THE KAGURU
A Matrilineal People of East Africa

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mountain areas, partly because the mountains are the most conservative area least affected by modern change and partly because the west, though subject to as many changes as the rest of Kaguruland, lacks the ready supply of grass and palms needed for other types of housing. These are the areas with greatest holdings in livestock and thus the most sensitive to the potential dangers of stock theft, which is far less easy to carry out from such palisaded enclosures. Today almost no such dwellings may be found in the higher central parts of the mountains, heavily forested and secure from raids; there, Kaguru always built traditional beehive-type huts such as are found there even now.

Today there are two equally popular alternatives to the tembe. One is a rectangular house (ibanda) with a series of rooms fronting on a small entry hall; the other is a round beehive-type structure (musongo) with two concentric walled spaces with the hearth and sleeping area in the center. Both are made of poles reinforced with plastered, dried earth, and both have thatch roofs. Metal roofs are only attached to rectangular houses. The circular house is said to be the more traditional; more modern-minded Kaguru favor the rectangular house since it allows construction of a series of rooms rather than just two, only one of which is really private. This privacy allows some modern Kaguru to avoid building separate girls' and boys' houses since, with several different rooms with different entries made possible with a rectangular house, little contact need be made between potentially incestuous kin. Often, in such houses, the central hearth around which the traditional circular house is centered is replaced with an outside cooking lean-to patterned after Arab and colonial styles.

The composition of Kaguru settlements follows no particular trend regarding affiliation to kin groups. In the past large settlements were built up around a core matrilineage and persons attached as spouses. Today a few such settlements exist, but only when an elder has acquired considerable wealth and power; the only cases I found involved men who held posts as headmen or chiefs, a few prominent rainmakers and traditional curers, and some very skilled and industrious traders and brewers. Most of the larger settlements are extremely heterogeneous since the persons settled there are attached to nontraditional employers such as a mission, market, or government agency. Smaller settlements are usually composed of kin, but it would be difficult to cite a prevailing pattern; however, among the commoner ones are: (a) a man, his wives, and their married children, especially his married sons and divorced daughters; (b) brothers and their wives and perhaps the brothers' divorced sisters and their children; (c) a man and both his married sons and married nephews; (d) a divorced or widowed woman and her married children with no senior male over them; and (e) a divorced or widowed woman and her daughters, who have various children but who are unmarried and free of direct male control.

The household and the immediate kin relations produced within it (the ties between husband and wife, parents and children, and brothers and sisters) are at the core of Kaguru social relations. The position a person achieves within larger groups, such as a lineage and neighborhood, is grounded in the support secured at the domestic level. One can best explain this by three sets of factors: (1) The household is the basic residential group, containing those persons with whom one most frequently interacts, whose resources, especially food, one shares, and about whom one knows most. It is thought that one can count most on such persons in an emergency. (2) The household is the basic unit of socialization. A child is gradually drawn, through rewards and punishments by his primary kin, into understanding and esteeming the values and goals held by the wider circle of his society. This point is made far clearer in the consideration of Kaguru ritual in Chapter 7. (3) The household is the arena in which many deep loyalties are contested and in which many resources are distributed so that we find that the members of households, including those who later leave the parental nest to set up their own homes, use the loyalties, emotional ties, and moral claims of these original relations as counters in the perpetual game of trying to secure their own individual advantages. The members of a household may each attempt to exploit the values of that group for his or her own ends. These same sentiments which bind persons together within such a group may also be used to drive some apart; adult offspring may be forced during a crisis to choose between mother and father, between one sister and another, as part of the politics of kinship, that is, the jostling and jockeying between persons seeking different goals.

This is not, of course, intended to suggest that Kaguru do not feel deep ties of affection and loyalty between kin, for they do. However, enormous pressures are put upon such ties, and intense competition occurs within the field of primary kin relations precisely because kinship is so deeply important since it provides the basic avenue to broader economic, social, and political security. In any society where kinship is this important, we may be sure that it is a sphere not only of intense sentiment and moral obligations but also, at least potentially, of
bitter competition and feelings of betrayal and enmity. Any clear and bright patch of moral directives always implies a corresponding shadowy area of guilt and notions of sin. Kaguru sometimes say that one should and must trust kin before others. Kin, especially matrikin, are thought most unlikely to be witches; yet Kaguru go on to say that the most terrible and dangerous witches of all will be matrikin, and some admit that such cases of witchcraft have been reported. They are saying that betrayals by kin can and do occur, and when they do, they are occasions of the bitterest ceremony. One can only feel profoundly betrayed by those upon whom one has trusted and counted, and the greater the initial dependence and expectation, the bitterer the sense of betrayal and loss.

