted a series of interviews with the elders of the community. In particular the institutions of clan and age-grades emerged as important. These institutions formed the back- bone of Kikuyu society in the nineteenth century and remain vital to an understanding of the ontological dynamics which operate in the present.

At this point my mandala consisted of four main arenas of difference which had emerged in relation to an artificially created whole (corresponding in this case to the physical whole of the market-place) and formed with reference to the central issues of the thesis (namely the development of the state and capitalism.) These categories were embedded in a wider spatial and temporal frame through data collected from interviews with the elders from the surrounding community. This material provided the basis for uncovering the four ontological dynamics around which the thesis is organised. I have termed these ontologies 'routes'

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[29] The material upon which these observations was based was collected through a market survey and census which I conducted near the beginning and the end of my research. The statistics were confirmed with reference to my general research. (see appendix A)

'roots' 'ascendance' and 'transition'. Each have their own 'ethos' (see Schiefflin 1976 for further discussion of this term). Each comprise a specific dynamic between parts and wholes which has been engaged in the structuring of inter-relationships between people and their engagements with capitalism and the state.

I have based my ethnography around these four ontological dynamics each of which provides a different perspective on the development of the state and capitalism. The grouping of these categories in relation to the 'centre' reflected the effects of engagements with state and capitalist development upon the inter-relationships in the market-place. The encapsulation of these categories within an artificial whole highlighted the distinctions and similarities of these categories in relation to each other. This enabled me to discern the plurality of the process of state and capitalist development and to avoid taking an essentialist view of the process as a whole. At the same time each ontology has an internal coherence which accounts for its power. The depth of these ontological constructs enabled me to portray the depth and power of people's engagements with the state and capitalism. Together, the plurality and 'holism' of these ontological dynamics reflect the nature of the inter-relationships through which the state and capitalism have been engaged.

Following on from Kapferer, Bourdieu (1977) and Strathern (1988), I am interested in ontologies not simply in relation to the subject matter of my research; but also in terms of their theoretical power. For Kapferer a phenomenological position is one which

> "sees all human orientations as constructions. These constructions are the significant realities and are not to be swept aside in favour of other constructions (e.g. rationalist social science theory.") (Kapferer 1983;xviii)

People's engagements with ontology may be seen to encode a theoretical and practical orientation to experience. In this sense Kapferer takes seriously, as I do, the theoretical power of ontologies present in people's statements and practices. He uses these as a means of analysis rather than imposing on his material a body of theory drawn from a different field of construction which may or may not have relevance.

A specific concern of my study is that the theoretical constructs I employ should emerge from the data in the form of the ontological engagements of the peoples among whom I conducted my

research. Thus rather than imposing on my data theoretical models which have been constructed in the context of Western academia, I use the ontologies which I have uncovered through the mandala in my analysis of the state and capitalism. The use of the abstract form of the mandala has enabled these ontologies to emerge from the data without the imposition of value-laden models constructed in a different context. The ontological dynamics I uncover must therefore be apprehended not simply as ways in which persons in a particular context negotiate their worlds, but also as the theoretical models behind my analysis.

CONCLUSION

The mandala has allowed me to engage with a broad range of data in relation to the development of the state and capitalism and to understand state and capitalist development at a theoretical level through perspectives internal to the process. Not only do these ontological perspectives offer insights into processes such as state and capitalist development, they are also engaged in lived realities where they enable action/agency to have transformational power in the world. The ability to connect with the mechanism of transcendence which involves a dynamic of differentiation and resolution, is empowering in the context of lived realities. Similarly the connectivity invoked through the structure of the mandala in engaging with relationality and holism, is powerful in attaining theoretical insights into these realities.

The image covers essentially the entire page content area, a full-page hand-drawn diagram.
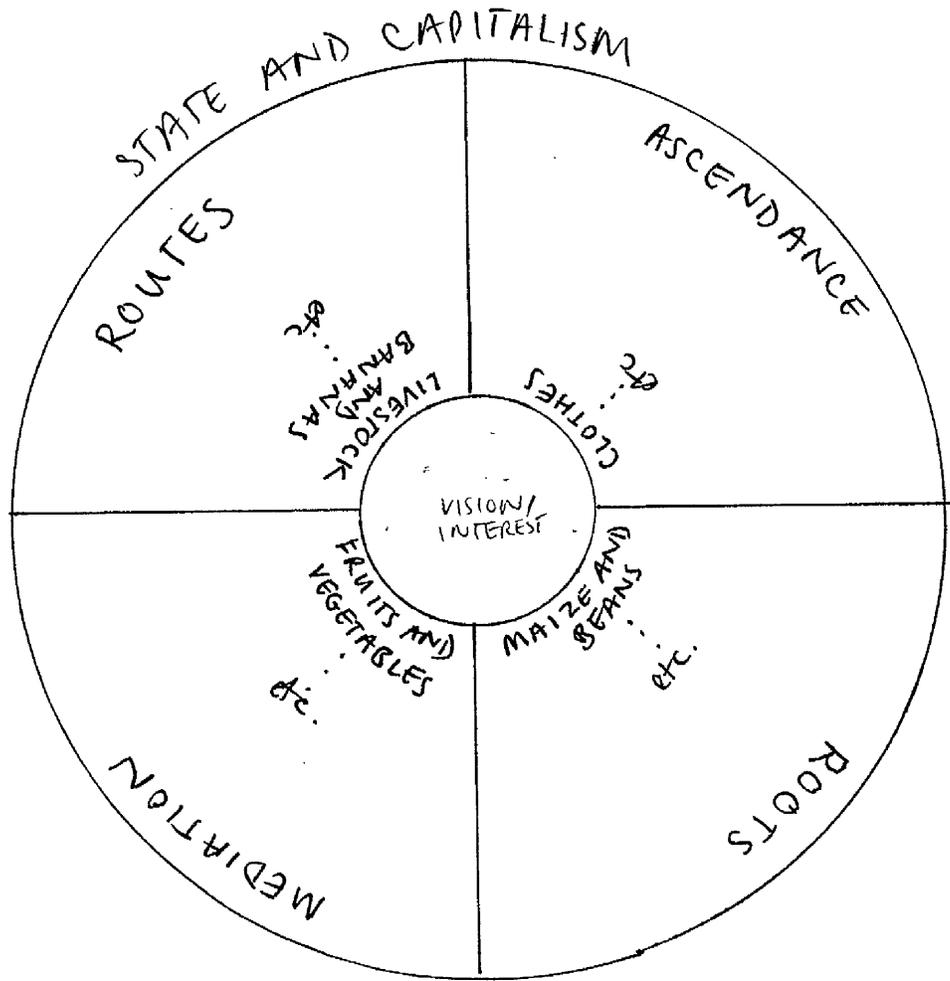
figure iii: the mandala

SECTION 6: SUMMARY AND OUTLINE OF THE ETHNOGRAPHY

The point of engagement of Kikuyu ontologies with the nation-state and capitalism during the course of this century has major implications for the understanding of both as well as for the understanding of wider issues connected to 'modernity' such as the relationship between plurality and authenticity and the nature of power.

The thesis is concerned to uncover ontological ground in the context of action specifically in relation to people's engagements with the constructs of the state and capitalism. I suggest that the ability to draw on certain ontological dynamics has empowered individuals and groups to transform and engage with the hegemonic forces of capitalism and the state in their lives. The process through which the state and capitalism are imagined, where imagination is an act of engagement between the 'world' and the ontological plane, is transformative in two senses. It is transformative of the constructs of state and capitalism. At the same time it allows state and capitalism to become dimensions in the transformation of persons in relation to their worlds. Thus the thesis aims to show how the state and capitalism not only exert power 'over' people, but are themselves empowering in that, as constructs, they are engaged in the wider process of action as transcendence.

The thesis focuses specifically on entrepreneurship at a micro level. The choice of subject matter not only allowed for the exploration of processes connected with state and capitalist development. It was also particularly suited to a study of action and power. Entrepreneurship entails a constant orientation to an 'uncertain future' where the negotiation of potentiality is a conscious dimension of practice. In the context of entrepreneurial practice, I try to show how people engage with ontological dynamics in the negotiation of uncertainty. These negotiations involve interactions with others and also interactions with wider processes such as the development of the state and capitalism. In their orientation towards the future, individuals actively transform the present and this includes the structures of capitalism and the state. This is to bring a notion of agency and power into a discussion of 'modernity'.

The thesis is divided into four parts. These parts provide four different perspectives on the state and capitalism. Each looks at the way in which a particular ontological dynamic has achieved

significance and power in relation to specific historical events and processes. The first chapter of parts I II III and IV of the thesis sets up the parameters of the four ontologies through which the state and capitalism have been engaged in the context of my fieldwork site. The first section of these chapters deals with the market data and the second deals with the data from interviews with the elders of the community. The ontological dynamics uncovered in these chapters provide the basis on which the more general material on the state and capitalism is analysed.

The second chapter of each part deals mainly with events which have occurred at a national level such as economic relationships in the colonial context, the emergence of nationalism, and the construction of 'tribe' as a mechanism of control over the state. The third chapter focuses on the local level and deals with the development of local capitalism, changes in marriage and kinship, struggles over land, the role of the church and so forth.

Each part finishes by returning to the market-place to look at the way in which the ontological basis of the mandala is continually transformed and transformational in relation to action as a transcendent process. Thus in the last chapter of each part of the thesis I look at the four ontological dynamics as they operate in the lives of some of the individuals who played a central role in my fieldwork. I look at the way in which, through engagement with particular ontologies, these individuals transform and are transformed by the forces of state and capitalism in their own lives and through this process have contributed to the (re)construction of the communities in which they live.

SECTION 7: THE SETTING

Murang'a district, known in the colonial period as Fort Hall, is in the Kikuyu speaking area of Central Province. It comprises an area of approximately 2,525 square kilometres and has a population of 858,063 (1992 population census). It is located approximately 80kms from Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, and is well connected to the city by frequent bus and *matatu* (minibus taxi) services.

Murang'a district spans three topographical zones. Muthithi, the market in which I based my research, is located in the middle zone. The lower zone stretches down towards Ukambani in the East. It is drier than the others and is not as good for agriculture as the middle zone in which Muthithi is located. However it is less forested and therefore good for grazing livestock. I was told that people who now live in Muthithi used to live further down in what is today Kaharati. This reflected an age where cattle farming was predominant over agriculture. Even into the middle of this century some of the elders remember herding their cattle from the hills above Muthithi right down to Kaharati where there is also salt. I was told that originally people only began to move higher up because of the mosquitoes and that otherwise it was the lower zones which were more popular.

The middle zone where Muthithi is located used to be covered in forest. From the 1950's the middle zone started to become prosperous due to its combination of conditions which were excellent for both food crops and then for coffee. Gradually all the forest was cleared and the area is now given over entirely to agriculture. At the time of the 1970 s coffee boom the middle zone became rich. People used to come down from the upper zones to places like Muthithi to seek casual labour on the coffee farms although today it is the other way around.

The higher zone used to be covered in thick forest which thinned out into moorland as one approached the mountain ranges of the Aberdares. Until recently when tea farming became profitable, this zone was the least desirable, and the people who lived here were thought to be very backward. In the early 1990s it was the highest zone which was the most lucrative of the three due to the downfall of coffee on the world market and the rise of tea which was then the more profitable cashcrop. Kangari above Muthithi is in the centre of the tea zone and Kangari market which is much more recent than Muthithi has grown rapidly with the rise of tea. Many of the *matatus* (minibus taxis) that connect Muthithi to Nairobi and

elsewhere are owned by people from Kangari. The road which goes through Muthithi begins in Kangari and continues down towards the coffee zones through Kirere and on to Muthithi market and finally down to Kaharati. At Kaharati the road hits the main road which connects Muthithi both to Nairobi about 80 kilometres to the south, and to Murang'a town about fifteen kilometres to the North.

The study is based in Muthithi market-place which is in Kigumo division. Muthithi is a rural market and is surrounded by outlying farms. The market only operates on Mondays and Fridays and is otherwise quite empty. The research undertaken in Muthithi market and its surrounding communities was offset by research from the nearby town market of Mukuyu located on the outskirts of the district headquarters, Murang'a town. One of the chapters focuses almost exclusively on Mukuyu to explore a particular dimension of the study which is only weakly present in Muthithi. This relates specifically to single women many of whom would be likely to move away from their rural homes in places like Muthithi to engage in urban-based entrepreneurial activities. This situation is one of many through which the dynamic relationship between urban and rural is articulated. The decision to do research in both a rural and an urban market reflects the fact that the urban-rural dynamic is a central theme which runs through the study.

PART I

ROUTES AND ROOTS; THE
DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL CAPITALISM

CHAPTER 1A

LIVESTOCK AND FOODSTUFFS IN MUTHITHI MARKET

Muthithi market today is divided into two. The first larger section is a kaleidoscope of people and colour; the flesh-green of the bananas the flaming reds of the tomatoes the golden piles of potatoes and the constant shifting of brilliant cloth, fluttering in the wind on the pitches of the clothes sellers. Separated by a thin barbed wire fence, the other half is sparse and drab. Very few people sell here and those who do are mainly men, their trade livestock. This section is patchworked in the colours of the earth like the animals themselves and it is rung with their bleats and groans. The only clutch of colour is at the end nearest the main section where the chicken sellers - mostly young men - stand with their brightly feathered wares.

> "Muthithi market" said Mzee wa Kabugwa "was there before the colonial times."

It was the biggest market in the district and people would come from miles around to barter there. According to Mzee, markets like Mukuyu, the neighbouring town market at the district headquarters, emerged only during the colonial times because of the building of the roads, but Muthithi, said Mzee, was

> "an original Kikuyu food market".

Throughout its existence, the market has been the site of a dynamic interplay between men and women, dominated at some stages by the trades of women and at others by the trades of men. Originally, it seems, the market was mainly for the barter of foodstuffs which were brought by women from their farms. As Cucu wa Gonyo told me:

> "In the past there was barter; if you had surplus you could exchange it but it was difficult to find people with whom to exchange. Muthithi market was there but you could only take produce there if you had surplus otherwise you would invite famine."

The barter which went on between farmsteads and in the market in places like Muthithi at the turn of the century was part of the on-going role of women as 'sustainers' of their households and was not related to profit. Women however played a dual role both as sustainers of their households and as generators of wealth. They also engaged in long distance trade which brought substantial returns. These trips were occasional events and were of a different order from the small-scale exchange that went on in the market which was

associated with sustenance. From the turn of the century the markets became the focus for the lucrative business of livestock. In Muthithi market, so the chief told me, there used to be many men selling livestock:

> "Thirty years ago" he said "there were very few women doing business; women stayed at home...but today the market is mainly women selling foodstuffs."

Since the decline of the livestock trade women have once more begun to dominate the markets, especially in the foodstuffs trades. Today the interplay between the genders is shifting once again, due mainly to the influx of young men selling secondhand clothes.

In the nineteenth century it was women, not men, who generated wealth through their movement between groups in exogamous marriage and trade (and also through their capture in inter-clan raiding and warfare). Men on the other hand were associated with the guardianship of wealth and the rooting of the 'routes' of the women. From the turn of the twentieth century however, in the context of the development of capitalism and state, the position to some extent began to be reversed. Wealth began to be generated not through movement but through stasis, and in this context land and property achieved a fundamental importance. In addition, from the turn of the century it came to be men increasingly who generated wealth through employment and business and through their ownership (previously 'guardianship') of assets such as livestock and land. These changes are reflected in the changes which the market has undergone over the course of the century. The interplay between gender and wealth reflect the development of a new connection between wealth and society in their engagement with the development of capitalism and state. The trajectory of this shift has not however been straightforward. The ways in which capitalism and the state have interacted with persons at a micro level have led to unexpected changes and even reversals in contexts like Muthithi. It is these which form the basis of this ethnography.

I) LIVESTOCK: MEN AND PROFIT

Today Muthithi market has a dual function; on the one hand it caters to the economy of 'sustenance' and on the other it is geared to profit and the accumulation of capital. Embodied in the persons of men, the latter is manifest mainly through the trades livestock and clothes/manufactured goods. By the beginning of the twentieth century the livestock trade was beginning to establish itself and men and
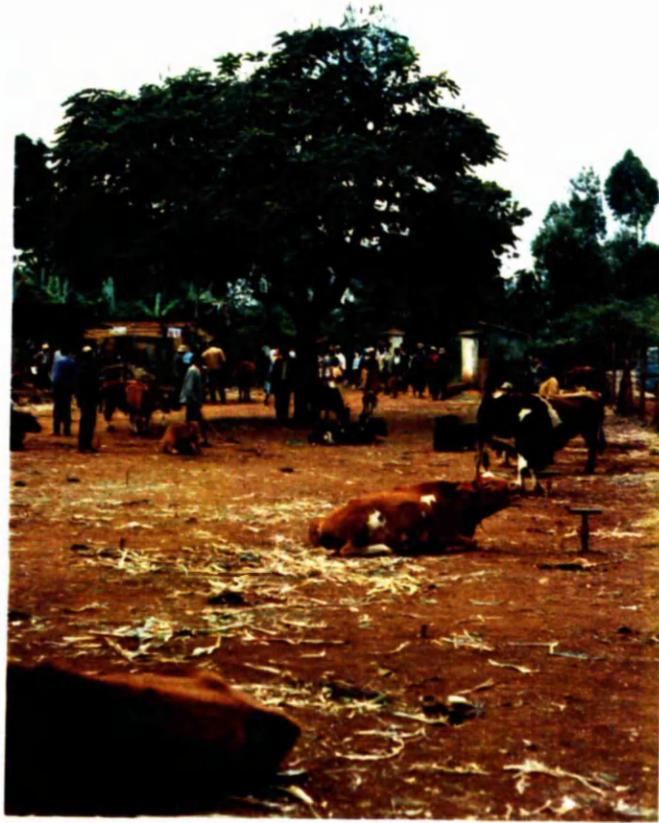
LIVESTOCK IN MUTHITHI MARKET.

livestock were to dominate markets like Muthithi and Mukuyu until the middle of the century. After this point, the trade declined relative to other sources of income such as cashcrops.

Livestock in the nineteenth century was acquired through bridewealth payments- through having daughters - or through raiding the stocks of neighbouring clans including those of the Wakamba and the Maasai. However the raiding of livestock died out when the colonial government came and brought with it *watho*, 'law'. Guka wa Muiruri, who has a store in the plot around Muthithi market, told me that he started business in the 1930's buying livestock from Ukambani and selling it in Muthithi. Before that, when he was a young boy he would herd his father's goats and cattle and he told me he even participated in cattle raids. This transition from raiding to trading was a product of the new structures laid in place by the colonial state for the mediation of relationhips between groups and regulation of the means through which wealth was acquired. In this context the income generating activities of men began to take precedence over those of women thereby inverting the relationship between gender and wealth which had obtained during the 19th century.

Today the livestock section of Muthithi, though not as big as in the past is still substantial. It occupies about a third of the market space and is divided by a barbed wire fence from the main market. The livestock sellers of Muthithi comprise fifteen percent of the market population. Most of the sellers are older men, many of them in their fifties. The few women who are there have come to sell a farm animal 'on behalf of their husbands' and are not business people[1]. In contrast to the women of Muthithi market, the livestock and clothes sellers are in business full time and, as Muthithi only operates on market days, these men tend to be mobile, selling in different markets in the area. The average starting capital for both clothes and livestock is relatively high compared to that required by the women who sell in the market. However, unlike the landless young men who sell clothes and who have obtained their starting capital through casual labour, the older livestock sellers have primarily obtained their capital from their land (90% as opposed to 25% in the market as

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[1] In a small market higher up in the hills a gaunt tall old woman was pointed out to me as being a livestock trader and a person of some wealth. I was also told that she was barren and had married two wives. She was the only person I came across who was a 'female husband' and thus it was appropriate that she was in the livestock trade.

a whole). This connection between men and land has underpinned male wealth over the course of the century in the context of capitalism and state. The fact that the younger men in the market do not rely on land for their capital is in part a reflection of the shift in the relationship between capitalism and gender which has happened again in recent times(See Part II).

Since the livestock trade in Muthithi market has reflected the connection between older men and wealth over the course of the century, it has made visible the respect in which , in recent years, the position of older men has declined in strength relative to that of young men and women. Hence it is all the more significant that a small new livestock market has recently been started on the next ridge up from Muthithi. The recent emergence of Kirere market since the late 1980's is testimony to the growing strength of the livestock trade in the Muthithi area; a resurgence in the present day possibly as a result of the declining returns from cashcrops such as coffee.

Kirere is somewhat different from the area immediately surrounding Muthithi market and many of the Muthithi livestock sellers actually come from Kirere. Like Muthithi, the farms around Kirere are small. However the men seem to be more industrious there and have 'developed' their land especially through coffee farming. Above Kirere is Gachocho, a big Anglican centre; and it is the influence of the Anglican mission with its stress on education which has in part contributed to the wealth of the area. I spoke to two elders who told me that many men from the Kirere area sell livestock nowadays 'because of problems' but also

"men from Kirere are intelligent so they have started business."
In this they contrast themselves with the men from around Muthithi market who have not been able to start business and who instead rely on the supplementary cash which their wives may earn from their much smaller scale involvement with the market. In Muthithi itself, the livestock sellers stand out in that they have on average more land and more coffee than most of the other market sellers. They are also from wealthier backgrounds than the women who sell in the market, who tend to come from poorer areas such as those directly around the market itself.

The livestock sellers not only seem to be wealthier than many of the other market traders, many of them are also involved in organised co-

operative ventures. Wa Chomba, for example, owns plots in Nairobi and more land near Thika. He is also chairman of a cooperative of Muthithi and Nginda farmers who own land near Thika. The organisations and co-operatives in which some of the livestock sellers are involved _ go together with their relationship to landed wealth. Similarly, in contrast to all other trading groups, the livestock traders are involved with extremely large market *harambees* (cash merry-go-rounds). While the women's *harambees* commonly involve between 20-30 people, Mzee wa Kirere for example organises a *harambee* in Kirere market with 340 members. They include not only livestock sellers but also farmers from the surrounding farms and people who own shops in Kirere plot. Mzee lives in Kirere and is trusted by all the people around. He says there is another *harambee* of 270 people in Muthithi which is organised by a Muthithi livestock seller. Like these two *harambee* organisers, other men use the market to cement their ties with their land and their local community as the new *athamaki* (big men) of the area.

Men's involvement in livestock seems to go hand in hand with the conservatism of their wives. The majority of the livestock sellers have wives who are farmers and who have little or no education. Two livestock sellers from Kirere told me that women who have married in the Kirere area don't do much business;

> "they must stay at home and look after the children while the men go outside because if the women go out the chidren may not even eat because the men can't cook...and it is too expensive to employ a maid."

For these men who bring in enough income from their land either through the profits of business or cashcrops, there is no need for the wives to supplement the family income by doing business. Instead, farming wives act as 'guardians' of their husbands' land and wealth.

II) FOODSTUFFS: WOMEN AND SUSTENANCE

If Kirere and Muthithi livestock markets have come to embody the fluctuating association between men and (landed) wealth in the area, then the foodstuffs section of Muthithi market where the women sell is associated with poverty and is geared to sustenance not profit. Today, the market for women continues to play the same role as it did in the past: in Muthithi market, the women who sell do business 'because of their needs', to sustain their households. They barely earn more in the market than they do from a day's casual labour. Mama Muiruri, a Kiambu woman who has a maize and beans store in the plot
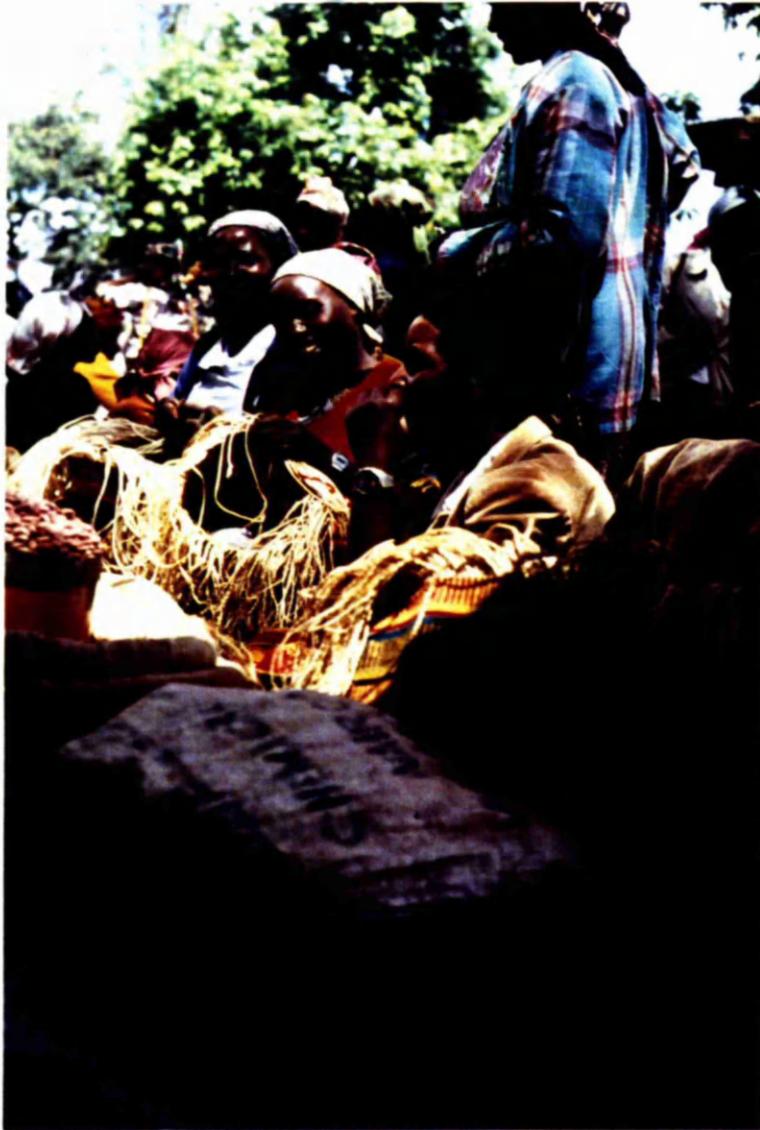
WOMEN TRADERS IN MUTHITHI
MARKET. (KNITTING *CIONDOS*)

on the edge of the market, said disparagingly that the Muthithi maize and beans sellers do not make 'profit';

"here they only sell in tins!"

Women make up roughly two thirds of the market traders and these are mostly farming wives who do business part time. A large proportion of the women who sell foodstuffs in Muthithi market are dependent on their husbands as far as their businesses are concerned: Either their husbands have given them the money to start as is the case with the maize and beans sellers whose husbands are mainly employed elsewhere. Or they have started business through the products of land to which they have access through marriage. The women who sell in Muthithi show a strong commitment both to their marriages and to their land. A number of Muthithi women said to me; 'if I divorced my husband I would have nothing.' Charity and her friend Angela who is a widow both sell in Muthithi market.

"Business comes and goes" they said "but your farm is always there".

If there is no food in the farms, business is good, but farming definitely takes priority. Even the investments to which the Muthithi women aspire are directed towards things like livestock and the farm which are ultimately in their husbands' control[2].

Despite their commitment to marriage and land however, the reality of the situation is that most of the women who sell in the market do so precisely because their husbands and their land fail to provide for even the basic necessities of their homes. Lucy told me jokingly that if she had known how big her husband's landholdings were she would never have married him! Charity told me that it is important that women like her are independent of their husbands because reliance on the husband and his earnings is the cause of many of the disputes between couples: the wife will buy things on credit during the month and the husband will come home, pay the school fees and find he cannot pay off the credit and arguments arise. But, said Charity, having her own source of income means that she doesn't have to rely on her husband for household expenses.

In situations where the husband's income, either from land or

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[2] Mama Njoki who sells in Mukuyu market has bought a cow with her business profits. Cattle are still very definitely associated with men and Mama Njoki says that she has to pretend that the cow is her husband's because if she says it is hers he will get rid of it and stop her from doing business.

employment, cannot sustain the household, the self-reliance of the wife through her own business activities is often the only way to keep marriages together. However the possibilities presented for Muthithi women by their entry into entrepreneurship are curtailed as their business activities are always in the last instance constrained by and subordinated to their role as farmers and wives. In contrast to the livestock sellers then, the women who sell in Muthithi market may actually be prevented from engaging in large- scale business through their relationships to marriage and land.

According to Lucy who sells tomatoes, most of the women who sell in Muthithi are from the area directly around the market. Muthithi location is famed as a good area for food crops and nowadays for coffee. However the area directly around the market where many of the market women come from is relatively poor and the farms are not large. It is also predominantly Catholic and there is a big Catholic church next to the market. Interestingly few of the men who sell livestock are Catholics compared to the women of the market where the reverse is the case.

In the local spatial imaginary, Catholicism and poverty are often seen to go together. According to Baba Mwaniki

> "Catholics don't practice family planning and people of those areas are suffering from land shortage. Those are the places where a lot of *pombe* (local beer) is brewed and the people are not so well educated."

He contrasted this to the area where he himself lives, about five kilometers down from the market, which has been dominated by the Presbyterian church and where the land holdings also happen to be much bigger – due, according to him, to the decimation of populations by the diseases brought by Europeans.

> "Around here many people have degrees!"

he said. Another view of this scenario was presented to me by a man from above Muthithi who told me that the reason for big land holdings is that the people of that area practice witchcraft! These stereotypes which cast poverty and wealth in different lights in relation to the moralities of 'protestant progressiveness' and 'witchcraft' define the social topography of the area where factors such as church development, disease, and so forth have to some extent stratified geography in relation to wealth. It is this which is reflected in Muthithi market in the demarcation between the food section of the market and the livestock section, between male traders and female traders, and which in turn broadly reflects the pattern

of poverty and wealth of the farmsteads on the surrounding hills.

CONCLUSION

The relationship between gender and wealth in Muthithi market today reflects an inversion of the past where women were the ones who were associated with the augmentation of wealth through their movement, and men were the guardians of wealth. In the nineteenth century, the 'routes' or trading and raiding were dominant over 'roots' of land ownership. In relation to the market this was evidenced in the fact that exchange was geared to sustenance rather than profit. Today however where the relationship between society and wealth is encoded in the dominant ethos of 'roots' (see Part III), the scenario is somewhat different. The contemporary market is geared not simply to sustenance but also to profit and this has much to do with the current relationship between men and land. In contrast to the situation in the nineteenth century, land itself has become the source of wealth particularly through cashcropping. This has had repercussions in terms of the livestock trade in Muthithi where men in their association with landed wealth use the market to make profit. By contrast the women of the market whose husbands are poorer, use the market, as in the past, primarily for sustenance. In general the market for women reflects the predominant ethic of women as wives who are to a large extent defined by the socio-economic position of their husbands. However this too is beginning to change particularly in relation to the banana trade (the subject of chapter four). It is in relation to the banana trade that the concept of 'routes' which was the dominant ethos behind both wealth and society in the nineteenth century, may once again be significant in understanding the transformations of capitalism and the new relationships between gender, society, and wealth which pertain in Muthithi today.

CHAPTER 1B

ROUTES, ROOTS AND THE ETHNIC WHOLE: WEALTH AND SOCIETY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

I)MARRIAGE AND TRADE: THE ROUTE-ING OF THE ROOTS

The patterns of social interaction in the nineteenth century in areas like Muthithi were based on the necessity of interdependence and the creation of wealth through reciprocity. This is best understood through the symbolism of gender reflected in the dynamic interface between what may be termed as 'routes' and 'roots'. Wealth was associated with movement, with exogamous relationships between clans. Even today, women are named after the clans just as men are named after the age grades and the female aspect of clan can be characterised as 'roots', as the essence and origin of personhood and as the locus of productive potential. In the context of inter-clan relationships, it was through women that the clans were set in motion; they were 'route-ed' in a system of dynamic exchanges through which productive potential was mobilised to generate wealth. Just as it was women who symbolised 'roots', it was women who were 'route-ed', who had to move, and this they did in marriage and trade.

When I asked Cucu and Guka wa Njoki what was the most important ceremony in a person's life, they replied;

> "marriage is the most important ceremony when a girl is given to her husband in exchange for goats."

The ceremony recognised both the mutual profit which was gained by both sides and the loss which each would suffer. Thus the ceremony was accompanied by a sacrificial feast where the clan of the groom would slaughter goats to be eaten by the clan of the girl.

> "These were to *gucokia gwatho* (to 'give thanks') to the girl's parents" said Baba Mbugwa.

> "The *gurario* (thanksgiving feast)", said Guka wa Kibaru "is to show that you have blessed the things which you have given to your father-in-law and now they belong to him."

Only after the *gurario* could the bride be taken away and could the family of the bride visit the family of the groom to give thanks to them in a series of reciprocal visits which would last for 'the lifetime of the couple and beyond.'[3]

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[3] Although you could be 'bought' you could never be 'sold', according to Cucu wa Njoki, like something in the market. "A person is not an

The bridewealth in the form of livestock symbolised the principle of 'increase'; the cows and goats would be added to the flocks of the girl's clan where they produced offspring just as the girl herself added to the wealth and prosperity of her husband's home through her own offspring and her labour. "Bridewealth" said Mama Anne "never ends". Marriage was not a finite exchange; it was the principle of 'increase' which would continue to yield 'forever' in the context of the relationship within which it was engendered[4]. Bridewealth signified the beginning of a woman's relationship to clan as one of movement rather than stasis:

> "*Ruracio* (bridewealth)" said Guka wa Kibaru "is to show where you go...it is the things which are given... where you go is where your clan is; if you weren't married [as a woman] you belonged nowhere."

To signify the importance of 'routes' over 'roots' in the context of the relationship between wealth and society in the nineteeth century, the clan identities of women were only activated after their movement in marriage. It is said *muiritu ndari muhiringa*, a girl has no clan. It is only after she marries that she becomes a member of a clan, not her natal clan, but her husband's clan. Thus women in the nineteenth century, although they symbolised the principle of clan as the locus of productivity, did not take on their identification with particular clans until they were married.

The 'route-ing' of the 'roots' involved the agency of women as creative of wealth through their movement as well as their objectification as symbolic of productive potential. Women, like livestock, were wealth, but because of the dynamic nature of wealth in the nineteenth century, women's active agency in movement was also an aspect of the creation of wealth. The agency of women was also recognised in the process of marriage itself; before the marriage proceedings could begin the girl had to cook *ucoro* (porridge) for the

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animal!" said Cucu wa Kirima-ini. If there were arguments between the couple for instance the girl could return to her natal home. There were cases of outright divorce– such a woman was called *gicokio*, one who has 'returned'. If a woman returned to her natal clan for good, the clan had also to return the bridewealth. But more often the argument would be mended and the girl would go back to her husband. If it was her fault a goat had to be paid for the 're-lighting of the cooking fire'. If it was his fault he simply had to apologise.

[4] I was told that today households can no longer visit each other after marriage because people are so poor that they can no longer afford to keep up the flow of gifts which must accompany visits between families.

NJERI DRESSED UP AS A KIKUYU
WOMAN OF THE 19TH CENTURY.

groom to signify her consent. If she did not consent the marriage could not proceed.

The active capacity of women in their relationship to wealth can be seen particularly in their role as traders. Trade, like marriage, was also the productive transgression of boundaries and it was thus associated with women. In the past

> "women were the ones to trade, not men, because women were the ones to carry loads" said Cucu wa Njoki.

Women would carry their loads with *ciondo*, the baskets which Kikuyu women weave. *Condo* now, as in the past, symbolise the productive potential of women which they bear with them in their movement as traders and brides. The fact that women themselves make the *condo* which they carry on their backs, suggests *ciondo* are also symbolic of the active agency of women in mobilising their productive potential and ultimately the productive potential of the clan.

It was through their relation to women that trade and marriage were very much connected in the past.

> Cucu wa Kamarigu-ini was not from Muthithi. She came there when she was a young girl to exchange pots for food. She was from Mugoire which is famous for pots. She said she stayed with friends of her father's who he had met at the big dances which were connected to the circumcision sets and which were attended by people from far and wide. When Cucu went to Muthithi to trade pots for the second time, she was 'seized' by a young man from the area who had taken a fancy to her. He took away her maize and beans that she had received in exchange for her pots and took her to his home then sent a delegation to her parents home saying he was going to marry her! After she was married she didn't sell her pots anymore.

For young women,

> "if they travelled they would often be married where they went like me"

said Cucu wa Kamarigu-ini. In addition, once they were married, women went far and wide to trade without fear of capture. Cucu wa Njoki described how her ancestresses would go even to Maasailand to trade. The Maasai used to come here to raid cattle and women, but women were not afraid to go to Maasailand in Cucu's time because when women went to trade they would not be hurt. (See also Leaky 1977 vol 1; 479-505).

ii) TERRITORY, DESCENT AND WARFARE: THE ROOTING OF THE ROUTES

The principle of 'routes' embodied in the movement of women was the defining characteristic of 'ethnicity' in the nineteenth century. Through 'routes', ethnicity could be seen as a relationship based on

the necessity of interdependence and the social expression of wealth through exchange. However the principle of 'routes' threatened to be its own undoing; the 'route-ing' of the clans threatened to breakdown their 'rooted' identities and thus to breakdown the whole system. Although women enacted the essence of clan as 'roots', as productive potential which was then constitutive of wealth through their movement, it was men who realised the rooting of these 'routes'. Men's role in the rooting of the clans could be seen in the fact that, unlike women, they always remained with their natal clan.

"Men are not bought" said Guka wa Kibaru "they will go nowhere." According to Mama Simon

"men don't like to go far from home; it is women who go". Men's role in rooting the clans was also seen in their relationship to the mbari, which are sub-clans. Clan itself is a cosmic essence related to productive potential and creativity. Embodied in the persons of women, it represents a cosmic definition of 'roots' (see Part III). However the *mbari* or subclans represent the rooting of the clans in time and space and this aspect of the clans is associated not with women but with men. The *mbari* were concretised in time through their association with a particular founder (male) ancestor and with his descendents over a number of generations. *Mbari* were localised in space in that they were associated with the particular territory on which that ancestor originally settled. Individual *mbari* tended to settle on the ridges of the hills that make up Kikuyuland, each of which became associated with the clan from which the *mbari* had sprung. Thus one ridge might be referred to as belonging to the clan Wairimu although in reality it was only a sub-branch of that clan that resided there. Men's association with their *mbari* was cemented through the fact that they did not change their clan on marriage and by the fact that they inherited their names and their land from that *mbari*. However, although physically more tangible than the clans, *mbari* were nonetheless subject to frequent fission as it was the expectation that sons would move off to found their own *mbari*. Thus, unlike women's 'roots', men's 'roots' were only ever short lived.

Men's role in 'rooting' the 'routes' can further be seen in the endemic warfare, the raiding between clans for goats and women which characterised the nineteenth century.

> "Before the whites came there were no rulers" said Mzee wa Wainaina, "only fighting and raiding between groups- especially with the Wakamba."

"People killed people of other clans like the Maasai" said Guka
wa Kibaru, "they were beating them and taking their things..."

The Kikuyu would fight with *rungus* (clubs), shields and swords which
were forged by a Kikuyu blacksmith according to Mzee wa Wainaina.
Mzee's father was a fighter and also a *muthamaki* (a big man) and a
mutonga (a rich man). His father used to go and raid in Ukambani
where they would 'kill the men and take the cows and women.' The
women were brought back and then 'sold'; 'married'. The bridewealth
went to their captors. According to Mzee, WaKamba women were very
happy to be captured and 'married' in Kikuyuland as they suffered
from hunger in Ukambani and Kikuyuland was a land of plenty. Maasai
women, however, were not so happy as they did not like the Kikuyu
diet. Godfrey Muriuki (1974) informs us that fighting in the
nineteenth century   was as much a feature of relations between
Kikuyu clans as between Kikuyu and Maasai or other of their
neighbours. Hence nineteenth century relationships were organised
along axes linking clans within an overall 'ethnic whole' rather than
between the 'tribes' of today.

The threat posed to clan identity through the fluidity engendered by
the movement of women across boundaries in trade and marriage, was
balanced by a counter-trend to reaffirm the boundaries between clans
and this was expressed through warfare. The fighting and raiding
between clans which characterised the 'male' side of inter-clan
relationships was, like marriage and exchange, a means of acquiring
wealth (women and livestock). However warfare had to do with the
defence and violation of boundaries just as the 'female' side of
wealth creation had to do with the productive transgression of
boundaries. Marcel Mauss pinpoints the dual face of social
relationships based on reciprocity in his essay on 'The Gift' when he
writes when two groups meet "they can either resort to arms...or come
to terms" (1988; 79). These two facets equally defined the social
system of the nineteenth century in terms of the complementarity of
alliance and warfare between clans. The extent to which warfare and
marriage expressed two sides of the same coin can be seen in the fact
that individual clans would go to war with each other even as they
intermarried. Equally, while men fought each other, women could go
into enemy territory to trade with the assurance that they would not
be harmed; as Cucu wa Njoki told me, her grandmothers did not fear
the Maasai because they were going there for trade.

In the context of the clans and the creation of wealth in the
nineteenth century, men symbolised the 'rooting' of the 'routes' and

this was demonstrated in the fact that they had ritually to orchestrate and contain the movement of women. As the case of Cucu wa Kamarigu-ini demonstrates, women who were 'unmarried', 'uncontained', would be married if they moved in activities such as trade. Similarly the married women who returned from long-distance trading expeditions had to symbolically present the fruits of their trade to their husbands although in reality they often maintained control over these (Leaky 1977 vol 1; 479-505). The principle of the 'containment of routes' was also realised in marriage itself whereby the bride had to be symbolically 'captured' by the groom before she could leave her natal clan rather than going of her own accord. This principle endured after marriage whereby men exerted their dominance over women as wives.

> "Married women" said Cucu wa Gonyo "feared their husbands very much; if you merely answered back [to your husband] you could be beaten and if another man heard you answering back to your husband he could beat you. If a woman ever beat a man she would be cast out from that area and no one would want to have anything to do with her ever again."

This contrasts with the relationships between men and young unmarried girls for instance who, according to Cucu wa Gonyo, 'had no fear of men'.[5]

III) CLAN AND SOCIETY: THE PARAMETERS OF THE ETHNIC WHOLE.

The relationship between 'routes' and 'roots' constituted the social system of the nineteenth century as one based on the necessity of interdependence and the social expression of wealth through exchange. Both 'routes' and 'roots' in the nineteenth century were contained within the overall parameters of a social whole which I term the 'ethnic whole'. The 'ethnic whole' embraced not only the clans of the Kikuyu but also the clans of the neighbouring Wakamba, Maasai and Mount Kenya peoples (Embu and Meru) as one. The 'ethnic whole' was

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[5] It is important to differentiate the association of gender and wealth from the association of gender and power. The symbolic role of men in containing women and the symbolic role of women in engendering productivity (through their labour and through their bearing of children) was differentiated from the reality where woman's capacity for hard work did not count for much if she was not also good, and where a man's abuse of the symbolic power he held over his wife was not necessarily condoned. Eliud wa Kabugwa told me that
> "the mark of a good man was one who took proper care of his wives and treated them well. The mark of a good woman was one who could behave courteously with visitors and offer them a chair and also someone who didn't insult children. She could be very hardworking but this didn't count for anything if her behaviour was not good."

thus a unity which was characterised by the plurality of language and culture endemic to the region. As Thomas Spear and Richard Waller remark:

> "The Rift Valley and its adjacent highlands were always a far more confused and complicated place characterised by great linguistic, social and economic diversity in which ethnic pluralism and multi-lingualism have more commonly been the rule than the highly restrictive and prescriptive ethnicities which appear questionably to be the current pattern." (Spear & Waller 1993; 19).

The 'ethnic whole' which united neighbouring groups, encapsulated the interrelationships between the fundamental units of social cohesiveness which were the clans. The relationship between clan and ethnicity was a relationship between the pull of the self-interest of the clans and the counter pull operating through a definition of the 'social' which transcended these interests. This relationship was in essence one between wealth and the social context of wealth. The 'ethnic whole' was a 'moral economy' (see also Lonsdale 1992) which defined the parameters of wealth as reciprocity between clans which were themselves united within an overarching concept of society. This sense of being part of a similar community transcended divisions of language and culture which separated these groups, particularly the Maasai from the Kikuyu and WaKamba.

> "In those days" I was told "the Maasai and Kikuyu were one; they married each other."

Nyokabi, which denotes a Maasai ancestress is a common name even today among Kikuyu girls.[6]

The principle of 'routes' as productive exchange was generated within a concept of society defined by the parameters of the 'ethnic whole'. This whole was itself formed by the dual incentives of increased productivity and the necessity of interdependence in view of ecological pressures such as famine. In terms of increased productivity, the inter-relationships between groups including those of the neighbouring Wakamba and Maasai not only increased the potential for wealth accumulation within clans but also allowed for increasing specialisation (Thomas Spear in Spear and Waller 1993;

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[6] The dominance of 'routes' as movement within a whole was also reflected in Muthithi market in the nineteenth century which attracted people such as the WaKamba who came regularly to trade there. Today this is no longer the case and the market has become much more localised reflecting also the dominance of 'rooted' identities over 'route-ed' ones in the present day.

10). By the end of the 19th century the Kikuyu were known for their agriculture, the Maasai for their pastoralism and the WaKamba for their role as middlemen in coastal trade and as ritual specialists. Maasai pastoralism could not function without some reliance on Kikuyu agriculture especially in times of drought and equally, the importance of livestock in Kikuyu exchanges, particularly for bridewealth, led to a reliance on Maasai cattle (Richard Waller in Spear & Waller 1993; 228). The exchanges between groups and the dynamic incentives which exchange generated were in themselves the source of wealth.

Trade and marriage were not only about the nature of wealth and productivity which stemmed from movement they were also a response to potential crises in the community which, in the nineteenth century frequently took the form of famine. (See also Richard Waller in Spear & Waller 1993; 230).

> "In the past there were terrible famines" said Cucu wa Kirima-ini. "When there was famine we used to go down to Kaharati to get limestone and exchange it in Muthithi market for food like bananas and things."

Famine was one of the main motivations for migrations, temporary or permanent, across clan boundaries and for other forms of movement such as trade and even the 'selling' of children.

> "People exchanged children for food" said Cucu wa Kirima-ini "especially young girls who would be given to the rich men of the neighbourhood - many were sold (*ciendagio*) in this way. Some were even taken to Ukambani and Maasailand but that never happened in this area. I told my father that even if he accepted food for me, I would never go" [7].

In times of famine, said Cucu wa Kamarigu-ini, they would go to areas where there was still food where they would remain until the famine was over. She herself went to the places where tea is grown today. Guka wa Njoki said that in the past there were many Wakamba who came to Kikuyu land as there was 'too much sun in Ukambani'. When they came they were given land by the Kikuyu as there was plenty of land at that time. People in the 19th century were very dependent on each other in places like Muthithi because of the threat of famine and even more so in Ukambani and Maasailand where it was much drier. This interdependence also necessitated periodic migration which

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[7] To sell a child was to exchange the labour and value of a child, normally a girl child, for, in this case, food. To sell a child in this way was to ensure that the child would not die of hunger which it might do if a family was suffering from chronic food shortage.

accompanied the constant movement between clans in the context of exogamous exchange.[8]

If there can be said to be anything concrete which defined the 'ethnic whole' of the nineteenth century in which the Kikuyu, Maasai, WaKamba and others were united, it was the ritual of initiation and the cross-cutting bonds of age and generation. A number of times I was told that the Kamba and Maasai were the same as Kikuyu "they circumcise just like us". One of the two initiation guilds in Kikuyu was 'Ukabi', which means Maasai and was the same initiation guild used by the Maasai themselves. Initiation united these groups in a 'moral community' which stressed their similarity, their 'civilisation', in contrast to those who did not circumcise or who did not circumcise in the way that they did. Thus for instance people from other parts of Kenya such as Western Kenya or the coast were not thought of as 'the same as Kikuyu.' The *ciama* or councils of elders which were formed from the ruling generation sets and which were the major political institutions of the time were also based not on the clans but on the cross-clan institution of the age-grades. The 'ethnic whole' was thus defined as a social and moral whole symbolised in the cross-clan ritual of initiation and concretised through the cross-clan institution of the *ciama* which were based on age and generation. Just as women were named after the clans, men were named after the age-grades and were associated with the encompassing nature of the 'ethnic whole'.

The principles behind the establishment of the 'ethnic whole' recognised the common interest involved in the inter-relationships between the clans. These inter-relationships were contained through the precedence of the social interests of co-operation embodied in the 'ethnic whole' over and above the individual interests of the clans. This is again shown in the relationships between men and

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[8] Even in this century famine has continued to motivate exchange; in Mukuyu market there is a small row of grandmothers who sell bananas at the entrance to the market. They told me that many of them started business in the 1940's when there was a famous famine called the famine of cassava. In 1984 there was another period of hunger and I was told that at this time many of the women in Muthithi started going to Nairobi to do business selling things like bananas. However the equations have been altered during this century by the presence of the state which has to a large extent replaced ethnicity as the medium of social relationships between groups.
   "In 1925" said Cucu wa Munyua "many Maasai came to sell their children to Kikuyus because of famine. After 1925 this didn't happen anymore because the government would give food."

A GRANDMOTHER WHO STARTED
BUSINESS IN THE 1940'S BECAUSE
OF HUNGER. SHE NOW SELLS BANANAS
IN MUKUYU MARKET.

women. Men, who embodied the principle of the 'ethnic whole' through their association with the age grades ritually orchestrated and contained the movement of women which represented the individual interests of the clan. Thus men's role in 'rooting' the 'routes' was paralleled by their role in containing the individualism of the clans.

CONCLUSION

The dynamism of ethnicity was comprised of what can be described as the two opposing forces connected to inter-clan relationships, those of 'roots' and 'routes'. The relationship of men and women to 'roots' and 'routes' was quadrangular: women symbolised clan as 'roots', but, in the context of 19th century ethnicity where the principle of wealth and society was based on movement and relationships between clans, they were the ones who enacted and were associated with 'routes' in the form of marriage and trade. Men symbolised 'routes' in that they embodied the principle of ethnicity which was, in the nineteenth century, characterised by porous boundaries stabilised and maintained through the cross-cutting links of the age-grades. At the same time men enacted 'roots' in that their principle role was to guard these boundaries and affirm the 'rooted' identity of the clan. Alliance and wealth were associated with women just as the preservation of boundaries and the guardianship of wealth was associated with men[9]. These relationships were articulated within an overall understanding of society which could be conceptualised as an 'ethnic whole' and whose existence was realised in the political and religious institutions based on cross-cutting links reflected in the age-grades. The 'ethnic whole' conveys the sense of community and inter-group relationships, the reality of inter-dependence and the benefits of inter-group exchange. Overall in the context of the nineteenth century ethnicity, the principle of 'routes', of the inter-connectedness of groups, was dominant over that of 'roots' as a definition of both society and wealth. In this context ethnicity itself was the 'unity of plurality' rather than the homogenous bounded entity of 'tribe' through which ethnic identities manifest themselves today.

The relationship between 'roots' and 'routes' continues to interact with the relationship between society and wealth even in the present day context of capitalist development. Today it is the more static

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[9] Men literally guarded wealth in their role as herders.

principle of 'roots' which encodes the dominant relationship to wealth in the form of capital and property (principally land) as opposed to productive potential (labour) and livestock. The present relationship to wealth is not defined through inter-relationships between groups orchestrated through exogamous exchange and warfare, but rather through control over capital and through the market. In terms of ownership and control over property it is men, not women who are actively associated with the creation of wealth and this can be seen in the livestock trade of Muthithi market which is both profit making and is connected to the relationship between men and land. The wives in Muthithi market on the other hand continue to embody their 'rooted' relationship to the clan in terms of their role as sustainers of their households, but they are no longer creative of wealth through movement (marriage and trade) as they might have been in the past. Instead it is wives today who play the role of the guardianship of wealth (the 'rooting' of 'roots') in the form of their husbands' land and assets.

Today relationships in the Muthithi area are changing once more a shift precipitated particularly by the downfall since the late 1980's of coffee as a cashcrop. Coffee can be taken to represent the present day association between men and 'rooted' wealth in the form of investment in land. However in the last 10-15 years the price of coffee has undergone large fluctuations on the world market and this has had a significant financial impact for both men and women. The strength of the Muthithi/Kirere livestock market may be seen as a new form of investment for men's capital. Similarly, for women, price fluctuation has not only resulted in their impoverishment as part of their husbands' households, it has also pushed them increasingly into independent forms of accumulation. This is seen in particular in the banana trade. Bananas form the largest section of Muthithi market. They are the crop of women and in the present day they are beginning to be exported in large quantities from Murang'a district where the income they bring in is threatening to supplant the fluctuating returns from coffee. This in turn has new implications for the relationship between wealth and gender in the present day and possibly points to a more 'route-ed' dimension in the definition of rural capitalism. Before returning in chapter four to the banana trade in Muthithi, the next two sections will examine some facets of the relationships between women and men, and 'routes' and 'roots' in

the context of the development of capitalism and state formation which will help us to understand present day transformations.

CHAPTER 2

TRADE-ROUTES: THE INCURSION OF CAPITALISM IN THE COLONIAL ERA

I) MEN AND BUSINESS

The 'routes' which in the nineteenth century wove the fabric of inter-group relationships within the social parameters of the 'ethnic whole', in the twentieth century came to be defined increasingly by the state. This can be seen in the development of markets. In the nineteenth century there were few big markets. Muthithi was one of these and people would come from far and wide to trade there. There were many WaKamba who came to exchange cows and goats. On the other hand markets like Kiria-ini started after the advent of colonialism, during the course of this century. Baba Denis told me that Kiria-ini was started by a man called Chui who built a small shop at the meeting point of many roads including the route to Nyeri and the North-South route from 'South Africa to Ethiopia'. *Kiria* means 'matter' and the meeting point of these roads was also a place where news and other matters were discussed. Many of the early markets of this century including Mukuyu and Karatina, were built along the roads. These new routes which began to link people in new ways were dictated increasingly by the demands of the colonial state.

In the nineteenth century, the movement undertaken in activities such as trade was in itself creative of wealth. However after the advent of the state and the market, wealth came increasingly to be about the accumulation of capital and about fixed assets and not about movement. It was at this stage that men became more involved[10]. Guka wa Njoki told me

"it was the Asians who taught us business".
Many of the business activities which went on in the early decades of the century were pioneered by Asians. Hassan Rattansi remembers his father telling him of how he trekked on an elephant trail into Nyeri to set up a shop there. They took calico, beads, bangles, salt, sugar

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[10] Peter Marris and Tony Somerset (1971) document the involvement of men in long distance trade, particularly with the Maasai, even during the nineteenth century, and it is to this which they in part ascribe the "unusual spirit of competition, entrepreneurship and hard work" which Kikuyu businessmen display in the present day. However my sources indicate that it was primarily women not men who were involved in long distance trade in the past. This may also vary according to region.

and so forth, which they traded for things like ivory and hides. Shopping centres emerged in the rural areas such as Thika Sabasaba and Maragua, the latter two very close to Muthithi. Guka wa Njoki started business before the Independence war taking produce either by foot or by donkey to Maragua to sell to the Asian stores there.

Peter Marris and Tony Somerset (1971; 48) refer to the flourishing trade in maize of Kikuyu men in the 1930's. They bought the grain cheaply from Kikuyu women and transported it by donkey to nearby shopping centres. However, as Marris and Somerset describe, these business activities declined due to competition from Asian traders who began visiting the area in the 1940's with lorries and began buying the Kikuyu women's maize while Kikuyu men moved on to other things. Guka wa Muiruri said, compared to Asian business, lack of capital was the main thing that disadvantaged incipient African business at this time. He himself started to grow coffee and wattle after the Emergency in the 1950's, and with the proceeds of these he went back into business and was able to expand. Thus it was the capital which was generated through a combination of employment and land (cashcrops) which could then be re-invested in business for men like Guka.

Although investment of capital was replacing 'movement' and exchange as the source of wealth in the twentieth century, women continued, even without capital, to mobilise 'routes' in order to generate wealth. According to the elders who sell livestock in Muthithi market, women started to do business in the 1920's, 30's and 40's

> "that's when they became clever; they would go to Magadi and buy salt which they would exchange here for foodstuffs..."

(This was highly illegal as far as the colonial state was concerned as the regulation and distribution of salt was a key through which they maintained a handle on rural populations.) Women also started to take advantage of trade with Nairobi. Cucu wa Mucii told me that people had been taking bananas and maize to Nairobi since before the Independence war - she herself used to take them. It would be a 3 day trip: she would carry bananas on her back until she reached Kamahuha then get a *matatu* (minibus-taxi) to Nairobi. Cucu wa Ciru started with one chicken which she used to buy oranges and avocados which she sold in Nairobi. She would stay overnight sleeping in the bus depot, and then sell in the morning. Thus women used the produce from their farms or any cash their husbands might give them, to continue their

trading activities and, through their movement, to generate their own capital.

II) WOMEN AND TRADE

Women's business activities in the 1920's, 30's and 40's were, like men's, a response to the increasing opportunities which were presented directly and indirectly by the colonial state. The state generated new markets and created improved infrastructure which connected people in new ways. However the development of the state simultaneously undermined the structures of ethnicity within which relationships and power had hitherto been organised. Women who profited from trade were now seen as threatening because the 'routes' they engendered through business could no longer always be contained by the 'roots' (embodied in the persons of men) through which communities were preserved. Now the 'routes' of the women were not controlled in relation to community or clan; they were open ended and were increasingly motivated by profit alone. This was ultimately represented in the figure of the prostitute whose productive potential was never 're-rooted' into her clan but was lost forever to the community from which she came.

