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## **Possibilities and limitations for Interculturalisation: A Perspective from the Rabai Marriage Practices vis-à-vis Anglican Teachings in Kilifi County, Kenya**

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### **Abstract**

This research article sets out to explore Rabai cultural marriage practices in an Anglican Church perspective within Kilifi County, Kenya. It has utilized a number of specific objectives, which elaborates the arrival of the Biblical teachings in Kilifi that turned out to be a fertile ground for Christianity to germinate. It examines the Rabai marriage practices in the light of the Anglican Church's teachings (hereafter, 'the duo') on the same. In retrospect, it surveys the biblical teachings on marriage, assesses the resilience of the Rabai [African] customary practices in light of the strong presence of the Anglican Church who epitomizes 'modernity' as opposed to the former who can easily be dismissed as merchants of the past models. The initial research was carried out in Rabai location. It targeted 120 Anglican Church members from the total membership of 360. The interviewed Church members were married under Rabai [African] customary marriage rites. It adapted qualitative research method in collecting data. Explanatory and descriptive methods were used to explore the Rabai [African] customary and Anglican Church's marriages, hence purposive sampling was equally administered. In retrospect, it was established that customary marriage, or some of its elements, were un-avoidable due to a hotchpotch of marital misfortunes. In other words, there was a progressive interchange amongst the duo, a development that encourages mutual cooperation for socio-strategic purposes. It was thus recommended that although the duo performed their marital rituals differently, their understanding of the same was largely similar. This further upped the game, as the Rabai case study demonstrated a pan-African approach in understanding the culture-gospel debate. Did the Rabai inter-culturalisation debate speak for the global community? Did the Rabai case speak to the ecumenical society, rather than the Anglican Communion? Did it speak beyond marital inter-culturalisation? Is inter-culturalisation the way to go amongst the converted peoples of the world?

**Key Words:** Gospel-culture dialogue, Rabai-Kenya, inculturation, acculturation, assimilation

### **Introduction**

While appreciating the African indigenous resources as the raw materials for the Gospel, it is always necessary to 'test' all spirits and/or the iota of activities of the dialogue partner(s). As African Christians, we

must always ask critical questions, such as: Are all the raw materials (indigenous) compatible with the Gospel of love that Christ propounded gallantly in his summary of law? Is this compatibility in tandem Christ's words: "The most important [Commandment] is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these" (Mk 12:28-34). Does the dialogue between culture and the gospel (inculturation) based on 'genuine' interchange or is it the case of the 'strong' culture 'overrunning' or 'subduing' the 'weaker' one (acculturation)? (Gathogo, 2016). Africans are aware that the Bible and culture's engagement is a process of coming together, the meeting of life with life; hence such a process is rarely completed within a particular generation.<sup>1</sup> Hence, the discussion has to be within a contrapuntal perspective (Waweru, 2020).

Second, culture being the total sum of life embraces religion, politics, aesthetics, economics, kinship, ethics, forms of informal and formal education, and other social activities, so several generations of believers are needed to firm up the dialogue taking place and reap the fruits of engagement (Waweru 2011). As anthropologists would contend (Gathogo 2011), the main difference between human society and the animal kingdom is seen in the fact that the former have scientifically organized systems (western knowledge systems, African indigenous knowledge, Asian knowledge systems etc), while the latter do not have cultures. Cultures guides how we worship the Supreme Being, how we prescribe and proscribes, how we conduct our betrothals, the way we treat ecology and the ecosystem, how we treat one another, and indeed it monitors our humanness (Ubuntu). It is the late Ugandan Poet, Okot p'Bitek (1931-1982) who viewed culture simply as "philosophy as lived and celebrated in a society" (cited in Gathogo 2011:6). Ideally, culture consists of material and non-material aspects; and where the material culture includes: tools, artefacts (objects), implements (tools), drawings, architecture and so on. On the other hand, non-material culture consist of ideas, believes, morals, mores, values, norms, attitudes, aesthetics, and so on. Seen from this backcloth, all cultures are equal and are the lifeline of all societies. Further, it implies that whether we are vouching for short term or long term needs, we will always entertain dialogue between our cultures and the biblical text, as human societies (Waweru 2009:245), so as to make it to the next stage in the arena of life. In retrospect, this translates to the fact that no human society can survive without culture, just as fish cannot survive outside water (Gathogo 2001, 2013). In any case, culture helps us to reproduce the conditions under which we live and work.