The best way to approach this problem of understanding Kaguru primary kin relations is to present a brief, somewhat formalized picture of how different Kaguru view a marriage and the social relations created by the family it produces. In the course of that exposition we shall see contradictions in this general picture since it varies with the point of view of those concerned. This suggests some of the potential lines of conflict in such relations. In the final portion of this chapter, I indicate some of the ways different individuals would gauge their actions and the actions of others, given their particular situations in a family group. I try to illustrate these with some cases of Kaguru social behavior.

The Strategy of Kaguru Marriage Arrangements

The Kaguru family is an arena or stage in which the members of various social groups attempt to achieve their ends. An entire monograph could be devoted to this problem. Any approach I take here can only provide a rough guide to all the possible variations and intricacies of these relations. A useful way of approaching this problem is to consider the various pressures and attitudes that lead to the marriage of a Kaguru boy and girl. Every Kaguru youth wants eventually to marry since no male is considered wholly adult until he has his own household and children. In any case, men should not draw water, fetch firewood, or prepare food. There are no formal prohibitions against such behavior, but it is seen as demeaning to men; these are women's tasks. Until a youth marries, he is therefore subordinate to the routines and schedules of another household, his father's or uncle's, until he himself is married. In the past Kaguru, elders manipulated their juniors primarily through the fact that not only did these elders control the young women required by youths but they also controlled the wealth by which these women could be secured. Youths were thereby tied to those kin groups which had provided wealth for them. Today some Kaguru youths, especially those with education, secure their own bridewealth with relatively little direct aid from their kin, although even in such cases, the support they received during their education still may oblige them to their kin. A youth goes into his first marriage hoping to establish his own household and, through a wife and children, hoping to improve his economic and social situation. His aim at the beginning is to marry while incurring as few constraining obligations as possible to those who help him secure a wife. If he takes other wives later, these will be secured from wealth acquired through his own labor and good fortune and no such obligations are likely to be incurred.

A girl's views on marriage are different. She is more fully under the control of her elders, usually her father and her mother's elder kinsmen, who have led her to expect to be married shortly after she has been initiated at puberty. In the past, when there was less communication between different areas of Kaguruland and polygyny was more common, women were scarcer for youths, and some girls were promised in marriage while still children or even before they were born. Girls are often given in their first marriage while quite young, in their late teens or early twenties, and such women make far less mature and shrewd assessments of their situations than their mates. The situation changes profoundly with time, in the case of older women, widows, divorcees, and those few independent souls who resist control by men. Most girls dislike leaving home, and some approach marriage with considerable uneasiness about what their husbands will expect of them. Nonetheless, nearly all girls realize that children are the major source of prestige, influence, and security for them. However, it is obvious that a woman need not be married to bear children. She secures some advantages by having a husband, but disadvantages are entailed in marriage as well, for a husband tries to control as many of his wife's activities as he can.

The formal rules of Kaguru society support male authority and discourage formal indoctrination of a girl into the details of jural rules. Kaguru never say that she is always married (kutala); she is always married (kutula, the passive form). Marriage is something arranged by men as the outcome of male goals. But women learn quickly, and the shy and pliable young bride sometimes becomes a tough and clever older woman quite the match for any man. The reader must remember, however, that all this discussion of social manipulation and potential tensions does not mean that many Kaguru marriages are not happy affairs with consider-
A Kaguru girl.

able affection. But marriages are not usually contracted with these feelings as the primary goals or motives, and other factors encourage what Kaguru claim is a fairly high divorce rate.

