



The origin, structure and the role of clan and *Gichiario* (blood brotherhood) as a system of social control in pre colonial Tigania of Meru prior to the adaptation of circumcision age set system in Kenya

Ntongai Igweta¹, Dr. Martha Muraya²

^{1,2} Chuka University

ABSTRACT: The purpose of this study was to analyze the origin, structure and the role of Tigania clans and Gichiario (blood brotherhood) as a system of social control in pre colonial Tigania of Meru prior to the adoption and adaptation of circumcision age set system. Specifically, the study examined how the clans emerged among the pre colonial Tigania, how they were structured and their specific roles. The study further investigated the origin of Gichiario (blood brotherhood) and how it was used to bring harmony among different clans of the Meru. The study was interpreted within the theory of social structuralism which was used to analyze the functionality of the clans and blood brotherhood among the pre-colonial Tigania. The study employed a descriptive research design. The study location was in Tigania, Meru County targeting the population with knowledge on clan/lineage system. A sample size of 40 respondents aged 60 years and above based on the concept of data saturation was selected, although some younger respondents were selected due to their knowledge on Tigania culture as result of education and community leadership. The sample was selected from the target population through purposive and snowballing sampling procedures. The respondents at this age possessed less diluted information as they acquired it from their parents or grandparents on clan and Gichiario structures. The data was mainly collected from secondary and oral sources and then corroborated. The data collected was analyzed qualitatively and presented thematically. The research was carried with strict adherence to the ethics of research. The research found out that, pre-colonial Tigania were not initially organized into clans prior to their migration. The clans developed on the course of migration. The Gichiario system of social control was later developed to keep the clans united and promote brotherhood even after the clan separation. The clan played vital role in pre colonial Tigania such as defining boundaries, land allocation, political leadership, intermarriages, performance of cultural rituals among others. This research is important on informing the policy makers on the vital role such traditional social institutions played in the society. Such institutions ensured social order, discipline and harmony in the society thus fostering a strong social fabric. Therefore, with sound policies such social institutions can be sustained. The research also contributes to the knowledge on social cultural history of pre colonial Tigania of Meru.

Corresponding Author:

Ntongai Igweta

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INTRODUCTION

The pre colonial Africa had social institutions which regulated the political, economic and social aspects of the society buttressing order and stability. The modes of organisation of such social institutions in African societies were influenced by the nature of social-economic patterns and to some extent, the physical environment of the community (Ambler, 1988). However, these organisational

units were not universal. The Bantu communities traditionally leaned towards descent forms with social organisation based on lineage/clan.

Ochieng (1990) states that the migration and settlement of Kenyan communities in their current locations was largely dependent on two major developments in the course of history of these communities. First, the evolution of food producing societies and second the introduction of metal working. These two factors enabled varied migration patterns to thrive under the conditions prevailing during these eras. Meru traditions indicate they once lived near 'great water' but fled due to persecution by light skinned people (*Nguo Ntune*). Fadiman (1993) suggests that during his research one of his respondents said "*we began in Mbwaa, a place where water goes to eat grass...*" This agrees with Nyaga (1997, p.1-2) who indicates some of his respondents said that long ago their ancestors lived in captivity near large body of water which they had to cross on their way to freedom.

Muriani (2022) the pre Meru migration originated somewhere from the region of the Ethiopian highlands and Sudan. He notes that *Ilia Itune* commonly referred to as Red Sea by the pre Meru had nothing to do with it because there is no historical evidence. The Chuka people were the earliest subtribe of Meru to migrate preceded by others and entered Kenya around Lake Turkana and took the Eastern direction in the arid Northern Kenya, they later landed at *Micii Mikuru* in Eastern Nyambene. The Chuka stayed here for a while before they joined their kins that had directly moved to the Southern slopes of Mount Kenya. Muriuki also points out that *Igaironi* was the original area where the Meru subdivided into various groups. The split of the pre Meru (Ochieng, 1990) occurred while they were at Tharaka which was caused by overcrowding or the need for the people searching economic opportunities elsewhere.

According to Akwalu, Mwaambi and Thiribi (O.I., 2022) Tigania arrived from Mbwaa as part of larger Meru and was one of the sons of *Mukunga* and *Ngaa*, the legendary patriarch and matriarch of the Meru people. According to Thiribi the name Tigania was created after the arrival at *Micii Mikuru*. The information given by the informants and the oral traditional sources, indicate that, Tigania was therefore one of the sons of Mukunga and Ngaa who became the founder of the Tigania people.