Third, with Sociologists and Anthropologists talking about the diverse forms of Acculturation, which includes: Bilateral (a two-way process where the 'donor' group borrows some of the 'weaker' groups' traits), Unilateral (where one of the groups in contact absorbs traits of the other group(s) – as only the weaker group feels the compulsion to borrow from the stronger group), Planned acculturation (which is a deliberate acculturation of one group by another for certain benefits), Selective acculturation (which takes place when the recipient group chooses which cultural traits to adopt from the 'donor' group), and Antagonistic acculturation (where a group borrows some cultural traits for defence against the group from which it has borrowed - as in the case of the Biblical Samson and Delilah, Judges 16) (Gathogo, 2011), one wonders whether the Rabai-Anglican 'dialogue' fits in this scheme of things. Is African hyphenated Christianity free from these forms of acculturation, particularly in the twenty-first century? Besides acculturation, the concept of Assimilation also comes into play. In a nutshell, assimilation refers to the process where persons or groups acquire the culture of another group in such a comprehensive manner that one strives to lead or duplicate that group or persons way of life (Gathogo 2011). This wholesale process is evident in the values, attitudes, mannerisms, diets, dress and all manner of behaviour. The British's Indirect Rule policy, during the colonial

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<sup>1</sup> For in-depth analysis, see Waweru 2011:6. *The Bible and African Culture: Mapping Transactional Inroads*.

era, cannot be categorised as assimilative as it left enough room for indigenous developments albeit its scepticism.

In attempting to understand the above assimilation-acculturation queries, it is worthwhile to journey with Charles Nyamiti (1997:57), the celebrated Tanzanian scholar, who propounded the view that "the Christian has something to learn from the traditional African [society]; not in the sense of new doctrines, but in the sense of new insights and new ways of understanding God." This translates to the fact that new insights and better reflections in African Christianity are evident when we strive to learn from the indigenous realities. Put it differently, cultural hermeneutics has a critical role in our understanding of scriptures. In turn, cultural hermeneutics will lead us to appreciate that there are many ways of understanding ones identity in light of the tempo of change that has been sweeping across Africa since the early twentieth century when the colonial hegemony and the missionary enterprises began to take shape. Cultural hermeneutics in the Rabai case, or any other case study, will demonstrate that we must always prepare to understand ourselves in a new way, and as much as we long for renewal of our respective strengths, we also have to ensure that we understand African Christianity innovatively rather than transactionally. Dynamism, as a characteristic of culture, prepares us for cultural hermeneutics and the Gospel-Culture dialogue (inculturation). In any case, we are always facing the danger of becoming irrelevant when we assume that the Gospel speaks to a cultural vacuum in the peoples it seeks to convert.

Beyond inculturation archetype, African Christianity will have to embrace inter-culturation, which is more praxiological, and/or action sensitive than the former. Indeed, it is the Nigerian scholar, Ukuchukwu Chris Manus (2003), who went beyond inculturation (mere dialogue) paradigm and put more emphasis on inter-culturation, a phenomenon where theory and practice are combined (praxiological perspective) to promote the agenda under consideration more practically and/or further. Certainly, inter-culturation, as a praxiological treatise, makes a deeper impression on scholars of African theology as it is viewed as a meta-language, a language that broadens our horizons and takes us beyond the prevailing shores. Inter-culturation is the 'language' that tells us, 'Come on! Stop arm-chair theologies, scholarships, theorizing, and now swing into action!' In retrospect, inter-culturation drives us, in African Christianity to literally 'wake-up and walk the talk,' and discern new insights, new ways, invent new metaphors and pro-active paradigms, new practices that will help in galvanizing the continent and reclaim the identity of its peoples.

To recapture the integrity of the African peoples, African Christianity has to be praxiological rather than ape their neighbours perpetually, in terms of jargons, manners, explication, and practice. In light of recent theological trends (African women's theologies and the feminist perspectives, post colonialism and the 'imported' post modernism, reconstructive, Ubuntu, liberative, cultural, triumphant and prosperity among others), inter-culturation takes us beyond these scholarly debates and drives to plant rather than propose what to plant. Seen from this perspective, inter-culturation assumes that the wearers now knows where the shoe pinches and needs no more lectures. Action-sensitivity is the way to go as we strive to get Africa out of a hotchpotch of 'imported' theo-religious metaphors that alienates Africa rather than helps her understand herself in light of the Gospel and the global trajectories.

In striving to understand Corona Virus Disease 2019, HIV and AIDS, the gender-gaps, the boy-child, patriarchy, battered men, polygamy, single-mother hood, divorce-increase, marital-separations, cleric-divorces, episcopal autocracies, blind denominationalism, blind nationalism, xenophobia, ethnic mobilization in politics, con artistic preachers, displacements and refugee challenges, banditry and terrorism, domestic violence, emerging forms of corruption in the academic institutions, teenage marriages, bad governance, church-state relations, new forms of dictatorship, the Big Men/Women Syndrome, cultism and the New Religious Movements (NRMs), among other tests, inter-culturation paradigm will certainly remain critical in delivering the promise. For is there a better way than getting immersed into our troubling contexts, through

being 'baptised into death' and eventually 'resurrect' with local solutions that will effectively and realistically address the myriad of concerns in African Christianity? (cf. Rm 6:4).

