Early Christian Missionary's influence on Bride Wealth

(A case study of Mutira Location in Kirinyaga County1930 – 1948)

By

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ABSTRACT

This research sought to find out historically the Early Christian Missionary's influence on bride wealth leading to its commercialization in today's marriage. The main objective was to establish this practice before the Early Christian Missionary's influence. (Pre – colonial era) and determine it in today's marriage, the issue was, 'did the Early Christian Missionaries interfered with the process of bride wealth in any way and how has it transformed today? Therefore my burden was to expose the point of interaction, influence and departure. The focus was the Agikuyu community a case study of Mutira Location in Kirinyaga County. Since this is a historical research the focus was more on the mission history in the Afrocentric approach dealing with cultural issues unlike religious and gospel spreading to Africa as many have done. Therefore looking at missionary documents from the Kenya National Archives with hermeneutic thought unlike many who look at it through anthropology, religion and Western civilization.

The colonial history in Kenya was also considered, though others have looked at it through the perspective of economic, political, gender, oppression and liberation history.However my main interest was the colonialist versus the African (Agikuyu) culture the interaction and the points of conflict. It is therefore evidently clear from the data analysis.

This is a historical research on the Early Christian missionaries influence on bridewealth .this research has established that the Early Christian Missionaries teamed up with the colonialists to interfere with many of the African (Agikuyu) customs such as the rite of passage such as initiation issues like the female circumcision, marriage, naming and religion hence leaving a wave of conflicts and controversies with African customs. In particular the bride wealth process was transformed completely from the pre-colonial practice loosing its meaning and purpose in marriage today leaving it as a commercial entity. Therefore among other interferences the Early mission more than anything else helped transform the Bride wealth issue completely. The Church in her mission work today needs to take into consideration the cultural dynamics in the society in her interpretation of the gospel. Purposive sampling was used, with interviews, questionnaire, library material and archival material as methods of data collection. This data was analyzed through qualitative and descriptive in a chronological and historical narrative in order to arrive at logical conclusions and recommendations.

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