Young men who were employed by the state were also escaping the orbit of gerontocratic control through which communities were organised and thus they too were seen as betraying their clans. The soldiers returning from the Second World War exemplified this dual threat to rural clans from the youth and from women. According to Baba Mwaniki, the abandonment of their clans by soldiers who went abroad to fight for the 'white man' resulted in the infidelity of their wives and many of these young men returned from the war to find that their wives had 'half-caste' babies (a reference to the perceived promiscuity of Catholic missionaries) or even worse that they had sold their land and run away to Nairobi to become prostitutes. The soldiers who had returned with cash to spend only exacerbated the situation by starting *matatu* (minibus) services. The *matatus*, I was told, swept the women away in droves to the cities where they sold the food of the rural areas thus inviting famine[11] or stayed to become 'prostitutes'.

As a metaphor, famine captured both the necessity and the danger of

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[11] There was in fact a big famine in the 1940's which hit areas like Muthithi.

exchange. During times of famine exchange could save lives, but equally it could generate profit for those unaffected who could obtain favourable terms from those who were suffering. In addition the desire for profit could potentially create famine by motivating women to sell the food which was supposed to be for the sustenance of their communities. The 'routes' of the women had always been as potentially threatening to communities as they were enhancing. As Cucu wa Gonyo said, you could only exchange things in Muthithi market if you had surplus or you would invite hunger. This is perhaps one reason why the long distance trading expeditions of women in the past were not a regular occurrence and were often a response to exceptional situations. In the middle of the twentieth century the metaphor of famine was used to control the movement of women whose independent earning capacity was now in competition with that of men, and to express the new threats to the social structures of the rural areas which colonialism and the cash economy engendered. Eliud wa Kabugwa who is an elder from Muthithi, explained to me:

> "People didn't have a problem with businesswomen in the past. Husbands were happy for their wives to barter food in the market. This was true until the 1930's. But in the 1940's after the war the ex-soldiers and 'the rich' bought *matatus* and started *matatu* services to Nairobi. Women then started selling food in Nairobi. This was when their husbands reacted, forbidding them to sell food to Nairobi because it would leave no food for the household and would cause famine. Nowadays there is no problem with women doing business as there are so many economic problems and no jobs so business is a good thing."

Despite the attempts to control the movement of rural women, people like the wives of Muthithi have continued to deploy their traditional relationship to trade in times of crisis. After the Emergency it was the women in places like Muthithi who took the lead in re-structuring rural communities at a time when men were still incapacitated.

> "Women" said Cucu wa Gonyo, "started going to Nairobi after the Mau Mau to sell bananas...but this wasn't the same as when they left their homes and went for prostitution: Some thought they were going there for prostitution but they weren't going there for that."

Cucu wa Karatasi said of women's business trips to Nairobi at this time

> "why should husbands mind as they were going to earn money to contribute to the home?"

If women had already started business in the 1940's, it was after the Mau Mau "which brought the problems which have continued ever since" that women started business in earnest. This was not just a response to crisis but also to opportunity. Mary told me that after the Mau

Mau the business activities which had begun before the war suddenly bloomed because there was no restriction on movement. Mama Wambui described to me how her mother would buy pots from Mugoire and sell them in Muthithi. One trip would take about three days and you would have to have someone to look after the farmstead during that time. Similarly Mary's mother, who was widowed in the Mau Mau, started selling bananas in Nairobi and pots in Kandara once the Emergency was over. She would trek across the ridges with a group of other women and from five to seven pots on her back. Pots and bananas were the two forms of business in those days through which women from areas like Muthithi could earn money. But bananas required more capital because of the *matatu* fare.

"We educate our children with our backs"
said Cucu wa Gakoigo referring to the trading activities of women. Education became the new investment through which the overall wealth of a community could be raised. Education was associated with employment and the state. In addition it was paid for with money which men could earn through employment and thus it was thought to be the responsibility of the husband. Women remained responsible for the subsistence of their homesteads; as Mama Wangeci told me

"I can't educate my husband's children!"
However men's relationship to wealth is unstable mainly because it is associated with the state and the world market which themselves are highly unstable. Thus, through the need for education, rural women are still called upon to deploy their traditional role in the generation of wealth through their movement. At times when men are in a state of crisis, women 'take to the road' in trade. They may also do this during periods of drought where they can no longer sustain their households through their normal activities and their land. In 1984 in Muthithi when there was a period of drought many women apparently started going to Nairobi to sell bananas or mangos from their farms. But once the drought was over they continued as before. At the end of the 1950's there was a great call for the restructuring of communities and more desire than ever for education in order to take full advantage of the possibilities offered by the approaching Independence of Kenya. At this stage, in the service of their clans and of the wider community, it was women who were the ones to trek across the ridges or ride the *matatus* to Nairobi, 'educating their children with their backs' and evoking the 'routes' of the past through which wealth had been engendered.

CONCLUSION

The relationship between 'routes' and 'roots' continues to be an important dynamic in the modern day. It seems that in the context of rural marriages in places like Muthithi male wealth, bounded by the state and often expressed through the metaphor of 'roots', and female wealth, unbounded by the state and still expressed through the metaphor of 'routes', interchange to allow communities to ride the tides of living in the modern world. In this respect rural wives on the one hand are seen as women who should stay at home and on the other as women who should go 'out' and create wealth through their movement not only to sustain their households but to invest in things such as the education of their children. The rural women who take to the roads in the service of their community and homes are, as Cucu wa Gonyo pointed out, not the same as the 'prostitutes' who abandoned both. Instead these rural wives are in the present time invoking the bygone 'routes' of the women which were defined by the fact that they were always re-rooted in their clans and contained within the framework of the 'ethnic whole' in which a concept of society was realised.

CHAPTER 3

MEN AND LAND: ROOTS, STATE, AND CAPITALISM IN THE 20TH CENTURY

I) CHURCH, CHIEFS AND COFFEE: NEW IDEOLOGIES OF GENDER AND WEALTH

During the twentieth century, whilst rural wives continued to invoke the concept of 'routes' in times of crisis, rural men were the actors through which a concept of 'roots' was steadily being cemented as the dominant ethos behind wealth and society. In the context of capitalism and state, new ideologies began to take shape which underpinned economic and social relationships and in the process elevated men '. to a new position in the creation and control of wealth. The history of Gachocho illustrates an overall dynamic through which men, wealth and state have come to be connected and through which new ideologies of the relationship between wealth and community have come into being.

Gachocho lies on the borders of the tea and coffee zones above Muthithi. It is not on the road, and to reach it one must go in from Kirere where the cattle market is located. Gachocho is a prosperous area with an unusual number of stone houses. Its wealth has mainly come from coffee which does particularly well there. Food crops are not grown in any quantity in Gachocho unlike Muthithi where they are grown alongside coffee. This is partly because the area is higher than Muthithi and thus food crops do not do so well and partly because coffee itself does exceptionally well there. The *shambas* in Gachocho are more fertile than those in Muthithi but also smaller. The absence of food crops means that the people of the area are dependent on cash which is obtained mainly through coffee and employment, both of which are dominated by men.

The state, in the form of the colonial chiefs, has had a major influence in Gachocho. Gachocho was the home of Kambogo, a prominent early chief who was a contemporary and friend of Njiri, one of the most famous and ruthless of the early colonial chiefs. Mwangi is the great grandson of Kambogo on his mother's side. He told me how the chiefs of that time were despised; many of them took land by force and became immensely rich. They also took women as wives by force and no one dared to oppose them or they would be killed. According to Mwangi, Kambogo had forty two wives.

The missions, which underpinned the incursion of the colonial state

in the rural areas, also had much to contribute to the development of the ideologies which lay behind a new concept of wealth, gender and society. As a result of its proximity to Githimu, the site of one of the early Anglican missions, Gachocho was also highly influenced by Christianity. From the beginning, Anglican Christianity associated itself, in the words of Baba Simon, with ethics of 'cleanliness, prosperity and progress' and pitted itself against what were portrayed as the regressive forces of 'tradition'. The missions were also responsible for education which was to be the key which enabled individuals to gain access to the fruits of the colonial state through the avenues it opened to employment.

Christianity and the chiefs set Gachocho on the road to prosperity. However, despite its association with the church and the state, Gachocho was not really to become wealthy until the advent of coffee after the 1950's. Mama Mbugwa remembers that when she was a little girl growing up in Gachocho, the area had forest and bush, and wild animals at the bottom of the garden like hyena and elephant. But after the 1950's the whole area was cleared, as it is today, to make way for coffee. Coffee was the crop of men. It was their capital earned through employment which bought the seedlings and paid for the inputs that successful coffee farming required. Those who benefited most from coffee were those who had integrated themselves most into the colonial regime. In Gachocho many of these were the 'standard fivers' of the 1940's who had had a mission education and who, as I was told by Waitherera, were 'our bosses'. Many of them became teachers who, in those days, were highly paid and relatively wealthy compared to others and thus had the capital required for coffee farming. Men like Baba Warugoro used the capital from his teaching profession to develop his coffee and then the capital from his coffee to start business. He now has a successful retail clothes shop in Nairobi.

Coffee was from the start associated with the state. Eliud wa Kabugwa was working for the government as an elder of the law courts in Muthithi well before the Emergency was declared in 1952. He started coffee in 1956 although he said coffee came to the area in 1952. The coffee nursery was in Kirere above Muthithi market where the livestock market is today. Mzee Kabugwa described how the whites were very strict about how the coffee was planted.

> "You were only allowed to plant 100 plants in a year to prevent you from becoming rich too quickly and providing competition for Europeans"

said Mzee. He protested about this to the District Officer and, he told me,

> "five whites came with the D.O. and uprooted many of my plants just as they had uprooted Koinange's coffee."

Guka wa Muiruri who comes from Githima, started coffee in the early 50's when it was introduced by the whites as a sweetener to stop people from joining the Mau Mau. The refusal of the colonial regime to let Africans grow cashcrops such as coffee which were seen as potential competition for white farming was one of the main issues behind the formation of the political movement which culminated in the Independence war. Those who grew coffee in the 1950's during the war were seen as the 'home guard' those who had 'betrayed' the fighters and were siding with the colonial government. Guka described how those who grew coffee were subject to attacks and often murder by the Mau Mau guerillas so it was not always the easy option. It was Guka's coffee however which allowed him to acquire the capital to re-start his business after the war and to become prosperous.

Baba Wangeci told me that when coffee first came it was very unpopular because it was said to be a KADU crop and people who grew it were putting themselves at risk because it is a strongly KANU area[12]. Baba Wangeci's grandfather was an assistant chief in the 1950's and 60's and after the war he forced his subjects to grow coffee because he saw that it would be very valuable in the future.

> "People believed that at Independence all would become rich and that the *Muzungus* (Europeans) would be forced to give up their land and the *Wahindis* (Asians) their shops. But this turned out not to be the case so people were very grateful to my grandfather." said Baba Wangeci.

The same thing happened in Gachocho when coffee prices began to decline in the 1980's, a factor which people blamed on Moi, the president at the time, who was perceived as being very anti Kikuyu[13]. People threatened to uproot their coffee and to plant other crops instead such as food crops. The government, fearing loss of revenue, had made the uprooting of coffee illegal. Duncan Gachohi, grandson of Kambogo, was a subchief in Gachocho at the time. He persuaded the

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[12] KADU was an alliance of smaller tribes which had the support of the colonial regime against the main Kikuyu Luo alliance(KANU)under which Independence was achieved.

[13] Moi was in fact part of the original KADU alliance which had opposed Kenyatta's KANU although he afterwards joined KANU where he eventually became vice president and then, after Kenyatta's death, president.

people not to destroy coffee saying the price would come up again and, sure enough, coffee is now beginning to come up once more. The prosperity of Gachocho today is in part attributed to people like Duncan Gachohi and other pro-government influences such as the early missions in the area.

A lot of land was put under coffee in the '60's and '70's and in the 1970's the income from coffee brought unprecedented wealth to coffee farmers in places like Muthithi. I was told that farmers would go to their banks to be told how much money they had in their accounts and they would be furious with the bank manager because they thought they were being cheated and that the ludicrously large sums were an insidious ploy to take away their land! However the coffee boom did not last and in the 1980's prices fluctuated dramatically on the world market. The fluctuations of the market were exacerbated by political and bureaucratic procedures caused in part by the ineptitude of farmers who failed to take control of the marketing of coffee.

The coffee board became riddled with loopholes and coffee money was siphoned off by middlemen and by the machinations of the politics and corruption. Today the farmer gets paid almost nothing for a kilo of coffee. The association in people's minds between coffee and the state can be seen in the fact that people blame the downfall of coffee on Moi saying he 'ate the coffee money'. Correspondingly the recent upturn in coffee is attributed to the efforts of the opposition Kikuyu politician Matiba who initiated the multiparty era. However although political interference may have contributed to the changing fortunes of coffee, the fluctuations on the world market have also played their part.

After Independence, coffee became the major metaphor for 'prosperity' underpinned by the state and the ethics of Anglican Christianity. Coffee pioneered the concept of 'development' which was linked to the notion of 'progress' and its associations with 'civilisation' and 'modernity' inspired by the missions. Baba Muriu told me that he retired at the end of the 1970's and he decided to 'develop' his land; he planted coffee. The concept of 'development' linked together the state, the mission-defined ethic of 'progress', land, wealth, and men in a single package. This was underlined at the time of Independence by the land demarcation of the early '60's. It was after

land demarcations according to Baba Mwaniki, that people started talking of 'my *shamba*' (farm) which cemented a new definition of wealth whereby 'fixed' wealth and individual ownership was dominant over the 'moveable' wealth and the alliances between clans of the nineteenth century[14].

II) COFFEE AND WIVES: THE GUARDIANSHIP OF WEALTH

Land and capital were associated with men (who inherited land and earned capital) and were mobilised by them to create wealth just as labour and fertility were associated with women and were mobilised by them to create wealth in the past. Furthermore, the 'development' of the land depended on capital which was generally obtained through employment and men were thus dependent on their wives to manage their land and look after it while they themselves worked, often away from home. Male wealth, as has been well documented, is thus dependent on female compliance in the role of wife and farmer[15]. In this new scenario the gender roles have been reversed and women as wives have increasingly become the 'guardians' of wealth just as men had been in the past[16]. The guardianship of (male) wealth extends to coffee which is often tended by women although, unlike food crops, the proceeds from coffee still remain in the control of men. Njoki told me that

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[14] The links between the state and coffee and the new morality of wealth can be seen in the ploy of the coffee board to legitimate itself in terms of one of the most deep-rooted standards against which the ethics of a community are measured; that of famine.
> "Cash crops are nice" said Mama Mbugwa "if there is drought the government will give maize":
The coffee board will give coffee farmers maize on credit in times of hunger. In this way they can commandeer the allegiance of farmers even when coffee itself is not only unprofitable but actually entails loss.

[15] Michael Channock for instance writes that the labour of wives on cashcrops was vital and the withdrawal of this at key times could spell disaster. This led to an emphasis on marital ties. (Channock 1985;14).

[16] Women's guardianship of rural wealth is symbolised in the phrase *mburi cia atumia*, 'goats of the women'. In an inversion of the nineteenth century, the goats were now guarded and tended not by men but by women.
> "Even now they belong to women let me tell you" said Cucu wa Kamariguini: "If a husband is employed he might buy you goats and leave them with you, you are the one who will be seeing to them so they are yours."
If there were problems she said, you could write to your husband asking for permission to sell them. You couldn't do anything without his authority or vice versa.
> "Before employment" she said "the goats were for men."
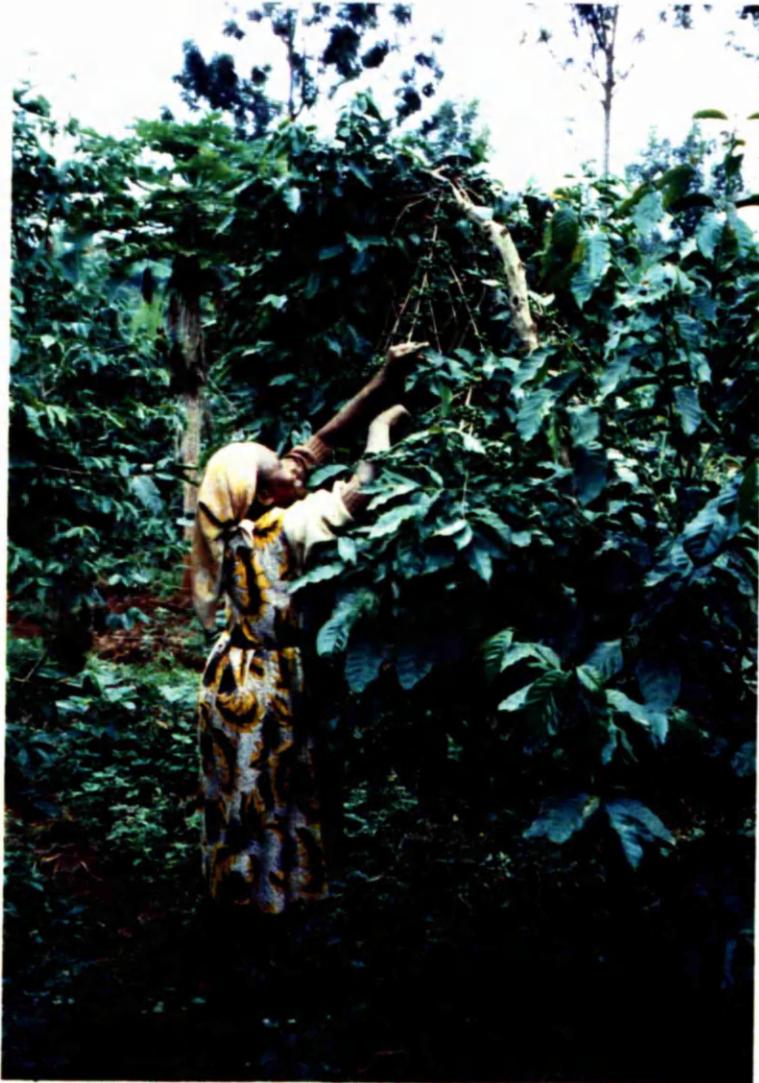
MAMA LUCY PICKING COFFEE.

either she or her husband can go and collect the coffee money - this is generally the case

"where there is love between the couple"

she said. However 'love between the couple' cannot be relied upon. Mama Mbugwa's neighbour has a husband who is a real drunkard. One day she went to collect the coffee money and her husband came and demanded it from her and she refused to give it to him. She ran away for the night. Her husband broke down the door to their house and destroyed many things. The next day she gave the money to the school for the children's school fees. "She is very brave" said Mama Mbugwa.

Coffee is supposed to provide the capital through which men pay for the large cash expenditures of the household, such as education. However the increasing failure of coffee and employment to pay for things like school fees has not only undermined the social and economic position of men, (thus leading to an increase in alcoholism) it has also prompted women to look for other alternatives. The example of Mama Mbugwa and her husband is illustrative.

> Mama Mbugwa is from Gachocho and her husband is a primary school teacher there. The couple also grow coffee. The combination of Anglican education and coffee have made Gachocho both prosperous and at the same time conservative. This is partly due to the ethics of the Anglican church and partly due to the strength of men who have benefited from the combination of education, employment and coffee. There are few businesswomen from the area as business is frowned upon as the activity of 'harlots'. However Mama Mbugwa decided that her husband's primary school teaching salary (and coffee) would not be enough to support her family and educate her children so she started business in the early eighties.

> By the mid 1980's Mama Mbugwa was becoming a successful maize and beans businesswoman and would sell maize and beans in Gikomba in Nairobi. Her maize and beans business was doing very well and by 1988 she had bought six lorry loads of stones and was well on her way to building a store in the plot which she and her husband owned in Gachocho. All this caused a lot of jealousy and people started coming to her husband telling him that his wife had become a 'harlot' and giving him bad 'reports' of her behaviour. They said that she would run away. In 1988 he made her stop.

> "I don't even want to remember that day!"

> she said. Her own father, who had a reputation for his fierceness, had allowed her mother to do business in the 1950's. When people challenged him he would reply 'I know my home'. However, in contrast to her father, Baba Mbugwa is weak according to his wife. Furthermore he has forgotten that his mother too did business in the 1950's, taking bananas to Nairobi, and that it is to this that he owes his education.

> Mama Mbugwa is in fact extremely loyal to her home. She maintained the double role of wife and businesswoman even while she was doing maize and beans:

"I swept by the light of an oil lamp" she said. "I have looked after my cow, I have seen my children off to school, I have left tea for my husband - and I have left my husband there sleeping. Let people talk; I know my work."

As for Baba Mbugwa, when his teaching is over he goes to the plot to 'socialise' with his friends and discuss the world and current affairs "so that we may become enlightened" especially those who are school teachers. He told me that it is not 'customary' for men to come home until the food is cooked - he often comes back late at night blind drunk. Baba Mbugwa informed me that

"women do all the work because they are inferior".

Mama Mbugwa told me that in the past a woman's work was only to cook and bear children but that now they must do everything.

"I don't know why" she said "but men have refused their work; they have become proud but this is only foolishness."

The case of Mama and Baba Mbugwa is illustrative of a particular transformation in the relationship between society and wealth in the present century. In this context, the ideologies of Victorian and Kikuyu patriarchies have combined through the history of the interaction among the missions, the state and communities such as Gachocho to underpin a particular ideology of 'male' wealth which cannot allow for the re-deployment of 'female' wealth even in times of hardship[17].

III) THE DOWNFALL OF COFFEE: REDEFINITIONS OF MALE WEALTH

By the early 1990's coffee farmers were profoundly disillusioned with coffee as they watched their hard won fortunes slip away from them with no visible alternatives in sight. This coincided with the downfall of employment on which men were also reliant for sources of capital. The two together have been responsible for the general depression of men particularly in the coffee producing areas of districts like Murang'a. Despite the decline in cashcrops and in employment, some men are beginning to diversify into other agricultural activities through which they can redeem their role as generators of wealth within their households. It is only those who have land and are relatively wealthy, however, who are managing as yet to make this shift. The recent growth in the livestock trade may be seen in this context as, in part, a product of the decline in coffee.

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[17] The specific dynamic which Gachocho exemplifies is further underlined by the fact that in Githima on the ridge opposite Gachocho which is a much poorer area and has not had the same combination of 'church, chiefs and coffee', there is apparently no stigma attached to businesswomen.

Their adaptive responses to changing economic circumstances have led men toward different forms of agricultural and animal husbandry. Baba Nyokabi who has now retired from his job in Nairobi says he is not going to cultivate cashcrops such as coffee and tea which are too unpredictable. Instead he is going to concentrate on food crops. Baba Macharia is also now retired. He has a four acre shamba in Muthithi on which he grows some coffee. But he also has two cows and grows an increasing number of food crops such as tomatoes and onions which his wife sells in Muthithi market. Baba Wangeci told me that macadamia can now fetch even more per kilo than coffee. Those who have macadamia trees are now reaping substantial profits. He himself has also recently started to rear turkeys which he says can fetch good money although at first he ran into difficulties as all his chicks died. He said that if there were better marketing facilities in the area things like dairy farming would be very profitable. There is no dairy cooperative in Muthithi area however. Lower down from Muthithi it is French beans which are really beginning to become lucrative. This was an area which was too dry to be good for coffee and until recently the people were poorer than those from slightly higher up. However the recent success of French beans as an export crop to Europe has rapidly elevated the fortunes of this area. (see Sender and Wanjama 1994). Again, as is the case with macadamia, this is in part due to the marketing facilities which have been developed around this crop.

Baba Mwangi has a four acre farm. He used to be a carpenter but has now all but retired from carpentry and is concentrating on developing his land. I was told that he is rapidly becoming one the three richest men in the area. These days Baba Mwangi can earn more from his few macadamia trees than he can from his coffee – which in addition requires much more input and hard work. He has also started pig farming. However it is bananas which really earn him money- five times as much as coffee annually according to him. Unlike coffee, bananas are not the crop of men, nor do they depend on large amounts of capital which must be generated through things like employment. Bananas are the crop of women and their growing importance is potentially shifting the balance of gender in relation to land in the rural areas.

IV) ROOTS AND SOCIETY: THE RENAISSANCE OF THE CLANS

The move away from employment and coffee has involved a retreat from activities which are heavily associated with the state. This has

paralleled the recent rejuvenation of the clans in areas like Muthithi in the 1990's. The strengthening of clan identities is in part a product of the different type of investment necessitated by capitalism which requires a longer term attachment to one place. Furthermore, the clans have become the new arenas in which the relationship between community and wealth (still biased towards men) can be contextualised. In this respect the clan is not simply an associational body, but has become a model for the contemporary re-creation of locality.

Many clans have recently formed themselves into self-help groups which are registered with the government[18]. Mama Mbugwa's husband's clan has recently started a group of this sort which now has thirty six members both men and women. Each member contributes 50 shillings per month and the money will be used for "development"; to initiate projects such as building a plot for rent. Nyambura told me that these clan self help groups are relatively new and that members have to pay something like a 10/= registration fee if they wish to join. Husbands and wives can join separately. Some clans have even split into men's and women's groups such as the Unity Group near Muthithi market; the women said the men were holding them back and thus they decided to form their own branch of the clan self help group. (In the past also when the clans met, men and women would often meet separately). These clan self help groups have nothing to do with the broader framework of the clan which is still called together at times such as funerals or for sorting out disputes when clan members may be asked to make a contribution. The clan self help group is a separate entity which is open to clan members to join if they wish and which is specifically geared to development projects.[19]

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[18] The debate in some of the recent literature on Africa on 'civil society' and the state, documents many respects in which developments within modern nation-states in Africa are leading to decentralisation and devolution of power into smaller scale local level institutions. The non-governmental organisations such as the clan self-help groups in Murang'a may be an example of this more widespread phenomenon. (See for instance Gibbon et al 1995.)

[19] I was told by some that the clan no longer exists and is no longer important and by others that it is still very important in things like funerals for instance when the clan will come together to pay for the burial of one of its members. Mwangi told me that the clan still helps out in matters such as building a house or raising money for school fees. But that it will only help those who have already helped themselves. The clan is still important today, as it was originally, in dealing with 'cases', wachira. If there is a dispute involving clan members, the elders of the clan will meet to sort it

Baba Muiru told me that the clan self help group in his area had recently built a water-pipe. Other clan branches along other ridges had similar ventures he said. The self-help group in his area was composed of members of the clan Wairimu. Baba Muiru said that, whilst anyone can join a *harambee* (cash merry-go-rounds such as those found in the market), the clan self help groups are only open to particular people; in this case people of the clan Wairimu. However it later transpired that all those living in his area had contributed to the building of the water-pipe. Similarly in the case of the 'Unity Group', although in theory it is composed of members of the clan Wairimu, many of those who have joined are not clan members but are people who live in the area. It seems that in the new definition of clan, locality is the key factor rather than descent or cosmic origin as in the past: Wa Karura told me

> "the clan is like the village; people come together from one area to help each other."

In the days when 'routes' were the core impetus behind productivity, the bonds of clan were defined primarily through the movement of persons between clans although locality was also important in terms of the 'rooting' of 'routes' through the institution of the *mbari* or subclan. Today the fact that it is locality rather than alliance which defines the clan is testimony to the importance of 'roots' over 'routes'.

While I was there, the Unity Group organised a big collection to send a son of one of the clan elders, Baba Mwangi, to university. I was told that everyone contributed because

> "Mwangi is not just a son of that household, he is a son of the community."

These clan self help groups thus employ the metaphor of the clans to cement together an ideology of community and wealth. The word 'development' is key to their definition of themselves and again invokes the concept of 'development' as it related to the so called progressive ideologies of wealth underpinned by the missions which surrounded the growth of capitalism and state in areas like Muthithi. 'Roots', community, clan, and the creation of wealth are finally

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out. If the dispute is a major one then elders may be called from further away – if necessary from "as far as Mombasa" said Baba Mwangi. If the clan cannot sort out the matter then it may be taken to the local chief and be dealt with by the government. The chief in the area in which I lived told me that the clan was very helpful to his office in dealing with local matters.

synonymous with respect to these clan self help groups. In contrast to the *harambee* groups which are normally associated with women, the clan self help groups are often initiated by men although women also play a prominent role. In the formation of clan self help groups, the 'rooting' of wealth through the persons of men in the context of the modern state is concretised into a new expression of community now independent of the state itself.

CONCLUSION

The farming of coffee in the ecological belt in which Muthithi is situated represents a summation of key transformations in the social definition of wealth and its relationship to gender in the context of the state and the development of capitalism. In this new context wealth is associated with individual ownership and created through the investment of capital in land and through links with the world market and the state which are primarily defined through the agency of men. I have suggested that this trend has more in common with the ethos of 'roots' and its association with intra-group relationships than with 'routes' which defined the inter-group relationships through which wealth was created in the nineteenth century. The renaissance of the clans in this context is a significant development which redefines the notion of intra-group relationships as a locus for investment through which wealth is created. In this respect the clan identities have come to be used as the parameters within which wealth may be engendered rather than the basis for inter-group exchange through which wealth was engendered in the past. Furthermore, whereas 'routes' emphasised the porous nature of boundaries and the interdependence between groups which defined a concept of society in the nineteenth century under the rubric of the 'ethnic whole': 'roots' under the contemporary metaphor of clan is increasingly the dominant expression of society in the present day and here the renaissance of the clans achieves its principle significance as the new metaphor for society itself.

CHAPTER 4

THE BANANA TRADE: THE INVOCATION OF ROUTES AND NEW DEFINITIONS OF WEALTH AND GENDER IN THE PRESENT DAY

I) BANANAS IN THE MARKET

It is illegal to uproot coffee. But in the *shambas* (farms) of Muthithi nowadays one can see many crops other than coffee which grow between the coffee bushes whilst the coffee bushes themselves remain untended. In particular the dark green with which the coffee bushes have painted the hillsides is now broken by the light green feathery leaves of banana trees and bananas have begun to replace coffee as the major export of the district. According to Baba Wangeci, before the advent of coffee there used to be "forests" of banana trees in Muthithi. However as a major export of the district, the banana trade has reached a level of importance today that is unprecedented. Bananas grow best in the coffee producing areas and thus their increasing importance is a challenge to coffee. Coffee is the crop of men but bananas, as a food crop, are the crop of women. Their association with women goes even deeper as it was bananas that were given to the mothers of a bride at her wedding as an acknowledgement of her virginity. In this bananas also symbolise the success of female enactments of ethnicity; in that they give testimony to the value of a girl as a future bride, they objectify the triumph of 'routes'. Potentially the shift from coffee to bananas alters the balance of power between the genders in relation to land and wealth. Perceptions are slow to change, however, and many people still think coffee is more valuable because it is paid in a lump sum whilst bananas bring in a steady income throughout the year.

The banana section of Muthithi market is located in a huge square well of ground which, on market day mornings, is filled to the brim with emerald green, banana upon banana, each stalk lying in front of its owner. If the market were like a great body lying with its feet at the road, the bananas would occupy the place of the heart, on the left hand side two thirds of the way up. In many ways bananas are the real heart of Muthithi today. The banana sellers, who make up the largest proportion of traders in the market, are not like the other part-time businesswomen of the market: they are farming wives who come only occasionally to sell bananas from their land as and when they are ready. By the afternoon the banana section will be almost

clear as the bananas will have been bought by the business people who come from Nairobi and the sellers will have returned to the land where the pressing needs of their farms await them.

Farming wives with more bananas to sell do not come to the market at all: Baba Wangeci told me that

"the market is only for those with very few bananas to sell- if you have many you do business directly with the buyers from Nairobi."

To start the banana business, said Baba Wangeci, all you have to do is to go to the market and speak to the buyers and get a regular order. After that they will come directly to your farm to buy. Once again, the market, for Muthithi women, is not for profit and the real business of bananas is not connected to the market but goes on outside.

It is particularly through the banana trade that the complexities embraced by the market can be seen. The bananas connect the city with the land, bringing together farming wives, single mother businesswomen who come from places like Nairobi to buy and the brokers like Charity who mediate between the two. Like the other women of the market, women like Charity are there to sustain their families. They live locally and are basically farming wives who do business part-time. Charity makes her profits through her skills in bargaining. She buys on behalf of the Nairobi traders who do not have the time to buy all their stock themselves as they must collect many bananas by the end of the morning. She told me that many of the Nairobi buyers are women from Kiambu and they are very "good people"; one of them gave her a loan of 3000 shillings to help with her children's school fees.

Charity told me that these Kiambu women really sympathise with Murang'a women because they can see how much Murang'a women are held back by their husbands. Not only do their husbands not help them financially, they also prevent them from travelling freely for business saying they will find other men. Kiambu husbands on the other hand allow their wives complete freedom and can even give them 10,000 shillings to start business. Charity has a high opinion of Kiambu businesswomen and in this she includes Mama Muiruri a Kiambu woman who married a Muthithi man and who has a successful maize and beans business on the edge of the market.

> "Mama Muiruri is a very good woman- the best in these parts" said Charity. "She will always help people if they go to her in trouble."

The metaphor of the urbanised or Kiambu Kikuyu woman and her rural counterpart is extended by other ethnic groups in relation to Kikuyu women in general. Kikuyu women are held up as the ideal of independence and success. I spoke to a Luhya woman who said she really admires Kikuyu women for their independence and hard work.

> "Luhya women work like donkeys" she said; "they work in the farms, carry loads and bear children. Kikuyu women will leave their husbands if they hold them back. They can afford to be independent because they work hard and can support themselves. But Luhya women would rather depend on their husbands and over exert themselves in their work."

The Muthithi market sellers and the brokers like Charity are caught between two models of women through their interaction with the market. On the one hand they are basically farming wives who do business to supplement their homes and who maintain their loyalty to their husbands and their land. On the other hand their business activities bring them into contact with the worlds of full-time businesswomen who are seen as rejecting both marriage and dependence on the land for independence and entrepreneurship.

> "Businesswomen don't get time to farm" I was told.

Further, whilst the Muthithi women feel that "if they leave their husbands they will have nothing" women like Mama Muiruri say that

> "We businesswomen we do not like to stay with men who do not work. If they are lazy we just leave them!"

II) FROM WIVES TO BUSINESSWOMEN: THE BANANA TRADERS OF KWAMIANO

There comes a point however when women like the Muthithi wives make the leap into the world of full time business. Education is a major reason for this. At this stage Muthithi market will not support their requirements and they will start travelling for business to places like Nairobi. The Muthithi women who travel to Nairobi to sell transform themselves from farming wives into businesswomen and the few who engage in the trade are in it full time. The women who take bananas to Nairobi are 'straddling' the transformation from nineteenth century ethnicity to state in terms of their roles as both wives and businesswomen.

As wives and traders women are on the one hand 'rooted' in their role as sustainers of their households and on the other hand they re-enact the old 'routes' of the women which engendered wealth in the past. In this they are different both from the full time businesswomen in markets like Mukuyu who forgo both marriage and land, and they are different from those rural wives who simply act as sustainers of

BANANA TREES ON THE FARMSTEAD.

their households and guardians of the land and wealth of their
husbands; women who are known to take the view that if they travel
frequently for business their children will get jiggers! The banana
traders both produce the bananas which they grow on their land and/or
supplement by buying from neighbouring farms and they act as their
own brokers, themselves taking the bananas to Nairobi where they will
also make the final sales and return with the profits to their homes.

The banana business to Nairobi became big in the 1950's, a time when
men were suffering the aftermath of the Mau Mau and the
infrastructure was in place to make business between Murang'a and
Nairobi both profitable and relatively easy. However the subsequent
growth of coffee and the returns from men's employment stemmed the
growth of women's independent business activities. Their husbands'
incomes could now support their households and pay for the education
of their children. This continued to be the case throughout the
sixties and seventies when the coffee market was booming. In contrast

> "nowadays there are many problems not like in the past and so
> women have to do business"

said Cucu wa Marigu. Mama Ciru has been in the banana business for
about two years now. She told me that

> "*thiena* (problems) showed me the way to Gikomba" (the market in
> Nairobi where most of the banana traders sell).

Coupled with this is the fact that bananas are only now beginning to
become a major and profitable export of the area.

> "It is only since the 1990's" said Mama Nyambura, another
> Muthithi banana trader, "that bananas have started to make
> money."

It used to be that women who were widowed would start business. (In
fact 40% percent of the banana sellers in Mukuyu market are widows.)
Cucu is from Muthithi and started business in the 1960's taking
bananas to Nairobi after her husband died. When she became a widow
she told me that she decided to *guthii barabara*, 'to take to the
roads'. Others whose husbands bring in little or no income may as
well be widows with only their husbands' land to show for the assets
of marriage: Mama Muriu started business in 1978 "because of
hunger"; her husband, who worked as a mechanic in Nairobi stopped
sending remittances. She told me that she didn't know how she was
able to start;

> "God gave me the money to start and showed me how."

Cucu wa Marigu also started business because her husband's salary was
not enough to educate her children.

"I go to Nairobi to look for salt"

she said. Like most women she started partly by selling produce from her own farm. She sold this in Kangari, a market high up in the tea areas. From there she started going to Nairobi with bananas which she bought from the farms around where she lives. Cucu wa Marigu has successfully educated all seven of her children all of whom have been to secondary school. Her eldest daughter is a now doctor. However even though she has no need to do business anymore, as all of her children are educated, business seems to have taken on an attraction of its own and if anything Cucu wa Marigu works harder than ever nowadays on her business.

The main centre for the banana-trader-wives is Kwamiano bus stop, about five kilometers below Muthithi, where the traders congregate from the neighbouring farms and wait for a *matatu* (minibus) to take them to Nairobi. The area is known for its large farms and is good for both coffee and food crops. Today however Kwamiano has another reputation, and is becoming known for the high number of businesswomen (banana traders) from the area. There is a large high school near Kwamiano which is attached to the Presbyterian church that has been there since colonial times.

Wangeci, who teaches in the school, told me that the children of the area are exceptionally unruly because of these businesswomen-mothers who neglect their homes for their trade. Ironically however it is the education of their children which has often prompted these women to start larger scale businesses in the first place. In this respect the high number of businesswomen from Kwamiano and its environs has to do not just with the depletion of men's incomes from the downfall of coffee and employment, but also with the influence of the Presbyterian mission in the area and the high premium on education which differentiates it from other areas such as that around Muthithi market itself.

The banana traders of Muthithi put up with hardships in their business that even seasoned businesswomen will not endure. A trip to Nairobi to sell bananas takes at least two or three days. (Again this is reminiscent of the three day trips of the traders in the earlier half of the century before there were regular *matatu* services.)

> After buying her bananas from the local farms, Cucu wa Marigu then has to wait at the bus stop next to her banana stalks, which are wrapped in banana fibres to prevent them being spoiled by the sun, until she can find a *matatu* which is prepared to carry her to Nairobi. Sometimes, with the *matatu* problems these days, she has to wait four days returning home each night. She cannot get food

during the day because the bus stop is far from her home. (Mama Nyambura is luckier; the bus stop is very near her home and her daughters can bring food to her during the day while she waits.) Once she gets a *matatu*, Cucu wa Marigu has to help load and then unload the bananas each of which is very heavy. Cucu wa Marigu is lucky as she has a regular customer in Gikomba who will buy her bananas wholesale from her. But most of the other Muthithi banana sellers do not have a 'customer' in Gikomba and have to sell their bananas retail. This may involve days of sitting in the hot sun, and at the end of this they may still end up making a loss. The place where the Muthithi women sell is by an open sewer which runs through the bottom of Gikomba market. The smell is at times overpowering. The market itself is carpeted in black mud which is alright if you have a stall but these women of course do not have stalls. At night they sleep on the floors of the *hotelis* for a small sum. Some if they are lucky and have husbands who are employed in Nairobi may stay with their husbands. Finally when they have finished their goods they will "go home to sleep".

III) WIVES AND MOTHERS: THE CHALLENGES OF FEMALE WEALTH

The entry of women in their capacity as 'wives' into full time business, especially in an arena which is becoming so crucial to the overall economy of Murang'a district, also brings them into contact with the state which has had a long history in the mediation of relationships between wealth, gender and community. Bananas do not have the same importance as tea and coffee for the national economy as they do not provide a large proportion of Kenya's exports abroad. However they are increasingly important economically within Kenya itself especially in places like Murang'a where they are now a major local export, and thus, like coffee, they are subject to political interference.

Before the export of bananas from Murang'a started to grow, I was told that the Nairobi bananas came from Kampala and from Western Kenya. Western Kenya is aligned to the area from which president Moi comes. Moi succeeded Kenyatta who was a Kikuyu, and in contrast to the support which the Kikuyu in general had from the state in the time of Kenyatta, the government of Moi is seen as being fundamentally anti- Kikuyu. This political scenario underlies the economic challenge presented to the farmers of Western Province by the farmers of Murang'a and has led to many confrontations between the two (this has been most prominent in the case of tea farming).

People also blame Moi for the demise of coffee from which Kikuyu farmers in particular are suffering. It is illegal to uproot coffee but farmers started to plant food crops such as maize and bananas between the coffee plants. I was told that when Moi came people said that they would not grow coffee because it was so unprofitable, they

would grow bananas instead to sell in Nairobi. Apparently Moi's rejoinder was that in 1988 he forbade bananas to cross the Chania river which separates Murang'a from Nairobi. The ban was short-lived however and today bananas cross the Chania river in their thousands.

Moi's attempts to stop bananas crossing the Chania river in the late 1980's could be read as resulting from the challenge presented by the Kikuyu to his own political constituency as well as the threat presented by the uprooting of coffee to the revenues of state. In addition, bananas are associated with women who tend to operate largely outside the formal arenas of the state. Furthermore they are associated with rural women who, in terms of the genderisation of the rural areas in the context of the state, are supposed to stay at home as guardians of their husbands' wealth; not to engage in independent entrepreneurial activities.

In the context of the banana trade then, women insert themselves into the core of political and economic relationships as these have emerged in the context of the state. This is a factor behind the problems faced by the Muthithi banana-trader-wives and can be seen in the story of Githurai. In the 1970's a new market started up on the outskirts of Nairobi called Githurai. Many of the Muthithi women now go there as Gikomba market is becoming almost intolerable. Quite apart from Gikomba's appalling conditions, there are problems with thieves and also many problems with the council who charge ridiculously high taxes which these women cannot afford.

Mama Nyambura said that initially Githurai was good because there were many buyers and not many people selling. However the traders who live in Githurai started complaining about these 'country women' who undercut their business. The council supported the full time traders of Githurai against the 'country women' who straddle the frontiers that the state has tried so clearly to demarcate. Thus, in 1994 the council opened a new twice weekly market for 'country women' which is not nearly as profitable as the main market was. It is inconvenient because you are restricted to selling on a particular day which may not coincide with the best days for buying. You face much greater competition from other 'country' traders who are also limited to selling on that day. Further if you do not finish your bananas you have to find another way to sell them otherwise they will go bad. Mama Nyambura also goes from house to house to sell if she does not finish her stock.

The state-derived hardships of the Muthithi banana traders are

greatly increased by the attitudes of the *matatu* (minibus-taxi) touts[20]. Both the women and the touts trek back and forth from the city. However whereas for the women these journeys seem to evoke the 'routes' of the past, for the young men they are more like a kind of 'rootlessness'- and even 'routelessness' (many say of young men like the *matatu* touts that they have "lost their route".)

The banana traders are completely dependent on the *matatus* in the operation of their businesses. The profits for rural women in this trade depend on the fact that they can cut costs because they buy, broker, and sell the bananas themselves. If they are to compete with the better organised and capitalised Nairobi business people who come directly from Nairobi, often with pickups, to buy, they must minimise all their own costs including transport. This was not formerly a problem according to Cucu wa Marigu who started business in 1979. She said that when the buses used to pass that way they would always carry the banana traders who had a very good relationship with the bus drivers. However the buses have now stopped because of competition from the *matatus,* and the *matatu* touts, said Cucu, really overcharge and exert their muscle in other ways "these 'country women' don't know how to pay!"

I was told that due to the problems with the matatus, many of the banana traders have stopped going to Nairobi altogether.

Charity who brokers bananas in Muthithi market, like many of the other Muthithi wives, has a son who is a tout. I met Charity one day when she was on her way back from the local chief's office where her son had just been arrested along with some other *matatu* touts for being careless with people's loads. Charity does not know how she will afford the bribe of 2000 shillings to get him out. The tension between the touts and the banana-traders reflects the general competition between young men and businesswomen today as the lack of jobs has prompted young men to enter the world of entrepreneurship once dominated by women. However this cannot explain the attitudes of these young *matatu* touts to the Muthithi banana traders who are often literally their mothers.

It seems that young men today are suffering an anxiety about their very masculinity in view of the demise of the relationship between

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[20] Touts, whose activities are illegal, solicit fares for the *matatus* thus aiding their competitiveness.

state, wealth and power from which Kikuyu men in particular have benefitted until recently. Today the de facto dependence on their mothers which these young men experience and the undermining of their role in relation to women in general leads the touts to obstruct the independent entrepreneurship of women, even as these women are engaging in the trade precisely to alleviate the hardships which their children must face. Once when I was with Cucu wa Marigu the touts only finally agreed to take her rather than some of the other women who were waiting

"because she prays for us".

IV) THE BANANA TRADE AND CATHOLICISM: NEW IDEOLOGIES OF WEALTH

Both in terms of their relationships with the touts and with the state, the banana-trader-wives confront an 'anxious virility' (Mbembe quoted by Rowlands 1995;39 in Miller (ed) 1995) which underpins a particular relationship between gender, state, and capital in the present day. In this light it is striking that the banana traders of Muthithi have latched on to the Catholic church as a means of mitigating their hardships and defining a distinctive ethic behind the new niche which they are carving for themselves. A very high proportion of the Muthithi banana traders are Catholics. Mama Nyambura and Cucu wa Muthithi who are both banana traders have both recently converted to Catholicism perhaps for this very reason. There is a very large and old Catholic church in Gikomba which is attended by many of the banana traders. In this way the church knits together their rural and urban lives and many of the traders in fact go to church everyday. The importance of the Catholic church is especially striking in Kwamiano where the area in general is dominated by the Presbyterian church.

Just as the protestant churches have played a major role in cementing the relationship between men, wealth and the state in terms of ideologies of 'progress', 'modernity', 'development', and 'civilisation', so the Catholic church has been counterposed to this in terms of its explicit relationship with 'tradition' and its identification with the poor. The Catholic church is said to condone practices like female circumcision which are associated with 'tradition' and are wholely rejected by the protestant and charismatic churches[21]. In addition the Catholic church has a specific

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[21] The Catholic church does not in fact explicitly condone female circumcision but neither does it take a strong stand against it.

policy of 'enculturation' which was described to me as the integration of Christianity and 'tradition'. Father Wainaina, a Catholic priest, informed me that each country has a specific theology. In South America for instance (where he also worked) there is a theology of 'liberation from poverty'; in Kenya it is the integration of 'tradition' and 'modernity'.

It would seem perhaps that, aside from its other implications, the concept of 'tradition' and the ethics of the Catholic church consciously pit themselves against ideologies of wealth and society defined through the relationship of men (and the state) to capitalism. In the context of the Catholic church then, the banana-trader-wives are evolving a new ethos behind wealth which is in some senses in opposition to that developed under the links between the Protestant missions and the colonial state that has continued to underpin 'male' wealth into the present day. It may be that the values of the Catholic church in relation to gender, state and wealth are more in accord with the position of the banana-trader wives than those of the Protestant churches. In the latter, conservative models of gender with man as the breadwinner and head of the household, do not accord well with the realities of these businesswomen-wives whose husbands and their 'wealth' fall far short of the current expectations of rural households. In addition these particular ideologies which demarcate the rural and the urban and imprison women in a model of virtue based on rural wifehood make it hard for women to uphold the flexibility they require if they are successfully to straddle the boundaries which their relationship to wealth and society entails.

On the other hand the banana traders of Kwamiano are different for instance from the Catholic wives who live around Muthithi market and who remain caught in a subsistence trap which does not impel them to branch out into more full time business. The distinctive feature of Kwamiano as opposed to Muthithi market has been the interplay between the incentives of education generated by the Presbyterian mission and the shortfall in male incomes.

It would seem then that the choice by a number of banana traders to convert to Catholicism is perhaps a recognition of a new ideology. This view links both the subsistence role of women and the creation of wealth to a desire to augment community through an idealisation of

education and progress. Thus in a sense it is the interplay between the ideologies of Protestantism and Catholicism which have led to the emergence of a new relationship between gender and wealth defined in terms of 'routes' and embodied in the persons of the banana-trader-wives.

CONCLUSION

Kikuyu women today are particularly identified with business. In some ways this is a continuation of their 19th century role as traders in the context of ethnicity and in other ways it is something quite new. In the past when women engaged in barter they were acting in their 'rooted' capacity as sustainers of the community. When they went on long distance trading expeditions, they were acting in their 'route-ed' capacity as generators of wealth where 'routes' were always bounded by the social whole and 'rooted' in the interests of the clan. The women of Mukuyu market in the nearby town who have rejected their clans for an independent self-sufficient life in which they are capable of making large profits are altogether different from their nineteenth century counterparts whose 'routes' were always re-rooted in their clans and bounded within a framework of society. The Muthithi women on the other hand who 'take to the roads' are following in the tradition of the past whereby the agency and movement of women was about the generation of wealth in response to both opportunity and crisis and was always re-rooted in their community and homes. In their engagement with capitalism through their evocation of the 'routes' of the past the Muthithi banana-trader-wives are once more creative of wealth for their clans through their movement in trade. However, 'routes' today, although it may still be echoed in the relationships of people like the banana-trader-wives to capital, is no longer creative of social relationships between clans as it was in the past. Today, the basis of the social, and its relationship to wealth is altogether different and it has more in common with the principle of 'roots' than that of 'routes' as the dominant ethos of the nineteenth century.

SUMMARY

Part I begins by looking at the way in which 'rooted' wealth has affected the distinctions between the genders in Muthithi market which has led to a contrast within the market between the profit making business activities of men and the business activities of women which tend to be oriented to the sustenance of their households and which are subordinated to their role as the 'guardians' of their husbands' land and wealth. These distinctions are also contoured by broader economic differentiations. It tends to be women from poorer households who use the market while the men are from wealthier households and their wives therefore remain almost entirely home-based.

The business activities of women in Muthithi market may, however eventually push them into a stronger role in relation to the control and generation of wealth in their own households. This has already been the case outside the market in the context of the banana trade, particularly with women from the Kwamiano area about five kilometers down from the market where there is the added incentive of the high premium placed on education. The banana trade in Murang'a district is beginning to have a substantial impact on the local economy where it is replacing coffee as the dominant export. This in turn has implications for the relationships between the local economy, the state and the world market as well as the relationship between gender and wealth. The banana trade in particular has re-introduced elements which may be defined with reference to the concept of 'routes' as a significant dimension of rural capitalism which also encodes a particular connection between gender and wealth. In contrast to the 'rooted' wealth created through the investment of capital particularly in land with the accompanying intra-group identities as in the renaissance of the clans; the banana trade engenders wealth through the movement of the traders themselves who broker their goods and re-root their profits in their communities and clans.

The relationship between 'roots' and 'routes' which has provided the focus for this chapter has been looked at primarily in relation to wealth and the social contextualisation of wealth. In the first section I have attempted to describe the structure behind 19th century social and economic relationships in terms of the dynamic tension between 'routes' and 'roots' within an overall social ethic of interdependence defined by the precedence of 'route-ed' identities

over 'rooted' ones. I went on to look at the way in which the principle of 'roots' has come to dominate in the 20th century in conjunction with the incursion of the state and the development of economic relationships based on capital and property. This has been particularly apparent in relation to the cashcrop of coffee which has cemented the relationship between men, wealth and the state in areas like Muthithi[22]. In the rural areas, the relationship between wealth and 'roots' has created a particular link between men and wealth, both as symbols of and creators of wealth, a link which in the 19th century I suggest, was made through women. The concept of 'roots' and its relationship to capitalist development is more fully explored in Part III. Part I has been concerned to look at the way in which elements of 19th century organisation, informed by the ethos of 'routes', are still important resources in structuring the development of capitalism in areas such as Muthithi. This in turn helps to provide a more nuanced understanding of capitalism in general with a particular sensitivity in this case to the importance of the interaction between gender, wealth and society.

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[22] This relationship has not been unproblematic however: firstly the colonial state attempted to curtail the expansion of African cashcropping and later the post-Independent state equally impeded the development of cashcropping through its control over the distribution and marketing of coffee. These factors in part account for the decreasing returns of coffee today which have in turn had an impact on the 'rooted' nature of male wealth in areas like Muthithi.

PART II
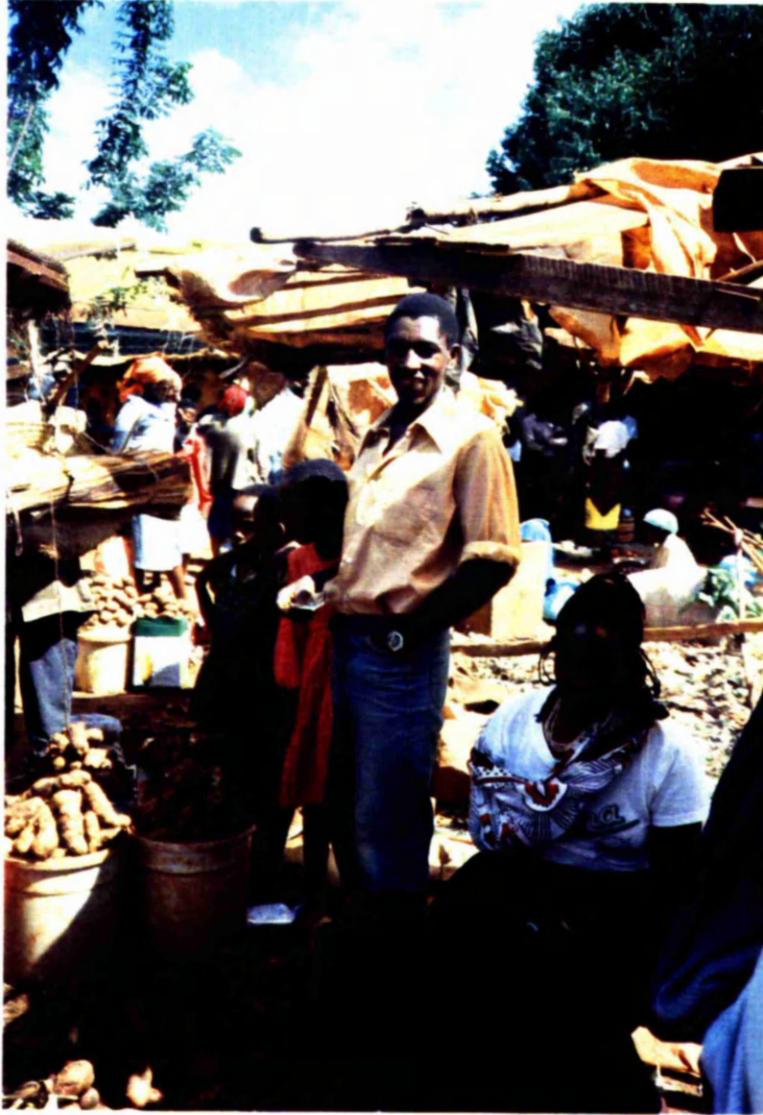
ASCENDANCE AND AMBIVALENCE; THE
LEGACIES OF THE NATION-STATE.

CHAPTER 5A

THE SECONDHAND CLOTHES TRADE IN MUTHITHI MARKET

I) ASCENDANCE AND EXPANSION: A NEW ETHOS IN THE MARKET

As you enter Muthithi market you must first push through the plug of people that block the narrow gateway and then thread a path through the crowds of women sitting amidst their piles of tomatoes and potatoes. Then you can breathe once more for you have reached the bright soft spaces of the clothes. You can almost dive into the mounds of cloth laid out like rumpled bedding on white sheets. The materials beckon; a sleek grey sweatshirt from America, the gorgeous flash of scarlet satin beneath the lacey froth of a ladies blouse (Dorothy Perkins perhaps). The choice of secondhand clothes is infinite, in contrast to the very specific ranges of new clothes. In the centre of this Disneyland of appearances stand the young men with their raw confidence, bullying you to buy. The female clothes sellers who sit behind their wares in the shadow of their husbands cannot compete with the lure of these warrior-youths turned drag-queens parodying themselves in the endless tragicomedy of life.

The striking thing about the clothes sellers in Muthithi market is that the majority of the traders are men. The only other trade which is dominated by men is livestock; but whilst livestock sellers tend to be middle-aged and older men, the clothes sellers are young (average age 30) and about half are unmarried and living at home on their parents' land. The expansion of the secondhand clothes trade is a relatively new phenomenon in rural markets. It reflects the failure of urban life and employment to provide an economic base for the young men who have now retreated into the rural areas where they attempt to carve out a niche for themselves through business.

Before the growth of the secondhand clothes trade there were few young men in the markets. Mukuyu market for instance is dominated by women, many of them single, to the extent that the market itself is regarded as the 'place of women'. In Muthithi, however, the market is not characterised as feminine because it is divided into two. It has the livestock section which is for men, and the foodstuffs section which is for women. However the clothes sellers of Muthithi do not sell in the livestock section with the men, they sell in the foodstuffs section with the women. Young men in the markets occupy an ambiguous zone which plays on their identities as young men and yet recognises that their ability to progress in the modern world is sustained by their entry into what is currently the realm of women and more

specifically of their 'mothers'. In the context of the clothes trade, this 'feminisation' is parodied in the techniques which young men use to sell. Some of them dress up in women's clothes and dance to the tune of a ghetto blaster in order to attract custom.