### **Rabai customary and Christian marriage**

This research article describes Rabai customary and Christian marriages under the Anglican Church in Rabai location. The consensus of the two marriage practices were reached through dialogically. In turn, dialogue is a discussion between two or more persons or groups, especially one that is directed towards exploring a particular subject or resolving a well-defined problem (Waweru, 2011). Such a dialogue has to be engaged across the respective divides rather than a lopsided affair (Watkins, 1999). Vinay (1997) insists that dialogue is natural and it could not be avoided because it is biblically supported (Prov. 27:17), while (Baur, 1990) errs when he avers that African cultures are pre-modern and the Christian beliefs under the Anglican Church are modern. In Africa, marriage is looked upon as a sacred duty which every person has to be involved, for failure to do so means a discontinuation to generational growth (Waweru 2009:247). Africans found themselves at crossroads when the missionaries arrived with a Bible which they could not read or understand (Waweru, 2020:28); hence, they had to wait for over 50 years for it to get translated, and eventually rediscover their marital practices and their interrelated concerns.

Marriage is an important rite of passage in African Society; and it is a matter of communal concern (Waweru, 2009:247). The Akan of Ghana viewed it as a union between man and a woman from two different clans (Kirwen, 2005). It brought families closer to the societies and ultimately stabilized social institutions in Yoruba land by uniting families, clans and societies. The Kikuyus considered marriage as a necessity in life, especially when paying Bride wealth (Waweru 2009), which was in form of livestock, that was intended to compensate the family that brought up the daughter (cf. Oshitelu, 2007). Polygamy and levirate marriages were common due to their economic and religious significance. Nthamburi (1991) narrates how Dr. Ludwig Krapf started a mission station at Rabai, which was later called Rabai Mpya in the Coastal region of Kenya, in 1844. Another area that informed the background to the research article on Rabai [African] Christianity was the missionary enterprise of the nineteenth and twentieth Century. It is they who shaped the nature and form of the Anglican Church Marriage and the resultant Teachings in Kilifi County. Genesis 2:24 can be said to be the foundation of biblical marriage, as is seen through Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. After the fall (Gen 3), however, marital institutions were extended beyond the Garden of Aden - to the un-fallen creation of God; a phenomenon that is widely believed to explain the cultural-marital diversities across the world (Noble, 2020).

Besides monogamous family seen in the Garden of Aden, noted above, Endogamous marriage is the practice of marrying within a specific social group, as in the case of Anglicans only or Rabais (Africans) only, one caste only, and seeing others as unsuitable for marriage. Endogamy is the practice of marrying within a specific social group, religious denomination, caste, or ethnic group, rejecting those from others as unsuitable for marriage or other close personal relationships. Endogamy is common in many cultures and ethnic groups. In contrast, Exogamous marriage is a socially accepted arrangement where one can marry outside his or her social group (family, clan, Anglican circle, Rabai circle, and so on).

The duo marriages discussed in this research articles are encountering exogamous and endogamous extremisms right into the twenty-first century. In light of this, Cannella (2022) describes Rabai marriage practices which were initially opposed by the early missionaries by recalling their practices as including: Consent, capture, compensation, exchange, woman-to-woman and replacement form of 'marriage' – as they were not dialogical enough. With the coming of the Anglican Church in 1844, the Rabai community embraced the duo practices. That is, customary and Anglican Church marriages, a trend that is visible right into the twenty-first century. Does this point to the resilience of African indigenous religion amidst onslaughts by Muslims and the predominantly Christian presence in the Rabai area? Does it mean that the first centre of

Anglican Christianity in Kenya (Rabai) has been overtaken by the 'newcomer' centres? Nevertheless, the practice of the duo forms of marriage (indigenous versus Christian) remain the main factor that triggers the research gap and/or the Problem Statement that we have gallantly strived to unravel. For what made the community practice the duo marriage practices concurrently? Did Krapf and the pioneer leading missionaries fail the dialogue of culture and gospel test, a marvel that led to proselytization rather than genuine conversion? Were the missionary mistaking inculturation with syncretism, a phenomenon where unscientific dalliance of various religious societies converge?

