

**THE GOSPEL AND AFRICAN CULTURE: POLYGAMY AS A  
CHALLENGE TO THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF TANZANIA-  
DIOCESE OF MARA.**

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**Submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirements of the degree of Masters of  
Theology (African Theology) in the School of Religion and Theology,  
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**December 2005**

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my wife, Phoebe Akelo and our children: Joyce, Happiness, Justin, and Hiikiah. Phoebe, you are a Super woman.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Psalms 100:4-5 says, “Enter His gates with thanks giving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name. For the Lord is good and His love endures forever, His faithfulness continues through all generations.” Indeed God’s love endures forever; I therefore need to thank God for giving me strength and wisdom to accomplish this task of writing about the challenge of polygamy in my home Diocese.

This study would not have been a reality without strong support from individuals and different organizations. I owe them uncountable thanks. I am grateful to both the Anglican Church of Tanzania, Diocese of Mara and The Church Missionary Society, England, for giving me a scholarship and moral support.

I am grateful to the Rt. Rev. Hilkih Omindo Deya, the bishop of the Diocese of Mara, for encouragement and financial support.

I am grateful to Professor P.M. Moila for who I am today. Without his inspiring teaching and his tireless efforts, in general, I could not have come this far.

I am grateful to Professor Isabel Apawo Phiri, my supervisor, for her critical reading, insights and guidance in helping me to produce this academic work. She has been a companion by giving me the right environment at this level of my education.

I am grateful to many women and men of Mara Anglican Diocese who have given me some useful information on some aspects of life in Mara, past and present, and with whom we had some very stimulating and fruitful discussions.

I am also grateful to my wife, Phoebe, and our children: Joyce, Happiness, Justine, Hilkih and our grand son Joseph Tito, whose encouragement and endurance sustained me during my research.

## ABSTRACT

This study is a reflection on polygamous marriage and its challenge to the Anglican Church of Tanzania- Diocese of Mara (ACT-DM). The study calls for the contextualization of the Gospel of Christ if the church is serious with the propagation of the Gospel to the Mara people. The term contextualization refers to a total process designed to translate into concrete reality the indigenisation as well as the adoption of the church to African indigenous thought and culture.

The research was set on the problem statement, “Is there any theological justification for the Anglican Church’s condemnation of polygamous marriage?” The study was set on the premise that even though there is a need for the Church to show love to every one- including the polygamists, there is need to unveil the controversy that the ACT-DM has grappled with concerning the place of the polygamist in the Church. Should they continue to be discriminated against in terms of being denied the sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Eucharist? Should they be allowed to lead the Anglican Church of Mara Diocese? What is the way forward? In arriving at the research findings, the study employed two methods. One was to collect oral accounts on the practice of polygamy in the Mara societies and the Church. The second one was collecting the written information as found in church minutes, reports, letters, books, articles and periodicals. The research revealed that even though polygamy is a dying institution, in Mara, people are just abandoning it slowly without proper teachings. That shows that there is a danger of its resurrection if the Church doesn’t engage in a teaching ministry on this issue so as to contain it. The other findings of the research are that, even if it is an African cultural practice, it is already overtaken by time and cannot be an effective substitute to barrenness or childlessness as was the case in the traditional African societies because there are other better remedies such as child adoption. The research findings also showed that the Church, despite having a theological justification for condemning it, has a responsibility, as a steward of God’s creation to offer pastoral roles to the polygamists, their wives and their innocent children who are disciplined by the Church “ because of somebody else’s sins.”

The study consists of five chapters and conclusion. The first chapter gives an introduction by way of showing the major motivation for the study, which sets the tone of the whole work.

The second chapter deals with the background information of the study of Christianity in Mara region of Tanzania. It also gives us a brief historical background of Christianity in Tanzania. The third chapter discusses the question on the Gospel and Culture thereby giving different schools of thought on the relationship of these two entities. The fourth chapter is about the practice of polygamy in the Anglican Church of Tanzania- Diocese of Mara, and its pastoral approach to the practice of polygamy which makes the chapter to be historically based on the oral as well as the written sources on the practice of polygamy. Chapter five is the critical analysis of polygamy which comprises of social and theological critiques of the various positions that are advanced for its continuation or suggestions as to why it should be abolished. The concluding chapter makes some recommendations and then draws the conclusion of the whole study.

## ABBREVIATIONS

- ACC- Anglican Consultative Council
- ACT- Anglican Church of Tanzania
- ACT-DM- Anglican Church of Tanzania Diocese of Mara
- AD- *Anno Domini* (referring to a year after Jesus Christ was born)
- AICs- African Initiated Churches
- AIDS- Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
- CMS- Church Missionary Society (Anglican Church)
- DM- Diocese of Mara
- Fr. – Father (Roman Catholic priest)
- HIV- Human Immunodeficiency Virus
- LMS- London Missionary Society (Interdenominational)
- NIV- New International Version Bible
- SABC- South African Broadcasting Corporation
- UMCA- Universities Mission to Central Africa (Anglican Church)

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

*Mahari*- Dowry

*Maweto or Nyumba Ntobu*- This is when a woman marries another for the sake of having descendants.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to and motivation for the research

The background to and motivation for writing on the topic, “The Gospel and African culture with particular reference to polygamy in Mara Anglican Diocese of Tanzania,” stems from my encounter with the challenge of polygamy in my sixteen years of clerical duties, as a church leader, in the same Diocese. That is, I have been experiencing the problems caused by the contradictions regarding the issue of polygamy. Polygamists have been granted permission for baptism, but on the other hand, they are deprived of their right of receiving Holy Communion and assuming leadership positions in the church. This could still be counted as the church becoming more tolerant on the issue at hand. This is because, in the Diocese of Mara’s *Pastors’ handbook*, which is part of church’s constitution pages 13-23 says; “a polygamist who wants to become a member of the Anglican church cannot receive baptism unless he announces publicly that he has divorced the other wives except one, and those church members who become polygamists should be put under church discipline and should be deprived of the right to participate in the Holy communion” (1995).

The church in Mara has held, for a long time that the practice of polygamy would die out but it hasn’t. Instead polygamy has remained a social subject that begs for urgent attention, especially by those of us who have variously brushed with it, among the Mara societies.<sup>1</sup> Characteristically, today, a man marries as many wives as he likes as long as he has enough cattle for paying dowry despite the many years of Christian presence in this region. The approach of the church towards this practice of polygamy makes some polygamists to remain in their “institutions” and reject Christianity as they feel rejected and uncared for by the Church which, ironically, bases her existence on Christ’s ethic of love. Fr. Hillman, a theologian and a missionary, after his long struggle with the church’s position on polygamy

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<sup>1</sup> By referring to Mara societies, I mean that the area has more than one ethnic group for it has Luos, Kuria, and Jita among others who are all affected by the “polygamy crisis” in their respective Anglican churches.

and what the Bible says (on polygamy) has come up with suggestions in his book *Polygamy Reconsidered: African Plural marriages and the Christian Church*. He says:

Moreover, since the leaven of the Gospel becomes properly effective among a people only through their active participation in the sacramental life of the Church, and since growth in Christian perfection is supposed to be gradually achieved in the course of a person's whole life, it would seem to be theologically unsound to evangelise polygamists and then to prevent them from participating fully in the Christian fellowship (1975:205).

With regard to Mara Diocese, I find myself agreeing with Hillman that the past church policies need to be re-examined. Even though I do not subscribe to all his views, I have, however, been finding his work very reflective, asking the question as to whether the theologians who see polygamy as a problem have really thought beyond ready-made solutions they have to offer. This point is among the many that arouse the curiosity of my mind to engage myself in revisiting the debate on polygamy in the Anglican Church of Tanzania, Diocese of Mara (ACT-DM). The question of polygamy has been coming up now and then in the theological world and has been characterised by disagreements and has remained an unresolved issue.

This question of whether a polygamist can be a full member of the Christian church has received much attention in the history of the church in Africa as my literature review will show; which means that my motivation for the study helps me to speak for the sub-Saharan Africa which experiences interrelated cultural problems. It is remarkable that various Churches, including the ACT-DM, have formulated constitutions condemning the practice without taking time to study the practice and offer ethical theological guidance from an African perspective.

The aim of this study is therefore to revisit the debate on polygamy in the Anglican Church of Tanzania, Mara Diocese as a "Gospel-cultural crisis" that can be unveiled by being subjected to a scholarly enquiry with a view to finding a way forward. This therefore calls for a comprehensive study of polygamy and its implications for the Christian life style in

Tanzania if the church has to be serious about authentic communication of the Gospel message to the Tanzanian context in particular and Africa in general.

My interest of pursuing the subject has therefore been motivated by my desire to seek a way forward with regard to polygamous marriages in a monogamous age. In so doing, I hope the study will offer a solution to the “polygamous crisis” that threatens the very existence of Mara Anglican Diocese. It is also hoped that it will provide direction to African Christianity in general for now and for the future of African theology.

## **1.2 Preliminary literature study and location of the research within the existing literature**

The preliminary literature does not directly deal with my topic of research. This therefore means that the study is by no means a carbon copy of the existing literature. However, it uses the existing literature on the Gospel and African culture with particular allusion to polygamy to uncover the statement of the problem. This provides us with the badly needed direction on the position of polygamous Christians in the Anglican church of Mara, Tanzania; thereby helping us to reflect on the entire sub-Saharan region in general.

Teresia Hinga (1992) offers one of the crucial works in this debate by calling on the church to reassess the way it handles some cultural practices such as polygamy, female circumcision, and spiritual imperialism among others. For in treating the issue of polygamy, the missionaries asked the polygamist to abandon all but one of his wives undoubtedly bringing untold pain to women and children thus discarded. Other African women theologians such as KwaZulu- Natal Chapter of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, view polygamy as one of the forms of marriage, which has brought misery to the African women. Their comment in response to Christina Landman’s article on polygamy is that “polygamy destroys the fabric of family life. It engenders competition and jealousy among the women and children and also does not take into account the psychological impact of this environment.” They go on to say that “polygamy does not support parenting especially from the father and instead encourages juvenile behaviour in men” (1999:77).

E. Hillman in *Polygamy Reconsidered* provides a preliminary framework for this research. His work goes on to define African polygamy and other marriage forms, the historical missionary and pastoral problem of African polygamy. The relevant demographic and anthropological aspects of African polygamy are also treated, and the biblical texts that are usually used in support of the traditional missionary Christian position are re-examined; and their traditional interpretation is questioned. The theological rationale of the traditional position is critically examined and some different theological opinions are presented (Hillman, 1975). While there are clear differences between polygamy in Mara societies and other African societies, there are also many similarities that make Hillman's work relevant.<sup>2</sup>

Another publication which is of great significance in this study is Hastings (1973). In this book, Hastings (1973:73) contends that the missionary approach to the question of polygamy was that it was sin comparable to adultery, an inferior marriage less satisfactory than monogamy. The question to ask ourselves is: "is there any biblical or theological reason for condemnation of polygamy in the church?" This concern agrees with Niwagila when he says, "whether the church has the right to use the sacrament as a weapon to punish polygamists is also a theological question" (Niwagila 1991: 409).

With regard to the Gospel and culture, John Mbiti speaks favourably about African culture and its interaction with the Gospel when he advises that,

The African culture must extend its hospitality to the Gospel as an honoured guest that, hopefully, may stay for many centuries and millennia as the case may be.... it is tragic when a culture, perhaps through no fault of its own, rejects the Gospel, closes its door to the Gospel, or turns a deaf ear to the Gospel. Each culture is in danger of doing this, sometimes dramatically and forcibly, sometimes slowly and imperceptibly. The Gospel is a divine message coming into frail cultural vessels (1978: 275).

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<sup>2</sup> See chapter five for in-depth analysis on polygamy in Mara.

These remarks from a leading African theologian shows that the Gospel and culture must come together, in a unity of purpose, and continuously engage in a dialogue, from time to time, for the sake of authentic African Christianity. He goes on further to say,

Conversion to the Gospel takes place within a cultural framework. The Gospel has been, and should continue to be, proclaimed within the melodies of our African culture – through words of our one thousand languages, through the vibrant tunes of our ten thousand musical instruments, through the joyous rhythm of our bodies and the solemn symbols of our artists. It is within our culture that we have to wrestle with the demands of the Gospel, and it is within our culture that we have to propagate the Gospel of our Lord (Mbiti 1978: 278).

According to Kanyoro, recent studies by women look at polygamy as an institution that is oppressive to women. She continues to say,

Polygamy thrives in patriarchal cultures, which believe in superiority of male persons. Men may own not only property, but women and their productive powers as well. Polygamy has tended to exploit women and children's labour because polygamy is justified as a means of enhancing productivity of property for men. Polygamy also depicts women as weak and needing the constant protection of men (2002:86).

Nasimiyu-Wasike is of the opinion that:

To inculturate the Christian message into African cultures is to be able to establish a creative process in which a new Christian culture gradually emerges. The task includes a careful discernment of the valid elements and institutions which rob some people of their freedom and thought and action and render them passive recipients of directives concerning what they are allowed to do where and under what circumstances (1992:116).

On the whole, the selected literature on Gospel and culture helps us to grapple with the dilemma of handling polygamy in African Christianity. In particular, the contribution of African Women's Theologians adds flavour to our discussion considering that this has been an exclusively male debate where they have been scoring their own goals without giving a chance to the female voices on an issue where they would best contribute.

### **1.3 Research Problem**

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether there is any credible theological justification for the church's attitude towards the polygamists who are denied full rights of membership. The statement of the problem therefore is,

Is there any theological justification for the Anglican Church's condemnation of polygamous marriage?

#### **1.3.1 Sub-problems**

1. How does the ACT-DM see polygamy as a challenge?
2. In what way is polygamy a challenge to the ACT-DM?
3. Is there any contribution that polygamy is making towards the church growth in ACT-DM?
4. What is the way forward with regard to "polygamy crisis" in ACT-DM?
5. What is the appropriate methodology that can be used in the gospel-culture debate in the Mara societies?

### **1.4 Research Hypothesis**

Polygamous marriage is not necessarily unchristian but it appears to be overtaken by time. It is my suggestion that a thorough study of polygamy and its implication for Christian lifestyle in ACT-DM Tanzania is a must if the church is serious about authentic communication of the gospel message to the Mara societies. For indeed, when the Christian faith is interpreted through the Mara cultural context, there is no credible theological justification for denying Mara Christians the sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Communion.

As Hillman says; "It is only when we begin to take seriously the different cultural conceptions and social institutions of the other peoples that some of our traditional, and hitherto unquestioned biblical interpretations are apt to be queried, challenged, and critically re-examined" (1975:142). The hypothesis is supported by theological reflection

on polygamy. This study is intended to help the ACT-DM to address the issue of polygamy without contradictions.

## **1.5 Theoretical framework**

This study is structured on the basis of the contextualization of theology which means an attempt to understand Christian faith within a particular context. In the case of this study, it means understanding the gospel in the context of Mara culture. Bevans (1992:4) insists that doing theology contextually is not an option but really a theological imperative. In his book *Models of Contextual Theology: Faith and Cultures*, Bevans gives detailed information about contextual theology, and provides five models of contextual theology. These models are: the translation model; the anthropological model; the praxis model; the synthetic model and the transcendent model (1992:37-117).

Though none of the five models is claimed to be better than the others, the theoretical framework of this research deals with one model: the Anthropological model.

### **1.5.1 The Anthropological model**

This model of contextual theology emphasizes preservation of cultural identity by a person of Christian faith. What is important in this model is the understanding that Christianity is about the human person and her or his fulfilment. This does not mean that the Gospel cannot challenge a particular context, but such challenge is always viewed with the suspicion that the challenge is not coming from God as such, but from a tendency of one (Western, Mediterranean) contextual perspective to impose its values on another. The anthropological model sees a particular context as unique, and emphasis is on this uniqueness rather than what participants in this context have in common with other groups. The strength of the anthropological model comes from the fact that it regards human reality with utmost seriousness. The anthropological model looks for God's revelation and self-manifestation as it is hidden within the values, relational patterns, and concerns of a context. The starting point of this model therefore is present human experience, with a particular focus on human culture, secular or religious (Bevans 1992: 47-52).

With regard to the anthropological model, Bevans (1992:48) states that it is within every person, and every society and culture that God manifest God's divine presence. In view of Bevans' comment, the model is appropriate in the study since polygamy involves culture and social change of the people involved. While the study concentrates on the culture that is attached to polygamy, the anthropological model helps to rediscover that God is present in the culture, and the only way humans will be able to appreciate the cultural values and systems is to appreciate the presence of God in one's culture. The use of this model therefore, helps us to bring about God's manifestation in our African culture.

To add on what has already been noted on this model, the study looks at the issue of culture with a view of trying to contextualize it with the Gospel of Jesus Christ so as to help bring about a reassessment of polygamous marriage by the Anglican Church of Tanzania Diocese of Mara.

## **1.6 Research design and research methodology**

My approach to this study combines history, systematic and practical analysis. Two methods therefore were used. One was to collect oral accounts on the practice of polygamy in the Mara societies and the Church. The second one was collecting the written information as found in church minutes, reports, letters, books, articles and periodicals. The theme of this research project has been examined through consulting first secondary sources dealing with polygamy. They mainly constitute the written sources on the issue at hand, in particular, literal material about polygamy.

Regarding the theme of the advent of Christianity in Mara and the approach of the Anglican Church of Tanzania Diocese Mara towards polygamy I explored written works, in which there is enough information about church approach to polygamy and the advent of Christianity in Mara.

The works I have cited in this study are by no means exhaustive; on the contrary, they only serve as foundation for the study. Of course the other component which constitutes the primary source for this work has been oral information. In the course of conducting this

research I managed to interview 30 people, this included seven church leaders.<sup>3</sup> It is sad that all seven church leaders whom I interviewed happen to be men, this is because, the ordination of women in this region is something out of discussion due to the male dominance or rather the patriarchal structure that does not allow women ordination. Other interviewees were seven Anglican Church elders, eleven church members from different denominations and five non members. Out of the 30 interviewees 18 were men and 12 were women. Their ages varied from 25-80 which helped in providing variety of experiences regarding the issue of polygamy. In addition, face to face method of interviewing was used as opposed to the questionnaire method because it is more interactive and revealing. This method gave the researcher an opportunity to explain the purpose of his visit. Finally my own experience of life and work at Mara Anglican Church as a priest from 1985 –2003 was of great value.<sup>4</sup>

## **1.7 Limitation of the study**

The limitations to this study are divided into two categories. The first part is the limitation of the term polygamy. As far as I know, the term polygamy stands for plural marriages regardless of gender, from heterosexuality to lesbianism. There is both formal and informal polygamy. This shows how broad the term is, so it has been very difficult for me to cover all types of polygamy in this paper. Whenever the term polygamy is used the intention is polygyny, which simply means a man with more than one wife. Lano gives a list of various types of polygamous marriages as; line marriage, open relationship, polyandry, polygamy, polyfidelity, polygyny, primary, or secondary swinging, triad, and triangle. (Lano and Parry 1995:127-128).

The second part on the limitations has been the location of the study. The question of how the church should handle polygamy is a world phenomenon. Being a student of theology I have selected a region called Mara, which is in the Northern part of Tanzania, a place where I was born and have worked for over fifteen years as a minister. The area covers

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<sup>3</sup> See the appendix on this.

<sup>4</sup> See appendix on people whom I interviewed.

Tarime, Musoma Rural, Musoma Urban, Serengeti, and Bunda districts (see appendix 1). This limits my area of research.

In this study, I have restricted it to Theo-pastoral approach on the cases of polygamy in the church, exploring how formal polygamy should be reconsidered in ACT-DM. In spite of all measures being taken by the church against polygamy, the practice remains strong. This point is underpinned by Kibira when he says; “the majority of Africans have not abandoned the practice, it seems that the ‘wall of Jericho’ protecting polygamy is very difficult to destroy because it is so deeply rooted in the culture of some parts of Africa” (quoted by Niwagila 1991:407-408).

The intention of the research project therefore is to assess the way forward with regard to polygamy in the age of monogamy as we focus on genuine Church growth that is Biblical and cultural at the same time.

## **1.8 Research Ethics**

This research paper sticks to the ethics of the research work as required by the University of KwaZulu-Natal, that it is done with the highest degree of honesty possible and with integrity. It is entirely my own original work and any information from other sources used is appropriately acknowledged thereby avoiding plagiarism. I have also strived to ensure that, by all means, I do not cause harm, in any manner; physically, psychologically, emotionally or in whatever way to the people I worked with in this research. Apart from being responsible to the environment, I have also tried as much as possible to be gender sensitive considering that my topic of discussion, like other topics, affects both men and women in the society. That means, any offensive language or attribution to a particular gender is a loss to all gender.

## **1.9 Polygamy defined**

Polygamy is defined as a custom or habit of having more than one male or female partner. Wasike (1992:101) defines the term polygamy as the marriage of one man and several women simultaneously. The word polygamy is a comprehensive term which embraces

various types of marriage unions that are not monogamous. In this study, the term polygamy has been used with the intention of referring to polygyny- that is, a type of marriage where one man marries more than one woman simultaneously. This is because, the type of polygamy found among the societies in Mara is the custom of having one husband to several wives simultaneously. A man may marry as many wives, as he likes, as long as he has enough cattle for paying *mahari*. Obviously, there is a growing dissentment on polygamy in the modern day Mara region. Mbiti (1969:142) holds that, getting married to two or more wives has been a custom found all over Africa. Which no doubt has to struggle to pass the test of the time.

According to the governments which recognize polygamy as a form of marriage, “polygamy is defined as a culturally determined, socially accepted and legally recognized form of permanent marriage where a man has more than one wife” (Gaskiyane 2000:7). We may sum up this section by saying that polygamy is still a significant phenomenon in African countries. However Magesa a Tanzanian theologian is of the view that “it is difficult to say whether it is increasing or decreasing” (Kisembo and Magesa 1977:6).

## **1.10 Conclusion**

In this chapter we have introduced the whole study on the “Gospel and African culture: polygamy as a challenge to the Anglican Church of Tanzania- Diocese of Mara.” It has given us the background to and motivation for the research, the preliminary literature study and the location of the research within the existing literature, the research problem, the research hypothesis, the theoretical framework, the research design and methodology and limitation of the study. In so doing, it has provided a platform of unveiling the statement of the problem,

Is there any theological justification for the Anglican Church’s condemnation of polygamous marriage?

The issues raised in this chapter (one) as outlined above are important to this study because they all point to the fact that polygamy is a challenge that needs to be addressed among the Mara societies.