Statement of the problem

A number of studies indicate lineage/clan systems had their logic in agricultural societies. While the age set system existed in pastoralist communities. Where these two systems were present in one community, questions of cultural exchange and adaptation inevitably emerged. Such exchange ended up altering the former system. This study was focused on analyzing how the clan structures emerged, how they were structured and their functionality among the Bantu communities with reference to pre colonial Tigania of Meru. It also sought to understand the origin and functionality of *Gichiario* (blood brotherhood) among the pre colonial Meru people.

Significance of study.

The study contributes to knowledge on the socio-cultural history of pre colonial Tigania. It demonstrates how communities in the past developed social systems onto which their political, social-cultural and economic activities were anchored. Such systems ensured that there was harmony and the society functioned in an orderly manner. Consequently, the study has shown the vital role strong social institutions can play in maintaining the social order in the society. This study is of great importance to the policy makers in coming up with policies which ensure that such traditional social institutions are preserved for the sustenance of social fabric in the modern societies.

Scope of the Study

The study covered the period, circa 1850s to 1908. This marked the period of Tigania migrations and contacts with other communities. During this period there were decades of warfare, interspersed with periods of peace, intermarriages, adoptions, and adaptations of new cultural practices. This view of cultural interactions was supported by scholarships such as Sandberg (1969), Fadiman (1993) and Mahner (1970).

Theoretical framework

This study was guided by structural functionalism theory. The theory was used to analyse how clan/lineage system worked among the Tigania in the pre-colonial era. The theory view society as system of interconnected parts that work together in harmony to maintain a state of balance and social equilibrium for the whole. Structural functionalism sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity. This approach looks at society through macro level orientation which focuses on the social structures and social functions. It addresses society as a whole in terms of the functions of its constituent elements namely; norms, customs and its institutions.

One of the proponents of the theory, Emile Durkheim notes that societies are able to maintain internal stability because they are held together by shared values, common symbols and social bonds. The structural functionalism theories bring different social institutions together for the cohesiveness of the society. The malfunctioning of one of society's organs lead to malfunctioning of other organs thus, disrupting the general stability of the society. Societies are viewed as bounded and fundamentally relational constructs, like organisms, the various social institutions working together in an unconscious fashion towards achieving an overall social equilibrium. All social and cultural phenomena are therefore seen as functional in the sense of working together and are

effectively deemed to live on their own. Therefore, the clan system as an organ of society in pre-colonial African societies was geared towards ensuring the stability of the society.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Location of the study

Tigania of Meru was selected as the study location because a number of studies and oral traditions point out that Tigania was the dispersal point of Meru sub tribes. It was noted that this location was ideal for the study because most of the clan structures have not been much affected by modernisation. According to Marshal and Rosman (1989) an ideal location of any study is the one that provides important information to the researcher.

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive research design. Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) averred that a descriptive research had a purpose of determining and reporting things the way they were. Thus, descriptive design enabled the researcher to carry out the study on the clan system of Tigania by clearly reporting how the events occurred. Therefore, the purpose of descriptive research design was to give a description of affairs as they exist or as they existed.

The target population

The target population was the informants with knowledge on the clan/lineage system of pre colonial Tigania based on age, gender and socio-political positions such as Njuri Ncheke elders, church elders and political elites. Borg and Gall (1982) defined target population as all the members of the real or hypothetical set of the people, events or objects to which the researcher wishes to generalize the results of the study. Therefore, the researcher used selected population in generalizing the findings of the study.

Sample Size and sampling procedures

The researcher employed purposive sampling with Snowballing technique to select a sample size of the 40 respondents who were knowledgeable in information as per the objectives of the study. The concept of data saturation was used to arrive at this sample size. Data Saturation concept states that, to ensure the credibility and validity of the study, the researcher need to collect information to a point where no new information can be collected from informants. When major themes based on the interview schedule became repetitive and no new information was given the data was deemed to have reached saturation at the 40th respondent.

Interview schedule

The interview schedule was used to conduct both closed and open ended questions. Closed ended interview guide was used to obtain specific information. Open ended interview guide allowed more exploration on the clan/lineage system.