As a woman matures, she more fully grasps the fact that her primary security lies in children even more than in having a husband, who may indeed restrict her freedom. It is hardly surprising that today, with no threat of raiding, many Kaguru widows and divorcees live alone but continue to bear children by various lovers. Despite its drawbacks, many women seem to judge this arrangement more to their advantage than further marriages. The initial marriage provides experience and other opportunities for women to break somewhat free of their kin so that such an independent life is made possible.

Given that, traditionally at least, both girls and boys want to get married fairly soon after their initiation, what factors determine the ease with which they enter marriage, and what do these factors involve in terms of the subsequent life of these persons? In general, Kaguru boys face far more difficulties than girls in marrying. Most Kaguru girls are disposable in marriage, even those considered ugly or subnormal in intelligence. Of course, a poorly endowed girl commands lower bridewealth than an attractive, healthy girl, but such is the desire for wives and children that any woman may find a husband if she wants. One might say that it is a “seller’s market” since men must provide some wealth or services to legitimize their access to women and secure rights over their children, and since polygyny is still practiced.

A youth’s ease in entering marriage depends upon a complex set of factors. To begin with, sons are provided with bridewealth in order of birth. A youth must usually wait until all of his elder brothers have married before he may. Furthermore, bridewealth, which ranges today from about $30–50 (200–350 shillings), represents a considerable sum and cannot always be easily secured. If a youth has many sisters near him in age, he may hope that the bridewealth received from some of them may go for his own marriage. A youth with many sisters and few brothers is at a decided advantage. Sometimes brothers will be assigned different sisters on whose bridewealth they can count. A selfish father or uncle may try to use such wealth to make an additional marriage for himself, though he then risks losing a youth’s loyalty. Younger sons may therefore wait long before marriage, especially if they have few sisters or if their fathers and uncles are poor. As a consequence, in poorer households youths may move off to seek the support of other kin.

Thinking in terms of modern western European customs, we sometimes entertain the illusion that marriages in other societies are made according to the aims of the couple involved, yet this is rarely so. Among Kaguru, a marriage is the result of the manipulations by two sets of adults, the girl’s kin and the boy’s. The views of the boy and girl involved are taken into account, but these are not usually considered of primary importance. The boy’s position is most problematic. A Kaguru marriage may be seen as the outcome of a struggle to decide the residence of the groom, a struggle determined by the youth’s vulnerability to the controls of his elders, though every youth would like to be master of his own fate and reside wherever he desires.

Considering this, the aims of the young men and women who marry must be considered in terms of the strategies employed by their elders. For an elder, the marriage of someone over whom he has control presents several alternatives: He may consolidate his control of a youth by contributing heavily to the bridewealth with the understanding that the youth resides with him or may keep control of a girl by giving her to a youth in exchange for little payment but with the stipulation that the youth move into the new wife’s (the elder’s) village. Then the elder has gained a follower whom he can control, but at a cost. This assumption of debt may take several forms. The most common would be that the youth’s father would make payments with the expectation that his son, in response to his father’s paternal concern, would build a new house near him to be a help to his father in his old age. In cases where a father is poor or where he has quarreled with his son, or where an impatient youth is the youngest of a long line of sons awaiting matrimonial aid, a youth might seek the help of other kin. This would usually be an elder in the youth’s matrilineage, the kin group in competition with his father for the loyalty of that youth. To explain the dynamics of this competition and also the ways by which elders use their kin connections to win the
loyalty of youths, I must digress briefly into a description of how Kaguru lineages resemble credit banks which grant loans and extend credit.

In each Kaguru lineage there are a few elderly men who are recognized as holding legal authority over the women and junior men of that group. In a sense these men are in competition for power, but their individual strength exists only as a result of their cooperation with one another. For example, it is true that a set of brothers may compete for the loyalty of their sisters and these sisters' children, but these men may in turn come to one another's assistance, especially in situations where this does not involve power within the lineage, namely, where each man is attempting to assert control over his own children, who are not members of that man's own lineage. There are two ways in which these men may cooperate. They may loan one another cash or livestock with which the receiver will pay bridewealth for himself or his kin. These loans must be repaid, either by the elder or by the youth who benefited.