Muchiri, a young business man from Muthithi told me that

> "men spend too much time showing off. That is why they fail in business"

Muchiri was referring to the conspicuous spending on drink and women in which men indulge . in the bars, thus squandering their profits. In contrast, in the context of the clothes section of the market where young men will dress up, play act and use ghetto blasters to attract custom; exhibitionism is a specific entrepreneurial ploy that sets these young men apart and makes them generally more competitive than their female counterparts. The young men of Muthithi market who sell clothes and manufactured goods[1] may have entered the market world of their mothers but they bring to this world a new ethos which in the last instance sets them up in competition with their mothers.

In fact in other avenues of business where men are just beginning to take over, their aggressive selling techniques are a serious challenge to women. This was the case at the bus stop at the junction between the Muthithi road and the main road from Murang'a to Nairobi where women used to sell fruits. Young men have recently moved into this niche and many of the women have now given up their business altogether in the face from competition of young men. (Leah Wanjama pers com.)

The challenge posed by young men to other market traders is paralleled by the challenge of the clothes themselves. In Muthithi they take up a disproportionate amount of space even though the sellers only comprise 20% of the market population. This is so in many rural markets where clothes are beginning to invade the spaces of the traditional foodstuffs of the women. In places like Kangari, a tea market high up in the foothills above Muthithi, clothes invade

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[1] In my samples I have grouped secondhand clothes with new clothes and manufactured goods such as kitchenware, 'boutiques' salt and soap although the latter have been sold in the markets for sometime. I have grouped them together because, as imports from Nairobi requiring high capital, they exhibit similar characteristics to the secondhand clothes trade. However it is the growth of the secondhand clothes trade that has really made a distinctive impression on rural markets in recent times. Gracia Clark (1994) also comments on the 'explosion of secondhand clothes traders' in the markets in Ghana leading to a stronger presence of men than had hitherto been the case.

YOUNG MAN SELLING CLOTHES IN
MUTHITHI MARKET.

not only the market but half the town at various points in the year (as when the tea bonus is paid). The necessity to control the vigorous entrepreneurship of the clothes sellers in relation to other

market traders has led some of the bigger municipalities to build a separate market for clothes. This is the case in Mukuyu where the clothes and livestock market is a few blocks away from the main market.

The large-scale presence of secondhand clothes has also pushed out the newly manufactured clothes which are not such good value in either price or quality. This has hit people like Ruth and Waitherera, two single mothers of Mukuyu who used to own knitting machines with which they manufactured their own wares before selling them in the markets. The business was so successful in Ruth's case that she employed three people to knit for her, but when these young men came in with their secondhand clothes from Nairobi, she was forced to abandon her knitting machines. Ruth now sells new clothes bought from Nairobi. The women clothes traders in general have a hard time competing with the aggressive selling techniques of the young men. They compete in other ways however such as selective buying strategies and an emphasis on quality over quantity.

Young men do not just compete with business women in the markets, they also compete with men who still remain in formal business: Baba Muiruri has a store on the edge of Muthithi market and he was complaining about the competition from young men who have started selling salt and sugar inside the market itself where they make a profit because they sell in tins (like women) rather than in pre-packaged bags like himself. Thus they can get away with selling 450 grams of salt for the price of half a kilo. "But when people get to know they are being cheated" said Baba Muiruri, "they will run away". Then he added ".but it is we (their fathers) who are encouraging them to do such things because there is no work."

Secondhand clothes have begun to be imported from Europe and America in large quantities since the late 1980's. It is also since this time that unemployment has really begun to hit hard particularly for young men who would previously have expected to be able to find work in the city. Kinyua, who sells fruits in Mukuyu market used to have a job. He trained for two years as a mechanic after leaving form four and then found a job in Nairobi, but he left his job and started in business because his wages were too low. In this he was like many of the other young men to whom I spoke in the markets, who had once been employed but had given this up because the wages were too low. Their expansion

into entrepreneurship has allowed these young men to be self employed, independent of the formal sector and the state; which, not so very long ago promised such rich rewards.

"Nowadays" said Baba Njoki "education and employment are useless." Education was valued in the past as the path to employment and 'progress'. However today education offers nothing but vacant promises. The devaluing of education seems again to be reflected in the markets. Compared to the women who sold clothes in both Muthithi and Mukuyu, the young men were, on average, less educated. (In Mukuyu those who were married also tended to be less educated than their wives).

However, although young men in the markets do not seem to rely on education as much as they used to or as much as their female counterparts, they still hold true to its values. Mwaniki was one of the young men who told me that men were more successful than women in business because of their ability to *gutara mathabu*, to calculate or plan (lit. count maths). Mwaniki had hardly even been to school but had learnt all his numerical skills through business. Dawson, who sells maize and beans in Muthithi, described his entry into the market entirely in terms that paralleled the values of education on 'rationality' and calculation:

> "I looked around me and saw that the population in the rural areas is growing steadily whilst land is not. Thus I calculated that the market for foodstuffs was likely to increase in the future. Once I started in the maize and beans business I used my knowledge of geography to discover the neighbouring markets where I might buy. There I met more women from Muthithi..."

Progress through knowledge and skill is as much an ethic of business for these young men as it used to be of the world of education and employment, and before that of the age-sets and age-grades of the Kikuyu.

Young men who sell clothes in Muthithi exhibit an marked independence from their kin. Although the clothes trade requires an exceptionally high capital outlay, most of those I interviewed had earned their starting capital themselves, 80% of these through casual labour[2]. This contrasted them with the women clothes traders almost all of whom had obtained their starting capital from spouses or parents. Their ability to be financially independent from their kin is strengthened by the fact that many of these young men are as yet unmarried.

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[2] The clothes sellers of Muthithi start with an average capital of 2000/= whilst the average for the market as a whole is about 600/=.

Further, an unusual number of these young men sold with *arata* friends or age-mates. Selling with their age-mates seems to be a distinctive entrepreneurial ploy that sets these young men apart from other market traders and particularly women, most of whom sell alone or with kin. The relative rootlessness of the young men who sell clothes is paralleled by the trade itself which involves selling in many different markets. This contrasts it with many of the other trades where, although traders may go far afield to buy, they tend to root themselves in one market as far as selling is concerned. The mobility of the clothes trade allows clothes traders to profit from the cash surpluses variously generated in the rural areas. The traders are able literally to follow the cashcrop payments. When coffee is paid, clothes sellers may even go to the factory itself to set up their stalls.

II) THE CLOTHES TRADE AND AN AMBIVALENT MODERNITY

The trade in secondhand clothes with which young men in the present day have particularly associated themselves echoes many of the ambivalences which young men have come to represent through their association with 'modernity'. In contrast to the livestock and foodstuffs of the markets which are 'indigenous', clothes and manufactured goods are 'external'. They are associated with the coming of the white men 'who dressed, like women, in butterflies' wings'.

> "The whites were known as the people of light, *andu atheri*, because before them people were ignorant"

said Cucu wa Njoki.

> "The whites brought clothes education and cigarette lighters"

said Guka wa Cecilia,

> "before that we were wearing 'nguo' (clothes) wa Gikuyu" (ie skins)

said Guka wa Muiruri.

Their associations with the whites and with 'progress' makes clothes more acceptable than other trades for young men who have to a great extent espoused the values symbolised by the 'white man' in associating themselves with education, employment and the state. At the same time however, the secondhand clothes trade evokes an ambivalence in its associations with 'modernity'. Clothes come from Nairobi which has in the past provided many opportunities for young men. Ironically however, the wholesale depots where the secondhand

clothes are sold to traders are located in the middle of Gikomba market, a huge Dante-esque hellhole carpeted with black mud which is famous for its squalor and crime. Thus through the clothes trade young men are engaging with an 'external' which is both empowering and exploitative.

Young men not only sell secondhand clothes, they wear them and make use of the clothes' potential for experimentation with style and fashion. Young men more than other groups thus seem to identify with the values and ambivalence which secondhand clothes symbolise. On the one hand the clothes have value because they come from the 'West', the place which is associated with wealth and progress. On the other hand the image which the West exports of itself through secondhand clothes, far from being new and desirable, is soiled and cheap. The fact that the clothes themselves are caste-offs of the West symbolises the dependency that young men, in their contacts with the city the formal sector and the state, may feel in relation to this ambivalent externality.

The mothers of these young men are equally experimental with secondhand clothes, but rather than taking on board the clothes as they are, they recreate them into something which is quintessentially Kikuyu and expressive of their identity as women and as traders: the older women of the rural areas unravel the wools of secondhand jumpers and use them to knit brilliantly coloured versions of the *kiondo*. *Ciondo* (pl) are the baskets which were used by women to carry goods for trading purposes among other things[3].

The literal transformation of the clothes into something so powerfully resonant with their identities as Kikuyu women reflects also the fact that women have formed their distinctive relationship to capitalist enterprise outside the ethos of the state and formal sector from which they have been largely excluded. This has in many ways allowed them to retain more control over their lives and in the present day, where informal entrepreneurship is more lucrative than the formal world of employment, they often find themselves in a stronger position than their men folk.

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[3] Some of these are then re-sold in the West though generally Westerners still prefer images of Africa which find expression in the traditional natural fibre *ciondos*. Ironically these are mostly made of sisal which, far from being 'traditional' was a cashcrop introduced by Europeans exploiting cheap reserves of African labour. Before sisal, *ciondos* were made from the fibres of local plants which the women chewed and rolled into strands on their thighs.

Young women similarly reject the ambivalent modernity symbolised in secondhand clothes. They are less experimental than men and, when they do buy secondhand clothes, are very conservative in their tastes. They will search for the right serge skirt through which they can salvage an image of high quality and respectability from the soiled caste-offs of the West. They are, however, very experimental with African textiles such as the batik prints from West Africa which are tailored into flamboyant modern African designs which are exhibited by young women on the streets of Nairobi with a sophistication and style that is hard to match on the streets of many European capitals. For young women their empowerment and associations lie more with a relation to an 'indigenous' 'modernity' rather than the 'external' one.

CONCLUSION

The trade in secondhand clothes can be taken to express the particular engagement of young men, and through them the community at large, with 'modernity' and the arenas of urbanisation and state. This engagement first took young men out of the rural areas and the orbit of their fathers' clans, but is now prompting them to re-engage with their rural communities through the link engendered by the clothes trade. In bringing back the frontiers of 'modernity' to the rural areas, men like the young clothes sellers of Muthithi market are also bringing a new ethos into the market; one which contrasts with images of the market and indeed of business as 'female'. Young men selling clothes have certain traits in common which set them apart from other traders. Their rootlessness, which is echoed by the mobility of the trade itself, their bonding with agemates, their exhibitionism, their emphasis on 'skill' and 'calculation' in business and the aggression with which they have expanded into entrepreneurship are all characteristics specific to the clothes traders. As with the association between trade and women, this new ethos evokes the social position of young men in the nineteenth century; via the ascendant ideals of the *mariika*, the Kikuyu initiation sets, and their impetus towards expansion out of their father's *mbari* (subclans) into the *githaka*, the land beyond the frontier. In these contexts young men were pivotal in articulating the ascendant expansive aspects of the 'social' and its ambivalent relationship with the self interest of the clans. It is to the relationship between ascendance and ambivalence to which we will now turn.

CHAPTER 5B

RIIKA AND *GITHAKA*: ASCENDANCE AND AMBIVALENCE IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIETY AND CLAN IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

I) *RIIKA* IDEALISM: THE VALUES OF THE KIKUYU INITIATION SETS

The *mariika* (pl) were the Kikuyu age-sets into which young men and women were initiated through circumcision at puberty. They comprised of horizontal ties based on common age and initiation which linked a particular group of people together throughout their lives. The *mariika* cut across the vertical ties based on family or descent which provided the basis of the Kikuyu clans. Young men played a pivotal role in terms of the tension between their identification with *riika* and their identification with the clan in which they would eventually become elders with positions of wealth and power. Along with the generation sets, the *mariika* formed the basis of what I have termed the 'ethnic whole' which was defined through common practices such as circumcision and through institutions based on age and generation such as the *ciama*. In this way, people's *riika* identities connected them to the principle of the 'social' which existed to transcend and to counter the centrifugal tendencies of the clans. Through their combined relationships with the *mariika* and the clans, young men in particular articulated the ambivalent relationship between society and individualism which characterised the patterns of economic and social interaction in the nineteenth century.

The strength of the *riika* bond was born of the common experience of the initation ceremony. Young initiates had to undergo circumcision *irua* (from *rua*, pain) together. Cucu wa Kamarigu-ini described how the boys and girls would stand in two lines facing one another. The boys would be circumcised first and the girls would watch to see who was fearing. Then it would be their turn. Afterwards they would all go to the circumcision hut where the girls would stay on one side and the boys on the other[4]. They would stay in this hut being looked after by their sponsors until their wounds were healed. Even today circumcision for Kikuyu boys is considered to be essential; I was told by Cecilia that if a boy goes to secondary school without being circumcised he will be beaten up or even killed. The association of

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[4] Other accounts suggested that the girls and boys were kept separate, which attests to the great variations in such practices throughout Kikuyuland.

men with the *mariika* (pl) relates to their very masculinity. Whilst Kikuyu women are named after clans, Kikuyu men are named after *mariika*.

After initiation girls became *airitu*, (young women), and boys *anake*, (young men; also warriors). It was a period in life of great pride and freedom for both men and women. Cucu wa Gonyo explained to me that at that stage *airitu* (female initiates) had nothing to fear from men. Their fathers (and mothers) could say very little to them and they could behave as they pleased. Their co-initiates, the *anake*, treated them with great respect, *giteo*. It was only after marriage that this respect changed to 'fear' as husbands could treat their wives as they pleased and would even beat them. All relationships between people of one *riika* (age-set) were based on *giteo*, 'respect'. So much so, I was told, that your age- mate could not even enter your home without first slaughtering a goat. Young men and women could spend the night together but there was no question of the girl getting pregnant because of *giteo*, respect.

> "The *riika*" said Cucu wa Kamariguini "are those who don't create problems for one another, only respect".

The period of youth between circumcision and marriage lasted, I was told, roughly from the age of 15 or 16 to one's mid twenties. One of the main activities of the *riika* was to organise communal dances, huge affairs involving the inhabitants of many ridges. Many old people described to me the dances that would be held at this time. *Airitu* and *anake* could stay out all night at these dances without their parents being able to say anything. It was at this stage that they formed ties with others of their age from distant parts of the land which transcended the local circles of their close kin. The contacts that her father made at these dances meant that Cucu wa Kamarigu-ini never had a problem knowing where to stay even when her travels far and wide to sell her pots took her many ridges away from her home.

In the past, as Eliud Kabugwa told me, the people of one *riika* would form communal work parties *ngwatio* and would generally help each other. This continued throughout their lives; for instance if your son was circumcised your age mates would often contribute a goat. (The bond was so strong that husbands of one *riika* might even share their wives.) However for women who moved away on marriage these ties were not so easy to keep up in practice. For young men and women the time after initiation and before marriage was the time when they

relied most strongly on their relationships with their age-mates rather than their relationships with their kin. Today young men in the market who sell with *arata* 'friends', are drawing on this tradition which recognises the value of cooperation among age-mates.

'Showing off' one's beauty in dress and decoration was paramount during the period after circumcision. Young men and women would pay great attention to personal adornment which they displayed at the dances which they attended. For young men however, the period after initiation was not just spent dancing and beautifying themselves. At this time they were also trained as warriors. The training involved several stages and a strict hierarchy based on the stage one had reached. The role of the warriors was to defend their individual clans and also to go on raiding expeditions for the clans. The independence of the youth in the context of the *riika* was restrained only through the strict ritual sanctions which gave the elders power ˯   ˙ the youth and by the fact that young men were dependent on their elders in the clan for their bridewealth payments. Despite this, it was said to be difficult for the elders to contain the hot blood of these young men, eager for war:

> "Young men with long hair are eager to fight! But the elders and the clan are against it." ('Nguchu', song sung by young men and women after circumcision.)

The competitiveness and 'aggression' with which young men have expanded into entrepreneurship along with the exhibitionism they display, are also reminiscent of the warrior youth of the past, eager for conquest and for the opportunity to accumulate wealth without relying on the beneficence of their fathers. Today the young men who sell in the markets not only strive to be independent of their fathers and/or mothers through their independent earning capacity, they also provide a serious threat to their elders through their competitiveness in business.

Skill in business and the ability to calculate and plan are emphasised by businessmen as features which distinguish them from businesswomen. The *mariika* of the past placed a primary value on knowledge and wisdom. This differentiated them from the clans in terms of which an individual's wealth and property would be the source of his power. The acquisition of knowledge in the age-sets began at circumcision, during the period of seclusion after the initiation ceremony had been performed. At this stage young men and women were educated into the ways of the 'tribe' and how to fulfil their duties as adults (Francis Mainah 1987). This initiation would eventually equip the youth to take their place as elders of the

ciama; the governing councils of the Kikuyu where affairs that were outside the jurisdiction of an individual clan would be debated.

Membership of a *kiama* resulted from passage through the various age grades that followed initiation and from the wisdom and skill which individuals displayed in their judgement and powers of oratory. A case could only be decided if all the elders agreed thus 'wisdom' and oratory counted for more than brute force.[5] In short, the *riika* and its most powerful organ, the *kiama,* achieved power through knowledge and wisdom; the clans achieved power through wealth. There were no women in the *ciama* though women had their own councils which deliberated the affairs of women.

II) EXTERNALITY: THE *RIIKA* AND THE NATURE OF THE SOCIAL

Bonds between age-mates as equals united by respect, acquisition of knowledge through the hierarchy of the age grades, emphasis on beauty and prowess in battle for men, are all qualities of the *riika* which hold particular importance for the youth who, being unmarried, have little power within their clans. There are echoes of these values in the way in which young men today attempt to bridge the gap between a dependent youth and a self-sufficient adulthood through their expansion into entrepreneurship. These values are expressed by the style with which they increase their general competitiveness in relation to older men and women.

The values of the *mariika* have also contributed to the self-conscious 'modernity' which is again a feature of entrepreneurship visible in young men's association with imports and manufactured goods such as clothes. This latter aspect evokes notions of boundaries in relation to the 'ethnic whole', defined both through the self-conscious identity of the *riika* and through the exclusion of the non-civilised; 'those who do not circumcise in the way that we do.' In this way, through their *riika* identities, young men defined themselves as part of a unity and oriented themselves to the external.

The *mariika* oriented themselves to the external in part through their relationship to time. They were the interface through which people confronted history and events. Each *riika* was named after a specific

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[5] The ideals expressed in the *ciama* are in many ways similar to Western notions of 'democracy'. Angelique Haugerud makes this point when she writes in her recent book on Kenya that "Democracy is not a Western import, but rather it builds directly on local cultural understandings." (1995;75).

event such that each *riika* was unique and tied in its identity to a period of Kikuyu history. Thus if a famine occurred the *riika* that was circumcised in that year might be named after that famine. There were *mariika* which were named after events such as the time when the first aeroplane which flew over the land (Ndege) or the time when a rogue elephant passed through and destroyed peoples crops (Njogo) or particular currencies which were introduced such as the rupee (Rubia). Again these events came from outside and impinged upon communities. They were confronted literally, through its institutions, and figuratively by their association with particular *mariika*. Whilst clan was always fighting or marrying clan in an endless web of interrelationships, the *riika* was called upon to deal with arbitrary events such as famine (or colonialism for that matter).

> "When there was no rain the clans would come together" said Guka wa Kibaru. The elders of the *ciama* would slaughter a goat under the *mugumo* (fig) trees, the sacred groves of the Kikuyu, and, facing Mount Kenya, they would pray to God to bring them rain. "The God of those times never failed" I was told.

This outward looking element of Kikuyu identity was especially associated with men, who, as I have said, were named after the *mariika* just as women were named after the clans.

The clans could invoke the powers of the ancestors, but only the *mariika* could invoke the power of God. The clans were held together by the moral obligations of kinship and exchange and their membership was defined by descent and alliance. However the *riika* had to define its membership according to a different kind of solidarity; one which transcended the 'natural' and expedient links of the family. The *riika* was in some ways reminiscent of the Greek *polis* which was composed of a fraternity of citizens who were linked by a pact based on their common notions of the ideal qualities to which they pledged themselves to aspire. In the context of the Kikuyu *mariika*, these qualities were based among other things on 'equality' 'respect' 'knowledge and wisdom as power' and the practice of 'democracy' in its institutions. These notions transcended individual self interest and called on a higher morality which not only served the social good but was also to be aspired to for its own sake, for the elevation of its members. As with the Greek *polis* where the 'civilised' nature of the citizen was apprehended as much through ideas about non-civilised others as through a self conscious perception of its own inherent qualities, so the riika was defined by those whom it excluded.

In the nineteenth century these boundaries were concretised through the practice of initiation which united as one the Kikuyu the Maasai the Wakamba and the Mount Kenya Peoples, whilst excluding others such as the Dorobo huntergatherers (see also Kenny 1981). The definition of 'social' (as opposed to clan) identities through the notion of boundaries could be transmuted into other types of bounded identity such as 'tribe', nationhood, with the advent of colonisation, even race. Once this particular manifestation of bounded identity based on self-conscious morality and exclusivity was mobilised in collective action, it could prove a powerful force. This potential was to become apparent during the course of the 20th century.

Guka wa Kibaru told me that before the advent of colonialism

> "People killed people of other 'clans' like the Maasai; they were beating them and taking their things. People didn't used to fight in *mariika*. But people fought the first whites who came like people of one *riika*; the blacks were fighting the whites; the blacks defended the inhabitants against the whites and the clans fought together because the country belonged to more than one clan."

Guka's statement illustrates the essential difference between the *mariika* and the clans. The *mariika* were the basis of the 'ethnic whole' referred to in chapter one. The clans on the other hand were defined by the relationship between descent and alliance and were the basis for the articulation of inter-relationships between groups. When colonial rule was imposed at the beginning of the twentieth century, the *riika* itself, instead of defining the unity of the social, became the basis of the new inter-relationship between the 'indigenous' inhabitants and the colonialists.

'Society' in the form of the *riika* now became the basis for the articulation of a new type of difference and in this way it came to resemble the clan in its representation of an individual interest group. The mobilisation of the *riika* in defence of its members was to reach its apotheosis in the nationalist movement which culminated in the guerilla war of the 1950's through which the colonial state was eventually overthrown. The transmutation of the *riika* into a basis for the expression of difference was to have far-reaching implications for the representation of 'society' in the context of the modern state.

III) EXPANSION: THE CONCEPT OF *'GITHAKA'*

The orientation to the 'external' towards which the institution and ideals of the *riika* was directed was itself closely tied to another feature of nineteenth century Kikuyu identity: namely the notion of

'expansion' and conquest of the 'frontier'. The expansionary push of Mt Kenya peoples in a series of migrations from ridge to ridge into what is now Central Province and the consolidation of this expansion around agriculture, land, and family is the underlying dynamic that not only structured the lives of individuals but gave rise to a distinctive Kikuyu ethnicity (see also Muriuki 1974): Living in a land of ridges and valleys, the Kikuyu were on the one hand a frontier people, always looking beyond the confines of their settlements to 'tame virgin forest' and 'conquer the wild' (Lonsdale 1992, vol2); and on the other hand they were a sedentary farming people who settled in *mbari* sub-clans associated with particular territory, and rooted themselves in a moral economy of 'family' and descent.

The expansion of the Kikuyu was motivated in part by fission internal to the clans and again this was of particular importance to young men. Sons were both the inheritors of their fathers' land and the ones who were expected to leave their fathers' *mbari* (sub-clan settlement) and go off to found new ones.

> "Their father's wealth was an achievement to emulate by their own efforts, not a start in life..." (Marris and Somerset 1971;28).

Marris and Somerset attribute to this ethic the particular entrepreneurial skills for which the Kikuyu are renowned:

> "wealth and respect depended more on intelligence and enterprise than inheritance." (ibid)

Young men founded new settlements by moving from the clan-owned *migunda* (farms) into the *githaka*, "the land which was not yet cleared". *Githaka*, I was told by Cucu and Guka wa Njoki, is not the land belonging to an individual, like *mugunda* (farm), it is the land of Kenya...'the whole country'.

> "People like us are too old to look for *ithaka* (pl), but the young people still go off to look for them." they said.

Githaka then was the land which was beyond the frontier of the *mbari*. This land was not only an emblem of that which was external to clan, it was an emblem of an external into which the community could expand through the enterprise of its young men. Hence it represented an impulse running counter to the involuting and decadent impetus of the clans.

Godfrey Muriuki (1974) delineates the conditions behind the expansions of the Kikuyu which included conflict with neighbours such as the Gumba and ecological pressures such as famines- or even

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mosquitoes[6]. Expansion into new territory and different ecological niches offered new opportunities for individuals and clans, but also necessitated a high level of cooperation. This cooperation was not only essential to the mobilisation of labour for clearing new tracts of land it was also essential for defensive purposes especially in the latter stages of the 19th century when Kikuyu encroachment onto the borders of Maasai land invoked considerable hostility from the latter. Although the need for cooperation was potentially threatened by the exclusivist and autocratic tendencies of clans whose members wished to fix and augment localities, the primary structure through which clans could bond together in times of need was the *riika*. Thus the expansion into the *githaka* promoted an identification with the ethos of the *riika* as much if not more than the ethos of the clan.

IV) AMBIVALENCE: YOUNG MEN AND THE TENSION BETWEEN *RIIKA* AND CLAN

Just as *githaka* transcended the frontiers of the *mbari* in space, so the *riika* transcended the frontiers of the clan in association. The transcendent aspect of both was particularly evident in young men. Young men not only went out to look for *ithaka* (pl) but also identified more closely with their *mariika* than with their clans as they did not yet have much power within the clan.

However young men were in a powerfully ambivalent position in their relationship to both *riika* and *githaka* in that their actions were also informed by the values of the clan and of elderhood to which they as individuals ultimately aspired. Much as they appreciated the freedom and heroic status that accompanied their activities as *anake* (initiates into the *mariika*), they would also have one eye fixed on the ownership of wealth and power which they would seek to consolidate in their capacity as elders and members of their clans. This ambivalent position of young men as new initiates into the *riika* and potential inheritors of the wealth of the clan thus placed them in a special position to articulate the wider tensions in the society between *riika* and clan; between expansion and involution; between what is beyond and what is within.

These tensions manifested themselves along the faultlines of power. In the Kikuyu society of the nineteenth century, these were

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[6] I was told by people who live in the lower parts of Muthithi, which is an exceptionally good agricultural area, that their ancestors had moved up from the drier areas further down because of mosquitoes.

structured along the lines of male gerontocracy. In the context of the clan, power accrued to age in the sense that the older you got the wealthier you became because you could command more labour and because your daughters would be married off and you would receive their bridewealth. In the context of the *riika*, the passage through various age-grades meant that elders progressively acquired knowledge and ritual skills which gave them power over others in society. The independence and warrior prowess of the youth in the context of the *riika* was threatening to this elderhood and this was paralleled by the threat that the institution of the *riika* itself posed to the institution of the clan. The elders of the *kiama* exerted control over the potentially independent warrior grades of the youth through strict ritual sanctions.

The tension between the youth and their elders however was nowhere more pronounced than within the clans themselves in the relationship between young men and their fathers. Young men were dependent on their fathers because their fathers controlled the bridewealth which young men required in order to marry and take their place in the clans. They effectively had to earn this bridewealth through herding activities which they performed when young. The youth accepted these curtailments on their power in the context of *riika* and clan and tolerated their lack of access to independent wealth because after marriage they would in their turn be in a position to start accumulating wealth and would take their place as elders themselves. Thus, in the nineteenth century in the context of ethnicity, the relationship between *riika* and clan perpetuated a system of male gerontocracy in which young men were disadvantaged (as were women as wives) and the desire of young men to challenge this system was ultimately checked by their future potential as elders in their own right.

CONCLUSION

The *riika* and the *githaka* together comprised what I have termed the ascendant ideals of the 'social' which broadly existed to transcend the individualist impetus of the clans. The *riika* exemplified the ascendant through its espousal of certain progressive ideals as well as its relationship to the 'external' through the bounded nature of the 'ethnic whole'. The *githaka* similarly was outward looking, an expansion out of the locus of the *mbari* (subclan) to push back the frontier and tame virgin territory thus resisting the involuting

tendencies of the clans while expanding the boundaries of the community at large. The two ideas were to an extent inter-dependent and found particular expression in the figures of young men who exemplified most purely the ethos of ascendance and expansion in nineteenth century Kikuyu communities. At the same time these ideals existed in latent tension with the aspirations of young men to take up their position of clan elders through which they would accumulate individual wealth and power. Thus young men expressed the tension which characterised nineteenth century communities between expansion and consolidation between society and individualism.

The association of young men with the 'ascendant' aspects of Kikuyu identity has paralleled their expansion, and that of the community at large, firstly into the urban areas and formal sector and now into local entrepreneurial activity in the rural areas. In Muthithi, the expansion of young men into entrepreneurship especially through the trade in secondhand clothes, draws on their relationship to the ascendant aspects of Kikuyu identity where they bring a 'progressive' ethos into the markets which has many affinities with the *mariika* of old. Through the clothes trade young men espouse a self-conscious 'modernity' as a distinctive identity through which the community itself has defined its relationship to formal sector and state.

The relationship between the clothes trade and Nairobi and beyond that, the West, symbolises a particular engagement with the external which has had special relevance for young men during the course of this century. Nairobi was the new terrain into which young men could expand out of the confines of their clans and localities; it was the new *githaka*. However today, although Nairobi exemplifies the 'external', the frontier which promises possibilities of expansion and wealth, it increasingly denies those promises and defeats those attempts. Whereas young men used to go to the cities to create a new life for themselves, the failure of the city to provide this has led them to bring back the 'frontier' into the rural areas.

In this way the clothes trade itself is, like young men in the context of the *mariika* of the past, transitional. It represents both the unfettered freedom of the city with its dissipating tendencies and the desire to translate this into the more solid material gain that will enable young men to become full adults in society; that will enable them, among other things, to marry.

The pivotal position of young men in the context of the relationship between the *riika* and the clan, between expansion and involution, has translated into their critical role in negotiating the relationship

between Kikuyu ethnicity and the state. It is the development of this relationship and the contradictions it espouses which has led to the present day entry of young men into the market. The next section will examine the relationship between young men and the state in terms of the tension between the transcendent aspects of the 'social' and the centrifugal pull of individual gain. It is the failure to resolve this tension in relation to engagements with the state, which, I argue, has led to the retreat by young men in particular from the arenas of state back into the rural areas. It is this in part which lies behind the expansion of the clothes trade in the present. This next chapters aim to explore this in terms of the ethos of society and its tension with individualism.

CHAPTER 6

NATION AND STATE: ASCENDANCE AND AMBIVALENCE IN THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM

I) COLONIALISM AND THE NEW 'GITHAKA'

Since the advent of colonialism in the last decade of the nineteenth century, *riika* and *githaka* as metaphors have played a powerful role in the history of the relationship between young men and the state. *Githaka*, as a metaphor of expansion into new territory, lent a particular naturalness to the ease with which young Kikuyu men took on the 'new frontier' of the state. The ideals of the *riika* permeated this engagement in the form of ideologies of 'progress' and 'enlightenment' which accompanied the mission educations through which the new frontier could be crossed. The relationship between the *riika*, the state, young men and the Kikuyu community was to achieve its principal significance in a political context through the development of the nationalist movement. It was through the mobilisation of ethnic solidarity evoked by the *riika* and in the espousal of its ideals – among them democracy and institutional discipline, gender equality, conquest and warfare – that the nationalist movement, composed overwhelmingly of Kikuyu, was galvanised into a revolutionary force capable of overthrowing the colonial state.

The beginning of the century saw a weakening of the power of the clans, as much of the Kikuyu population was decimated by famine and disease. At the same time the authority of the clans was subjugated under the initial punitive raids of the proto-colonial state ('softening up the natives' as it was called). The state implemented its policy of indirect rule through the creation of 'Chiefs'. Through this institution, men of little standing in Kikuyu society were arbitrarily rocketed into positions of great power. However the primary challenge of the colonial state to the clans of the Kikuyu was not through the direct subjugation of their authority but through its subversion by virtue of the opportunities it offered to Kikuyu youth.

Guka wa Njoki was one of many young men who was employed on the white settler farms. He told me

> "I went to work for the white man to get money for buying goats and women!".

This new route to wealth meant that these youth were no longer

dependent on their fathers and their clans for bridewealth. They could now go out and earn their bridewealth themselves, thus breaking the link between *riika* and clan which had held in place the male gerontocracy of the nineteenth century.

The challenge which the state presented to the clans in siphoning off their youth was compounded by that of the missions. The missions offered 'safe havens' to those like the poor and the youth who were disadvantaged in the power structures of the clans. In Muthithi the missions attracted a number of adherents from the area who went to undergo the "*githomo ya migambo*" (education of the voices). One cucu (grandmother) still has the hammer she used to help break the stones to build the schools. Cucu wa Kirima-ini's father donated land to one group of missionaries and she then met her future husband there. He, like many of the new young converts had run away to the missions because of 'problems'; the constraints of his father and the clan:

> "That Mzee" (his father) wanted to take everything he earned "so he ran away with part of his sister's bridewealth" said Cucu.

The missions not only offered safe havens, they also offered education which was seen as a prerequisite to material progress in the world of employment. As Dr Arthur of the Scottish Mission remarked:

> "The mission schools brought the young men together in the pursuit of a common aim, namely, as they themselves put it, to progress" (DC/FH.3/2).

The ideology of progress through knowledge was very much in keeping with the ideals of the *mariika* of the past. Education took the place of the age-grades and 'Christian civilisation' became the new moral community. The missions inserted themselves directly into the structures of the *mariika* even to the extent that they took over from the elders of the *ciama* their role as mediators between the people and God (Ngai). According to Eliud wa Kabugwa, when the missionaries came to Muthithi they built their homes under the sacrificial trees.

As the *mariika* had done, the missions and the state united the youth in a 'moral community' of *misheni* or *athomi* (readers) which was counterposed to that of the clans. The clans reacted strongly to this challenge. The early converts according to Cucu wa Njoki were told by their parents that they would 'lose their route'. The girls like her who ran away were called *maraya*, prostitutes. Men like Guka wa Wangeci abandoned their duties to their fathers to participate in this new avenue to 'progress':

> Guka wa Wangeci, according to his son, abandoned his herding duties for his father and ran away to Tumu Tumu when he was young

to attend the mission school there. He would return home at the end of term only to receive a severe beating from his father and be told never to leave home in such a manner again. However when the new term started he and his friends would take their fathers' flocks out to graze and leave them there whilst they commenced the long trek back to school. Guka wa Wangeci later became a sub-chief for the colonial state.

When Ben Wamahiu's grandfather ran away to school, his father committed suicide.

The 'parricide' on the part of the youth[7] was in effect a repudiation of the clan by the *riika*. It actualised the underlying fear provoked by the existence of the *riika* and in particular the threat of the warrior youth, to the existence of the clan and in particular its 'fathers' who hoarded its wealth in a gerontocratic regime which favoured older men over their sons and over women. However the youth were soon to discover they had merely exchanged one patriarchy for another. Just as the state opened up opportunities for the young, like the clan, it also attempted to contain them. It co-opted their labour and denied them the opportunities to enter the agricultural markets open to white farmers. It kept them in firmly subordinate positions within the institutional hierarchies, such as those of church and government, which they were beginning to enter. The missionaries instilled into their converts an ideology of allegiance to the state as well as to God.

"We were taught loyalty obedience and the bible" remembers Guka wa Muiruri. The *misheni*, an aspiring youth whose ultimate goal, like the youth before them, was to become powerful and wealthy themselves were thus denied this progression.

Guka wa Muiruri divided his early manhood between being educated, working in Nairobi and herding for his father. Moving between *riika*, state and clan, he, like many others, managed to straddle the contradictions and conflicting identities which were stirred up by the growth of the state. The ambivalent position of the youth at this time was potently symbolised in the double mutilation they had to

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[7] Carole Pateman (in Keane 1988) following on from Freud looks at the 'parricide' in the context of the Greek *polis* where the murder of the father by the sons ushers in 'civilisation'. The remorse of the sons drives them to institute law and order in the form of the democratic *polis* which overrides the individual motivations of patriarchy and family. In the context of the Kikuyu, the 'parricide' of the youth can be seen as the beginnings of a new engagement with Kikuyu 'civilisation' not in the context of the 'ethnic whole' but in the context of the state where it instituted a predominance of (the male) youth over the elders and, at first, of *riika* over clan.

undergo. As a precursor to circumcision they had their ears pierced and stretched to show that they were ready to be initiated as young adults in the 'tribe'. When they went to the missions their ears were then sewn up again. They were being squeezed between a paternalistic state and a paternalistic clan. This pressure strengthened the bonds among the young through the structures of the *riika* until the *riika* itself became a metaphor through which the incipient nationalist war could be fought.

II) THE *RIIKA* AND THE INDEPENDENCE WAR

As the state increasingly sought to suppress African political activity, the growth of nationalist sentiments took on an idealistic and militant character which was defined in relation to the ascendant aspects of Kikuyu ethnicity as enacted by the male youth.

"The (Independence) war was because of *githaka*"

Cucu wa Njoki told me. This was a specific reference to the land alienations of the colonial state on behalf of the white settlers which restricted the expansionist possibilities of the Kikuyu into new territories.

However *githaka* was more than that. It was a metaphor for the possibilities presented by the frontiers of the market and the formal sector into which young men were beginning to expand but which were equally curtailed by the restrictions of the colonial state. The Independence movement was oriented increasingly towards the egalitarian and democratic ideals of the *riika*. The capacity of the structure of the *riika* to transcend even ethnicity was galvanised to create a 'national' identity through which the imposed colonial state could be overthrown. This was furthered by experiences during the Second World War when many Kikuyu youth went abroad to fight. This not only exposed them to external influences which contextualised the colonial rule they experienced in their own country, it also gave them the military expertise needed to undertake armed struggle.

Bildad Kaggia was one of the Nairobi leaders of the Independence movement and a member of the underground Central Committee which orchestrated the movement from Nairobi until he and many of the others were arrested in 1952. Kaggia's ideals and aspirations were crystalised through his exposure to state and church, and were very much in keeping with the ideals of the *riika*.

> Kaggia was brought up in Murang'a where he remained until he was recruited into the British Army during the Second World war. He had been to Kahuhia, one of the first mission schools and while he

BILDAD KAGGIA IN HIS POSHO MILL.

was there he developed a strong feeling for Christianity. However his Christian influence was not inspired by the parochialism and doctrine of the state/mission alliance, but by the transcendent ideals of Christianity itself. Thus his espousal of Christianity came not through his experience of the mission school whose allegience was in his words "to their country and not to God", but from a group of Rwandese missionaries who visited the school and preached different Christianity influenced by pentecostalism. Kaggia then went on to obtain a job in the district headquarters but his disaffection with the authoritarian attitudes of the European district officials led him to sign up to join the army which meant leaving Kenya to go and fight in the Second World War. While he was in Egypt he visited the Holy Land several times. Later, in a year spent in England, he came into contact once more with a pentecostal church whose attitudes were again different from the repressive strictures of the Kenyan missions. It was these influences which led him to start his own church on his return to Kenya in the mid 1940's. His message was perceived as a threat to the government and the movement which he started was suppressed. This led to his decision to become part of a small group of revolutionaries who, in the late 1940's, began plotting to overthrow colonial rule. He was arrested as one of the Kapenguria six when the Emergency was declared in 1952. (Interview with Kaggia 1994).

Kaggia's political vision was very much influenced by his Christian principles, which advocated freedom and equality for all. It was a very different vision from that of Kenyatta and the moderates who wished to entrench the positions of the incipient African bourgeoisie and to this end were prepared to ally themselves with the British state. Others who formed the 'hardcore' of the Independence movement had also had experience abroad during the war.

People like Stanley Mathenge used this experience in the military training which they gave to the freedom fighters. J.D.Kali who also participated in the movement had been to India during the war where he had attended some of Gandhi's prayer meetings and was influenced by Gandhi's ideals. Pio Gama Pinto, an Asian originally born in East Africa but educated in India brought his experience of the Indian Independence movement to his central participation in the Kenyan freedom struggle. His ideals were later to lead to his assassination during the post-Independence government of Kenyatta.

The combination of idealism and new horizons which were opened in part through travels abroad did much to inspire the freedom struggle which became part of what was identified as a more global resistance to the imperialist slant which the deepening spread of capitalism had taken. In this sense the Independence struggle in Kenya, far from being parochial, oriented itself to the creation of a 'brave new world' in which guise it was connected to a wider current which swept through not just Africa but the world at large.

The peasants of the rural areas who took to the forests in the cause

of the struggle for Independence were led by this small core of young men based in Nairobi who preached ideals of freedom and equality. Cucu wa Njoki remembers the *anake* (young men) from Nairobi coming to administer the Mau Mau oath in the 1950's. Guka (her husband) had taken it before her but told nobody. It was only when she revealed to him that she had taken the oath that he told her he had done the same.

Cucu was made the head of the women's contingent in her local area and would organise parties of women to prepare food at night which would then be ferried to the forests by relays of runners again under cover of darkness. She was unusual in that she was relatively highly educated, again an ideal which was much in keeping with the *riika*. Margaret Gachichi (1986) comments on the fact that education was valued in the Mau Mau:

> "women who took up leadership roles...were usually those who had some basic formal education no matter how rudimentary." (1986;105).

Margaret Gachichi's thesis on 'The role of Gikuyu women in the Mau Mau' also explores the extent to which the women who were involved in the Mau Mau thought of themselves as equals of men. She writes about Muthoni, a famous Mau Mau general who did not think of herself as a 'woman' but operated as the other fighters did; "to fight to struggle..."

Baba Betty who was a young boy at the time also became a scout for the forest fighters. Prior to this period, the Kikuyu oath had never been administered to women and uncircumcised youth. The Central Committee in Nairobi, the core of the Mau Mau movement, oathed men women and children thus transforming the nationalist struggle into a struggle for all. It was a radical appropriation of the ritual power of elderhood by the warrior youth in the service of the ideals of the *riika* which demanded equality and respect regardless of gender and now age.

However from the start of this engagement with the state the contradictions were in place which were to emerge fully after Independence. The original impetus behind the invocation of the *riika* in the cause of nationalism was the state's restriction of the acquisition of independent wealth and power on the part of the youth even as the state held out these possibilities.

Guka wa Njoki went to work for the white man to earn money, not to become part of a new idealistic community which the concept of nationalism evoked, but 'to buy goats and women'; aspirations of

'clan'. These contradictions were to continue to run through the nationalist struggle in terms of its call for equality even as it was fought for the underlying interests of status which entailed a fundamental inequality, between men and women, young and old.

The story of Guka wa Njoki and a young woman called Wambui is a case in point:

> Wambui was a young woman who went to the forests to fight. She was captured by the homeguard and Guka wa Njoki bribed them to release her. He then married her on the strength of this bribe which he said was her 'bridewealth'. The marriage did not last long however as she was much younger than him and after the war she ran away.

Guka's actions showed the contradictions between *riika* and clan in his individual aspirations to acquire 'goats and women' and his espousal of the nationalist cause. He viewed his role in the liberation of Wambui, a fellow freedom fighter, as an entitlement to marry her. This was in a sense a violation of the equality and respect that formed the basis of the guerilla movement in its identification with the *riika*. However the opportunities outside the structures of marriage and clan which had enabled Guka to earn his own bridewealth and repudiate the shackles of his father's clan also allowed Wambui to repudiate her husband's clan. After the war she left Guka to go and work on a settler farm.

III) THE APPROPRIATION OF STATE AND THE RE-ASSERTION OF THE CLAN

After the war, Guka wa Njoki told me

> "Kenyatta came to the people and asked them 'if you continue to fight who will you rule?'"

The conquest of state by the 'warrior youth' entailed a mobilisation of Kikuyu ethnicity under the umbrella of the *riika*. This over-rode distinctions of age, gender, and clan. .   . The transformation of this 'ethnic nationalism' into a broader nationalism was blocked, however, by the localising forces of clan and by the post-independence impetus to consolidate the power which Kikuyu ethnicity could, through the organs of state, command.

The *riika* was always a forced metaphor through which the nationalist struggle was to be fought. Its social aims were in contradiction with the 'individualistic' opportunities that the state seemed to promise to the youth. This underlying contradiction translated itself as a submerged class formation which was gradually to rise. During the 1930's the nationalist movement was divided by the moderates who wished to ally themselves with the capitalist orientations of the

state as opposed to the militants who rejected all that the state stood for. During the Mau Mau itself a fundamental rift emerged between those Kikuyu who were loyal to the government, the homeguard, and those who went to the forests to fight. This rift was to resolve itself at independence in the subsumption of the *riika* by the self-interest of the clan.

The newly independent Kenya now had a Kikuyu president and those who could lay claim to being Kikuyu within the nation state could look to enjoy particular privilege.

Kenyatta, in embracing the 'protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism'[8] called on a morality of wealth rather than equality and the underlying message of his agenda was to re-root this wealth within the Kikuyu community under the rubric of the *'mbari ya Mumbi'*. The *'mbari ya Mumbi'* was 'the house of Mumbi' the creator and mother of the Kikuyu.

In post independence Kenya the *'mbari ya Mumbi'* transcended the divisions between the clans uniting them under a new definition of ethnicity which was not about interdependence between groups but about the creation of a Kikuyu 'superclan' or 'tribe'. The *'mbari ya Mumbi'* and its practical manifestation in institutions such as GEMA (Gikuyu Embu and Meru Association), oriented itself towards the accumulation of wealth and the material well-being of its members as the clan had done, a feature which the *riika* had always sought to counter.

By the end of the 1960's people who called themselves Kikuyu dominated the institutions of the state and held privileged positions throughout the spheres of the formal sector and business. The new

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[8] The new morality of wealth was justified in Biblical terms: as Baba Mwaniki explained to me:

 The missionaries had attempted to suppress individual enterprise for
 their convertees by emphasising the importance of 'the wealth
 hereafter' rather than the 'wealth of this world', using this to
 make a virtue out of poverty. However after independence, according
 to Baba Mwaniki, people looked more closely at the bible and saw
 that in many respects the missionaries had spread the wrong
 interpretation of the 'word': The Bible says that there is nothing
 wrong with wealth as long as it was not excessive or for its own
 sake. However there is something wrong with poverty; if you are poor
 you might be tempted to steal and that is wrong in the eyes of God.
 So people pray to God to make them comfortable so they do not need
 to steal and thereby sin against Him.

In post independence Kenya, the 'wealth of this world' was something to be condoned not condemned. This went along side the economic boom of the 1960's and 70's where Kikuyu people in particular were accumulating wealth as never before.

githaka extended from Nairobi into the Rift Valley where the White settler farms were converted into settlement schemes whose principle beneficiaries were Kikuyu. Nepotism, the consolidation of clan, had begun to set in.

The notion of the *'mbari ya Mumbi'* represented a re-definition of Kikuyu ethnicity in relation to the state, one which incorporated aspects of both *riika* and clan. It was now through the nation-state, the space of the *riika*, that the 'clan' aspirations of the 'tribe' (*mbari ya Mumbi*) towards individual gain could be realised.

Baba Jocinta who is from Muthithi and who went to Nairobi as a young man in the 1960's explained to me that

    "it is necessary to work to build the nation"
but at the same time

    "to be a Kenyan one must have land."
The maintenance of Kikuyu control over the state called for both a progressive orientation towards the 'new *githaka*', 'working to build the nation', and the consolidation of ethnic identity through its rooting within the land or 'territory' of the Kikuyu.

The necessity of consolidating tribal identity in the interests of wealth and power is perhaps one factor which explains why Kikuyu men have refused to make the break with the rural areas and instead attempt to anchor themselves both in the city and the country. For instance Kikuyu men are particularly concerned to assert their rights to inherit their share of their fathers' land even when they themselves are wealthy and the share which they are due is so small as to be insignificant. This contrasts them with the Luo for instance many of whom moved with their wives and families to the city all but severing their ties with their rural roots.

CONCLUSION

The inability of the *riika* to sustain even the brief period of nationalism and to translate its forward looking ideals of equality and democracy into the formation of the nation-state is in part to blame for the predicament of young men today whose aspirations are thwarted by the divisive forces of class and 'tribe'. After Independence the 'gains of conquest' which resulted from the primarily Kikuyu nationalist movement were consolidated into the wealth and individualism of the new Kikuyu *mitonga* 'big-men' 'bosses' as they are known today. These *mitonga* were the mission educated

youth (*misheni*), the standard fivers of the 1940's who first betrayed their fathers and then betrayed their *riika*[9]. It was now through identification with clan as 'tribe' that privileged access to the state through the partisan forces of ethnic identity was cemented. It was under a capitalist middle-class who looked towards the values of the 'clan' that Kenya was led into its new nationhood not under the left-leaning idealists of the Mau Mau.

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[9] John Lonsdale also writes of the language of 'clan' and *riika* as the moral language of class when he talks of "*mbari* wealth" versus "*riika* poverty" (1992;463). After Independence, he writes,
   "patrons moved out of providing land and into the mediation of
   state power..." "their critics invoked the democratic then populist
   ideas of *riika*" (1992;354).

CHAPTER 7

SOCIETY AND STATE: THE CRISIS

> "If you sharpen a blade on both sides" said Waitherera "it will cut you."

I) HOME AND WORK

The ambivalent relationship between *riika* and clan within the state has always had a particular significance for the male youth. After independence the state continued to draw young men away from their clans to the *riika* space of the city as the new terrain of enterprise and material gain. At the same time these gains were dependent in part on the privileged position which Kikuyu ethnicity held within the state which demanded the strengthening of 'tribal' identity. This scenario called for an identification with both the *'riika*-nation' and the 'Kikuyu-state' both of which were concretised in the persons of young men. Kinyua who sells fruits in Mukuyu market told me before I left that, in contrast to the women of the market,

> "with us [men] we will always be here because we are here for 'work'. Even at my home it will always be my home. Mama Kamau can be married with someone and she can go to Nyeri or Mombasa. But with me the only thing that can change is my job; you might find me with potatoes instead of *sukumas*."

The divisions between 'work' and 'home' paralleled the post-independence divisions between nation and state. In these Kikuyu men became ideologically fixed because of their allegience to both. The inherent instability of the state has resulted in an ossification, or concretisation of identity instead of the flexibility that this instability in actual fact requires.

Baba Muiruri who has a store on the edge of Muthithi market was made redundant from his job with the Kenya Meat Commission and thus had to return to the rural areas. However he told me that he was glad of this because it gave him a chance to accustom himself to rural life.

> "Many of those who retire at sixty and then come back to their rural homes hardly last a year" he said – "they cannot live outside the city."

Men are dependent on the dynamic relationship between 'home and work' 'country and city' in order to sustain either and yet their attempt to consolidate and make permanent their 'gains of conquest' prevents them from retaining this dynamism in their lives.

'Work' and 'home' have become part of a relationship that, anchored in the persons of Kikuyu men, has embodied the tension between *riika*

and 'clan', between the expansion of the frontier and the consolidation of this expansion. This has found expression not only through the straddling of city and country but also through the maintenance of (urban) girlfriends and (rural) wives: In relation to the state, the ability to retain privileged access to resources demanded a consolidation of 'tribal' identity through which the state could be monopolised. This involved investment in the rural areas where 'tribal' identity was defined in terms of territory and land. At the same time it involved being based in the urban arenas of state where wealth through formal sector employment could be acquired. Thus the particularity of the relationship between the acquisition and investment of wealth in the context of political relationships to the state led to a situation where most men had to maintain two households- one rural and one urban.

Land needs an accumulation of capital to farm it. Thus the farms of Kikuyuland required the remittances which men sent back from the city. At the same time, men who worked in the city needed to ensure that their land was looked after and its proceeds not appropriated by others. Kinyua's story is a case in point.

> He inherited land from his father and had planted coffee but whenever he went back he found that his coffee had been harvested by other members of his family who had also kept the proceeds. Thus he married 'a girl from home' to look after it. Kinyua visits his wife two or three times a month and sometimes more if there is some work to be done on the farm, like spraying for instance. He has two bank accounts, one for coffee which his wife can draw on for household expenses, and one for his business.

Njao who is a Kikuyu from Murang'a, told me that whereas Kikuyu women will marry anyone, Kikuyu men are exceptionally conservative and will only marry Kikuyu women and more specifically 'a girl from home'. For Kikuyu men, the wife, 'the girl from home' initially represented the re-rooting of their conquest of the state within the territorial framework of the Kikuyu clans now united as one 'tribe' under the 'mbari ya mumbi'.[10]

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[10] John Keane in his analysis of 'civil society' as the social base of the bourgeoisie writes that
  "civil society is established after the image of the civilised male individual: it rests on a foundation of excluded women who are expected to live under conditions of household despotism."
  (1988;21).
This in some ways characterises a particular (and short lived) expression of gender in terms of husbands and wives in the context of Kikuyu relationships to the state in the first two decades after Independence where power and wealth were dependent on the subjugation of women as wives.

The maintenance of 'work' and 'home' resulted in the need for young men to remain physically in the cities and towns, the terrains of the nation-state, and yet to maintain a permanent link with their rural 'roots'. This meant living apart from their wives and families in the rural areas. The divisions engendered through this scenario have been woven into the very fabric of relationships, particularly those between men and women. Mweru, the granddaughter of one of the women who sells in Muthithi market, told me that the main problem with marriages these days is that men go off to Nairobi leaving their wives in the rural areas and forgetting their rural homes.

> "Like you have seen my uncle's wife; she is looking after his children and his farm and her husband is not even there!"

According to many of the women to whom I spoke, this state of affairs is the cause of all the divorces these days.

Men not only neglect their rural homes, they also establish relationships with other women who are not their wives. Mama Mbugwa's sister-in-law committed suicide because her husband was having an affair with another woman. Girlfriends objectify both the wealth that can be gained through the organs of the state and its urban arenas, and the insecurity of this wealth, which is subject to the state's instability and to the vicissitudes of a fickle world market. To girlfriends are attributed special powers which induce men to part with their wealth.

The figure of the 'girlfriend' represents an illegitimate relationship rooted not in the rural areas where it will ensure the maintenance of 'tribal' identity, but in the cities and towns where such relationships threaten the break down of 'tribal' identities as expressed through state. Girlfriends are referred to as 'housebreakers'. They are seen as dissipating wealth because wealth is not 're-rooted' through them back into community. Further, girlfriends take the children of their lovers back to their own clans thus initiating a system where the offspring are named not after their fathers' clans but after their mothers' clans.

Girlfriends and wives themselves have represented the ambiguous identities which men have occupied in order to maintain their positions within the new nation-state: Njoroge who sells fruits in Mukuyu market told me

> "my business has really gone down over the last two years. I am going to give up girlfriends: If I have a girlfriend I have to give her 30/= a day and buy her lunch which makes 50/= a day-about 1500 a month. And for my wife I take home between 1200 and 1500 a month. But my wife is doing a lot with that money; she is buying fertilisers looking after the farm taking care of the kids

whilst my girlfriend isn't doing anything - she won't even wash my clothes and she always needs more money than I can give her. The moment you stop giving her anything she is off with someone else and then she can only bring back a disease."

II) CRISIS IN COMMUNITY; INCEST, THE CURSES AND THE DIVISION OF THE CLANS

The maintenance of these threefold relationships has put increasing strain on rural communities. The contradictions of the nation-state as realised in the lives of Kikuyu men now threatens the social fabric. The breakdown of rural communities has given rise to myths about incest, to an invocation of the curses of old to try and hold households together, and to a fundamental division in clan itself which, through the breakdown of marriage, is divided into male clan and female clan.

Myths about incest resulting from divorce not only speak to a perverse inversion of social morality, they also express concern about the loss of order and of geneological knowledge which were part of the former functioning of the clan. Mwinyi told me two stories about divorce:

A couple married and had a son. The wife then left her husband leaving her son behind. She then remarried and had a daughter after which she divorced her second husband. This pattern continued for she remarried again and had another child. Many years later her first son and daughter met in Nairobi and became lovers. When they went back to their homes and announced their intention to marry they found out that they were brother and sister.

The second story ran like this;

A couple married and had children including a daughter. The wife then left her husband but this time she took the children with her. Many years later her first husband and their daughter happened to meet and fall in love. This relationship between father and daughter resulted in marriage before they discovered the real nature of their relationship.
The split clans of divorced parents put particular pressure on grandparents who must now attempt to bind their households together and to control the assets of marriage -principally the children- through other means. To this end, the elders of the society take recourse to the power of the 'curses' of old: Cucu wa Kamarigu-ini told me that

"in the past a curse wasn't a big thing, you would simply say 'may you have done to you what you did to me' but now a curse can break up homes."

I came across a number of occasions of split homes where I was told that the children could not chose which home they wished to belong to because their grandfather had laid a curse:

"My cousin's wife" said Mweru, has returned to her parents

> leaving the children behind because the grandfather had left a curse so she could not take them with her."