Data Collection Procedures

Oral interviews were carried out guided by an interview schedule. The interview schedule was guided by the objective of the study. The secondary data included library books, history books, the internet, journals and other written materials related to the clan system. The researcher visited the Kenya National Archives, Kenya National Library Services and Meru Museum for the archival sources. The information from oral sources, secondary sources and archival sources was corroborated and analysed critically. To ensure the reliability and validity of the secondary sources the information was subjected to internal and external reliability tests to minimize subjectivity.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The origin, structure and the role of clan and *Gichiario* (blood brotherhood) as a system of social control in pre colonial Tigania of Meru prior to the adaptation of circumcision age set system.

The Origin and Organization of the Pre colonial Tigania Clans.

The clan in pre colonial Tigania comprised a social unit consisting of a number of families claiming a common ancestor and following the same hereditary lineage. Ambler (1988) notes that the migration of central Kenya communities was gradual and involved families or small groups of kinsmen moving to new areas. The unity generally is recognised as the clan or greater family. People of one clan trace their ancestry to their founder who was one of the original settlers. The land he was first to clear and build on is therefore theirs. There is no individual right to land. All the land rights are in the hands of the clan's council or Njuri (KNA/DC/MRU/1944). The Tigania were organized into clans depending on their founders and how they crossed the *Ilia Itune* during their escape from Mbwa. The clans were also named depending on time of the day or night that the original founders crossed the *Ilia Itune* from the land of captivity. For instance, those who crossed when it was dark were named *Njiru*, those crossed when it was reddish in the early morning became *Ntune* and those who crossed during the day time became the *Njaru*. (Akwalu O.I., 2022). After crossing the *Ilia Itune* the Meru community began to identify itself by establishing clan names and identities. This oral source is supported by oral tradition by Muriangi that,

Immediately after the leading man crossed, he sneezed and called of his clan names and makes it known which one a person or group belonged to. He further says if a person sneezed incidentally or while snuffing some tobacco he shouted the name of his appropriate clan. (Murianki, 2022, p.28)

Nyaga (1997) notes that the Meru people had no clans before the self sacrifice opened the way to the establishment of the first clans among the Ameru. It is this time the clans started giving names to each of the three who sacrificed themselves. Nyaga says these original clans of Njiru were known as Antubaita because they reached the other side of the water while it was still dark. The clan of Antubanthanju is called Ntuune, because they reached the other side of water early morning while the Akiuna clan also named *Nthea* reached the other side of the water when it was already glittering.

This information is further supported by the oral sources of Akwalu, Muchui and Mwaambi (O.I., 2022) who avers that as the Meru people were trying to cross the river during the migration in order to free them from the captivity, they were faced with difficulties. The God then instructed *Koomenjoe* who was their leader to slaughter a person and open and read the instructions from the intestines on how they were supposed to do in order to have a successive escape. During this period a man volunteered to be sacrificed and offer the required answer. The volunteer was called Gaita which literally means who *sacrificed himself*. Gaita became the founder of Antubaita clan. Another man offered to be the next if Gaita intestines after being sacrificed failed to offer the way out of the bondage. This man then stood akimbo in readiness and was named Kiuna and became the founder of Akiuna clan of the Tigania. According to these oral informants the clan were also named as per the roles they played during the time of the exit, for instance, the founder of Antuathanju clan was known as Thanju who went to fetch the sticks to cane Gaita in case he feared to be sacrificed, Thanju became the founder of Antuathanju clan of the Tigania. The ancestor who founded the Andune clan was known as Ndune and during the time of the exit is the one who went to fetch the firewood and was named Andune due to the sound produced while one is cracking the wood. On the issue of self sacrifice Nyaga stated that,

The self sacrifice opened the way for establishment of the first clans of Meru. The clans started by the giving of the names of those who sacrificed themselves and their descendants were named after them. (Nyaga, 1997, p.5).

The information given by Nyaga corresponds with oral sources who notes that the first person who offered himself to be sacrificed was Gaita and his descendants called Antubaita, the person who volunteered himself to be an alter onto which Gaita was to be operated was called Amuthetu (Soil). The person who set himself ready to be operated on in case the Gaita did not offer the required answers was called Akiuna and his descendants form the Akiuna clan (Akwalu and Muchui O. I.2022). Therefore, according to the theory of structural functionalism theory these clans were named according to the various roles they played during the exit strategy. These clans worked together in achieving the societal's intended goal of escaping from the land of bondage. The information from the oral sources, oral tradition and archival sources on clan formation attributes such clans were designed as per their functionality. On theory of structural functionalism theory such structures perform specific roles in the system. Each of these clans was having the distinct role it played in pre colonial Tigania.