In the next chapter, the study will seek to unveil the background study of Christianity in Mara region of Tanzania. In so doing, it will help us to address ourselves to the questions on, how was the Gospel presented in Mara region by the early missionaries? Could it be that the missionaries failed to address the cultural questions from the very outset thereby postponing a problem that will one day explode? How did the missionaries relate with the African culture? Could it be that the advent of the African Initiated churches came as a result of the missionaries' failure to address the question on the Gospel and African culture?

## CHAPTER TWO

### BACKGROUND STUDY OF CHRISTIANITY IN MARA REGION OF TANZANIA

#### 2.0 Introduction

“Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers, unless you are circumcised, according to customs taught by Moses, you cannot be saved. This brought Paul and Barnabas into a sharp dispute and debate with them...it is my judgement that we should not make it difficult for the gentiles who are turning to God...” (Acts 15:1-21 NIV)

The main aim of this chapter is to outline a brief historical background of Christianity in Tanzania. We shall also look at historical background of Mara region and the advent of Christianity into this region. Finally we shall narrow our focus of this chapter down to the rise of African Initiated Churches. The study on the rise of African Initiated Churches is important in this study considering that they came as a result of the negative approach of the Western missionaries in handling the African culture in the Mara region.

Since the introduction of Christianity to the African continent by the missionaries of European origin, all doctrines, traditions, laws and customs of the church have been disseminated to the indigenous people through the medium of Western European culture, which eventually undermined the traditional assumptions. The missionaries perceived the church as the instrument of God’s kingdom, the task of which was to destroy African culture, institute Western culture, and finally, to bring about a true culture which may be labelled Christian. African culture “was therefore regarded as either too evil or too imperfect to build into a single harmonious system with the so called Christian culture” (Moila 1995:23). In view of this Mbiti says; “I plead with people from other cultures and background, to understand the meaning behind African marriage and family, and to be patient in passing harsh judgement on our traditional marriage and customs and ideas” (quoted in Hillman 1975:56).

The incarnation of Christ is more than what we think as Gobi Makoka says;

In becoming human, Christ identified himself with us in all but sin (Phil 2:5-11). Humans have thereby permanently been invited to share divine life with God. The Christ event in becoming human is therefore, a reciprocal process between divinity and humanity. At play is the power of God's kenotic love in and through Jesus Christ empowering humans to become fully human. The reciprocity between divinities in reaching out for human kind, underlines what we here understand by the term inculturation par excellence or contextualization (Makoka and Shomang 2003:1).

This study discusses the Gospel and African Culture with particular reference to polygamy and observes if there is any biblical or theological justification for the Anglican Church of Tanzania Diocese of Mara's condemnation of polygamous forms of marriage. I strongly believe that re-examining church's past policies will not only bring challenges to the Anglican Church of Tanzania, Diocese of Mara, but will also enable her to properly treat cases of polygamy, as already found existing in the converts from African traditional religions background. The study gives suggestion and recommendation on what is to be done if the church is serious about authentic communication of the gospel message to the Tanzanians.

## **2.1 A brief historical background of Christianity in Tanzania**

The advent of Christianity in Tanzania can be divided into two phases. Phase one was under the Portuguese Catholic missionaries 1599-1612, but their work was confined to Zanzibar and Pemba, and could not cross over to Tanzania Mainland before this work proved a failure (Sahlberg 1986: 12).

According to historians (e.g. Sahlberg 1986, Anderson 1977), the first phase could not succeed because of the following two reasons: The first reason was that Portugal was more interested in trade than mission. Secondly, the Portuguese Catholics wanted to plant Portuguese Catholicism without regarding the special cultural context in which the Gospel of Jesus Christ should be planted. Of special interest to this study are the two reasons that Sahlberg gives that caused the rift between these two cultures. He says the first one was the

fact that the Catholics could not tolerate polygamy, the practice that was favoured by local population. The second area was on the issue of language. The Catholics used Latin as the official language. These two reasons became a hindrance to the propagation of the Gospel by Portuguese Catholic missionaries (1986:13).

Of special interest to this study is the second phase of the Advent of Christianity in Tanzania, which started with Rev Dr. Ludwig Krapf and Rev Johann Rebman, the German missionaries who came under the umbrella of the Anglican Church (C.M.S.). Ludwig Krapf- the pioneer in East Africa landed in Zanzibar in 1844 and was later joined by Johann Rebman in 1846. These two managed to cross over to Tanzania Mainland. In 1848 Rebman went to minister around Mount Kilimanjaro and the following year he went to serve among the Wachaga people of Northern Tanzania. In July 1848 Krapf travelled to Usambara Mountains with an idea of establishing a new mission station among the Usambara people (1986: 24-27). In his book *The Missionary Factor in East Africa* (1970) Prof. Oliver describes Krapf and Rebman as somewhat impractical but also as men of vision, tenacity and boundless courage. He says, "without doubt Krapf gives us a picture of an active and energetic missionary folk". He is acknowledged as the excellent linguistic folk. Both these good characteristics predestine him to be an energetic translator (Sahlberg 1986:29).

After Krapf and Rebman had ministered for a while, David Livingstone joined them. He started his missionary work with London Missionary Society (LMS) in South Africa 1840-1855; in 1869 he crossed Lake Tanganyika and reached Ujiji near Kigoma in Western part of Tanzania (: 32). Livingstone played a very big role by making the British aware of the slave trade. Secondly the formation of missionary organisations was a result of the speeches he made in England concerning mission work in East Africa. The outstanding missionary organisation was Universities Mission to Central Africa (UMCA). This organisation under Bishop William Tozer and Dr. Edward Steer started their work in Zanzibar in 1864. From 1864-1884 they managed to establish many new stations in Zanzibar and a long Tanzanian coast up to Masasi in the southern part of Tanzania (: 35-38). While Anderson (1977:49) designates UMCA approach as civilizing due to their stress

on better education, Sahlberg (1986:40) perceives them as the people who Africanised the gospel in Tanzania and East Africa as a whole, because of their effective effort to bring up freed slaves to ministerial responsibility and translation of scriptures, *The Book of common prayers* and hymns in Swahili and indigenous languages.

In 1975 CMS had stations in Chagaland and Bukoba and in 1876 Mackay a CMS missionary opened a new station at Mpwapwa about 700 miles inland. Even if Mpwapwa was a small place, the work in the course of time spread there widely (: 44). Though the First World War 1914-1918 caused a crisis to the Anglican mission stations, after the Second World War the Anglican Church gained strength and witnessed a rapid growth.

There were two issues that the Anglican missionaries prepared to combat. The first one was the issue of slave trade and secondly was polygamy. For this study it is important to note that Mackay is quoted by Sahlberg as having said that "It is impossible to continue with slavery and polygamy when a person is a Christian" (1986:22).

The overview study of the advent of Christianity in Tanzania has prepared us to study the specific region of Mara which is the specific concern of this study.

## **2.2 Demographic and economic background of Mara Region**

To avoid reconstructing castles in the air and a number of questions from being posed I find it appropriate to locate Mara region geographically. Mara Region is in the northern part of Tanzania. It is located between latitude 1 and 2 and degree 31° South of Equator and between longitude 33 10° and 35 15° East of Greenwich, Republic of Kenya to the North, Kagera region to the West, Mwanza and Shinyanga regions to the South and Arusha to the East. It is also flanked by Lake Victoria on the northwest (Mara 1998:1).

The Region has an area of 30,150 sq. km, of which 7,750 is covered by Lake Victoria water and 7000 sq. km. by Serengeti national park. The area available for human settlement and agricultural production is 14,799 sq. km. Only about 3000 sq. km. of this area is used for crop cultivation (DM Development office 2002:4). The five administrative districts in the

region include Musoma Urban, Musoma Rural, Serengeti, Bunda, and Tarime. (See appendix I).

Over 95% of the population is Christian or with few Muslims mostly in urban areas. The main ethnic groups in terms of their numbers are Kurya, Jita, and Luo. Kurya are the main ethnic group in Tarime highland and in the midlands and account for roughly 50% of the population. The Jita are the main ethnic group in the lakeshore and lowland inland areas south of Musoma. The Luo stretch along the Kenyan border from the lakeshore to the foot of Tarime highland. The Kurya are agropastoralists, whereas the Jita and the Luo are semi-agropastoralists. There are other small ethnic groups such as Zanaki, Suba, Ikizu, Issenye, and Kenye etc in the region (Mara 1998:3).

According to the 2002 census, Mara region had population of 1,368,602 people with the males being 653,449 and females 715,153. Despite land area of 21,618 sq. km. the population density of Mara region has continued to increase by 26 percent from a density of 43.7 persons per sq. km. in 1988 to density of 55 persons per sq. km. (<http://www.tanzania.go.tz/census/mara.htm>).

The majority of the economically active population in Mara region are engaged in subsistence agriculture as its main economic activity. Small portion of the population, especially those close to the shores of Lake Victoria is absorbed in the fishing industry (Mara 1998: 16).

The Region has three rather homogenous agro-ecological zones; these are the lakeshore, midlands and the Tarime highland zone. In the Midland, socio-economic differentiation is greater and wealth for men is calculated in terms of numbers of wives, cattle and ox teams and the ability to cultivate large areas of land. Earning from crop sales are invested in cattle. Cattle are kept for natural increase and milk and are also used for *Mahari* or dowry. The wives command more land and increase the family labour force available for crop production. Extending the cultivated area, or investing earnings in cattle and increasing numbers of wives increase wealth (: 24). In response to this Anne Nasimiyu Wasike

(1992:105) says, “this idea of increasing the number of wives in order not to overburden the first wife with work and to increase crop production only enhances the concept of inequality and subordination of women to men. There is no partnership in this relationship, and women are like slaves, working to enrich their husbands and masters.”

### **2.3 The Advent of Christianity in Mara**

Having seen the demographic and economic background of Mara region, we shall now, in this section, address ourselves to the advent of Christianity in Mara. In so doing, we shall address all the five denominations that spread their nets in this region. They include the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA), the Roman Catholic Church, the African Inland Mission (AIM), the Anglican Church (CMS) and the Mennonite Church.

#### **(a) The Seventh Day Adventist Church (S.D.A.)**

The advent of Christianity in Mara can be traced back to 1908 when a group of Seventh Day Adventist Church Germany missionaries, arrived and established their first station at Majita on Lake Victoria shore in Musoma rural district. Missionaries and those who had been baptized worked together preaching and teaching people at Majita and neighbouring villages. Three years later in 1912 new stations were established at Nyabange, Ikizu and Busegwe, the station that became the headquarters of S.D.A. Church in Mara up to the present time (Sahlberg: 1986:96). Their work did not stop there; in the same year they happened to open one station at Shirati Kanyosingo and another one at Kibomai, both in Tarime district. In every station there was a teacher to teach the children. The need for qualified teachers to do this work was great and so a school (college) was started at Ikizu. In 1940 three Africans, who underwent training in this school became priests. These people were Andrew Siti, Ezekiel Mafuru and James Odera (Interview with Rev. Deya 28:06:2003).

**(b) The Roman Catholic Church**

The second group was the Roman Catholic White missionaries who arrived in Mara in 1911. The group was stationed at Nyegina on the shores of Lake Victoria in Musoma Urban. From there the work spread all over. New stations were opened at Musoma, Komuge, Kowak, Makoko, Iramba, Tarime, Kibara, and parts of the Region (Interviews with Fr. John Chacha 10:07:2003).

**(c) The African Inland Mission (A.I.M.)**

The third mission work to Mara was in 1929 when a group of African Inland Mission evangelists from Shinyanga Region in Tanzania arrived in Mara and established their first station at Ruanga Musoma rural district. This group was led by Peter Manguru and his wife Mary both indigenous people of Shinyanga. In 1932 a group was sent to Busumi where they opened a church. In 1933 new stations were established at Busekera, Nyamuribwa, Kwikerege and Buringa. In 1934 another station was opened at Butata, where Paul Chai Chemere and Naftali Magai Mugenyi joined the leadership of the Church. The African Inland Mission did not operate in other districts in Mara until they decided to handover their stations to Mennonite Church in 1935 (Hess 1984: 27).

**(d) The Anglican Church (C.M.S)**

The history of the Anglican Church of Tanzania diocese of Mara is unique compared to the other regions in Tanzania. According Rt. Rev Gershom Nyaronga, the first bishop of the Diocese of Mara, in his book *Historia Fupi ya kanisa la Anglikana Mkoani Mara*, the Anglican Church filtered in Mara from Kenya in 1931. The church was brought in by indigenous people of Kowak village in Tarime district who happened to work in Kenya. These people were converted to Christianity and when they came back to Kowak they started evangelising their neighbours, holding family prayers and later the church was founded at Kowak. The indigenous people who brought the Anglican Church in Mara were five, Ayubu Okelo who later became church leader and a teacher, Jacob Ogendo, Samson Oduk, Eliakim Amondi and Yohana Adhero.

The church prospered through difficult moments. In 1932 the young church sent a three man delegation consisting of Mr Yohana Adhero, Mr Benjamin Luande and Erasto Wambura to Maseno, Kenya to seek advice from Archdeacon Edwin Owen (CMS) and also to invite him to visit Kowak in order to strengthen the church. The archdeacon accepted the invitation and came to Kowak via Kamageta. In 1934 Musa Omulo who was one of the Anglicans who migrated from Kenya to Buhemba founded the church at Buhemba in Musoma Rural district. During the first visit of Archdeacon Owen at Kowak in 1932 Musa Omulo was already living at Buhemba. Kowak remained under the parish of Pehill Akoko (Kenya) up to 1954 when Bishop Stanway of the Diocese of Central Tanganyika solved the matter by sending Rev. Denis Balozi to establish Kowak parish. Kowak became the first Anglican Church headquarters and evangelism centre for the whole of Mara. Within the first ten years of existence of Kowak parish, church elders of Kowak, Sakawa and Buhemba opened new stations with schools at Tairo in Bunda district, Nyang'ombe in Musoma Rural district and Luanda Kiseru in Tarime district (Nyaronga 1985: 3-17).

#### **(e) The Mennonite Church**

The history of Mennonite church in Mara began with American missionaries, John and Ruth Moseman and their companions Elam and Elizabeth Stauffer. They arrived at Shirati in Tarime district in 1934 where they established a church, a school and a dispensary that later became Shirati hospital and the headquarters of Tarime diocese. In December 4 1935, Elam and Elizabeth established the new station at Bukiroba in Musoma urban district. Now came a demand of a college and so in 1936 a college was started at Bukiroba station. In the same year a new station was started at Mugango, in May 1939 at Bumangi, on January 1 1940, at Nyarero. In 1950 four Africans were ordained to be priests. These were Ezekiel Muganda, Andrea Mabebe, Nashon Nyambok and Zedekia Kisare who was consecrated in 1967 as the first African Bishop of Mennonite Church in Tanzania. In 1953 another station was started at Tarime and in 1954 at Musoma. From 1947-52 the church succeeded to open 8 schools all over Mara (Hess 1984:1-94).

### **(i) Mission Schools**

All missionaries in Mara took the establishing of schools seriously because they were seen as an effective medium of providing religious education. According to Sahlberg (1986:99) the schools were regarded as *preparatio evangelica* that is a preparation for a true reception of the gospel. The schools were the spearheads of their mission work. The missionaries in Mara made school education one of the most important apostolate projects. Foundation of schools, training of teachers and over-all supervision of all education affairs in religion were placed in the forefront in the missionary planning. Religion was accorded an important position in the school curriculum. All efforts were made by teachers to see that religion was an integral part of education. As observed by Mbiti,

it is the young men and women in these schools who assimilated not only religion but science, politics, technology and so on, and the same young people are the ones who became detached from their tribal roots. Those attending schools also became the vehicles of carrying the new changes and introducing them to their village (1969:217).

In all the mission stations and other satellite churches in Mara region, the missionaries taught some doctrines which eventually undermined the traditional assumptions. African beliefs and practices were ruthlessly condemned as total paganism and superstition. This included traditional marriages. Specifically, polygamy was considered unchristian and nothing but sin comparable with adultery. According to Moila, this was the subjugation of culture (1995:21). This is why Eiselen quoted in Moila has argued that “Missionaries brought not only a new religion but also a new social order” (1995:23).

## **2.4 The rise of African Initiated Churches**

Many Christians in Mara region found themselves caught between the demands of their societies on one side and the teaching of the Church on the other. This state of dilemma did not last long. Between 1929 and 1970 there was a sudden rise of the African Initiated Churches (hereafter, AICs), pushing their way into Mara from Kenya. According to Mildred Ndeda, Nickodemu Siwa, who was one of the migrants from Kenya, who reached Mara accidentally while searching for pasture, introduced the first AIC in North Mara in

1929 called Nomiya Luo Church. He settled at Ochuna where he formed the first community (2004:8). The other churches that penetrated from Kenya were Roho Ruwe Church 1940, and Church of Christ in Africa 1959, Musanda Holy Ghost Church 1959, and Legion Maria of Africa Church 1962 (Oliello Jr., 1992: 24-25).

This was seen as a reaction on the negative approach of the western missionaries towards African culture and tradition. African Independent Churches came with flexible theologies, which advocated some of African customs and traditional beliefs. This attracted many Christians from mainline churches especially from the Anglican Church. African traditional marriages were accepted and polygamists were warmly welcomed. "The emergence of African indigenous churches was motivated not only by political, economic and social deprivation and racial discrimination, but also by spiritual hunger. As observed by Niwagila, "in the African culture, religious spiritual experience is the centre of life, and is also a means of perpetuating true relationship" (1991:412). The African who moved to AICs found this element missing in the mission churches.

On the whole, it is difficult to assess the effectiveness and standard of the AICs in Africa. For some of them have incorporated traditional practices which are clearly not Christian and which reduce their Christianity to a very low level. But others seriously and sincerely maintain a high standard of Christian life as lived in the context of African life (Mbiti 1969: 236).

Although the challenges brought by African independent churches did not affect the growth of the Anglican Church and other mainline churches, at least it was a reminder that something was wrong somewhere. Mbiti in analysing the position of African initiated Churches say;

The independent church movement seem to get closer to African traditional aspirations and religiosity than does mission Christianity. But the latter seems better equipped and concerned to move with the changing times, despite signs of lagging and conservatism. In any case the two forms of Christianity need each other and are perhaps necessary for the moment, and a humble cooperation between them

would obviously enhance the impact of Christianity in Africa (Mbiti 1969:241).

## 2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has shown us how the various denominations were introduced to the indigenous people of Mara region in Tanzania, and that the propagation of the Gospel in Mara was done with the motive of subjugation of the cultures of the indigenous people. It is in the light of such approach that Warren (in Bevans 1998:49) argues that there is need for a deep humility by which we remember that God has not let Godself without a witness in any nation at any time. When we approach the person of another faith than our own, it will be in a spirit of expectancy to find how God has been speaking to him or her and what new understanding of grace and love of God we may, ourselves, discover in this encounter. Our first task in approaching other people, other cultures, and other religions, is to take off our shoes, for the place we are approaching is holy, or else we may find ourselves treading on people's dreams. More serious still, we forget that God was there before our arrival (1998:49).

Warren's statement more or less describes the chief concern of contextualisation of the Gospel especially through anthropological model, whereby the practitioner does not consider himself or herself to be the one who brings the Gospel into a culture, but rather one who looks for the presence of God as manifested in that culture. This then throws open the definition of both culture and the Gospel and how these two relate- the work which will be addressed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER THREE

### GOSPEL AND CULTURE

#### 3.0 Introduction

Having outlined the background of Christianity in Mara Region of Tanzania, in this chapter we shall be addressing the question of the Gospel and Culture. This chapter is important because, when the Gospel and culture interacts especially, with regard to the African context, the outcome will be Christianity that will be authentically African, which is relevant to the contemporary situation in Mara. In this case the context is the issue of polygamy in Mara Diocese. The purpose of studying about Gospel and culture is that Gospel does not operate in cultural vacuum; it needs culture to be given expression. So dialogue between the Gospel and culture gives authenticity.

#### 3.1 What is Culture?

The term culture has many definitions that include beliefs, knowledge, morals, art, law and customs. This modern technical definition of culture as a social patterned human thought and behaviour was originally proposed by British anthropologist Edward Taylor in 1872. Since that time there has been considerable theological debate by anthropologist over the most useful attributes that a technical concept of culture should stress (Bodley 2003:1).

Bodley defines culture as that which,

consist of everything on a list of topic, or categories, such as social organisation, religion, or economy. Culture is a social heritage, or tradition, that is passed on the future generation and is shared, learned human behaviour, a way of life. It is ideas, values, or rules for living. Culture is the way humans solves problems of adapting to the environment or living together. It is a complex of ideas, or learned habits, that inhibit impulses and distinguish people from animals. Culture consists of patterned and interrelated ideas, symbols, or behaviour and it is based on arbitrarily assigned meanings that are shared by society (2003:2).

Culture involves at least three components. That is, what people think, what they do, and the material they produce. It is learned; not biologically inherited and involves arbitrarily assigned, symbolic meanings (Ibid).

Hillman perceives culture as something that can only be achieved from permanent human groups. He says,

Culture refers to the complex of learned patterns of thought and behaviour which belong commonly and characteristically to members of a permanent human group who share a common history and destiny who regard themselves and recognize by other such groups as a people a part in the family of mankind [sic]. Since men [sic] experience human existence only in limited dimension of particular historical... and since permanent culture groups normally grows from the seeds of biologically related family and clan units, there is necessarily in the world a plurality of cultures and ethnic background to each culture (1975:57).

Hillman (1975:57) continues to argue that temporary human groups like factory workers or the army cannot claim to have a culture, because culture is something that is created, developed and then handed on. This process really does not occur within groups that are merely conventional or legal. This to me is debatable because groups like the army have their own unique way of responding to their own environment. They have created and developed their own unique culture. For example the way they greet each other, according to ranks by saluting, is something that is not common to the other human groups. Their way of dressing is another example. Therefore this view is debatable.

Greertz suggests the meaning of the word culture as,

the total way of life of a people, the social legacy the individual acquires from his[sic] group, a way of thinking, feeling and behaving, an abstraction from behaviour, a theory on the part of the anthropologist about the way in which a group of people in fact behave, a storehouse of pooled learning, a set of standardized orientations to recurrent problems, learned behaviour, a mechanism for the normative regulation of behaviour, asset of techniques for adjusting both to the external environment and to other men [sic], a precipitate of history, a behavioural map, sieve, or matrix ( 2003.1).

John Mbiti (1976:273) describes the term culture as the human pattern of life in response to human beings' environment.