This notwithstanding, the researchers found that the two marriage practices coexisted, a fact that resulted in marital harmonization in the society, especially when inter-culturation began to take shape. The specific objectives of the research article, from its initial stages, were: 1. To explain the Rabai customary marriage practices and the Anglican Church's ways of the same. 2. To examine the biblical teaching on marriage. 3. To assess the dalliance of the Anglican Church members (if any) with the Rabai [African] marriage practices. 4. To establish the actual nature of the Rabai customary marriage practices.

In view of this, the research article addresses the Rabai customary and Christian marriages, with integrity and with ethical prescriptions, a phenomenon where cultural relativism and/or respect of cultures was religiously observed so as to offer a fair judgement on the duo. Besides this, the research article ably highlighted on Church member' responsibilities and teaching of Christian religious education in their respective institutions. In the analysis, it informs its readership that both practices are valuable and are deserving of respect, and/or broad consideration.

In attempting a justification, the research activities were carried out in one critical location out of fifty four, and to one [Anglican] denomination. The rationale for this consideration had to do with Rabai location being the 'cradle' of Christianity in Kenya, and Rabai Mission of 1844 coming before other subsequent Anglican Missions noted in Gathogo's (2011, 2020a) works, and other related works; as indeed, there were well established missions "such as Kabete 1900, Weithaga 1904, Wusi 1905, Kahuhia 1906, Nairobi 1906, Maseno 1906, Kisumu 1909, Kabare 1910, Kigari 1910, Mutira 1912, Butere 1912, Gathukeine 1913, Ng'iya 1921, Kacheliba 1929, and Marsabit 1930" (Gathogo 2020a:110).

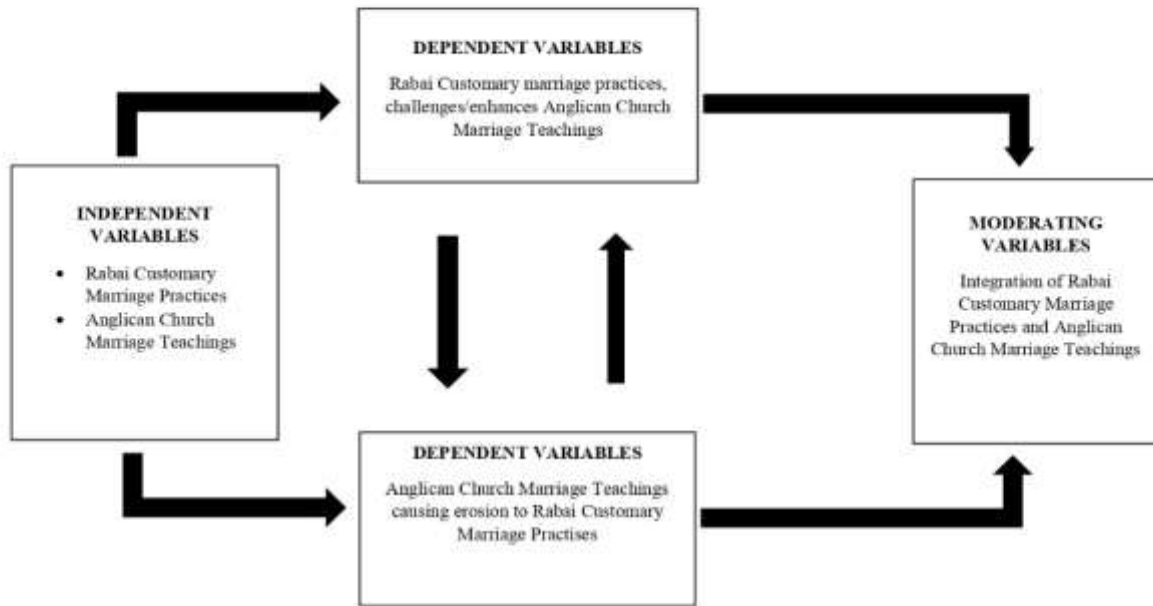
With the duo marriages getting spiced simultaneously with Endogamous and Exogamous marriages, and research gap still obtaining, and indeed the challenge thereof as a result of the huge differences, a theoretical framework that informed the research article falls within the Theology of Inter-Cultural theory (Grenham, 2006). In turn, it insists on partnership between religious and non-religious cultures as the panacea to meeting the praxiological need of the community(ies) of faith under consideration. It goes beyond inculturation, acculturation, assimilation and other concepts noted above. It inspires action, and indeed goes beyond the mere dialogue between gospel and culture (inter-culturation).

The theory of inter-culturation is relevant to the research article as the interaction between Rabai and Anglican marriages goes beyond mere theorising and intellectual introspection. It is action-oriented, a phenomenon where theory and practice meet (praxis). This integration among the duo, for a couple of decades and beyond a century, has been packed with action that now need a reflection. In a postcolonial perspective, marriage has been conducted in an integrated concept within Africa, dowry being paid to the parents and offertory being collected in Church (Waweru 2020). The Rabai's dalliance with Anglican Christianity could not easily abandon some of its practices in totality.