Murianki (2022) assertion corroborates with oral sources on the clans' origin whereby he says that the Tigania clans were known depending on the roles they played during the time for the exodus as per the structural functionalism theory that, society is made of various organs or structures which perform specific roles. He says that '*Antubaita and Amuthetu are people of soil, the Akiuna were by-standers and the Antuathama were the Migrants*'. According to Mwaambi and Nculubi (O.I., 2022) which is also supported by the oral tradition by Murianki (2022) that, Amatu clan got their name from the Matu(ears) because as the Meru were trying to find out the exit strategy from the *Nguu Ntune* enslavement and get someone to be sacrificed, the Amatu heard and requested for time to fold their ears thus earning themselves the name Amatu clan. The Antuathama clan refused to offer their person to be sacrificed during the exit time and stated that they would continue migrating thus earning their name and becoming the founders of Antuathama clan of the Tigania. The clans of Irotia was instrumental in providing the prophency dreaming (*kurota*) whereby their dreams were vital in advising the community on how they would safely escape from the *Nguu Ntune* people.

When the Gaita was being sacrificed to give the answer for the escape strategy, the people who provided knife (Kachiu) for his slaughter became the founders of the Akachiu clan. Those who provided the needle (*Mukua*) to stitch Gaita formed the Amukua clan while those who provided the strings (ndigi) to stitch Gaita while he was being sacrificed became the founders of Antuandigi clan. This information is also supported by (Nyaga 1997) an oral tradition that, there were clans such as Amuga, Amukua, Antuathanja, Antueria and Abondigi. These clans were named depending on the materials they provided during the escape. The Antuamburi clan was formed by the people who during the time of escape were told to offer the person for sacrifice and were somehow reluctant and said that they were looking after their goats (Mburi) thus earning themselves the name Antuamburi clan. The Antueguma clan was those who refused to cooperate with others during the time of migration and believed that they could migrate on their own. However, they later realized they could not succeed on their own and they joined other clans. This formation of the clan through blood ties contributed to their strong ties as noted by the informants and buttressed by Bernadi (1952) who posits Bantu societies tend to have strong lineage (clan system) which performs central integrative tasks. Such studies agree with

scholarships by Fadiman (1982), Mahner (1970), Rimita (1988) and Sandberg (1969) that show pre colonial Tigania were organized into clans.

The earliest clans according to structural functionalism theory were named as per their societal roles. These clans were named insiders and were the black clans, these clans were Gaita, Amuthetu, Akiuna and Akachiu. These clans are believed to be the first arrivals and that why they were associated with peace, harmony and the fertility of the soil. The red and white clans were considered immigrants who were incorporated by black clans and not among the original occupants of the land. They were known as outsiders (M' Ndegwa, O.I 2022). This concept of insiders and outsiders' clans as demonstrated by structural functionalism theory played a key role in ensuring that harmony restored in case of conflicts in pre colonial Tigania. This concept was also used as basis of claiming land ownership by the insiders. The immigrants' clans were seen as source of the conflict in the society whereas the original clans were seen as source of harmony in the community. Spear (1981) works show the existence of insiders and outsiders clans of the Tigania, he avers that, there was resemblance between the generational pairs and the clans. In line with structural functionalism theory the right generation set usually created conflicts through exercise of its political power and equivalent to the clans, he refers to has *red* and *white* (*outsider*) clans. While the left generation set used their ritual authority to restore harmony which was equivalent to the black (insiders) clans. This information is buttressed in Nyaga (1997) that the clans of Antubaita and Amuthetu are also called the *Njiru* (black), the clan of Antubathanju is called Ntune (red). Nyaga notes that the clans of Njiru and Ntune are considered one clan because they all crossed the water at night while the Akiuna clan also known as Nthea because they reached the other side of the water when the sky was glittering with stars. The concept of insiders and outsiders' clans can be attributed by the societal mechanisms of ensuring that the peace and stability was achieved in the society in the instances of land ownership conflicts and other social unrests.