Kessing (1958:1) summarizes culture as being the totality of humanity's learned accumulated experience, which is socially transmitted, or more briefly, the behaviour acquired through social learning.

Various insights can be deduced from these definitions; for they lead us to the fact that, culture is a rooted experience in human, which helps him or her to find his or her place of existence in his or her own environment. Therefore this means that culture is part and parcel of human existence that cannot be separated or taken away from humanity. The other point is that culture differs according to the group and environment. But most people are convinced that their way of life is the best way of becoming truly human (Hillman 1975:59).

Since religion and culture in Africa are integrated and inseparable, then this work will adopt the definition of culture given by Shorter who simply defines culture as the way of life. This definition agrees with how societies in Mara understand the term culture. "Culture is a pattern of values and meaning expressed through images and symbols, which are transmitted by human society, and which enable human beings to communicate and develop their understanding of life" (1987:18). In other words though culture is human made, its impact on human life is beyond description. In Mara we believe that culture is what shapes our lives and it is what gives us identity.

Shorter's definition agrees with Tillich's when he say that, "every human act is culturally conditioned. Not only our external behaviour, but also our every judgment, even our inner most thoughts and emotional responses are formed, shaped and coloured by our own particular cultural experience and historical vantage point" (Tillich in Hillman 1975:59). In other words each culture needs to be recognized because each culture represents, conserves, and communicates something of the total human experience in its own limited but unique fashion (1975:59). This means that it is not a simple thing to tell people to stop

a certain tradition and custom, and also “condemnation does not have much effect on the person who for the whole of his or her life grew up in the system” (Niwagila 1991:407). If change has to take place it must come from within and not from without.

All these functional elements in the culture are dynamically interrelated vitally depending upon the other in a manner of a living organism. This is why no social-cultural element, for example, polygamy “can be correctly understood in isolation, without reference to its particular place and function within the total system to which it belongs” (Raymond, quoted by Hillman 1975:58).

As we have seen, all cultures are confined within the boundaries of group, region or nation which signify a plurality of cultures and ethnic background to each culture. This leads us to the next point which establishes differences within cultures.

### **3.2 Cultural Differences**

Under the subtopic ‘what is culture?’ we have seen different definitions of the word culture. It is an undeniable fact that all definitions point out that culture belongs to a specific human group at a specific environment and that because the world is made up of different family and clan units, it has plurality of culture. This indicates that cultures differ and that each culture has its uniqueness. “But it is quite another thing to regard them as better or worse, higher or lower, more or less human. Nor should they be seen as simple or complex, primitive or advanced, savage or civilized” (Hillman 1975:60).

This would be ill-treatment of other cultures ignoring the truth that each culture has a view of existence, a sort of guide to the understanding of what life is all about and how to survive as happily as possible as an individual in a community (Stott and Coote 1979:178).

Taking the example of African culture, one cannot simply condemn it without taking into account its religious content, that of the family, clan and society. Marriage, birth, death, music, art, education and language have a religious connotation. The African worldview does not divide culture into categories, a social culture, a political culture, a religious

culture etc. All cultures address themselves to the Divine from whom the power of existence originates. This is the reason why the church has found it difficult to eradicate some of the African customs such as polygamy (Niwagila 1991:407). However, this can be reassessed from time to time considering that culture is dynamic and not static.

There is a tendency of regarding Western experiences as a prior norm for comparing all societies and categorizing them as savage, barbarous or civilized. Robert Lonie has turned this down when he says, "In the sphere of social life there is no objective criterion for regarding cultural phenomena" (1975:61). The Major factor that contributes to cultural differences among various communities is the language. On the other hand language is strength as it preserves various or particular cultures. In the case of the Tower of Babel, various cultures were represented. As the Bible says;

Now the whole world had one language (read culture) and a common speech. The Lord said, if as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this ... come let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other. So the Lord scattered them from there over all earth...because the Lord confused the language of the whole world (Genesis 11:1-9 NIV).

This could be said to be the origin of different cultures and different races and ethnic groups, so bias evaluation of culture is unfair and history proves this as Strauss says,

So called primitive societies of course, exist in history, their past is as old as ours, since it goes back to the origin of the species. Over thousands of years they have undergone all sorts of transformation ... but they have specialized in ways different from those, which we have chosen. Perhaps they have in certain respects remained closer to very ancient conditions of life, but this does not preclude the possibility that in other respects they are further from these conditions than we are (Strauss in Hillman 1975: 62).

All human kind has his or her origin from God who is the source and beginning of life. no one can rightly claim to have been created superior to the other. If this is true then all cultures should be treated with respect and "not only each past generation but also every different cultural context today should be carefully studied for whatever signs of

transcendence, wisdom and human refinement might belong to it uniquely” (Berger quoted by Hillman 1975:63).

We have seen how comparisons of different cultures sometimes do more harm than good, while we appreciate the diversity of God’s creation as evidenced by various cultures, we need to point out that the diversity of cultural patterns becomes a problem when the “dominant” races use it to subordinate others who are different from them. As shown by the post colonial theory, the dominant cultures wrongly tend to think that they know what the other groups of people want. Consequently, they impose their experience to interpret other people’s experiences and make decisions for them; which is cultural imperialism. We sometimes forget that to pursue excellence in one particular area is, at the same time to forfeit similar initiatives in many other areas (:64).

So progress in one area should always be evaluated against retrogression in other area of the same culture. Probably the only true universal norm of human progress is the concern, respect and love that men [sic] should have for one another. A very high level of such sensitivity may be accompanied by the use of inadequate techniques. A case in pointing is the New Testament’s Good Samaritan who, while manifesting the highest type of human behaviour, used a medical technique that might have done more harm than good pouring oil and wine into wounds (Hillman 1976:6).

### 3.3 Polygamy as a component of African culture

The war between African polygamous marriages and Christianity is the indication that polygamy is the component of African culture. Speaking on marriage, John Mbiti stresses how marriage is a complex affair with economic, social and religious aspects, which often overlap so firmly that they cannot be separated (Mbiti quoted by Blum 1989:20). Polygamy is just one aspect of a culture. In every culture we find marriage as being one of the most important components of the culture (Bossard quoted by Blum 1989:23).

Polygamy is one of the forms of marriage in traditional African culture, so no one can accept the institution of marriage in African culture without accepting its existence. The fundamental character of polygamy in African society is born out by the fact that this form

of African marriage is the base of the extended family, which is the backbone of African communion relations and living (Makoka and Shomang 2003:5-6).

We have already discussed what we mean by the word culture. Podley (2003:2) gave us very important hint concerning the issue of culture by stating that culture is made up of three components, firstly is what people think, secondly is what they do and thirdly is the material they produce. Though now overtaken by events polygamy is part of what the Africans have been doing from time immemorial, and also part of their demonstration of life until recently when it was challenged by the changing circumstances.<sup>5</sup> Hillman says,

The patterns of particular culture are delicately interwoven multicoloured threads. They form a web of thought categories, values, scales, emotion responses, aesthetical norms, and education methods. The complex includes, also techniques of survival, food production household management, economic insurance, child rearing, social control, and mutual assistance etc (1975:58).

So when we talk of a particular culture we are talking of the whole system of life. For example when we talk of African culture we must take into account its religious content, that of family, clan and society, marriage etc. So African culture includes marriage and procreation and the moment we touch on marriage in African societies we must acknowledge polygamy as a form of marriage that has been one of the corner stones of African culture for quite some time (We shall return to this in the next chapter).

The definition of culture above left us with three outstanding points. First, culture always refers to a specific group, at a specific place, which means that, culture has its limitation of representation. This is to say that culture conditions people and reachable areas of creation. The second point is that, culture is not static; it changes according to generation, time and place. The third and last point is that culture is human made institution which contains both good and evil elements. This is due to the human's sinful nature as Mbiti (1976:281)

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<sup>5</sup> The changing circumstances that have seen the decline or the demise of polygamy especially in the latter part of 20<sup>th</sup> century includes the over emphasis by Christian teachings on monogamy as the ideal form of marriage, the emergence of capitalistic world, the change from traditional economy to modern economy, globalization, the modern forms of education and the current moves towards the deconstruction of patriarchy.

rightly denotes, because culture is made by human, and because human is sinful, what he or she creates bears the in print of human sinfulness.<sup>6</sup>

### 3.4 African Women's Theologians and Culture

"Then God said, let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them...So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:26-27)

Among the issues that contribute to the refusal to accept the *Imago Dei* in everyone, is the issue of culture. There can be no argument that culture has been the main cause of the oppressive structures in African societies, especially in regard to the oppression of women. Mildred Ndeda defines oppression as,

Imposition of the will of a certain person or group upon another person or group which may take the form of structural (repressive cultural customs) or more personalized forms of oppression. These can be expressed in the forms of external and internalized oppression. Externalized oppression is manifested through androcentrism, exclusion and subjection. Androcentrism is the habit of thinking about the world, ourselves and all that is in the world from the male perspectives. It downs or silences the women's voices and perceptions by continual out pouring of male perceptions into the world (2004:2).

In other words, androcentrism can be defined as male centered worldview, which does not value or include female perceptions, critique and contribution. It becomes clearer in the occasion when women are not permitted to define themselves or their roles but simply discover that "they have been defined and categorized by others so they become the silent other" (Ndeda 2004:2). Women are then perceived as non-men, those who have neither the status nor the roles of men. Very often women are defined in terms of their relationship with men.

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<sup>6</sup> This argument will be very important to us especially in the next chapter (s) when we shall be considering the changing patterns of culture that have weakened or washed away the institution of polygamy that has dominated the African scene from time immemorial.

These forms of oppression being androcentrism, exclusion or subjection have one thing in common; they are imposed by men serving in various categories of life “hence all of them can be encompassed under the rubric of patriarchy, which literary means the rule of the father or by men for the benefit of men” (Ibid).

In response to the African cultural oppressive structures, African women theologians established an institution that researches on women’s experiences in Africa. In 1989 African women theology was officially recognized and highlighted in Accra Ghana by the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians. As Phiri (1997:69) notes, the Circle originally defined African women as daughters of Africa living South of the Sahara whose lives are influenced by Christianity and African culture. At the present time the Circle has gone beyond that, and it embraces all women of Africa regardless of status, creed, religion, colour and educational background.

The main purpose of the formation of this forum is the liberation of women from the oppressive structures in both the society and the religious institutions especially the Church. Commenting on this Phiri (1997:11) says

\* The construction of womanhood by patriarchy is one of the central issues for feminist theologians globally and particularly in Africa because it has influenced the way women and the roles that women can play in African Church and society are imaged. Patriarchy has defined women as inferior to men thereby perpetuating the oppression of women by religion and culture.

The conditions and status of African women have been something that men do not want to discuss, but as for women theologians it is something that ought to be discussed as the urgency of the moment. Kanyoro observes the conditions of African women by saying that:

African women are custodian of cultural practices, for generations, African women have guarded cultural prescriptions that are strictly governed by the fear of breaking taboos. Many aspects that diminish women continue to be practiced to various degrees, often making women objects of cultural preservation. Harmful traditional practices are passed on as “cultural values” and therefore are not to be discussed, challenged or changed. In the guise of culture, harmful

practices and traditions are perpetuated. Practices such as female genital mutilation, early betrothals and marriages, and stigmatization of single women and widows, [polygamy, domestic violence] hinder the liberation of women (2001:159).

Oduyoye (1995:3) argues that, for years women have been carrying the knowledge that men were oppressing them, but the conditions were not suitable for them to raise their voices. She says, "Over time, African women had to learn to know their oppressors but had held their peace, because "when your hand is in someone's mouth, you do not hit that person on the head."

Kanyoro (2001:164) suggests that in order for African Women's liberation theology to achieve its goal, cultural hermeneutics should be regarded as very important and first step towards that goal. This is because "all questions regarding the welfare and status of women in Africa are explained within the framework of culture." And in her insightful work, *Introducing Feminist Cultural Hermeneutics an African Perspective* (2002), she suggests how hermeneutics should be done. In summary this is what she suggests; The Church should be open to change and at the same time it should maintain the tension that exists between gospel and culture. According to her, this tension will automatically invite dialogue between Christianity and African religious cultures. "Cultural hermeneutics can also be used as a method of dialogue between Christianity and African Religions." She is of the view that when dealing with the aspects of gospel and culture these three questions should be applied: "How is difference a problem to gospel and culture?" "What option might we consider when dealing with differences?" And lastly "how do we theologize once we recognize the difference?" For her, difference is not a problem but a reality that can be good and creative. "What is required of cultural hermeneutics is to sift the good aspects of the culture and religion and affirm them, knowing that there is room to reject what is bad" (:65-71).

In summary I share the views of African women theologians that the oppression of women by culture should be discussed theologically. I am also in agreement with their insistence that culture is not static and has to change for the well being of women as persons created

in the Image of God (*Imago Dei*) like their male counterparts. This is a call from the voices that the society should hear- including Mara societies. So the society needs to rise to the occasion and address the teething problems that are eating away the society in Africa. These teething problems includes the stereotypes that have underpinned women among other issues and are tantamount to the self refusal to be the self she was meant to be; the refusal to accept the *Imago Dei* in every one.

According to Hillman, this is the time of change when people are expected to see and perceive things in a different way, or rather in a more positive way; a time “to learn from others.” This is a call to transcend our own cultural limitations and congenital blindness (1976: 60). More about women theologians will be discussed in the next chapter.

Mbiti (1976:281) defines evil elements in the culture as the demons of culture “which only the Gospel is equipped to exorcise and disarm.” So it is my concern that we should define the term Gospel before we engage ourselves into the discussion on the relationship between the Gospel and culture. This is to say that the next point will be the definition of the term Gospel.

### 3.5 What is the Gospel?

The English word Gospel is from the old English (Anglo-Saxon) god-spell or god-good, originally meant the reward for good news and then good news itself is the usual New Testament translation of the Greek *euaggelion* (Richardson 1998:244). I would agree with Rajuili (2004:230) that the meaning of the word Gospel is,

Often not clear to many people both inside and outside the Church. At the popular level, the Gospel has been imbued with a “variety of meaning” ranging all the way from its usage as an adjective carrying the meaning of reliability in statements such as a gospel truth or authentic truth.

The Gospel could also be understood as the proclamation of the fulfillment of times and the coming of the Kingdom of God as Mbiti (1976:273) points out that the “Incarnation of our Lord was God’s act of intercepting human and cosmic history.” Desmond Alexander and

Brian Rosner are of the view that the Gospel was declared before hand to Abraham, “all the gentiles shall be blessed in you” (Galatians 3:8). This agrees with Rajuili’s (2004:23) views when he says,

In the scriptures the good news (Gospel) dates back to the Genesis account where God chose Abraham and later the nation of Israel, the prophets and finally Jesus to be the bearer of the good news. In His programmatic statement found in Luke (4:16-30) and based on Isaiah 58 and 61, the central message of Jesus was that, he did not introduce an entirely new theme of mission to the gentiles, but he carried forward God’s concern for nations.

In other words the Old Testament Gospel is proclamation of the coming kingly rule of God, which will have “a defined form and a defined means” (200:521).

According to Alan Richardson and John Bowden (1983:244) the known *evangelion* is not found in Old Testament. Only the corresponding verb which may be literally translated to evangelize, Hebrew word *ba-sar* means “bring good tidings.” It denotes the announcement of one of God’s mighty acts done on behalf of the chosen people.

The term Gospel can be assimilated to prophet Isaiah’s message of restoration, for example in Isaiah 52:7 “how beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news. Who proclaim peace, who brings good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion “your God reigns.” All the prophetic utterance found in Isaiah are centered around the historical occasion of the nation’s deliverance from captivity in Babylon.

#### **(a) The Gospel in the New Testament**

The Term Gospel is most often used in the New Testament to denote the Christian Message. The word sometimes appears as the Gospel of God, meaning not merely good news about God but good news from God, who has taken initiative in making it known to all. At other times the Gospel is spoken as the Gospel of Christ which again means not only good news preached by Christ but good news whose content is Christ himself beginning with his humanity. This corresponds with views of Alexander and Rosner (2000:522) when they say; in the New Testament the Gospel of the Kingdom has its concrete expression in

the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus is seen to fulfill the Old Testament expectation; this is because the Gospel was promised before hand through the prophets.

Richardson and Bowden (1983:244) are of the opinion that Paul's use of the term Gospel as defined in his Epistle to Romans 1:3-4 perceives the term Gospel as the "disclosure of Jesus Christ as God's Son and our Lord by His resurrection from the dead. This disclosure implies the ending of one world and the beginning of new one in (2 Thes.1:9-10), and dismissal of sins."

The Gospel is also the disclosure of God's righteousness for his restoration activity for everyone who has faith, both Jew and Greek (Rom 1:16). It is very clear that the Gospel brings salvation to everyone who has faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ himself and not through observing law as it was demanded by the missionaries who brought the Gospel in Mara. Rev. Kiwovele (in Trobisch 1971:15) who latter became the bishop of Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern part of Tanzania says

If salvation were based on monogamous marriage... the salvation looks as though it were earned meritoriously, by fulfilling certain conditions rather than given grace of God through repentance of sins and faith in Jesus as savior of mankind [sic].

While our modern society cannot revert to polygamy, Rev. Kiwovele's concern is worth revisiting. For what or who brings salvation? The monogamous marriage as the missionaries insisted or the polygamous marriages as the African practitioners of culture insisted? The answer is none of them. For Christ's salvation is obtained by faith as St. Paul in Romans 1:16 discovered, that the just shall live by faith alone. However, we cannot justify polygamy in a monogamous age by being just critical on the early European missionaries.

The Gospel could also refer to a record of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ as documented in the first four books of the New Testament, which relate to the process by which the fulfillment event emerges through Jesus' life, death, resurrection and ascension.

### 3.6 Gospel and Culture

Since the early Church, the question of culture and Gospel has continued to come upon every generation of Christians in different forms and different ways. In contrasting culture and the Gospel, Mbiti (1976:274) says; the Gospel is one, unique, holy and universal. It is also eternal, revealed in history and makes new creation in Christ. On the contrary, culture is a human made phenomenon which makes human beings to be organized into a pattern of thought, acts and in general behaviors. Culture has neutral elements, and universal elements found in all societies, it is also historical, changing, temporal, and transitory and conditions people in reachable areas of creation. Moeahabo Moila (2000:74) agrees that culture conditions people, by saying that, "each human individual is born into a particular social-cultural context. From that point on, persons are conditioned by members of their society in countless, largely unconscious ways, to accept as natural to follow rather uncritically the cultural patterns of that society." This does not mean that the Gospel and culture are mutually exclusive but instead they are intimate partners. Mbiti goes on to say,

The Gospel was revealed to the world, in the context and language of culture of Palestine two thousand years ago. Since then, the Gospel has been proclaimed, propagated and accepted within the cultural milieus of the people of the world. When Gospel and culture meet, and if the Christian faith is generated, then the product is Christianity (1976: 274).

The question that we ask ourselves is that, if conversion of the Gospel takes place within a cultural frame work, then how do culture and the Gospel relate? In explaining how they relate, Mbiti is of the opinion that, "no single culture should imprison the Gospel, because the Gospel is not the property of European or American culture, neither should we make it the property of our African culture" (: 275). The Gospel belongs to Jesus, thus it cannot be confined within the boundary of culture or nation or any generation. Mbiti continues to say, that the Gospel is beyond culture, "the beyondness of the Gospel derives from the fact that God is the author of the Gospel while man [sic] is the author of culture" (: 281). And if we agree with Mbiti that human beings are the authors of culture, then, we need to acknowledge that neither monogamy nor polygamy can save African people or humankind in general. Rather God through Jesus Christ saves. But still we must not forget that the

Gospel needs culture to be given expression. Because of this partnership, Moila suggests that, “Christian preaching should be related to the cultural background of the African believer” (2002:78). The fact that God is the author of the Gospel gives the Gospel its legitimate power to transform and judge culture. This is to say that African culture should be ready to be transformed and judged by the Gospel. Mbiti supports this argument when he says,

We must also without fear or hesitation, bring the Gospel to bear upon our culture in order to evaluate it, to judge it, transform it. Because culture is created by man [sic], and because man [sic] is sinful, what he [sic] creates, however beautiful, however great, however highly cultivated it might be, it nevertheless bears the imprint of human sinfulness through individual sins, corporate sins, structural sins, economic sins, social sins, political sins, national sins and international sins (1976:281).

In other words, culture cannot claim perfection because of its impurities. Mbiti uses the term demon for the impurities that culture has. He insists that the demons of culture cannot be exorcised by whatever means except by the Gospel. This is because the Gospel is equipped to exorcise and disarm culture (Ibid)

The approach of the Church towards African cultures in Mara can be defined as; “Christ against culture” or the “Gospel against culture” as discussed by Richard Niebuhr in his book *Christ and Culture* (1951:45-76). The danger that lies ahead of this kind of approach is that, the gospel operates within cultural vacuum. This is because the approach requires the Church members’ withdrawal from their culture. The other component that is connected with the withdrawal from the culture is the relations of Law and Grace. This approach puts more emphasis on legalism than significance of grace in Christian life. Niebuhr (1951:79) is of the view that,

The emphasis on conduct may lead to the definition of precise rules, concern for one’s conformity to such rules, and concentration on one’s own will rather than on the gracious work of God.

In my view, the Church should adopt the vision that says; “Christ the Transformer of Culture,” in other words gospel is the transformer of culture. This is because, in His incarnation Jesus identified with us in all but sin (Phil. 2:5-11). He was brought up within

Jewish culture but he did not condemn Jewish culture but instead he spent more time trying to transform it through his teaching. St. Augustine's view as (quoted by Niebuhr 1951:2090) agree with our position in this study when he says, "Christ is the transformer of culture in the sense that he directs, reinvigorates, and generates that life of man [sic], expressed in all human works." These views agree with Mbiti's (1976: 281) when he says, without fear or hesitation, we must bring the Gospel to bear upon our culture in order to evaluate it, to judge it and to transform it. Since culture bears some sinful elements, the method of dealing with these sinful elements in culture cannot be mere dialogue, but transformation which can only be possible through the teaching of the Gospel that is based on *Agape* (love), as Christ taught us. This, I believe is what the societies in Mara need.

African theologians who favour contextual approach to Christian faith will agree with me that the on going debate between the Gospel and culture should be the vehicle that leads to the development of a Christology that welcomes African beliefs systems on board. The study of the "Gospel and Culture" leads us to study "Christology in African Theology." And since African theology is literary an interaction between culture and the Gospel of Christ, the above study has clearly prepared us for the next sub-section.