**Culture-Christianity relationship model conceptual framework** that guided the findings of the research article, (see fig.1.1.1).

**Figure 1.1.1**

*Culture-Christianity Relationship Model*



**Source:** Researcher 2021

*Note:* Figure 1.1.1 described the relationship of variables on how they conflicted and influenced each other. That resulted to moderating variables.

According to Fig. 1.1.1, Rabai customary marriage practices and Anglican Church marriage teachings were independent variables. A conflict on mutual partnership is visible, depending on their respective abilities in matters to do with influencing each other. In the course of research, this resulted to dependent variables, a phenomenon where Anglican marriage teachings were explicit in opposing Rabai customary marriage practices and/or accommodated them and vice versa. Moderating variables were created when there was integration of Rabai customary marriage practices and the Anglican Church marriage teachings. The model guided the article in examining dialogue between Rabai customary marriage and the Anglican marriage teachings. Though the two marital practices approached marriage differently, they however got incorporated through diffusion, assimilation, separation, integration and at worst through marginalization.

## Methods

Data was collected by employing cross-sectional, descriptive and explanation because it is community based. The respondents were Church members who were married in the Church. It described cause and their effects (Mugenda, 2003). The article described Rabai and Anglican Church marriages, how they sometimes conflicted and enhanced through their practices. The site of the article was at Rabai location. Three meanings

describe Rabai, it is the ethnic group, the administrative location and sub-county headquarters. The ethnic group is affiliated to Mijikenda community which is made up of Mijikenda and freed slaves.

It was the place where Christianity under the Anglican Church began in 1844 when Krapf started a mission station under the CMS (Feeders, 2006). That explains the reason for the choice of Rabai as a case study. It is 25km. North-West of Mombasa city. Out of 360 Church memberships the article targeted 120 who were married under the Rabai marriage rites. Since the article targeted specific responders then purposive sampling was employed. Twenty (20) adherents in the Church, ten (10) Deacons and ten (10) Deaconesses in the Church. Forty (40) in the Church because they were the majority. Twenty (20) Church committee members and twenty (20) social outreach ministry members. Open and close ended questions were administered to 100 members. An interview schedule was administered to twenty (20) social outreach ministry Church members. The researchers were issued with an introductory letter from Kenyatta University which explained the purpose of the research. This introductory letter from the University, a research permit was subsequently obtained from NACOSTI. Authority letter was issued by the County Commissioner of Kilifi County copied to the Rabai Sub-County Commissioner because that was the site of the article. The collected data in mother tongue (*Kirabai*) and Kiswahili was translated into English. For transparency, the researcher issued copies of the research permit to the respondents.

## Results

The researcher identified the gaps by reviewing relevant literature to the article, Rabai customary marriage vis-à-vis marital teachings of the Anglican Church in Kilifi County, Kenya. That was based on the following:

### 1. Rabai customary marriage practices and the Anglican Church marriage teachings

The Indians define marriage as legalized procedures for identifying children in the family, clan and society. While the Kikuyus insists on unrelated marriage because incestuous relationships are not allowed (Waweru, 2009). The Bible in the Hands of the Africans too condemns marriage between relatives, particularly among the Anglicans (Waweru, 2022). Africans reading the Bible clearly indicates that God is perfect and holy, revealing marriage as a universal issue. Bride wealth payment was the responsibility of parents (Waweru, 2009), however it was altered in Central Tanzania because parents stayed far away from their children (Hastings, 1993). The Akamba relate marriage as a rite that bond children which is culturally accepted. Though the processes differ the meaning is the same (Kirwen, 2005 and Shorter, 1998). Among the Mijikenda marriage practices were similar and they were arranged by aunts, parents and relatives (Feeders, 2006). Aunts provided food for visitors and bought veil during wedding. Part of Bride wealth was paid by the clan. That explained why a married woman also belonged to the clan. Incest marriage among the Rabai was not allowed because of *maphingane* disease which was associated with body deformation. If compulsory marriage took place a bull was charged as a fine that was not part of the Bride wealth.

Ancestors were remembered through libation when *Mnazi* Beer was poured on the ground (Adeyemo, 2006). That was done when consent of the Bride was sought, Bride wealth negotiations and payment and blessing of the Bride by the father. They caused calamities when they were not honoured. According to the Anglican teachings, marriage was a must, God's gift and originated from the Garden of Eden for physical union between man and woman (Noll, 2022). It was permanent, voluntary and prepared by parents that corresponded to the marriage between Isaac and Rebecca (Adeyemo, 2006) because Rebecca was to commit herself to the relationship. Jesus identified Himself with the Galilean community when He attended a wedding feast at Cana of Galilee (Jn. 2:1 -11). It was at that occasion when He performed the first miracle. He showed how the gospel works. Should Christians attend customary weddings? That posed challenge, however in such occasions God's redemptive could be revealed through praying. The research

article found that Rabai customary and Anglican marriages could not be separated because it was community affair which included the community and the Church.