It is not uncommon these days in the case of divorce, for the women to leave taking the children with them but the curses of the grandparents override the decisions of the parents. Mwaniki's and Mama Njoki's stories are a case in point:

> Mwaniki's parents separated when he was very young- "my father was 'run over by a bus'" he told me, which is a euphemism for divorce. His mother took the children to live at her parents home where her father has given her land in her own right. However Mwaniki and his siblings still keep in contact with their father who lives nearby. He has said to Mwaniki that he wants to give him land but Mwaniki has had to refuse because his maternal grandfather has laid a curse to prevent the grandchildren returning to their father's home.
> Mama Njoki, whose husband has worked in Nairobi ever since she married him, eventually left him in the 1980's and went to live with her parents. Her husband's parents now look after the children but find them difficult to control – Njoki, the eldest grandchild has already become a single mother. I was told that if Guka wa Njoki asks Mama Njoki to come back and builds her a hut, his son, her former husband, will not be able to say anything because Guka will lay a curse.

The clans now perpetuate themselves not through marriage but through the curses of the grandparents which hold them together when the rifts between men and their wives threaten to tear them apart.

It seems that the identification between clan and state as 'super-clan', has violated the fundamental basis of Kikuyu society: Under the rubric of the 'ethnic whole', the uniting of the clans was effected through the uniting of men and women in exogamous marriage. Today the uniting of the clans as 'tribe' within the state has, in contrast, led to a divorce between men and women. This in turn contributed to the transformation of the ambivalence of *riika* and clan within the parameters of the state into a division of society itself into male clan and female clan. Children of divorced parents must now choose between the clans of their fathers and the clans of their mothers and the wider implications which these gendered clans enfold:

> Kage is the son of a split home. He was brought up by his mother who is a teacher in the Rift valley until he went to secondary school when he returned to his father's home in Muthithi and was looked after by his grandmother. His father lives and works in Nairobi where he has a high position in the postal services. Kage is in a difficult position. He is highly educated but cannot find a job and his father will not help him. He lives with his young wife Njeri and her baby daughter in a palatial half built stone house that his father is constructing in Muthithi. But without a job and without capital he can do nothing. They live on what Njeri

can earn in the market from selling onions. His father has remarried a young Kamba woman in Nairobi and Kage says that if he asks his father for money his father's new wife will quarrel with him. He could probably ask his own mother to help him with some capital to start business but if he goes back to her he is in danger of losing his claim to the land that he could inherit from his father.

Kage it seems cannot ally himself both with his mother and his father but must chose between them. The one will provide him with capital and the other with land, but each is useless without the other. He could get a job himself and raise capital to farm his land but nowadays jobs are increasingly hard to come by. Further he is loathe to get a job because he says it will take him away from his wife. It is as though he perceives that the split marriage of his parents was the result of his father's disappearance to the capital to look for work and he himself does not wish to perpetuate this cycle the results of which now leave him impotent.

III) THE DEMISE OF THE *MBARI YA MUMBI*

The contradictions which were set up in the relationship between Kikuyu ethnicity and state were to deepen after the death of Kenyatta. The state, the city, the road to civilisation and progress brought its ultimate reward with Independence when the fruits of education and employment turned the mission boys into 'bosses'. The death of Kenyatta in 1978 however saw the ascension of Moi, a non-Kikuyu, to the presidency. Moi adopted a profoundly ·anti-Kikuyu stance and, 'following in Kenyatta's footsteps', he concentrated his attentions on the elevation of his own ethnic group to a privileged position within the state. The fall from grace of the Kikuyu from the state led to the rapid demise of the *'mbari ya Mumbi'*. The weakening of the foundations of the political relationship between Kikuyu ethnicity and the state found a symbolic resonance in the attempted coup of 1982. The coup rocked the government temporarily before order was restored and also rocked Kikuyu perceptions of the city as the new *githaka*, laying its solidity open to question; its concrete foundations were not, after all, so sure. A middle aged man at the bus stop in Muthithi told me that after the coup many Kikuyu who had been trying to make a home for themselves in the city rushed back to the land and started investing in the rural areas.

However far from mending the rifts which the split existence of men had entailed, their increasing involvement with their rural homes

only put more pressure on their households and this was exacerbated by the decline not only of the political position of the Kikuyu but also their economic position. At first the ambivalent identity of young men and the productive relationship between wage labour and the land seemed to promise the best of both worlds. However the economic boom of the '60's and '70's gave way to economic decline which particularly affected the formal economy and also the cash crop — coffee, both of which provided the economic base for Kikuyu men. Added to this was the increasing pressure in the rural areas themselves where, by the 1980's, the relationship between population and land was beginning to result in severe land shortage. The return of men to their rural homes at this time spelt disaster.

Not only were men increasingly unable to bring back remittances from the city. They were also, in an inversion of this bargain, demanding that their rural households bolster their dual relationship with the city and the land. The demise of the political and economic relationships between Kikuyu men and the state also prevented the sons of rural households from moving into the economic niches of the city, thus adding to the pressures on rural households.

In the present day and age, where there are no jobs, and education brings nothing but disappointment, young men are once more dependent on their fathers who can't even provide them with land. Baba Jocinta's tale brings together . these trends:

> Baba Jocinta had always worked in Nairobi while his wife and children stayed in Muthithi. His older sons however could not any longer find work in Nairobi.

> "Nowadays" he said "young men are depending on their fathers and this is very bad as it will send their brains to sleep and they will not be able to look after their parents in their old age."

> He added that they were just staying at home and

> "sucking their mother dry".

> The failure of his sons to move out and become independent was juxtaposed with Baba Jocinta's own impotence and his increasing incapacity to sustain his rural home on his salary alone. He complained to me that he could no longer afford to pay for his children's school fees. His wife had started business in order to make up for this. Women increasingly have taken over to make up for the shortfalls of their men folk and this of course only exacerbates the sense of crisis which men experience; husbands become dependent on their wives and sons on their mothers.

> A couple of months after I had this conversation with Baba Jocinta I was told that a terrible thing had happened; he had come home and evicted his wife and her two children by a previous relationship, with the help of the local police. The three of them were severely beaten and kept for a few days in the local jail and told never to go back to that home again. Nobody would tell me quite what was going on, but I was told that Baba Jocinta and his wife had quarreled over money: Far from bringing money back to his

rural home Baba Jocinta had found himself unable to subsist on his salary and was coming back to his home to demand some of the money from the coffee. He found that his wife had spent this on the household and was incensed. Later I heard that he had brought his girlfriend from town back to live in his rural home.

Whatever the exact story, it seems that Baba Jocinta had been unable, partly for financial reasons, to reconcile his split existence between city and country and had thus been reduced to this brutal measure. Baba Jocinta illustrates the crisis which the Kikuyu engagement with the state has generated, the weight of which has fallen upon men through whom this engagement has from the start been effected.

IV) THE DEMISE OF MALE CLANS

The contradictions generated in the tension between *riika* and clan in the context of the state had already forced a series of divisions which manifested themselves along the lines of gender among other things. In some respects gender which was the major faultline along which these contradictions were to emerge. Once men's relationship to clan, and through this to 'community' in the form of 'tribe', began to be broken down by the weakening of men's economic and political power within the state, women's relationships to clan began correspondingly to strengthen and this was manifest both through girlfriends and wives. Through their relationships with men outside marriage, girlfriends had already, instigated a feminised version of clan defined through descent, and through female control over resources to which male wages contributed. Now wives also began to display an increasing control over the clans of their husbands through their access to and control over economic resources as farmers and businesswomen.

"Education is your *shamba* (garden)"
Mama Mbugwa told me; education is your greatest asset, it is your inheritance. The husband is supposed to pay for his children's education but increasingly it is wives who shoulder this burden through their entry into business. This is bolstered by the decline of male investments such as coffee and the rise in female crops such as bananas which also give women a stronger link with their husbands' land.[11]

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[11] Raymond Smith (1956) in his book on family structures in British Guiana, suggests that the trend which he observes towards matrifocal households and the strength or weakness of the conjugal bond are linked to the jural position of the father in relation to the children and that this in turn is linked to socio-economic

The nature of the new relationship between men and women with respect to their control over the clans and society has found its most powerful articulation in the relationship between mothers and their sons. There is now a generation of young men who are dependent on their mothers, rather than on their fathers, for their upbringing. The relationship to women as mothers and dependence on the economic power of women through their entrepreneurship has led to an amalgam of the 'girlfriend' and the 'wife' which brings with it a whiff of the ancient threat of the mythical 'matriarchy' of the Kikuyu (see chapter 9). The predatory 'mother/businesswoman' figure represents the increasing dependence which men as sons now experience in relation to women. This has ramifications in terms of the relationship between Kikuyu ethnicity and the state: Kikuyu women have come to represent the independence from the state itself which many communities in the present day must develop in order to sustain themselves.

Caught between the failure of the city and the land shortage of the rural areas, the experience of young men is potently captured in the figure of the *matatu* tout. Touts are the 'drop outs'. They have often literally dropped out of the educational system and are unemployed. They work illegally on the private taxis where they solicit for fares from prospective passengers. A young man who was a *matatu* tout told me that he left school after standard five to join his friends who were touts because they were earning so much money. Although their practice is illegal, the touts earn more money than the drivers and conductors. Danson who is a tout in Murang'a told me that he hates that life and wants to become a lorry driver even if it means earning less money. He hates the company of the touts who do not even have fixed abodes and sleep with one girlfriend until they are kicked out and have to find another.

These young men travel back and forth from the country to the city in a void of liminality. They have no homes. They are not married; their names will be lost; they are like wraiths. The touts express not only the crisis that faces young men today, caught between the city and the country. They also express the liminality of the *riika* itself and the precarious position of young men, not yet able to reap the

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conditions: Men who are in insecure positions economically are less important to the functioning of their households and in these cases the mother-child bond may become more important. This may also be relevant to the decline in the strength of marriage bonds in places like Muthithi today.

benefits of their clan status which would accrue to them when their fathers allowed them to marry.

The ambivalence of this period could on the one hand be elevated into a powerful moral community which transcended the selfish aspirations of individual clans or it could become a period of dissipation where individuals who were betwixt and between lost their sense of identity and roots altogether. For young men in the 1920's being squeezed between the clans of their fathers and the partriarchy of the state produced a positive expression of the values of the *riika* which translated itself into the highest ideals of nationalism. For young men today being caught between a weak and hostile state and the weakened patriarchy of their fathers' clans, the reverse seems to be the case. The road of 'opportunity' that swept young men away to the city was built in Muthithi by the forced labour of their mothers during the Emergency in the 1950's. Kenya has one of the highest road accident rates in the world. The road to the city, built by the mothers, has now turned into an altar of sacrifice where young men are trapped in a limbo, travelling to and fro, from city to country, and spending their earnings on drink and girlfriends until they end up as victims of the 'djins'[12] who are thirsty for blood.

Men's attitudes to marriage today reflect their lack of power within the arenas of formal sector and state and the corresponding challenge by women to their positions in relation to clan. Marriage for men in the context of the state was the consolidation of clan particularly through the relationship of wives and land as the investment of male wealth. However the present demise of the relationship between men and the state has threatened their ability to use marriage to consolidate their clan positions. The crisis of state has finally led to a situation where men, due to their lack of resources, cannot afford to marry at all. Njoroge a young man who sells chickens in Mukuyu told me that

> "young men do not marry these days because they do not have enough money to serve their wives."

Marriage for men speaks to questions of mortality and immortality which generate a much deeper fear. Your personhood in Kikuyu is perpetuated through your children who carry your name. Their children, for women, automatically carry their names and the names of

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[12] The recent scares about devil worship in the Kenya have many nuances across all areas of life. Car accidents for instance are attributed to 'djins' who survive on human blood.

their clans. But men must marry in order to have their children named after them and their clans. The lack of resources in either the city or the country which allow men to cement their relationship to clan through marriage may result in their complete social annihilation.

Nowadays said Kinyua

"there is no point in having children..."

There is no way any longer for men to consolidate the wealth acquired through the expansion of the *riika* into their rooted identities perpetuated after death through the clan.

CONCLUSION

Within the unification of Kikuyu ethnicity as a repository of power, the divided space of the nation-state found expression in the divorces between men and women and in the divisions of the clans into male and female. This has been coupled with the demise of the *'mbari ya mumbi'* after the death of Kenyatta, and with it the demise of a particular definition of Kikuyu ethnicity and of Kikuyu masculinity in relation to the state. This scenario has left men in a state of crisis. The perpetuation of 'community' has fallen increasingly on Kikuyu women and this has only exacerbated the sense of crisis experienced by men. The mother-figure in particular offers perhaps the only hope of salvation for men in their current predicament. It is now through the business world of their mothers that men who are prepared to become for a time 'feminised' may hold out new hope of the re-building of masculine identity and a way forward for the community as a whole.

CHILD CLIMBING INTO HIS MOTHER'S
GRANARY.

CHAPTER 8

MEN AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP: THE UNIFICATION OF 'RIIKA' AND CLAN

> "Out of the egg- symbolised by the round cooking vessel- will
> rise the eagle or phoenix..." (Jung in Swartz-Salant 1995; 44)

I) FROM RIIKA TO CLAN: THE CLOTHES TRADE AND TRANSITION

In Muthithi market the clothes trade and the young men who engage in
it appear to embody the transitional stage of the riika. Njoroge is a
clothes seller who sells all over Murang'a district including
Muthithi market.

> "I used to sell in Nairobi" he told me "but only uneducated
> people stay there. We keep our traditions so that when the time
> comes for us to inherit [land] we will know how to farm it."

People like Njoroge are rejecting the city as the new githaka. The
cities are now for the 'un-educated' and, for those who want to go
forward, 'tradition' not 'progress' has become the byword. The
clothes themselves mirror this path. They are imported from the city
to the country where they form the bridge to the new 'frontier'.
Business has provided an answer for young men if they are prepared to
renounce the now vacant promises of 'education' and 'employment' and
enter the feminine realm of markets and entrepreneurship from which they
can recreate 'tradition' and earn enough money once more "to serve
their wives".

Although business in general is currently associated with independent
women, the clothes sellers who are entering the female realm of the
markets, do so in an arena where women are respectable and
unthreatening; 'contained'.

> "Women have only come into the clothes trade recently and that is
> because of their husbands"

said Njoroge.

The identification with 'modernity' makes clothes acceptable for the
wealthier 'respectable' women whose husbands will not otherwise let
them "sell in the markets like harlots." Women who sell clothes on
the contrary, are entering a male realm where they are more dependent
than other women in the markets. Women who sell clothes are generally
more akin to women who are employed and many are from similar
backgrounds; they are highly educated and an exceptionally high
proportion are married. Many of these are supported in their entry

into business by their husbands[13].

Kikuyu men like Njoroge who sell clothes in Muthithi exhibit many of the uncertainties and ambivalences associated with the ambiguities which this 'transition' phase entails. This is evident in their attitudes to women who in many ways represent the ambivalent relationship which Kikuyu ethnicity holds in relation to the state: Njoroge told me that it is not good to marry a 'girl from home';

> "that is the cause of all the ethnic clashes right now".

Men like Njoroge have experienced the negative repercussions of the ethnic chauvinism of the Kikuyu within the state which was perpetuated through their relationship to land and marrying a 'girl from home'. The legacy of this chauvinism has been the eviction of the Kikuyu from state power which has resulted among other things in their victimisation during the ethnic clashes of the early 1990's[14].

In terms of his rejection of the model of 'a girl from home' Njoroge had a progressive attitude towards women but at the same time he was deeply ambivalent about them. He described to me how in Meru even a grandmother would cross to the other side of the street if a man was passing and hide herself in the bushes. "Kikuyu women" however "have no respect". He told me that if you get married it is better not to have any assets because even if you get sick your wife would rather let you die than sell any of them.

> "Kikuyus like money too much" he said "It is good to like money but not too much."

In Njoroge's view and in the view of many Kikuyu men, Kikuyu women –

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[13] I have found that the women who sell clothes are unusual in the markets because of the involvement of men, often their husbands, in their businesses. This again points to the link between the clothes trade and the 'external' realm identified with the city, with 'modernity' and with the 'West', all metaphors through which men have defined their particular relationship to the state. Elenor Watchel (1976) found the same to be true of Nakuru businesswomen in the 1970's who had stores and who were equally dependent in their business endeavours on their husbands. Again these women were involved in forms of business involving a relatively high capital outlay. However, especially since the 1970's, women have begun to engage in forms of business such as the maize and beans trade involving a large capital base where they operate independently of men. It is these women today who form the archetype of the successful single mother Kikuyu businesswoman (see Part III).

[14] After the Kenyan government, with pressure from foreign donors, embraced multi-partiism, there was a spate of 'ethnic cleansing' especially in the Rift Valley where many Kikuyu's have settled. The 'ethnic cleansing' was related to the creation of ethnically pure constituencies which eliminated the possibility of a large opposition vote.

particularly businesswomen - express the characteristics by which the community as a whole are perceived: Kikuyus are seen as being obsessed by money at the expense of all other values especially those of kinship. Their success within the modern state is admired but is also condemned. For men who are now returning to the rural areas to mend their broken marriages and re-create their clans, the emphasis on wealth and progress as key aspects of their 'modernity' are tempered with an acknowledgement of their dependence on other values that are more associated with community such as those of the family and the clan. In this respect the models of Kikuyu women as the 'girl from home' and the predatory businesswoman-mother figure are both unsatisfactory.

The *riika* stage of the young men who sell clothes in Muthithi market is, in other markets and in other trades, beginning to consolidate itself. Through the transitional stage of the *riika*, men are now beginning to move towards a new definition of marriage and 'clan'. The clothes traders of Mukuyu market for instance, although similar in some ways to their Muthithi fellows (some of the traders in fact sell in both markets) also display significant differences. In Mukuyu there were roughly equal numbers of men and women selling clothes as opposed to 80% men in Muthithi. This is partly due to the presence of single mothers in Mukuyu market who have sold clothes in the market for some time.

However the equal numbers of both sexes is also a reflection of a number of business couples and people who sell with their relatives as opposed to selling with their male age mates as in Muthithi. On average more of the Mukuyu clothes sellers are married than is the case in Muthithi and of these a number sell with their spouses. This is highly unusual both for Muthithi and Mukuyu markets and reflects a new progressive trend where men and women are working together rather than apart. This would appear to be a 'marriage' of the ideals of equality associated with the *mariika* and the orientation to 'family' which is associated with the clan.

II) FEMALE CLAN AND THE *RIIKA*: THE RE-CREATION OF COMMUNITY

Mukuyu market, as Wanjiru says, is the 'space of women' and more specifically of single mothers. The fact that the union of business and marriage is occuring in a market which has become symbolic of single motherhood and the 'clans of the women' is especially significant. In Muthithi the same thing is happening but not among

the clothes sellers, The really interesting new phenomenon in Muthithi market is the entry of young men into the maize and beans trade. Unlike clothes, maize and beans is the feminine realm par excellance and is the natural home of the (single)mother businesswoman. Mwaniki, who is one of the maize and beans traders, said there used to be only five young men in the maize and beans section of the market as "the market is the place for women". Muriu and Ngugi who are among this number said of the big maize and beans traders "they are like our mothers". "Yes" agreed Mama Muiruri, the maize and beans 'queen' of Muthithi,

> "they are our sons. We taught them how to do business. We were there first!"

The young men who sell maize and beans in Muthithi embody a set of values that seems to unite the *riika* ethos of the clothes sellers with an orientation to the clan as the basis of the new community. The majority have mothers who are successful businesswomen who have helped them to start, providing capital and passing on their expertise. Unlike the young men of previous decades who placed primary value on education as the sign of a progressive 'modernity', many of the maize and beans sellers have not had much education, although they employ its values in their businesses where they stress the importance of planning and calculation (*gutara mathabu*).

In addition many of these young maize and beans businessmen place a premium on investment in land, a value associated in the context of the state with traditionalism as tribal conservatism. However they do not leave their land to rural wives to farm but remain heavily involved themselves. In addition it seems that they are keener to plant foodcrops rather than cashcrops such as coffee which have been subject to a high level of state involvement. Lastly these young men all had progressive attitudes to marriage and most have owed their success to their business partnerships with their wives. Muriu, Mwaniki and Wambui, Dawson, and Ngugi and Purity are all involved in the maize and beans trade in Muthithi and are among the most successful business people in the market today.

> Muriu was the first young man to enter Muthithi market and sell maize and beans. He is the son of a prominent maize and beans businesswoman of the area and it was she who gave him the capital to start. Muriu's mother was forced to start business herself because her husband's remittances from Nairobi were not enough. Baba Muriu is now retired and sits at home drinking his coffee money. Mama Muriu is in business full time and sells or buys everyday of the week – it is she who carries the household. Muriu started business after standard seven unlike his older brother who finished secondary school and went on to become a teacher. All the brothers who come after Muriu have followed him into business (all

of them in the clothes business). Muriu lives at home with his wife and children and will inherit a portion of his father's land but he aims to buy land of his own. I asked him why he would invest in land as opposed to re-investing in his business or even in property.

"It is traditional to have land" he said "and besides land is permanent, business is not."

Muriu, like his colleagues, combined his dedication to entrepreneurship with his valuation of land as 'tradition'; as an expression of the consolidation of wealth to which his entrepreneurship aspires.

Mwaniki is also the son of a maize and beans businesswoman- "she taught me how to do business" he told me jokingly. He started with his own capital earned through casual labour after he left his job in a factory in Thika. His dad was "run over by a bus" the euphemism for divorce. He is one of those children who were brought up in his grandfather's home and are held there by the curses. (His father wants to give him land but he can't accept because his maternal grandfather has laid a curse). Mwaniki had only reached standard two because when his parents separated his older brother threatened to beat him up if he went to school. Nonetheless he is a shrewd business man and brings the values of education into his entrepreneurial activities; he told me that the secret of success in business is the ability to *gutara mathabu*- to count maths, to calculate or plan. He works with his wife Wambui although she concentrates more on the farm (his mother's land) and he on the business. Like Muriu, Mwaniki is equally serious about business and farming saying both are just as profitable. Mwaniki does not use his land for coffee and cashcrops, instead he and Wambui plant maize and bananas thus linking their relationship to land with their relationship to business.

"Land helps your business- we just harvested five sacks of maize, we will sell four and keep one"

he told me.

Dawson was one of the youngest of the men who sold maize and beans in the market. He was unusual in that he was highly educated - he had reached form four. His parents were not business people. He had a job as a life insurance salesman in the rural areas but he did badly because "people didn't understand the concept!" Dawson was helped initially by another male *githeri* seller nicknamed *mubia*, 'the priest'. Dawson told me that business is much better than employment not because it gives you more money but because it gives you more freedom; for instance if a ditch needs digging on his farm he can take a day off and do it. If he was employed this would be impossible and he would have to employ someone else to do it. Like Mwaniki and Muriu his first investment would be land:

"Land brings you money because you can develop it" i.e. invest in farming "then have it valued then use it if you want as collateral for a loan to buy a plot".

Dawson is not yet married but when the time comes he told me that he doesn't just want someone who will 'stay at home' and farm and that it was important to him that his wife be educated. He wants someone who will get a job or do business; someone who will be active. If he has to go away he will want to know that she will be as capable as him of running the business and the farm and the home.

Ngugi and Purity were one of the most successful young couples in Muthithi and sold both maize and beans and kitchenware. They
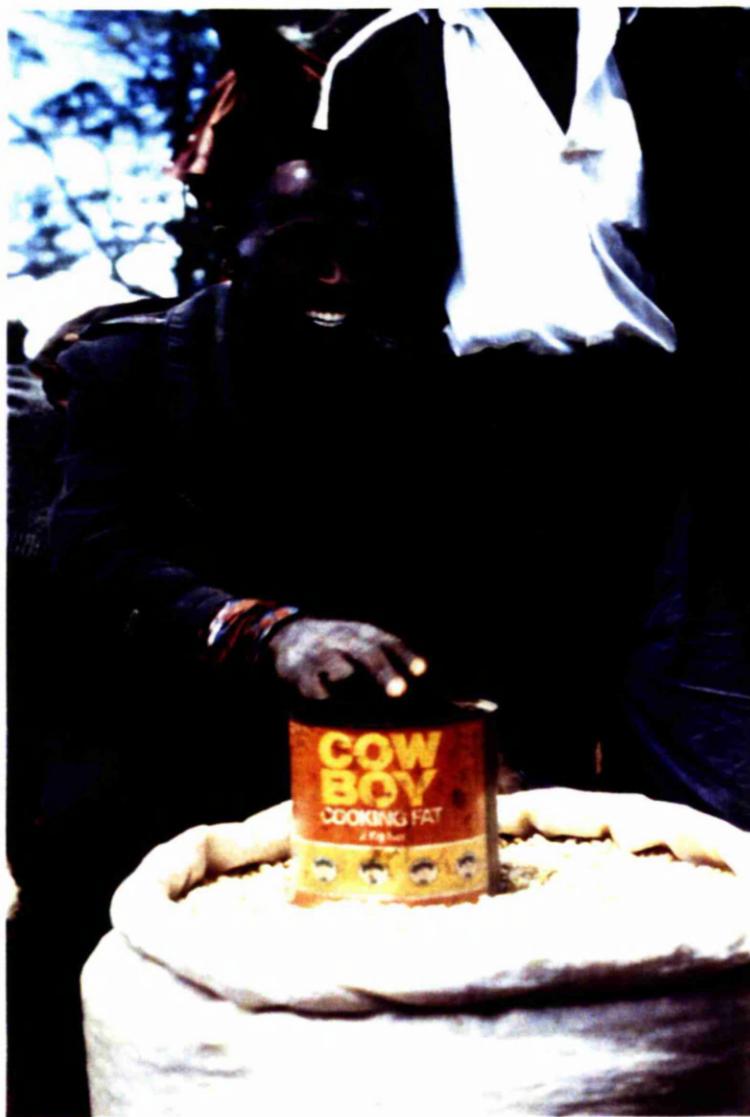
MUIRURI, MAIZE AND BEANS TRADER
IN MUTHITHI MARKET.

started business together four years ago with their earnings from
casual labour in the same year that they were married and their
first child was born. They have been so successful that they are
now looking to buy a store on the edge of the market and move out
of the market altogether. Purity has employed a young cousin to
stay at home and look after her children so that she can work in the
business full time. Both Purity's and Ngugi's parents also did
business - Ngugi's father sold charcoal in Nairobi and his mother
sold maize and beans in Muthithi. She still sells maize and beans
in the market but also helps Purity and Ngugi. Ngugi's younger
brothers used to work for him too and they have now started their
own businesses. Like Mwaniki and Muriu, neither Ngugi nor Purity
had secondary education. Purity and Ngugi's union of marriage and
business points the way forward to new partnerships between men
and women, business and family, capital and land.

III) *RIIKA* MARRIAGES

The progressive relationship that young men are forming with business
is also illustrated in their marriages: Njoroge is twenty four and
sells chickens in Mukuyu market[15]. He was the only one of these young
businessmen I met who had married with *ruracio*, bridewealth. Men do
still pay *ruracio* but often not until much later in their lives when
their children are grown up and they have enough money. Njoroge told
me that it is not good to marry without *ruracio*. Marriage with
ruracio was the old way of marrying. In fact you couldn't take a girl
home without it. However the *ruracio* of today is not the same as that
of former years. In the past your *ruracio* came from your father, from
your clan, and was a key factor in the perpetuation of a society in
which the (male) elders held power over women and the youth.
Nowadays, through the institution of the 'pre-wedding', marriage has
been moved from the jurisdiction of the clans to that of the *riika*.
The 'pre-wedding' is an institution through which your age-mates band
together to organise the financing of your wedding.

The *riika* marriage of today which involves bridewealth recognises the
value of marriage as a productive partnership and at the same time
recognises that that value is dependent on the ideals embodied in the
riika and the power of the youth, rather than the ideals of the clans
as they existed in the nineteenth century in support of a
gerontocratic regime. In resolving the tension between the *riika*
whose expansionist but rootless pull took young men to the city, and
the clan's involuted patriarchy which attached young men to the land,
it seems that these marriages embody both the equality between the

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[15] Many men start business with chickens. Chickens, like women, are of
the compound and for men to be selling chickens instead of livestock
is another example of their engagement with a feminised realm.

sexes that was an integral part of the horizontal bonds of the *riika* and the rooted lineal aspects of clan based on homesteads and wealth.

IV) MUCHIRI

Muchiri is part of a new generation of young business men who are becoming highly successful in the rural areas. Muchiri is from Muthithi and his entry into business has an evolutionary logic to it which encapsulates in a single life span the avenues which have been opened to young men during the course of this century. When he left secondary school Muchiri left the rural areas for the local big town to seek employment. This was the typical route for young men to take in the past, as employment in the cities, especially when combined with a good education offered the promise of individual progress and the accumulation of wealth. He was employed in a factory in Thika earning 80/= a day. However the money was little and one day he decided to start selling fruits at the bus stop. This was the first turning point in his career; the day he abandoned employment for business.

Muchiri bought some passion fruits for 10/= sold them for 14/= and went back and bought some more. By the end of the day he had made 180/=. His next venture was raw mangos which he sold with a special mixture of chili. His mangos with *pili pili* were very popular especially among the clothes sellers of Thika market. The clothes sellers however, persuaded him

"to leave that business which is for good-for-nothings, *matatu* boys who waste themselves on drink and *bangi*" and join the *metumba* trade (secondhand clothes trade) "which is serious."

This was the second turning point in his career; the shift from fruit selling at the bus stage to the clothes business. The clothes business was considered to be much more 'serious' than simply hanging out at the stage in the extravagant world of the *matatu* touts. For many like Muchiri this level of business enables them both to transcend :   the unrewarding world of work and the city and to avoid the liminal world of the touts and thus see their way to financial independence.

After about a year in the clothes business Muchiri opened a bank account at Barclays. A few months later he employed someone to work in his clothes business and went into partnership with a friend of his who was living in Busia. He now transports things like mangos or whatever is in season from Murang'a to the Ugandan border. The seasonality of this trade makes it relatively insecure; there are big profits to be made and big losses. Thus it is good to have his clothes trade to fall back on. Muchiri told me he can make 8000/= per week pure profit through exporting fruits. When he compares that to the 80/= a day he made at the carbon factory in Thika he sees that he is better off. His ambition reaches out to even further horizons than the borders of the country, He wants to go into the export business exporting French beans to Europe which again are grown locally in Murang'a. The latest business in which Muchiri is involved has the additional feature of bringing profit to his home region through marketing its agricultural produce. In this sense it is the opposite of the clothes business which serves rather to soak up rural profits.

Muchiri had three very conflicting images of women which seemed to parallel the stages he has moved through in his career to date: I asked him if his sister would do business and he told me that women were not as brave as men and that she would probably stay at home until she got married. His sister typifies the docile woman,

keeper of the home that we have encountered from the divided world of those who are employed. He then went on to describe the business women he had come across; they are very clever he said. At the end of the day they will go straight away and bank their money - he described to me a woman in Western Kenya who sold cabbages and who made so much money that she had to take it to the bank in a big sack accompanied by a police escort. Then they will go to the bars and befriend someone like himself who will take them out and buy them beer. The man will get hopelessly drunk and in the morning will wake up to find his money all gone.

> "Most men fail in business because they squander all their money in showing off and having girlfriends" he said "Women are extremely thrifty with their profits".

This image of the clever thrifty business woman who preys upon the weakness of men was rather different to his description of women like his sister who are 'not as brave as men'. Lastly he described the woman he would like to marry. He said his wife would accompany him on his business trips and would help him in his business. He said if she stayed at home she would most probably wonder what he was up to and may even take a lover. It was much better in a marriage for husband and wife to be together. Muchiri had finally united the opposing views of women as the 'mother-businesswoman' and the docile 'sister' in his notions about marriage.

CONCLUSION: "A MAN IS A MAN"

According to Baba Ciru, "a man is a man". Baba Ciru is one of the more successful businessmen of Murang'a district. He owns a large petrol station in Murang'a town and is a close associate of Matiba. Baba Ciru had no education at all and, as he has amply demonstrated, one doesn't need education to be a *mdoze* (a boss); "a man is a man", education or no. Furthermore, "an Englishman is just the same as a Kenyan" (he had recently returned from a trip to London). Education and nationality, two of the features through which Kikuyu men have defined their distinctive progress no longer make a difference to success. This is perhaps a contrast to men's previous engagement with business as Peter Marris and Tony Somerset suggest in their analysis of 'African Businessmen' (1971). Marris and Somerset comment on the attitudes of early businessmen who embraced their distinctive identification with 'modernity' to the detriment of their potential success in their entrepreneurial endevours. The 'African Businessman'

> "repudiates the traditions of his society" modelling his business on ideals of "European rational efficiency"; he repudiates kinship but cannot become a member of the social world he desires... "ironically" write Marris and Somerset "the self-conscious modernity of his ideals lead him towards a dead end where he stultifies his chances of achieving them."(1971;227)

In the present day this 'self-conscious modernity' no longer appears to define the new engagement of young men with the world of entrepreneurship. In the rural areas at least, this may have something to do with the identification of young men with their

'mothers' and with the 'female' aspects of modern entrepreneurial world which they are entering. However the young men who enter the markets also bring with them the memory of their espousal of 'modernity' which links them to their engagement with the state and to their previous position in the *mariika* of old. This 'ethos' seems to ensure that, far from becoming part of the female world of the markets, young men are redefining the nature of entrepreneurial culture in the rural areas and this is helping to achieve an integration of some of the facets of Kikuyu identity which have been dichotomised in the context of state development.

SUMMARY

Young men have had a particular affinity with the ascendant aspects of Kikuyu identity through their position as initiates in the age-sets of the Kikuyu and through the expectation that they will transcend the boundaries of their subclans and expand into the uncultivated *githaka*. However young men are in a strongly ambivalent position in relation to the ascendant aspect of Kikuyu identity in their aspirations to become powerful and wealthy individuals through the structure of the clans. Thus, as much as they embody the qualities of the 'ascendant', young men also express the 'tension' in Kikuyu society between expansion and involution. This tension has played an important part in defining Kikuyu ethnicity. In the twentieth century ` the tension between *riika* and clan has played its part in the development of the nation state and of the relationship of Kikuyu ethnicity to the state. Young men in particular have played a crucial role in this relationship which has led both to their elevation and their downfall.

In the context of nationalism, the *riika* provided the framework for unification and idealism which was aimed towards liberation and the creation of a 'brave new world'. After Independence the aspirations of the *riika* and the dreams of the nation were, however, betrayed by the class interests of the clan. This, coupled with the demise of the *'mbari ya Mumbi'*, led to an increasing state of crisis for the Kikuyu as a whole, one which fell with particular harshness on the persons of Kikuyu men whose experiences of the contradictions of the post-independent state threaten now to tear them apart. These tensions have in addition placed intolerable pressures on local communities, which have begun to fragment along lines of gender, culminating in the divisions of the clans themselves (this is fully explored in Part III).

In the context of the markets the legacies of *riika* and clan and the positioning of young men between the two is providing a new dynamism which offers hope not only for the male youth, but also for the community at large which has been disenfranchied in the context of the modern state. The young men who sell clothes are attempting to convert their dependency within the state and world market into an independent adulthood within the community through an entrepreneurship which relocalises the 'external' by the importation of clothes from the city into the rural areas. In this context 'locality' becomes not just a metaphor for clan, for the

consolidation of wealth and power, but also a new 'frontier' in itself which shapes the nature of that consolidation and hence marries the concept of the *riika* with the concept of the clan. The ambivalent identities of young men in their transitional positions between *riika/githaka* and clan, between 'expansion' and 'consolidation' have thus found peculiar poignancy in relation to the secondhand clothes trade in rural markets like Muthithi. Thus the entry of young men into markets like Muthithi brings with it a new ethos which will transform the nature of the market and, from this new basis, will engender transformations in the engagement between Kikuyu ethnicity and the state.

PART III

THE ROOTS OF CAPITALISM AND THE
STATE.

CHAPTER 9A

MAIZE AND BEANS IN MUKUYU MARKET

I) WOMEN AND SUSTENANCE: FROM MUTHITHI TO MUKUYU

The maize and beans sellers of Muthithi make a thin artery of colour through the centre of the market; a pathway crowded as tight as is possible with women on either side. The artery is fringed by the brilliant colours and white froth of the *ciondo*, baskets which the maize and beans sellers knit to occupy the hours between the sporadic business which comes their way. Most of these women are 'married women of the land' who only do business on market days. Like the women who sell clothes, they are unusually dependent on their husbands because of the high starting capital that marketing maize and beans requires. Over half of them buy their stock wholesale from the surrounding farms or from the stores in places like Kirere a little further up in the hills or from the few big business people who sell in the market itself. The latter sell on large, randomly located platforms in the heaving sea of the market and are a relatively recent phenomenon. The majority of these platforms are in fact occupied by young men like Muriu who always seems busy in his grey overalls, scooping his maize from the plastic sacks into the *kiondo* of a customer. If he looks across the red mass of tomatoes in front of him, he can make out the huge figure of his mother sitting on her own platform like a dowager amongst her jewels. She is also one of the more successful sellers in the market and is in business full time. It was she who gave him the capital to start.

Maize and beans is the trade of women.

    "No man will be seen dead in the market selling with debes!" [1]
said Mama Mbugwa.

Although this cultural taboo is gradually being broken, over 90% of the maize and beans sellers in both Muthithi and Mukuyu are still women[2]. The association of women with the staple food of the Kikuyu is a long- standing one. In the past, women were responsible for the

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[1] 'Debes' are the cooking fat tins which are used to measure the maize and beans when it is bought and sold.

[2] In both markets the maize and beans traders comprise 10% of the market populations as a whole.

cultivation and preparation of food just as men were responsible for rearing livestock. Maize and beans thus evoke women's role in the reproduction of their households. In Muthithi the association of maize and beans with women and land still pertains. Muthithi is an area where a lot of maize and beans are grown in the farmsteads and, although nowadays there is barely enough for household use, many are forced to sell in season to generate some much needed cash. Thus the market, which follows the rhythm of the farming cycles, swells at certain points of the year with the *ciondo* of maize and beans which women bring to sell from their farms. It is for this reason that Mukuyu maize and beans traders will occasionally come to Muthithi in season to buy.

The maize and beans section of Mukuyu lies at the core of the market, at its heart so to speak. Almost all the maize and beans sellers of Mukuyu are of the caliber of those few who sell on 'platforms' in Muthithi market, and most are in business full time. Mukuyu market operates on a daily basis and most of the maize and beans sellers trade every day of the week; going on buying expeditions in the mornings when it is not a market day. For them the market is both 'work' and 'home'. Muthithi market on the other hand is firmly subordinated to the land. When it is not a market day the market in Muthithi is dead. The most you will see is a few crows hopping about amongst the trees and a few boys playing football.

Unlike Muthithi where women's entry into business is financed almost entirely by their husbands, about half of the women in Mukuyu market have earned their starting capital themselves. The maize and beans sellers of Mukuyu are not 'married women of the land'; they are the archetype of the independent 'single mother businesswoman' and they epitomise the ideal of the successful businesswoman to which many of the other women of the market aspire. Just as the farming wives who come to Muthithi occasionally to sell a banana from their farms represent the essence of Muthithi, so the maize and beans traders represent the essence of Mukuyu.[3]

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[3] Mukuyu is also a centre for bananas as it occupies the same climatic zone as Muthithi. As in Muthithi, the bananas are brought to the market on market days by farming wives. However unlike Muthithi, the banana trade occupies a peripheral position in Mukuyu market where bananas are sold right up against the perimeter fence. Many of the bananas barely even cross the threshold of the market before they are bought by the brokers and piled up outside the market to be taken to Nairobi.

The association of Mukuyu with women is such that Wanjiru, a maize and beans trader, was led to remark

"the men in the market are like women."

Wairimu is a successful maize and beans seller in Mukuyu. She told me

"90% of the market are women and" she added "75% of these are single mothers..."

Although Wairimu's statistics exaggerate somewhat, it is nonetheless true that the number of single mothers in Mukuyu is high especially when compared to the surrounding areas such as Muthithi. Among the maize and beans sellers the figure is particularly high as over half of them are single. For the Mukuyu traders, maize and beans has transformed the reproductive role of women. Through the maize and beans trade, women's engagement with entrepreneurship in Mukuyu market allows them not simply to sustain their households, but also to make profit. In this respect, yet again, Mukuyu provides a contrast with Muthithi where it is not women but men, through the livestock and clothes trades, who make profit. In Mukuyu, the market itself makes visible the link between women and wealth. In its association with (single) women and successful entrepreneurship, Mukuyu represents the transformation which the economy as a whole has undergone during the course of this century where 'roots' have now taken prominence over 'routes'.

II) THE TRANSFORMATIONS OF MUKUYU MARKET

Mukuyu market was born with colonialism in the first decade of the century. Like Karatina and the other major markets of the time, it was built along the main road to Nairobi. Before the 1950's Mukuyu was much more like Muthithi. It was a large market, dominated by men selling livestock, and with many trees one of which gave the market its name. These days the livestock trade is relegated to the clothes market some distance from the main market where it makes a pathetic showing on market days.

Mukuyu today is transformed from the wide, grassy, tree covered hill that it used to be; not least because of the fact that all the trees are gone. In the 1960's toilet facilities were put in and people were hired to clean the market. In the 1970's the market was opened everyday for people who wanted to sell on a daily basis. Chainlink fencing was also put in the 1970's; donated by Matiba, the local politician. Then the market was tarmaced so that people could sell there even in the rainy season. According to Richard, an ex- revenue collector, there was also a huge influx of women into the markets in

the 1970's and most of these were single mothers who made the market their home. Today Mukuyu market is a densely populated warren with tiny pathways and covered spaces where the rooves of the stalls almost touch each other. Around the market is a maze of alleyways with small compounds on either side where people rent rooms. As well as these 'plots', numerous shops, workshops, bars and hotels have sprung up obscuring the market altogether. These days the market is hardly even visible from the road.

Mukuyu is located about a mile from Murang'a town, the district headquarters dominated by government employees, mostly men. Mukuyu caters to the town both through the market and through the bars and hotels which proliferate around its perimeter. Many of the men who work in the town have girlfriends who live in Mukuyu. The market itself has been shaped over the years by the development of the town and the interaction between the two. The women of Mukuyu now link their reproductive role with entrepreneurship to generate a parallel economy which is at once interdependent with that of the town and at the same time sets itself up in opposition. Ultimately this opposition is reflected not only in the relationship between the men of the town and the women of the market, but also in the relationship of Mukuyu to Muthithi. This relationship makes visible the dichotomies engendered by the transformations of capitalism and the state in the context of Kikuyu communities.

III) FROM BARMAID TO BUSINESSWOMAN

The path to success for the single mother businesswomen of Mukuyu has not been easy. Many of the single mothers I spoke to had become pregnant in their teens after which they were forced to abandon their education and eventually to leave their rural homes.

> "You do not feel good staying at home with your parents and your brothers"

said Wanjiru. Traditionally women are supposed to leave their natal homes when they get married, thus single women often find that they would rather face the pressures of urban life than the stigmatisation they feel at home.

When they arrive in places like Mukuyu, many women start out in various forms of casual labour particularly in the bars. The income from these types of work is not high, but one can acquire finances through relationships with men which are entered into on the side. These relationships vary from outright prostitution to much more permanent liaisons where women become like second wives. In all cases

relationships with men involve some form of remuneration as an acknowledgment of the reproductive and productive labour of women. I asked Mama Kamau whether it was possible simply to have a boyfriend for love.

> "Aie! for love! without money!...could my children lack school fees and I be staying with someone for love? If boyfriends haven't married you and given you a shamba they are there to help you. If they stay in your place they pay the rent. If not they must give you whatever they have when you have a problem. What I can give him is I can cook for him".

Even after one has started business, relationships with men continue to play an important part. Until one is financially established men are often essential especially in view of the unpredictability of business. They are also essential if one has other responsibilities such as children whose needs eat up all the profits of business and allow no hope of progressing. Nyambura is a young single mother who worked for only a short time in the bars before she found herself a 'sugardaddy', a man much older than her who helped finance her entry into business. Already she has progressed from tomatoes to maize and beans where she is doing well. However she was not happy with the relationship. It was very exploitative and her 'boyfriend' beat her often. As I was leaving, I heard that she had left him. By that stage she was financially independent enough to be able to do so without her business suffering.

Kinyua who works in the market is on the other side of these relationships. When I commented on how well single mothers were doing for their children he said "that's because they are helped by men" and he told me that these women are very bad;

> "they eat the money of men, especially those who drink beer. Women are not after love! All they want is men's property, and if you don't keep them well they leave you! It is better for women to stay with their husbands."

The illegitimate nature of relationships between single women and their boyfriends emerges as a tension between 'girlfriends' and 'wives' where the one is seen as an exploitative and barren relationship and the other as lucrative and mutually beneficial   .
Sherry is married and she told me that her husband's business used to be very successful until a girlfriend came on the scene.

> "these women want a lot of money"

she said. The girlfriend was responsible for the breakdown of both the marriage and her husband's business. Mama Mbugwa and her married friends who live around Muthithi were also complaining about these 'girlfriends' that their husbands were involved with. However they

said that even if these women come up and taunt the wives of their lovers, the wives do not care because their husbands are paying their household expenses and their children's school fees whereas

> "all they will do for their 'prostitute-lovers' is to buy them a cup of tea!- and their children will remain unschooled."

In general the kind of help that men give to their girlfriends is short term whilst that which they give to their wives invests in the 'future' of their families.

IV) FROM POLYGAMY TO POLYANDRY?

Although relationships with men may be insecure for 'girlfriends' as opposed to wives, the independence which single women are forced to attain outside marriage may ultimately be to their advantage. Even if the women of Mukuyu have had financial help in starting out in business, they do not remain beholden to the men who have helped them once the relationship has ended. In this they are unlike their Muthithi counterparts whose husbands have a stake in their businesses and who feel that if they leave their husbands they will "have nothing". Njoroge is the boyfriend of one of the maize and beans traders of Mukuyu. He told me that

> "Five years ago women were very much held back in business by their husbands. Then they finally put their foot down and even left their husbands in order to develop their businesses. This is part of the cause of all the divorces right now. Since then they have been doing very well."

The Mukuyu women who have once been married but then divorced often have a cynical picture of marriage. When they look back they see that they are better off; although they perhaps forget the traumas they had to go through before they became successful and independent. Wanjiru said that she had once been married but was well out of it; if she had stayed with her husband

> "I would still be living in Kangema and farming and having a rough life!".

Mama Njoroge left her husband when he decided to marry a second wife. In the past this wouldn't have been an option. She would have had to stay with him and accept her lot. Now she still keeps in touch with her home and her children but leads her own life in Mukuyu and "I enjoy!" she said, meaning it is not only her husband who can form other relationships.

Mercy, a businesswoman from Murang'a town, divorced her husband because he was "cruel" and was holding her back. She told me that if you are married you cannot get a bank loan without your husband's

permission. So if you do not have a supportive husband you are better off being single. Rosy said she would not now agree to get married unless having a husband meant a considerable increase in her standard of living –

> "otherwise", she said "we might as well continue to borrow other people's!"

Once the Mukuyu women have reached the level of the maize and beans business, their relationships with men are on their own terms. In fact by this stage many women are richer than their boyfriends. It may even be they who pay for the beer! Wanjiru who is a maize and beans seller, would never be prepared to sacrifice her business for her boyfriend or to compromise in any way. Njoroge, her boyfriend, seems in fact to be much more serious about her than she is about him and he told me that he regards Wanjiru as a second wife. While I was there he was about to leave his job in Murang'a town, but he hoped to start a business in Mukuyu where among other things he could continue to live with Wanjiru. She however was much more casual about her relationship with him. She knew he was about to leave his job and wasn't at all convinced that he would be able to start a business in Mukuyu.

> "But if he goes I will find another one"

she said grinning broadly. Then on a more serious note she added

> "it is not good to think too much about 'husbands' you must think of your work and your business." [4]

The Mukuyu maize and beans sellers have not only rejected marriage for business where they can remain independent of men, they are even seen to be reversing the social pattern of polygamy to something resembling polyandry. I was talking to an old grandmother about being a second wife and she told me that women didn't mind being second wives because they were each given their own home, but some got jealous:

> "It's the same thing if a woman has many husbands, some must get jealous"

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[4] Ironically the more serious relationships which develop in the market are normally the result not the cause of financial security. Whilst those at the lower end of the market seem to suffer more from exploitative and short term relationships with men, those who sell things like maize and beans or clothes seem by that stage to have more stable relationships. Nici Nelson (1977: 187) reports the opposite scenario in urban Nairobi of the 1970's where the more successful women avoid engaging in long term relationships with men which undermine them much in the same way as do the relationships of rural wives.

I asked her if women had many husbands and she said no, but they do nowadays-

> "especially those who do *biashara* (business) because you can't know".

I was having a three way conversation with Waitherera and Kinyua in which both were complaining about the behaviour of men and women in relationships- Waitherera complained that you stay with a man and then you find out that he has another girlfriend. Kinyua's rejoinder was that men were traditionally allowed to have more than one wife anyway.

> "Ah" said Waitherera "now the tables are turning, look at Mama Wangila; she has three husbands and she is only one! have you ever heard of another woman like her? Now we are going to follow her!" [5]

V) FORMAL AND INFORMAL SECTORS AND INDEPENDENCE FROM THE STATE

Relationships with men become a ladder through which women may progress from 'barmaid' to 'businesswoman'. As they move along this ladder, women 'tack' between the formal sector embodied in their relationships with men where they siphon off part of the salaries which men obtain through employment, and the opportunities offered by informal entrepreneurship. As most of the boyfriends of the women who sell in Mukuyu market work in the town, the successful entrepreneurship of the women is dependent on the formal sector from the outset.

The distinctive relationship of men to capital through the state provides the basis of the relationship of women to capital through the market and it is here that the real nature of the dependence of women on men can be seen. In urban situations such as Mukuyu it is men who play the role of the 'sustainers' of the households of the women. There they help to finance rent and other expenses such as school fees. They thus enable women to progress in business and to generate wealth in their own right. This eventually leads women to be self-financing such that they no longer have need of the financial support of men.

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[5] Mama Wangila was the mother of a boxer who became internationally famous and settled in America. Wangila died in 1994 and the rights over his body and property became the subject of a celebrated court case in Kenya which went on for many months. During the court case it was difficult to establish his paternity because his mother appeared to have had more than one 'husband'.

This is a contrast to Muthithi where the combination of women and land provides the sustaining base of the households of men who in their relationship to the state through the formal sector and cashcrops, can generate independent wealth over which they retain control. In the last instance however, single women achieve a more independent relationship to capital than do men and married women. In their generation of wealth, men remain tied to their relationships with the state in much the same way as their wives remain tied to them. Furthermore whilst the state itself retains some control over capital through men, it loses this control through the relationships which men engage in with their girlfriends who redeploy the capital of men outside the orbit of the state in the context of the markets and the informal economy.

The independent nature of the informal economy and the threat it presents to the formal economy and the state embodied in men and 'wives', is reflected in the perceptions about the market and those who sell there. The market itself is associated with single mothers- or worse still 'divorcees': "women who have left their husbands" as one man put it disgustedly. Mama Paulus's father was furious when she decided to come and live in Mukuyu because he said "the market is for 'prostitutes'" [6].

Although it is considered improper for women to drink in bars, businesswomen are notorious for their consumption of beer. In this respect they infringe the demarcation between urban and rural areas, between men and women which is engendered in the context of the formal economy: Businesswomen move in the world of hotels and bars which serve beer and meat, foods normally associated with men. Among other things beer is associated with promiscuity, a behaviour which is condoned in men but not in women. In the past both men and women used to drink the traditional beer which was brewed for special occasions. But today the brewing of ∧traditional beer is illegal and only licenced alcohol may be consumed. Since this time women, with the exception of people like the single mother businesswomen of Mukuyu, have by and large stopped drinking. At the same time men have become increasingly dependent on alcohol to the extent that alcoholism is now a problem widespread among men. Beer has become representative of men's ultimate dependence on the state, and alcoholism is especially

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[6] Mama Muchioke said that the image of the market woman as prostitute was incorrect as it was precisely as an alternative to prostitution that women go into the market.

evident in men who fall victim to the state's inability to sustain the economy.

The maize and beans sellers of Mukuyu and women like them, are not only unashamed of their single status and business profession (the two of which go together in many people's minds) they seem to actively flaunt it. This is particularly evident in the large stature many of them acquire which is not simply to do with the bulk and strength needed to carry the sacks of maize and beans. Size is associated with success for both men and women; *mutonga* is a word which means both 'fat' and 'rich'. As Mwangi, a maize and beans trader from Thika, told me,

> "a successful businesswoman can be told by the size of her girth!".

This is a contrast to the farming wives of the rural areas who must stay fit and slim in order to be able to work. Similarly the less successful businesswomen are slimmer due to the pressures of survival. Mama Munyua, the maize and beans 'queen' of Muthithi, told me she was so huge because she drank beer and ate meat. Unlike men who do not generally become *mutonga* through their consumption of beer and meat, businesswomen turn this consumption to a mark of their success and ultimate independence in relation to the state.

It is said that women do better than men in business because, unlike men, they do not squander their profits on enjoying themselves. Instead they remain in control of their consumption of alcohol which is mostly paid for by men in any case, and this enables them to save their profits for their businesses and families. On the other hand women also are generally said to do less well than men because whereas men may plough their profits back into their businesses women must rear and educate their children. However, women like the Mukuyu maize and beans traders seem to manage to do both and to continue to be successful. One man asked me

> "why is it that when the market women get really drunk they become suddenly serious and start singing religious songs?"

In the end the women's drinking is always subordinated to the seriousness of their work and to their commitment to their families. These seem to be better served through women's relationship to the informal economy than they are through men's relationship to the state.

VI) BUSINESSWOMEN AND THE ETHOS OF INDIVIDUALISM

The relative independence in relation to the state achieved by women such as the Mukuyu maize and beans sellers is echoed in the distinctive ethos which they bring to business. Businesswomen have the reputation for being excessively individualistic and self-centred. They are said to be orientated not to the building up of the community 'for the future' but rather to short term gain in the present. They have a reputation for being ruthless and avaricious. This is not just in relation to men, but also in relation to business itself where the search for money overrides all else.

"Business is not about friendship"
said Mama Munyua. Mama Muchioke's business began to take off while I was there and she told me

> "you know we don't even get time to eat lunch! but we don't care because of money."

I was told by Waitherera that a friend of hers who is a businesswoman will never miss a day of business; there was to be a funeral of a mutual friend of theirs and she would not even attend that because it was on a business day.

In terms of their attitudes to business through which women ride the tides of profit and loss businesswomen again differentiate themselves from businessmen. Women like Mama Munyua say that the secret of success in business is all about 'having the heart for business'.

"You can't afford to care too much about money"
said Mama Munyua. She told me that when she started she made big losses, but it all counts towards experience which is the most important thing in business.

> "Business is about profit and loss; if you make a loss you'd better just pray that next time you will make a profit!"

She told me that she can make a profit of 20-30,000 shillings on a single trip. But then last week in Nairobi she lost 20,000. Even so she said that "next time I might take that money and make a huge profit!" This contrasts to the attitudes of young businessmen like the maize and beans sellers of Muthithi who attempt to shore up the insecurity of business by taking a more long term view. These young men say that the secret of success in business lies not in 'having the heart' but in the ability to *gutara mathabu*, to calculate or plan. For instance if they go to Namanga and make a loss they will not go back whilst the women will go back "because they do not know how to calculate!" However in Mama Munyua's case it seems that her perseverance and the fact that she does not care too much about her

losses as long as she has a high turnover has led to her success. This of course is as 'calculating' as the approach of the men.[7]

VII) BUSINESSWOMEN AND HARAMBEES

Businesswomen appear to orient themselves to the 'present', to their immediate interests rather than the longer term 'future'. This is also evident in their relationship to self-help groups. I was told that

> "businesswomen will not help each other in business but they will help each other in other ways like *harambees.*"

'*Harambees*' are cash merry-go-rounds where a group of traders will get together on a regular basis to pool a fixed sum of money which will be given to each in turn until the circle is complete. These types of cash merry-go-round are sometimes called 'women's *harambees*' and are associated with short term and immediate benefits. Although many businesswomen will engage in *harambees* to generate goodwill if nothing else, some reject even these; Mama Munyua told me she does not believe in *harambees* because they don't make profit!

There is another type of self-help group called an *ikundi* which is a group of people who come together to undertake a more long term investment or project. *Ikundis* are for 'development' for the future, 'for your children'. They can also be social groups where women come together to discuss their problems. With *ikundis* there is a stronger purpose involved than that of the short term *harambees*. Baba Muriu who lives in Muthithi where he farms his coffee, told me that

> "anyone can join a *harambee*"

but with *ikundis* it is a different matter. *Ikundi's* are more associated with the rural areas, with men and farming wives rather than with businesswomen. Wanjiru said disparagingly that she didn't see the point in investing her money in projects 'for the future' and that it was much better to plough it back into the business so that the money could make more money.

Both in their attitudes to *harambees* and even more to '*ikundis*', maize and beans businesswomen display their anti-community bias and

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[7] There was a time in fact when women like Mama Munyua seemed to be doing rather well by going to the Ugandan border to buy. And when I asked the young men who were selling maize and beans in Muthithi why they weren't going there to buy maize, they replied that people from that place cheat you — "you know they are Ugandans". I asked how they know this given that they had never been. They said they had been told so by the women who went.

individualistic ways of operating which are geared to the present rather than the future; to themselves and their immediate kin rather than the wider community. The very word 'development' is associated with ideas that these businesswomen hold to be alien to their way of life. 'Development' is associated with the state, with men, with 'society'. This is different from the concepts of individual profit and success which lie behind the ethos of business.