### **3.7 Christology in African theology**

Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But what about you?" He asked, "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ the Son of the living God" (Matt 16:13-16). Now, our question in this sub-section is, "who do we say Jesus Christ is in our African context to day?"

It is beyond doubt that much has been done by African theologians- both women and men regarding the question of African Christology of contextualization. Nthamburi (1991:61) confirms this when he says, "a number of African Theologians have endeavored to show how Christology can be indigenized." The main purpose of this work, in the words of Mugambi and Magesa (1998:45), is "to translate Jesus Christ to the tongue, style, genius, character and culture of African people."

This is done so that the African Christians will no longer feel uncomfortable, but instead find Christ to be the fulfillment of their heritage, because the Africans understand Christ in the context of their culture. For Christology helps in approaching the New Testament teaching on Christ with African worldview. Nyamiti (1991:3) shows his appreciation for the work that has been done by African {Black} theologians concerning the subject matter and he says, “by far this is the most common and most developed theological school in Black Africa.”

In African theology, Jesus is depicted by the titles that befit Africans. For example Jesus is perceived as Ancestor, an Elder Brother, Master of initiation, Mediator, Chief, Liberator, just to mention a few. In my work I have focused my conversation on the two titles, Jesus as African ancestor and as a liberator based on the views of Kabasele Bujo, Bediako, Moila and Wasike.

Bujo (in Nyamiti1991:10) depicts Jesus as “Proto-Ancestor, the unique ancestor, and the source of life and highest model of ancestorship. “Through the incarnation, Christ assumed the whole human history including the legitimate aspirations of our ancestors.” Though our biological ancestors transmitted life to us, the fact remains that they also received that life from Christ who is the source of life. Moila’s view is that, “the concept of ancestor is a very important one for the African explanation of the human and divine natures of Jesus Christ (2002:77).”

According to Kabasele (1991:126), Christ came to fulfill the ancestral mediation to himself. Bediako summarizes this point by saying that,

The way is open to appreciating more fully how Jesus Christ is the only real and true ancestor and source of life for all mankind [sic], fulfilling and transcending the benefits believed to be bestowed by lineage ancestors (2000:31).

Though most of African scholars agree with the application of ancestral office to Jesus, Idowu is very conscious on the term applied to the divinities, for example the term

ancestor. He argues that, there is always a clear distinction between the divine beings and pure ancestors, and because we have many words or terms to use, we need to be keen in selecting the suitable term that fits the context, instead of overloading any term with forced meaning, if we are not careful in the usage of terms applied to the divine beings, we will find ourselves violating the distinction between the divine beings and pure ancestors. As a result, God or Jesus Christ becomes demoted to the rank of ancestor in African thought. I agree with Idowu that a clear distinction should be put in place, but on the other hand my confidence is built on the usage of Proto- ancestor that is used by both Bujo and Moila. Moila's response is that

Jesus is further accepted as ancestor not in the normal sense. In other words, his status as the Son of God gives him a status of extraordinary ancestor or Prime-Ancestor. His works affirm this point. He did what no human being is able to do (2002:72).

For Anne Nasimiyu- Wasike (1991:77), Jesus is the liberator and saviour of African women. She says, in their oppression African women have learnt tolerance, but now the time has come when there is hope in Jesus Christ,

who came to heal a broken humanity. He empowered and enabled the downtrodden of society to realize their dignity and worth as persons. He continues to empower and enable the African women today so that she passes from unauthentic to authentic human existence, and so that she discovers her true identity of being made in the Image of and likeness of God.

Wasike continues to argue that Jesus "inaugurated the restoration of individuals and societies to wholeness and he invited disciples to participate in this restoration" (ibid). Phiri (1997:13) supports the approach of the Gospel with critical mind when she says, despite this domination, some women have began to discover the liberating and empowering potential of the Gospel with regard to their situation as women, and have began to reread the Bible from their own perspective. This comes as a challenge to the Church as the body of Christ to participate fully in this restoration.

I would summarize this point by the words of Anslme Sanon that says, the incarnation of Christ made,

him exposed to humans and their cultural experiences. This cultural humanity assumed by Jesus in this incarnation serves as mediation of redemption both to humanity and to his role of adoption of all humanity. This human being Jesus, assumed by infinitude to the divinity, is capable of assuming all humanity is open to all humanity, joining all humanities together in time and space to heal and save them (1991:96).

In reverting to our main concern, in this study- polygamy- we note that African theology grapples with relevant issues such as “polygamy as a challenge” to the spread of the Gospel, as it is, indeed an interaction between cultural tendencies, however patriarchalised, and the Gospel. The study on Christology in African theology has therefore prepared us to study “Culture and Christianity at logger head.”

### **3.8 Culture and Christianity at loggerheads**

‘The word became flesh and made his dwelling among us’ (Joh.1:14). This fundamental confession implies that the universal love of God as revealed in Jesus Christ through the power of the Spirit manifests itself in particular contexts and through particular cultures” (Duraising quoted by Ariarajah 1994: vii).

Ariarajah defines the term culture as the tool that shapes the human voice that answers the voice of Christ (Ibid). This implies that culture and Christianity are not expected to have conflict. In contrast to this, the debate on how Jesus and Gentiles should relate and also between Christianity and its Jewish heritage was a divisive issue in the emerging Church as reflected in Acts 10-15 (Ariarajah 1994:1).

The conflict between culture and Christianity became clearer when Western missionaries came to Africa. Ariarajah says colonization, westernization and evangelization were all characterized by an assumed superiority of what was brought to the religions and cultures of the people who were met and “conquered” (1994:3). In challenging western missionaries approach to other cultures, Hillman says,

The fact that Christianity has become an integral part of all western cultures does not mean that these have become Christian cultures. Although Christianity and particular cultures have had far reaching influences upon one another, no single culture stands over and above all others as the Christian culture. No particular set of cultural patterns and social structures is in itself specifically Christian (1975:66).

“The ignorance, insensitivity and outright rejection of other cultures as primitive, pagan, heathen or savage has been well documented”(Ariarajah 1994: 3) whether in Africa, Asia or America. The missionaries forgot one thing that Christians are not to be distinguished from other people by country, language or customs. They have no cities of their own, they use no peculiar dialect and they practice no extraordinary way of life (Dod quoted by Hillman 1975:69).

In summary I would say that the Church was hijacked by Western cultures, ignoring the fact that it was sent to all peoples in every time and place. Hillman is of the opinion that the church is bigger than race or nation, he says,

It is not bound exclusively and indissolubly to any race or nation, or to any particular way of life or any customary pattern of living, ancient or recent. Faithful to her own tradition and at the same time conscious of her universal mission, she can enter into communion with various cultures models to her own enrichment theirs too (1975:69-70).

This debate on “Culture and Christianity at logger heads” prepares us to understand the arguments that the proponents of polygamous marriages in Africa have been using to justify it theologically. While the above arguments are philosophically true, the ethics of our time (otherwise called situational ethics) dissuade us from advocating for a return to polygamy at this period in our history. However, we shall attempt to analyse the various arguments for and against polygamous marriages in our bid to unveil the statement of the problem. The above section has however prepared us to study the “African Culture and Christianity” as it was brought by early missionaries.

### 3.9 African Culture and Christianity

Since the introduction of Christianity to the African continent by the missionaries of European origin, all doctrine, tradition, law and customs of the Church have been disseminated to the indigenous people throughout the medium of western European culture. The western missionaries in general followed a policy that labelled whatever cultural ethos that did not harmonize with the European way of thinking and lifestyle as unchristian. Their attitude has persisted from the beginning of the missionary era up to the present day in the life of the Church as an institution. This is reflected in the liturgy, catechetic, doctrine and canonical norms of the Church. The Church has remained European on African soil on the plea that all “European is Christian and all indigenous cultures could intrinsically hardly qualify as Christian” (Makoka and Shomang 2003:1).

Mugambi confirms that,

During the pioneer missionary period, most missionaries expected African converts to abandon and denounce their heritage and imitate missionaries, of course, neither the missionaries nor their Christian ancestors had to do this. Yet the African was expected to be divorced from his [sic] culture in order to embrace the Gospel. This was impossible hence the situation which African designed for themselves, both in-spite of and because of the negative attitude of missionaries towards the African Cultural and religious heritage (198:159-160).

From the words of Max Warren as quoted by Niwagila (1991:406), which says, “We have marched around and alien Jericho the requisite number of times. We have sounded the trumpets and the walls have not collapsed”, and Mugambi’s statement above, gives a clear picture of how the Church or rather Christianity has related itself with African culture. Their comments correspond with the approach of the missionaries in Mara and Tanzania as a whole. As I have said in the previous chapter, whatever was African was seen as evil and satanic and should be abolished. The Church under the influence of western Christianity worked towards down fall of the walls of Jericho, which was in the real sense African traditions and customs. In order to make the way clear for the spread of Christianity on the African continent. “It was taken for granted that western Christianity under the influence of the European missionaries was to be the norm for African life” (Ibid).

Rev. Hinderer who was an Anglican missionary writing to Venn wrote that,

The country is heathen and mixed up and held up by heathen priest-craft, and we are allowed to teach and preach the Gospel not because they are tired of heathenism, but because God gives us influence as Europeans among them. This influence is very desirable and necessary to us (quoted by Niwagila 1991:406).

The missionary attitude towards African culture was beyond description. "The assumption here by the European messengers is clearly incompatible with the logic of common sense because it is based on a false significance of the superiority cult" (Makoka, Shomang 2003:1). Pobee reminds us that this kind of attitude towards African culture forgot one thing that Christianity as it came to people of Africa, "is a composite of the teaching of Jesus, Semitic culture, Greco-Roman culture and European culture" (quoted by Niwagila 1991:406). Moila (2002:77) cites Sundler's (1960:291) says,

Our first missionaries missed the gate. They would have won many people by transforming the old belief into the new and changing the way of approaching the Almighty. The deceased would have been compared with the angels of God which are never worshipped but just praised as God's messengers. Something must be done to establish contact between the old belief and Christianity. Contact with both is therefore the key to enter the African door and the African heart.

Mbiti (1976:275-276) does not see theological justification for condemnation of African culture, he says "It was very unfortunate, therefore, that Africans were told by word and example, by those who brought them the Gospel that they first had to become culturally circumcised before they could become Christians. There is no theological justification for that kind of burden."

It would be unfair to generalize this negative attitude to all missionaries. There are some few who were committed to presenting culture preserving. "Some laboured tirelessly to preserve local culture by communicating ancient stories to writing and translating and making them known to the world" (Ariarajah 1994:3). For Mbiti, all missionaries together with their African helpers were devout, sincere and dedicated men and women. But they were not theologians, some of them had little education, and "most of the Africans

evangelist and catechists were either illiterate or had only little formal learning... Christianity was not from the start, prepared to face a serious encounter with both the traditional religion and philosophy or the modern changes taking place in Africa," (Mbiti 1969:232).

What Mbiti says is true but we also need to admit that condemnation of missionaries toward African culture brought more harm than good. It has created African Christians who live a double standard life. Christian teachings make them be Christians at daytime but at night they are Africans. Makgokong confirms this when he says,

The African, not alike other nations elsewhere during their stage of development, is in many respects still entangled in a tradition and custom on the one hand, and Western values on the other. He [sic] is in a stage of transition in which the new cannot simply supersede the old; there must be an evolutionary development towards something, perhaps synthesis of both elements (in Moila 2002: 78).

Mbiti is also of the opinion that, "cultural imperialism must be terminated first in order to allow the indigenous culture to relate more effectively in the Gospel, on its own terms and without pressure from outside. With humility and gratitude let us borrow and learn from other cultures, but let us not become their cultural slaves" (1976:276).

The above debate on "African Culture and Christianity" has shown us the Theo-cultural justification that the proponents of culture have always given in order to counter balance the arguments against the African culture and irrelevance in the growth of Christianity as the early missionaries portrayed it. Unfortunately, while the missionaries dismissed everything to do with African culture as unworthy; the proponents of African culture on the other hand equally defended almost everything in African culture as necessary in the spread of the Gospel. There is every reason, therefore, to address the two extremes.

### 3.10 Conclusion

This chapter has given us opportunity to discuss the relationship between the Gospel and culture starting with the definition of culture which has been described as the way of life,

through to the relation between Christianity and African culture. The question of culture and the Gospel is old as the Church itself. We need to remember that every human act is culturally conditioned, not only our external behaviour, but also our every judgement, even our inner most thoughts and emotional responses are formed and shaped and coloured by our own particular cultural experience and historical vantage point. This is to say that culture is “the medium of receiving, diffusing, tuning in and relaying the Gospel.” Mbiti suggests that,

each culture must count it privilege, to have the Gospel as its guest. African culture must extend its hospitality to the Gospel as an honoured guest that, hopefully, may stay for many centuries and millennia as the case may be. Some cultures of the world have rejected the Gospel while others have restricted its effectiveness. It is tragic when a culture, perhaps through no fault of its own, rejects the Gospel, closes its doors to the Gospel, or turns a deaf ear to the Gospel. Each culture is in danger of doing this, sometimes dramatically and forcibly, sometimes slowly and imperceptibly. The Gospel is a divine message coming into trail cultural vessels (1976:275).

We also need to remember that culture is unique, and does not need to adopt categories of thought from other cultures, in order for God’s revelation to be appropriated. Each particular culture is to be studied critically in its individual capacity in order to discern Gods’ presence (Bevans 1992:49).

The study of culture and the Gospel has prepared us to study the specific challenge of polygamy in the Mara Anglican Diocese. This will provide a marked shift from the general view on culture and the Gospel to a very specific area of study- Mara Anglican Diocese.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### POLYGAMY IN MARA ANGLICAN DIOCESE

#### 4.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, we have addressed the question on the Gospel and culture. In this chapter, we intend to address the pastoral approach to polygamy as a context of interaction between the Gospel and culture by the Anglican Church but with particular reference to the Anglican Church of Tanzania-Diocese of Mara. We shall seek to trace the background which the early missionaries had in condemning polygamy in ACT-DM. The chapter will also assess some of the missionary's arguments as we refer to our problem statement: "Is there any theological justification for the condemnation of polygamous marriages in ACT-DM?"

This chapter reviews the fieldwork research that I conducted in Mara Region of Tanzania and has attempted to analyze the findings and suggest some recommendations on what should be done.

The church in Mara has held, for a long time, the view that the practice of polygamy would die out but it hasn't. Instead polygamy has remained a social subject that begs for urgent attention, especially by those of us who have variously brushed with it, among the Mara societies. Characteristically, today, a man may marry as many wives as he likes as long as he has enough cattle for paying dowry despite the many years of Christian presence in this region. The approach of the church towards this practice of polygamy makes some polygamists to remain in their condition and reject Christianity as they feel rejected and uncared for by the church which, ironically, bases her existence on Christ's ethic of love.

#### 4.1 Field work July 2004/ January 2005

My field work was carried out during the month of July 2004 and also 15<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> January 2005. From 5<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> July 2004 I conducted intensive interviews and face to face method

of interviewing using guiding questions. This is because the researcher found the face to face interviews method more interactive and revealing. This method gave the researcher the opportunity to explain the purpose of his visit.

My first interview was done on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2004 at ACT-DM head office, Musoma. The interviewee was The Rt. Rev. Hilkih Omindo Deya, the Bishop of The Diocese of Mara. I had two reasons of having him as my first interviewee. First was to seek permission or rather a blessing from him as he is the person in charge of the Diocese of Mara. And it is under his jurisdiction that the permission to conduct research in this area is granted. Secondly, as an authority in the Church his opinion concerning church matters is of great value, so to hear from him was something worthy. From there I continued with my random interviews.

#### **4.1.1 Response from the Church leaders**

Polygamy persists to be an argumentative and divisive issue in Mara and Africa as a whole. The Church leaders' response can also be divided into two, those who support the practice of polygamy and those who do not. It is quite interesting that all seven church leaders whom I interviewed come from polygamous background. Thus for some their background as products of polygamous marriages had much influence on both their response and the perception of polygamy.

For the Church leaders who support polygamy, it is only Rev. Julius Outta, a retired Rural Dean whom I interviewed on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2004 who came openly supporting polygamy. He said "there is nothing wrong with polygamy, and I don't see why the polygamists should not be granted full membership in the Anglican Church." He went on to say that, "in Africa, polygamy is something for one to be proud of and that prominent people like the late Julius Nyerere were products of polygamous marriages." It should be noted that the former president Nyerere was a native of Mara region. However, he did not explain the changing circumstances as a result of globalisation and the cultural contact with the Gospel of Christ.

On the contrary The Rev Canon Justin Aloo whom I interviewed on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2004 had a different view. He was of the opinion that, "Polygamy should not be encouraged by either

the Church or the societies, from my experience as a son of a polygamist. I saw the wrangles and wars that are in polygamous homes. It is full of evils that cannot be accommodated in the church.”

The rest four could not support polygamy but at the same time, they could not give theological reason on why polygamy should not be encouraged. The only answer that they gave was that the Church does not allow polygamy. Another question that could not be answered by these church leaders was the relationship between Church sacraments and the institution of marriage.

From my experience as an Anglican clergy person, the Anglican Church defines the term sacrament as, an outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual grace. (See also in Book of Common Prayer). While the Roman Catholic observes seven sacraments such as baptism, confirmation, penance, Eucharist, holy orders, matrimony, and extreme unction. Most protestant bodies, on the other hand, acknowledge two sacraments, that is, baptism and Eucharist. Though The High Anglicans (Anglo- Catholics) maintain seven sacraments, there is clear distinction between the two major of sacraments baptism and the Eucharist which they believe are instituted by Christ “ and the remaining five as sacraments of the Church” (Richardson and Bowden 1983:515).

The Low Anglicans (Evangelical Anglicans), like The Diocese of Mara acknowledge two sacraments, baptism and the Eucharist. The question that remains un answered is that; what is the connection between these two sacraments and the holy matrimony? Why is the Church refusing baptism or Eucharist to the polygamists? These questions could not be answered by Church leaders whom I interviewed. What I learnt from my research is that, most of the practices in the Church are depicted as Church traditions and no one dares to question the originality or whether they should be practiced by the Church or not. It is also difficult to tell as to whether the Church has Biblical or theological reasons that allow them to associate marriage with a sacrament.

#### 4.1.2 The response from women

The issue of polygamy has proved to be divisive not only to the church leaders but to both women and men in Mara. As some women were bitter with the practice of polygamy others were of the opinion that polygamous marriage offer freedom to women than that of monogamous marriages. I have decided to give responses from five women to avoid repetition of the arguments.

Mrs Anne Peter whom I interviewed on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2004 had much to say on culture. Narrating her story, she said that when she was sixteen years old, her father told her that it was time for her to look for someone to marry. She said “marriage for me was not a priority; my ambition was to acquire sewing skills for my future so as to enable me to lead my own dependent life. But according to our culture there is no room for argument with your parents, so I had to obey and I started looking for a man that I should marry, which is also contrary to our culture which requires a man to look for a woman not a woman looking for a man. I tried for two years to get my own husband without success. This is because I did not want to marry a polygamist. The pressure from my father grew high to the point that I could not bear it anymore; this compelled me to accept to be a second wife as the final alternative.” In describing polygamous marriage Anne dismissed it as “hell like”, and as one which is full of accusations and temptations of different kinds. This includes fighting and witchcraft. She continued to say that in polygamous marriages, women are reduced to mere objects of sex, this is because the husband becomes one’s husband when they are in bed, but when he is out, he becomes the husband of all. She suggested that girls should be given opportunity to choose whether they should marry or not, and also she said that culture should change to meet the dynamics of our contemporary situations.

Mrs Ondindo whom I interviewed on 11<sup>th</sup> of July 2004 was of the same opinion that polygamy is nothing but another way of glorifying men, and an institution that places women at a higher risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. Giving an example, she cited a case where her husband, who has three wives, took his third wife and disappeared to unknown place. She continued to say, “It is very tempting because this is the fourth year since he

disappeared from the maternal home. As you see we are young and sexually active, and need money for our upkeep. We do not know whether our husband decided to run away because of the burden of his ten children and three wives or whether he wanted to lead a new life with his younger wife.” These remarks easily capture our imagination and clearly make us feel that the Church has to fight against polygamy just as it fought apartheid and now HIV/AIDS.

Julita who is a teacher by profession and a single mother whom I interviewed on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2005 was very bitter on the practice of polygamy. She said that there was nothing that dehumanises women like polygamous marriages. Talking from experience, she said that she was married to a polygamist who had four wives twenty years ago. According to her, the man treated his wives like properties; every work within the household was done by his wives, but whatever was achieved from their labour through the garden or through their small businesses was his and failure to report to him was met by beatings. Julita is of the opinion that, polygamy should be discouraged, and she agreed with Anne’s views that women should be given equal opportunity in the societies to decide whether they should be married or not.

The second group of women supported polygamy basing their argument on culture and economical situation which affects some of the families in Mara. For example Mrs Magotho whom I interviewed on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2004 thought that, in polygamous marriages, women enjoy freedom than in monogamous households. She continued to say that if you are hard working you can achieve a lot. “Again in polygamous marriages, there is no loneliness whether the woman is barren or not, everybody within the household enjoys fellowship with one another.” When I asked her about the wrangles and wars in polygamous marriages she replied that wars are every where, whether it is monogamous marriage or polygamous one. As a product of patriarchy, she was not able to explain to me how another woman could cure her loneliness when both of them are not lesbians. She also did not explain how she would have felt if she were the barren woman in a polygamous home. Would she have persevered the mockery of other women or even from her husband?

She also appeared to have been justifying the traditional culture which has glorified such stereotypes.

Mrs Yunia Sila whom I interviewed on 30<sup>th</sup> July 2004 argued that there is nothing wrong with polygamy. It is a cultural practice which has been practiced in the Old Testament times; we also found it being practiced by our fore parents. It has served many purposes within the society, for example the need for children when the first wife proves to be barren. She continued to say, "I don't see any problem with polygamy so long as the husband is able to cater for all of us. I feel secure, I am called by the name of my husband whether he is a polygamist or not." Like the previous one, she doesn't explain how one husband could share his love between various women at the same time and be fair to all-at the same time.

#### **4.1.3 The response from men**

None of men whom I interviewed besides church leaders, stood against polygamy. Almost every one had his reason for supporting polygamy. For example, Webiro Wanzagi whom I interviewed on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2004 argued that it is only poverty that makes men to marry one wife, but in reality a man should have more than one wife. He gave his reason that one wife is like one eyed person who can turn blind at any time. He did not explain why he thinks more about 'the other eye also going blind, whatever that means'. He concluded by saying that "one wife is a white man's culture that cannot be applicable in Africa, that is why, the church is failing in working to wipe away polygamy".