However, there is another way that elders cooperate, which has far more complex repercussions in terms of Kaguru lineage affairs. A Kaguru elder may give a girl from his lineage to a related youth, perhaps even to his own son, with the understanding that the youth resides near him. The lineage gains control of an additional man while not losing control, even temporarily, of the girl. This is said to have been a very common practice in the past, when matrilineages were far stronger and even the most independently minded youths had to reside with some kin group and could not, as now, safely set up homesteads apart from others. In such cases, while the lineage gained control over persons, some individuals within the lineage lost bridewealth. The main reason a youth would be willing to bear the disadvantage of residing with his wife's kin would be because he lacked sufficient wealth to secure a wife on his own terms. If no such wealth were forthcoming from the youth, the girl's kin would lose wealth on the marriage. The wealth gained by a lineage from the marriage of one of its girls is shared between a number of the lineage's members, yet the youth and girl can only reside in one place and can thus only benefit a few of the persons within the lineage. Thus, the elder who gains most from such a marriage has, in a sense, put himself into debt with many of his fellows who have endured some loss but have not reaped any corresponding gain. The members of a lineage have to resolve this with the arrangements of subsequent marriages. As a result, the allocation of wealth received for any girl represents a complex and tangled history of previous marriages. If there had been no previous marriages in a kin group (an impossible and only hypothetical situation), wealth would be distributed to the seniormost, close relative in the girl's lineage, namely, her mother's oldest brother or, were all such men dead, the girl's eldest brother; if such brothers were unavailable, then the next nearest maternal relative, say, the girl's mother's sister's son, and so on. However, nothing is so simple. Because men may have several sisters, not to mention other junior women in their lineage, they and their predecessors have set up debts of obligations due to the peculiar distribution of wealth from previous marriages. For this reason Kaguru sometimes say that the debts established at a woman's marriage are only repaid at the marriage of her daughter or daughter's daughter, when further wealth comes into the lineage for further redistribution.

Marriages generate a sequence of unique but related networks of debt and obligation between a wide range of kinsmen. Bridewealth debts express the corporate or perpetual character of Kaguru kin groups, for debts continue beyond the life span of an individual. In this sense, a Kaguru lineage may be called corporate; for its life span is like a corporation, a body unto itself, with a life span independent of any of the persons who happen to make up that group at any time.

These are the rules in the case of wealth gained from the marriage of a girl within a lineage. Kaguru say that in the past most of the wealth received in marriage went to the lineage. Furthermore, they add that in the past such payments were usually low because the lineage rarely gave up such a girl, the youth generally being required either to reside with his wife's group or to visit her periodically while he himself stayed on with his own kin; only elderly, rich men took their wives away from their villages. Whatever the truth of these assertions by Kaguru about their past, this is hardly the case today. Considerable wealth is still paid to a girl's lineage, but usually between two-thirds and three-fifths of bridewealth is now paid to the girl's father or, if he is dead, to his closest lineal kinsman. Some Kaguru say that, theoretically, a man may do as he pleases with such wealth, even putting it aside to secure a new wife for himself. However, in practice this wealth is usually distributed to many of the father's own lineal kin. Sometimes this goes toward paying off other debts which the father has accumulated through previous marriage arrangements. Sometimes it goes toward the marriage of one of his sons; this case still indirectly benefits the father since the wealth works toward putting his son in obligation to him. Kaguru provide two explanations for these changes in the payment of bridewealth. They say that bridewealth payments have risen enormously during the colonial period because men can no longer force young affines to live in their bride's villages and work so that any material advantage to be gained from marrying off a girl must be realized immediately through a payment. They also explain the larger portion of wealth given a girl's father by saying that a father only receives wealth once for a marriage, whereas a lineage gains perpetual wealth from a marriage, first through the bride, then through her daughters' marriages, then through these women's daughters' marriages, and so on. More sociological explanations relate to the decline in the lineage as a political and residential unit due to political changes.