VIII) FROM MUKUYU TO MUTHITHI; BUSINESSWOMEN AND 'COMMUNITY'

Single mother businesswomen occupy an ambiguous position in relation to the wider community to which many of them still remain connected through their natal homes. They are seen as being not just a-social but anti-social; they have abandoned the rural areas and marriage: Elizabeth told me

> "I could never agree to be married because I could never be a farmer!"

Businesswomen say that they do not have time to farm. Full time businesswomen are seen as being "too 'lazy' to work on the land" (an accusation also levelled at prostitutes). Instead of remaining in the rural areas as wives, businesswomen maintain an independent existence in the towns where they exploit men and ultimately exploit the 'community' as a whole for their individual profit. The Mukuyu traders 'profit' from the neediness of rural wives in places like Muthithi, who must sell their maize cheaply in season for cash and then buy it back again at a higher price when their own stocks run dry. Through the maize and beans trade of Mukuyu, the relationship between women and sustenance which is still incarnated in Muthithi, appears to be inverted such that the women who trade maize and beans, rather than acting as sustainers of the community, are instead predatory upon its needs. They profit from scarcity and famine; and in some respects contribute to their creation.

Ironically, however, in view of the present economic conditions, it is in fact the maize and beans businesswomen who are in many ways responsible for the ability of the rural areas to sustain themselves at all. Today in places like Muthithi, maize is no longer grown locally in sufficient quantities to sustain the population. Instead it is a major factor in the population's dependence on the outside market, on imports. The maize and beans businesswoman is the main conduit for this as she travels outside the locality to bring maize

MAMA LUCY AFTER THE MAIZE
HARVEST.

and beans back . . to sell.[8] In this respect the independence from the state which businesswomen have cultivated is also beneficial to rural communities. The price fluctuations which are influenced by the world market are supposed to be mitigated by the economic policies of the state particularly in regard to staple foods. However they are often exacerbated by the state which seeks to protect the interests of influential farming and business lobbies often with disastrous effects on rural communities. However, through a mixture of unofficial bribes and other means of evasion, businesswomen may help ease the worst fluctuations which are amplified by the state.

It is in part the flexibility of the market-place itself which allows women to keep prices down. This is partly due to the minimal overheads such as rent involved in their businesses. It is also due to the flexibility of buying and selling with tins as opposed to fixed measures. At this level of business, the use of the tin in buying and selling means profit. Otherwise the market women would not be able to compete with the store holders who can buy in much bigger quantities.[9] The customers also appreciate this flexibility which, through the successful manipulation of the tin by the trader, can give a customer the impression that she is getting slightly more for her money. An old grandmother told me that people would never agree to buy in the market with weights. The tin again is symbolic of the ambivalence in the relationship between businesswomen and 'community'; it allows the seller to make profit both from her customer and from the person she buys from. However by doing this she can in the last instance mitigate the effects with which the manipulation of the market by the state may threaten the ability of local communities to sustain themselves at all.

Gracia Clark (1994: 402) also comments on the flexibility and resilience of Asante traders and suggests that this may be critical

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[8] In Muthithi it is now the young maize and beans business men who travel to buy. For businesswomen, travelling is ultimately in conflict with their role as mothers looking after young children. However in the case of the couples who are in business together in Muthithi the problem of travelling and childcare is mitigated as it is normally the husband who travels.

[9] The tin exemplifies the flexible aspects of business and it is here that a maize and beans seller can make profits simply through the skill of her hands: when she is buying for instance she will hold her hands around the rim of the tin to contain the maximum amount of grain. When she sells she will allow the excess to slide away.
"My mother in law taught me how to pile the tins so that I can get an extra five for every bag..." said Mama Nicky.

to the ability of local communities to survive at all in the current global economic and political climate. She writes:

> "traders will be able to consolidate their position within their local and national communities while those communities continue to lose ground internationally. Traders' efforts to survive and accumulate lead them to keep using secondary and innovative trading channels that improve overall economic resilience and autonomy at the local and national levels. Flexibility has been critical to surviving the erratic fluctuations of past crises, and it preserves a great range of viable choices for facing continuing and future crises."

Gracia Clark concludes however that whilst the strategies of market women may help to ensure survival, the worsening terms of trade at an international level will increasingly enable them to do little more than survive and are unlikely to lead to economic growth.

CONCLUSION

The businesswomen of Mukuyu are part of a new wave of single mothers, the daughters of the Mau Mau, who have been ostracised in their homes and have been forced to carve out an existence for themselves in the satellites of urban areas such as Murang'a town. In the passage from barmaid to businesswoman, they are initially dependent on men for survival, but for some this dependence allows them to devote their profits to building up their businesses rather than simply to sustaining their homes. In this way the lucky ones are able to progress sufficiently in business to become fully independent of boyfriends or family and to be able to choose the terms of their relationships. Ultimately their success, which rests on the foundation of their relationships with the formal sector in the form of boyfriends who are employed in the towns, allows them to create a relationship to capital and state which is more independent than that of men whose incomes are dependent on state-controlled employment and cashcrops.

The self-sufficiency of successful businesswomen is echoed in the ethos they bring to business which is based on individualism and risk; 'having the heart for business'. The ethos of individualism combined with the fact of their relative independence and success stigmatises businesswomen who are viewed as being a threat to community embodied primarily in the persons of rural wives. The relationship between businesswomen and wives is antagonistic; as urban girlfriends they siphon off the capital which husbands would otherwise invest in their rural homes and they use this capital as the sustaining base of their own independent accumulation. In

addition, the foodstuffs business in which many of these women engage profits from situations of scarcity in the rural areas. However, as Gracia Clark writes in her study of market women (1994: 404):

> "Traders' efforts to preserve their own autonomy inevitably make a positive contribution to the autonomy of the communities and nations they help constitute."

Thus the independence which many businesswomen have achieved in relation to the state, whilst this is a major contributor to their social stigmatisation, may ultimately provide a new basis for the linking of society and wealth which the state, the formal sector, and men have increasingly failed to achieve.[10]

The passage from Muthithi to Mukuyu which has taken place during the course of state development and which is incarnated continually in the movement of single women from the rural areas to the towns, is reversed as these same women re-connect themselves to rural communities again in the role of 'sustainers'. They do this through their crucial role in the redistribution of goods which mitigates the unpredictability which rural communities must face through their incorporation into the world market. In this sense businesswomen invert the relationship between 'roots' and 'routes' of the nineteenth century; instead of 'route-ing' their 'roots' in exogamous marriage and trade thereby engendering wealth, businesswomen 'root' their 'routes' in the sense of trade routes thereby sustaining not only their own households but also the community at large which depends on them for its staple food. In this sense it may be businesswomen not 'wives' who are ultimately responsible for the sustenence of rural communities today.

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[10] Gracia Clark (1994) comments on the dominance of the marital model particularly in the context of the modern state, which represents the role of women in terms of wives rather than mothers. She sees this as undermining to the position of women like the Asante market traders in a society where the role of mothers traditionally commands great respect and would enhance the respect accorded to market women in the national context. Although the Kikuyu culture of Mukuyu is substantially different from Asante culture, it is none-the-less true that the stigmatisation of market women concentrates on their failure as wives rather than their success as mothers and uses this to further undermine their position.

CHAPTER 9B

THE CONCEPT OF ROOTS IN KIKUYU ONTOLOGY

I) ROOTS AS ORIGIN AND ESSENCE: THE MYTH OF THE MATRIARCHY

The archetype of the single mother businesswoman which characterises the women of Mukuyu, reaches beyond the market to express a particular facet of Kikuyu identity that has to do with the concept of 'roots'. In chapter one I have discussed the social system of the nineteenth century, in terms of the dominant ethos of 'routes' in the form of exogamous relationships between groups and the transcendence of boundaries organised around the principles behind the 'ethnic whole'. In this context the concept of 'roots' was suppressed but continued to run as an undercurrent. As the 'shadow' side of 'routes', it was expressed through the relationship between men and clans in the form of *mbari*, territorial clan, and the notion of the defence and preservation of boundaries.

However whilst the principle of clan was 'route-ed' in the context of the 'ethnic whole', clan itself continued to be conceived of in terms of 'roots'. Guka wa Kibaru told me that the clan is people of the same origin who cooperate with one another. They are those with whom you are very close — "*uria turi amwe piu!*".

> "The clans" said Cucu wa Kamariguini, "didn't come from anywhere; they were created where they are by God and you cannot refuse them....can you refuse where you belong?"

In this sense the clans transcend both time and space and are linked to the primordial concept of creation itself. This is a different concept of clan from that expressed through the *mbari* which is the concrete, 'social', expression of clan in time and space. Whilst clan as *mbari* is more associated with men, clan as origin is associated with women and the female aspect of clan is, in the last instance, more fundamental. Among the Kikuyu, women are named after the clans just as men are named after the age-sets.

The notion of clan, particularly in its association with women, is tied to the notion of 'creation' and of 'essence'. Cucu wa Mucii, explaining to me about the clans, told me that Mumbi, the creator, created Gikuyu and together they gave birth to the Agiguyu, the Kikuyu people. Mumbi is God in the sense of the creator God and is to be differentiated from Ngai another name for God which portrays the power that God exerts over human lives. (It was to Ngai that people

prayed when there was no rain.) Mumbi is not only God as the creator, but is also the name given to 'woman': Cucu wa Mucii told me that "Gikuyu was a Kikuyu, and Mumbi was a woman". Whilst Gikuyu has a social identity, that of Mumbi, a 'woman', conveys the sense of something which is beyond (or before) the social. "Mumbi", continued Cucu, "is the clans of the women" (*Mumbi ni we mihiringa ya atumia*). Thus Mumbi is the creator of the Kikuyu, she is a woman and she is the creator of the clans. And your clan, as Guka wa Kibaru said, is your origin; it is the essence of your personhood, where you belong for better or for worse.

The essence expressed in the notion of clan as the 'god-given' aspect of personhood is a cosmic essence, not a biological essence associated with birth. For a child to be a member of a clan in the past, it was not enough simply to be born into that clan. In addition the child had to undergo another ceremony known as 'being born with a goat':

> At the age of puberty before circumcision, a child would be seated on the laps of its parents as if it were an infant, and the intestines of a goat which had been slaughtered would be wrapped around the child and its parents. The intestines would then be cut like the umbilical cord by an elder of the clan and the child was then a full member of the clan.

Thus the clan carries the idea of a 'cosmic' identity into which humans have to be born through ritual. Even outsiders who were not born in the clan could become members of the clan through the ceremony of being 'born with a goat'. The essentialist aspect of clan was thus rooted on the cosmic plane and transcended the 'social'. In this it may be likened to Western notions of biological essence which similarly transcend the 'social'.

The pre-social creative and essentialist aspect of clan is described in the myth of origin of the Kikuyu. Jomo Kenyatta in his ethnography on the Kikuyu, 'Facing Mount Kenya' gives a full rendition of the myth (Kenyatta, 1962; 6-10). The relevance that the myth has come to acquire in post-independence Kenya, particularly in the period associated with Kenyatta's rule, makes the importance given to the myth in his book especially worthy of note.[11] In his rendition of the myth, Kenyatta describes the birth of the nine Kikuyu clans from the daughters of Mumbi and her husband Gikuyu. He tells of the time when the daughters reached marriageable age and Ngai, God, sent nine young

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[11] It is unclear how old the myth is, and it would not be suprising if it were fairly recent given the fact that it is perhaps even more relevant today than it would have been in the nineteenth century.

men to Gikuyu who told them that they could marry his daughters on condition that they agreed to live in his homestead under a "matriarchal system". This they did and the families lived together for some time with the parents acting as the head of the *mbari ya Moombi* or household of Mumbi so named in honour of their mother. Eventually the old couple died. The households of the nine daughters had by this stage become so unwieldy that it was decided to split them into nine clans each one headed by one of the original daughters of Gikuyu and Mumbi.

Kenyatta goes on to describe the tyranny of these clans, ruled as they were by women under a "matriarchal" matrilineal system.

> "It is said that while holding superior position in the community the women became domineering and ruthless fighters. They also practised polyandry. And, through sexual jealousy, many men were put to death for committing adultery or other minor offences. Besides the capital punishment men were subjected to all kinds of humiliation and injustice.
>
> Men were indignant at the way in which the women treated them and in their indignation they planned to revolt against the ruthless women's administration of justice. But as the women were physically stronger than the men of that time, and also better fighters, it was decided that the best time for a successful revolt would be during the time when the majority of women, especially their leaders, were in pregnancy."

Thus the men planned to make the women pregnant all at the same time in order to weaken them as a body. The men's plan was successful and they immediately took steps to "abolish the system of polyandry and to establish a system of polygamy..." They also changed the name of the 'tribe' from "*Rorere rwa Mbari ya Moombi* to *Rorere rwa Gikuyu* (ie Gikuyu nation or Children of Gikuyu)..." but they could not change the names of the clans as the women rebelled saying that if the men did so they would refuse to bear any more children. Thus the clans are to this day named after women.

I was told by Baba Mbugwa that there is another myth concerning these Kikuyu matriarchs:

> "Once the Kikuyu women owned many goats but one day all the goats left them and they are now to be found wandering about the forests where they are known as antelopes..."

Thus not only were these matriarchs overbearing - they used to ride on the backs of men apparently - they were also incapable of holding onto property and so building up the overall wealth of the community. The 'goats of the women' were wild it is said. After the takeover by men, the goats were no longer wild but became part of the principle

of 'increase' and productivity harnessed in a system of exchanges and alliances between clans which augmented the wealth of the group as a whole. The principle of 'routes', relationships between clans, which was engendered by the male takeover was, in the case of the Kikuyu, analagous to the birth of society itself.

II) FEMALE ROOTS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

After the 'patriarchal takeover', the original principle of the clan as essence or 'roots' which the myth sets forth, was submerged beneath a new version of clan as 'routes' wherein it was creative of wealth. In the same way the matrilineal 'matriarchal' aspects of society were submerged below the patrilineal 'patriarchal' social structure that still exists today.[12] In this context women were still associated with the principle of clan, but clan itself was no longer an essentialised static entity; clan was movement, it was 'routes' not 'roots'. However the original sense of clan as origin and essence continued to be embodied in the persons of women in the role which they performed after marriage as the 'sustainers' of their households and in their relationship to the nyumba. It was in this context in fact that women still achieved their primary identity as 'women':

At marriage Cucu wa Njeri told me, women were both very unhappy because they would be snatched from their homes and happy because they would be "given their own things". Guka wa Kibaru told me that when he got married

> "I couldn't touch her. She would stay in my mother's hut for eight days during which time I would build her a hut. Then my mother came and made the stove and lit the fire. The girl was given two half gourds a pot and utensils. She was given a garden and told 'this land is yours' and even if her husband died it could never be taken away."

According to Cucu wa Gonyo, a woman became a woman when her hearth was built for her. "*A twikaga atumia ahenderwo mahiga*": she became a woman when she was given the stones.

The hearth stones which Cucu wa Gonyo said made the girl-bride into a woman, are the symbol of the self-contained unit or *nyumba* which

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[12] It must be noted at this point that the Kikuyu myth of the matriarchy does not necessarily have any basis in historical fact. However it is important in the sense that it clarifies the logic behind concepts of 'society' as they existed in the late nineteenth century in terms of 'routes'. At the same time the myth helps to understand the underlying importance of 'matriarchy' and the matrilineal principle which co-existed with the so called 'patriarchal' system of alliance and descent.

THE GRANARY IN THE COMPOUND WITH
THE FARMSTEAD BEHIND.

marks her own individualised space within the clan. *Nyumba* is the basic unit of the household. It is the house which is built for the wife and from which she will rear her children and feed her children and her husband. No matter how many wives a man may marry, each wife will have her own garden and her own *nyumba* within the compound. The *nyumba* is not geared to 'increase' it is geared to sustenance. In this respect it may be likened to the self sufficiency of the clans of the women embodied in the mythical matriarchy of old. *Nyumba* is in fact a name which I have heard used to refer to clan. However after the patriarchal takeover, the *nyumba* and women were contained within the framework of marriage; 'roots' was contained by the principle of 'routes'.

Through her married role and her relationship to sustenance woman still symbolises her original essentialist form as the creator/mother of the Kikuyu and the matriarchal or 'pre-social' aspect of clan. However she is equally the symbol of the newly defined ethnicised clan which moves, which is about 'routes' and productivity rather than 'roots' and stasis. This she exemplifies in the fact that she moves on marriage and her clanhood is not activated until she is married. The paradox of clan itself which is both 'routes' and 'roots' is expressed in the name given to women, *andu anja*. *Andu* means people and *nja* is literally 'the outside'.

At first I assumed that women were called *andu anja* in reference to the fact that they come from 'outside' and that they are the ones who move both in marriage and in trade. But I was told emphatically that on the contrary *andu anja* means people who stay at home – it is the same, I was told, as *mukari mucii*. *Mucii* is house and *gukara* is the verb to stay. I was rather confused by this and people tried to explain to me that the compound is referred to as *nja* and that women stayed in their compounds. When I discussed the matter with Cucu wa Kamariguini however she said that yes, perhaps it would have been better if men were called *andu anja* because they were the ones who stayed at home and it is women who go! Finally I realised that *andu anja* captures precisely the ambiguous position of women. People use it to refer to the 'rooted' aspects of female identity although its literal meaning denotes the 'route-ed' aspects of female identity.

III) FEMALE ROOTS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE MAIZE AND BEANS TRADE

Maize and beans themselves are symbolic of 'roots': they are the staple food which provides the sustenance of the community and the essence of life. They are associated with women who are responsible

for cultivation. The cereals are composed of hard durable 'self-contained' kernels each of which is also the seed for the next generation. Today in the context of trade, maize and beans continue to echo the concept of 'roots'. Partly because people will always need to eat, the trade itself is seen as stable in relation to other trades which are more unpredictable. One successful businessman told me that although he is moving now into property, he will never give up maize and beans:

> "property fluctuates" he said, "*githeri* [maize and beans] is stable."

The high capital involved in maize and beans and the fact that it can be stored also means that it is a good investment. Mama Munyua, a maize and beans businesswoman, does not believe in banking her money. She keeps a little 'in there' for emergencies but otherwise she invests any extra she has in maize and beans which she can always keep until the price is favourable. Maize and beans is not just your food; it is your bank, your stability, your insurance which, in this day and age when the state and formal economic institutions are so precarious, makes the maize and beans business itself a representation of economic 'roots' and security.

Not only are maize and beans symbolic of 'roots' in their role of sustenance and the creation/essence of life, the single mother businesswomen who trade maize and beans are also connected to the concept of 'roots'. There are for instance obvious parallels between single mother businesswomen and the matriarchs of the myth: Through their particular relationship to entrepreneurship and capitalism, single mother businesswomen echo the ethics of individualism expressed by the matriarchs of the myth. The single mother businesswoman is not only a source of admiration for her success and qualities of independence, perseverance and self reliance, she is also condemned as a 'prostitute', as immoral, as uncontrollable, as avaricious, as exploitative, of others particularly men, all characteristics which were attributed to the mythical matriarchs.

Successful businesswomen are also known for their physical size. This is associated with the particular kind of strength that is reminiscent of the brute force with which the matriarchs exerted their dominion over men. Very few men even today can match up to the size of a successful businesswoman. The fact that these businesswomen exist in independent self-sufficient worlds where many of the norms of society are rejected or inverted also evokes the pre-social matriarchy of the myth. Kikuyu businesswomen are said to be so greedy

for money that they have forgotten all other concerns such as family or 'community'. Single mother businesswomen also bring up their children in small matrifocal household units which are again reminiscent of the *nyumba* which is the female aspect of clan. Lastly I have suggested that single mother maize and beans businesswomen play an important role in the sustenance of rural communities in the present day. In this respect they also realise the principle of 'roots' which has to do with sustenance, 'life' and creation, as well as individualism and self-sufficiency.

Today the concept of 'roots' and its association with 'essentialism' and 'individualism' relates not just to female identity and a particular facet of 'clan'; it has come to acquire a fundamental importance in the redefinition of Kikuyu identities in relation to capitalism itself. As an ethnic group, Kikuyus are particularly associated with capitalism, "Kikuyus are the Jews of Kenya" said Baba Nyaga "Kikuyus are the Asians of Kenya" said Njoroge; both references to the business acumen of the Kikuyu. "We Kikuyus we need money!" said Kinyua as if that was akin to their lifeblood. "Kikuyus like money too much" said Njoroge "it is good to like money but not too much". There is a joke which runs 'If you want to see if a Kikuyu is dead or merely sleeping all you need to do is drop a shilling on the ground nearby...' If the Kikuyu as a whole are condemned for their individualism and capitalist sentiments, then single mother Kikuyu businesswomen are viewed as the archetype of this ethnic character. Today the myth, particularly as exemplified through the persons of Kikuyu single mother businesswomen, speaks to an ambivalent relationship to capital itself which has on the one hand led to the success of the Kikuyu in the context of the state but at the same time is the source of their undoing.

CONCLUSION

The concept of (female) 'roots' is connected to concepts of origin, essence and creativity which lie behind the entity of the clan. It differs from the more short lived expression of 'roots' alluded to in chapter one in the context of male relationships to sub-clan and the practice of inter-clan warfare. Female 'roots' in the nineteenth century found expression in the unit of the *nyumba na mugunda* (hut and farm) which were given to women on marriage from which they raised their families and from which they played their role as sustainers of their communities through their provision of food. Today the concept of 'roots' which has run through Kikuyu ontology is

perhaps even more important than it was in pre-twentieth century Kikuyu society. The contemporary concept of 'roots' has come to dominate the relationship between society and wealth in the context of the state and capitalism and has come to redefine Kikuyu ethnicity itself. The next two sections will explore the history behind the particular engagement between Kikuyu ethnicity and the state which has made the concept of 'roots' both a social and economic reality. It is this conjunction which places the single mother Kikuyu businesswoman in an archetypal position in the context of Kikuyu identity in the present day.

CHAPTER 10

ROOTS AND STATE: 'INDEPENDENCE'

I) FEMALE ROOTS AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE INFORMAL SECTOR: 1920'S -1950'S

> "In the past" according to Cucu wa Gonyo, "women were foolish like porridge, but then they acuired *ogi* (knowledge) through which they could come to have their own things" "and", according to Cucu wa Munyua, "they didn't need marriages any more."

I was told that before the whites came women did not have any choice but to get married and they were totally dependent on their husbands. However, just as education and employment opened up opportunities for men, it did the same for women. Both young men and women ran away to be educated and 'look for money' either through employment on settler farms or in Nairobi. Cucu wa Gonyo told me that women who left their homes were called *maraya*, prostitutes and those who left for good were treated as though they had died. Cucu wa Kamariguini described prostitution to me:

> "Prostitution started with the education which taught people about money; people went to Nairobi to be employed and started making money and marrying with other 'tribes'. This was prostitution. And the men would take the children away leaving the women alone.[13] Before, Kikuyu would marry only 'Kikuyu'; people whom they knew - like Wakamba and Maasai..."[14]

'Prostitution', the abandonment of clan, violated the fundamental relationship between wealth and society that had existed in the nineteenth century through the principle of exogamy. In marriage, women converted their labour and fertility, the productive potential of clan, into wealth through inter-clan exchange. These exchanges were anchored through the persons of men who became guardians of the clans. They were contained within the 'ethnic whole' also realised in the persons of men. The women who became 'prostitutes' brought neither bridewealth nor children to their clans. They alone reaped

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[13] Some of the women who went to Nairobi formed relationships with men from ethnic groups such as the Meru, the Luhya, the Luo, whose custom it was for the fathers, not the mothers, to keep the children. Men of these ethnic groups would even abduct their children thus leaving the Kikuyu mothers 'alone'.

[14] In those days Wakamba and Maasai were considered to be the 'same as Kikuyu'.

the benefits and the benefits were money, "which symbolises nothing" as Cucu wa Njeri told me.

Cucu wa Njeri was referring to the bridewealth payments which are nowadays paid in money but which used to be paid in livestock which was itself symbolic of the principle of fertility, increase and the 'moveable' wealth of the nineteenth century. The wealth generated by urban women, on the contrary, had no social base. Just as young men broke the link between gerontocratic power and clan wealth through being able to earn independent incomes, so urban women broke the link between clan itself and wealth which was engendered, in the past, by their 'routes'.

> Wanjiku wa Abdullah who came from Gachocho, in the hills above Muthithi, was one of a number of women who moved to Nairobi in the 1920's where she was adopted by a rich Muslim couple, Abdullah and wa Karura. Wa Karura was herself a Kikuyu and Abdullah a Nyamwezi from the coast and Wanjiku, like many of the women who moved to the towns in the first half of the century converted to Islam. Islam offered the support which was denied to women by their natal clans and by the state and missions who condemned their 'illicit' livelihoods. John, the grandson of Wanjiku's brother, was also brought up in Nairobi and he remembers as a small boy in the 1950's being lost in the streets of Nairobi being rescued by the sister of Karanja wa Kibarabara, a chief from the area below Muthithi. Unlike her brother, a chief in the rural areas, she, an urban woman, was a Muslim. John's grandfather went to Nairobi as a young boy in the 1920's where he was brought up by his sister, Wanjiku wa Abdullah. She had by then become a rich and influential woman and thus her brother had an easy life. She found him work as a labour contractor in the building industry and told him that "he would never have to work with his hands". She had one particular contact in the industry, a white man who was nicknamed Wa Tina (arse). Because of his sister and her influence, John's grandfather would be approached by many, including Banyani Indians, who wanted him to put a good word in for them with people like Wa Tina.

> Even whilst he lived in Nairobi, John's grandfather always maintained contact with the rural areas. When Wanjiku died in 1948, John's grandfather laid claim to inherit her wealth but he was told that her property was not subject to Kikuyu laws of inheritance and, as he had not converted to Islam, all her wealth would go to the Muslim community. Islam and the city claimed not only the children of the women who went there, but also all their wealth which was not diverted back, through their male descendants, into their clans but rather was channelled into the new urban communities of which they were a part. After his sister's death John's grandfather moved back to the rural areas. He married three wives who lived in Gachocho and his eldest daughter, Wanjiru later became a single mother. Her single mother status made it difficult for her to remain in the rural areas and, following in the footsteps of her aunt, she too moved to Nairobi where she brought up her son John.

The relationships between Wanjiku wa Abdullah, her brother and their descendents demonstrates that the two faces of the state, rural/urban, male/female, formal/informal, were never in reality so

divorced and were on the contrary, often mutually interdependent. In Nairobi the two faces of the state were often united through the relationships of Kikuyu women with Europeans, Asians and Kikuyu men as was the case with Wanjiku wa Abdullah whose contact with both the Muslim community and 'Wa Tina' was what allowed her to become so wealthy in her own right and so to benefit her young Kikuyu brother. Her brother's wealth and contacts were thus acquired through a relationship to the state which was 'female' and illegitimate rather than through the more restricted 'male' world of formal employment which was, from the start, bounded within state control. The bifurcation of the state into a 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' face from the early decades of the century spawned the beginnings of a dual economy. One sector was associated with the extraction of capital though organs of state which was heavily reliant on protectionism, particularly of the agricultural sector in the hands of the White settlers, and the exploitation of resources of African labour and land. The other, more focused on the towns, was based on business, and trades such as building and carpentry which were dominated by the Asians, Muslim coastal elites and by women.[15]

The bifurcation of the state along lines of gender, class and race stemmed, according to Louise White (1990), from a central contradiction in the colonial state which could recruit but not maintain wage labour. The countryside could not support the daily needs of city workers who needed food, companionship, sex and housing to survive or at least to be prepared to work away from their homes. This provided an opening for urban women who served the needs of men through various forms of prostitution which often included the provision of food and even accommodation. Louise White sees prostitution as a capitalist social relation

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[15] David Anderson, in a paper entitled 'corruption at city hall' (Anderson 1996), argues that the 'illegitimate' face which the state acquired particularly in the operation of urban Nairobi, stemmed from the rivalry between Asians and Europeans for control over the state as an organ for the extraction of surplus and resources. By the early 1930's the Asians had lost out in their bid to gain control over the organs of state and were forced to extract surplus through 'illegitimate' means thereby engendering a counter-state, an economy based on 'corruption' as opposed to the so called 'legitimate' means of extraction which the state employed. This 'illegitimate' state owed more allegiance to Islam than to Christianity and its links with the African community lay not so much with men as with women who, through various liaisons, exploited the increasingly corrupt 'underbelly' of the state to their own ends.

"not because capitalism causes prostitution by commoditising sexual relations but because wage labor is a unique feature of capitalism: capitalism commoditised labor." (1990;11).

Through the commoditisation of their labour outside the parameters of the state, urban women were able to dictate their own prices and to make profits which they invested, also outside state control in urban property and entrepreneurship. Thus, according to Louise White, independence from the state allowed women to convert their engagement with the capitalist economy through the mobilisation of their labour as 'prostitutes' into

"a reliable means of capitalist accumulation" (1990;2).

The livelihoods of women in the urban situation fed into the reproduction of matrifocal households and the initiation of new descent lines which, over time, became matrilineal. Nici Nelson's study (1977) focuses on the legacy of this and demonstrates how these female centred households strengthened the bonds between women and their female descendents such that men, sons or lovers, became increasingly peripheralised. The link between labour, fertility, women and descent which began to be made in places like Nairobi had strong echoes with the 'rooted' aspect of the Kikuyu clans embodied in the matriarchy of the myth. These matrifocal households reproduced themselves through the deployment of women's labour in an economic situation which was fundamentally different from the social economy of the nineteenth century which had recognised social interdependence as a primary facet of economic relationships. Instead the social economy of Nairobi women had more in common with the individualistic a-social world of the matriarchs of the myth.

However whereas the world of the matriarchs was neither generative of 'society' or wealth, the women of Nairobi were, in the context of capitalism, able not simply to sustain their households but also to accumulate surplus and generate wealth in their own right. Thus the new link between wealth and the female principle of creativity through fertility and productive potential (labour), generated the possibility of a new expression of 'society' through the 'clans of the women'. Furthermore, just as the original clans of the Kikuyu were engendered through the daughters of Mumbi and their liaisons with men from 'outside', so the women of Nairobi equally perpetuated their households not through inter-clan relationships but through random relationships with men from elsewhere. As Baba Ngobu told me

"A Kikuyu man will only marry a Kikuyu woman, but a Kikuyu woman will marry anyone!"

The willingness of urban Kikuyu women to randomly cross the boundaries of 'tribe' race and culture meant that the new 'clans' which they engendered were not only a re-creation of the mythical matriarchy of the past, they were in addition the umbrella under which the new mixed-blood nation was being born.

II) MALE ROOTS AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST COLONIALISM: 1920'S – 1950'S

Whilst the development of the state paved the way for the consolidation of 'female clan' and its alignment to wealth, it restricted the development of 'male clan' in undermining the power of the *mbari* and curtailing the aspirations of the male youth. Unlike women, men, whose incomes were limited from the start by the parameters of formal sector wage labour, were further curtailed in the investment of these incomes by the strictures of the colonial state on the development of African agriculture in the rural areas. The attempts of Africans to make inroads into agricultural markets were blocked by the colonial state which wished to maintain African wage labour as a class and which needed to protect the powerful European settler lobby against competition from African farmers. Thus for instance Kikuyu were not allowed to grow the potentially profitable cash crops of coffee and tea until the 1950's. [16]

The inability of men, already 'feminised' through their new relationship to labour[17], to convert their incomes into wealth and hence concretise 'male clans', was exacerbated by the development of 'female clans' which clearly echoed the threat of the mythical matriarchy that had existed as a shadow beneath the ethnic whole of the nineteenth century. Men were furthermore active participants in the economic power that women were acquiring because it was their incomes which were productively reinvested by women in arenas over

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[16] In fact the primarily bourgeois aspirations of young Kikuyu men which were geared towards the exploitation of indigenous resources particularly in agriculture, and to participation in the world market were in many ways aligned with those of the state, as was to become apparent in the resolution of the Independence struggle of the 1950's. But the perception of this alliance was blocked by the white settler lobby which faced ruin if it had to compete with successful African farming.

[17] Labour, in the past, was associated with women as part of their productive and reproductive role. The commoditisation of labour through capitalism whilst divorcing it from its gender specificity at the same time re-gendered labour such that male and female labour were differentially generative of wealth.

which men had no control. The political activism which men increasingly espoused during the period from the 1920's to the 1950's could thus be seen as an expression of 'male outrage' at the erosion of their nineteenth century control over wealth and society, their inability to engage productively with the new state and the challenge presented by women's relationship to wealth through the informal economy.

It was under the umbrella of the nationalist movement that the interests of the Kikuyu male bourgeoisie were to concretise themselves under the metaphor of 'roots' as the new link between society and wealth. In the construction of 'male roots', clan and land were the key devices, and together they cemented a definition of community as 'tribe' which, as the subtext of the nationalist movement, was used to contest the legitimacy of the colonial state. The importance of land in the nationalist movement was not simply due to the alienation of land by the white settlers. The neighbouring Maasai suffered much more from land alienation than did the Kikuyu, and in fact in Murang'a, the hotbed of early Kikuyu political activism, there was almost no white settlement at all. Neither was it due to land pressure for people were not, in the first few decades of the century, suffering from land shortage.[18] The importance of land was, for the Kikuyu "first and foremost a political issue" as ˙someone˙ put it to me. Land had already been singled out as an arena of political contestation by the Europeans and the Asians and thus in the early days of African politicisation it became an issue for them too, particularly for the Kikuyu.

In the formation of the nationalist movement, the alienation of land by the white settlers began to be portrayed as an attack on the very identity of the Kikuyu, who, it was claimed, had a special identification with the land as an 'agricultural people'.[19] In

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[18] When Mama Mbugwa was young in the early fifties she said that they used to be very scared of wild animals as the forest would surround them, not like today where it is all cleared. This is what made it easy for the fighters of the Mau Mau to hide because there was so much cover. Land, I was told, was there for the taking and one had only to set light to the bush and where the fire stopped that was your land. People in Muthithi were still migrating downwards into the lower reaches of the area as late as the 1950's, although I was told that land was already beginning to be sold in the 1940's.

[19] This was portrayed as an essential aspect of Kikuyu identity; it was said that God, Ngai, called together three brothers asking them to choose between the hoe the bow and the herding stick. The Maasai chose the herding stick, the Wakamba the bow, and the Kikuyu chose the hoe.

addition the Kikuyu claimed an 'inalienable' attachment to their land through the notion of clan embodied in *mbari*. However

relationships to land in the context of the pre-twentieth century Kikuyu clans were highly complex, and the invocation of an origin myth together with the concept of the *mbari* as a justification for inalienable land rights was a political simplification of the situation.

Mbari, it will be remembered, are subclans. They descend, patrilineally, from a particular known ancestor who was a member of one of the nine original clans but who gave his name to a subgroup of that clan which he founded. This subclan was not only concretised in time through patrilineal descent from a particular ancestor, it was also concretised in space through the land on which this ancestor built his original homestead. Cucu wa Gonyo told me that originally people of one clan stayed together on one ridge as *mbari* but that their gardens, *migunda*, were widely dispersed;

> "someone would have as many as ten *migunda*; the women would have to walk long distances to bring back the produce of their farms which they would carry on their backs with their babies on their fronts."

Thus there is a difference between the land as 'territory' associated with the residential location of the *mbari*, and land as a 'resource' which was supposedly the issue of contention between the colonial government in alliance with the white settlers, and the nationalist movement.

The portrayal of the Kikuyu as an 'agricultural people' and the issue of land as a resource in fact related to the concept of female clan as 'roots'. Both clan and land had a fundamental association with women in their creative capacity and productive role. This entailed a relationship to land as the site of production and reproduction which was manifested in the *mugunda* or garden which a woman was given on marriage and through which she sustained her household *nyumba*. Thus, as a resource to be exploited through agriculture, land was not associated with the Kikuyu as 'an agricultural people', it was associated with Kikuyu women.[20] In addition, the 'inalienable attachment' which the Kikuyu claimed to have to their land was related as much to female clan as 'origin' as it was to *mbari* as the

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[20] Father Wainaina, a Catholic priest from Ngaburi above Muthithi, put it to me that "women are like agriculturalists and men are like pastoralists".

physical location of descent. Whilst 'origin' was a relationship to essence and was viewed as permanent, 'descent' was a relationship to social time and the *mbari* were mostly temporary and subject to frequent fission. As noted earlier the expectation was that enterprising sons would not remain on their fathers' *mbari* but would move off to found new ones. 'Origin' cemented a much more permanent, if abstract, link between identity and wealth expressed through land and clan.

Land, both as property (wealth), and as the lynchpin of Kikuyu identity in its relation to clan, became the core issue around which the independence war was fought, and around which a new definition of 'roots' as 'tribe' was formed which defined the post-independence relationship between the Kikuyu and the state as the site of male bourgeois power. 'Roots' as 'tribe' was a combination of male and female clan. Patrilineal descent now gave men control over land as a resource creative of wealth, and the territorial rights which the Kikuyu claimed to have in relation to their land were justified through the notion of identity as cosmic essence or origin. 'Tribe' as the basis for (male) (Kikuyu) control of the post-independence state depended on the mutually constitutive link between communal identity and wealth. 'Tribe' transformed the a-social expression of 'roots' found in the unfettered capitalism of urban Kikuyu women into a new expression of 'roots' as 'community' which hinged on the persons of Kikuyu men.

III) WOMEN AND KENYATTA'S GOVERNMENT

Although the impetus behind the nationalist movement was located in the interests of a male bourgeoisie the movement was forced to define itself considerably more broadly in order to succeed. The nationalist movement thus drew on the metaphor of the *riika* through which it could co-opt a wide section of Kikuyu (and others); rich and poor, young and old, men and women. In addition, as the movement became increasingly urban-based after the second World War, it drew heavily on the support of the urban underbelly, utilising the networks which Kikuyu women in particular had built up outside state-control.

For instance at the time of the Emergency men as well as women in the city converted to Islam because they did not want to be identified as Kikuyus in their passbooks and thus be subject to harassment from the colonial state. The Nairobi organisation which spearheaded the revolt, the Central Committee, drew on support from the prostitutes and brothels of places like Eastleigh and Pumwani. Kaggia, a leader of the movement told me

> "The Nairobi women were deeply committed to the movement and were very useful as they weren't suspected by the government. They would do things like procuring guns from soldiers ...and many of them acted as spies."

The movement also drew on the much needed financial support which wealthy Nairobi women were able to offer. Among those first arrested as the hardcore leaders of the 'MauMau' were three women one of whom was Mama Josaphine who was based in Eastleigh.

> When she was a little girl, Mama Josaphine moved with her mother from Nyeri to Kiambu on the outskirts of Nairobi after her father died. When she grew up she started work as a nurse in what is now Kenyatta hospital but soon moved from this profession and started working for some Asians who owned a pharmacy. From here she climbed at dizzying speed to become a property owner and to establish herself among the few wealthy Africans of the time. As a woman she had the opportunity to acquire wealth in ways which were denied to her male contemporaries. Mama Josaphine was one of the very few Africans at the time of the Emergency to own a car and in fact she had two, one of which she put at the disposal of the organisers of the Freedom Movement for their use in the struggle. It was this car for instance which took some of the defendants of 'the Kapenguria six' to the Kapenguria trial which culminated in the detention of the leaders of the Independence movement and in the detention of Kenyatta himself. Shortly after this Mama Josaphine was herself detained and was not released until the struggle was over.

Among the Kapenguria six was Bildad Kaggia whose participation in the movement was fired by his mixture of radical Christianity and socialism, ideals much in keeping with those of the *riika* which produced a moral vision of what nationalism entailed. His was a different vision from that of the moderates like Kenyatta who wished to entrench the positions of the incipient African bourgeoisie. Mama Josaphine's interests, like Kenyatta's, lay in protecting her entrepreneurial concerns. During the Independence struggle these disparate interests came together in a common cause which united male 'clan', female 'clan', and the *riika* in the fight to overthrow colonial rule and redefine the relationships between Kikuyu ethnicity and the state. It was only the aftermath of the struggle and its very success in the achievement of its goal which were to expose the contradictions that the movement had contrived.

Despite their participation in the struggle, women were once more marginalised in the mainstream politics of the post-independent state. Some women did attempt to move from ' _ participation in the Independence struggle into participation in the political field of the nation-state. Sarah Sarai, who was one of the three women arrested with Mama Josaphine at the beginning of the Emergency, vied for office in Kenyatta's parliament.

AFFLUENCE: MAMA Josephine with her Mercedes Benz next to one of her residential plots.

MAMA JOSAPHINE.

> "However after Independence it became clear that the politics of consolidation of *Uhuru* meant jostling for positions in the increasingly male-dominated power structures and she was sidelined in the dispensation of office, status and fortune."
> [Standard / /1994...]

When I asked Mama Josaphine why she didn't go into politics after Independence, she replied that she likes to work twenty four hours a day instead of just going around in circles like politicians do. And

> "men like to go into politics: they can stick together. Women don't like to work together like that; there are too many jealousies."

Mama Mbugwa who is from the hills above Muthithi echoed this sentiment when she told me that

> "women are too 'naughty' to be employed!";

they don't like to work for others and prefer to work for themselves.

The ethics of individualism and hard work that had come to characterise the entrepreneurship of Kikuyu women were not compatible with the compromises of the formal sector and of the male political world. However the 'clans of the women' continued to wield power through the economic structure of capitalism where 'roots' were in themselves generative of wealth. Thus Mama Josaphine preferred to concentrate on her already considerable business success. She now owns a large amount of property including a cinema complex in Eastlands near where she bought her first plot in the 1940's. She is to be seen on the streets of Nairobi wearing her impressive *kaftans* and, even at her advanced age, driving herself around in a huge white mercedes. She did however continue to contribute to the building of the 'nation'. For instance she was one of the people to provide the financial guarantees which were a condition for the airlift of East African students to the USA at the end of the 1950's shortly before Independence.

Despite being marginalised after Independence, women continued to operate behind the state both politically and in the informal sector. The influence which women exerted behind Kenyatta's state can be seen within his own family.[21] Kenyatta's daughter, Margaret Kenyatta, has had a long and distinguished public career and was Mayor of Nairobi at one stage. Kenyatta's third wife, Mama Ngina, played a powerful role during his era of government when she 'ruled the country from the bedroom' as Baba Muchioke put it. Apparently she would convey her

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[21] By contrast, I have heard it said that the lack of powerful women behind the present government is to its detriment.

husband's wishes to his ministers through the persons of their wives in the privacy of her bedroom which allowed for a forthrightness that was impossible in the formal public spaces of the men. Beth Mugo, Kenyatta's 'favourite niece' again did not hold formal political office in her own right, but in effect she did so through her husband who was given several prominent appointments including ambassadorial ones during Kenyatta's political reign. Beth Mugo did however build herself up into one of Kenya's most successful businesswomen, and in the recent era when women are beginning to enter the political field she has started to become politically active herself.

IV) KIAMBU: MALE ROOTS, FEMALE ROOTS AND THE ETHOS BEHIND THE POST-INDEPENDENCE STATE

"Entrepreneurs" said Evelyn Mungai, another of Kenya's most prominent businesswomen, "are born and not made".

Like Beth Mugo, Mama Josaphine and Kenyatta himself, Evelyn Mungai comes from Kiambu. In terms of the symbolic geography of Central Province, Kiambu has come to symbolise the principle of 'roots' which was manifest both in Kenyatta's state and in the 'female clans' of the Nairobi women. Since Independence Kiambu has taken over from Murang'a as the political centre of the Kikuyu.[22] In the early half of the century according to Ole Kantai, Murang'a was in every way more progressive than Kiambu. Most of the early nationalist politicians came from Murang'a (among them Harry Thuku, Joseph Kang'ethe and Bildad Kaggia). Nyeri was too dominated by white settlement to be able to operate forcefully in relation to the state and Kiambu was both recently settled by the Kikuyu and was too near Nairobi to become a centre for independent political development.

At the beginning of the century, so John told me, Kiambu was a sort of 'no-mans land'. If someone was accused of bewitching someone else he was sent to Kiambu; thus its name, 'the place where the women cried' derived from *mbu*, the ullulation of the women. The people of Murang'a according to John, would hear those cries caused by all the discord in Kiambu from across the hills. Bildad Kaggia was brought up in Murang'a but he told me that before he was born his father had to flee to Kiambu because he had made so many girls pregnant without

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[22] It is said that 'there will never be a president from the other side of the Chania', the river which separates Murang'a and Kiambu. The rivalry between the two continues today in places like the city council where the Murang'a and Kiambu factions are still jockeying for power.

marrying them! Kiambu was the area associated with miscreants. Its compromised image continued to be sustained into the colonial period as some of the most prominent collaborators with the colonial regime came from Kiambu. Kenyatta was born in Kiambu. I was told that his grandfather, Magana, was a 'charletan' witchdoctor from Ngaburi on the next ridge up from Muthithi who was driven from the area and went to live in Kiambu.

Kenyatta himself was always a moderate politically and his willingness to compromise with the colonial state continued at the end of the Emergency despite his arrest; the British negotiated with him over the handover of power, even while he was still in prison. The handover was thus orchestrated in such a way that the faction closest to British capitalist interests would come to dominate. This was in effect the emergent (male) bourgeoisie, members of organisations such as the old KCA, Kikuyu Central Association, whose aspirations had been blocked by the colonial state from the 1920's.

The nationalists who had fought for the interests of the majority and for ideals of equality lost out at independence. Those who went to the forests to fight for freedom were doing so in order to overthrow not just the Europeans but also their system of governance, one in which the state was used to extort surplus from the country for the good of the few. People had experienced this directly in the hut tax, the forced agricultural reforms and the appropriation of land. Thus in the struggle of the majority of its fighters the Mau Mau in effect represented the social pressure which the *riika* had always exerted over the self-interest of the clan. During the nationalist movement, this pressure sought to counter the uncompromising self interest that was represented first by the colonial state and later by the Kenyatta regime.

Bildad Kaggia, alongside Kenyatta one of the most prominent leaders of the Kikuyu at the time of the Emergency,   . was one of many who lost out after Independence due to his leftwing ideals. He was lucky to escape with his life.   Some of the others who challenged Kenyatta's presidency were assassinated during the decades of Kenyatta's rule.[23] During the post-independence era Kaggia has been exiled to a small plot in Murang'a where he owns a flour mill in which he grinds the maize which the women bring. I have suggested that maize and beans itself is symbolic of the essentialist

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[23] Pio Pinto, J M Kariuki, Tom Mboya, Ronald Ngala.

individualist 'rooted' aspects of Kikuyu identity especially in its association with women. Kaggia's *posho* mill continues to grind down the 'whole' self-contained kernels of maize which the women bring him each day into flour, although he remains powerless to stop the chauvinistic tendencies which Kikuyu capitalism has translated onto the national political scene.

CONCLUSION

In the context of the post independent state, Kiambu became a symbol of the unfettered entrepreneurship of Kikuyu women, of the capitalist leanings of the Kikuyu as a whole, and of the new link between Kikuyu ethnicity and the state in the person of Kenyatta. In this sense it was symbolic of the combined significance of male and female 'roots' which had evolved during the course of the century. The prostitutes of the early half of the century who had abandoned their fathers' *mbaris* for the opportunities of the city consolidated a new expression of (female) 'roots' in the context of their individual accumulation and unfettered entrepreneurship outside the orbits of state and 'community'. At the same time the bifurcation of the economy through the state's partisan relationship to capital prevented the development of male accumulation and of a male bourgeoisie.

The nationalist movement was a reaction to this. Under the umbrella of the movement a new link between community and wealth was engendered as a means to deliver the organs of state into the hands of an incipient male bourgeoisie by means of the concept of 'tribe' or 'male roots'. 'Tribe' represented the forging of a new link between wealth, defined through the state's control of capital, and community now defined through the link between the Kikuyu ethnicity and the state. This was such that white racism was replaced by Kikuyu chauvinism as the hegemonic force behind partisan control over the state. The post-independence state in effect became the modern-day expression of 'roots' as the dynamic interface between capitalism and society which allowed the chauvinism described in the mythical matriarchy to become the new expression of ethnic identity translated onto the national political scene. Through the identification between Kikuyu ethnicity and the state, it was Kenyatta more than the urban Kikuyu women who now evoked the mythical matriarchy as the new expression of society incarnated not through the persons of women, but through the persons of men.

DAVID IRUNGU, A NAIROBI
POLITICIAN FROM MATHARE VALLEY
AND HIS MOTHER DURING AN
ELECTION CAMPAIGN.

CHAPTER 11

THE GENDER OF ROOTS AND THE INTEGRATION OF COMMUNITY

I) THE CEMENTATION OF MALE ROOTS: CLAN AND LAND IN THE RURAL AREAS

Njoki and her family live in Ngaburi, on the next ridge up from Muthithi. Ngaburi was where Kenyatta's *mbari* was located, although there is little to show for it today. The people of the area also say that he himself was born there.[24] Njoki told me the story of his birth:

> "Kenyatta was born with nine seeds in his umbilical cord for the nine clans of the Kikuyu. He had three stars on his forehead and sparks came from his eyes. When he was born he was holding a fistful of soil."

By Independence, land and clan had become the key metaphors through which Kenyatta consolidated Kikuyu supremacy within the state. Kenyatta's 'umbilical cord' united the nine (female) clans which were embodiments of the productive potential (seeds, wealth) of the Kikuyu into the one 'tribe', the *'mbari ya Mumbi'* under which the state was won. The 'soil' was the key site of 'tribal' identity as territory and as wealth through production.

The rhetoric of state employed the metaphor of the nation to extend its control over the resources which it invested in the *'mbari ya Mumbi'*. This was explicitly encouraged by Kenyatta who made several speeches after Independence about 'home'. He said that wherever you may go, abroad or within the country, you must always bring your wealth back 'home'. Thus, through the metaphors of 'clan' and 'land' the relationship between wealth and identity became mutually reinforcing, instituting a new definition of 'community' in terms of 'tribe' as 'male roots'.

The connection between clan and land was consolidated in post-independence Kenya beginning with the land demarcations which followed on from the Independence war. Cucu wa Kamariguini told me that

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[24] In fact Kenyatta's father moved to Kiambu before Kenyatta was born and Kenyatta himself did little to acknowledge his Murang'a ancestry.

"during the Mau Mau there were no circumcisions and no marriages for seven years ...then in the eighth year there was land demarcation".

The land demarcations of 1958 and 1963 represented the end of the social anarchy which the Mau Mau entailed, and the inauguration of a 'new society' expressed through a new relationship between clan and land as the social definition of wealth. In the first demarcation, which came on the tail end of the Emergency when many individuals had not yet returned to their homes, land was demarcated according to the *mbari* which, it was assumed, was the traditional pattern. But as Cucu wa Gonyo pointed out settlement may have occurred in *mbari* but landholdings in terms of gardens for cultivation were widely dispersed and were not defined according to *mbari*. Rather they were defined in relation to individual *nyumba* as sites of production and sustenance. There were many complaints after the first demarcation according to Baba Mwaniki because people took land which wasn't theirs. So there was a second demarcation in 1963 in which people were split up and dispersed and land was allocated to individuals.

"Only after land demarcation" said Baba Mwaniki "did the idea of 'my *shamba*' (farm) come about and people started developing their land."

The second demarcation instituted a new connection between personhood and land in terms of individual property rights which had more in common with the female *nyumba* than the male *mbari*.[25]

One of the main reasons people give for the necessity of owning land today is that one must have somewhere 'to bury and to build'; to invest ones wealth and fix it in perpetuity. Whenever I went to someone's home one of the first things that would be pointed out to me was the grave of an important ancestor in the garden. Cucu wa Kirima-ini told me that in the past there were no funerals; corpses would be bound by their hands and feet and neck by *migoto* (banana fibres) and dragged to the forest – "and we would hear the hyenas

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[25] "It would have been better" said Cucu wa Kamarigu-ini "if there had never been land demarcation because the *shambas* suddenly became very small." Cucu wa Gonyo said that the second demarcation was the time when the crops became scarce, "because when the crops from one garden didn't do well you had no other gardens to fall back on". (This was a reference to the previous system of agriculture where people spread agricultural risks by having many shambas for one family in a system which to Europeans looked incomprehensibly inefficient and time consuming.) The demarcations not only consolidated individual rights over property, they also exacerbated the effects of population pressure which were beginning to be felt in the rural areas.

laughing". This was until government laws concerning burial came in before the Ngargu ya Mianga, the cassava famine of the 1940's.

> "Then" said Cucu "those who didn't have land would ask their friends for a place to bury and to build."

Burial on the land shows that you belong somewhere and that you are someone;

> "you know we don't just want to be buried in Langata cemetery!"

a Kikuyu insurance broker said to me. Burial on one's farm created an inalienable link between personhood and property through the interment of one's corpse on one's land.

Furthermore burial enshrined a new concept of 'clan' in terms of descent which was now connected to wealth through property. An old *Mzee* told me

> "the clans are very important today because of funerals especially because people go so far away,- then who will pay for them to be brought back and take care of the arrangements if not the clan? In the past there were no burials, but there were weddings which involved the clan and also births. But most important there was a lot of fighting and clans were very important in sorting out disputes."

This statement is testimony to an age where the most important function of the clan was in the forming of relationships between clans, whether they be of marriage, warfare or trade, rather than the consolidation of relationships within them. In the latter context it seems that the clan nowadays celebrates its membership through rituals of death rather than of birth and marriage. Funerals link persons to property and property to clan in a context where collective identity in relation to the state in effect guarantees individual relationships to wealth.

The relationship between wealth, communal identity and state had been formed initially through the bid for male control over wealth. The circle connecting wealth, identity and state through relationships to clan and land ᵗ.ᵣᵉᵗ ᵉ was completed by the notion of inheritance as the legitimation of male control over land. The inheritance of land through men was legitimated through recourse to 'tradition'. It was accepted and enshrined in law that property must be inherited through sons because this was the 'traditional' pattern in the context of the *mbari* where, as Guka wa Kibaru told me,

> "the 'ownership' of the land passes from father to son".

As we have seen, the *mbari* was a particular definition of clan through male descent and territory. It did not, originally, relate to the control over land as a resource which was explicitly associated

with women. The conditionality of male relationships to land as a resource reliant upon the persons of women, whether wives or mothers, was a consequence of the essential relationship between women and production. This formed an expression of the 'rooted' aspects of a Kikuyu society embodied in the notion of 'female clan' and expressed through the institution of the *nyumba*.

First, the relationship between a man and land as a resource was conditional upon marriage and was gained through the person of his wife.

> "Sons" said Guka wa Kibaru "are not given land before marriage, but after marriage they are given. You can't give a son land before he marries – where will he be taking the yields? And he is being given food by his mother."

Second, when agricultural land was passed on to a man after marriage, it was not passed on from his father, but rather from his mother. Land, given originally to wives on marriage, was also divided through wives as inheritance. If a man had many wives, each wife would have a specific portion of land and, irrespective of how many sons she had, her land would be divided equally amongst them. Thus half- brothers, despite sharing the same father, might gain access to very different portions of land.

However the invocation of 'roots' through 'tribe' entailed a combination of female and male clan, of *nyumba* and *mbari*, whereby clan was both origin and descent, and land was both territory and resource and both together formed the basis for the redefinition of the relationship between society, men and wealth in the context of the state. In this context land achieved its key importance not only in the definition of the relationship between communal identity and state but also in terms of male control over wealth and in the definition of masculine identity itself.

For men, whose control over wealth has been defined through their relationship with the state and the formal sector which is in turn defined through the construct of 'tribe' as a means to control the state, rural land is not merely a resource; it is the foundation of 'tribal' identity through which men legitimate their control over wealth and society. The importance of land inheritance for Kikuyu men cannot be overstressed and has led to a situation where even wealthy, urban men will fight tooth and nail for a tiny portion of their ancestral land which can be of little economic consequence to them.

> "Whatever you have it is enough" said Guka wa Kibaru "even if you have ten sons and only one acre".

Land and clan were transformed through land demarcation, burial and inheritance into a new expression of the relationship between wealth and society in terms of 'male roots'.

> "In the past", said Baba Wangeci "a man would be very happy if he had many daughters; if he had many daughters he would be a rich man indeed. But nowadays we prefer sons."

> "Sons," said Baba Simon "are the ones to inherit and they will be the ones to take care of their parents in their old age and their parents will not be left alone...girls bring in bridewealth but then they go!"

He accompanied this with an emphatic gesture of the arms. In the past it was their 'going' through which daughters created the mutually constitutive relationship between the clan and wealth which formed the basis of society itself. Sons, through their stasis now link clan and wealth in their capacity as inheritors of the land and in the perpetuation of the link between clan and land through patrilineal descent.

Sons have always played this role from the time of the mythical takeover of the 'patriarchs' when men took over the clans from the women. However in the past descent and inheritance were not related to wealth and were subordinated to relationships of alliance and exchange. Today the role of sons in the inheritance of wealth and in the perpetuation of descent through the patriline is a vital component in the expression of society in terms of clan as 'roots'.