Peter Gony whom I interviewed on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2004 argued that he did not want to lead polygamous life, but because his first marriage could not give him a baby boy, the pressure from his parents and relatives made him to marry the second wife. He said "culturally a man does not obtain recognition unless he has a son." When I asked him about his experience of polygamy, he admitted that there is no peace in a polygamous marriage but, due to compelling circumstances, to him polygamy is important. He added the element of labour force as among the driving elements to polygamous marriages. By building on culture, Gony failed to acknowledge the dynamism of culture. By so doing, he failed to explain why he thinks children makes one happier yet, God grants them to us by God's

will. He also did not explain what would have happened if he got troublesome children, criminals, and thugs etc. who would equally deny him peace. What would happen for such a parent? Would one cling to the culture that held that children bring joy yet in that case, they would be bringing misery? Such stereotypes need to be revised. Again, by saying that monogamy is a white man's culture, he fails to recall that polygamy in African culture only came as an accident! That is, when one has a barren woman (though this no longer holds), when one had a big plantation and so he needed children to work on his farm (but now we have tractors etc.). And again, children now are taken to school where a parent pays dearly. If one has a higher number of children than he can manage, then the children will suffer in this emerging-capitalistic economy of our time. Why then make the women and children plus even the husband suffer in the name of preserving culture which has not invited us to defend it? Who has all the time, today to stay at home rearing children year in year out? Isn't it a psychological torture that an intending polygamist, today, would be inflicting himself?

#### **4.2 The Pastoral Approach to Polygamy by the Anglican Church**

This section highlights the various debates and controversies that have taken place on polygamy at a global level in the Anglican tradition. Some of them include the denial of baptismal rites amongst the polygamists: the contribution of Henry Venn: the contribution of Bishop Colenso: the Lambeth Resolutions of 1988 among others. The section will also attempt to show that even if polygamy is not a modern form of marriage as it is already overtaken by time, in this age of depatriarchalisation and self re-examination, the Church has every reason to discourage the practice rather than encourage it. While at the same time, the Church has a moral duty to demonstrate God's love (*Agape*) to those who are already practising it. For it is for God so loved the world that Christ had to come to provide direction to the world which was once wrought (cf. John 3:16). By discouraging polygamy in love and at the same time demonstrating love to those who are already practicing it, the Church would effectively be carrying out her pastoral role- a role she should always play.

The purpose of drawing from various schools of thoughts in this section, therefore, is to show the extent to which patriarchy has been blind to the plight of the dignity of women who are forced to share husbands in a very degrading environments. Conversely, one finds that it is men and not women who are consistently supporting polygamy- in their publications. Even in an age where polygamy has been overtaken by events, various scholars have continued to express their admiration for it as this section will show. Confronted with such a situation, the Church's pastoral approach now ought to be heard and seen.

Kibira argues that,

The question of whether a polygamist can be a full member of the Christian Church has received much attention in the history of the Church in Africa. Many authors, not in favour of the practice have written against it. Churches have formulated constitutions condemning the practice. Colonial governments have introduced laws on matrimony, which have supported monogamy and disapproved of polygamy...It seems the wall of Jericho protecting polygamy is very difficult to destroy because it is deeply rooted in the culture of some parts of Africa (Kibira quoted by Niwagila 1991:407-408).

Hastings argues that the approach of the Church towards African traditional marriages did not consider contextualization of the gospel. He says;

The deeper issue was really that of the eccleasical absolutization of marriage norms which had developed in the course of the centuries in the western Church and were now being applied in such a very different social and cultural context (1973:5).

Because the Christian Church grew up within a predominantly monogamous world, there was little room for polygamy.

In 1850s as the Anglican Church was growing fast both in the west and south of Africa polygamy was also becoming an issue (Hastings 1973:12). In 1856 Henry Venn, chief Secretary of Anglican Church Missionary Society, in order to solve the issue of polygamy, wrote a memorandum in favour of the position that was taken by West African

Missionaries and this is what he wrote, “ A state of polygamy is unlawful within the Church of Christ even though commenced in ignorance:

1. Because it has been declared by God contrary to the divine institution of marriage.
2. Because it has been pronounced as adultery by Christ
3. Because it is written; let every man have his own wife and let every woman have her own husband” (Venn in Hastings 1973:12).

While the issue of polygamy was hot in West Africa, in 1853 John Colenso was appointed to be the first bishop of a new Anglican Diocese of Natal, in South Africa. It did not take time before he was confronted with the issue of polygamy. In response to this situation, in 1862, Bishop Colenso wrote a letter to Archbishop of Canterbury who was the chairman of Anglican Communion. In his letter paragraph 3, he says,

The conviction has deepened within me more and more that the common practice of requiring a man, who may have more than one wife at the time of his conversion, to put away all but one before he can be received to Christian Baptism, is unwarranted by Scriptures, unsanctioned by Apostolic example or authority, condemned by common reason and sense of right and altogether unjustifiable (Colenso quoted by Hastings 1973:13).

The views of Bishop Colenso brought controversy not only in South Africa but also in England. Twenty six years later in 1888 the issue of polygamy came before the Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops and this was the resolution,

It is the opinion of this conference that persons living in polygamy be not admitted to baptism, but that be accepted as candidates and kept under Christian instruction until such time as they shall be in a position to accept the way of Christ (5(A) passed by 83 votes to 21), Committees report (In Hastings, 1973:14).

This resolution affected the whole Anglican body from this time onward because the polygamist could not be baptized.

In 1969 Tanzanian government laid down a proposal that requested for a uniform law of marriage. The Government proposed that even Christian marriages in Tanzania should be

recognized as potentially polygamous (*Mapendekezo ya serikali juu ya sheria ya ndoa* September 1969:1-12).

In response, the committee of Churches of Dar es salaam gave a joint reply on the government proposal in November 1969. The committee included churches like the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Baptist, Mennonite, Salvation Army, and Assembly of God. The Committee was of the opinion that monogamy was not a Western import as the Government thought, and that polygamy was previously justified by historical, social, and economic situations, and that even at that time there was no need to make this African form of plural marriage illegal for non Christians (The committee of Churches of Dar es salaam on the Government's proposal, November 1969:4, 5, 9). The logic behind the argument of the committee was that as time goes by, polygamy would die a natural death.

According to Hastings (1973:25) in February 1970, Anglican Archbishops, met in Lusaka Zambia to discuss "the attitude of the Church to the African customary marriage." The meeting agreed that "there was need for a pastoral appreciation of the problems arising out of African marriage customs, both rural and urban, in relation to full membership of the church." Later in the same year 1970, The Anglican diocese of Victoria Nyanza in Tanzania, which in 1985 was divided and gave birth to the dioceses of Kagera and Mara agreed in the synod that,

A polygamist legally married by native or Muslim Law may be baptized together with his wives and small children after due teaching and preparation. The diocesan synod resolved not to put this decision into effect until the province had further considered it (Ibid).

In 1971 under Marriage Act 1971 Tanzania Government permitted polygamy as a legal form of marriage but the Act says polygamy is permitted with consent of the first wife, upon registration parties are to declare whether marriage is polygamous, potentially polygamous or monogamous, and marriage may be converted to polygamous or monogamous by joint declaration of obedience. Maintenance of wife or wives is husband's duty; it becomes wife's duty in cases where husband is incapacitated and unable to earn a

living. Courts may order maintenance under limited circumstances where husband refuses or neglects to maintain wife or wives. Also under marriage Act 1971 minimum age is 18 for males and 15 for females, courts may permit underage marriage of parties who have reached 14 years of age if specific circumstances make marriage appear desirable. It provides that valid marriage requires free consent of marrying parties; guardian's consent is not required for parties who have attained 18 years. (Law 2003:1-2). And the new certificate of marriage, which includes polygamous marriages, was introduced (See Appendix 3).

While the Government's legalisations of both monogamous and polygamous marriages are within her own constitutional demands to recognise the freedom of every citizen, the Church should engage in dialogue with the Tanzanian government to discourage the state from encouraging the practice. She should also engage herself in lobbying, through civic education against polygamy to the whole citizenry by showing the negative consequences of polygamy. For by empowering the citizens through civic education, the culture of polygamy would be rid off (we shall return to this latter).

Immediately after the birth of the Diocese of Mara in 1985 the first thing that was done was to formulate a constitution that condemned the practice of polygamy. In the Diocese of Mara's pastors handbook, which is part of the Diocesan constitution, pages 12-13 says that a polygamist who want to become a member of the Anglican Church cannot receive baptism unless he announces publicly that he has divorced all other wives except one, and those Church members who become polygamist should be put under Church discipline and should be deprived of the right to participate in the Holy Communion (1985:12-13) service. While the idea of discouraging polygamy is worthwhile, the Church needs to address the question on the divorced women and the children who are negatively affected by this action. One wonders, "Can the Church set a fund for those children so as to cater for their upkeep or education? Or should the Church accept that polygamous families as it continue to preach against the polygamous unions?" This is an ethical dilemma that calls the Church to revisit it.

The question that we should ask ourselves is that from Henry Venn 1856, Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops 1888, ACT-MARA Constitutions 1985, is there any Biblical or theological justification for the Anglican Church's condemnation of polygamy?

In the Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops of 1988 the issue of polygamy came again though it was not among the expected agenda, the African Bishops were restless because they said, it is unfair to demand that converts put away their surplus wives when they become Christians (Andrew 1998). After long discussions the resolution No. 26 was reached that:

“This conference upholds monogamy as God's plan and as the ideal relationship of love between husband and wife, nevertheless recommends that a polygamist who respond to the Gospel and wishes to join the Anglican Church may be baptized and confirmed with his believing wives and children on the following conditions:

1. That the polygamist shall promise not to marry again as long as any of his wives at the time of his conversion are alive.
2. That the receiving of such a polygamist has the consent of the local Anglican community.
3. That such polygamist shall not be compelled to put away any of his wives on account of the social deprivation they would suffer.
4. And recommends that provinces where the Churches face problems of polygamy are encouraged to share information of their pastoral approach to Christians who become polygamist so that the most appropriate way of discipline and pasturing them can be found and that the ACC be requested to facilitate the sharing of that information” (2003:1).

In summary the conference allowed the local Bishops to decide under the circumstances the wives of polygamist who could or who could not be admitted to baptism. This however did not solve the problem for the Anglican Communion as it was again left to Bishops to provide pastoral guidance. Who knows whether some Bishops could be for it or against. So

no consensus was reached. That consequently left the Anglican Church without a clear direction on the issue of polygamous marriages and the status of their Church membership.

After the Lambeth conference of 1988 there was a sense of being tolerant by the ACT-DM. Polygamists were allowed to receive baptism and to participate in the Holy Communion but in the urban areas the story was different. Polygamists were not allowed to assume leadership especially being an elder, though in rural areas where most of the members are polygamists, some polygamists were granted permission of assuming leadership. This was done unofficially because nothing was changed in ACT-DM's constitution regarding polygamous marriage. Still those members who became polygamists after they had accepted Christ were put under Church discipline and they were not supposed to participate in the Holy Communion at the same time they were not allowed to take any leadership office.

This for me is a contradiction, and at the same time confusing baptized converts for as Venn says,

It would be very hard to convince baptized converts, tempted to sin, that there is any real differences between admitting a polygamist into the Christian Church, and allowing polygamy to those already within it or that it is just to put a polygamist out of the Church, who has become such after baptism, when another polygamist, who had become such before baptism, might be admitted, and remain one of its members (Venn in Hastings 1973:12).

According to Bishop Hilkih Omindo, the bishop of the Diocese of Mara, the Church should base her principles on Christ's ethic of love, especially for new converts who are polygamists. They should receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour without conditions of sending away other wives. He continues to say, that he does "not think, however, that the church should encourage her members who are fully evangelised and baptized to enter into polygamous marriage" (My interview with him 5<sup>th</sup> July 2004). In summary, bishop Hilkih does not agree with Venn on how polygamists should be treated. He is of the opinion that the church should not allow polygamy to church members who are already in

monogamous marriages but on the other hand it should be fairer to those who had become polygamists before baptism.

After addressing the various schools of thought that have come up with regard to polygamous unions, the sub-section has prepared us to study the challenge that polygamy poses to the Anglican Diocese of Mara.

#### 4.3 **Polygamy: a challenge to ACT-DM**

Polygamy stands as a challenge to ACT-DM because it is socially accepted by the societies of Mara as one of the main forms of marriage. Polygamy persists informally in the Church and formally in the entire societies of Mara.

The inconsistency on the way or in the methods of approaching the issue at hand is also a sign that polygamy is a challenge. In the rural areas where many people are practitioners of plural unions, the Church permits the polygamists to assume leadership roles in the Church- as Evangelists or Church elders, while in the urban areas, the polygamist; if he is a new member would be granted permission to participate in the Holy Communion but not to assume leadership. The full membership is only granted to monogamists as Hillman comments that the Church has tended to assume that the ideal of Christian marriage as a sacramental symbolism, which reflects the relationship of unifying tone between Christ and the Church, can only be realized in monogamous marriage. He does not see the difference between monogamy and polygamy; he says “a man by reason of socially valid polygamous unions be united to each of his wives to such an extent that each wife becomes one flesh with him” (Hillman as quoted by Dwane 1975:232).

In addition to that Dwane (1975:236) says, polygamous marriages are not temporary liaisons, but are by intention, permanent unions. And this is one of the characteristics features of marriage as God has ordained it. While I can try to see the sense in Hillman and Dwane’s works, I am however persuaded that every effort should be spared to bring down plural marriages. At the same time, I am also persuaded that this should not be done by imposition of the laws and rules but through proper teachings on the church’s

understanding of marriage. This should be done from Sunday school through to premarital counseling. I also agree with Bishop Hilkih on the admission of those who had become polygamists before their baptism. Gaskiyane agrees with bishop Hilkih's views when he argues that,

Refusing to baptize polygamous converts is a refusal to obey the will of God. Public water baptism of all believers in Jesus Christ is the direct command of Christ Himself (Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:16). If we are to do what Christ commands, we have no alternative. We must baptize polygamists and every other kind of sinner who comes to Christ in repentance and faith (2000:48-49).

It is also my opinion that polygamous converts should be given permission to participate in the Holy Communion as other members do except that they should not be granted any leadership roles as St. Paul recommends in 1 Tim 3:1-13, Titus 1:6.

According to my research, the insistence on monogamous marriage has made some contribution towards the Church growth in ACT-DM. For indeed the Anglican Church of Tanzania can be pronounced as an indigenous church in terms of her members and leadership. While at the same time, it has obeyed the Biblical exhortation in 1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:6 where Church leadership is ascribed to those who practice monogamous marriages. As far as I know all leaders are Tanzanians. For example in Diocese of Mara we have about 56 ordained ministers (See appendix 2) and all of them are natives of Mara region. It is very interesting that some of these ministers come from polygamous background, either as son or grandson of a polygamist. The clergymen<sup>7</sup> who are from polygamous backgrounds are helping the Church to see the difficulty of their upbringing from such an environment thereby helping the Church on this.

With regard to the way the Gospel was introduced in Mara, we can say that something went wrong in the beginning. The missionaries who brought the Gospel did not consider the context where they were going to plant the Good news. They did not care about the environment, culture, social change and tradition. Gill is of the opinion that, community

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<sup>7</sup> The reference to clergymen is due to the fact that in Mara, we have not started to ordain women- a fact that has a lot to do with patriarchy.

and culture are interrelated; you cannot win the community to Christ and at the same time expect them to throw away their culture without any teaching. For as Gill says,

Each community has a culture by which it is meant to be the totality of what constitutes its life and all that is essential for relationship among its members, and its relationship with God and with the natural environment. It is in relation to community that people define their identity. Community and culture are interrelated as body and soul. The cultural dynamics is manifested in the daily life of the community and each of its members (Gill quoted by Anajarah 1994:44).

As we have seen before, the Church's approach towards the issue of polygamy was negative and unchristian. We have people who found themselves putting away all but his first wife before they received baptism. Geskiyane summarizes this point very well when he says,

If the Church requires a polygamist to first put away all but his first wife before he can be baptized, the Church violates the commands concerning divorce and the permanence of marriage, (Matthew 19:6). As it has been shown earlier, in traditionally polygamous cultures, multiple wives are considered to be wives in the eyes of God. When a church insists on the divorce of such wives, the Church teaches a practice which God hates, (Malachi 2:16). By doing this, the Church becomes guilty of contributing to the breakdown of stable family unit. Wives and Children who become victims of such practices often become bitter against the Church and turn away from Christ himself as a result (2000:43).

In supporting this Omodo says; the Church forbids polygamy but demands divorce (quoted by Trobisch 1971:11). This observation calls the Church to work out for a better formula of discouraging polygamy without necessarily causing others to commit the sin of divorce; as both divorce and polygamy do not portray the Church in the positive light. The Church in my locality categorized the monogamists as people of high morals and polygamist as people of low morals. The children from the polygamous marriages feel guilt that they are coming from a low moral standard background. In my research on the subject matter, I found that many old men in Mara died while blaming the Church for denying them baptism. Some could not accept the conditions of divorcing their wives with whom they had lived together for many years. Some were made hypocrites by temporarily denouncing

their wives in order to receive baptism. The negative approach of the Church on polygamy has not only prevented people from accepting Jesus Christ as their Savior but has also led the families into temptation of being liars in order to receive sacraments (Niwagila 1991:409). Kibira says that the church has given no answer to these problems; we have reduced our Pastoral ministry into a ministry of laws. When we fail to solve our people's problems then we use a common expression and fail to admit our failure, and from there, learn from our mistakes (quoted by Niwagila 1991:409).

Thus, this sub-section has shown that the Church should not ignore cultures when propagating the Good News. Instead it should take time to study cultures and then alternatively create room for dialogue between culture and the gospel as Kanyoro (2002:65-71) suggests. This is well summarized in chapter three p.33 of this study. In my opinion, the guiding principle should be I Corinthians 7:20 which says that each Christian should remain in the situation which he/she was in when God called him/her. But such Christians are not free to keep mistresses or to take additional wives.

#### **4.4 The analysis of the findings.**

The first element in my findings therefore, is the element of culture. Culture has moulded the society in such a manner that the society requires much from the members, and some of these requirements become major factors that drives people to polygamous marriages. For example, among Mara societies the requirement of marriage has more effect on women than men. This is because; a woman would prefer to be the second or third wife than to remain unmarried. This mentality of thinking that remaining unmarried is uncultural is a result of many years of patriarchalisation. That means both men and women are socialised to see polygamy as better than celibacy. But one wonders: between peace and polygamy which is better? Obviously, the Gospel of Christ invites us to peace above anything else. We need to appreciate that even remaining as celibates rather than living in a troublesome polygamous families is also a new culture in Africa that ought to be welcomed. Otherwise, why acquire freedom and at the same time accept to remain as slaves? (John 8:32).

The other component of marriage is for procreation. Mbiti has explained this cultural belief as follows:

Marriage is a duty, a requirement from the corporate society, and a rhythm of life in which everyone must participate. Other wise, he [sic] who does not participate in it is a curse to the community. He [sic] is a rebel and a law breaker, he [sic] is not only abnormal but under human. Failure to get married under normal circumstances means that the person concern has rejected society and society rejects him [sic] in return (1969:33).

In Mara societies as it is in some other societies in Africa, children are believed to be an insurance of immortality to an individual, therefore failure to have children is apparently a curse, which creates a feeling of fear and insecurity to other people in the society and the couple concerned (Oliello Jr. 1992:28). The issue of procreation affects both men and women especially women in case of barrenness as we observed above. Marriage and procreation can be said to be the main factors that lead men and women in Mara to engage themselves into polygamous marriages, and it is undisputed truth that the Anglican Church has failed to address. There are some ways that the church could have addressed these issues, for example the option of adoption in case where the wife is barren. And on the question of marriage, the church should promote what Paul says in 1 Cor. 7:8-9

There is something I want to add for the sake of widows and those who are not married; it is good thing for them to stay as they are, like me, but if they cannot control the sexual urges, they should get married since it is better to be married than to be tortured.

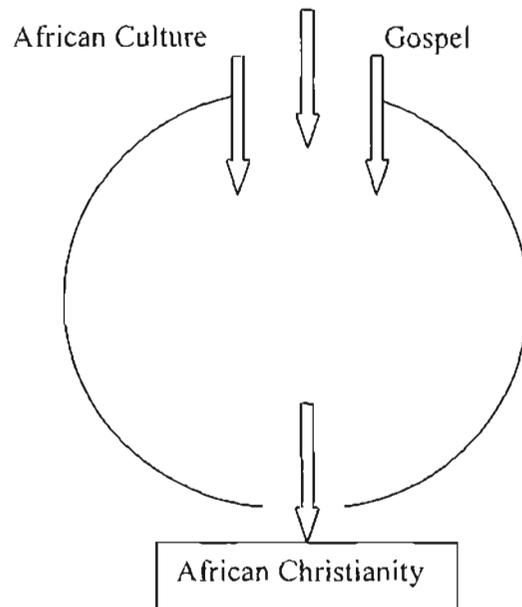
For rather than a young woman running after married men just to ensure she has a husband, Paul suggests celibacy as one of the options that ought to be put in our agenda. Concerning barrenness, one can also borrow from the African cultural systems where all children belong to the society and therefore develop the attitude that the children of a neighbour, a brother or a sister are also hers. The society should also be encouraged to move away from dogmatism and seek to learn some productive cultural elements from other peoples without necessarily doing away with their own cultures that God gave them to steward.

The second element is the legalization of polygamous marriages by the Tanzanian government. Since the legalization of polygamy in 1971, the Church appears to have been fighting a losing battle. Those who felt that the Church was unfair to those who wanted to practice polygamy were free to cross over to civil or customary marriages. This not only became a stumbling block to the Church in her efforts of discouraging polygamy but it also created a safe haven for polygamists. The Church was supposed to advise the government on the danger of polygamy, with regard to economical, ethical and medical factors such as HIV/AIDS.

The third element is the Church's failure to acknowledge the influence of African culture on African's hearing of the Gospel message. Moila (2002:77) argues that "African people view the world through their culture and tradition which was practised by their forefathers who transferred them to those coming after they were gone." As Helander (1958:40) argue, polygamy which the missionaries fought against as the greatest sin of all, but divorce and remarriage which Christ does forbid have been equated with polygamy. In my opinion, the contextualisation of the Gospel could have been easy through the method of cultural hermeneutics as the method of dialogue between the Gospel and African Cultures, as suggested by Kanyoro (2001:164, 2002:65-71) and also as summarized in chapter three p.33. This would have created room for the Gospel to transform those elements in the culture that dehumanizes men and women and at the same time retain those that are good.