## **2. Biblical teaching on marriage**

The three elements of marriage are spiritual, emotional and physical closeness (Gen. 2:24) the passage is the foundation of God's marriage as ordained to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. However after their fall marriage institutions were extended to the un-fallen creation (Noble, 2020). Marriage in the Bible creation is for enjoyment and procreation through which children are born which strengthens marital affairs (Waweru, 2009). Jesus declared what God had joined no man could separate, Apostle Paul encountered marriage conflicts of spouses in Ephesus (Mt. 19:4-6, Eph.5:28-32). The researcher advised spouses to respect each other for stable marriages. Spouses should show love as Jesus does for the Church. Through love, spouses can overcome marital conflicts. In biblical marriage spouses were to consider spiritual, emotional and physical closeness. Their relationship should be based on the concept love and intimate selfishness as the Bible teaches between husbands and wives. Biblical and customary marriages are practices that should be respected. The article found that both biblical and customary marriages were valuable and should be respected. The aim of the study is to arouse a voice in the predominantly Western-oriented theological academic circles and investigations where African voices are more often than not either sidelined or suppressed in biblical studies (Waweru, 2022).

## **3. Resilience of Anglican Church members to Rabai customary marriage practices**

The Anglican Church members in Yoruba land argued that their resilience to customary marriage practices was based on the following: Some missionaries practiced polygamous marriages, therefore they continued with that marital relationship. It integrated families of the Brides and Grooms to the clan and society (Oshitelu, 2007). Customarily practices of levirate marriage and re-marriage of widows was common among the Nuer in Sudan (Kuek, 2021). That was because the practices were beneficial to the community. The article proceeds to explore the need for a definition of African marriage, how it relates to African Christian faith, and the challenges posed by African Theology to the Christian faith (Waweru, 2018).

In 1844 Krapf started a Christian mission under the CMS at Rabai which was later called Rabai Mpya. Rabai are mixture of Mijikenda and freed slaves (Feeders, 2006). Among the first converts were Nyondo and his father Abegunga who were in 1860 baptized as Isaac and Abraham and in 1865 Rebman witnessed the colourful wedding between Nyondo and Polly from Bombay (Nthamburi, 1991). The article revealed that the Anglican Church influence was based on two arguments. First, the establishment of the mission center. Second, the wedding between Nyondo and Polly. The Anglican Church marriage was monogamous and condemned polygamous marriage, Bride wealth, wife inheritance, compulsory marriage, incest and levirate marriages of the Rabai. The Bible however does not deny the existence of the practices. The author further explained that the practices promoted customary awareness and stabilized marriage and they were unavoidable in societies. In Milka Muthoni's view (as cited in Gathogo, 2008), polygamous marriage is a better than childless African Christian marriages, as she saw divorce as 'worse off.'

Milka Muthoni's (as cited in Gathogo, 2008) Afro-Pentecostal position corresponds with Abraham's marriage to Sarah, and other cases such as those of Hannah, Rebecca, Rachel and even Samson's mother who was married to Manoah (1Sam.1:5-6, 20, Gen. 25:21, 29:31, 30:22, Jdg.13:1-3). They later conceived and brought forth their own children. Significantly important is to appreciate that Polygamous marriages had been the source of marital conflicts in both cultural and Christian marriages, as in the case of Abraham (Gen. 16: 1-4). Further, Marriage procedures differed in most of the African communities though they have same values of procreation, protection and security at old age (Mbiti, 1969). The author further states that Christians do not erase their customary practices when they receive redemptive blessings of salvation,



instead the two were concurrently practiced. However, African marriage practices are tremendously diminishing because of the influence of modernization (Sumo, 2021) laments. In Anglican Church marriages, the Bride must be blessed by her Father and communion with the ancestors through libation cannot be avoided. The ancestors are believed to control the activities of the living. When offended, they can cause calamities (Adeyemo, 2010). The two marriage practices engages a dialogue for marital harmonization in the African society (Waweru, 2008, 2011, 2020, 2022).