II) ROOTS AS THE NEW EXPRESSION OF THE SOCIAL

During the course of this century the relationship between wealth and 'community' has changed such that 'roots' has replaced 'routes' as the key metaphor in the social definition of wealth. Mama Simon said to me when describing her relationships with her in-laws "but after all blood is thicker than water" and it was only natural that she would always be more attached to her own family. In the past water was 'thicker' than blood. Inter-clan relationships were more important than intra-clan relationships, alliance was more important than descent. Now 'clan' itself has replaced *riika*/ethnicity as the dominant expression of the social whole and, in an inversion of the fluidity of the nineteenth century into the fixity of the twentieth, land has replaced livestock as the dominant expression of wealth. Livestock was actual wealth in the past and in addition it symbolised the principle of wealth which rested on 'mobility' in terms of reciprocity and fertility. Similarly land today embodies not just wealth as a resource, it also symbolises, in conjunction with clan,

the static expression of wealth in relation to 'tribe' as a
particular facet of the relationship between capital and state.

The importance of 'roots' as a new expression of society was brought
home to me when I attended a fundraising for the local branch of the
PCEA church. To collect the parish contribution for the next four
years the fundraising was held in the village of Kihingo where I was
staying. The church these days is perhaps the most important
embodiment of community in the rural areas. In this respect it is
similar to the metaphor of clan in that it is a new metaphor for
communal identities replacing the 'ethnic whole' of the nineteenth
century.

"Nowadays the church is your clan" said Cucu wa Waru.

The fundraising was held at the homestead of a prominent local
person, a place where the grandfather had died a few years
previously. From the outset, the ceremony was contextualised in
terms of a key notion of belonging and identity involving concepts
of descent and land. The grave of the grandfather was the site
connecting them all. The ceremony was initiated by the eldest
daughter of the house, a very smart lady who had come from Nairobi
with her family. She began by calling up her mother and then all
her siblings and their families. Each was given a candle lit from
that of the grandmother and then the pastor said a prayer. The
rest of us then waited while grandmother and her descendents
accompanied by the pastor trooped off into the garden to the
grave.

After Cucu, her descendents and the pastor had returned from the
grave, the sermon was given by Mama Simon the wife of the local
preacher. She talked about the 'home' and of how the 'home' is a
metaphor for the soul. If you have bad things in you she said,
your home will also be bad. Then she pointed a warning finger at
the men present and talked of alcoholism and of the disruption men
caused within their homes due to drink which led them to beat
their wives and children. They above all as "the head of the
house" should be responsible for its moral welfare. The concept of
men as the 'head of the house' echoes the state's relationship to
the community, a relationship which is symbolised in the persons
of men. The alcoholism and general disruption with which an
increasing number of men in the rural areas today abuse this
position is also resonant of the increasing failure of the state
itself in its relationship to society as a whole.

After the service the fundraising began. Over this officiated a
wealthy new-comer to the area, a man called Thuo. With their
wealth and capital, these new-comers are able to displace people
from their land and so are perceived not only as an economic
threat but a threat to the cohesion of the 'clan', the root of
modern identities which are expressed through the connection
between people and their land. The conspicuous role that Thuo had
taken in the local church was a way of integrating himself into
the community and giving himself a 'clan'-type identity within the
very community potentially placed under threat by his power and
wealth. He was at great pains to stress to me how he was now a
mundu wa Kihingo a person of Kihingo and how he now 'belonged' to
that area.

> The fundraising revolved around the three 'guests' who had been
> invited as wealthy members of local families. They now came
> forward with their contributions and called on friends and family
> to add to these sums thus showing the extent not only of their own
> wealth but of the influence they had within the community. Two of
> the three guests, chosen for their wealth and success, were women.
> One of them was Anne, the (single) daughter of the household in
> which I was staying who had a lucrative job in Nairobi. Anne and
> the other lady were both stunningly dressed in flamboyantly cut
> suits. They represented the wealth that women are increasingly
> able to command in the context of the modern state and the
> potential of this wealth to nurture rural societies, in contrast
> to the wealth of men.

The fundraising illustrated the centrality of the metaphors of clan
and land as the new expression of society and their expansion from a
specific association with 'tribal' identity and the state, to other
institutions such as, in this case, the church. It also demonstrated
the ambiguity of 'tribe' (and by extension the state itself) in
relation to rural societies in terms of the increasing failure of men
to support their rural homes. Further it encapsulated the potential
threat of class formation in the rural areas and the containment of
class within a concept of the social. Lastly the fundraising paid
tribute to the increasing importance of women's wealth in the context
of rural communities and the underlying challenge which this presents
to definitions of communal identity in relation to formal sector
capital, the state, and men.

III) THE FRAGILITY OF MALE ROOTS IN THE POST-INDEPENDENCE STATE

By Independence, to be Kikuyu was to be associated with the state
itself. However the state turned out to be a precarious tool through
which to define a link between wealth and society in the context of
Kikuyu communities. Not only was control over the state insecure and
the state itself unstable in its links with the world market, the
state was also highly partisan. It strengthened the position of men
vis a vis women, it strengthened the position of a wealthy
bourgeoisie over the Kikuyu as a whole, and it strengthened the
position of Kikuyu from certain areas over others. People from
Murang'a complain for instance that they received no benefit from
Kenyatta's state which was oriented entirely towards his own home
area of Kiambu. Kiambu was itself a metaphor for a particular
expression of 'roots' which was ultimately linked to the anarchic
self-interest of the mythical matriarchy. Thus the ability of the
state to define a positive link between society and wealth was highly
compromised. Kenyatta's identification with Kiambu and his
abandonment of his own roots in the heart of Murang'a such that today
there is nothing on the ridge above Muthithi market to show that his

mbari originally came from there, is itself symbolic of the ambiguous relationship between the state and the community as experienced by the people of Muthithi.

The beginnings of the contradictions entailed in the construction of the social in terms of 'male roots' were to be found in the Independence struggle. The Independence struggle, whilst it delivered temporary control over the state into the hands of a male Kikuyu bourgeoisie, also consolidated female independence in the rural areas.

> "During the Mau Mau" said Kaggia "women were forced to become independent of their husbands..."

His own wife for instance had to fend for herself and her family throughout the time he was imprisoned. Not only did women have to take over the provisioning and care of their families and homesteads, many young women also went into the forests to fight alongside the men. The story of Cucu wa Ciru illustrates the role of the Mau Mau in creating the model of female independence which is so unusually prominent in the case of the Kikuyu.

> Cucu wa Ciru protected herself and her children after her husband's detention as a freedom fighter during the Mau Mau by clothing herself in the sheets on which the children had urinated during the night, covering herself in ashes and pretending she was deaf and dumb. In this way she avoided being taken to the concentration camps because the home guard soldiers who rounded up others in her village assumed she was mad. Cucu then went to Murang'a town and bought coffee seedlings with money she had obtained before the war through business. She became the second woman in Murang'a to plant coffee. Coffee was used in a system of reward and punishment during the Mau Mau and again because she had coffee the home guard assumed she was a loyalist and left her alone. After the war when her husband had returned with no reward for his struggle, it was Cucu's coffee which educated the children, built the stone house in which she now lives, and paid for the land which the couple then acquired. Cucu never ceased to chide her husband until his death for going to the forests to risk his life for an ideal which was in the end betrayed by the ethics of greed and self-interest.

> Cucu passed on some tough legacies to her own daughters which were symptomatic of the insecurity which the post-independence state presented particularly through the persons of men. When her younger daughter, Njeri fell in love and was to get married, Cucu put a stop to the marriage on the day of the wedding saying that first Njeri had to get a job and become independent, and only then could she contemplate marriage. Her elder daughter did get married and also had a job for a number of years but her marriage was a disaster and her job did not even provide enough money for her to educate her children. Thus she left her husband and set herself up in business perceiving that single motherhood and the informal sector were in the end preferable to debilitating marriages and formal sector employment.

As Muni from Murang'a town told me

"women have learnt from their mothers that they can't trust men and must rely on themselves."

The image of the 'independent' Kikuyu woman that was associated with the new nation-state rose so to speak from the ashes of the Mau Mau. The ash with which Cucu wa Ciru covered herself to protect her family achieves a new significance in this context. Today it is the independence of rural women and the legacy which they pass on to their sons and daughters that gives rise to new hope for the re-integration of the community which men through the state have by and large failed to achieve.

The ambiguous place of the state, and the contradictions it espoused in relation to rural communities, were expressed from the beginning through gender and gender continued to contour attempts to translate the new structures of wealth and power into a positive expression of society. 'Tribe' entailed the dichotomisation of wealth and community, such that wealth gained through the investment of capital obtained through the formal sector was associated with men, and community embodied in the guardianship of land and the perpetuation of descent in the rural areas was associated with 'wives'. The perpetuation of 'tribe' as a definition of communal identity which enshrined male power thus depended crucially on the relationships between men and their wives. Unless they marry, men cannot perpetuate patrilineal descent nor can they safeguard the rural investments on which they are dependent for the maintenance of the 'tribal' identity which guarantees their control over the state.

The precarious control of the state over capital however, was making it increasingly difficult for men to sustain their rural resource and to earn enough money to marry, to "serve their wives" as one man put it, thus was undermining the structure of 'tribe'. In addition the number of divorces was becoming increasingly high because of the inability of men to maintain a dual existence between the city and the country. The inability of men to marry was also a threat to their immortality within their clans. , Elizabeth's statement: :
We return to

"Women can have children even if they do not get married. Men must get married otherwise their names will be lost forever."

Immortality in relation to clan and the perpetuation of 'tribal' identity which enshrined male power in the context of the modern state were thus connected. This meant that the increasing lack of resources to enable men to make the link, through marriage and land, between their social identities and their economic bases threatened men's very personhood. Kinyua turned to me one day and said
As noted before

"What's the point in marrying anymore? There is no land so no point in having children. One might as well just stay like that."

The institution of marriage, through which 'tribe' as a link between communal identity and wealth was maintained was equally threatened by independent urban women. As we saw earlier Single mothers are referred to as 'housebreakers'. As girlfriends they break up men's marriages siphoning off men's wealth for their own 'clans' rather than those of the men themselves. In addition as sisters they not only fail to bring in bridewealth which their brothers may then use to get married, they are also in competition with their brothers over the resources of the clan. These conflicts are apparent in relation to single mothers and wives: Mama Jane used to be married but then divorced her husband because of his many girlfriends. She has now found herself a boyfriend who is also a married man. "But" she said

"my sister-in-law is a very bad woman; she won't even speak to me because I have a boyfriend who is a married man- she is worried that her own husband (Mama Jane's brother) will do the same!"

Elizabeth told me

"Wives are terrible; they think because they are wives they are better than us. They think we are nothing".

There was a time when Elizabeth came to physical blows with her sister-in-law and the two had to be separated by her father. Wives maintain a definition of community in terms of 'tribe', a definition which is increasingly threatened by its dependence on formal sector and state and by the rival wealth and security which single mothers can command through the informal sector. Thus the legacies of independence have rendered the link between men, communal identity and state increasingly vulnerable to the economic vicissitudes of the present day.

IV) HOLDING THE CLANS TOGETHER: THE RELATIVE CAPABILITIES OF MALE AND FEMALE CAPITAL IN THE MAINTENANCE OF COMMUNITY

The social definition of wealth in the rural areas now swings in the balance between formal and informal capital represented respectively in the persons of men and independent women. This tension is illustrated through the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren which straddles the contradictions embodied in the relationships between men, single women and wives, such that grandparents more than wives now become representative of community. The relationship between grandparents and grandchildren now realises social regeneration across the divisions which formal and informal capital engender. Grandchildren are named after their grandparents

thus leaving their parents 'alone'. The grandparents are caught between both these situations with the result that they acquire a very proprietary role over their grandchildren, regardless of whether they belong to the sons or the daughters of the clans. This has led to a circumstance described by many single mothers where if they want their children to come and live with them they have to take them by force because the grandparents will not let them go. In addition the grandparents may employ the use of curses to keep their grandchildren in their home.

V) BROTHERS AND SISTERS AND THE STRUGGLE OVER LAND

The tension between male and female roots which had shadowed nineteenth century ethnicity was beginning to create a major faultline through late twentieth century communities where society itself was defined in terms of 'roots'. This tension has deepened significantly in recent times where growing political and economic insecurity threaten the relationships of men both to the state and to 'community' such that their land and homes are now more important than ever. The identification which men maintain with the rural areas is not simply a means of perpetuating male control over wealth through 'tribe'.It has also become for men the basis of survival itself. Thus brothers are dangerously threatened by their returning single mother sisters who now hold, albeit tenuous, legitimacy within their clans. The rifts between brothers and their single mother sisters over the 'home' and the land are some of the most vicious of the schisms that cleave rural households in the present day. Nowadays "people can even kill you for land" said John. Mama Kamau told me a story of a woman who was murdered with her children by her brothers because she had been given some land by their parents. Mama Martha's story also illustrates the tension in brother/sister relationships in the present:

> Mama Martha is a single mother. She had her first child when she was just about to finish school and was forced to abandon her education. She was at first rejected by her parents and left home to find work and have the baby in Nyeri. It was only after her second child was born that her parents asked her to come back. She spent her maternity leave at home and once again established a close relationship with both her parents particularly with her mother to whom she had not been close since she was a child. Mama Martha had to move continuously in the early years to look for work. Thus her parents asked her to leave the girls with them. She did this for a few years but decided she did not want to live without her children. Her parents, as is the case with so many single mothers, did not want her to take the children back. But she forced them, saying that their education would suffer in the rural areas.

> Mama Martha's mother left home for a number of years when Mama Martha was young so that she, as the eldest daughter, brought up her younger siblings almost as a surrogate mother. During her

early years Mama Martha was very close to her father and saw him as the rock of the family when her mother abandoned them, although this was to change. Even after she left home, Mama Martha continued to help her siblings, particularly her younger sisters one of whom has also become a singlemother. Mama Martha also increasingly helped her parents, traditionally the role of the sons. "If my mother runs out of cooking fat it is I who must buy her some more" she said. Unlike herself, Mama Martha's brothers were able to finish their education and are now very well off. Mama Martha continued to keep up her close relationship with her brothers after they got married, and it was she who nursed her sister-in-law after she gave birth. It was at this time that she found a letter that one of her brothers had written to the other saying that she, Mama Martha, was "sucking our parents' home dry" as her daughters were being looked after there. Mama Martha's brothers also blamed her for the fact that another of their sisters had become a single mother accusing her of setting a bad example. Gradually the growing rifts between Mama Martha and her brothers which were buried deep under their close relationships, were beginning to emerge. However it was land which finally broke the relationship apart.

When the time came for her father to divide his land he said he would divide it between Mama Martha and her brothers. They all went to the land office but the officials refused to ratify the division because although Mama Martha was to inherit land, no provision had been made for her younger sisters who were as yet unmarried. Mama Martha's father had assumed that she would, out of the goodness of her heart, ＿   ＿t if they did not get married, ＿ ＿ would give them some of her land. The brothers and her father were now furious with Mama Martha accusing her of having been to the District Office behind their backs on behalf of her other sisters. The irony of the situation from an outside perspective was that Mama Martha's brothers are extremely well off and have little need of the small portion of land that they would inherit from their father. Her sisters on the other hand are struggling. She also has a young brother, the youngest in the family, who has not got a job and lives at home working halfheartedly on his parents' land. Again the fact that he and other young men like him who can't get jobs are able to do this is in sharp contrast to their sisters who, even if they do not get married, must leave home and fend for themselves.

The war between Mama Martha and her brothers has begun to fracture the whole household along lines of gender. During the land case Mama Martha's father chose to side with her brothers against her, despite his close relationship with her from childhood and the fact that it was Mama Martha's children, not those of her brothers, who were brought up in his home, and the fact that Mama Martha herself was supporting her parents. Since the land case Mama Martha's closeness to her mother has grown and she has become almost estranged from her father. Mama Martha's father illustrates the tension between masculine identity and the preservation of community embodied in the relationship of the grandparents to the 'home'. On the one hand, as grandparents and members of their clans, the interests of men lie with their grandchildren, and thus they may be led to favour their daughters over their sons for reasons mentioned above. However the threat that single mother daughters present to men in general leads them to protect the interests of their masculinity and side with their sons. Mama Martha's home, far from providing the basis for the integration of communities in the face of the threat which state development presents, has become split along the axis of gender as a symptom of the divisive

power of the state in conjunction with the pressures of capitalism on rural communities.

VI) BROTHERS AND SISTERS AND THE STRUGGLE OVER THE *NYUMBA*

Communal identity, defined through the construct of 'tribe' and embodied in the persons of wives, began to extend its parameters after independence in relation to a broader construction of 'roots'. This was in part a reaction to the inability of the alliance between Kikuyu ethnicity and the state to form a secure basis for rural communities. In effect, the social definition of wealth through formal sector capital and the state was becoming increasingly insecure and with it the construct of 'tribal' identity, the position of men, and the relationships between men and their wives. This opened the way for the challenge which female capital, often gained through the informal sector, began to present: Single women were beginning to challenge men's undisputed rights to the resources of the clan embodied in land, and even more fundamentally men's relationship to *nyumba*, the home. The *nyumba*, in the context of 'roots', is the most fundamental expression of social identity, the root of sustenance, of life, and the foundation upon which wider forms of social identity are constructed.

In the context of 'tribe', the *nyumba* was the embodiment of communal identity through the persons of wives in their role as sustainers and guardians. However with the weakening of marriage ties, the *nyumba* rested increasingly in the hands of grandparents. They became the arbiters of the relative capabilities of male and female capital, embodied in the persons of sons and single mother daughters, to nurture rural households. In this context, sons and single mother daughters have increasingly had to fight not only for access to resources embodied in land, but also for legitimacy within the *nyumba* as the root of social identity. At the same time both sons and single mothers must operate outside the *nyumba* to generate the capital which will render the *nyumba* productive. Whilst singlemothers were always excluded from the *nyumba*, the peripheralisation of men in relation to the *nyumba* was previously amended through their wives. However today men as well as single women must struggle to legitimate their position in relation to their rural homes:

> Baba Mwangi whose daughter Grace is a single mother, was a sympathetic father especially perhaps because of the presence of his grandson Maina to whom he was very close. However, in a Jekyll and Hyde transformation, his attitude to single motherhood was inverted as far as his sister Elizabeth was concerned. Elizabeth is a single mother who lives and works in Nairobi as a housegirl. Her three daughters have been brought up by their grandmother in

the rural areas. Elizabeth and her daughters are very close to Cucu just as they were very close to Elizabeth's father before he died. However Elizabeth's relationship with her brothers has been one of bitter struggle. Before her father died he insisted that Elizabeth should inherit land along with her brothers. "But they could not give me a single cent from my father's land" she said and instead they eventually clubbed together and bought her some land in the Rift Valley. As brothers it seemed they would rather buy her land out of their own pockets than forgo even a small portion of their father's land.

The continual conflict between Elizabeth and her brothers has come to the fore not just in relation to land, but also in relation to the *nyumba*, their mother's home. Recently the sons, who are wealthy tea farmers[27], decided they must build their mother a stone house to replace the mud and wattle one which she has occupied until now. Her mother's homestead will go to Elizabeth after her mother dies and thus Elizabeth, despite her meagre income, was also asked to contribute to the building of the house which she would eventually inherit. She did this through a loan from her employers. The first dispute arose after their mother moved in. The brothers had designed the building of the house without a back door for the kitchen. "So there is nowhere to pour water" said Elizabeth "and if my mother wants to bring firewood in she has to carry it through the living room!". In actual fact many women in the rural areas do not like to cook in a stone kitchen which is very impractical compared to a mud and wattle kitchen that is especially suited to rural conditions. Elizabeth says that she is going to make her mother an outside kitchen using some of the materials from the mud and wattle home her mother used to live in. The brothers won't hear of it and say they will build their mother a drainage channel in the new house where she can pour water. Elizabeth says she is going to build that kitchen even if it means she doesn't speak to them for a year!

The kitchen is the heart of the *nyumba* and the most important place in the homestead for women. Not only is it the centre of their activities it is also the place where they socialise as opposed to the living room or the compound which is reserved for men and for visitors. Men are thus peripheralised in relation to the *nyumba* from the outset even when they live in the rural areas. Equally single mothers are peripheralised in relation to the *nyumba* because, as daughters they are supposed to leave home and get married. Elizabeth's desire to build her mother a kitchen outside the house that her brothers have built is a bid to reassert her own control over the *nyumba* from which she, as a single mother, has been marginalised. She defends her position partly on the grounds of gender whereby she insists it is unthinkable for a woman to operate in a kitchen such as her brothers have built for their mother, thereby stressing the legitimacy of her voice, as a woman, over theirs. For Elizabeth's brothers, it is important that their mother continues to operate from the kitchen in the house they have built, which is where they will sit and talk with her when they come to visit. In this way they too appear to be seeking to strengthen their connection with their mother's *nyumba*, a link which in the past would have been beyond question.

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[27] The two older sons were both teachers and it was the capital acquired through the teaching profession which they invested in tea.

III) HOME AGAIN: SINGLE MOTHERS AND THE CLANS

Single mothers today are beginning to come back 'home', not simply through leaving their children with their parents but also in a more formal sense. I was told by Mama Ciru, a single mother in Murang'a town, of an institution that exists among the single mother businesswomen of Thika called 'Home Again'. The major function of the group is to finance visits to the homes of its members. Each member contributes about 1500/= per month and they visit each others' parents' homes where a feast is organised. This is so that these women do not forget their homes and can 'visit' their homes even though they are not married. However Mama Ciru added

> "Kiambu ladies are very cunning; they will try anyway to get money!"

and they also ensure that they get some money out of the parental visit for themselves. The money is given to the mother of the member whose home is being visited but she is told in advance by her daughter 'I am going to bring some friends and they will give you some money which you will give to me and I will leave you with a little of it. But I will pay for the party and everything.' If, for instance, she collects 10,000/= (approx. £100.00) she will leave her mother about 1000/= and her mother will be happy. Thus, in a slight twist of the traditional feast, instead of the money going to the clan of the woman, as it would do if it were a wedding, most of the money is kept by the woman herself. For the Thika women it seems that they have reached a halfway house. They perform the feast through which they legitimate their clan identities but they keep a large percentage of the wealth which would traditionally go to their clans, themselves.

Mama Kamau is a single mother who, even though she does not intend to get married, is actually planning to perform her own *gurario*, bridewealth ceremony, by slaughtering a goat for her clan. This decision has come about partly because her younger sister has recently been married and her new husband cannot in theory complete his *gurario* until the older sisters have also been 'slaughtered for'. As a single mother Mama Kamau thus jeopardises not only her own position in relation to her clan, but also that of her whole family. The fact that she has not been married, and her failure to complete her ritual dues, threaten her sister's marriage with bad luck. However she also has another motive for legitimising her position within the clan. At the moment, although her brothers have been given land it looks very unlikely that she as a single mother will be given land,

and she does not want to press the issue because she values her relationship with her family too much. She knows that if stakes her claim to clan land, her brothers' wives will say things like 'Wanjiru didn't marry because she wanted this land..' "and" said Mama Kamau

> "the children [of the brothers and their wives] can even kill you because of that which they feel is theirs..."

However if she legitimises her status within the clan by performing her own 'gurario' she says they will not be able to refuse her request:

> "...they must give me land becasue I am to do everything else."

Mama Kamau is not wealthy, and thus these resources are not simply a matter of legitimating her clan identity, they are also a matter of life and death, of the survival of her children.

As 'housebreakers', single women not only break apart their brother's relationships to their clans, they also threaten the integrity of community located in the *nyumba* as the basis of sustenance and the source of clan identity. For a single mother to pay her own bridewealth when she does not even intend to marry may seem absurd. But people like Mama Kamau who have decided to pay their own bridewealth are seeking to re-integrate themselves into the *nyumba* and thereby legitimate their status in the community at large. In paying her own bridewealth 1.   -, Mama Kamau is complying with a definition of the social in which her single mother status is illegitimate in contrast to that of her brothers who, even if they do not get married maintain social legitimacy within their clans. Thus while challenging her ostracisation in her natal home, Mama Kamau is at the same time sustaining the cultural constructs which have de-legitimated her status in the first place.

CONCLUSION

The relationship between clan and land as metaphors for identity and wealth, defines a new notion of society in terms of 'roots' which has replaced the principle of 'routes' dominant in the nineteenth century. 'Roots' as an expression of society relates in a broad sense to the development of capitalism in rural economies, where capitalism itself has been entwined with the particularly powerful engagement between Kikuyu ethnicity and the state. In this context the social definition of wealth in terms of 'roots' is variously defined through collective identity wherein it is encompassed in notions of community (the 'tribe', the church, the village etc) in the family unit embodied in the *nyumba* normally in the guardianship of grandparents

or wives, and at an individual level in terms of property rights where a connection between individual identity and wealth is maintained principally through the ownership of land. The nature of the interaction between capitalism and state however has resulted social and economic divisions in rural societies which are increasingly untenable, especially in the context of the downturn of the economy, and the marginalisation of the Kikuyu from state power. The relationship between husbands and wives is now under pressure and the faultline created through the division of formal and informal sectors is extending into rural communities, where it is manifest in the tension between brothers and their singlemother sisters. It is against this background that male and female 'roots', as manifestations of social and economic relationships, are pitted against one another, forcing divisions within rural homes, often along lines of gender. The increasing social and economic pressures in rural and urban areas mean that individuals must now fight to redefine social norms, not just in their own interests, but in the interests of the community through which they may be better able to face the challenges of the future.

CHAPTER 12

FEMALE ROOTS AND INVESTMENTS FOR THE FUTURE

I) THE LEGACY OF WANGU

In the context of the myth of the matriarchy, in the context of capitalism and ethnic politics, and in the persons of single mother businesswomen, the concept of 'roots' is ambiguous with respect to the notion of society. According to the myth, the questionable ability of the matriarchy to foster a link between community and wealth, and to sustain a 'civilised' social order, was the justification for the takeover of the 'patriarchs'. The chauvinism of the Kenyatta state has been used as a justification for the current victimisation of the Kikuyu in the context of the wider community of the nation.[28] Finally, the individualism of single mother businesswomen is invoked to warrant their ostracisation in their natal homes and from the society at large. In all these cases there is an underlying perception that the principle of 'roots' is fundamentally anti-social and must be contained. However there have also been points in twentieth century Kikuyu history where women, symbolically evoking the notion of 'roots', have asserted their independence precisely in order to counter an attack on their communities.

The myth of matriarchy and of the essentialised 'rooted' aspect of the clan has continued to run through Kikuyu ontology and has resurfaced in Kikuyu history. The figure who most exemplifies this is the famous chief, Wangu wa Makeri, who ruled in a place called Weithaga in the early decades of the century. Wangu was not a myth for she appears in the archival records of the district and is well known by most Kikuyu today. Women would tell me that they used to have power but that was lost after Wangu wa Makeri. Wangu was said to be a very powerful chief who, like the matriarchs, "rode on the backs of male bearers". It is said that there was a threat of attack by a

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[28] Since the death of Kenyatta and the ascension of Moi to the presidency, the Kikuyu have been stripped of their political clout and have suffered both from this and from the downturn of the economy as a whole. In addition, in the context of the multiparty era from the beginning of the 1990's, they have been victims of ethnic cleansing, particularly in the Rift Valley where their extensive colonisation has been used to scapegoat them in relation to the indigenous inhabitants.

neighbouring group; she called the men together exhorting them to fight, but they were too cowardly, so she demanded that they give her their clothes, saying she would lead the women to fight in their stead. The men were furious at this insult to their male pride and devised a scheme to depose Wangu. They challenged her to strip naked and do a war dance before them. She accepted the challenge but when she saw how she had thus shamed herself in front of her people she was forced to resign.

There are echoes of Wangu in the political history of the Kikuyu. In the 1920's Harry Thuku, the young leader of Kikuyu political resistance to the colonial state was imprisoned. Crowds of angry demonstrators gathered outside the prison demanding his release but to no avail. Once again the women berated their men for their powerlessness and demanded that they 'hand over the trousers'. The women then led a charge apon the prison but tragically the police opened fire and many were killed.[29]

In much more recent times the mothers of Kikuyu political prisoners who were imprisoned for their opposition to the regime of President Moi, the current president of Kenya, again gathered to stage a protest to demand the release of their sons. This was in the early days of the multiparty movement when male opposition leaders were beginning to hold huge political rallies with little harassment from the police. In contrast the action of this small group of women apparently warranted the calling out of a full squadron of riot police! This response was testimony to the challenge to the male state which is presented by the politicisation of women. Echoing Wangu's action many of the women bared the upper parts of their bodies in defiance of the attacks by the riot police. Again many women were badly beaten but they continued their protest from the refuge of a church in Nairobi and eventually they were successful for a number of their sons were released.

Wangu and the women who have followed her during the course of this century are examples of the prominent role women have assumed when the communities of which they are a part are under threat; particularly in relation to the modern state. In the colonial period and the Moi regime, either to protect their sons or to protect the

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[29] There are some suggestions in the literature that it was Wangu herself who led this challenge but in fact Wangu's term of office ended roughly ten years earlier and it is likely that the two events have been confused.

community at large from outside threat Kikuyu women have displayed their potential power and strength through political action. In the context of Kenyatta's state when the Kikuyu themselves were at the centre of state power, Kikuyu women did not issue this challenge. The independent action of women in defence of the community takes place at critical points in the social history of the Kikuyu and yet remains an aberration of the social norms where independence and individualism expressed in the notion of 'roots' is seen as anti-society.

Single motherhood is now changing as single mothers are reintegrating themselves back into the social fabric instead of remaining in anarchic defiance of society. This has partly been achieved through their endeavours in business which have given them the economic strength to operate somewhat independently of customary social forms, and then to redefine the social in their own terms as they consolidate their social status. Through single motherhood among other things, the concept of 'roots' is transcending the individualism and chauvinism with which it threatened to scar Kikuyu ethnic identity in the context of 'tribe', and is creating a more positive link between local communities and the economy, which integrates community values with a degree of success and empowerment that is often hard to achieve countries in like present day Kenya. Through the re-integration of the informal economy and rural communities, single mothers present a progressive legacy to the next generation wherein some of the divisions which have been created during the course of this century may be resolved.

II) INVESTING IN LAND AND EDUCATION

In places like Mukuyu, single mother businesswomen are beginning to provide a future for their children which combines the economic advantage of their position with a re-integration into society within which they have long been ostracised. Despite the fact that they start out with no access to land, the Mukuyu maize and beans sellers are unusual in terms of both markets in that 50% of them have bought land of their own. A major reason for investing in land before other property is that these single mothers wish to provide land for their sons:

> Wanjiru is a single mother businesswoman who sells maize and beans in Mukuyu market. She started off working in the bars while her children were brought up by their grandparents in the rural areas.

YOUNG BOY IN THE MAIZE AND BEANS
SECTION OF MUKUYU MARKET.

As a single mother she herself felt uncomfortable staying in her parents home although she was quite happy to leave her children there. Every time she went home she asked her parents to let her take her children to live with her in Mukuyu, and each time they refused saying that she would kill them. Eventually she took them by force, and her father then gave her a loan to start her maize and beans business. Now, ten years later, Wanjiru is doing very well. She has one of the more upmarket rooms around the plot which is well furnished and even boasts a television. She has a boyfriend who works in Murang'a town who she has been with for nearly four years. Her son has recently finished secondary school and her daughter is in her final year. Paul, her son, did so well in his final exams that he got the grades to study engineering at university. This is no mean feat as university places especially in a subject like engineering are hard to come by even for children of middle class homes who can afford the best schools. Just before her son finished school, Wanjiru bought her first piece of land in the neighbouring Loco 20. She told me that this land was for her son although he was as yet unaware of her acquisition. She said that she would wait until he had finished school and then she would tell him "I have bought you a land".

Successful businesswomen like Wanjiru, far from being anti-social, short-term and individualistic in their aspirations, are looking to 'the future'. At the same time as acquiring land for their sons, single mothers are also teaching their sons business. Sherry who has a clothes business told me that she had just given her whole business over to her son because she wants him to be 'independent'.

Elizabeth, a single mother who lives in Nairobi, has acquired some land, part of which she inherited and part of which she has bought herself. She told me that, as she has no sons, she would give her land to Mwangi, her grandson. "What about Wanjiku?" I asked. Wanjiku is Elizabeth's eldest granddaughter and is named after Elizabeth.

"But I really love Mwangi" she said "and Wanjiku can get married, or stay like me and have part time jobbers! But it is better if she gets married."

Elizabeth was not the only single mother to whom I spoke whose ambition was to provide land for her son whilst appearing unconcerned to do the same for her daughters. Land is a symbol of the link between communal identity and wealth which was initiated through the construction of 'tribe' as the new expression of society in terms of 'roots'. Whilst ascribing to the link between society and wealth expressed through 'roots' single mothers, at the same time challenge 'male roots' when coming back as sisters to claim rural land. However in passing on land, whether inherited or bought, to their own sons whilst appearing reluctant to make similar provision for their daughters, single mothers seem to be linking their informal capital and female centred households back into an expression of society defined through 'male roots' legitimated through the 'patriarchal'

ideologies of formal sector and state and through a particular rendition of 'tradition' in terms of patrilineal inheritance.

Many single mothers say that they expect their daughters to get married and that of course if they do not, they too will inherit a portion of their land. In some ways, by establishing a base for their sons through the combination of land and business which is both socially condoned and economically viable, single mothers are strengthening the position of men, and so are increasing their chances of making progressive and successful marriages and thus ultimately increasing the chances of (progressive) marriages for their daughters.

At the same time single mothers are investing in education for both their sons and their daughters. In Mukuyu market, although, in common with many of the older women in both Mukuyu and Muthithi, about 40% of the maize and beans sellers are themselves uneducated, 90% of the Mukuyu maize and beans sellers have sent their children to secondary school. This is a very high figure compared to all other trading groups in both markets and again shows that these women are oriented to the progressive horizons of the 'future' embodied in the world of education.

Furthermore, far from favouring the education of their sons over that of their daughters, single mothers show no discrimination, and on the contrary seem to encourage their daughters even more than their sons to go forward with their education.[30] As always with education, the assumption is that it will lead to formal sector employment and again this is contradictory in relation to women like the single mothers of Mukuyu.

Many of the single mothers I spoke to had to leave school due to pregnancy but most of them did not regret this, perceiving that the informal sector offers at least as much economic opportunity as the formal sector. Many of them asked me "what jobs are there anyway?".

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[30] Nici Nelson (1977: 117) also notes this phenomenon in the context of urban Nairobi women and comments on the disappointment faced by these mothers when their investments in education fail to land formal sector jobs for their children. She also reports that women's investments in their children's education are replacements for investments in land. In my study by contrast, businesswomen appear to be particularly keen to invest in land at the present time. This may reflect the fact that they are based in small urban centres in the rural areas rather than in Nairobi, or it may reflect the different historical period on which the research was based and the increasing incorporation of independent female capital into the (rural) social fabric in the present day.

Once again the high priority placed on the education of their children puts single mothers in a position of ascribing to a world from which they themselves have been rejected and which they themselves reject. However, although they may hope that their daughters will get good jobs, single mothers also seem to value education in the context of business where it can open up wider horizons and allow one to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by entrepreneurship in the context of the formal and informal economies. By investing in education and in land for their children both of which are associated with the social worlds which from which single mothers remain ostracised, single mothers are re-integrating themselves into society, demonstrating the relative strength of the informal economy in relation to the values which society upholds and at the same time subtly transforming these values which are defined principally in relation to the formal sector and the state.

In addition single mothers also now invest in land as a source for their own businesses. In Mukuyu many of the maize and beans sellers have bought land in loco 20 which has become a rural satellite for the market. This is not just for the purposes of inheritance for their sons, it is also an investment in their own businesses; enabling them to increase their stocks by a few extra sacks of maize and beans each year. The same is true in Muthithi where the few wealthy maize and beans businesswomen I spoke to had bought their own land in nearby Maragua where they had chosen not to cultivate coffee, but rather to cultivate maize and beans. In this way these women are by passing the state-controlled markets for international cashcrops and are going some way towards making the rural areas less dependent on food imports whilst completing the chain on which their own businesses depend. Eventually the new link between land and business which these investments entail challenges current definitions of the link between society and wealth defined through men and cashcrops. It may in addition be of considerable benefit to rural economies whose dependence on international cashcrop markets causes large fluctuations which have an unpredictable and often negative effect on local communities.

III) INVESTING IN MARRIAGE

In their attempts to build their informal sector wealth into the basis of the new community, single mother businesswomen do not reject

the ideologies that underpin a 'rooted' notion of society in terms of land and clan. Not only do they buy land for their sons however. Women like Mama Maina and her sisters, all of them single mothers who live in Mukuyu, have actually started subscribing to a monthly clan *harambee* (cash merry-go-round) of their father's clan in the rural areas. The ultimate investment which businesswomen can make however is in marriage itself. Here they may compromise the independence upon which their economic activities depend in order to become or remain part of the community.

Bridewealth payments have undergone many changes during the course of this century where they have shifted from the responsibility of the clan as a whole to the responsibility of the groom in a context where young men began to have access to independent forms of wealth, to the responsibility of the riika who organise pre-weddings, and now on occasion, to the responsibility of the bride herself reflecting the strength of female capital and the integration of this into 'community'. While I was in Muthithi I attended the first stage of Mama Munyua's clan wedding which was one example of women effectively paying their own bridewealth.

> Mama Munyua is unusual in Muthithi where her huge bulk and striking beauty match her success and make her stand out. She does not sell in the market itself but rather in a store on its periphery. There are very few real business women like her in the area and in fact she does not come from Muthithi but rather, as one might predict, from Kiambu, the true home of the big businesswomen. Mama Munyua married a Muthithi man whom she met in Mombasa

> "when I was a tourist - like you."

> Her husband, Baba Munyua continued to work in Mombasa for ten years while she continued to live in the Muthithi plot behind her father-in-law's shop;

> "we made love by telephone!"

> she said. During this time Mama Munyua continued to lead her own life whilst remaining committed to him as a wife and as the mother of their children. She started business in 1987 with her own capital from working in her father-in-law's provision store on the edge of the market. She started selling maize and beans in the market itself but the business eventually became successful enough for her to move out of the market and rent her father-in-law's other store for her maize and beans. She says even now that if the going gets rough she can always go back and sell in the market.

> As she has become more successful, Mama Munyua's business has become increasingly centered on the nearby town of Thika in Kiambu. She told me it is better to sell in Thika because you can sell a lot at one time.

> "You can even finish 100 bags in a day." There is no business in Muthithi, she said, "here people just sell in tins!"

> Although her real business interests seem now to be focussed on Thika, she still has her store in Muthithi where she always has a

few sacks of maize and beans to sell to the market women. Mama Munyua has always lived at her husband's home in Muthithi plot, but she never lived in his rural home, on the land. The one thing she is not is a farmer's wife. She has, however, bought herself some land in Maragua as have one or two other big businesswomen of the area, where like them, she plants maize and beans some of which she sells. Her next investment will be a pickup. It seems that, although she operates independently of her husband, they consider their assets to be jointly owned.

Mama and Baba Munyua's marriage is unusual as most men cannot accept their wives reaching a level of success and independence that rivals their own. However Baba Munyua is to some extent immune from the pressure of his peers as he rarely spends time in Muthithi. His education and exposure to the world set him apart. Baba Munyua's attitude is that even if he tried to keep his wife chained to the home she would do what she wanted. So he might as well let her go! He added on a more serious note

"you must base a relationship on trust and faith"

otherwise there is no hope. Mama Munyua also has certain expectations of her husband;

"we business women we don't like to marry men who stay idle. If they can't work we just leave them"

she said. Although he cannot seem to reach the level of success of his wife, Baba Munyua is both industrious and supportive and has earned himself a wife who is both extremely successful and is also committed to their marriage. Equally Mama Munyua has managed to link the independence which her entrepreneurship requires and the increasing centering of her activities in the town of Thika, with the maintenance of a successful and egalitarian marriage and a strong relationship to the surrounding community[31] which is still based in rural Muthithi.

Mama Munyua's commitment to her marriage was graphically underlined while I was there when the couple undertook the first stage of their clan wedding. They had in fact been married for about fourteen years and had hₐₙd a hugely expensive church wedding about five years previously,

"but nowadays" said Baba Munyua "we must do both because we have two cultures".[32]

The clan wedding is still very important according to Baba Munyua and if you do not do it you may be cursed. The clan wedding was to be completed in several stages. This was the first stage which involved a preliminary feast and the first installment of the bridewealth. However instead of Baba Munyua's clan being the ones

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[31] In terms of the local community Mama Munyua is particularly supportive of the businesswomen in the market whether they are semi-independent rural wives or the few single mothers who engage in full time business in Muthithi and surrounding markets and who live, like Mama Munyua, in the Muthithi plots.

[32] It is common nowadays for couples not to complete their wedding ceremonies until late in life as the pressures of their finances dictate. They will often complete the formalities when it comes to the time for their own children to marry as they cannot themselves receive the bridewealth and *gurario* (blessing/feast) of their future sons in law until they have completed their own weddings.

MAMA MUNYUA AT HER CLAN WEDDING.

BABA MUNYUA AND THE MATATU HIRED
FOR THE WEDDING.

to finance the occasion, I was told that the ceremony would be financed partly by friends 'by people like you' said Mama Munyua.

Mama Munyua told me that her husband was to bring his friends and she was to bring hers. A *matatu* was hired to take us all from Muthithi to her parents' home in Kiambu and in the event the *matatu* was so crowded with women that the few men who had come were hardly visible. These women were all Mama Munyua's friends from Muthithi mostly women who sold in the market. On the way we stopped in Thika to pick up the other contingent; again Mama Munyua's friends, this time the real big business people who sell wholesale in Thika.

When we arrived at Mama Munyua's natal home we were welcomed by the women of Mama Munyua's clan with much singing and excitement. While the men stayed in the compound, the women were taken to a specially constructed area and the feast was produced. Every sort of food imaginable was brought out including the slaughtered meat and plenty of sodas to replace the traditional beer. Cups of steaming ucoro were also produced which Baba Munyua devoured with great gusto.[33] Then a more serious mood descended and the men and women convened in their separate enclosures to begin the real business of the day; the collection of money. The women's collection was officiated by one of the big Thika business women, Mama Njoki. She was a little younger than Mama Munyua and was even larger than Mama Munyua herself. Mama Njoki had come with her husband who, like Baba Munyua, was dressed in jeans and a denim jacket. Baba Njoki was the only man in the women's contingent and, unlike the other men present at the wedding, he too was a maize and beans seller. He and his wife are a business couple and work together. Both are close friends of Mama Munyua.

The money was collected in a relatively orderly manner with the Thika women contributing substantially more than the rest of us. Mama Njoki kept exhorting her husband to add more! Then she asked all of us to add a little more to make it up to an even figure. Baba Munyua's contingent was tiny by comparison and almost all the men were direct members of his clan – his brothers in fact. His father was too frail to come in person so Baba Munyua's eldest brother officiated the occasion. Interestingly Baba Munyua's mother joined the women's group even though she was of Baba Munyua's clan. Thus it seemed that in contrast to previous customs, the occasion was based on gender rather than clan.

Finally the two collections were pooled; Baba Munyua's collection came to 5000 shillings and Mama Munyua's collection came to 26,000

"so you see the women are in front!"

she said. The money was then taken to the elders of Mama Munyua's clan. Then there was dancing for the women followed by introductions and speeches by the male clan members of both sides. Afterwards Baba Munyua gave me a breakdown of the finances for the occasion; he said that the collections were to finance the feast which included three goats for slaughtering and one to leave there as well as all the other food and drink. In all it came to 20,000. He himself had taken 10,000 he said. This must have included Mama Munyua's own contribution (she had told me before hand that she was due to receive her *harambee* money which she needed for the wedding). The rest of us had contributed just over 30,000 between us. Thus Baba Munyua was able to give 20,000 to the clan as an initial payment for the bridewealth. In effect it seemed as though

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[33] *Ucoro* is traditionally the porridge that the bride cooks for her future husband while she decides whether or not to accept him.

Mama Munyua, through her friends and business associates as well as her own contribution was paying her own bridewealth. After the ceremony Mama Munyua told me that her husband was very happy

"because he has a proper mama now!"

The relationship between Mama and Baba Munyua spans Murang'a and Kiambu, formal and informal sectors, business and land, male and female capital. It is in this context that Mama Munyua and her friends, many of them single mother businesswomen, have invested their wealth in a traditional marriage ceremony which will cement the relationship between two clans and will integrate the independent informal entrepreneurship of Mama Munyua herself with the social values embodied in her husband through his connection with the formal sector and his rural clan. In paying their own bridewealth, women are demonstrating the relative strength of female capital in the present day and the importance of this in the context of a new definition of the link between society and wealth. Unlike the Thika women's 'Home Again' and Mama Kamau's plans to perform her own *gurario*, Mama Munyua's wedding makes these symbolic gestures into a reality. It is interesting that the women's collection in Mama Munyua's wedding was officiated by Mama and Baba Njoki, one of the few younger business couples who have entered into partnership together and who have reached a pinnacle of success in the maize and beans trade. (They import several lorry loads of maize and beans each week from neighbouring countries into Kenya.) It is possible that Mama and Baba Njoki, like the young maize and beans sellers of Muthithi market described in chapter eight, point to a progressive direction for the future wherein the disparate forces which have caused the divisions that currently have such a destructive impact on rural communities, may be resolved.

CONCLUSION

The legacy of Wangu, of independent women exerting their power in defence of their communities, has been an aberration in the course of the century. Wangu herself was shamed and deposed for her action. However at the end of the twentieth century when the principle of 'roots', defines the social fabric itself, the independent women who, I have suggested, incarnate (female) 'roots', are in a strong position in relation to the concept of the social. With their wealth and relative independence of state and formal economy, they may provide the means through which the degeneration of rural communities may be stemmed and turned in a new direction. Already independent women seem to be investing in the symbols of progress and society

through their investments in land and education for their children and the ability to pass on their experience in entrepreneurship. It is these mothers who produce sons such as the maize and beans sellers of Muthithi market. The young maize and beans sellers of Muthithi have re-defined their masculine identity to embrace the feminine world of small-scale entrepreneurship, and have made egalitarian and progressive marriages which are at the same time business partnerships. Successful businesswomen are also now beginning to combine their success and independence with (investments in) marriage. In this sense they are resolving the divisions engendered in the colonial era between formal and informal, between rural and urban, between community and wealth gleaned outside the orbits of the state. Both the *riika* marriages and the cases where women pay their own bridewealth point to new definitions of marriage and partnership which are in their own ways attempting to resolve the divisiveness of the state which has resulted ultimately in the divorce of men and women and the splitting of the community embodied in the *nyumba*.

SUMMARY

The conjunction of the post-independence state and the phenomenon of single mother businesswomen is in part a product of the particularly strong engagement between Kikuyu ethnicity with both capitalism and the nation-state, an engagement which expresses the concept of 'roots' as a cultural, economic and political reality. 'Roots' as the principle of origin, essence and creativity was primarily expressed in female relationships to clan which were the dominant ethos of the pre-social world of the matriarchy in the context of the Kikuyu origin myth. However this mythical world was overturned by the 'patriarchal' takeover which inaugurated society itself wherein the individualism of 'roots' was suppressed beneath the social ethos of 'routes'. In the context of Kikuyu history, the biggest resurfacing of the myth of Kikuyu matriarchy and its association with the essentialism of Kikuyu identity is, perhaps, in the instance of Independence itself which by that very term is suggestive of the individualism that characterised the original matriarchal society. In a reversal of Kikuyu cosmology, the new post-independence relationship with the state has produced a vision of society which is expressed through 'roots', realised through the self interest of clan rather than the transcendence of self interest embodied in the 'ethnic whole' based on the structure and ideals of the *riika*. Society as 'roots' in the Kenyatta era was expressed through men's relationships with the state. However, once again, male 'roots' have proved to be ephemeral and short lived. The success of 'roots' in the post-independence state has primarily been expressed outside the orbit of 'society' in the context of independent women. Thus as a symbol of 'roots' and a barometer of its significance in present day Kikuyu society, the phenomenon of the single mother businesswoman has been archetypal. Wairimu, a maize and beans trader told me:

> "We are a nation of single mothers. It all started with the Emergency and it will only end with the Second Coming!"

The single mothers of the 1970's were literally children of the independence struggle, born in the 1950's during the Emergency when their own mothers acquired an independence and self-sufficiency which they were to pass on to their daughters. Similarly the success, politically and economically, of the Kikuyu in relation to the post-independence state has been reflected in the success achieved by single mother businesswomen. Cucu wa Nyambura, who used to sell maize and beans in Mukuyu market in the 1960s, told me that

"in the time of Kenyatta [1960's & 70's] business was very good especially because of trade with Thika and Nairobi. School fees were low and there was a lot of money to be had in those days."

This period went alongside the economic boom of the 1970's and reached its pinnacle by the 1980's when, according to Wairimu, 'people sold like machines'. During this period the Kikuyu as a whole benefitted disproportionately through their political and economic connection with the nation-state and capitalism, a connection which was symbolised in the ethos and success of single mother businesswomen.

The ability of businesswomen today to translate their success into the new expression of the social where relationships between men and women, between society and wealth may once again be integrated, will be crucial to the ability of rural communities to sustain themselves in the light of the pressures they face both politically and economically in the present day. It seems that in many ways society is much more accepting of its independent daughters than was previously the case, and correspondingly independent women are themselves actively investing in a progressive vision of society, particularly through their children. As an anecdote of this, I am reminded of the time when I went to stay with Mama Muchioke, a businesswoman from Mukuyu, whom I found teaching her five year old son how to do maths using maize kernels.
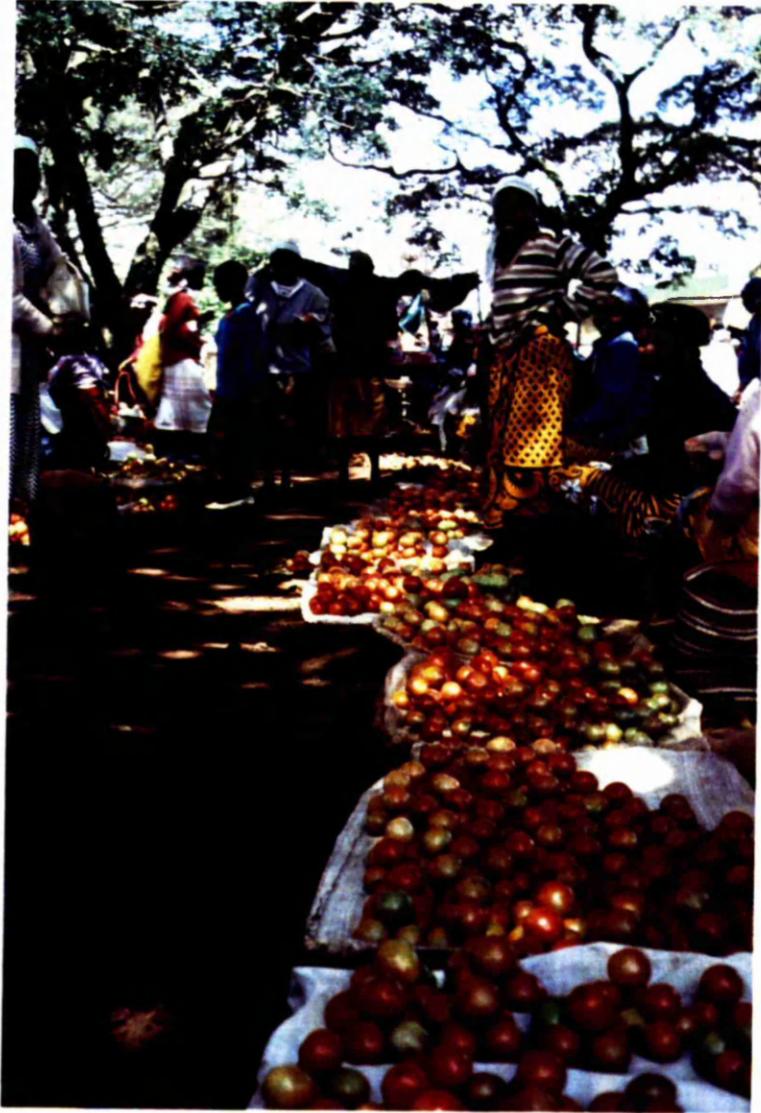
MEDIATION AND MARGINALITY;
SOCIETY AND THE STATE.

I will sing while going back to where?

When I grow up will I get lost?

Be sold for Ngwachi or sugarcane?

Messages are sent to men and young girls.

They shouted at me and I came bearing a giceri

I was a new woman straight and upright

I would sing crying

Why did we plan this ndumo and not sing?

(Ndumo. Song sung by married women)

CHAPTER 13A

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES IN MUTHITHI AND MUKUYU MARKETS

With the exception of bananas in Muthithi, the fruits and vegetables trade is the most numerous in both Mukuyu and Muthithi markets. It is also the most ephemeral. Fruits and vegetables are a transitory trade and must take their place as best they can, flowing between the more solidly based trades of the markets. Even the produce itself is easily perishable and must be sold quickly. In Muthithi the fruits and vegetables form bright swatches of colour beneath the trees. The red tomatoes and golden potatoes greet you as you enter the market from the road. Along the side fence there is a froth of white where the more lucrative business of cabbages is conducted. Next to these are the wispy threads of the spring onions and carrots which, like the cabbages, come from Kangari high up in the hills towards the Aberdare mountains. The fruits, many of which are not for 'business' but just from people's gardens, are spaced even more randomly around the market. The pawpaws have actually been pushed out into the livestock part of the market as though no more room could be made for them in the main section, which is increasingly being invaded by the large pitches of the clothes sellers.

I) MARGINALITY: FRUITS AND VEGETABLES IN MUKUYU MARKET

In Mukuyu the fruits and vegetables cork the market at both ends, sandwiching the maize and beans and manufactured goods in between. There are some proper stalls for fruits and vegetable sellers which make a dark damp awning over one section of the market beneath which rich colours bloom tantalisingly. Here it is cool and fresh. But the

regular sellers prefer to sell in the open air, in a dusty well of ground that is put aside for 'country women' on market days. Or better still in the illegitimate spaces outside the market itself around the entrance where they can attract passing custom. Almost by their very nature, fruits and vegetables seem to do better in the most marginal spaces such as outside the markets around the entrances, rather than in the designated areas where the competition may be too great. In these marginal spaces the sellers are more likely to attract passing custom and for the fruits sellers in particular whose goods do not form part of the staple diet, but are a luxury, an extra, the ability to attract passing custom is crucial.

The fruits and vegetables trade is the easiest of all trades to make a start in because it requires a very low capital outlay. You can start with almost nothing and then, as you make profits, buy more as you go along. The low capital base of the trade makes it easy to slip in and out of- easy to make profit (fruits and vegetables make 100% profit) and easy to loose everything especially due to the perishable nature of the goods which must be sold there and then or they will rot. Seasonality affects the fruits in particular which results in gluts and fierce competition at certain times and then correspondingly a dearth of supply at others. Much depends on luck and also on flexibility which may involve travelling at certain times. The unpredictability of the fruits and vegetables trades makes them unfavourable as an investment, and those with capital will instead often chose to do maize and beans or clothes.

Fruits and vegetables often provide a transition to the more lucrative trades of the market such as maize and beans or clothes which require large capital bases and are generally more secure. Mama Maina for instance started in fruits and vegetables in Mukuyu and is now a maize and beans seller. About a quarter of those who sell fruits and vegetables in Mukuyu are young men and for them too the trade is a transition to larger scale more secure forms of business. These young men tend to be highly educated and are similar to the clothes traders of the market. Kinyua sells *sukumas* (greens). He is married and his wife and children live on his three acre farm in Nyeri which his wife looks after while he stays in Mukuyu. "We are here for work" he says, contrasting the young men of the market like himself to the single mothers for whom the market is both work and home. Njeri sells *sukumas* next to Kinyua. She is a single mother but unlike him she does not have land or anyone to look after her children and her family must depend on her business alone.

The majority of fruits and vegetables sellers in both markets are women, many of them young. In Mukuyu many of these are single mothers who live in the plots and have no land of their own. Unlike the young men who may use the trade as a transition to higher forms of business, many of these young women are themselves in very unstable positions either because they are just starting out in the world of business or because they are forced into the trade as a measure for survival. The latter may remain stuck in the 'transition' stage of fruits and vegetables unable to escape into more secure forms of business:

> Unlike Mama Maina who had already established herself in business before having children, Mama Kamau came to Mukuyu because of becoming a single mother. If you start business when you have young children it is almost impossible to re-invest your profits because whatever you make goes to feed or educate your children. Mama Kamau says she would have a much better chance to make her business grow if her children lived with her mother and she didn't have to worry about their daily bread. Also she could travel more for her business and maybe exploit the market with Nairobi. But single motherhood is now no longer the exception and her mother already has to cope with the children of her other single mother sisters. In addition her brothers are not happy about her taking her children back home as they regard the 'home' as their rightful domain. This is so in spite of the fact that they are often very supportive of her in other contexts.