Thiribi and Mwaambi (O.I., 2022) says it is after the crossing of the *Ilia Itune* that some of the Tigania clans were named. This implies that not all the Tigania clans were named during the time of exit. Some clans were sub clans of major clans. Other clans of Tigania were named the names of the women, such as the clans of Thing'aa, Mwathi and Antuang'aa. These were the sons of Thing'amburi. The oral sources indicate that Thing'aa told his father to share his possession to which the father accepted his request. Upon receiving his possession, he migrated and left his other brothers and formed the Antuathing'aa clan. Later he was followed by his brothers. However, the brothers were the late comers in the land they settled because their brother already claimed the land rights because they were the first to arrive. The oral sources indicate that the clans formed by the *Mwathi* and *Antuang'aa* did not participate in Tigania *Nthenge* rituals execution on matters of the land rights because they are regarded as not being the original owners of the land. Thiribi also points out that some clans were not original Tigania but were assimilated into the Tigania clan system and allowed to form their own clans. For instance, the Antuachuru clan of the Tigania was of *Mwooko* origin. The founder of the clan was known as *Achuru* who was captured by Gaita as he was taking the milk guard. Tigania traditions did not allow the killing of the foreigners. Therefore, any foreigner who was caught was assimilated in the Tigania society. Hence when Achuru was captured by the Gaita was assimilated. One day Achuru was grazing the livestock and some people started calling him Mwooko. Achuru was angered and killed the person who was calling him so. After this incidence Achuru ran away towards the Irootia where he met a beehive maker known as Baichiungu who adopted him. Achuru grew into a strong man (Laing'o) and was able to acquire so many animals. This development made Baichiungu so happy about Achuru and allowed him to form his own clan. This marked the genesis of the Antuachuru clan of the Tigania. According to the oral informants, the people of Antuachuru clan cannot participate in the Tigania *Nthenge* execution ritual because they were originally not Tigania. In accordance with structural functionalism theory, this signifies a practice in the Pre colonial Tigania society whereby some organs or clans could perform certain functions whereas others could not.

The theory of structural functionalism is also demonstrated in the clan known as Ngirani among the pre colonial Tigania. This clan according to the respondents was made of the girls who were believed to be bad omen and capable of causing misfortunes to the family in case they were married by the young men. Such girls included those born as twins, those born with feet coming out first or those whose upper teeth grew before lower teeth. Girls from the Ngirani clan could only be married by the men who were old as their second and third wives. The respondents also said that there was Ngirani clan which originated from the curse of a girl who was forced to marry an old man when she desired to be married by young man. When she experienced problems in old age she left a curse that all her sisters should be married by the old men. This formed the origin of Ngirani clan (M'ibui, Kangai, & Thangalani O.I., 2022). However, Nyaga (1997) avers that this was a technique which was used by the old men to get young wives who would serve them at their old age. The deeper analysis of the formation of Tigania clans was influenced by the functionality. Their naming structures clearly as advocated by structural functionalism theory was dependant on the roles they played within the larger community of pre colonial Tigania. The functionality of such clans was therefore pivotal aspect in the pre colonial Tigania clan formations.

The Roles of the Tigania Clans

The clans of the Tigania worked as government of its own headed by *Mukiama* who acted as head of the clan and spiritual leader of the clan. The *Mugwe/Muuwe* was the universal leader situated at Chiru for all the Meru subtribes. The clans gave the people identity such as the people of Antubaita and Andune could identify themselves with these clans, this ensured that there was unity within the clan members (Muchui, O.I., 2022). This corroborates with Parkin (1997) who observes that the lineage determined inheritance and residence. This residence pattern of the Bantus informed the key relationships such as alliance, trade and marriage. Therefore, the Bantu farmers through their kinship were able to maintain stable society as compared to that of hunter-gatherer societies which was flexible. The flexibility of such communities was due to their pastoralism nature which made them to keep on moving from one place to another. It is evident the lineage systems of Bantu made them more stable as compared to communities which were not farmers. Such stability was due to long stay in a given area as opposed to the pastoralist communities who kept from moving from one place to another. Such movements could have created weaker bond to these communities and affect their stability. The people of the clan could come together to offer protection and assist one another. For instance, in case there was a disagreement between Antubaita and Andune clans the members of individual clans could come together for solidarity. Nyaga, (1997) assertion that, clans could perform specific roles for instance, the ritual which was done to commemorate *Mororua* also known as *Gaita* was conducted by the elders from the clans of Antubaita, Amuthetu and Akiuna. Nyaga continues to aver that, the elders from these clans stood a good distance from the rest when they were conducting the rituals. There was nobody from other clans who was allowed to get to the place where the ritual was being done. Once the elders completed the task they came out of the area where ritual was being performed and joined other people and informed them how the land was to be governed and other rules required. Nyaga's assertion buttresses those specific clans of pre colonial Tigania performed specific roles. This assertion from oral tradition by Nyaga was supported by oral sources (Muchui and Mwaambi, O.I, 2022).