About a quarter of Kaguru marriages are made between related kin as arranged by certain elders who thereby manage to control juniors through the form of residence these youths must thereby adopt. From the point of view of a youth, these arrangements may take two forms: (1) He may marry a daughter of one of the men of his lineage. Anthropologists sometimes call this mother's brother's daughter marriage (or matrilateral cross-cousin marriage), though this only rarely involves the actual daughter of one's actual mother's brother—at least among the Kaguru. In this case, the youth often resides with the bride's father or must secure the approval of the lineage elders who made the marriage arrangements as to where he sets up his first homestead, at least during the early years of the marriage. (2) The youth may marry a girl from his father's lineage. This is sometimes called father's sister's daughter marriage (or patrilateral cross-cousin marriage), though among the Kaguru this too only very rarely involves an immediate relative. In such a marriage, the boy's father has especially strong control.
of the youth and of the youth's children, who will be of their paternal grand-
father's lineage and not, of course, of the father's.

In both cases, the residence pattern is of considerable disadvantage to the
youth, for he is under the direct control of a kin group to whom he is in debt
and to whom his wife can appeal on her own right. In the second case, he is in
a particularly weak position toward his own children since the major persons with
whom he must contend for his children's loyalties—the members of their lineage
—reside with him, his wife, and his children. Such forms of marriage have been
called "preferential" by some social anthropologists, but it should be remembered
that this adjective can hardly refer to the attitude of the youth, who is generally
conceded by Kaguru to have been at some disadvantage in his circumstances ever
to embark upon such a union in the first place. Whatever preferences were
involved refer to those of elders who gained, or at least hoped to gain, from the
match. There are other forms of such "preferential marriages" among the
Kaguru; however, the principles of strategy remain similar.1

Both boys and girls have ways of circumventing these arrangements by
their elders. A boy might elope with a willing girl, but in the past he risked being
killed if caught. Elopement is fairly safe today, but he may still risk fines through
a court. Another tactic is to get a girl pregnant. The pregnancy is seen as a
measure of the intratable defiance of the couple, and realistic parents often give
in to the marriage. Furthermore, if a girl is pregnant, she is, at least until the
child is weaned, undesirable to others, so that her parents sometimes accept less
favorable terms from the suitor available than they might otherwise do. These
are risky ventures, however, and only desperate boys with poor prospects, very strong-
willed girls, or those deeply in love would so vex their kin.

However, no one may marry just anyone. Marriage within one's own clan
is impossible; for Kaguru this is tantamount to witchcraft. Although sexual rela-
tions within one's clan are spoken of in horror, many Kaguru tales and legends
deal with this theme. One may not marry anyone whose father has the same clan
as one's own father. It is said that this is so because it would place such men in
opposition to one another, both in the arrangements over bridewealth and in
the loyalties toward their children, whereas such men should support and help one
another as members of one clan. Kaguru expect kin of different lineages to be
involved in competitive roles (as in the cousin marriage mentioned previously),
but they do not expect this of kin of the same clan or lineage. It may happen that
very distantly related kin wish to marry; sometimes this is allowed after a cere-
jony which symbolically wipes out kin ties. Some Kaguru say that this may
account for the fact that certain clans have similar names.

Kaguru also insist that no men of the same clan should have wives from
the same clan. The worst instance of this would be a polygynous man who had
taken sisters as wives, but brothers and cousins within the same lineage also
should never marry women of the same clan. Since some clans may number over
a thousand persons scattered over a very wide distance, some of whom do not see
or know one another, this rule is not observed literally, but men of the same
lineage or distantly related men living near one another conform. Kaguru say that

1 These marriages are discussed further elsewhere (Beidelman 1966).

However, affairs between such prohibited partners do take place from
time to time. These relations are thought to cause serious illness among the kin of
both offenders. This can only be averted through confession and treatment by the
joking partners of the couple concerned, who undertake rites to remove the pollu-

The Form of Households

Kaguru say that every man, at least every pagan man, would like as many
wives as possible. It is quite common for persons to have had several spouses over
the years. It is also said that in the past many men had more than one wife,
whereas now this is no longer common. Today in the highly acculturated areas
where there is considerable education, higher incomes, and greater aspiration to
European and Christian customs about 6 percent of the married women are part
of some polygynous, extended household; in the more remote, traditional areas
about 18 percent are.