Their partnership created mutual respect which resulted in positive response (Gathogo, 2008). The early Anglican missionaries did not consider that, as theirs was a dismissive approach. Despite their spirited efforts to wash the slate clean, right from 1844 when Christianity was introduced under the Anglican Church since 1844, the Rabai community's resilience to their customary marriage practices has remained, perhaps under the banner of interculturalisation or inculturation, or merely sticking to their indigenous religio-cultures. The research article found out that customary marriage practices could not be avoided even by the committed Christians, as marital misfortunes, and other related concerns, as in the case of resultant consequences to the families, clans and societies, in a communalistic society, will always drive the Rabai people to appeal to certain elements of indigenous resources. So in Africa Marriage is a *Dini* affair, because whatever the Africans do, whether religious or not religious matters are simply *Dini* (Waweru 2022: 77).

**4. Rabai customary marriage practices.** There are different beliefs within the customary and Christian marriages in Africa. Indeed, Africans approaches marital affairs from a cultural backcloth, while Christians approach it from a biblical perspective, hence the reason for the contestations that eventually poses marital challenges (Baur, 1990). We are of the view that these marital contestations ought to be highlighted adequately so as to evaluate the place dialogue in these discourses. Besides this, African customs have numerous pre-modern frames of reference, while Christianity has had modern frames of reference. Whether positive or negative dialogue cannot be avoided in any given society (Vinay, 1997).The author further insists on mutual respect for positive dialogue. The Akan of Ghana defines marriage as a union between two unrelated clans because incestuous marriage was not allowed. To counter marital deviations however, polygamous marriages were encouraged (Kirwen, 2005). Marriage integrated families to the clan and society (Oshitelu, 2007). The Nuer of Sudan use livestock in paying Bride wealth, as it united families to the clans and societies (Shorter, 1998, Pritchard, 1994 and Kitembo, 2015). The Rabai community practiced both exogamous and endogamous marriages. Exogamous is marriage outside your family while endogamous is marriage within the family (Hornby, 2010).The advantages of exogamous marriage were that couples' respect was high and children recognitions were beyond their families while in endogamous marriage families were familiar to each other. Apart from the above types of marriages, which were also common among the Rabai, other forms includes: consent, capture, compensation, exchange, woman-to-woman and replacement nuptials. The beginning of Rabai marriage is evidently seen when the Bride and the Groom agreed on marital relationship. The parents of the Groom visited the parents of the Bride. The latter was merely an 'introductory' visit. It is at this stage when the Bride sought her consent. Further, 'Bride negotiations' started when the Bride consented, and Beer was used as stimulus and a marital prediction. However marriage continued if the Bride was the first born among the female children in the particular family. This was due to the fact that marriage was conducted according to the order of birth, a phenomenon that draws its parallelism with Jacob's situation when he was given Leah rather than Rachel for marriage (Gen. 29: 26-27). That showed marriage was complicated and its meaning is globally similar. The article found out that the Rabai customary marriage practices were beneficial to them because they were customarily accepted.

## Discussions

The section discussed the article under the objectives of the article, which was based from the title of the article. Rabai customary marriage practices vis-à-vis marital teachings in the Anglican Church in Kilifi County, Kenya. The respondents were 120 Anglican Church members.

**1. Rabai customary marriage practices and the Anglican teachings on marriage.** The research article reveals that Church members focused on the origin and design of God's marriage, husbands and wives responsibilities, and viewed sexuality as in God's plan. Monogamous marriage was initiated to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Marital institutions were however extended to all people across worldwide cultures. This explains the reason for marital complications and the significance for its reverence globally. Among the Rabai, informal certificate was issued for divorce while in the Anglican Church, formal certificate has been the norm. Nonetheless, the meaning of divorce remains the same. Polygamous marriage has persisted in Rabai, the Bible however admits its existence (Gen. 4: 19-24). That explained that marriage was a universal affair. The involvement of the parents' (for Brides and Grooms) involvement in Bride wealth payment, blessing of the Brides and handing over the Brides to the Grooms are characteristically witnessed by the Church. This demonstrates the communal nature of the Rabai marriage, and is indeed a societal affair. Rabai approaches marriage customarily while Anglicans base it on Bible alone (*Sola Scriptura*) (Noll, 2022), a pointer to its connection with sixteenth century Reformation that began with Martin Luther – the German Reformer in 1517 (Gathogo 2020b). Although God is above all cultures, Rabai marriage practices and rituals have greatly affected the Anglican missions in the locality. Clearly, the Gospel cannot imprison culture nor can culture imprison the Gospel, as God is the ultimate in this inter-culturation trends.

**2. Biblical teaching on marriage.** The youth preferred come-we-stay (cohabitation) marriage which had a score of 50% because it could be dissolved any time. Compared to Anglican Church 37% and Rabai customary marriage 12.5%. Anglican Church was preferred because it was monogamous while community based for Rabai customary marriage. Aunts, parents and relatives prepared the Brides and Grooms which was also experienced in Central Kenya (Waweru, 2011).