Akwalu (O.I. 2022) states that, during social-cultural issues in the community the members of the clan could come together and solve the issues. The norms of the clan were also a preserve of the clan who acted as custodian of culture and political authority. When it was the time to offer the sacrifices in the society there were different clans who were tasked with various roles. If it was a ram to be sacrificed there were specific clan which could carry out the ritual. In case a member of a given clan committed an offence in another clan say for instance, a member of *Amuthetu* killing a person from the *Akiuna* clan. It was not a responsibility of the offender to pay the fine. However, all the members of the Amuthetu clan could come together and pay the offender's fine imposed by the Akiuna clan. In case offender did an offence repetitively a collective punishment for a clan could be instituted (Micky, 2020). The Tigania clans were the custodian of the land boundaries and protected it on behalf of its members. The clan ensured discipline was maintained among its members as noted by (Fadiman, 1993) guilt of an offender with the clan was considered collective and could spread from that one person to the entire clan. The clan council could order for beating or the livestock fine could be imposed meant at punishing the guilt of offender and to enhance the reconciliation. The oral informants indicated that when it was matters relating to the land adjudication and consolidation it was allocated following the clan boundaries. The members of a given clan occupied the land in the same area which in turn they allocated to the members of their clan.

Laibuni and Muchui (O.I., 2022) hold the view that, the clans had the power to punish the criminals being the custodians of the divine authority. If somebody was accused of a certain crime within the clan, it was the duty of the clan members in deciding the punishment for the crime committed. Such decision taken by the clan was final. Spear (1981) observes that political and ritual authority in pre colonial Tigania was divided into two pairs; the fathers of one pair serving as the ruling elders and their sons as warriors. This was a practice according to oral sources which was being undertaken by the Tigania clans even before they adopted and adapted the use of circumcision age set system. The analysis of Spear's work shows that there was resemblance between these generational pairs and the clans. This is because the right generation set usually created conflicts through exercise of its political power and equivalent to the clans, he refers to has *red* and *white (outsider)* clans. While the left generation set used their ritual authority to restore harmony which was equivalent to the black (insiders) clans. The clan of insiders acted as a mediator whenever conflicts rose in society when the outsider clan was exercising its political power. Therefore, these pairs worked in cooperation and were interdependent.

Spear further, points out that, the essence of the '*insideness*' was because of the ritual leader of all the Meru people; *Mugwe*. According to Spear, *Mugwe* was considered to be morally pure and able to bless major events in the community and oversee the initiation of generational sets, administer sanctions and ritual curses. *Mugwe* was not a political leader but was a link between the past and the present; hence, the continuation of community traditions. Naturally *Mugwe* was a retired elder and was thus associated with the black clans; the insiders were the epitome of ritual harmony. It was worthwhile to say that the problem of amalgamation of diverse peoples into a single people was thus represented in the deepest structures of the pre colonial Tigania society. This view of spear is supported by (Murianki, 2022, p. 31) clans of insiders such as the Antubaita being the first to land in the country were associated with social harmony, peace and fertility. Whereas the red and white clans also known as outsiders who were the immigrants of the descendants assimilated by the black clans were associated with conflicts and were ritually disruptive. However, the duty of the original clans was to restore peace and harmony. The clan also ensured that the welfare of its members was protected.

The clan could do this by regulating social events such as the marriages. In order to control the inbreeding within the clan of the related families the clan ensured that the marriages were done outside the ones clan or the unrelated families. This practice of marrying across the clans could also have been a way of promoting solidarity among different clans.

The Relationship between the Tigania Clans

As noted by the structural functionalism theory various organs in the society work together in achieving the societal goal. The various clans in pre colonial Tigania worked together while others had specific roles to perform in societal social affairs. However, all these different roles performed by these clans were for the good of the society. The clans within the same moiety related well with other clans, in order to promote harmony between various clans, the marriages were encouraged across the clan (Taata and Akwalu O.I, 2022). The oral informants noted that various clans could perform certain activities together regulated by the council of elders. As put by Laibuni (O.I., 2022) when for instance, the community was carrying out the sacrificing rituals different clans were assigned different roles to play. There was a family in a given clan which was to produce a sheep for sacrifice and family from another clan could offer the *Giempe* (honey measuring 20 litres). Then another family from a different clan could be given a responsibility to carry out the sacrificing exercise itself. This practice ensured that there was cooperation between different clans of the Tigania.