The propagation of the Gospel of Jesus could have taken the shape of the figure below.

#### Hermeneutics



*Fig 2: An illustration of the conversion process to Christianity*

This figure above (Fig 2) shows the method that I believe would allow the transformation of culture without imposition of another culture.

The fourth element is the oppression and dehumanisation of women in polygamous marriages, whose major cause is patriarchy. The precise origin of patriarchy is culture but the present actuality and power cannot be disputed because of the persistent male domination in all walks of life. Given that all cultures in Mara are patriarchal, it is difficult for their members to view women and men as equal partners. Both men and women perpetuate this form of oppression. This is very similar to the Jewish culture as explained by Helander (1958:28) who says, “Like a Jewish man according to Rabbi Jehuda, 150 AD, should say a daily prayer, ‘Praise be to Him who did not create me a woman’.” He goes on to argue that whenever polygamy is defended, the reasons given are “usually the needs of man, the demand for labourers in the household, the wish to have children and heirs, but seldom the wishes of the woman.” As we have seen in chapter three of this study, culture is not static but dynamic, but patriarchy is a creation of culture which can also be transformed just like any cultural practice. The church<sup>8</sup> should therefore remind her members that there are other elements in the Mara culture that have changed over the years due to interaction

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<sup>8</sup> By Church, I mean the church leadership. That is, the Bishop, the Archdeacons, the Area Deans, the Vicars, the Evangelists and lay leadership of the church.

with western civilization and Christianity; and that since culture changes we need to appreciate some elements from other people. Otherwise wholesale condemnation of other people's cultures whether they are westerners or Africans amount to cultural imperialism. Even though the mode of adopting children or people into our various African clans has changed, as we no longer slaughter goats in such ritual ceremonies, we can also try, as Christians of Mara, to assess how others adopt children or grown ups and see whether we can borrow a leaf from them. Thus while the Gospel does not operate in a cultural vacuum, we need to revisit our good African cultures in the light of globalisation, the advent of HIV/AIDS, the economic factors that make polygamy a difficult enterprise and the danger of living under tension, rivalry and suspicion in a polygamous family. Only then can we people of Mara become the true citizens of the world as we ought to and as we focus on the heavenly home where we also become citizens (see Philippians 3:20). It is therefore important to grapple with this challenge with an open mind knowing very well that God has called us to freedom (Galatians 2:4, 5:13, 1Peter 2:16, Luke 4:18).

#### 4.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has given us an opportunity to discuss the pastoral approach to polygamy by the Anglican Church but with reference to Anglican Church of Mara Diocese. We have also noted that polygamy is a real challenge in ACT-MARA as evidenced by scholars' views and the interviews that were conducted in July 2004 and January 2005. We have also seen how the Anglican Church chose laws and rules as a preferred method of eradication of polygamy in Africa. It is undisputable truth that the Gospel was introduced as something against culture and not intimate partners as we saw in chapter three. The dialogue between Gospel and cultures could have brought harmonious working relationship than merely enforcing laws which required the polygamists to divorce other wives but one. The next chapter is on the critical analysis of the practice of polygamy.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CRITICAL ANALYSIS ON POLYGAMY

#### 5.0 Introduction

In chapter four we discussed the approach of the Anglican Church to the practice of polygamy, thus polygamy was judged as something incompatible with the Christian way of life. This chapter analyses critically the nature of polygamous marriages in the African context with the particular reference to Mara region of Tanzania. I will also look at the reasons for the legitimisation of this practice and its disadvantages in the context of Mara community.

This chapter will go on to compare and contrast the polygamous and the monogamous marriages. It will also engage African women theologians' views on polygamy. Lastly, it will look at what the Bible says on polygamy. It is undisputable truth that the practice of polygamy in many African cultures has received a very positive response especially among the societies that believe that to have many wives is considered as prestigious thing. For example in Mara societies, the more wives a man had the more respect he used to command in the patriarchal structure.

## 5.1 Polygamy as a form of Marriage

While Blum (1989:73) talks of the difficulty that the anthropologist have in attempting to arrive at a satisfactory definition of the term marriage. Beya (1992:158) defines marriage, from the Roman Catholic Church point of view as the “union of persons of the opposite sexes for the purpose of procreation and rearing of the human species.” Hastings argues that marriage as intended by God should be defined as “the permanent union, at least by intention of man and woman, for the purpose of procreation and rearing of children and mutual companionship and assistance.” According to African women theologians, the definition given by Hastings highlights a crucial point that has been ignored by African societies regarding the issue of marriage. Mutual companionship is something theoretical, and lacks room for discussion. Oduyoye (1995:134) argues that marriage “locates a woman in a socially validated relationship that enables her to procreate to the advantage of either her matrikin or her affinal kin.” On the other hand, marriage in the African societies “confers full responsibility and a measure of autonomy on a man as a member of the community, the woman remains as a subject” (: 135). Despite the above shortcomings among the societies in Mara and the whole of Africa, by and large, monogamous marriage is still regarded as a very important rite of passage. This view finds acceptance in Mbiti’s (1969:133) works when he observes that marriage is the focus of existence for African people. Mbiti (1969:133) goes on to say

It is the point where all members of a given community meet: the departed, the living and those yet to be born. All the dimensions of time meet here and the drama in which every one becomes an actor or actress not just a spectator.

According to Tanzanian Marriage Act of 1971, the word marriage is defined as a union between a man and a woman or women as husband and wife or wives so that their off springs may be regarded as legitimate. The union can become legal when the couple registers their union before a lawful register of marriages, wed in a Church in case of Christians, or are married according to the customs or traditions of their society this is because the law as legal form of marriage also recognizes customary marriage. In the case

Some societies like in Mara used to accept polygamy because in some respects it was considered to embody some of the society's ideals. Hillman (1975:88) argues that, this form of marriage is preferred in areas where there is a relationship of mutual support and reinforcement between polygamy and culture, polygamy and tradition, polygamy and public opinion and where polygamy enjoys superior prestige, as compared to monogamy, so that respected males in the society will normally seek to acquire more than one wife. But as Fox said, the above human solutions are never perfect, polygamy on the other hand benefits men more than women; this will be discussed as we go on with this discussion. As we noted earlier, there is no society that claims to be polygamous although the members of Mara societies believe in polygamy as one form of marriage, which can bring to its members the greatest number of children. This is however an ancient tradition that puts a lot of emphasis on children as opposed to the emphasis on love between man and woman. It undermines the principle of human mortality. That is, we are here for a short time. Due to the economic pressures some men cannot afford to pay the *Mahari* (dowry) for more than one wife and this makes monogamy also to be a common practice (Blum 1989:21).

### **5.3 What were the reasons for polygamy in African traditional culture?**

We have already seen how complex the act of marriage is and how polygamy is based on the blessings of societies' through their culture and tradition. Regardless of the number of men who actually attain their social ideal, polygamy was assumed to be culturally normative so long as it enjoyed superior prestige and was not the exclusive prerogative of a very small status group.

Now, if this was the case, why did some people in the traditional African societies prefer polygamy as opposed to monogamy? The reasons that contributed to polygamous marriages in Mara societies are not any different from the factors that contribute to polygamy in other African societies though some of the factors in Mara would seem uniquely.

### 5.3.1 Childlessness

In Africa the primary purpose of marriage has been variously described as procreation. That is, one must have his or her descendants on earth. "For life received must be communicated" (Kabasele in Schreiter 1991: 119). So every marriage is expected to ensure the continuation of the extended family and clan. Commenting on this, Wasike (1992:57) says, "There is a belief in patriarchal tradition in Africa that those who die are reborn in their children. Therefore it is important to have children in order to perpetuate this line." To fail to do this it was held is to be cursed by God. This can be compared with Genesis (1:28) "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth." Mbiti (1969:133) confirms this point when he says, "marriage and procreation in African communities are a unit. Without procreation, marriage is incomplete." So failure of an individual to have children was apparently seen as a curse that creates a feeling of fear and insecurity to both the couple and the society concerned. Mbiti who speaks from the perspective of the patriarchal society argues that, marriage is the "religious obligation by means of which the individual contributes the seeds of life towards man's struggle against the loss of original immortality of life" (Ibid). Magesa in explaining the view of the people of East Africa regarding children says,

Very common in East Africa was the concept of nominal reincarnation, the custom of naming children after grandparents and even referring to them by regularly alternating kingship terms. The verbal practice was backed by the belief that a special relationship existed between grandparents and grandchild and that the grandparent acted as guardian spirit or protector of the child... It can be readily understood that childlessness placed a very heavy if not an intolerable strain upon a marriage. Without the alternative of polygamy divorce would be practically inevitable and it was divorce that the practice of the sororate was designed to forestall (Kisembo & Magesa 1977:73).

### 5.3.2 A wife of one's choice

My interview with people from different societies in Mara made me to believe that, "a wife of one's choice" is a common practice to all communities in Mara. A preparation for marriage in Mara society which had its basis in rituals and ceremonies began by the father telling his son that it was time to marry. Here, two things could happen. One is that, the father or the mother could choose a partner for him or he could be given a chance to choose

his partner. This kind of marriage is done when the boy is still young at the age of about 16 – 20 years. And because this marriage was not the decision of the young boy, most of the men in their 40s felt that it was an appropriate time to marry. The first wife was always counted as the parent's choice whether he was the one who chose her or not. So the second wife was regarded as his own choice. Sometimes because marriage happened when the man was still young, the first wife reached her menopause when the husband was still sexually active. In such a case the first wife would encourage the husband to take a second wife to avoid adultery. The underlying belief among most members of the Mara societies is that a woman could not do sex after menopause. In other words, it was abominable to do that. This gave the reason for polygamy. Even though this belief is slowly losing weight, it must be acknowledged that it still holds sway among some people who have stuck to the old cultural belief thereby making polygamy a challenge that has to be grappled with in the light of such beliefs. Indeed, some women who have been patriarchalized to believe so do assume that they have "graduated" upon reaching the menopause. They therefore do not expect to do what their "daughters can best do"-sex, interview with Rev. Julius Outa (24/6/2003), Othaigo Magotho (26/6/2003), Webiro Wanzagi (30/6/2003), and Manyama Kanyuagare (2/7/2003).

### **5.3.3 Maweto Marriage (*Nyumba Ntobu*)**

*Maweto* or *Nyumba ntobu* marriage is when the woman is married and she realizes that she is unable to bear children. She will encourage one of his husband's sons or any person of his choice either from the second wife or the sons of his brother-in-law to take a wife and this woman will be responsible for the dowry and the upkeep of that daughter-in-law (*Mkamona*). The children who will come out of this marriage were to be counted as her offsprings. The person who was appointed to be the husband of this woman was expected to have had his own wife who was to bear him children who would be counted as his own offsprings, (interview with Masioko Chacha 26/6/2003/ and my own experience). This cultural practice was also common with the Kalenjings of Kenya.

### **5.3.4 Socio-economic Factors**

Some time, the first wife would encourage her husband to take a second wife because of the need for enough workload. Magesa argues that polygamy was seen to increase the labour force and assisted in food production. Seen in that light, a large family community rendered all the operations of rural life more efficiently, e.g. clearing land, building, making artefacts and utensils, guarding the field against marauding birds and animals, and so forth. It also made cooperation in communal work less demanding since there were more representatives of the family who were available to participate (Kisembo and Magesa 1977:68). This was an important factor as my research showed. Because Mara societies depend on agricultural productions, livestock rearing and fishing, this called for family labour force to be availed (Magotho, personal communication 16th July 2004).

### **5.3.5 Sex Ratio as a Factor to Polygamy**

Magesa says that sex ratio is not a major reason that can justify the existence of polygamy in the traditional African society (Kisembo and Magesa 1977:67). That is not true, according to Blum (1989:83). In the 1948 census, Tanganyika showed the largest ratio of females with 108.4 females per 100 males, in 1957 census there was a very slight increase of the proportion of females over males with 109 females per 100 males. The 2002 Tanzania population census of Mara region, as indicated on page 17, revealed that male population was 653 449 and female population was 715 153. There was a surplus of more than 61 704 females.

In Mara societies it was considered unacceptable for adults to be unmarried. Every woman had to have a husband and every man had to have a wife. In such situation a woman would prefer to be one of the multiple wives rather than to remain without a husband and further risk being considered a social outcast. It was therefore considered morally important for every woman to have a husband (Gaskiyane 200:7).

### **5.3.6 Prestige as one of the Factors**

In many polygamous cultures, having more than one wife was seen as prestigious. In most of our societies of Mara, a man was considered as a person of great influence or a leader if he had several wives and many children (Gaskiyane 2000:19). This is very common among the Luo, Kurya, Zanaki, Isenye Ikizu etc. A man may marry up to forty or fifty wives. I personally know of five people who have more than twenty wives. Two of them have twenty-eight. One has forty-eight; the other one has fifty. This goes beyond lust to a patriarchal interpretation of pride, status, recognition and the desire to seek respect. This was also a very practical issue in the Old Testament times especially among the Kings, (1Kings 11:3-4, King Solomon). Although having many wives led King Solomon into terrible spiritual apostasy (1 Kings 11:4-50).

### **5.3.7 Wishes of the Parents as a factor**

The wishes of the parents dictated the nature of marriage as some would prefer to form alliances with rich families. Sometimes it happened between two related or close friendly families. For example, girls were expected to marry in the families where the wives of their brothers came from. Some people preferred the practice of sororal polygamy in which sisters become the wives of the same husband (Hillman 1975: 92). This was very common in Mara, but in reality this kind of marriage deprived girls of their right to decide whom and when to marry.

### **5.3.8 Levirate marriages as a factor**

Levirate is also one of the factors that contributed to polygamous marriage. Taking the widow of a dead brother, as a wife was commonly practiced in Mara. This was done in order to provide the widow with security, care for her children, the means to have children if she had none and to provide an inheritance in the family (Gaskiyane 200:17). This can be compared with, Deuteronomy 25:5-6, Exodus 21:10 and Luke 20:34. The Church in Mara or rather the missionaries did not recognize or tolerate widow inheritance. In the Christian marriage, the contract is absolutely and completely dissolved by the death of one of the partners. Allowing or tolerating widow inheritance would imply a denial of that Christian belief. But in Mara societies, widow inheritance is practiced because the contract continues

even after the death of the husband. According to the Anglican teaching after the death of the husband the widow is a free woman and she is permitted to remarry if she so wishes. This shows how the traditional cultural teachings differ with those of the Anglican Church. This calls for a thorough scrutiny of the whole practice in Mara.

#### 5.4 Reasons that were used for legalisation of polygamy

The approach of the Church towards the African culture especially with regard to polygamy has been negative, they did not bother to know why societies were practicing polygamy, and what was it that they were gaining from this practice. The traditional approach of western theologians to the question of polygamy was that polygamy was sin comparable to adultery (Kisembo and Magesa 1977: 81). They could not consider African core values of marriage. Below are the points that the societies in Mara understood as advantages of Polygamy that the Church could not comprehend.

In the African traditional society, Mara inclusive polygamy was seen to provide for unbroken continuation of the family, for both the husband and the Children in the event of the death of one wife. Instead of loneliness, the husband would not experience difficulties because the other wife would be there for him, and also the children would not struggle much because their other mother would be there. Mbiti explains this view when he says that,

When a family is made up of several wives with their households, it means that in time of need, there will always be someone around to help. This is corporate existence, for example, when one wife dies; there are others to take care of her children. In case of sickness, other wives will fetch water from the river, cut firewood, cook and do other jobs for the family (1969: 143, Gaskiyane 2000: 19).

In Mara Societies, there were rites and taboos to observe and this included proper behaviour of spouses during menstruation, pregnancy and the period of breast-feeding. During this time, the society forbids spouses to have sexual intercourse. Polygamy satisfies the husband because by that time, tradition forbids a husband from having intercourse outside the wedlock. The point that is almost similar to this is when the first wife reaches menopause and no longer wants to have sex (This is according to cultural beliefs and not

biological reality) Instead of the husband committing adultery, he would have other wives to meet his sexual needs (Blum 1989:105, also Gaskiyane 2000: 21). This customary belief as noted earlier in 5.3.2, are getting overtaken by time as the society grapples with globalisation.<sup>10</sup> This does not however mean that polygamy is not a challenge to the existence of Christianity in Mara today as customs take long to erase.

Polygamy caters for the desire of having a larger family and the idea in nearly all-traditional African societies was to have as many children as was physically possible. Children belonged, not only to the nuclear household, but also to the extended family-community as a whole (Kisembo and Magesa 1977: 22). To have many children was a priority in the Mara society, but now due to socio-economic changes, children are still primarily a priority, but individuals are encouraged to have a fewer number of children than before. Another important issue concerning children in Mara society is the issue of male children. A man desires to ensure that his name and family line will be continued. Thus he feels that it is essential to have a male child if he has no male child by his first wife. He would then take a second wife thinking that she would produce a male child (Gaskiyane 2000: 16). Polygamy was also seen to provide for the loss of children through sickness and death. It provided a “solution” in the case of barrenness of the first wife thereby preventing divorce and re-marriage. The other advantage of polygamy was that divorce was rare; this is because this kind of marriage was seen to be more of a relationship than a contract. To have many marriage links was seen as advantageous because of the cooperation, support and peace that could be expected to come from other groups with which a man or a group would come to form an alliance of purpose with through the act of these polygamous marriages (Flachmerer quoted by Blum 1989: 107). Mbiti 1969:143 observes that,

Polygamy helps to reduce prostitution, unfaithfulness and concubines, especially on the part of the men. This is very practical with the current life when men generally go to live and work in the cities and towns, leaving wives and children in the rural areas. In the case of polygamous marriage the husband can afford to take one at a time to

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<sup>10</sup> Globalisation refers to the New World Order where we are in a new social dispensation; where the world is moving towards “one culture” though, critically speaking, it is the dominant cultures swallowing the other cultures and imposing “one way” of doing things.

whatever women do in a polygamous marriage is for strengthening the husband by giving him prestigious status in the society. In her words, a woman is considered as “a fertile field in which a man planted his seeds” (1992:102). And since a woman’s big role is procreation, the plights of the disadvantaged woman in the society for instance, the barren woman hangs in the balance. The only thing they do is to agree to their husbands’ need for going for more wives. Similarly, for a woman who only bore girl children, the husband would go for another wife under that pretext of the need for the boy child (:104). This, unfortunately, makes women to appear inferior to men as they are valued only in relation to men.

Quarrels and fights among the wives and among the children sometimes occur because of favours. The husband may neglect some wives because he favours others. For example Jacob’s story in Genesis 29-30, shows jealousy breaking between Leah and Rachel because of favouritisms. The Bible says Leah had to pay in order for Jacob to sleep with her, “So when Jacob came in from the fields that evening, Leah went out to meet him. “You must sleep with me,” she said, “I have hired you with my son’s mandrakes.” So he slept with her that night (Genesis 30:16 NIV). Compare with David’s story with Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11:1ff. In Mara, as in other parts of Africa, jealousy sometimes leads to accusations of witchcraft. As Mbiti says;

Sometimes feelings of jealousy may lead to practicing witchcraft. If one of the co-wives feels slighted or mistreated, she may seek the service of the witch-doctor [sic], who is believed to be able to cast a spell upon the co-wife, her children or even upon the husband. An attempt may be made to poison the rival or the husband. Witchcraft is one of the most feared and hated phenomena in many African societies, one which can lead to dissolution of marriage (Mbiti quoted by Blum 1989:113).

The other disadvantage of a polygamous marriage in Mara is that it permits certain sexual rights to men that are not permitted to the women of the same society. A married man may be permitted to have relations with a woman, who is not his wife, and not be held accountable, but a married woman caught having an affair could be condemned and punished for adultery (Joyce quoted by Blum 1989:112). Like in the other patriarchal societies of Africa the communities in Mara give more power to men than women in marital relations. They are given power to control the household with an iron fist. For

live with him in his place of work, while the other wives remain behind to care for the children and the family properly.

What Mbiti says, is disputable and biased. His statement considers the sexual needs of male partner without putting into account the sexual needs of women which are treated as if they don't have sexual desires. On the other hand his statement corresponds with life in the traditional Mara region where men are given more sexual rights than women, and polygamy has been seen as antidote to prostitution, unfaithfulness and concubines. In spite of modernity, there are still pockets of people today in Mara region who believe and practice what Mbiti has observed.

The last element is that, in big families within many African societies, there are duties, which some people feel cannot be adequately performed by members of a family that is too small. Such duties include looking after cattle in the woods or plains, baby sitting, working in the fields, collection of firewood from the forest, water from the river, looking for lost sheep or cattle, going to town to earn some money, cooking, building new houses, hunting or food gathering and the like. These duties are made lighter when there are many people in the family to share them or do them jointly in a team spirit (Ibid).

According to Wasike, nothing in a polygamous marriage was intended to benefit women. And again the reasons that are used to justify polygamy in "traditional Africa reveal a distorted relationship that has crippled both women and men in different ways" (1992:107).

## 5.5 Disadvantages of Polygamy

One of the most outstanding disadvantages of polygamous marriage is the sin of jealousy. This point has been discussed by different groups, individual, theologians and anthropologists from the past to the present day. They argue that jealousy is the root cause of the problems in a polygamous marriage. Dwane argues that "men may not easily appreciate what it costs a woman to share her husband and the father of her children with several wives." For when wives of "a polygamist compete with each other and quarrel frequently, this is not a manifestation of petty jealousies but a loud reminder" that there is something wrong that need to be attended to (1975:235-236). Wasike is of the view that,

(quoted by Phiri 2003:8). According to Sally and Wach, the risk is not limited to polygamy or monogamy but to all forms of marriage as long as it involves a man and a woman. Their arguments are based on unfaithfulness and immorality, which on the other hand leads us to the question, “Is there any connection between the spread of HIV/AIDS and the practice of polygamy?”

Phiri (2004:11) quotes Sam Mcetywa (221) who argues that,

The Ama Mpondo practice polygamous marriages. It could be mistaken to conclude that polygamy promotes the spread of HIV/AIDS because of the assumption that all such marriages are untrustworthy. Like any heterosexual marriage, traditional polygamous marriage is sacred, solemn and trustworthy. Tradition has laid down principles to protect such marriages from STDs and HIV/AIDS. Such rules are known by the whole society who monitors that they are followed. It is only when the rules are broken that such diseases can come in. Therefore it is not the practice of polygamy that brings HIV/AIDS but the misuse of tradition that needs to be dealt with.