The single mothers who sell fruits and vegetables are like the maize and beans traders in that for them the market is both work and home. Maize and beans however is a stable trade. It is a good investment partly because of the fact that it is a staple food, and partly because of the fact that it may be stored. Similarly those who sell maize and beans are in a much more secure position than the fruits and vegetables traders. They operate with a much higher capital base and many of them have bought their own land. By the time they are in the maize and beans business, the single mother businesswomen of Mukuyu are able to be both independent and successful. By contrast few of the single mother fruits and vegetables sellers have either land or capital to back them up. Many are reliant on relationships with men to help them out with small extras and maybe pay their rent. The fruits and vegetables business does not allow one to cope with any unforseen eventualities such as illness and at these times if you do not have friends or relatives to help out you may well go under. When people are in serious difficulties they may turn to their families; as Mama Kamau said your family must help in the last instance

> "because they don't want to see you die".
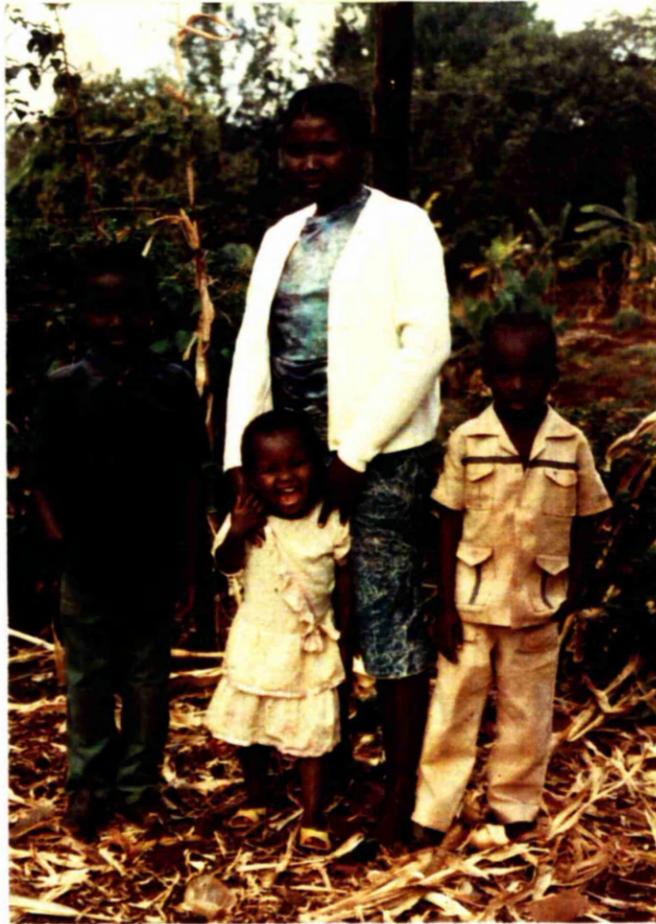
MAMA NGOBU, A FRUITS SELLER IN
MUKUYU MARKET, AND HER CHILDREN.

The women who sell fruits and vegetables in Mukuyu straddle two worlds: They are not firmly established in the informal economy in which people like the single mother maize and beans sellers make their living, nor are they established in the formal sector, either as wives or through employment. In this respect their status is marginal, both to the independent informal sector world of successful single mother businesswomen, and to the socially accepted formal sector world of employment and marriage. Even the trade itself, which cannot compete with staple foodstuffs or manufactured goods, hovers instead at the periphery of the market, neither inside nor outside. The survival of single mother fruits and vegetables traders depends on this ambiguous status where they combine informal entrepreneurship with links with the urban formal sector through their boyfriends as well as whatever help they can get from their rural homes. The ambiguous position of single mothers is also reflected in their ambivalent relationships with their brothers who treat them both harshly as competitors in the home and leniently as sisters to whom they have strong emotional ties.

In some ways the fruits and vegetables traders represent the interdependency that all these worlds in the last instance entail. In this respect their presence is uncomfortable. The fruits traders of Mukuyu complain for instance that the Council is always trying to force them to build 'proper' stalls from wood and nails a little way into the market, and to sell their goods in permanent pitches. Some of the regular Mukuyu sellers do have stalls but they rarely sell there and never on market days. Like the Council, men from town whose girlfriends sell in the market seem to feel uncomfortable with the peripheral spaces which these traders occupy. Mama Kamau has an 'admirer' who does not like her to sell outside the market and even gave her 300 shillings to buy wood and nails to build a stall. He said if he is seen talking to her outside the market people will wonder what he is doing talking to that lady. But if he is inside the market it is okay. However Mama Kamau will not compromise her business for him- someone in her position can only afford to do so if an 'admirer' or a boyfriend gives her an alternative form of security such as buying her land.

The ambiguous position of the fruits and vegetables traders is particularly pertinent in the present where there is a breakdown of the dichotomisation of formal and informal as social metaphors within the context of the nation-state. It is interesting for instance that

single mothers are now increasingly turning to the church for support.

Single mothers have not had an easy relationship with the church where their status is condemned as immoral. However it seems that this is changing. In Mukuyu for instance, among the fruits and vegetables sellers, the number who belong to the charismatic churches is higher than average for the market as a whole. For Mama Tom who converted to the Deliverance church when she came to Mukuyu, the church offers . more support than her broken marriage ever did. The entry of single mothers into the church which has long been associated with the establishment values of a male-dominated society in which single mothers are marginalised, is an instance of the transgression of the boundaries which have hitherto perpetuated these divisions.

II) TRANSITION: FRUITS AND VEGETABLES IN MUTHITHI MARKET

As with Mukuyu, the fruits and vegetables trade in Muthithi caters primarily to subsistence. However unlike Mukuyu, the Muthithi traders do not rely entirely on the market. Most of them live on the land either as wives or as young women -some of them single mothers- with their parents. What is unusual about the fruits and vegetables traders in Muthithi is that they are on average more self-sufficient than other women who trade in the market. Many of the Muthithi fruits and vegetables sellers have earned their own starting capital through casual labour. In this respect they resemble the Mukuyu women rather than the other women of Muthithi (e.e. the maize and beans sellers, most of whom are dependent on their husbands for their starting capital; or the banana sellers whose business comes from the land to which they also have access through marriage).

Again as with Mukuyu, the majority of those who engage in the trade are relatively young women. When they leave school, life is very uncertain for them. As there are no jobs it is increasingly hard to escape from the rural areas. Neither can women these days expect to rely on the security of marriage and land.

> "Nowadays" said Muthoni "ladies have become accustomed to stay single".

Many will say that even if they do get married it is not good to be married unless you have a job or unless your husband has one, and they speak as if the latter were the more unlikely eventuality. These days young single mothers in the rural areas do not necessarily move to the towns like Mukuyu but instead remain in their rural homes. At

first they may depend on their parents for everything but as time goes on and their babies need clothes and then later on school fees, they find that they have to start earning some income.

> Njeri started selling onions in the market with 100 shillings given to her by her mother. By that time she had tried unsuccessfully to look for a job and was pregnant with Esther. She started onions because of the low capital required. She said that the first day was very discouraging as she did not know anyone and she made a loss but she persevered and after that began to make small profits. Njeri was living with her mother when she started and now she lives with her 'husband' in a come-we-stay marriage. Her husband is unemployed so although they have the land and house which he has inherited, her business is their only source of cash. Luckily Esther is too young as yet for them to have to worry about school fees. The money Njeri earns is for food. She cannot even afford to buy a chicken and has barely any utensils for cooking. She says that she does not want to ask her mother for capital to raise the level of the business because she wants to be 'independent'.

Through the fruits and vegetables trade today it seems that the traditional farming wives of Muthithi and the new wave of young single mothers are being rolled into one. These days young women have to make their way in a very different world from that of their mothers for whom the choice between single motherhood and marriage was often a choice between an independent existence in the cities and a dependent one in the countryside as a rural wife. Single mothers are now a rural phenomenon. They are no longer cast out of their homes but continue to live with their parents. The young Muthithi women are brought up in a scenario where they anticipate the need for self-sufficency both in terms of men and of the state; neither can they find husbands nor can they find jobs. They maintain the links and support from the communities into which they were born.

Young women today, both married and single, have strengthened their ties with their natal homes in a way in which their forebears could not do. They are no longer ostracised from their communities after becoming singlemothers in the way in which singlemothers used to be. An increasing level of involvement with the church has meant that young women including singlemothers are playing a more central role in society at large than was previously the case. New marriages in the form of 'come-we-stay'[1] seem to be increasingly the norm.

These marriages are loose knit and although they offer little security they do allow for a pooling of resources which can lead to a

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[1] 'Come-we-stay' marriages are informal marriages which are defined only by the fact that the couple live together. Normally the 'wife' will go and live at her husband's home.

more secure future for the couple concerned. At least informal marriages give women the flexibility they need in terms of maintaining links with both their natal and married homes. As the income earning opportunities of men decline younger women are increasingly in the position of having to explore alternatives. This they are doing combining various means of support and smallscale entrepreneurship to achieve some form of independence from which to re-define the relationship between gender, society and wealth.

III) FRUITS AND VEGETABLES AND THE INTEGRATION OF LAND AND BUSINESS

Fruits and vegetables are themselves a relatively recent phenomenon in the markets. Before it was mainly staple foods and livestock which were sold there. This is partly in response to demand- fruits and vegetables now form an important part of the Kikuyu diet- and partly in response to the need in the markets for low capital trades that do not require land. Many of the fruits and vegetables come from elsewhere and are brought to the markets in lorries or from other markets such as Karatina in the neighbouring district of Nyeri.

Karatina is said to be the biggest market in East Africa and was started in colonial times. The farms around Karatina were irrigated as part of a bid to supply food for the Second World war; thus, combined with the fertile soil, they are excellent for producing the horticultural products for which the market is famous. On market days huge lorries can be seen parked outside the market ready to take things like tomatoes to places like Mombasa.

> Mama Njoki has a fruits and vegetables stall in Karatina where she is to be seen next to her shining arrays of produce wearing a denim jacket and shades. Her business is altogether of a different scale from that of even the most successful fruits and vegetables traders of Muthithi or Mukuyu. She started with 50 shillings given to her by her mother who was single. Since then she has also become a single mother and her business has grown so that she has been able to buy her mother a three acre farm in Laikipia and is about to invest in cattle. She said the secret is to persevere in one trade. But it is also the case that Karatina provides more opportunities than places like Muthithi for lucrative business ventures which take advantage of the combination of entrepreneurship and land.

In Muthithi these days farming practices are changing and people are moving away from cashcrops such as coffee and tea and into more diversified farming practices such as horticulture. People have even started to use irrigation as they do in Karatina to grow things like tomatoes. Some of the traders in the market complain that this has led to less demand for such things and business is going down.

However in other trades such as *sukumas* (greens) people from places like Mukuyu are beginning to come to Muthithi in season to buy. Thus there is potential for an increase in horticultural products from the surrounding farms to benefit the market and for a greater reward from the entrepreneurial efforts of those involved as brokers in the fruits and vegetables trades, people mediating between the farms and those who come from outside to buy. The new link which is being established between production and small-scale entrepreneurship in the rural areas bypasses the state-dominated orbits of larger cashcrops such as coffee and tea.

The export of horticultural products along with dairy, macadamia, and poultry farming diversifies farming in a way which is reminiscent of older practices where the division of farms into many widely spaced landholdings mitigated the effects of climate and environment on yields. Today the fluctuations in world and national markets both have a drastic impact on rural economies; and this may be mitigated by diversified farming practices and by the flexibility which women in particular have brought to small-scale entrepreneurship. This is already the case with the success, despite many obstacles, of the banana trade in recent years.

The banana trade in Muthithi, unlike fruits and vegetables in the market, offers the possibility for rural women to acquire real wealth. At present however the lucrative side of the trade takes place outside the market and involves constant travel which hampers the ability of the traders to sustain their homes and families especially if they have young children. I spoke to a young single mother from Muthithi who, like Njeri, used to sell fruits in the market but who has now started going to Nairobi with bananas because she cannot afford to support her children with the profits which the market currently offers. She leaves her children with her mother when she goes to Nairobi, but she said to me

> "would you be prepared to leave a one and a half year old child?"

Today fruits and vegetables are among the most marginal and least secure trades in the market but their future potential holds more promise especially if business activities and farming enterprises can work together to respond to the market for products. This is already the case with the banana trade. However the optimal solution seems to lie not just in the marriage of production and trade, it also seems to lie with the marriage of men and women. Some of the most successful businesses in Muthithi such as those of the young maize

and beans traders not only combine land and business; they are also business partnerships involving husbands and wives and even extended families. In this context, where the burdens can be shared, the mobility and time required for successful business can be combined with the needs of young families.

CONCLUSION

The fruits and vegetables trades in Mukuyu and Muthithi mediate the dichotomies which shape the relationships between the markets and the communities which surround them. In Mukuyu the traders remain dependent on the formal sector through their relationships with boyfriends and brothers and they are dependent on the informal sector through their entrepreneurial activities. Richard, a revenue collector in Mukuyu said that the single mothers of today cannot expect to succeed in the way that the single mothers of the 1970's did because of increasing pressure on the economy and increased competition in the market itself. Thus many women remain stuck in this transitional stage. In Muthithi a substantial number of fruits and vegetables traders are young women who hover between single motherhood and wifehood where they attempt to bridge the gap between the two. If horticulture takes root as a viable agricultural product which can be distributed through the market place as an export crop to the surrounding areas and beyond in Muthithi, the fruits and vegetables trade may itself transform the marginal status of the traders and the relationship between the market and the land.

The relationship between marginality and transition and the status of rural communities today, makes the fruits and vegetables trade and the young women who engage in it, key players in the latest phase of Kikuyu relationships to the state. In recent times the Kikuyu themselves have been marginalised in relation to the state and men especially have found it increasingly difficult to sustain their economic and political muscle. The definition of community, once centred on the space of the nation state which was dominated by the Kikuyu and more particularly by men, is now undergoing a radical transformation which in many ways hinges on women. Women who have been largely ostracised within the state either as wives or as single mothers are now well placed to play a key role in mediating the shift towards a new Kikuyu (political) culture which has retreated from the space of the nation state into a space which emphasises 'locality'. Just as, in places like Muthithi, today's fruits and vegetables trade is linking entrepreneurship and land, so young women in various ways

are mediating the transition to a new definition of the relationship between society and wealth.

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CHAPTER 13B

FEMALE CIRCUMCISION AND THE MEDIATION BETWEEN SOCIETY AND WEALTH

I) YOUNG WOMEN AND VALUE: ARTICULATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN *RIIKA* AND CLAN

The position in which young women today find themselves in the articulation 'transition', has parallels with the period of initiation which girls had to undergo at puberty in the nineteenth century. For women the rite of initiation symbolised their key role in mediating the relationship between society and individualism. Circumcision, as the key marker of initiation, made both men and women part of a community, one that cross-cut the divisions of the clans and the divisions of the generations. Circumcision was important said Cucu because it was 'tradition';

> "even our great grandmothers and grandfathers had been circumcised..."

It linked this generation to generations past, joining them in one common identity which transcended both time and space. Cucu told me that everyone was very happy at circumcision there would be endless singing and dancing. People would come from all the surrounding ridges and the older women would ullulate. The initiates would go down to the river early in the morning to bathe before they were circumcised. Circumcision was done in a field - *'iteri-ini'* - and was a communal ritual. According to Cucu wa Kamariguini, people were not circumcised one by one;

> "Many were circumcised together- twenty thirty forty,..."

Cucu wa Gonyo told me that she was happy to be circumcised because those who were not circumcised did not have company - they would be left alone.

According to Mama Mbugwa the main reason for circumcision was in order to become an 'adult'. To become an 'adult' was to become 'socialised' and to take on a new social identity which transcended the 'biological' state of childhood. The initiates incarnated the values on which this social identity was based which included equality and respect. The post initiation period was not just about equality and respect, but also about the exploration of sexuality, and the control of sexuality, in view of the recognition of its centrality

in the context of marriage in the creation of value and wealth. Initiates continued to spend alot of time together after circumcision. They were allowed to pair up as girlfriends and boyfriends and could even sleep together, but on no account could they go as far as having sexual intercourse which would result in pregnancy outside marriage. I was told that because of 'respect' this in fact rarely happened. Cucu wa Gakinya told me that when they were all sleeping together in one hut if someone was caught trying to have sex with his girlfriend there would be an outcry and he would be thought to be abnormal! Respect, *giteo*, was the quality through which social values transcended biological impulses in view of the recognition of the importance of sexuality as 'production' channelled through marriage to create wealth. In this way, the quality of respect engendered through the *mariika* particularly in the context of (sexual) relationships between young men and women linked the values of society to the values of clan.

Although boys and girls were both initiated at puberty, this held different implications for each. Whilst men achieved their identity as men through their identification with the *mariika*, the initiation sets, and the principle of society itself, women achieved their identity as women through their identification with the clans. Circumcision was the key ritual of membership of the *mariika*, the initiation sets, which lay behind the parameters of the social embodied in the 'ethnic whole'. Men took their names from the *mariika* and formed the ruling councils of the elders which were based around the age-grades and which transcended the individualism of the clans. Thus for men to be circumcised was central to the definition of their masculinity in relation to the concept of society itself.[2]

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[2] The social institutions based on the *mariika* had three main forms: firstly there were the age-sets, the circumcision sets into which young men and women were initiated at puberty. Then there were the age-grades, which governed the rites of passage which accompanied the life-cycle. Circumcision was the first of these but there followed other rituals which accompanied key moments in life such as the time when men moved from being warriors to being junior elders, then senior elders and so forth (for women there were three main stages; *airitu*, initiates, *kangei,* young married women, and *nyakinyua,* elders.) However institutions based on age did not simply involve the age-sets and age-grades, they also involved the generation sets into which men were born. There were two generation sets the membership of which alternated between father and son. The ruling councils of the elders alternated between these two generation-sets and every thirty years or so there was a great ceremony, the *ituika* in which the handover took place. In the context of the ruling councils, the status of their members was based firstly on generation and secondly on passage through the various age-grades. Women also had their own

Women on the other hand were linked to the concept of clan. They were named after the clans and achieved their primary social definition as 'women' at marriage when they took on their clan role. Thus whilst men identified with their *riika*, their circumcision set, for all their lives, women describe dramatically the trauma of marriage when they were separated from their 'riika' "and all the dancing stopped". If they married far from their natal homes it would be difficult for them to keep in touch with their co-initiates at all.

Similarly men paid a goat to their circumcisors after their circumcision whilst women did not have to pay their circumcisors until they were married. Whilst a man could become an elder after his first son was circumcised, a woman could not become an elder until after her first daughter was married.

Thus for women to be circumcised was to pass through a transitional stage which was marginal to their identity as women. However it was precisely this marginality which gave female initiation its key transformational power in articulating the link between the social principles behind the 'ethnic whole' and the individualism of the clans.

Since circumcision for women was an essential precursor to marriage. According to Cucu wa Kamariguini those who were not circumcised were not happy:

> "I'm not joking!" she said; "if you are not circumcised who will marry you? You will stay in your parents home."

She remembers overhearing the conversation of a group of young men on their way to the pastor's house saying 'if a girl is uncircumcised they would not marry her' so who would marry her wondered Cucu? They would say

> "she must feel the same pain that we have felt; we can only marry an uncircumcised girl if there are no circumcised ones left."

The significance of female circumcision was to provide a transition from the potential individualism of women in the context of their natal clans and to place them in a social context from which they could then be 'married'; from which they could re-define their relationship to clan in terms of the values of society as well as the individual interests of family. Thus it was through the ceremony of circumcision that women placed clan as the locus of wealth in

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councils but these deliberated only the affairs of women and were not based on generation-sets as women did not have these.

relation to the principle of ethnicity as the social context of wealth.

In this respect, as *airitu* (initiates) they were symbolic of the social valuation of wealth and productivity. The 'value' which was symbolised in the persons of young women was evident in the period after circumcision and the prestige attached to circumcised girls. Cucu wa Njeri told me that her *riika* days, the period post circumcision, were her happiest because

> "girls would be very beautiful then; they wore bangles up to their forearms and earrings and necklaces like the Maasai girls today, and they would sing and dance all the time- songs like 'Gicuka'..."

> "The cut was very big" said Cucu wa Gonyo "but we didn't feel the pain as it was our wish".

II) CIRCUMCISION AND COMMODIFICATION

Today circumcision for women is banned by law and, although the practice was still widespread until relatively recently, few girls nowadays are circumcised.

> "I have never heard of a girl being circumcised in recent times." said Cucu wa Kamariguini "I wouldn't agree to be circumcised now...What's the difference? They give birth in the same way. I'll be given the same food by those who are circumcised and those who are not. Will I refuse to accept firewood from an uncircumcised girl? For myself what have I been given? Are those who are circumcised any richer? All I pray is that they be born to fill the homes. What we are given by God we will receive with open arms. Each of us must search for our own things and go our own ways. We were following tradition in the past but now we don't know 'irua' (circumcision). I don't know why men don't just stay like us. Why?"

The social relevance of female circumcision in the linking of the individual interests of wealth and productivity to the social interests of the wider community has weakened. Now 'each of us must search for our own things' says Cucu. 'In the past we were following 'tradition'. 'Tradition' was the enduring expression of the social values inculcated in the notion of community. Mama Kamau told me that nowadays circumcision has lost its social aspect:

> "they don't have *mariika* (agesets) anymore" she said "those who are circumcised don't even go visiting along the ridges".

In her case, after being circumcised she just went home and was looked after by her mother for a couple of weeks then she went back to school. Elizabeth remembers feeling devastated when her agemates went to be circumcised in the 1960's whilst she herself was forbidden to go, because she thought they would no longer associate with her. But to her relief, they associated with her completely freely

afterwards as though there was no difference between them. The community of which men and women became a part through the ceremony of circumcision no longer exists. The 'ethnic whole' has given way to a new communal identity formed in relation to the nation-state and in this context the role of women in the creation of wealth and their mediation between clan and society no longer pertains.

The shift from ethnicity and clan to capitalism and the state has engendered a dramatic shift in the role of women as symbolic of value both in relation to wealth itself and in relation to the socialisation of wealth. Cucu wa Kirima-ini told me that in those days women had no difficulty in finding husbands. Today it is the opposite; it is women who must chase after men.

> "Nowadays" said Cucu wa Gonyo "girls are not important so they can just leave with their children..."

Women may still symbolise the productive potential embodied in clan but production is no longer transformed into wealth through the principle of reciprocity and increase, rather it is commodified; it is transformed into wealth through being appropriated in exchange a specific market-determined value. Thus marriage itself becomes the appropriation of the labour of wives who are 'bought' in the modern sense of the word. In this respect bridewealth, far from becoming obsolete has become more important than ever and is even increasing in value especially if the girl has been educated. I was told by Mweru that the father will count up how much he has paid for his daughter's education and include that in the bridewealth. Those whose boyfriends cannot afford the 60,000 shillings run away to somewhere like Mombasa said Mweru. If the girl has a job she may even help to pay for her own bridewealth.

According to Leah Wanjama the meaning of *ruracio* (bridewealth) has changed. Before it was partly symbolic and showed that the woman had 'moved' from one home to another. Now it is calculated exactly in financial terms, in terms of how much a girl has 'cost' her father. Leah told me of a girl whose father had demanded bridewealth and made the groom sign post dated cheques so they had to live solely on the wife's earnings for three years. He ruined them both financially and his daughter refused ever to see him again. In the context of the clans, the commodification of production still symbolised in the persons of women, has led to the situation where women themselves are expected to compensate their clans for the 'costs' of their upbringing: For instance, single mothers, according to Mweru, are expected to contribute to the upkeep of their parents in lieu of

bridewealth. Mama Kamau the single mother who intends to do her own *gurario*, the feast which accompanies the bridewealth payment which is to give thanks to the clan for the 'gift' of a daughter, is doing so despite the fact that she does not intend to get married.

III) CIRCUMCISION TODAY

> In Muthithi market two sisters sit together selling tomatoes. Lucy is married and her husband is a casual labourer. They are not well off but they have land just above the market. Peris, Lucy's eldest daughter, has recently finished primary school and her one ambition is to go to secondary, but the parents cannot afford it. Peris chose to be circumcised in 1994 when she was thirteen and Lucy said she neither approved or disapproved. But then she added that being circumcised turns you into a 'Good Kikuyu Woman' and would make it easier to find a husband. Wa Kamau, Lucy's younger sister, is a divorcee. Although she herself was circumcised, she says on no account will she allow her own daughters to be circumcised.

To be a 'good Kikuyu woman' these days does not necessarily bring the hoped for rewards of marriage and land. As Mama Kamau said

> "in the past if you were not circumcised you could not get married. But nowadays even if you are circumcised you do not necessarily find a husband and if you are not circumcised you many still find one so there is no point anymore."

In any case, marriage does not necessarily offer any more promise of security than does single motherhood in the present day.

Cecilia also comes from the hills near Muthithi although she was brought up in Mukuyu where her mother sells in the market. Unlike Peris, she had the good fortune to go to secondary school and is now in form four. She told me that for boys circumcision is a must; if a boy goes to secondary school uncircumcised he will be beaten up and maybe even killed. Girls, she said, have a more 'balanced' attitude. Those who are circumcised are in the minority. However some of the girls in Cecilia's school are still circumcised and it is said in fact that the practice of female circumcision is actually on the increase in the present day. Cecilia told me that most of the girls in her school who are circumcised are from Kiambu - it is a big thing there apparently. They say it makes them 'good' and 'clean'. The ones who are circumcised think of themselves as superior to the other girls because they think they are more mature. It is these ones who start going with men and getting pregnant, so they are very much insulted by the other girls according to Cecilia (⊐)[3]. Cecilia

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[3] I was also told by Wanjiku, a single mother who lives in Mukuyu, that she got pregnant (in the 1970's) very soon after being circumcised;

herself is not circumcised; she wants to finish her education and have a career as a nurse or a teacher, and if she fails to get a place in college she will start a business. However her two younger sisters are circumcised and both now have children - one has a 'come-we-stay' (informal) marriage and the other is single.

"I am studying for them"
said Cecilia!

Circumcision today has become symbolic of choices which women face in terms of options such as studying and entering a world defined by ethics of 'progress' on the one hand, and 'maturity', having children, on the other. Cecilia who was able to go to secondary school and thus to have the possibilities of taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the 'progressive' horizons of the nation-state, has chosen not to be circumcised. Her ability to go to secondary school was mainly due to the efforts of her grandmother who was a successful Nairobi businesswoman in the 1970's but who has now returned to Muthithi. Peris was not so lucky and it almost seems in her case that the inability of her mother, one of the rural wives of Muthithi, to finance her secondary education through her fruits and vegetables business in the market, prompted Peris's decision to be circumcised, to attain maturity through 'tradition' rather than 'modernity' where both are statements about the nature of society in the context of the nation state.

CONCLUSION

Female circumcision in the nineteenth century was symbolic of the mediation between clan and society which was constitutive of both wealth and value. In general women symbolised clan as roots, as creativity (productivity) and essence. In the context of the nineteenth century economy of reciprocity, the clans, as the locus of productivity, were route-ed; they were mobilised to create wealth through marriage and exchange. These exchanges took place in the context of the 'ethnic whole' as a bounded entity defined by the ethics of the social and symbolised in the persons of men. Thus broadly speaking, women were symbolic of the principles behind clan and men were symbolic of the principles behind society.

These principles however were merged in the nineteenth century, and this again was effected through the persons of men and women. Men's

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"I went and did it straight after doing that thing!" she said.

embodiment of the ascendant ideals of the social were tempered by the ambivalence of their relationships to the clans where, as individuals they attained positions of wealth and power. This ambivalence was itself symbolic of 'control over wealth'. Women's embodiment of the productivity of the clans was tempered by their relationships to the 'social' through their initiation into the *mariika*. In this sense they symbolised the mediation of the relationship between society and clan which was constitutive of value as the social principle of wealth.

The liminal position of women today as seen for instance in the fruits and vegetables trades, can in some senses be likened to their liminal position as *airitu* (circumcised girls) in the past. As initiates, *airitu*, young women, were suspended in the interface between ethnicity and clan, between society and individualism, where the relationship between the two was constitutive of value. Today, with the commodification of production and the redefinition of the parameters of the social, female circumcision no longer symbolises this role.

The relationship between society and wealth is now mediated not by women but by men through their mediatory role between state and 'tribe' which is constitutive of wealth. Women, in the context of capitalism and the state, play a static role divided between the 'communalism' of wives and the 'individualism' of single mothers. As I shall argue in the next section, this has continued to be symbolised through the metaphor of circumcision where wives as repositories of tradition and guardians of 'tribal' identity are seen as circumcised and single mothers who embody social anarchy are seen as uncircumcised.

Today the relationship between Kikuyu ethnicity and the nation-state is itself breaking down and it is in this context that young women are potentially able to deploy the ambiguity of their status to bridge the divisions which have been set up in the context of the state and to forge a new definition of community and its relationship to gender and wealth. Young women are now attempting to bridge the division between, among other things, single mothers and wives, and once more to make the link between the creation of wealth and an integrated concept of community. In this context it is interesting that circumcision is said to be on the increase among girls from Kiambu which has long been seen as the heartland of the Kikuyu single mother businesswoman. This could be understood as a means to link the individualism which that status represents back into a 'moral

community' defined in relation to 'tradition'. Equally, the fact that educated and 'progressive' young women are choosing not to be circumcised is perhaps a recognition that a return to 'tradition' and 'traditional' forms of morality is not necessarily the way forward especially in view of the divisions which concepts of 'tradition' have engendered in the context of 'tribe'. In this day and age where the future is so uncertain, the creation of a sense of community and the capacity to generate wealth are equally elusive. In this context the choices which young women make and the goals to which they aspire are of great significance to rural communities.

CHAPTER 14

THE FEMALE CIRCUMCISION CRISIS OF 1929: THE NEW PARAMETERS OF THE SOCIAL WHOLE

I) FEMALE CIRCUMCISION CRISIS AND THE CREATION OF A KIKUYU CONSTITUENCY

Women's primary role in the mediation of the relationship between individualism and society was to undergo many changes during the twentieth century where the concept of society itself came to be redefined in relation to the state. It is significant that female circumcision was to play a key role in this redefinition once again placing women in the role of transition and mediation. This was to happen through the 'female circumcision crisis' of 1929 which was a crucial turning point in the development of the nationalist movement and its aims of liberation from colonial control.

In this context the issue of female circumcision was appropriated as a basis on which to contest state power and, more fundamentally, to redefine the relationship between society, wealth and gender. In the context of the crisis women themselves became objects of the mediation between nineteenth century ethnic identity and twentieth century 'tribe'. The debate was initiated as a conflict between the the Presbyterian mission at Kikuyu in Kiambu headed by Dr. Arthur and the newly emergent KCA (Kikuyu Central Association) who were a group of politically motivated educated young men led at the time by Joseph Kang'ethe. The colonial government was drawn into the debate as an unwilling third party and, as 'objects' of the debate, the views of women were almost entirely excluded.

The campaign to discourage female circumcision had arisen from the evangelising project of the missions as part of what they saw as their 'civilising' role. However in the late 1920's their position on the question was placed in the spotlight so to speak when the KCA, a politically motivated group of young educated Kikuyu men, entered into the debate forcing the church to take a more radical stance. Whereas before this time the church had implicitly condemned the practice of female circumcision, it was now pushed into making the repudiation of the custom an explicit condition of church membership. As Dr Arthur of the Scottish Mission was moved to write

> "It is true to say that prior to 1929, the abandonment of 'the circumcision' of women by individuals in different areas was not a cause of unrest. Except for the championship of the rite as a

national symbol by the Kikuyu Central Association, it probably
would by now have been widely abandoned. This faction, in spite
of its professed aims as to progress, education, and
enlightenment, has, through its ill-advised attitude, done more
than anything else to delay the emancipation of Kikuyu
womanhood." (DC/FH.3/2 p7)

Dr Arthur wrote to the education department in Nairobi

"I would like to say that circumcision has been a dead matter in
this mission for years; it has now become a live issue because
the Kikuyu Central Association have made it a political issue. "
(PC/CP.8/1/1 5/11/29)

As a 'political issue' the female circumcision question played a
central role in the development of the nationalist movement which
culminated in the Independence war in the 1950's. The crisis was
generated or certainly inflamed by the KCA,

"a small faction of one tiny tribe among the British East
African tribes" (PC/CP.8/1/1 NBI 13/11/29)

as a direct challenge to the hegemony of the colonial state. As one
irate district commissioner was led to protest "The KCA are bold
enough to claim the right to lead the Kikuyu people!"

Through the female circumcision issue, the KCA appealed to questions
of identity thereby creating for themselves a political constituency
from which to challenge state power. They addressed themselves in
particular to those sections of Kikuyu society which had already come
under the most threat from the incursion of colonialism; namely the
male elders who were already well aware of the challenge presented by
the state to the

"fabric of the old ancestral structures" (PC/CP.8/1/2 15/8/31)
which guaranteed their power within Kikuyu society.

Through the politicisation of the circumcision issue, the KCA tapped
into the crisis which the elders were facing in relation to the state,
particularly through the missions and their provision of education,
which took the youth out of the orbit of gerontocratic control and
gave them access to independent status and wealth in the context of
the state and its income generating opportunities. KCA propaganda
served to make explicit the link between the female circumcision
question and the betrayal of the elders by the mission educated
youth. The fears of the elders came out in a *Baraza* in Embu around
the question of female circumcision: The elders felt that

"...the mission had broken faith with the tribes by introducing
a rule which would divide each tribe into two, the educated
being no longer Mwimbi, Muthambi, or Chuka but merely *'Misheni'*,
since in order to get education a young man or woman must
repudiate circumcision (female) and ipso facto repudiate his

elders, his clan, and his tribe." (PC/C.8/1/1 15/10/29 DC Embu re *baraza* on Dr Arthur's action in Chogoria outschools.)

Ironically it was the KCA who were the very *misheni* who were at odds with the elders. Their appeal to the elders to uphold 'tradition' in the face of the threats of the church and the state was in fact part of their own political project which, under the guise of nationalism, was geared towards the coalescence of their own power and wealth within the new framework of the state. In order to consolidate their material base, which was continually undermined by the efforts of the state to protect its own constituents, namely the white settlers, the KCA had to acquire political power. This involved an invocation of the integrative function of ethnic identity, now defined through female not male circumcision[4], over the disparate clans which could in turn deliver a broadly based 'Kikuyu' constituency from which the KCA could campaign their interests.

Just as the church were pushed into making the repudiation of female circumcision an explicit condition of church membership, so the KCA made the practice of female circumcision an explicit condition of Kikuyu ethnicity. Those who repudiated female circumcision were now seen as repudiating their Kikuyu identity per se. Thus the KCA were able both to co-opt the allegiance of the elders and to span the divisions between 'progress' and 'tradition' in the creation of a new definition of communal identity which could be used for political ends.

The KCA added fuel to the fire by introducing the idea that the repudiation of female circumcision was connected to the state's attempts to alienate the land of the Kikuyu. As a result of this the District Commissioner of Fort Hall writes to the Provincial Commissioner of Nyeri of...

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[4] In the nineteenth century, men, in their association with the *mariika* (the initiation sets) and with the *ciama* (the ruling councils), were identified with the cross-cutting institutions which underpinned the 'ethnic whole' as a definition of the social which existed to counter the individualism of the clans. In this sense male circumcision was a symbol of society itself. Women were also initiated and were members of the *mariika* but they were primarily identified with the clans. In the 1920's, the politicisation of the female circumcision issue allowed the KCA to create a new symbol of the social, this time defined through the embodiment of 'tradition' in the institution of female circumcision. Thus it came to be female not male circumcision which became the emblem of the social whole. Furthermore, unlike the situation in the nineteenth century where circumcision for both men and women was part of the lifecycle, female circumcision in the twentieth century became objectified as a socio-political emblem.

> "...those natives who ignorantly believe that the ulterior
> motive of the missions and government is to break down age old
> native customs and thus detribalise the native in order to take
> his lands" (PC/CP.8/1/2 6/1/32 DC FH to PC Nyeri).

In this subtle equation between identity and land a new definition of
society was being created in which the parameters of social identity
and individual wealth were one. Through the combination of the female
circumcision issue and the issue of land alienation, social identity
was connected to the ownership and control of wealth and property and
to the governance of women. In this sense the concept of society was
fundamentally different from the ethnic framework of the past which
explicitly sought to counteract and transcend the individualist
tendencies of the clans in relation to the ownership of wealth by
divorcing social identity embodied in the *riika* from the individual
interests embodied in the clans.

II) FEMALE CIRCUMCISION CRISIS AND THE CHALLENGE TO THE STATE

The KCA had thus far succeeded in transforming the female
circumcision issue into a political tool through which to place
themselves in confrontation with the state, and simultaneously to
create a new concept of social identity. In so doing, the KCA
effectively used the church as a pawn through which to undermine the
authority of the colonial state. As the debate between the
Presbyterian mission and the KCA intensified, the church demanded the
support of the state in the name of the grandiose cause of 'Christian
civilisation'. They called for the banning of female circumcision by
law in view of the

> "real danger in letting down the forces of Christian
> civilisation, which should be supported by Government as for the
> best good of the people." (PC/CP.8/1/1 16/1/30)

In this the church appealed to the medical profession for back up. Dr
Ross wrote to the government in support of the church's position
that:

> "Female circumcision (clitoridectomy is a misnomer) should be
> made criminal as a barbarous custom comparable with cannibalism,
> burial of widows alive with husbands, etc." (PC/CP.8/1/2 23/8/31
> Comments by Dr. Ross to DC Kiambu).

The government was genuinely caught between two stools; on the one
hand they had to be seen to be supporting the forces of 'Christian
civilisation' and on the other hand, in order to maintain the
legitimacy of their rule, they had to protect the boundaries of this
'civilisation' which were defined in relation to the equally
important concept of non-civilised or 'traditional'. As the District
Commissioner in Meru writes to Senior Commissioner Nyeri

"It should be borne in mind also that the forceable or too rapid
abolition of any deep rooted native custom inevitably leads to
the break down of others which it might be desirable to
retain..." (25/09/29).

Not only was it in fact desirable to retain an arena of 'custom' over
which to exert hegemonic control, it was also essential to tone down
the milleage which the KCA were making out of the high profile of the
circumcision issue. Thus the appeals of the church to the government
put the government in an extremely uncomfortable position. As the
Senior Commissioner in Kikuyu writes to the Colonial secretary in
Nairobi

"I consider the general policy of the government towards female
circumcision should be one of masterly inactivity." (PC/CP.8/1/1
12/10/29)

However the challenge presented by the KCA and the appeals by the
church forced the government eventually to adopt a more radical
stance and, at the beginning of the 1930's the practice of female
circumcision was banned by law.

III) THE *KARING'A* MOVEMENT AND THE INTEGRATION OF MODERNITY AND TRADITION

This had precisely the results that the government dreaded. With the
banning of female circumcision and, shortly after, the banning of the
KCA itself, sentiments were inflamed and directed into a potentially
revolutionary force. As the controversy gained momentum, a new
movement arose for the establishment of Independent Schools and
Churches outside mission control. This was threatening not only to
the church but also to the government who relied on the institutions
of the church to maintain control over the population.

Congregations were divided. Guka and Cucu wa Njeri remember the time
when all the young people left the church and the old stayed and were
made to sign documents with their fingerprints confirming their
loyalty to the church on matters such as the circumcision question.
Those who stayed were called *Kirore*, the fingerprinters. Guka said

"we refused to go to church. Africans wanted to continue with
their traditions and the whites wanted to stop them by making
them sign with their fingerprints. But we knew Kenyatta was
abroad fighting for us so we refused. Only after Independence
did we go back to the church. Kenyatta told us that now the
whites had left we could all go back to church and the churches
became full."

Those who left the church and established the Independent schools and
churches formed themselves into a movement called Karing'a. Karing'a
means 'pure' and was the name of one of the two circumcision guilds

of the Kikuyu, the other one being 'Ukabi' or Maasai. By the early 1930's the KCA, officially banned, continued to operate under the umbrella of the Karing'a movement (Kang'ethe 1986). However, whilst continuing to stress Kikuyu 'purity' and the importance of circumcision (male and female), the KCA/Karing'a fully embraced both Christianity and education. This allowed them to sidestep a return to gerontocratic control which the invocation of 'tradition' might have entailed. Ethnicity, redefined as 'tribal purity', was now removed from its grounding in the 'ciamas' (councils) of the elders and re-grounded in the institutions of the 'Kikuyu-ised' church under the Christian God. This was further cemented by the 1962 translation of the bible where the word for ancestors, *andu agoma*, 'those who are sleeping' was translated into the word for the Devil. Thus the power of the ancestors and the role of the elders in mediating between them and their descendents was neutralised and 'demonised' firmly entrenching a new hegemony of youth, education and Christianity.

The wrenching of 'progress' and the Christian God from the parameters of mission control also allowed the KCA/Karing'a to subvert the power which the state exerted over populations through the missions. Slogans like

"We will be served the sacrament: it is God's not Dr. Arthur's" (DC FH.8 p223)

began to abound. Furthermore a link began to be made between Christianity and 'Kikuyu purity' which allowed the Karing'a to question the legitimacy of the state itself: The Karing'a compared themselves to the Israelites and even today some Kikuyu call themselves 'The Jews of Kenya'. I was told that there were connections between the Kikuyus and the original Jews who have similar customs one of which is male circumcision.

"Abraham learnt to circumcise in Africa" one man told me.

These links actually subverted the mission-state project by claiming that the Kikuyu had an older historical link to Christianity than did the British and thus a more legitimate claim to herald the 'forces of Christian civilisation' on which the state supposedly rested. A version of Kikuyu history emerged, recounted to me by Bildad Kaggia, from which it was said that they did indeed have contact with the original Jews in Egypt and that the Kikuyus originally came from Egypt before moving down through Somalia to their present position.

The female circumcision crisis of 1929 thus provided a spring board for the nationalist movement which allowed the KCA to confront the

colonial state and to create their own political constituency through the mobilisation of identity around a new concept of 'tradition' symbolised in female circumcision. In this process they also co-opted the Kikuyu elders whilst at the same time subverting their power through the integration of 'modernity' and 'tradition' and the institution of a new cultural hegemony in the context of the Karing'a movement. The integration of 'modernity' and 'tradition' also strengthened the power of the nationalist movement in relation to the state and allowed the KCA/Karing'a to challenge the legitimacy of the colonial government through invoking a deep-rooted link with Christianity. Within this context, 'modernity' and 'tradition', 'civilisation' and 'purity', themselves became metaphors around which the state's control over capital could be contested and re-defined. The next stage of the process was to cement a relationship between gender and state as the foundation of control over wealth and the definition of society itself.

IV) PURITY AND PROGRESS: NEW DEFINITIONS OF GENDER

'Purity' was a metaphor which was used both by the KCA/Karing'a and by the Missions in debating the question of female circumcision: The professed aim of the church which included a ban on female circumcision as 'barbarous', impure, was to lead

> "all christians... together on the path of purity and progress".
> (DC FH 3.2)

However in terms of the genderisation of the state men were the ones who were invited to 'progress' through the opportunities offered to those who had been educated. Women on the other hand were expected to remain 'pure' as reproducers of the labour force. The reproductive role of women was stressed in the debate. The operation was said to be injurous because of the resulting difficulties which were caused in childbirth. In the memorandum prepared by the Scottish mission it is stated that circumcision affects

> "the woman's natural functions...with disasterous results not only to the birth rate, but also to the physique and vitality of the tribe." (DC FH 3.2)

In contrast male circumcision was condoned by the church partly through its connection to the original Jews and also because it was said to discourage self abuse! Thus male circumcision was socially desirable and was also connected to 'civilisation' defined through recourse to Christian traditions.

It must be remembered that the original function of circumcision had been to 'de-biologise' both men and women and transform them into

adults, into social beings. The equation between non-circumcision and 'biological purity' as defined by the church further strengthened this association. The attempt to ban the circumcision of women when coupled with the fact than male circumcision was still condoned was in effect to make women 'biological' and men 'social'.

The KCA pitted their own notion of 'tribal purity' against the church's notion of 'biological purity'. The 'tribalisation' of circumcised women served to maintain their social 'adulthood' but in a completely different context from that of the nineteenth century. 'Tribe' was about a relationship between wealth and society through access to the state where women now symbolised community in the form of 'tribe' much as men had symbolised community in the context of the 'ethnic whole' in the nineteenth century. The link now made between male circumcision and Christianity, and female circumcision and Kikuyu 'purity' had the adjunct of associating men with modernity, the state, and political control and women with 'tradition' and the preservation of cultural identity.

Furthermore community was no longer a dynamic framework within which relationships of exchange could be productively channelled. Community as 'tribe' in relation to the state was now a static unit from which access to wealth could be contested and within which wealth could be invested. Thus the 'tribal purity' of the KCA and its new relationship to society was as alien as the 'biological purity' of the missions to the traditional practice of circumcision which was supposedly an integrative rite not an exclusive one.

Male circumcision, both 'tribal' and 'Christian', now cemented men's mediatary role between 'modernity' and 'tradition' where 'modernity' was aligned with control over the state and 'tradition' was aligned with the preservation of community as 'tribe'; as a repository of wealth and as the arena for the contestation of state power. Thus, in an inversion of the nineteenth century scenario, women now symbolised the 'social whole' but a static, objectified one. Men not women now mediated the relationship between society and wealth. The new communal identity embodied in 'tribe' as an interdependent relationship between wealth and society was defined through the persons of men who mediated literally between state and community, city and country in the incarnation of wealth through the state's control of production and labour.

The symbolic importance of male circumcision in relation to power and wealth, combined with its political significance in relation to the state, now made circumcision for men crucial to masculine identity[5]. For men today the social and political significance of circumcision in the context of the state is such that if a Kikuyu man is not circumcised he may even be circumcised by force[6].

V) THE METAPHOR OF FEMALE CIRCUMCISION IN THE STATE'S CONTROL OVER CAPITAL

Whereas the universality of male circumcision has come to symbolise the association between the wealth and society through the state's control over capital, the division of women into circumcised and uncircumcised has come to symbolise the contradictions embodied in the state's relation to capital and the implications of these contradictions for the integration of society in relation to wealth. In the context of the female circumcision crisis, circumcision became a powerful symbol in the tussle for control over the state between male Kikuyu bourgeois interests and the colonial government.

In this context the circumcision of women as wives became a metaphor for community as 'tribe' which was the lynchpin of the Independence struggle. This in itself polarised circumcision such that the non-circumcision of women was associated with the colonial state where it was defined with recourse to arguments about civilisation and progress – arguments on which the colonial government had always fallen back to shore up the legitimacy of its relation to state control. Thus the metaphor of 'uncircumcised women', both as Christian wives and urban single mothers, was associated with 'modernity' and with the state itself.

However there was a third angle to the metaphorical power which female circumcision had come to acquire. The debate itself was

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[5] Politically male circumcision had been used in the context of the nationalist movement to legitimate the link (through the connection with the Israelites) between Christianity and Kikuyu identity as a basis from which to challenge colonial control over the state. In more recent times male circumcision has also become important politically in differentiating the Kikuyu from their major political rivals, the Luo, who do not circumcise and are therefore derided by the Kikuyu as 'children'. (It goes without saying that the Luo have their own interpretation of this scenario which is equally unflattering to the Kikuyu).

[6] For instance there are frequent reports today of the forced circumcision of Nairobi street children who have escaped the normal procedure on entry into puberty.

couched in biological terms with recourse to arguments about childbirth and fertility such that uncircumcised women also came to be associated with the colonial state's attempts to control the reproduction of labour. However the issue of control over the reproduction of labour was not simply another bone of contention between the colonial government and the KCA in their struggle for control over capital, it was also an issue within the state apparatus itself. Whether they were christian wives or urban single mothers, the 'biologisation' of 'uncircumcised' women encapsulated women's key role in reproduction as well as their key role in production, the commodification of which created wealth. The state's inability to control the reproduction of the labour pool meant that 'uncircumcised' (independent) women were also able, through the commodification of their productive and reproductive potential, to re-invest surplus in the informal economy outside state (and 'tribal') control. (Louise White 1990). Furthermore, the surplus which women invested was acquired from male wages thereby diverting these from investment in the rural areas where both surplus extraction and the reproduction of labour were under state control. Thus non-circumcision for women became a metaphor not only for the incorporation of women into the state, and hence of state control over Kikuyu men, but also for the subversive power of the informal economy as a counter challenge to the state's control over capital.

Not only did metaphorically 'uncircumcised' single women appropriate surplus from the state, they also threatened communal identity as the project of Kikuyu 'tribal' exclusivity within the state because, far from conserving the wealth and seed of the 'Kikuyu' within the boundaries of 'tribe', they dissipated wealth and gave birth to 'half-caste' children. Thus the non-circumcision of women, in a full circle, linked the state's failure to control the reproduction of labour to the KCA's failure to control the parameters of the social defined as 'tribe'.

This had cultural echoes within Kikuyu ontology where uncircumcised women became not only 'biologised' but also 'pre-social' in that they echoed the time before the *mariika*, the age-grades, when women were in control in a system which was perceived as fundamentally anarchic and geared to individual interest and greed. Now female wealth, accumulated through the informal sector, was also 'individualised', anarchic, not 'socialised' through the new community of 'tribe'

wherein it would be ultimately controlled by the state (power over which was still the subject of contestation between the KCA and the colonial government). Thus uncircumcised women linked the forces of uncontrolled capitalism to the break-down of community itself.

The legacies of the state's differential control over capital have continued after Independence to shape ideas about society and wealth and this has continued to be expressed through the metaphor of circumcision. Uncircumcised girls, 'irigu', have become associated with promiscuity and prostitution (and vice versa) in a context where control over sexuality as the reproduction of labour is itself inserted into the core of capitalist relations with the state. It is commonly believed for instance that men prefer to have sex with uncircumcised women because they say that the women 'enjoy' it more. However most women alledge that circumcision (at least in the minimal form in which it is practiced today) does not impinge on a woman's ability to enjoy sex. Thus the myth that men prefer to go to bed with an uncircumcised woman, according to Leah Wanjama, is an excuse concocted by them so that they can have girlfriends outside marriage and leave their 'circumcised wives' at home.

Men's perceived need for girlfriends and their desire for the sexuality of 'uncircumcised women' is itself symbolic of the dependency of the formal sector on the informal sector. Equally it is said that whilst circumcised women can stay without sex, uncircumcised women 'need' sex and this is why they get involved in relationships with men even when these relationships are exploitative. This in turn is symptomatic of the ultimate dependence of the informal sector on the formal sector.

Circumcision and sex have thus become metaphors for the uncontrolled and potentially debilitating nature of the relationship between Kikuyu ethnicity and the state through the interdependence of the formal and informal sectors. This interdependence, far from benefitting the individuals concerned and strengthening local communities, is perceived as undermining and a-social and again this is often represented in relationships between men and their girlfriends. Through 'uncircumcised' women, who in any case threaten the project of 'tribal' exclusivity through which state power is acquired by having relationships with non-Kikuyu men, men are drawn into relationships whose ultimate benefits accrue to the individualism of 'prostitutes' rather than the social interests of 'community' which are linked with the state.

CONCLUSION

Cucu wa Njeri told me that after the Independence war female circumcision stopped:

> "Nowadays" she said "circumcision isn't good for women. It stopped after the Mau Mau and people didn't think it was bad because they saw that circumcised and uncircumcised girls were the same."

After Independence the issue of 'tribal' identity lost its overt political raison d'etre when state and 'tribe' effectively became one under the new government led by the former KCA stalwart, Kenyatta. However although in theory circumcision for women as the symbol of 'tribal' identity, became redundant, the practice was still widespread, just as the existence of 'tribe' remained the vital subtext beneath the partisan nature of state control. Equally, while the metaphor of 'circumcised women' became covert or redundant, the metaphor of 'uncircumcised women' continued to be important in the context of the state's continuing inability to control urban capital which only led to deepening contradictions between wealth and society.

Thus the importance of circumcision as a metaphor in the delineation of power, wealth and society in the twentieth century is such that the symbol of circumcision itself has acquired the power to define the status of women. Whether circumcised or uncircumcised, single women who operate in the informal sector are labelled as 'uncircumcised' and rural wives as 'circumcised'. In reality the practice of female circumcision waned only relatively recently and many of the so called urban single mothers I spoke to were in fact circumcised. Equally many rural wives, especially those who have had a long standing association with protestant Christianity, were not circumcised.

In the nineteenth century, female circumcision symbolised the relationship between society and wealth. In the twentieth century, in the context of capitalism, the symbolic role of female circumcision changed, a shift which was itself symbolically mediated through the female circumcision crisis of 1929. After this point it was male circumcision not female circumcision which symbolised the link between society and wealth in the context of 'tribe' as the dynamic link between communal identity and control over the state which was itself constitutive of wealth. In this context female circumcision came to symbolise the static notion of community as 'tradition' much as male circumcision had symbolised community in the context of the 'ethnic whole' in the nineteenth century.

At the same time, the non-circumcision of women as symbolised in the figure of the independent single mother, has come to embody not just a threat to the parameters of the 'social' defined through wives, but has also come to embody the inability of the state to control capital. The links between men and their girlfriends are thus seen as undermining of the link between society and wealth. In recent times, where the relationship between Kikuyu ethnic identity and the state is breaking down and is no longer creative of wealth, there is a need to redefine the relationship between society, wealth and gender. In this context the metaphors of 'circumcised' and 'uncircumcised' have acquired new significance, but this in itself may lead to the re-integration of single mothers and wives .such that the power of circumcision as a metaphor may disappear altogether.

CHAPTER 15

EXCOMMUNICATION FROM THE STATE: THE CHURCH AS THE NEW FOUNDATION FOR SOCIETY

> "We are a nation of single mothers. It all started with the Mau Mau and it will only end with the second coming!" (Wairimu, a single mother maize and beans businesswoman from Mukuyu).

I) CHURCH AND SOCIETY

From the early decades of the century, the church has played a mediatory role in the relationship between Kikuyu ethnicity and the state. In the context of the missions, and primarily through the persons of young men, the church linked a new concept of society as christian civilisation to the formal sector arenas of state. In addition, through the female circumcision crisis, the missions provided a catalyst for Kikuyu politicisation as a challenge to the state. In the context of the Karing'a movement, the church provided a forum for the integration of 'modernity' and 'tradition' from which to redefine society and to institute a new cultural hegemony in the context of an anti-state culture. At Independence when the state was delivered into the hands of a Kikuyu president, the church was re-integrated into the mainstream of society and church, 'tribe' and state became one in relation to the central position of the Kikuyu in the control of wealth and power. Guka wa Njeri told me that

> "After Independence Kenyatta came to the people...and told them that now the whites had left they could all go back to the churches and the churches became full".

The church today has integrated itself into the core of rural communities. Here it reflects the complexity of the various trends that have contributed to the formation of communal identities in the present day. The Catholic church for instance has taken on board the metaphors of 'modernity' and 'tradition' in its policy of 'enculturation' whereby it strives to reach out to rural populations through making the link between 'traditional' institutions such as initiation and the institutions of the church such as baptism.

In its use of the concepts of 'tradition' and 'modernity' the Catholic church has keyed into a major component in the definition of Kikuyu ethnic identity in relation to the modern nation state. Similarly the Protestant churches tend to reflect the ideologies behind ideas about wealth and virtue where notions of 'cleanliness' and 'godliness' are associated with an image of progress that reflects in particular the ideologies behind 'male' capital.

Inversely, the metaphor of 'clan' particularly in its relation to capital and wealth has also been co-opted in the context of the church.

> "Nowadays" said Cucu wa Waru "people have two clans; the church and the clan."

This is so right down to the institutional level. Many churches these days are devolving into sub-groups which are not unlike the 'new' clans in the manner of their organisation. The Catholic church for instance started sub groups of each congregation called *miaki* in the early 1980's. *Mwaki* means fire. These groups are supposed to keep the spirit burning and are named after the saints- 'those who are happy after death'. The *Miaki* meet together to pray and to offer various forms of assistance and solidarity to their members. People contribute financially to these groups but their main function is supposedly 'spiritual'. As with the new clan groups each member has to pay a membership fee and, like the new clans, the *miaki* are geographically based. Each small area will have its own *mwaki*. Other churches nowadays are starting their own versions of *miaki*.

However the most radical changes which are becoming more relevant today than in the Kenyatta period when the Kikuyu were at the centre of state power, have been instigated by the charismatic churches. In the charismatic churches the hierarchy of the institution and the dogma of the doctrine of the church are downplayed in favour of individual testimony and an equality between men and women, young and old;

> "any can come up to the front of the church and testify"

said Baba Mwaniki, and indeed they do. Even young girls will frequently bypass the established hierarchies of age and gender to play a major role in church services. The charismatic churches have on the one hand much freer more totalistic forms of worship but on the other hand they are much more controlling[7]. Dancing and trance like states also play an important part in the services with prayer taking the form of 'stream of consciousness'. There is no formal

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[7] For instance, although apparently it is common in the establishment churches for women to get married even when heavily pregnant, I was told this could never happen in the charismatic churches where the congregation are expected to pledge their total allegiance to the ethics of the church. Thus, in contrast to the establishment churches, in the charismatic churches there is no problem with young men and women spending time together because it is taken for granted that they will not infringe the laws of the church which include a ban on sex before marriage.

priest although a preacher may lead the service. The charismatic churches reflect in part an increasing participation of the youth in church culture. In their relationship to youth and in their emphasis of equality and respect between young men and women particularly with regard to the control of sexuality, the charismatic churches today seem to resemble the *mariika*, the circumcision sets of the past. In this respect they can be seen as providing a strong basis for communal ethics which the older establishment churches, especially in their association with the state, fail to convey.

The multifaceted nature of the church today and its integration into the fabric of rural communities has made it, above all other institutions, a new framework for 'society'. In this context it is important to note that the church in particular, has always been strongly associated with women who make up the majority of its congregations. Baba Njoki told me that

> "women are more religious than men because they stay in one place because of the children so they can go to church on Sundays".