A Kaguru household may be seen as a group organized around the produc-
tion and allocation of resources, the basic resources being foodstuffs, craft objects,
and human offspring. These common concerns both unite and divide the members
of this group. Each woman has her own fields, chickens, and gardens which she
tends. She may also make some income through brewing and selling beer and
making mats, baskets, or pottery, which she may sell to her neighbors or at a local
market. Many wives buy and sell goods at markets with a fairly free hand, but
this is at the discretion of their husbands. By tradition, a wife has no legal right
to dispose of any goods without the approval and knowledge of her husband.
However, a husband's control over his wife is tied to various obligations. He must
provide food and care for his wife, even when she is continuously ill and cannot
care for herself, and he should purchase basic items, such as cloth, blankets, and
utensils, which she needs. Besides the fields and gardens which a woman or her
children work for their own needs, they should all work at least some of the time
on fields belonging to the head of the household. The produce from these fields
may be used by the household head as he sees fit. Similarly, if the father owns a
herd of sheep or goats, he may dispose of these as he wishes, though if he allows
certain animals to his wife and children, he cannot take them back to use in any
way he wishes. He must justify such acts. A man's dependents produce two
kinds of assets: those which go for their own well-being and support, and which
he can control only in a limited sense, and those which he controls outright. Thus,
a man with several wives would not take foodstuffs from one wife and sell them
to provide a gift for another. However, he is obliged to dip into his own wealth to
provide a minimum standard of living for all his wives. If he finds wealth for a
A Kaguru husband and wife.

third wife, it would be from his own personal resources held in a granary and herd kept independently of his present wives.

It is said that a husband should get the permission of his present wives before taking any additional wives, but this is not always done. Co-wives seem somewhat jealous of one another, and Kaguru tell many stories about the witchcraft practiced between co-wives and about the bitter feeling and rivalries between a man's children by different women. Nonetheless, many polygynous households seem to run smoothly with wives cooperating in household chores. Some Kaguru say that the worst disaster to befall a man would be if he had two wives who conspired together against him. Some cynics say that the ideal arrangement would be three wives, for while two might be in league, the third almost always would be at odds with the other two and thus would inform on them to her husband. So long as all the various wives bear children and are healthy, polygynous house-

holds seem to work fairly well, but where one wife lacks children while another has several, odds are high that the infertile wife will blame the fertile one as a witch causing sterility.

The End of Marriage: Death and Divorce

If a woman dies, no bridewealth is refunded to her husband; it is just bad luck. If the groups united by a marriage consider it desirable to perpetuate this relationship, a kinswoman of the dead woman, perhaps even her sister, may be substituted with only a token additional payment. This is said to be done because the two groups of affines like being related. It is easy to see the advantages to this in the case of marriage with a chief, rainmaker, or rich man. If the husband has other wives, these may be asked to serve as stepmothers to orphaned children. The wealth allocated to the original mother's household should be kept for her children and not mixed with that of any other wife, but inroads on wealth are common where the children are young and the husband strongly influenced by the surviving wife. In the case of divorce, children may temporarily go with the mother, especially if they are young and being nursed. It is said that once the children are mature, the true legal claims will be made. A father will arrive to demand his share of any bridewealth gained from his daughter's marriage, and a grown son begins to visit his father in search of bridewealth for his first wife.

If her husband dies, a woman is urged to remain with her dead husband's kin. These maintain that they had all helped pay for her marriage and that she should therefore be taken by another in the deceased's lineage. In the past a woman would be forced into widow inheritance (ubatu); today widows can refuse, and indeed most do, often setting themselves up as independent householders only loosely connected with their kin. This is especially likely if they have already borne some children.

For Kaguru divorce is a more socially complex marital problem than death. In general, men rarely desire a divorce and do all they can to prolong and frustrate litigation. A wife must be exceedingly quarrelsome and difficult before a husband seeks a separation. This is because the Kaguru method of bridewealth refund at divorce rarely favors a husband. Where the marriage is childless or where the husband holds a high political post or is rich, a girl's relatives are loath to agree to a divorce, even when the man's conduct has been judged wrong by general standards. Ironically, the more children a woman has borne, the more her kin gain materially from her divorce. They are allowed to deduct 50 or 60 shillings from bridewealth for each child the woman has produced, even if the children did not survive. Thus, a girl could marry at the age of sixteen, bear five or six children, seek a divorce, and still be in her late twenties and easily marriageable to another husband. Even if the original bridewealth was 300 to 400 shillings (a high amount), her kin would not be obliged to return more than a token payment of a few shillings. At divorce the wife keeps all that her husband gave her as well as those goods produced from her gardens. A woman might well take some of her younger children with her. It is her husband, therefore, who is the real loser, having to raise new bridewealth payments for another wife and having
to worry about the disloyalty and suspicion his wife and her kin might sow in the minds of his younger children, who have moved with her.