**3. Resilience of Anglican Church member to Rabai customary marriage practices.** The research article revealed that grandfathers taught boys how to talk to girls on marital relationship and capture them. They were to respect their in-laws, recognize marriage misfortunes and avoid sex before marriage. Grandmothers prepared the Brides because they were close to them. Food, presents and wedding veils were provided by aunts. Beer was used to communicate to the ancestors through libation (Adeyemo, 2006). That was because they were assumed to control the activities of the living. Practices of polygamous marriage, wife inheritance and levirate marriages were common in Rabai and in the Bible. Polygamous was advantageous to Rabai community that was why senior wives were highly respected. However, it was the source of family conflicts (Gen. 16:5) as was the case of Hagar and Sarah. Death of Onan (Gen 38:3-10) revealed that sex was divine and originated from God. This shows that marriage is God's gift and indeed ordained. An example of wife inheritance in the Bible was between Ruth and Boaz (Ruth. 4:1-7). The main cause of divorce is un-faithfulness which has displaced many families (Deut. 24:4). This explains the reason for its being condemned in the scriptures (Prov. 6:32). Some Anglican Church members goes back to Rabai cultural marriage practices after their new faith fails to address their concerns fully. The major test is to assess the incompatible and compatible elements that would otherwise throw the inter-culturation vehicle under theological dustbins.

**4. Rabai customary marriage practices.** Both exogamous and endogamous marriages were common to the Rabai community and in the Bible and participation of patrilineal and matrilineal were necessary. The ancestors were communicated through libation. Monogamous marriage was God's plan and Jesus affirmed it. During marriage, Churches focused on preparations rather than its meaning. The practice of father handing over the Bride to the Groom was co-operated in the Anglican Church. Sex was for pleasure and ritually purposes. God's presence was vital in dialogue. Some of Rabai marriage practices included: consent, capture, compensation, exchange, woman-to-woman and replacement. The practices were beneficial to the Rabai. God established marriage before human institutions and it was Holy, it for one man one woman. The purpose for marriage was for procreation in both Rabai and Anglican Church. Polygamous marriage and concubine keeping practices were common. The Church ministers, parents of the Brides and Grooms played their parties independently. Blessings of the Brides by their fathers were unavoidable. Rabai community accepted Anglican Church rituals by incorporating them in their marriages, a hybridity that builds the case of inter-culturation. Grenham (2016) advocates for partnerships between religious and non-religious cultures, and among diverse peoples through purposeful interactions. Other areas that calls for dialogue and further action are: Early marriages between non-Christian and Christians, protection, love for children, the marriage roles, pastors, and Church leaders. Certainly, the Anglican Church is a religious body which is considerably focused on the degree of institutionalization discernible in a structured order (Waweru 2022), but still with conscious phenomenon that is culturally specific to Western Society. In view of this, inter-culturation with the Rabai rituals amounts to Rabai-Anglican Christianity that defines the new religiosity.

## Conclusion

The research article began by redefining the concepts of Assimilation, acculturation, and inculturation in order to understand the nature of the dalliance between Anglican Christian marriage and Rabai indigenous marriage in the Kilifi County of Kenya. Though not consciously guided, inculturation (dialogue of culture and the Gospel) featured prominently as the real deal. By comparing the two sets of marriage (Christian versus customary), the symbiotic relationship came out clearly, hence the question on how genuine the dialogue is, given the lack of clear guidance, brought us to wonder where whether there subtle forms of acculturation or assimilation. Genuine dialogue presupposes that the two sides embrace mutual respect for each of the two sides of the coin.

On the whole, it was established that the resilient characteristic of Rabai customary marriage practices right into the twenty-first century is clearly evident. It was theoretically informed by the Theology of Interculturation, as propounded by Grenham (2016), which insists on mutual respect between cultures, and is action-oriented treatise. It was supported by Shorter (2006) on encountering of two cultures in the course of relating and/or interacting. As noted earlier, the two cultures under consideration were Rabai and Anglican Church marriages. Culture-Christianity relationship model's conceptual framework guided the flow of the initial research, as it depended on how the variables related with one another. Open and close-ended questions were administered to 100 members. An interview schedule was superintended to 20 social outreach ministry Church members. The findings were that the two practices could not be separated, because they were communal-inclusive affairs, hence the symbiotic relationship among the two in the larger Kilifi County of Kenya, and indeed speaks for the larger African context.

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The researchers concedes that they are the sole authors of this research article that creatively contributes to the world of academia, and is not published, and will not be published, by any other Journal apart from JJEOSHS.

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The views and opinions expressed in this research article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors.

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This research article followed all ethical standards for research.