

The Persistense of Iweto Marriage Among the Akamba Christians of Kangundo District Machakos County, Kenya

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Abstract:

For centuries, a woman marrying another woman has globally been practiced. This study has focused on woman to woman marriage among the Akamba Christian of Kangundo district, Machakos County. This form of marriage is referred to as Iweto marriage, (plural Maweto). It is observed that Iweto marriage is contrary to Christian teaching where marriage is between man and woman thus exclusively monogamous. The purpose of the study was to establish the factors behind the persistence of the Iweto marriage among the Akamba of Kangundo District, Kenya. The study had four specific objectives. (First, to examine the significance of the Iweto marriage among the Akamba of Kangundo. Second, to identify the changes that have taken place in the marriage and establish the reasons for the changes. Third, to establish the factors that continue to sustain the Iweto marriage among the Akamba Christians of Kangundo. Fourth, to assess the response of the Christians towards the Iweto marriage. The study employed descriptive-statistical research design. Data were collected from primary and secondary sources. Questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions were used to generate the required data. Simple random sampling procedure, purposive sampling method and snowball techniques were employed to select the respondents and the three locations for the study. A total sample of 102 respondents were interviewed. The locations selected were Kangundo, Kakuyuni and Kawethei. The respondents included Maweto, female husband, pastors, priests, church members, clan elders, local administrators. Data analysis comprised qualitative and simple quantitative methods. The data was analyzed and discussed using Maslow's Hierarchy of -need theory (1970) and Shorter theory of culture change (1973). Maslow looks at behavior as a product of need while Shorter observes that some aspects of culture are easily changed depending on their level in the culture. This conceptual framework helped to provide a comprehensive perception of the persistence of the Iweto marriage despite the influence of Christianity. The research findings revealed that several factors are responsible for the persistence of the Iweto marriage in Kangundo. However all these factors point towards a net work of traditional beliefs and practices which still influence the local social economic sphere. It was evident that women's life in Kangundo is still controlled by laid down patriarchal structures which are created, maintained and perpetuated by the society. It was established that adherence to the traditional beliefs and practices has not changed much with the coming of Christianity. The study concluded that, Iweto marriage is one of the preferred options available for women without sons though it contravenes Christian teaching. The society has not come to terms with other available solutions such as adoption hence without a suitable substitute, resistance to change is inevitable. It was noted that the Christians face several challenges as they respond to the Iweto marriage. The study observes that there are certain cultural practices like Iweto marriage that cannot be discarded by the society without giving a suitable alternative hence

the need to add Christian values to the practice and to give the society more time to acknowledge the alternative.