The Meru consanguinity is never affected by the settlement but origin. In this respect it means that the relationship among the various Tigania clans could not be affected by the place they settled but rather the origin of the clans. For instance, in Athwana ward of Tigania West there are several families of Amatu and also in Mbeu ward but primarily belong to the Kianjai. Akwalu says the Antuboochiu clan is spread in various parts such as in Tigania East where they are found as *Muchii ywa Aaru*. According to oral sources a young warrior from Antuboochiu clan travelling lost the way in Tigania. Akwalu further notes that this young warrior went to seek refuge at warriors' barracks traditionally known as *Aaru* and he later became the founder of *Muchii ywa Aaru* (Akwalu, O.I., 2022).

Muriira (O.I., 2022) avers that, during the land allocation the clans went alongside each other within the same territory. For instance, in the land allocation among the various clans of the Athwana ward in Tigania West subcounty the clan land allocation was as follows; Antubaita clan, followed by the Andune clan then the Amuthetu and Antuathama clans. As demonstrated by structural functionalism theory, this practice ensured there was peaceful coexistence among these clans because there could be no dispute over land due to the fact every clan had their own land boundaries. The Antuathama clan is said to be an independent clan who lived side by side with Mwooko. They are regarded as having been among the original inhabitants of the land. This was the reason that in land disputes one could not be allowed to initiate Nthenge process where a person from Antuathama clan is involved. This was due to the fact that the land was regarded as theirs because they landed ahead of other clans (Akwalu O.I., 2022). This demonstrates the systems of control which existed among the clans. Such clan systems majorly defined the land use by the individuals within the clan in pre colonial Tigania.

The Gichiario/blood brotherhood as System of Social Control

Among the Tigania there existed a *Gichiario* (blood brotherhood) social system of control based on blood consanguinity. The *Gichiario* system brought people together and acted as covenant to ensure no betrayal among the people of Meru. Such practice of social control according to the structural functionalism theory ensures that there is social order and harmony in the society. Muchui (O.I 2022) the *Gichiario* which is also known as blood brotherhood started after the Meru people migrated from Mbwa. The oral informants indicated that after the death of *Koomenjoe* who had led people out of the bondage he was succeeded by *Kaulu O Bechau* who became the new leader of Ameru. The informants indicated that after the Meru settled in Tharaka there is a time the clans wanted to migrate to various parts. In order to ensure the solidarity between the different clans, Kaulu O Bechau came up with a system of social control. He introduced the oath which was a covenant known as *Gichiario*. This oathing involved the human blood. Two people from different clans were cut and their blood mixed, they were given this blood to drink as they took oath repeatedly on the maintenance of brotherhood ties and never to do wrong or betray their fellow brothers after the separation. It was necessary that every clan or sub-ethnic group establish the blood brotherhood with immediate or remote ethnic community for mutual support and reinforcement (Murianki, 2022) notes this was a common practice among the Kenyan tribes.

Thiribi (O.I 2022) avers that the *Gichiario* was peace agreement after coming from Mbwa. It was done at Tharaka in a place called *Igaironi* before Meru subtribes and clans started to disintegrate through the migration to their present homeland. Thiribi adds that *Gichiario* was developed by Kaulu O Bechau as system of regulation to prevent the division which could be caused by such migrations. It was a way of sustaining their relations because the Meru people were one and even if there are many dialects witnessed it is because of the areas they settled after the migration. Therefore, the *Gichiario* oathing ritual involved tough conditions being given and whoever violated them could be faced with dire consequences. The oral sources correspond with oral tradition by (Murianki, 2022) that, *Gichiario* was being feared that a customary leader could not dare to enforce a law or even apprehend criminal whom he was related with through the *Gichiario*. There was a fear that in case such happened some mystical retaliation in form of

misfortunes could befall the person. In event the punishment was to be administered he had to delegate it to another person not related to the offender by the brotherhood consanguinity.