The views of Mbiti (1969:144) agrees with Mcetywa’s when he says, “on the other hand, it needs to be pointed out that the problems of polygamous families are human problems and are not necessarily created by polygamy as such.”

Philippe Denis (2003) as quoted by Phiri (2004:12) is also of the same view that polygamy does not contribute to the spread of HIV/AIDS. He says,

Polygamy is not dangerous, from AIDS point of view if the man limits his sexual contacts to his wives and wives have no sexual activity outside the marriage. This could count, at least partly, for the low incidence of HIV in predominantly Muslim countries such as Senegal or Mali.

Denis and Mcetywa represents the voices of some African who share the same view, this is because as we know in African societies, different people carry different views over the issue of polygamy. However, in my opinion and based on my experience as an African who happens to be the grand son of a polygamous marriage and a church leader, I believe that the practice of polygamy, partly, if not fully, contributes to the spread of HIV/AIDS. This is because a polygamous marriage involves many partners, if one contacts HIV virus, the risk of transmission is very high since some of the wives may wish to marry after the death

everything in the home including wives, children, land, cattle belong to the husband. The bond between the husband and the wife is not very close and public intimacy in the relationship is avoided because the husband is expected to treat each of his wives impartially (Moila 1995:15).

The other disadvantage of polygamous marriages is adultery. Trobisch argues that those who address polygamy as antidote against adultery see only one part of the problem. For once an inclusive sex-partnership is accepted, the step toward adultery is easy to take. Women married to polygamous men often live individually in adultery because their husbands usually stay with one wife for a week at a time or with the favourite wife only for a long time. As a result, he is not able to satisfy them sexually (Trobisch 1971:31-32). Wasike (1992:107) agrees with what Trobisch says when she argues that it is undeniable truth that when a polygamist neglects the other wives for the sake of his favourite wife, "it is not surprising that these women married to polygamous men had secret lovers." This normally happens when the husband is too advanced in age and wives are younger and attractive.

There are also socio- economic factors that challenge polygamous marriages. Mbiti gives an example of a case,

...where a man has more than six children unless he is comparatively wealthy, it becomes a great burden for him and his family to educate all these children in modern schools, or even to clothe them properly or feed them adequately should the crops fail in a given season. Furthermore there are problems of discipline and growing up which are more difficult to handle in family larger than average, David's family 2 Samuel 13:1 ff (Mbiti 1969:143:144).

## 5.6 Polygamy in the era of HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS stands as the most challenging issue in Africa especially in Sub- Sahara Africa. It has been argued that the main cause of this pandemic is unfaithfulness or immorality. Sally and Wach argue that, the transmission of HIV virus in Sub- Saharan Africa is through heterosexual intercourse with marriage at a greater risk of contracting the HIV virus

illness or not. Giving the example of the Luo of Kenya to confirm this point Chinchon (1999:126) argues that “traditional practice of the wife inheritance in Nyanza District is largely responsible for the 40% who are HIV positive in the area.”

From my researches therefore, I still doubt whether the members of a polygamous marriages can be faithful and trustworthy. For according to my experience, fidelity is something rare to be found in polygamous marriages. I also don't have faith in the traditional laws and rules surrounding fidelity in marriage as still effective especially in Mara societies. Helander (1958:21) affirms this by saying that “today, unfortunately, in the towns and to some extent in the country, the old stability of African marriage has vanished.” I close this section with this comment, whether it is out of sinful nature of the individual member of the polygamous marriage or otherwise, the fact remains that polygamous marriages increase their risk from the HIV/AIDS infection.

## **5.7 Contrasting Polygamy and Monogamy**

As we have already noted, marriage in Mara societies means either monogamy or polygamy. They are both seen as legal forms of marriage. While some Church leaders strongly condemn polygamy as adultery and some go to an extent of saying that a polygamist cannot be a true Christian (Gaskiyane 200; 13). On the contrary some individuals in the societies in Mara regard monogamy as a sign of poverty (interview with Webiro 30:6:2003). The views of the societies in Mara regarding the two can be understood in this way: that God ordains monogamy and polygamy as manifestations of the reality of marriage, but because of human sinful nature some see some strengths and weakness in each of the two types of marriage.

In a polygamous marriage as we have noted earlier, it is quite normal to live with jealousy quarrels and tensions. There is nevertheless, a great burden on the husband of plural unions, and sometimes, impossible to meet the needs of such relationships. He must with difficult strive to provide an, equitable distribution of his love, that is, a service to his whole family (Hillman 1975: 125). The relationship between the husband and his wives is always shaky as he cannot afford to be very close to each of them as it should be the case. In

of the husband who died from AIDS related ailment thus spreading the disease even further.

It is no wonder then that some polygamists who are old enough to be grandfathers tend to marry girls who are of the same age with their granddaughters and sometimes because of age he fails to satisfy his wives sexually. This eventually leads his wives to find satisfaction outside the wedlock, which increases their risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. Likewise to polygamists who get married to fifty wives, they get into the habit of leading morally loose lives with other women outside their “married” lives. For they tend to devalue women so much that they see every woman “like the other one at home” who can bring new sexual or romantic experiences. As a result, they equally remain sexually dissatisfied as some lean into the habit of looking for new sexual exploits every now and then. I know of a man in my locality, who had five wives. He was a senior politician and he always found himself busy with public duties. As a result, his wives started complaining of not receiving enough sexual and material attention from him. In response to their complaints, the man decided to consume viagra drug which empowers a person sexually. Due to a weak heart condition rather than helping him to become sexually stronger, the drug killed him. This death shocked his family, the locality and the entire nation! This example shows the negative effect that the institution of polygamy can cause to the family and the nation at large. For a death caused by viagra drug-that stimulates sex-renders somebody somewhere as a widow or as an orphan.

We have also seen that widow inheritance is one of the factors that contribute to polygamous marriages. Mbiti clarifies that,

the brother, who inherits the wife and children of his deceased relative, performs all duties of a husband and father. The children born after his inheritance generally belong to the deceased man (1969:144).

This kind of marriage is very common among some of the societies especially the Luo. The danger here is that there is no precaution taken concerning HIV/AIDS. They marry without HIV tests to find out whether the cause of the death of the late husband was AIDS related

monogamous marriages the relationship between the husband and his wife on the other hand is less stressful and closeness is almost guaranteed. The bond between them is therefore intimacy.

In most of the polygamous cultures, women are regarded as inferior to men and male dominance is the normal culture because man is the head of the household. Wives, children, land, cattle and everything belong to him. There is oppression and sometimes even torture while life in a monogamous home involves only two people that makes it easy for them to discuss issues pertaining to life. Parrinder (1958:35) argues that,

It is indeed in the rights of women, and the respect for personality, that monogamy has one of its surest justifications. Where there are several wives there is bound to creep in an idea of the inferiority of women, who tend to be regarded as property, or as lower beings to several of whom the superior male has right.

Mbiti (1969:144) points out that the problems of the polygamous families are human made and can be solved or avoided in a monogamous set up whether in Africa or Europe or even in America. That means, the smaller the family, the easier it becomes when addressing the problems.

## **5.8 Effects of Social Economic Change on Polygamy**

Social economical changes are inevitable and the pace of these changes manifests themselves rapidly in many parts of our continent. These changes also have their effects on our traditional African culture. In explaining the change that faces Africa, Mbiti says that change is total; it involves the whole existence of African peoples and that these changes make their impact upon the religious, economic, political and as well as in the social life (1969: 216).

Though the changes are inevitable, everywhere in Africa, including my country, Tanzania, their impacts on traditional African cultures of Mara society are not big in comparison to other part of Tanzania and even other parts of Africa. The societies in Mara are still rooted in their culture; they go with both culture and modernity. For example, one of the most

important change that African societies have undergone in their economic structures during the twentieth century is the transition from subsistence to a cash economy. (Perlman quoted by Blum 1989: 124). But up to date the majority of the economically active population in Mara region is engaged in subsistence agriculture, as its main economic activity (The United Republic of Tanzania, Mara Region, Social economic profile 1998: 16).

Customary marriages are still strong though over 95 % of the population are Christian's practitioners. The payment of *Mahari* (dowry) is still common though there is a decrease in the number of cattle paid today. That is from 40 in the past years to 12 or sometimes 6 in present times.

The areas that have been touched by the social economic changes include, the number of children that one has, and also the unproportional increase in the population in comparison to the land area available. As we have seen earlier on African culture, the greatest desire and requirement is to have children, but in the modern world, many children and wives are being viewed as a great burden that needs to be cut into size especially if the polygamous man is not rich enough. The presence of many wives and children may no longer be seen as a mark of prestige. Today the prestige may be manifested in the way a man can support his wife or wives and their children (Blum 1989: 132). Nowadays a man does not simply expect his wife or wives to give birth to many children, but he also has to face many responsibilities towards his children and wives. A man who occupies a prominent position in society is frequently expected to manifest his higher status by providing his children with variety of clothing, high education and inheritable property.

Urbanization is another aspect of modern change in Mara. Men leave their wives and go far way from home and for a long time. Some men exploit this situation to enter into casual union with other women. Sometimes they completely neglect to provide for their families back home. The burden becomes huge on the women left behind, and because of the economic burden, and many children, they are left to care for, some women turn to prostitution. This portrays polygamy in a very negative way.

Mara is a very overcrowded region despite the large land area, which is about 21, 618 square kilometres. The population density of Mara Region has continued to increase by 26 % from a density of 43. 7 persons per square kilometre in 1988 to an estimated density of 55 persons per square kilometre in 2002 (United Republic of Tanzania, Mara Region Social economical profile, 1998: 10). This may stand as a stumbling block to the practice of polygamy in the future, because most of the polygamists depend on extension of the cultivated areas to be able to sustain their households with food, clothing etc.

Individualism is also a challenge to polygamous marriage. Mbiti says, “The size of the family is shrinking from the traditionally extended family concept to one which the parents and the children constitute the family in the modern sense of the word (1969: 225). In traditional Africa, there was considerable cooperation in the upbringing of children by different categories of relatives, and it was relatively easy for children to be fostered or waned to various households within the family community (Kisembo and Magesa 1977:73). This is no longer possible because of individualism that has come with capitalism which is emerging as the defining factor in our modern world, especially after the end of cold war in 1989. This has helped in weakening the polygamous institution.

### 5.9 African Women Theologians and polygamy

African women theologians share different views over the issue of polygamy. While some, e.g. Christina Landman, are advocating for it, others, e.g. Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike and Musimbi Kanyoro, feel betrayed and are of the view that polygamy is an oppressive institution which dehumanizes women, and should not be allowed by both the church and society. According to my research carried in July 2004, the division of opinion among women regarding the issue of polygamy cannot be confined within the boundaries of African women theologians; it goes beyond that, because it divides women regardless of their status or colour. This can also be confirmed by the results of a survey carried in Nigeria and then published in *The Sunday Times* (Lagos) February 24, 1985, as quoted by Mercy Amba Aduyoye in her work *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy* (1995:144.147). It is also something worthy to say that women’s division of opinion does

not rule out the fact that the reasons for polygamous marriages both in tradition and modern society favour the man more than woman.

Musimbi Kanyoro argues that, polygamy is an institution that is oppressive to women that “thrives in a patriarchal culture which believes in the superiority of male persons.” She goes on to say,

Polygamy has tended to exploit women and children’s labour because polygamy is justified as a means of enhancing productivity of property for the man. Polygamy also depicts women as weak and needing the constant protection on men (2002:5).

Nasimiyu -Wasike agrees with Kanyoro’s views when she says that polygamy is oppressive and it is practiced against the will of God, and that

The promotion and encouragement of polygamy were based on grounds that favoured men by boosting their personality and reducing that of women to subservient and inferior status. The whole system supported and enhanced men’s power and domination over women (1992:107).

She continues by explaining the similarities that are there between the Biblical creation stories in Genesis 1- 2 and African myths of the origin of human life. Wasike concludes that,

From these creation stories of the Jewish people and the African people, monogamy emerges clearly as the ideal form of marriage for humanity and that the only one sanctioned by God. Monogamy therefore is not a cultural product, but a foundational relational aspect that was meant to promote mutual dependence complementary relationship, and mutual cooperation between woman and man (:108)

In summary, African Women Theologians who oppose polygamy see it as part of the African structures that oppress women and constructed primarily for the benefit of men. These theologians say that the polygamous social structure confers on men more than women, social, political, economic, even sexual gains. Polygamy denies women the human right to undivided love of her husband. While the wife cannot share her love with other

men, the man can share his love with other women in the polygamous system. It turns women into an appendage, a property of the man, one of man's labourers.

Christina Landman holds a different view over polygamy. Landman, who is one of the Circle members, wrote an article which appeared in *The Citizen News paper* of 15<sup>th</sup> January 1999 and was also discussed on Felicia Mabuza Shuttle- SABC TV show of 22 March 1999. In all these events Christina Landman was recorded as calling for the legalization of polygamy among whites as a counter to South African high divorce rate and as an alternative for betrayed wives and mistresses. She also held that it would reduce the incidence of venereal diseases, men's prostitutions and the women prostitution. Landman argues that the Bible is on the side of women who fight for polygamy. "Did not the patriarchs have many wives"? (1999:71-73).

The KwaZulu-Natal Chapter of the Circle responded against Landman's article with one voice. They said,

We are disappointed and offended by Christina's proposal for the adoption of polygamy by the white community; we feel she is making an irresponsible, offensive and dangerous proposal. We stand united in our disapproval and hereby join the struggle against the promotion of this abusive system (1999:71).

This was a clear indication that the group was against the practice of polygamy, which according to their view was oppressive to women. This on the other hand is an indication that the issue of polygamy is divisive even among women of the same faith.

In summarizing this section, I would say that the division of the opinion among women regarding the issue of polygamy does not bend the truth that polygamy is for the benefit of men than women.

## 5.10 Polygamy and the Bible

The issue as to whether the Bible condemns or permits polygamous marriages has received much attention from biblical scholars. Christian scholars throughout the ages with very few exceptions have persistently affirmed the absolute incompatibility of simultaneous

polygamy with a Christian way of life. According to Schillebeeckx (1965:284) there are some scholars who argue that “no where in the New Testament is there any explicit commandment; that marriage should be monogamous, or any explicit commandment forbidding polygamy.” It is from this kind of argument that I would suggest that in the absence of binding interpretations, scholars as well as those charged with pastoral responsibilities must continually review and judge the opinions of exegetes, and thus, seek to formulate a policy, in keeping with the most reliable interpretation of the scriptures.

### 5.10.1 History of polygamy in the Bible

A study of patrilineal African societies shows the existence of many similarities in structure between the Hebrew patriarchal family and the traditional African patrilineal family. According to Blum (1989:176), if we take marriage as an example, the similarities includes, the practice of levirate, observance of certain sexual taboos, fines payable to the father or husband, in cases of fornication or adultery, and polygamy which is the subject of this study. There is another school of thought that most of the elements of the Hebrew family structure were borrowed from the surrounding neighbors. Wasike (1992:109) clarifies this when she argues that other scholars have observed that “in many cases the people of Israel assimilated customs and institutions of the surrounding neighbors.” Polygamy is argued to be among the practices that were adapted by the Israelites.

Other scholars hold that, marriage at the time of patriarchs was polygamous, but according to Blum (1989:179-180) it would be incorrect to designate the marriage forms of the patriarchs as simply polygamous without any qualification. He says, “A man in the time of Abraham could not take a second wife, unless his first wife was sterile and if she provided him with an informal wife, although he could take additional informal ones.” Blum agrees that there was a later development at the time of Jacob, when the practice of polygamy was legalized. This corresponds with Wasike’s argument that Israelites’ station in Canaan made them adapt new cultural practices.

According to Hastings (1915:461), Post- Exile Jews had a different view on marriage; monogamy was enforced by both law and customs, although neither the Bible nor Talmud

formally forbids polygamy. Only in the case of levirate marriage did the Pentateuch ordain a second marriage. Monogamy was seen as an ideal marriage as shown by Genesis 2:24, Song of Songs and other prophetic imagery in which marriage typifies the relation between one God and the chosen nation of Israel. Hastings observes that by the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, monogamy was made the binding and absolute rule for Jews. There is another school of thought that Hellenic rule played a very big role in the promotion of polygamy because Greeks were monogamous. Blum (1989:8) argues that Roman and other European cultures likewise were monogamous.

### 5.10.2 Polygamy in the Old Testament

Some scholars argue that monogamy was the marriage intended by God from the beginning and they use Genesis 1:26-28, 2:7-25. For example Gaskyane (2000:28) argues that for us;

to understand the whole problem of polygamy from the biblical perspective, we must first understand marriage as God established it in the beginning. When we do this, it is very clear from the fact that God created only one woman for one man in the Garden of Eden, that monogamy was God's perfect plan for marriage for mankind [sic]. Any other forms of marriage found in the world have been an invention of human culture and not the plan of God.

When God created humanity, a plan for marriage was instituted along with creation. According to Genesis 2:18 and 22, the Bible implies that there was only one form of marriage that is, one woman for one husband. However as time went on, polygamy emerged. The first mention of polygamy in the Old Testament begins with Lamech in Genesis 4:19-24 who is also revealed to be a self-confessed murderer. Other examples of polygamy that stood out in the bible were those Elkanah who had two wives (1Samuel 1), David's plural marriages in 1Sam. 11:17, 2Sam. 11:12 and then king Solomon whose idea of taking foreign wives turned his heart against God and the Levite of Judges 19.

According to Trobisch (1971:26), there were different motives that led to polygamy in each instance. For Abraham and Elkanah (1Sam. 1), it was barrenness, for Lamech (Gen. 4:23), it was pride, for Gideon in (Judges 8:30), it was prestige. While for Boaz who married Ruth

the widow of one of his cousins in (Ruth 4), it was the levirate marriage and for David the paramount king of Israel and his son Solomon it was power and sexual lust. Other scholars argue that, while polygamy was permissible during Old Testament times, it was practiced primarily by upper class people. Even in Old Testament times the norm was that a man had only one wife. This is corroborated by the prophetic use of marriage as metaphor for the relationship between God and Israel and by the metaphorical interpretation of Song of Songs.

Hillman (1975:31) does not agree with the interpretation of Genesis 1, 2 as God's approval for monogamy, he calls it a shallow anthropology and persistent ethnocentrism. Westermann argues that we have become accustomed to listening to the Bible in the light of a particular type of interpretation. He continues to argue that it "is the western cultural tradition, far than the Bible that has provided Christian with their basic notion about marriage," for it has been just too easy in the past for theologians and churchmen to read into the Bible what they expected (quoted by Hillman 1975:142).

Helander argues that,

Right through the Old Testament, polygamy is firmly established custom. Even Moses, the great Lawgiver himself had two wives, Zipporah and the Ethiopian one (Ex. 2:21, Nu. 12:1). In Deut. 21:15 ff there is even a law regulating a certain situation in polygamic family (1958:24).

He continues to argue that there is only one verse in the Bible that condemns plural marriage especially to those whom God chose to be leaders of God's people, "The king moreover must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself or... he must not take many wives or his heart will be led astray" (Deuteronomy 17:16-17). In this passage the emphasis of the statement is not on taking more than one wife. It is a warning against acquiring many wives. The passage does not warn against polygamy as a moral violation but it warns the leaders of God's people that having many wives will lead them into spiritual apostasy. In 1Kings 11:3-5 King Solomon becomes the example of how many wives can lead to spiritual apostasy.

Gaskiyane has argued that God did not condemn polygamy as immorality but, in the law of Moses the polygamist was required to provide for each of his wives in all respects, including a normal sexual relationship (Exodus 21:10) (2000:30), in previous sections of this study, we have noted that it is very difficult under certain circumstances for a man to provide for his wives equally. Therefore, it can be argued that in Exodus 21, this was another way of God informing man that polygamy is an institution that ought to be avoided like sin, as no man can effectively satisfy his fellow human beings. Rather only God can quench our thirst effectively-once and for all. So the idea that God approved polygamy as a form of marriage cannot be true because it is the same God who instructed Moses that the kings of Israel were to have only one wife (Deuteronomy 17:17). Perhaps at this point one may wonder as to why God had to give such a contradictory instruction to Moses. My own conclusion is that God did not tolerate polygamy as a valid form of marriage; this is because God has given humanity a free will to choose what he or she thinks could go along with his or her environment, but with wisdom and love (Genesis 3, and Matthew 10:16).

### 5.10.3 Polygamy in the New Testament

The issue of polygamy did not take much space in the New Testament times as was the case with the Old Testament. Helander (1958:27) affirms this when he says that “there is no word in the New Testament that clearly deals with the question of polygamy.” Blum (1989:188) suggests that, several conclusions can be drawn from the silence of the New Testament concerning the issue of polygamy. He says that it might be concluded that Christ and the evangelists were quite aware of those marriages and accepted them as legitimate, it may be that there were cases where the “members of the household could have been readily accepted for baptism if they felt the call to follow Christ and become Christians.” Bruce is of the opinion that,

It is commonly believed that the teachings of Jesus on the permanence of marriage cf. Matthew 5:31-32, 19:3-9, Mark 10:2-12, Luke 16:18, amounts at least implicitly to a repudiation of simultaneous polygamy. Since the Lord himself makes no explicit reference to the problem of polygamy, this whole argument hinges decisively upon the following assumption; that Genesis evidently depicts monogamy as divinely

willed from the beginning and that simultaneous polygamy is intrinsically bound with divorce and remarriage hence also with adultery, (Bruce quoted by Hillman 1975:155-156).

The teachings of Paul about marriage as the symbol or analogue of the mystical union of Christ with his Church (Eph. 5:22-34) has had a profound influence on Christian thought, elevating and purifying the conception of marriage. In his letter to Timothy Paul brings out a statement which some scholars would use to back up polygamy (1 Timothy 3:2). Paul instructs elders to be men of one wife while in 1 Corinthians, as in Ephesians, as mentioned above, he maintains his stand on monogamy by instructing the church to abstain from immorality which may lead to having many wives. Finally Paul again used the same words from Timothy when talking about the office of eldership in Titus 1:6 saying, “a person who wishes to be an elder of the church should be a husband of one wife.”

These and many other biblical references are some of the scriptures that have been interpreted differently by many scholars. It may also be proper to argue that, for Paul to emphasise that leaders should be men of one wife is an indication that there must have been polygamy going on in the community and in the church while other people may argue that the appeal of Paul was nothing but a warning to the church against the practice of polygamy. In my opinion on this issue is that, although polygamy may have been practised in New Testament, as I said before, the New Testament times was influenced by Hellenistic rule which was predominantly monogamous. This can also be interpreted that the ideal form of marriage in New Testament times was monogamy, although we cannot rule out the fact that polygamy was also an accepted form of marriage.