Just as men are associated with the space of the nation state, so women, in their capacity as rural wives, are associated with the space of 'community' and this finds expression in their participation in the church.

II) THE DEMONISATION OF THE STATE

Since Independence the church has provided an important counterweight to the state as the institutional and often ideological base within local communities. Since the death of Kenyatta and the ascension of Moi, this function has become paramount as the church has acquired an explicitly political dimension in the articulation of the changing relationship between Kikuyu ethnicity and state. This has been so at a formal political level but also more subtly at a grassroots level in terms of the 'demonisation' of the state.

The scapegoating of the Kikuyu as a whole within the nation-state has produced a counter-reaction within Kikuyu-speaking areas. This is in part what has led to the initiation of multiparty politics which are attributed particularly to the efforts of Kenneth Matiba, a politician from Murang'a who became the principle anti-government political figure from the late 1980's until the aftermath of the 1992 elections. Matiba was imprisoned for his role in the multiparty movement until, with foreign pressure, he was released and elections

were held under a so-called democratic procedure in 1992. However Moi was re-elected leaving the Kikuyu even more provoked than before.

In the early 1990s a new phenomenon began to take root within Kikuyu society which sprang from church theology: namely rumours about Devil Worship. Whether or not there is any evidence for Devil Worship, the belief in its existence has become a firmly established facet of modern society particularly in Kikuyu speaking areas. For the Kikuyu, Devil Worship is principally associated with the government. The failure of the so called democratic elections to oust president Moi have only added fuel to the fire.

It is said that Moi is the head of the Devil worshipping church, proof of which lies in the fact that he has contrived to remain president without even being elected! In addition he is said to spend much time in the East, in places like Korea, which is again associated in people's minds with Devil Worship and anti-christian practice. During the ethnic cleansing which preceded the 1992 elections in which the Kikuyu in particular were brutally attacked, victims were said to have arrows in their bodies saying 'made in Korea' once again making the link between the government, the devil and the scapegoating of the Kikuyu community.

Since the political demise of the Kikuyu, it seems that the relationship between the church and 'society' has achieved a new significance as the church has become an instrument through which the Kikuyu have redefined their relationship to the state and contrived to retain a sense of empowerment in the face of an overwhelming attack on their political and cultural identities. The demonisation of the state has had further ramifications as devil worship is invoked to explain other uncontrollable factors which operate within society such as the rising number of deaths of young people caused by car accidents and also now by AIDS. Car accidents are said to be caused by Djins with nails who are hungry for blood. The fear of Devil Worship has infiltrated communities to such an extent that people are even suspicious of their own relatives and constantly feel themselves under threat from forces over which they have no control. It seems that the only counterweight to the power of the Devil is salvation through Jesus Christ.

III) SALVATION AND WOMEN IN THE CONTEXT OF AN ANTI-STATE CULTURE

The practice of salvation has risen dramatically since the early 1990's in Murang'a. The reason why a lot of people are being saved

now said Mama Kamau, is because of problems which cannot be solved except through Christianity. For instance prayer and the laying of hands is seen to have more effect than dependence on either government hospitals or traditional healers. Salvation has thus become a metaphor for individual and communal empowerment in the context of an anti-state culture.

Salvation is more than just baptism in that it demands a total committment to Jesus Christ and through him to God. Njoki is a secondary school teacher who has recently become a single mother. She told me that all her family are saved and now she herself has recently become saved.

> "Now" she said "rather than living according to the law of the land or my own individual morality, I am living according to the law of God".

In bypassing the 'law of the land' (the state) and placing one's self under the 'law of God', salvation is potentially a powerful threat to the ability of both society and the state to control the lives of individuals.

It is mainly women who become saved and these days this includes a number of single mothers. Mama Martha, like Njoki, is a single mother. She became saved

> "not for the community or the church but for myself".

Women who are saved generally commit themselves to abstain from sexual relationships with men outside of marriage. Mama Martha became saved after her last boyfriend, to whom she was very close, brought his wife and children to live in Murang'a and she decided she could not sleep with him anymore. It is very hard, she said, to do without sex but it is extremely important to her to be disciplined in this matter. The control over one's sexuality which salvation enables, especially for single women, has parallels with female circumcision in the past. It is generally thought that those who are circumcised do not need sex

> "it is not good to enjoy sex too much" said Charity "unless it is with your husband.."

Mama Wangeci told me that women who are unmarried and saved must abstain from sex but she thought it would be impossible for those who were uncircumcised. But now she said she no longer believes this because she has seen how belief in God can give you great strength and the power to control yourself and your body. Salvation for women, whether married or single, has become the means of individual

empowerment through which women can control their relationships with men and through this, their relationships to society at large.

> Mama Wangeci became saved shortly after she was married in the early seventies. Her husband was even then a drunkard and had already started having other relationships although they lived together in Nairobi. She herself was working for an Asian Pharmacist, and she started getting terrible headaches. Her employers were Christian and one day they said to her that she should come to a meeting held by a Black American Preacher called Brother Joe and he would heal her through prayer. She went and "even before he started praying the headaches went and they have never come back since that day!" A few weeks after this God appeared to her saying 'I have healed you and you have never once thanked me or recognised me' so from that time Mama Wangeci became saved. Her husband then got posted to Murang'a but Mama Wangeci refused to go with him because she knew that her salary was essential to the survival of her family as her husband would drink all his. He told her he was going to take the children with him.

> For the next fifteen years or so, Mama Wangeci worked in Nairobi and visited her children at weekends. Meanwhile her husband carried on drinking and going with women. Brother Joe prayed for the drunkard husbands of his female flock and Mama Wangeci said that that the next time when she went home her husband said that he had had this terrible experience the last time he went drinking. He had suffered this terrible torment in which he had been taken ill and God had revealed to him that his wife was suffering because of his drunkenness. Three months later he went out to drink again and the same thing happened. And one more time after that. Now since 1987 or so he hasn't touched drink, and Mama Wangeci hopes the same thing will happen with the girlfriends. If she wasn't saved, said Mama Wangeci, she would have left her husband long ago. Since retiring, she has started her own business in Murang'a town and has also bought her own plots and well as buying other plots jointly with her husband.

In the case of Mama Wangeci, salvation has enabled her for better or for worse to keep her marriage and her contact with her children and at the same time to preserve her independence and financial security.

Women and single women in particular, in using salvation as a means to control their relationships with men are at the same time realising the ability of the community as a whole to control its relationship with the state which is symbolised in the persons of Kikuyu men. Men are not only symbolically linked with the state, they are also tied into the state in a very real way and this has directly impinged on their relationships with women. Salvation, like circumcision, in its control of sexuality, allows women to resist the

abuse of their situation which men and, by extension, the state itself can impose.

"Who needs a husband" said Mama Joanna "when you have Jesus!"

IV) WOMEN AND THE CHURCH: CHANGING ATTITUDES

The importance of the church as a counterweight to the state and as the major institutional base for rural communities has given women who are the major participants in the church, a potentially powerful position in society. However, although women make up the majority of the congregations and are generally much more diligent in their practice of Christianity (they will meet several times a week whilst men if they do turn up will only turn up on Sundays) they play almost no part in the hierarchy and institutions of the church which are dominated by men. Beth Mugo is one of the foremost female political and entrepreneurial figures in Kenya and was one of the few women who contested a seat in the 1992 elections. She and her husband belong to the Presbyterian church. Her husband is a church elder and she is a member of the women's guild. She said in an interview that she does not approve of the church's attitude to women although when she makes a stand on this issue, she is told jokingly

"no women's issues in the church please Beth!".
Beth Mugo's husband has always been very supportive of her high profile career, however in the church at least it is he who plays the leading role as a church elder.

Beth Mugo says she is biding her time as far as the church is concerned as she thinks things are changing fast. For instance the church has recently started ordaining women priests. The church is also getting more political and is a potentially powerful challenge to the more regressive tendencies in the government. In this context too Beth Mugo sees a role for women in challenging the status quo through their increased participation in church and politics which can instigate a different approach from that of the dominant male ethos of state culture. With regard to single mothers, Beth Mugo said the attitude of the church may be seen as being ambiguous. It disapproves of adultery but the definition of adultery may be interpreted to include only married women and therefore single mothers are not as such to be castigated.

The entry of women into the church and even into the mainstream of its institutions reflects the changing position of women in general in relation to the church. Women are even beginning to challenge the interpretations of the theology and doctrine of the church. Mama Ciru

who is a member of the Protestant CPK, believes that women have a particularly special place in relation to God. According to Mama Ciru, although God is definitely a man he really loves women:

> "on the first day he created heaven and earth, on the second light and darkness...on the 6th day a man in his own image, but still he was not satisfied. So he took one of Adam's ribs and with it he created woman. At last his work was perfect and he was truely satisfied. So of all his creations woman is the most special to him!"

Marianna is a Catholic from America who is running a project in Murang'a town which caters to single mothers. According to her the Catholic church has a terrible attitude to women. A priest cannot marry because he will be marrying a 'woman'; Eve, the root of 'evil', was the one who led Adam into sin; the virgin Mary is portrayed as a docile pliant woman; God is a 'He' not a 'She'... and so forth. On the other hand, in Marianna's opinion, the Catholic church has a potential advantage over other churches in the enormously powerful figure of Mary herself. The fact that Mary has such a powerful role in the church is potentially very empowering to women;

> "the woman who wrote the Magnificat was not docile!"

she said. According to Marianna, the virginity of Mary may be seen not as the repression of female sexuality but as the control over sexuality which women can bring to play in their own lives. Control over sexuality can be looked on as another aspect of choice.

V) SINGLE MOTHERS AND THE CHURCH

Single mothers in particular have long been marginalised by the church and by society at large. However the relative strength of their economic position and the huge increase in their numbers makes their ostracisation in the church, which itself is symbolic of community, increasingly untenable. According to Mama Christine, the first generation of single mothers was between 1970 and 1980 and at this time, she said, it was very bad to be a single mother:

> "Girls were cast out of their homes and excommunicated from the churches. Some were forced into prostitution due to complete lack of moral support."

One of the main battles for single mothers according to Mama Christine, has been dealing with their stigmatisation by the church.

> "If single mothers want to be accepted into society they must be accepted into the church; society is the church" she said.

The church has a bad attitude to single mothers; it will not even baptise their children. The church gave single mothers a bad name in society at large where they are seen as 'housebreakers' because of

their relationships with married men. However these days things are changing and single mothers are becoming increasingly a part of mainstream society where they are beginning now to challenge their exclusion from social institutions including the church:

> In 1992 Mama Christine and a couple of other women from Murang'a town started a group called the Single Mothers Association of Kenya. Mama Christine wants SMAK to break away from the pattern of many other women's groups which are focussed around small income generating activities. She would rather start a nursery school or build a hostel for single mothers, both of which would be more important in the long run, "for the future". For her, the group has an important social function to play in giving single mothers support rather than simply handing out cash to help with individual needs. To this end also the group has organised a series of speakers including psychologists and also lawyers. The speakers have been very helpful according to Mama Christine in highlighting the kinds of problems experienced by single mothers and in explaining the negative attitudes of those around them in society at large. According to Mama Joanna, a member of the group, SMAK has been a great help because it has given them good practical and legal advice and also because it has allowed them to share their experiences in a society in which they are otherwise quite isolated.

> The organisers were particularly keen that the group should operate under the umbrella of the church partly in order to gain the respectability which their cause otherwise denies them. The church could also provide a source of moral support for single mothers which would replace the need to get involved with relationships with men where these are often undermining to the women concerned. The group first approached the Anglican church, the CPK, to ask if they could hold their first meeting there. Their request was refused. They then approached the Presbyterian church, the PCEA which gave them support. At their first meeting seventy people attended. The number rose to 100 in the second meeting and 130 in the third. The CPK later backtracked as they got more publicity and support. Also a similar group was started by the Catholic church with support from abroad. Thus the CPK are now eager to be associated with SMAK.

> The battle with the church which single mothers face was brought to the fore by an address given by the CPK bishop. Having at first refused to even allow the society to operate within the CPK, the bishop then backtracked and Mama Christine asked him if he would address one of their meetings. To begin with the Bishop was over an hour late. He had prepared his speech in English, and although some of the members spoke English, many did not especially the older members of whom their were quite a number. The Bishop then went on to condemn the 'sin' of single motherhood but added that the church in its infinite compassion would accept 'fallen women' back into its fold and would forgive their sins as long as they reformed.

> In general his attitude brought to bear a combination of values in which the relationship between 'masculinity' 'patriarchy' 'civilisation' and 'progress' are pitted against the fabric of society which operates economically through the informal sector and is dominated by women, a substantial number of whom are in this day single.

VI) CHURCH, STATE AND WOMEN

The increasing movement of women, especially single women, towards participation in formal institutions is not only reflected in their relationship with the church, it is also reflected in their relationship with the state and their entry into formal state politics. One of the new generation of women politicians is Martha Karua whom I interviewed in 1994.

> Martha Karua is one of the younger generation of political figures who are challenging both the established practices of government and the male status quo. Her route into politics was through her career as a lawyer and her membership of the Law Society of Kenya. Like the church, the Law Society began to challenge the government and to make a forray into opposition politics. As the Law society began to get more vocal in the early 1990's at the beginning of the multiparty era, the government started to repress and harass them[8]. The members of the Society thus realised that in order to safeguard their professional interests they had to fight politically. Also with the legalisation of the opposition, many members of the ruling party, KANU, began defecting to the opposition and, according to Karua, the younger generation, professional lawyers among them, realised that multi-partiism would just mean new politics with old players.

> Martha Karua herself had no intention of standing for political office, however she said that as soon as the Law Society made the decision to participate more actively in the political field its male members suddenly took over as if this was now naturally their realm. This greatly angered the women and that is what motivated Karua to join politics. She realised that unless women stood themselves they would continue to be marginalised. Martha Karua stood against a KANU candidate in her home district of Kirinyaga. Her opponent took advantage of her position as a woman and a divorcee to sully her political campaign by saying things like 'tell her to go and find a husband'. (Martha Karua says she went to school with his daughters both of whom are themselves divorcees!) In addition she did not have money to throw around unlike her opponent and she told the people that they had better elect her on the basis of the issues for which she was going to fight.

> Martha Karua had been told by her friends that she would never get elected as a woman in the rural areas because people there would be too politically unsophisticated to respond to her campaign, so she had better stand in the city. However in the 1992 elections she won her seat in parliament, vindicating her faith in the rural electorate and their ability to respond positively to the challenge which women like her were issuing to conventional political practices. She continued to play an unconventional political role even after being elected, concentrating on political and economic development rather than the personalised

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[8] At the beginning of the 1990's the Moi government succumbed to pressure to open up the de facto one party state which had existed since the Kenyatta government to allow the formation of opposition political parties.

patronage in which most politicians engage[9]. Martha Karua feels that political development must come even before economic development as the electorate, though highly politicised still needs a huge amount of civic education before they become aware of their rights and start acting on them. According to Karua, there is still a colonial hangover and an innate fear of authority. For instance the other day she broke up a District Officer's meeting and even her supporters were not happy about it

"they don't know that they can do that kind of thing..." she said.

I asked Martha Karua which, of the church the government and the foreign agencies, she found to be most useful in the implementation of her development plans. She answered without doubt the church. She said that the church plays a major role in facilitating her activities. For instance if she wants to hold a meeting she cannot apply for a licence from the government as she will have to face the full weight of their bureaucratic machine through which every excuse will be found to prevent the meeting from taking place. However the church does not need a licence to hold a meeting. So if she operates under the umbrella of the church she can hold her meeting with no problem. The church is also a good way of mobilising her constituency: For instance on June 15th 1994 she held a seminar for women voters. The participants were all local and were recruited through seven church groups in the area all of which have women's groups[10]. Of the church denominations, Martha Karua says the best is the Catholic church because it is the least corrupt and the most useful. Then the CPK (of which she herself is a member) then the PCEA. The new charismatic churches are largely peripheral for her purposes but she approves of these because she says that freedom of worship is an essential aspect of the democratic process. As far as women in the church are concerned she feels that the church are trying hard to take a positive line. Bishop Gitari (of the CPK) had just ordained twenty women priests;

"they were young women like me" she said with a smile. "When people see not only women but young women in such positions they will start to realise..."

CONCLUSION

Since the death of Kenyatta the Kikuyu themselves have been 'excommunicated' from the state and Kikuyu ethnicity is now marginalised in the context of state power. The changing economic and political fortunes in Kikuyuland have given rise to a new orientation in which women, through entrepreneurship have taken over as the

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[9] Politicians are frequently asked to be major contributors to fundraising events in their constituencies where they are called upon to dispense large amounts of cash for various purposes. Martha Karua has asked her electorate to excuse her from such events and allow her to concentrate on more specific and long term development issues.

[10] Although only 600 had been invited, 2000 turned up. They also invited 100 men. In these women's seminars according to Karua, you always have to make sure there are some men or you will simply be marginalised and attacked for being 'anti-men'. The police harassed them severely and tried to beat up the participants but this only drew more attention to the meeting.

economic backbone behind the rural economy and the church has replaced the state as the focus for cultural identity. From the time of Independence the church has played an increasingly important role as a counterweight to the state in the context of rural communities. Women play a central role in the church, however at an institutional level they have been almost entirely excluded. The exclusion of women, and in particular women like single mothers who play an increasingly important function in rural economies, from the institutions of the church and state alike is being challenged. In addition, the practice of salvation has become a means through which those, like single mothers, who may be excluded in the context of 'society' and the formal establishments of the church and state, can create, through their direct relationship with God, a challenge to the social norms in which they find themselves ostracised. It is also literally a means through which women in general can exert power and control in their relationships with men. In this respect salvation, particularly in conjunction with women, has become symbolic of the ability of the community to control its relationship to the state itself.

With respect to their prominence in the informal economy and the church, women, who have long been forced to operate outside the mainstream of the formal economy and state, are now well placed to mediate the transition to a new definition of society. Kikuyu women are using their new significance in relation to society at large to gain a foothold in the realm of the state where their own marginality sits well with the marginality of the Kikuyu-speaking community and Kikuyu women now play an important role in opposition politics. Through their relationship with the state, women are not only mediums in the redefinition of Kikuyu ethnicity but are also in the position of orchestrating change at a national level in terms of the state and its relationship to the country as a whole.

In this way young women are able to challenge the link between a particular rendition of ethnic identity which, in conjunction with control over the economy, has instituted a partisan state that has been, in the long term, undermining of the society at large. Figures like Martha Karua have linked the issues of opposition politics, women's rights, the mediatary potential of the church, and the redefinition of political culture. Karua is herself a Kikuyu and a single mother but her goals and aspirations go far beyond the partisan confines which have hitherto defined the political field. Her role in opposition politics may potentially enable her to

breakdown some of the parameters through which the links between politics wealth and identity have come to control society. Karua said of the government

"if they do not respect me then I will make them fear me."

CHAPTER 16

LEGACIES OF INDEPENDENCE AND THE RE-INTEGRATION OF SOCIETY AND WEALTH

The worsening political and economic situation today renders the dichotomies engendered through the relationships between state, capital and ethnicity increasingly untenable in the lives of individuals who must now seek to pool their resources not just in order to succeed but simply in order to survive. Retaining links between natal and married clans, between city and country, straddling formal and informal sectors, business and land is the challenge now open to the next generation. Today young women in particular are in an ambiguous position as they hover between the opportunities that their mothers have opened for them, giving them the choice between wifehood and the independence offered by entrepreneurship. The choice seems to be between on the one hand marriage and a dependence on the state and the male-economy, and on the other hand the individualistic overly independent world of the single mother businesswoman. However as businesswomen become wives and wives businesswomen it seems that increasingly there is an integration of concepts of 'individualism' and 'community' in the context of productivity and wealth which is generated within the relationship between Kikuyu ethnicity, capitalism and the state. In the re-rooting of the productive potential of Kikuyu individualism within a new definition of society, young women today can potentially transform their marginal status into a new direction for the future.

I) LEGACIES OF RURAL WIVES

The daughters of 'single mothers' and 'wives' today live with the legacies of their mothers but look towards a very different future.

> Njeri was born in Nginda below Muthithi market in the early seventies and, as her father died when she was young, she and her brothers and sisters were brought up by their mother who continued to live on her husband's farm. Njeri was the only one of the girls who chose to continue with her education and she finished form four. Her sisters left school after primary and then got pregnant and now live with their 'husbands' in come-we-stay marriages near to their home. After trying unsuccessfully to find a job, Njeri started business in Muthithi market selling onions with 100 shillings given to her by her mother. Shortly after this she became pregnant. She became pregnant by choice because, she said, both her sisters had babies, even her younger sister, and she was 'feeling left out'. She was not in love with her boyfriend at the time and said she would rather be a singlemother. Njeri named her daughter, Esther, not after her mother or her clan, but after her best friend at school thus already making a break with her own

NANCY, A VEGETABLES TRADER FROM
MUTHITHI AND HER DAUGHTER
(PICTURED HERE WITH MUTHONI, MY
RESEARCH ASSISTANT IN MUTHITHI.)

MAMA CIKU, A BUSINESS WOMAN IN
MURANG'A TOWN AND HER DAUGHTER.

past and traditions. The future of her daughter would not be oriented to the ethos of clan and productivity which has traditionally been the symbolic role of women, but rather to the future, to a world more defined by the ethos of the *riika* and education.

Njeri carried on selling onions in the market after Esther was born and during this time she met Kage whom she now lives with in a come-we-stay marriage. Njeri says she is happy to be married because she has her own things- though she has very few of these because the couple have no money.

'Come-we-stay' or informal marriages are today increasingly the norm. They are defined by little else other than the fact that the girl will leave her own home and go and live with her 'husband'. In a come-we-stay marriage, the husband has little hold over his wife, and thus these marriages are part of an ideology of independence to which women these days aspire. Some women will say that come-we-stay marriages are very exploitative of women because they offer no security and husbands can just tell their wives to go at any time, leaving them with the responsibility for looking after the children alone. However men themselves seem to have little security at the moment and thus in other ways it may be better that women build up as much independence as possible in their marriages right from the start. Njeri says she prefers this kind of marriage because she is free to leave at any time and that she would do this for instance if she found a job.

The come-we-stay marriages of today not only allow young women to maintain relative independence from their husbands but they also represent the choice to retain much closer links with their natal homes than was the case in the past. Njeri and her sisters do not live far from their mother even now.

"We like to stay near our mother" said Njeri; "if I want to borrow anything like firewood, I can just take a *mukwa* (rope) and go over to my mum's".

She says she would not feel comfortable borrowing things from the women of her husband's clan;

"your husband's mother can never be like your mum."

And equally if both Njeri and one of her brothers' wives ask her mum for something, she, Njeri, will get first preference. In the past when women moved on marriage and became part of their husband's clans, the opposite would have been the case. In come-we-stay marriages, young women maintain a relative independence of their natal clans and their husbands whilst at the same time taking advantage of the potential forms of support which both can offer. In this sense the come-we-stay marriages of today represent both the

independence which women may achieve as single mothers and the support they may have as wives.

> Njeri and Kage live in a huge stone house, quite incongruous for the area, built with the wealth of Kage's father who is a high official living in Nairobi. Kage's parents separated when he was born and Kage spent his early years with his mother in the Rift Valley before coming back to live with his father's rural clan in Muthithi. Like Njeri, Kage is highly educated and exceptionally intelligent. However unlike her he has not managed to start either employment or business. He says he cannot find a job and is not prepared to start business without capital and his father will not help him with either a job or money, although he is in a position to do both. He feels that the provision of a house and land for his son in the rural areas is more than adequate, but with these alone, Kage can do nothing. The house itself is still only half finished and has only the bare minimum of furniture - in the living room a large sofa suite and a huge wooden table, but otherwise nothing. Njeri is always apologising for the fact that it is so dirty. It is very hard she says to keep a stone house such as that one clean in the rural areas where one is continually walking in and out from the mud and dirt of the farm and using firewood to cook. She would much prefer to have a small mud house that she could keep neat and tidy and cosy and which would be a better size for her family to live in.

The half built stone mansion in which Njeri and Kage live seems symbolic of the bloated promises of 'modernity'. The path of education was thought to lead to the cities and to opportunities but these days is more of a dead end. Building a life anew with new ideals and goals and different forms of support requires imagination and perhaps humility. It takes humility for a highly educated young person to sell onions in the market something Kage cannot bring himself to do. If Kage and Njeri were to join forces in business and summon up the support which both their families can potentially offer they might find that they can lift themselves out of the rut in which they are stuck at present. Nowadays the partnership of marriage with business and land has led to a few young couples in Muthithi market achieving a high degree of success and even finding themselves on the way to leaving the market altogether. However as things stand the future is uncertain for Njeri and Kage, suspended as they are between the failure of the formal sector to provide economic opportunities for the young and the difficulties involved in earning a living in the rural areas through the combination of land and business.

II) LEGACIES OF BUSINESSWOMEN

The children of rural homes today find it hard to move into income earning opportunities in part because, especially for those who have been educated, they are not well disposed to business and in part because their parents frequently cannot provide them with capital.

CUCU USED TO BE A NAIROBI
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For example, as the daughter of a rural wife, Njeri has no capital to augment her business. Kage cannot provide this, as he himself is paralysed by the legacies of the nation state. His father's allegiance lies with the city and his new young Kamba wife rather than with the children of his first marriage in the rural areas. The children of successful businesswomen however have inherited both something of their mothers' expertise in what is now ^one of^ the most profitable forms of income generation, and often other things besides, such as a good education and even land. Many also bring a more forward looking approach to life which is not hampered by the ethics of the past. For instance, young women today will often be positive about single motherhood and will plan for it so that it does not disrupt their business activities and thus force them into dependent relationships with men.

> Charity, Emma and Anne are all daughters of maize and beans businesswomen. They have no qualms about combining their education with a future in business. All three have finished or are finishing form four and all three aspire to do business. Business, and possibly even single motherhood, far from being demeaning or 'unrespectable' is the way forward for independent young women who are ambitious in life. Charity at 23 has in fact already started business with 10,000 shillings given to her by her mother. She did not even try to get a job or a place in college and instead went straight into maize and beans ^trade^ like her mother, where her sights are set high. Already after a year she was making the trip to Busia and being shown the ropes by Mama Munyua, an established maize and beans businesswoman from the area. Charity says she may eventually get married and have children, but for the moment business is her first priority. Emma equally wants to start a business after finishing school. She says her mother (who herself started as a barmaid) would give her the capital to start. But Emma does not want to do maize and beans because she says it makes a person 'untidy'. Instead she might do clothes.

> Anne, like Emma is still in form four. However she is much more diligent about her studies and studies well into the night. Anne also wants to start business but says that first she must find a job in Nairobi to get some capital together. Her mother, Mama Mbugwa, is married and lives in the hills above Muthithi. Because of the conservative attitudes of her husband Mama Mbugwa has been prevented from taking full advantage of the possibilities which her business can offer. Thus Anne does not expect to be given capital by her parents who have the younger siblings to support. Furthermore she says she cannot do maize and beans ^trading^ because, unlike her mother, she is not strong enough to carry the sacks.

People like Anne recognise on the one hand the enormous achievements of their mothers, achievements which they are unsure they can replicate, and at the same time, as is the case with Emma, they wish to define their own relationship with business as one of respectability not of 'untidyness' or social unacceptability. In addition they have much more backing than their mothers did

(including backing from their mothers) and therefore more choice in their relationship to entrepreneurship.

Today there are a number of young women who are daughters of businesswomen and who are both highly educated but also make the positive choice to go into business. For many, their mothers were forced into business after becoming single mothers or divorcees. But for these young women their entry into business preceeds all thoughts of marriage and children, and is a positive choice in a world where business is often the most secure form of financial independence. With the experience, confidence, and often the capital of their mothers to back them up, these women stand to make a success of the increasingly competitive world of entrepreneurship. The independence which their mothers have acquired through business, and the capital they can afford to give these young women, is in this sense a strong legacy for the future, and may place them in a better position to achieve individual success as well as bringing up their families.

III) THE INTEGRATION OF FORMAL AND INFORMAL

The daughters of single mothers and wives who are trying to make it in the world of entrepreneurship today achieve differential success in part because of the legacies of their backgrounds. However there are other young women such as Jessie who are attempting to combine the best of the formal sector with the opportunities offered by informal entrepreneurial activity. Although this is common practice in the urban areas, it is rarer in rural areas.

> Jessie comes from Kangari above Muthithi towards the Aberdares. Kangari has recently become wealthy through tea money but used to be very backward. Most of the young women from the area are either professionals or farmers wives. Jessie is the youngest daughter of her father's youngest wife (her father had three wives). Her family are either in teaching or in business but she herself has combined both. She is a school teacher in Muthithi primary school, however she is unusual in her school in that she also does business, thus straddling the social and cultural divide between formal and informal sectors. In general teachers, who are part of the 'respectable' formal sector, will not do business. Jessie says some of the others do a little business but not like her. They will just sell things occasionally from their farms. Jessie started business two years ago with 5000 shillings which she saved from her salary. She started with secondhand clothes but has now branched out into a number of different things. She sells mostly to her colleagues from school, which means she has a ready market, especially if she continually buys different things. She is lucky too with her contacts. She gets her brother to buy things for her in Nairobi and send them via the *matatus* many of which are owned by relatives and friends from Kangari so they will drop things by for her for free (when she meets them in Kangari she buys them a soda or something).

Jessie told me that she is the only 'lady' in her school; the others are all married. Apparently, she says, teachers are very sought after and it is unusual that at the age of 26 she is not married. However she has a boyfriend who lives in Thika and is a businessman whom she may eventually marry. Again she says she is the only one amongst her colleagues whose partner is a businessman. She plans to start a boutique in Thika but says that on no account would she give up teaching for business; she likes the security of teaching from the point of view of the salary and also from the point of view of the access to loans which she can get as a teacher. If she starts a boutique she will employ someone to work in it rather than working there herself.

Jessie's independence and her ability to bridge the cultural gulf between the respectable world of the teaching profession and the informal world of entrepreneurship has led to a degree of success and emancipation which is unusual in women of her class in this area. She has brought a forward looking attitude to her work which allows her to benefit from the dynamism offered by entrepreneurship as well as the security offered by formal sector employment. In this she has had the backing and support of her family who have encouraged her endeavours and even helped her in a practical way in her business. In her case, the backing which her family has given her and the support which she in turn is able to give them (she is currently helping to build her mother a stone house) has been crucial to her success.

CONCLUSION

The legacies of the changing relationships between society and wealth in the context of the state and capitalism in the twentieth century are in part responsible for the successes and failures of young people today in rural districts like Murang'a. Couples like Njeri and Kage are suffering from the legacies of a relationship between society and wealth engendered through men in their relationships with the state. The ethics which underpinned this particular definition of society and economy rested on the valuation of 'progress' embodied in the formal sector, the state and cashcrops, and a model of virtue in terms of marriages which were divided between rural and urban areas in the context of which rural wives played a static role as guardians of 'community'.

Both Njeri and Kage tried and failed to get the jobs which their education should have opened up for them in the urban formal sector and instead have been forced back into the rural areas where they must make a living for now at least. The come-we-stay marriages through which people like Njeri and Kage attempt to create a new partnership from which to face the pressures in rural communities today are not defined by the same ethics as those that lay behind the marriages of their parents. In fact they do not seem to be defined by

any ethics at all. They do, however, allow for a pooling of resources from the clans and families of both homes. In this sense these come-we-stay marriages integrate men and women on a more equal footing and also integrate natal and married clans. It is this flexibility which may enable them to allow people like Njeri and Kage to respond creatively to the needs of their families in the context of the intense pressures presently existing in rural areas like Muthithi.

Young women like Jessie - the 'youngest daughter of a youngest wife'- are equally the product of the rural ethics of wealth and society defined through formal sector and state. However in Jessie's case her father was also a businessman of some considerable wealth. In addition Jessie has a large family and her siblings are all older than her, and many of them highly successful in their own right. Jessie herself has an unusual amount of individuality and imagination and this she has brought to bear on the conservative profession in which she is employed. As a teacher, instead of getting trapped in the ethics of respectable formal sector employment, she has branched out both in terms of her entrepreneurial activities and in terms of her choice of boyfriend, into a more progressive scenario in which she has used the various legacies of her background to the full to set her on the way to achieving an unusual degree of success and security in the future.

Charity, Anne and Emma, all daughters of businesswomen, have taken on board the individualist and a-social legacies of their mothers, created through a definition of wealth formed in opposition to both 'society' and the state from the early decades of the century. These young women have, however, transformed the legacies of their mothers into a forward looking direction of the future in which they aspire to success whilst rejecting the stigmatisation of both informal entrepreneurship and the possibility of single motherhood.

However the abilities of both men and women in the present day to embrace capitalism outside the state and to convert this into the new basis for society makes it more likely that these young businesswomen will in fact get married to men who themselves hold progressive views. They may thus be able to combine their individualism and success with marriage and 'community'. In this light it is interesting that the image of the successful Kikuyu businesswoman and her relationship to society seems to have become a symbol of a newly emerging definition of progressiveness in the context of the nation as a whole:

Alice lives in Nairobi and is the daughter of a single mother businesswoman. She has a Luhya boyfriend. She says, in common with many other Kikuyu women I spoke to, that Luyha and Luo men are the best because they really know how to care for and love their wives. They know that their wives are also mothers and therefore that they have 'value'. Kikuyu men on the other hand, according to Alice

"...don't know how to work! They only know how to drink and smoke *bangi*. And they expect to be supported by their wives and at the same time they treat their wives very badly- if they don't know where the money is coming from they will beat you."

Nowadays, according to Alice, many more Luhya men are choosing to marry Kikuyu women because they know that they are very hard working. Before they did not like marrying Kikuyu women because it would always be said that they would run off with the children. But in this day men do not just need wives who stay at home; they need wives who know how to work. They think that if they marry a Kikuyu woman they will become rich. Similarly if Alice (who is a single mother) marries a Luhya or a Luo she knows she will have a good marriage in which the problems can be shared.

In Alice's view it seems that today the emancipated Independent Kikuyu woman is no longer to be ostracised as a single mother. On the contrary she is highly desirable as a wife who at the same time is in a position to expect an equal return from her husband in terms of support and valuation. The symbolic partnership of 'Luhya' and 'Luo' men and Independent Kikuyu women is a new statement about the real possibilities now offered by the nation, ones which have been so sadly destroyed in the decades since Independence. Today it seems that women, particularly the successful businesswomen who were so heavily stigmatised, are once more beginning to have value, and that their value may call for a re-assessment of the nature of Kikuyu ethnicity as a whole in relation to the state, which has equally been condemned for its individualism and success. However this calls for a changing attitude in which the entrepreneurial ethic associated with both single mother businesswomen and with the Kikuyu as a whole, must be tempered with a recognition of the importance of the social, defined not just in relation to clan as individualism writ large, but in relation to the wider community of the nation state and beyond. It is in this context that women's significant role in the mediation between society and wealth, defined both as ideas and actualities, may point to the way forward in terms of a new definition of the nation state itself, and its changing relation to the structures of capitalism.
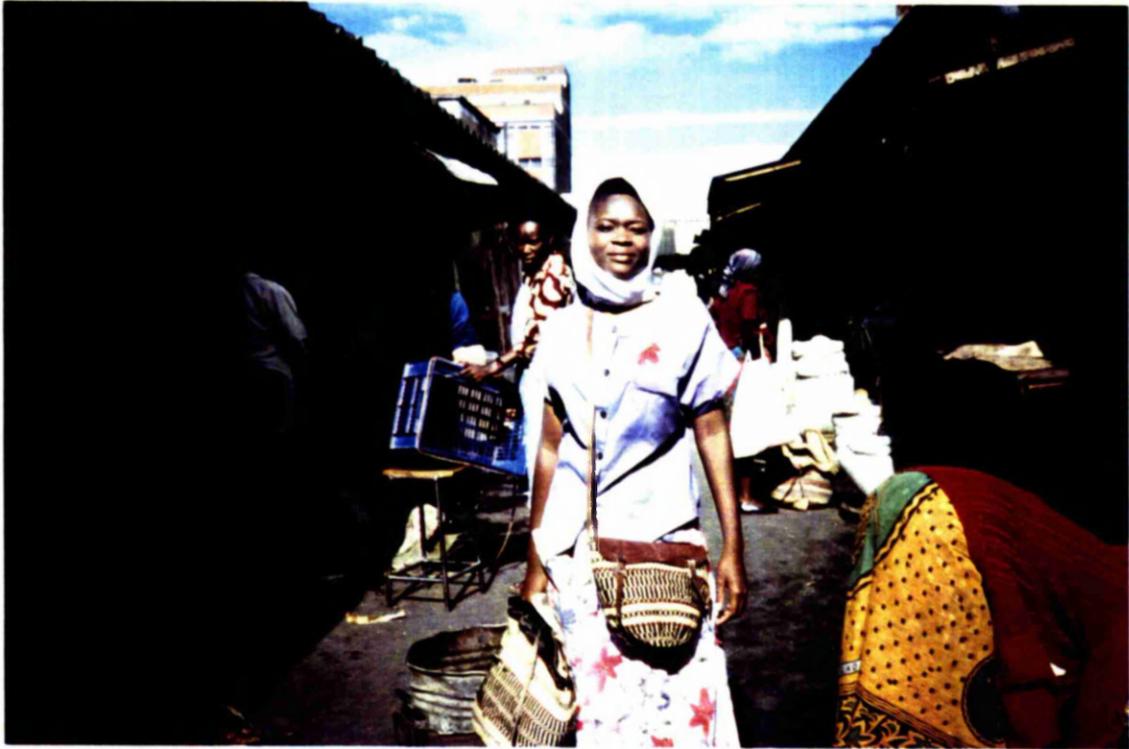
WAMBUI, A FORM IV STUDENT AND
ASPIRING BUSINESSWOMAN.

SUMMARY

"Nyeri women are very different from Murang'a women; Murang'a
women are only interested in money- they will sell everything
until they have nothing left. People here don't like Nyeri
women, they say they think like men and are only interested in
'developing'. And as for Kiambu women they don't even care about
their homes!"

In the context of the geography of Kikuyu speaking Central Province,
Kiambu lies closest to Nairobi and is seen to be especially
influenced by its development. Nyeri is furthest away and is viewed
as conservative. Murang'a occupies the middle ground. This geography
has been mapped on to the stereotypes of Kikuyu women depicted in the
above statement. Either women like the 'Kiambu women' are seen to
have lost all touch with their homes, or, like 'Nyeri women' they are
seen to have become co-opted into a male dominated ideology focussed
around notions of 'development' which are associated with the
debilitating forces of the state in conjunction with the
international community. In this context it is Murang'a women who
occupy the middle ground, and who are in a position to symbolically
integrate the two.

Women's role as mediators between society and wealth in the context
of the *mariika* and the clans in the nineteenth century was symbolised
in the persons of *airitu*. *Airitu* were young girls who had undergone
the ceremony of circumcision but who had not yet taken on their clan
identities; who were not yet 'women'. Women were identified with the
clans as the locus of productive potential which in the nineteenth
century was creative of wealth through its mobilisation in inter-clan
exchange. These exchanges took place within an overall concept of the
social which ensured that wealth and inter-clan relationships would
benefit not just individuals but also the community as a whole. This
was necessary partly in view of the interdependence which was
required to face environmental pressures, and partly because the
individualistic tendencies of the clans could potentially lead to the
breakdown of inter-clan relationships through which wealth was
constituted.

Women then realised movement in two senses in the nineteenth century;
in the context of 'routes' they were the mediums of exchange and were
thus creative of wealth in the context of inter-clan reciprocity. In
addition, with respect to female circumcision, they mediated the more
subtle relationship between clan and 'society' embodied in the
institutions of the mariika based on age. Both in the context of

wealth and in the context of the social principles behind wealth, young women were symbolic of value.

In the twentieth century, wealth was no longer created through the mobilisation of production through inter-clan reciprocity. Instead wealth was created through the structures of capitalism and state which entailed a more static relationship to production which was much more in keeping with the individualism of intra-clan identities rather than the reciprocity of inter-clan identities. In this context 'roots' as the locus of individualism and essence as well as the locus of production became the dominant ethos behind both wealth and society.

In the context of the state, the relationship between wealth and society was mediated not by women but by men. 'Tribe' as the new manifestation of community was now the social principle behind wealth in a state context where it could be used to bargain for a privileged access to resources and where it could become the locus of investment which was in itself creative of wealth. 'Tribe' was symbolised in the persons of wives who now performed a static role as guardians and repositories of their husbands' wealth. As individuals, women were also creative of wealth in the context of capitalism. However their wealth was regarded as a-social and even anti-social. In the context of the twentieth century then, women were both passive symbols of the social whole (much as men had been active symbols of the social whole in the nineteenth century) and symbols of anarchic a-social wealth. In neither capacity did they mediate a dynamically integrative relationship between society and wealth and in neither sense were they symbolic of value.

Things have changed considerably in recent times; especially in view of the fact that Kikuyu relationships to the state have altered so dramatically since the death of Kenyatta. Now the Kikuyu as a whole have been marginalised in relation to the state and relationships to both wealth and society can no longer be defined in relation to the state. Since Independence, women, through the informal economy, have began to build up an increasingly powerful alternative to the male-dominated 'formal' economy that hinges around the ability to maintain control over the state. The future, the long term, the 'community', has been marginal to the priorities of single mother businesswomen. Nowadays, however, their success is beginning to feed back into their clans and into the community partly through their investments in their children. In addition, as men's incomes decline, rural wives are also beginning to generate wealth in their own right through the

link between entrepreneurship and farming. Today, women's role in small scale entrepreneurship has begun to play a vital role in rural economies no longer supported by the urban incomes of men and the income from (male) cashcrops such as coffee and tea. Since Independence, rural wives have also established an strong basis for a new definition of 'community' through their relationships with the church. Thus women in general are once more beginning to constitute a relationship between wealth and society which is changing the definitions of both.

Through their attitudes and their responses to the opportunities offered to them, the legacies of rural wives and urban single mothers are particularly evident in the important position of young women today in mediating the transition to a new definition of community. In this they are joined also by progressive young men such as those described in Part II. In the redefinition of the relationship between society and wealth, young men and women invoke the idioms of both *riika* and clan which have interwoven themselves through the fabric of state and capitalism to shape rural communities in the present. Together, through the institutions of the church, through egalitarian and flexible marriages such as 'come-we-stay', and through the merging of economic opportunities offered by combinations of business and land, formal and informal sectors, young women and men are, against all the odds, fighting to sustain the social economy of the rural areas and to take it forward into the future.

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has been concerned to understand action and power in relation to a concept of the whole. In looking at action and power, the study attempts to understand how individuals in their lives engender transformation, and how they are empowered in relation to hegemonic structures which might threaten to subsume them.

In the ethnography the principle of holism may be seen to emerge in a number of ways. Firstly I have attempted to show how persons are empowered in their actions in relation to a transcendent dynamic. In this context they engage with holism as potentiality. Particularly in relation to entrepreneurial activity, this may be experienced in the negotiation of an uncertain future.

Persons also engage with holism in relation to ontology. Ontology may be viewed as the manifestation of holism in the context of the social. In this respect ontologies are already relative because they are emergent on the plane of the relative. However in their holistic dimensions they may be seen as the foundation of power at the level of the social. Ontologies encode a specific model for the resolution and engendering of difference in the process of transcendence. In their realisation of ontological dynamics, individuals situate their actions in the field of the social at the root of its logic and manifestation. Thus in realising ontological dynamics, individuals are empowered in relation to their worlds. This is so in part because ontologies are socially embedded. They resonate across time and space through the realities of those who engage them. Ontologies thus have transformational power in terms of relationships which they have already been instrumental in creating.

The ethnography is based on four ontological dynamics. I have tried to show how these ontologies are engaged in action and how this process has empowered individuals in relation to their worlds. In terms of the macro perspective of the study which attempts to understand the development of the state and capitalism, ontologies may be seen to be fundamental. Through their engagements with ontologies, state and capitalism are themselves transformed. Equally, through these engagements, the state and capitalism exert transformational power in the lives of individuals because of the way in which ontologies are socially embedded. Thus an analysis of ontology allows me to link a wide range of micro and macro level

processes and to develop an understanding of agency and empowement in relation to state and capitalist development.

A major point which this thesis makes is that engagements with the whole both engender and transcend dynamics of differentiation. One implication of this is that system and subject are not imprisoned in a structure of duality. Thus in engaging with the foundation of difference and holism, individuals may transcend the cultural and social parameters of their worlds. This realisation is particularly pertinent to the present day when individuals and groups inter-communicate across a wide range of socio-cultural boundaries.

Thus in the context of anthropology, I do not view the anthropologist to be 'trapped' within the parameters of his or her cultural location. Anthropologists themselves engage ontological dynamics in their own transcendent quests and they may equally engage with and understand the transcendent dynamics in the lives of others. It is for this reason that this study does not attempt to 'understand' an 'other' culture through models developed elsewhere. Neither does it utilise the boundary between anthropologist and anthropologised in its construction of categories of difference. Rather it recognises a field of common interest - the state and capitalism - and engages directly with the dynamics through which processes of state and capitalism have been realised in the lives of individuals. In this way, the subject matter of the research also becomes its theoretical base.

The attempt to engage with difference and holism across a boundary other than that of anthropologist/anthropologised has been of particular relevance to my situation because I have deliberately undertaken to do fieldwork in my own country. At the same time this experience has highlighted the plural nature of my own identity because in recognising myself as 'co-subject' with those among whom my research was conducted, I was also led to recognise the extent of my difference.

This brings me back to an initial point which was made at the beginning of the introduction. I alluded to the fact that one feature of 'modernity' is the particular way in which difference is experienced as fragmentation. There are many people today who must experience a plural sense of themselves at the heart of identities such as nationhood, race and even gender. This plurality is experienced in a field of everyday communication even within ones own family (one's parents for instance may have different racial,

cultural and national origins from oneself). The experience of 'radical' difference within a field of such close communication also serves to highlight the commonalities which go beyond the (cultural) constructions upon which difference is based.

Thus far from being fragmenting, the experience of plurality in the context of 'modernity' may lead to a heightened realisation that we are not simply defined in relation to and in opposition to each other. Rather we are part of a world in which we are all united by our common orientation towards that which is beyond all differentiation, towards the universal or God. It is this realisation which has been the underlying premise of this thesis.

CUCU WA GONYO.

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APPENDIX A: FIELDWORK METHODOLOGY

The field work for this study was based in two market-places. One in the rural areas and one on the outskirts of a small town. I spent a lot of time in the markets observing the process of entrepreneurship. In addition I went on a few business trips with certain traders to neighbouring districts and to other parts of the country including Nairobi, Busia on the Ugandan border and Namanga on the Tanzanian border. I also visited a number of small markets in Murang'a district itself as well as a couple of the larger markets in Nairobi.

At the beginning of my field work I conducted a census in Muthithi market in which I recorded the number of traders, their gender, and trade. At the end of my field work I did a survey with a basic questionaire which included demographic data and also data on businesses. The survey was based on a 10% sample of each trading group in both Muthithi and Mukuyu markets. The survey and the census helped to give a more systematic picture of the inter-relationships between the trading groups and their characteristics. These form the basis of each of the four parts of the ethnography. However the sample was too small for the statistics to be used in their own right. Instead the survey was conducted to systematise and confirm the general impressions which I had already formed during my research.

I collected case study material for forty or so individuals in the two markets. I systematised this information through a general check list. In addition I collected some genealogical material. The data from the markets was supplemented with data from the surrouding communities. I visited many homes both in the rural areas and in the town mainly belonging to or connected with individuals who I had met in the markets. In addition there were certain key individuals who came from places such as Nairobi who contributed substantially to the research.

I also conducted taped interviews with about 15 elders from the Muthithi area. The data from these interviews provides the basis for my understandings of the cultural constructs which, together with the market data, provide the basis for the formation of the four ontological dynamics which I present.

Aside from the more formal parameters of the research, the vast majority of the field work was conducted through informal conversations and participant observation. It was vital to the nature of my research that my interactions with people remained as unstructured as possible in order for the data to reflect not only my own concerns but also the concerns of those with whom I spoke. To this end I found that it was not helpful to take notes while talking to people. Rather I recorded the subject matter of my conversation from memory at the end of each day. It is these notes which constitute the overall subject of the ethnography.

APPENDIX B:

Table 1: Market Population

Muthithi (n=119)

| | Proportion | | % Total |
	Men	Women	Sample
Livestock	85	15	15
Clothes	80	20	20
Maize&Beans	0	100	10
Fruit&Veg	35	65	35
Bananas	10	90	20
Total	35	65	100

Mukuyu (n=103)

| | Proportion | | % Total |
	Men	Women	Sample
Livestock	70	30	10
Clothes	55	45	25
Maize&Beans	10	90	10
Fruit&Veg	35	65	35
Bananas	25	75	20
Total	35	65	100

Table 2: Marital Status

Muthithi - Men

	Percentages			
	Married	Widowed	Single	Divorced
Livestock	75	10	15	0
Clothes	55	0	45	0
Maize&Beans	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Fruit&Veg	25	0	75	0
Total	60	5	35	5

Muthithi - Women

	Percentages			
	Married	Widowed	Single	Divorced
Livestock	100	0	0	0
Clothes	75	0	25	0
Maize&Beans	85	5	0	5
Fruit&Veg	70	5	20	0
Total	75	5	15	5

Muthithi - All

	Percentages			
	Married	Widowed	Single	Divorced
Livestock	80	5	15	0
Clothes	55	0	45	0
Maize&Beans	85	5	0	5
Fruit&Veg	65	5	25	0
Total	70	5	20	5

Mukuyu - Men

	Percentages			
	Married	Widowed	Single	Divorced
Livestock	80	0	20	0
Clothes	75	0	25	0
Maize&Beans	50	0	50	0
Fruit&Veg	65	0	25	10
Total	70	0	25	5

Mukuyu - Women

	Percentages			
	Married	Widowed	Single	Divorced
Livestock	50	50	0	0
Clothes	85	0	10	10
Maize&Beans	50	0	40	10
Fruit&Veg	35	15	25	25
Total	55	15	20	15

Mukuyu - All

	Percentages			
	Married	Widowed	Single	Divorced
Livestock	70	15	15	0
Clothes	80	0	15	5
Maize&Beans	50	0	40	10
Fruit&Veg	40	10	25	25
Total	60	10	20	10

Table 3: Nos. of Children and Secondary Schooling

Muthithi - Men & Women

	Av. No.	% Sec.School*
Livestock	5	40
Clothes	3	20
Maize&Beans	5	45
Fruit&Veg	3 to 4	55
Total	4 to 5	45

Mukuyu - Men & Women

	Av.No.	% Sec.School*
Livestock	2	75
Clothes	3	55
Maize&Beans	4	90
Fruit&Veg	4	45
Total	3 to 4	60

*% of secondary school aged children who have been sent to school

Table 4: Education

Muthithi - Men

	Percentages with			Average
	None	Primary	Secondary	
Livestock	15	60	25	V
Clothes	5	80	10	VII
Maize&Beans	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Fruit&Veg	25	75	0	VI
Total	10	75	15	VI/VII

Muthithi - Women

	Percentages with			Average
	None	Primary	Secondary	
Livestock	0	100	0	VI
Clothes	25	25	50	VI
Maize&Beans	40	45	15	III/IV
Fruit&Veg	15	75	10	V
Total	25	65	15	V/VI

Muthithi - All

	Percentages with			Average
	None	Primary	Secondary	
Livestock	15	65	20	V
Clothes	10	70	20	VII
Maize&Beans	40	45	15	III/IV
Fruit&Veg	15	75	10	V
Total	20	65	15	V/VI

Mukuyu - Men

	Percentages with			Average
	None	Primary	Secondary	
Livestock	0	100	0	VI
Clothes	10	70	25	VIII
Maize&Beans	0	50	50	FM1
Fruit&Veg	0	50	50	FM1
Total	5	60	35	VII/VIII

Mukuyu - Women

	Percentages with			Average
	None	Primary	Secondary	
Livestock	100	0	0	0
Clothes	25	40	35	VII
Maize&Beans	40	30	30	V
Fruit&Veg	25	60	10	V
Total	35	50	15	V

Mukuyu - All

	Percentages with			Average
	None	Primary	Secondary	
Livestock	30	70	0	VI
Clothes	15	55	30	VII
Maize&Beans	35	35	35	V
Fruit&Veg	20	60	20	VI
Total	25	55	20	VI/VII

Table 5: Residence

Muthithi - Men

	Percentages	
	Market	Elsewhere
Livestock	0	100
Clothes	20	80
Maize&Beans	n.a.	n.a.
Fruit&Veg	25	75
Total	10	90

Muthithi - Women

	Percentages	
	Market	Elsewhere
Livestock	0	100
Clothes	25	75
Maize&Beans	0	100
Fruit&Veg	5	95
Total	10	90

Muthithi - All

	Percentages	
	Market	Elsewhere
Livestock	0	100
Clothes	20	80
Maize&Beans	0	100
Fruit&Veg	5	95
Total	10	90

Mukuyu - Men

	Percentages	
	Market	Elsewhere
Livestock	20	80
Clothes	60	40
Maize&Beans	50	50
Fruit&Veg	60	40
Total	50	50

Mukuyu - Women

	Percentages	
	Market	Elsewhere
Livestock	0	100
Clothes	40	60
Maize&Beans	70	30
Fruit&Veg	75	25
Total	55	45

Mukuyu - All

	Percentages	
	Market	Elsewhere
Livestock	15	85
Clothes	50	50
Maize&Beans	65	35
Fruit&Veg	75	25
Total	55	45

Table 6: Land

Muthithi - Men

	Inherited	Bought	Both	None
		Percentages with		
Livestock	75	0	15	10
Clothes	40	0	10	45
Maize&Beans	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Fruit&Veg	50	0	0	50
Total	60	5	10	30

Muthithi - Women

	Inherited	Bought	Both	None
		Percentages with		
Livestock	50	0	50	0
Clothes	75	0	0	25
Maize&Beans	90	0	0	10
Fruit&Veg	75	5	10	15
Total	80	0	5	10

Muthithi - All

	Inherited	Bought	Both	None
		Percentages with		
Livestock	75	0	20	5
Clothes	50	0	10	45
Maize&Beans	90	0	0	10
Fruit&Veg	70	5	10	20
Total	75	5	5	20

Mukuyu - Men

	Inherited	Bought	Both	None
		Percentages with		
Livestock	80	0	0	20
Clothes	40	0	0	60
Maize&Beans	50	0	0	50
Fruit&Veg	50	10	0	40
Total	55	5	0	40

Mukuyu - Women

	Inherited	Bought	Both	None
		Percentages with		
Livestock	50	0	50	0
Clothes	40	35	10	15
Maize&Beans	20	50	0	30
Fruit&Veg	35	15	0	50
Total	45	20	5	35

Mukuyu - All

	Inherited	Bought	Both	None
		Percentages with		
Livestock	70	0	15	15
Clothes	40	15	5	35
Maize&Beans	25	40	0	35
Fruit&Veg	40	15	0	45
Total	50	15	0	35

Table 7: Median Starting Capital (KShillings)

Men

	Muthithi	Mukuyu
Livestock	500	50
Clothes	2000	2000
Maize&Beans	n.a.	1000
Fruit&Veg	200	1000

Women

	Muthithi	Mukuyu
Livestock	n.a.	n.a.
Clothes	2000	2000
Maize&Bea	1000	1000
Fruit&Veg	200	400

Men & Women

	Muthithi	Mukuyu
Livestock	500	50
Clothes	2000	2000
Maize&Be	1000	1000
Fruit&Veg	150	500

Table 8a: Sources of Capital

Muthithi - Men

	Casual Labour	Employment	Farm	Business	Spouse	Parent	Friend/Relative
			Percentages				
Livestock	0	10	90	0	0	0	0
Clothes	80	10	5	0	0	0	0
Maize&Beans	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Fruit&Veg	75	0	25	0	0	0	0

Muthithi - Women

	Casual Labour	Employment	Farm	Business	Spouse	Parent	Friend/Relative
			Percentages				
Livestock	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Clothes	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Maize&Beans	10	0	40	0	40	10	10
Fruit&Veg	35	0	30	0	20	20	0

Muthithi - All

	Casual Labour	Employment	Farm	Business	Spouse	Parent	Friend/Relative
			Percentages				
Livestock	0	10	90	0	0	0	0
Clothes	80	10	5	0	0	0	0
Maize&Beans	10	0	40	0	40	10	10
Fruit&Veg	50	0	30	0	15	15	0

Table 8b: Sources of Capital

Mukuyu - Men

	Casual Labour	Employ-ment	Farm	Business	Spouse	Parent	Friend/Rel ative
				Percentages			
Livestock	40	0	40	0	0	20	0
Clothes	40	15	10	10	0	10	25
Maize&Beans	50	0	0	50	0	0	0
Fruit&Veg	75	10	10	0	0	0	0

Mukuyu - Women

	Casual Labour	Employ-ment	Farm	Business	Spouse	Parent	Friend/Rel ative
				Percentages			
Livestock	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Clothes	10	0	15	10	60	10	0
Maize&Beans	40	10	10	0	30	0	10
Fruit&Veg	45	0	20	0	10	10	5

Mukuyu - All

	Casual Labour	Employ-ment	Farm	Business	Spouse	Parent	Friend/Rel ative
				Percentages			
Livestock	40	0	40	0	0	20	0
Clothes	25	10	10	10	30	10	10
Maize&Beans	40	10	10	10	25	0	10
Fruit&Veg	60	5	15	0	5	10	5