Scholarships by Micky (2020) and Fadiman (1993) further corresponds with oral sources that, as the fragmentation of Meru people occurred, the elders noted that some of the clans were weak whereas others were strong. Therefore, the practice of *Gichiario* was developed in order to bind various clans in accordance to its procedures and instill discipline. *Gichiario* oath taken was to prohibit a clan from harming the other and to come into rescue of their brothers in the other clan when they needed assistance. Such oaths were also extended for military assistance. The elders in developing the *Gichiario* system thought on ways of ensuring future discipline among the young men and promote unity by ensuring no bloodshed occurs in future. The respondents argued that the new military alliances between different clans of the Tigania began from this time and oaths were taken. The *Gichiario* therefore, was introduced to ensure that even after the separation of the clans, the harmony and discipline could still be maintained. This shows an important aspect played by the oathing ceremony towards the clans' formation and their functionality among the pre colonial Tigania.

M'Igweta (O.I., 2022) gave an example of how the people of Tigania clans took a *Gichiario* oath with people of Muthambi clans for military alliance. He further notes that people from these sub tribes cannot harm or fight one another because it would mean spilling your brother's blood and the consequences would be dire. The respondents also noted that even intermarriages between the clans which had the *Gichiario* oath were impossible and the elders of such clans could not assent such alliances. For instance, the clans from Akithi in Tigania could not marry with clans of Ruiga in Imenti. The intermarriage between the Antuamakia clan in Tigania and Igoki clan in Imenti could not be allowed by the elders because of the *Gichiario* ties. The respondents noted that in an event such intermarriage occurred there would be untold misfortunes which would befall the couple. However, some respondents noted that there were some *Gichiario* which were mainly for the protection of the land rights by the new clans' incorporated in older clans. In such scenario the intermarriages were allowed.

Micky (2020) avers that the Tigania might have adopted the concept of *Gichiario* in order to maintain military alliances and peace. This could be due to the need for reunion between the different clans of Tigania through the peace rituals. The reason for the *Gichiario* oaths was to create the bond even after the fragmentation of the clans from Tharaka. Micky further show that conflicts which were witnessed among the young men could have necessitated the adoption of the *Gichiario* as way of ensuring peace was maintained. It was important for the unity to be maintained because the Tigania were in constant war with their neighbours such as the Maasai. Therefore, for them to survive they needed such solidarity.

The system of *Gichiario* was applied in the whole of the meru community and it was highly feared. This mechanism was mostly used to restore order and ensure the peace prevailed in the community. The *Gichiario* bound the people to act in certain ways and with severe consequences to any party that went against the *Gichiario*. If the *Gichiario* brokered for peace between the warring parties, the terms of the resolution reached were completely binding to all. Some of the clans who had *Gichiario* ties in pre colonial Tigania included; *Antubaita* in Athwana with *Kitharene* in Tigania East. The *Akithii* with *Ruiga*, *Antubathanju* clan in Akithi with *Irootia* clan in Muthara. The *Andune* clan in Athwana with *Athimba* clan in Igembe. The *Tigania* sub tribe also had the *Gichiario* ties with *Mwimbi* sub tribe. In line with structural functionalism theory, the *Gichiario* enabled the people to work in good faith and commit themselves to harmonious and peaceful coexistence. It also fostered integrity among the clans of the pre colonial Tigania.

CONCLUSION

Murianki (2022, p 31) aver that, unlike the Meru proper which are the Imenti and Tigania, some other Meru communities especially in Meru South like Chuka and Tharaka tend to have a number of their clan names and personal names featuring on certain ecological themes. He further noted that Chuka and Tharaka had their ancestral origin on a different ancestral line of *Murutu* lineage from Chiangoi and Chianpandi ancestors. Oral respondents said that the original black clans of Gaita, Amuthetu, Agachiu and Akiuna are the original clans. They were referred to as the clans of the insiders. As per structural functionalism theory, these differences on clan structures and functions can be attributed to the geographical distance between these sub tribes, groups they interacted with and also the variations which occurred as they separated and the roles they continued to play

It is worthwhile to note that, as noted by both oral traditions and oral sources the clans were important structures in the pre colonial Tigania. As advocated by the structural functionalism theory, the clans of pre colonial Tigania defined various aspects of society functionality varying from the land ownership, boundaries, marriage patterns, political leaderships and the general relationship among the members of the society. It can be concluded in this chapter that the clan and *Gichiario* (blood brotherhood) were vital organs in ensuring the societal order in pre colonial Tigania.

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