Trobisch (1971:25) agrees with Blum on the silence of the New Testament on the practice of polygamy by saying that:

During the New Testament the message of Genesis 2:24 had brought forth change to such a degree that simultaneous polygamy seemingly was no longer a burning issue, though it was still practiced during the time of Jesus. Jesus' silence about this fact is therefore surprising, could it be that Jesus was in favour or not? In any case the silence of the New Testament about polygamy is complete. The passage

stipulating that bishop or elder should be “husband of one wife” (1 Tim. 3:1, Titus 1:5) may not even refer to polygamy, but rather advise against remarriage of a widowed church leader.

Hillman (1975:156) sees this assumption as highly dubious, he says, “what we have seen here is that Christian theology of marriage derives more from the history of biblical interpretation than from what the Bible actually says on the subject.” Spinger is calling for a new interpretation of the Bible when he says,

What exegetes have done is two fold. First they transcended the limits of western thought patterns, which had inevitably influenced western minds interpreting the sacred text. Necessarily, this had involved interpolating meanings and nuances of thought into divine revelation, which were not there. We need only recall the impact of literary genre on what were thought to be historical passages of Old and New Testament. This transculture view of Scripture involved at the same time breaking through into oriental thought patterns which had long kept secret the meaning of words and phrases (quoted by Hillman 1975:142).

#### 5.10.4 Polygamy in the early church

Polygamy was one of the divisive issues in the early church as it is today. While some did not consider polygamy to be unchristian, others found it as an issue that needed immediate attention. For example Harris (1976:335) commenting on Augustine’s view says that,

Augustine did not consider polygamy as an offence against the moral law provided that its object was the multiplication of the race. It is immoral (*contra mores*) he held, only if its purpose be mere sexual pleasure. It can become wrong on extrinsic grounds if it is prohibited by positive law or reprobated by public sentiment.

Although polygamy happen to be a matter of dispute in the early church Atkinson (1995:673) argues that the early church fully appreciated the significance of the one flesh union between a couple (Matt. 19:4-6, Mk. 10:6-9, Eph. 5:31). Its exclusive nature ruled out polygamy as an option for the Christian.

According to Blum (1989:9), during the evangelisation of Africa, the evangelisers were not only faced with a new form of marriage, “but as missionaries quickly learned, polygamy itself could be practiced in a widely varying set of circumstances and conditions. Each tribe or people had its own customs.” Blum continues to argue that,

In many cases Missionaries did not really understand well the language and customs of the people, and were at a loss to recognize what ceremonies, if any were necessary for a cultural accepted marriage.

Harris (1976:335) observes that, nearly all missions in Africa were agreed on not admitting a polygamist in the church unless he puts away all his wives but one as we observed earlier. They never seriously considered the possibility of accepting a husband and all his wives and children for baptism. They also agreed that any baptised Christian taking more than one wife must be excommunicated or otherwise face disciplinary charges. But differences of opinion arose in the case where a wife was to be divorced whenever a polygamist became a Christian.

Macquarrie (1986: 484-485) realistically talks of Christian moralists as follows,

Today Christian moralists recommend a more humane approach to the problem of polygamy. While still believing in the ideal of monogamy, they recognize that in cultures where polygamy has long been the rule, it cannot be instantly abolished, even where families or tribes have been converted to Christianity. It should be remembered too that although western society have turned a way from open polygamy, the prevalence of prostitution, sexual promiscuity, and easy divorce means that something very like polygamy remains a phenomenon beneath the surface in the societies.

## 5.11 Conclusion

In chapter five we have been able to see different schools of thought regarding the issue of polygamy. While the societies in Mara perceive polygamy as part of their culture, the church on the other hand dismisses polygamy as a pagan custom and discourages this practice. According to the majority of African women theologians, the practice of polygamy is inhuman, and needs to be discouraged by both the church and the society. We

have also seen that even the reasons that are used by many African societies including Mara societies in legalizing polygamy are no longer valuable. Lastly we have seen different views on the perception of the Bible towards polygamy. In our African societies, different people carry different views on the issue of polygamy. Whether one is a Christian or not, polygamy still remains a heavy debate on their minds. Helander (1958:40) observes that, "The Africans looks upon the Bible as a Law book." And so long as the Bible is not explicit on the issue of polygamy, it will persist to be a divisive issue.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

#### 6.0 Introduction

Chapter five gave us an opportunity of making a critical analysis on the practice of polygamy. The study which involved African traditional cultural perception of polygamy, the views of African women theologians and biblical perceptions of the subject at hand. Chapter six is the conclusion of this study, which includes the recommendations that have come up in the course of the study.

#### 6.1 Recommendations

Adrian Hastings in his book *Marriage in Africa* (1973:73) draws up a list of the possible attitudes that a Christian may adopt towards polygamy;

- a. Polygamy is simply sin comparable with adultery
- b. Polygamy is an inferior form of marriage, not sinful where it is the custom but always unacceptable for Christians.
- c. Polygamy is a form of marriage less satisfactory than monogamy and one which cannot do justice to the full spirit of Christian marriage but in certain circumstances

individual Christians can still put up with it as they put up with slavery, dictatorial government and much else.

- d. Polygamy is one form of marriage, monogamy another. Each has its advantages and disadvantages; they are appropriate to different types of society. It is not the task of the Church to make any absolute judgment between them.

Hastings rules out (a) and (d), and choose between (b) and (c). Dwane (1975:228-229) summarizes the reasons that made Hastings to arrive at this conclusion. He says that, Love and judgement are inseparable during the process of transformation to Christianity. He goes on to say,

If polygamy is accepted by the Christian Church, then this has to be a short-term policy, and not a long-term one. There has to be made a distinction between the institution of polygamy, which should be barred from the unmerited love and transforming power of God.

I do agree with the choice of Hastings although not fully. I would suggest that the Church in Africa especially in Mara should take point's (b) and (c) this is because, if we say polygamy is simply sin what do we mean? The term sin as understood by the Church is acting contrary to the will of God. "Sin is in the final analysis refusing to become Christ like. It implies a decision to be short of the truly and fully human and free; resting, for the enjoyment of short-term benefits (Verryn 1975:240). Hillman acknowledges that cultures differ because they are dependent upon the bio-climatic environment in which a people finds themselves but the worst thing to do is to think of one culture to be superior than the other, nor primitive or advanced (1975:58-60).

Hastings gave us four basic positions a Christian can take towards polygamy, and it is undeniable truth that the approach of church leaders, theologians and scholars towards polygamy are based on these four positions. In the first position as we have seen already polygamy is a sin to be compared with adultery. We have theologians and missiologists who would take that position. The second position is that polygamy is inferior form of marriage. This is the position of most pastors and Church authorities today.

The fourth position according to my research is what some sizeable members of the societies in Mara would take, as one way of solving the problem of polygamy in the Church. It says; polygamy and monogamy are both equal forms of marriage. However, this is impractical when we consider the religio-socio-political factors that we have considered in this study on polygamy. For polygamy today has very little advantage in the modern world such that it can no longer enrich the Gospel of Christ. Their position in the world of monogamy, and also the world that is under siege of HIV/AIDS, automatically face resistance from different institution, and groups, especially the majority of African women theologians. My suggestion is that ACT-DM should take the third position that says, "Polygamy is a form of marriage less satisfactory than monogamy. And a type of marriage" that cannot be relied to enrich the Gospel of Christ in Africa of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This is because polygamy dehumanizes women and at the same time, places the members at risk of HIV/AIDS infection. Furthermore we must agree that those cultural laws that are used to guide African marriages have become outdated. Thus we must devise- other ways of enforcing fidelity in our African societies rather than assuming that we shall save ourselves through polygamy. For it is just like saying, "let us do female genital mutilation to our girls as a way of enforcing morality." This defeats logic for two wrongs doesn't make a right.

It is my opinion that the Church should discourage the practice of polygamy not by imposing laws and rules but through proper teachings. Men and women should be told the shortcomings of polygamy, which includes dehumanization of women, the danger of HIV and AIDS and economic pressure that polygamy is imposing on the already overburdened people. I would suggest that the church should not use Baptism and Holy Communion as weapons to punish polygamists and members of their families because these are sacraments instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ. I agree with Hillman (1975:191) when he suggests that, the question of whether polygamy and Christianity are mutually exclusive deserves attention as well since the Church could benefit by re-examining past policies to ascertain whether it acted on the basis of scripture or on the basis of culture in the last two hundred years of Christianity in Tanzania.

On the contrary polygamists should not be given opportunity for leadership especially as Church elders, pastors and bishops because this is what the scriptures say about the qualities of a leader in the church (see 1Tim 3.1-13 and its parallel, Titus 1:6). This will give the polygamists their full participation in sacramental life of the Church and will also help them deepen and enrich their relation with all the members of their families (Blum 1989:290). We must not forget that salvation in Christ Jesus is based on love and not on judgment; and this can only be real if the church would take the issue of Christian education seriously. The Church, however, should not allow her members who are fully evangelized and baptized to enter into polygamous marriages. In case one disobeys, then he or she should be penalized by the Church's disciplinary body. For when we know the truth, it should be allowed to set us free (cf. John 8:32).

## 6.2 **Effective Christian Education**

Effective Christian education is needed because of the changes and challenges that face the African societies today. To the African societies, religion covered all aspects of life; there were no dualistic approach to life. Mbiti says that, one serious draw back in modern African family life is the fact that, whereas under the traditional set up, both boys and girls received preparatory education concerning marriage, sex and family life, especially during and after their initiation rites (1969:227), the Church and the school, today, is giving very little counseling to the youth and students of our time and the little they are giving does not appear to address the context. This is a dangerous trend.

In order for the Christian education to be effective, the Church needs to adapt the methods that were used by the societies for preparatory education and then modify them to suit the changes of our time. For example the status of women among the society should be addressed and gender equality should be taught right from the Sunday school.

The material that should be taught should address the society's culture. For example what does the word marriage mean to the society and how do they understand marriage in relation to the Biblical teaching that, all people are equal before God. The assumption that western culture is the correct culture and that therefore, Christian culture is necessarily

identified with the customs and traditions of the western civilization is a hindrance to the spread of the gospel and a stumbling block to those of other traditions (Aria rajah 1994:25).

Building an effective Christian education will depend on contextual theology especially on anthropological model. The Church must make sure that the Christian education that they offer takes culture seriously but at the same time “does not take everything in a culture, but also judge, transforms and changes cultural norms and practices” (Ibid p34). For example in the case of barrenness, the couple should be advised to take adoption as an alternative. They should be encouraged to approach one of their members within their extended family for his or her child for adoption, which I hope will make it easier for them.

The education must also acknowledge that culture is a changing reality and that one should be aware of the impact of the secular, materialistic and technological culture on the society. Through contextual theology, the Church members will be able to articulate God’s manifestation in their own culture without making wrong assumption that everything in culture is perfect. It is my suggestion that the church in Mara should apply Cultural hermeneutics as a method of dialogue between African traditional assumptions and Christianity, this will not only bring harmony but it will also help to separate the good and the bad from the African culture.

### **6.3 Conclusion**

The purpose of this work has been to investigate the legality of condemnation of polygamous marriages by the Anglican Church of Tanzania- Diocese of Mara, asking the question as to whether the church has credible theological justification for this. The study has demonstrated the contradictory approach of ACT-MARA on the practice of polygamy, which eventually showed how much the church has become the prisoner of missionary heritage. It is also important to be considerate when talking about missionary heritage, due to the fact that not everything from them was meaningless and unchristian and not everything in them was perfect as they were mortal beings like us.

In chapter two we have noted that the conflict between African cultures especially the practice of polygamy with Christianity in Tanzania started in the sixteenth century with the Portuguese Catholics who showed cultural intolerance. This conflict became worse with the advent of Christianity in Mara which included different denominations as mentioned in chapter two. The reaction against subjugation of African culture is seen on the rise of the African Initiated Churches, who proved to be weaker contesters compared to the mission churches. Two reasons can be cited to be the cause of the weakness of the African Initiated Churches in Mara. First, the founders of the AICs were non literates and had problems in interpretation of the scripture in relation to Church leadership. Secondly other groups of AICs went to the extreme that is to the point that they could not be separated from the African traditional Religion.

The study of the Gospel and culture in chapter three has shown us how these two entities are a mutual partner which was contrary to the popular missionary approach which treated the African culture as an enemy of the Gospel. We have learnt the power of the Gospel which originates from God and through Christ the Gospel transforms and judges culture. We have seen also how some elements in African culture are sometimes oppressive especially to women. The study on polygamy calls us to reassess these elements.

We have seen, in chapter four, how polygamy has continued to be a challenge in Mara Anglican Diocese; and how various groups view it in different ways. We have also seen various justifications of polygamy in chapter five such as celibacy, culture dictates that all must be married, barrenness and protection can be handled as we work out a pastoral formula that can cater for the victims of the circumstances-especially children. In so doing, the study has acted as an eye opener and given us a reason of doing further researches on this subject.

We have also seen in this study how the approach of the Anglican Church towards this issue of Polygamy brought controversy. We have also seen why the Mara societies have continued to prefer practicing it even when the world is shifting towards monogamy. It is an undeniable truth that the position taken by the Church of denying the polygamists, their

wives and their children a chance to partake the Holy Communion needs to be revisited. It is also true that we need, as a Church, to conscientize the society to acknowledge the slogan, “one man one woman.” As a Church we have both sociological and theological basis to support our positions. This will not only transform the Church but it will also help in transforming the entire Mara society for the better. It is a great challenge for us, the modern theologians, to be effective stewards of God’s creation.

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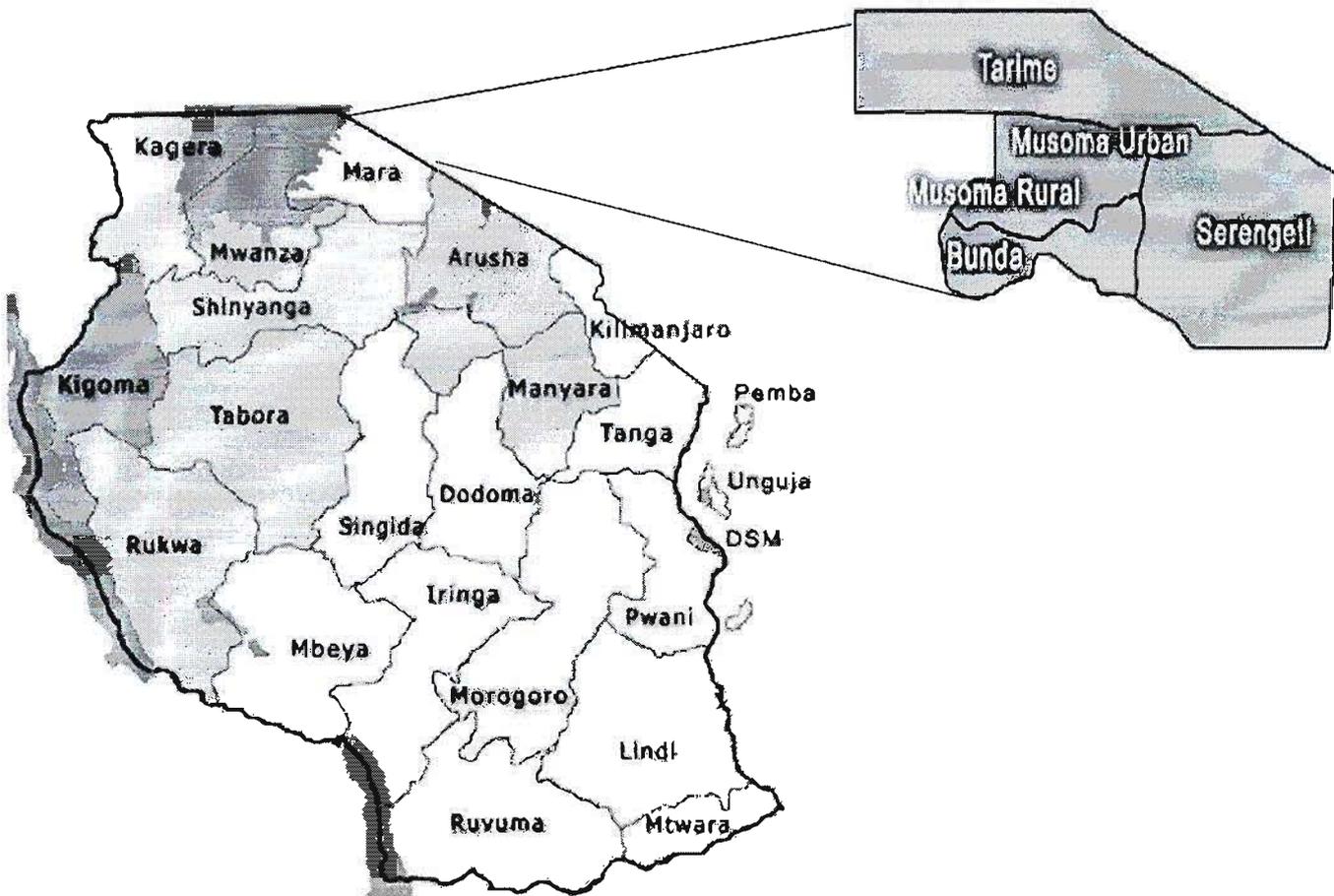
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## APPENDIX I



**Map of Tanzania showing the regional administrative boundaries. Inset is Mara region where this study was carried out.**





## APPENDIX 4

### Interview Guide in English and in Swahili

1. Polygamy is a very common form of marriage among Mara societies, what is your view of this practice

Inavyoonekana Mitaala ni aina ya ndoa inayopatikana kwa makabila yote ya Mkoa wa Mara nini maoni yako juu ya ndoa hii.

2. What do you think contributes to the persistence of polygamous marriages in Mara inspite of the Church's effort of discouraging this practice?

Kwa mawazo yako unadhania ni kwa nini ndoa za mitaala zimeendelea kuwepo pamoja na juhudi zinazofanywa na kanisa kuzuia ndoa hizi?

3. In your view, what are the factors that contribute to polygamous marriage?

Kwa maoni yako ni sababu zipi unafikiria kua zinachangia kuwepo kwa ndoa za mitaala hapa Mara?

4. According to my understanding The Anglican Church observes two sacraments; Baptism and Eucharist, Marriage is not a sacrament. Then how does marriage relate to these sacraments?

Ninavyoelewa mimi, Kanisa la Kianglikana linatukuza sakramenti mbili yaani Ubatizo na Ushirika mtakatifu, ndoa siyo sacramenti. Je? Unafikiria ni uhusiano gani uliopo kati ya ndoa na sacramenti hizi.

5. In your view should the polygamist be given full membership in the church or should he not?

Uonavyo wewe ni vizuri Kanisa liwapatie wenye mitaala haki zote kanisani au la.

6. To what extent should the Church accommodate polygamist.

Ni kwa kiwango gani unafikiria kuwa Kanisa liweze kuwapokea wenye mitaala.

7. In your view what impact does polygamous marriage have on self image of both man and woman.

Kwa maoni yako unafikiria kuwa mwanamume na mwanamke walioko katika ndoa wanajisiakiaje.

8. In your view, what impact does polygamy have on the image of the Church?

Kwa maoni yako unafikiria kuwa ndoa ya mitaala inalitangazaje Kanisa.

9. What role do you think the government should play in regard to polygamous marriages?

Unafikiria serikali ya Tanzania ingefanya nini katika suala hili la mitaala.

10. Do you think that polygamous marriages should still be encouraged when we consider the challenges that face society e.g. Cash economy, and HIV/AIDS.

Unafikiria kuwa jamii bado ina haja kuwa na ndoa za mitaala wakati huu ambapo jamii inakabiliana na changamoto nyingi kama uchumi unaotegeme fedha, na magonjwa Kama ukimwi.

11. In your view are there any biblical or theological reasons, for the Church's condemnation of polygamy?

Je kwa maoni yako unafikiria kuwa Kanisa lina sababu zozote za kibibilia au za kitheologia za kuliwezesha kuzuia ndoa za mitaala.

12. What is the status of women in the society and in polygamous marriages?

Wakina mama wana hadhi gani katika jamii na katika ndoa za mitaala.

13. Do you have any further comments to make regarding the practice of polygamy?

Je una lolote la kuongeza juu ya suala hili la mitaala?

**APPENDIX 5**  
**List of interviews**

The Rt. Rev. Hilkiyah Omindo Deya	Musoma	5/7/2004
Rev. Julius Outa	Tarime	24/6/003 and 6//72004
Rev. Nelson Nyamongo	Tarime	7/7/2004
Mrs. Magotho	Tarime	8/7/2004
Mrs. Anne Peter	Tarime	9/7/2004
Mr. Webiro Wanzagi	Musoma Rural	30/6/2003 and 10/7/2004
Mrs Odindo	Bunda	11/7/2004
Mrs Justina Chacha	Bunda	12/7/2004
Mr. Achieng Malowa	Musoma Rural	13/7/2004
Mr. Joseph Okal	Musoma Rural	14/7/2004
Rev. Canon Justine Ofiello	Tarime	15/7/2004
Mr. Othaigo Magotho	Tarime	26/6/2003 and 16/7/2004
Mr. Elias Chiguma	Musoma Rural	17/7/2004
Mr. Manyama Kanyuagare	Musoma Rural	2/7/2003 and 18/7/2004
Mr Daniel Okere	Tarime	19/7/2004
Mr. Dede Orina	Tarime	20/7/2004
Mr. Peter Gony	Tarime	21/7/2004
Mr. Otieno Raura	Tarime	22/7/2004
Mr. Abuok Ayoma	Tarime	23/7/2004
Mrs. Penina Joel	Tarime	24/7/2004
Mrs. Phoebe John	Tarime	25/7/2004
Rev. Otieno Deya	Tarime	28/6/2003 and 26/7/2004
Mrs Masioko Chacha	Tarime	26/6/2003 and 27/7/2004
Rev. Fr. John Chacha	Musoma	10/7/2003 and 28/7/2004
Mrs Yunia Sila	Tarime	30/7/2004.
Miss Julita Kisora	Tarime	15/1/2005
Mrs Yunia Barnaba	Tarime	16/1/2005
Mrs Jael Miya	Tarime	18/1/2005

Mrs Dina Charles

Musoma Rural 19/1/2005

Mrs Lilian Joseph

Tarime 20/1/2005