The interests of all involved change as a marriage endures. Paradoxically, the longer a couple are married, if they bear children, the greater the advantages the wife and her kin may derive from a divorce. Of course, this discounts the fact that the longer a couple remain together, the more likely they will find things which hold them together in terms of sentiment and daily customary attachments.

Children and Marriage

The real complication in domestic social relations only arises with the birth of children. Until then, most Kaguru marriage are not considered complete and neither spouse is permanently attached to the other's group. With children, however, a person is connected through them to his spouse's kin, even after divorce or the death of his mate. A widow may dislike her husband's kin and move off to live independently of his or even her kin; but when one of her sons matures and needs help in securing wealth to marry, she and her son will remonstrate with both his sets of kin for aid. The logistics of most Kaguru kin relations depend on the interplay of three sets of loyalties: those toward one's own household, those toward one's maternal kin, and those toward one's father's kin. As we have seen, the quality of this interplay varies through time. Until marriage, an individual judges his advantages simply in terms of maximizing benefits from both paternal and maternal kin. After a marriage the situation changes profoundly since one retains these loyalties but must now balance these off against other ties and interests. Once a man sets up his own household, he no longer sees the interests of his parental group as being so close to his own. He must sometimes humor his wife and provide for her welfare and comfort if she is to remain loyal and helpful. Correspondingly, a wife can, if she is lucky, gain some freedom and independence through marriage. After all, she will then have her own house to run and, barring a meddlesome mother-in-law, she can use her husband's affections and needs as the reason for a growing lack of involvement in her parental group. Where a Kaguru husband and wife find affection and compatibility, such manipulation becomes part of the general give and take of domestic affairs. Where marriage are unhappy, this provides recognized grounds for divorce.

A husband and wife are both united in their concern for their children, and both tend to see offspring as their solace and protection in old age. However, a father and mother are tied very differently to their children. Kaguru say that fathers love their children, especially their sons, but that fathers cannot do all that they would like for their children. This is because a father belongs to a different clan and lineage from that of his children; to the extent that he remains loyal and true to his fellow lineage mates and their demands, he cannot help his own children. In contrast, a Kaguru mother has no ties which take precedence over those to her children. Of course, she has conflicting ties, such as those toward her own parents, her husband, and her brothers, but none of these is expected to be maintained to the extent that it would prejudice her children's best interests.

A Kaguru man is caught in the crosscurrents of conflicting jural obligations to the members of his lineage and the members of his household; this is the price he pays for enjoying formal authority in a matrilineal system. A Kaguru mother has no such involvement with authority and, consequently, equates her aspirations with her offspring's. Thus, she is seen by her children as the surest expositor of their own interests. The mother-child bond is the most important and valued tie in Kaguru society. Although Kaguru describe this relationship in somewhat idyllic, even altruistic, terms, it is colored by the tone of authority and power relations. Some Kaguru women use their children's loyalties to gain influence and power, even at the expense of their children's own welfare; furthermore, even when women believe themselves devoted to their children's best interests, they may still order these children (for their own good) to act in ways which will secure the help and protection of elders.
These complexities become clearer when we see the implications which mother-child ties can have when they are projected through time, when a couple's children have borne children. At this point the unproblematic and "pure" feelings of mothers and children may be used in the varying efforts by some to control others within a matrilineage.

In a Kaguru lineage, authority is held by a senior male [balai (mother's brother)] over juniors of his generation and over the children of his kinswomen. This authority is sustained by the pressures of self-interest upon various elders, determined in part by common values of lineage loyalty and ancestral respect held by all lineage members and in part by dependence which the poorer, less socially adroit persons have upon elders for help and guidance. Underlying these are deep, complex affectual bonds between children and their mothers. This is shown by the fact that men and women rarely repudiate and ignore their elders while their own mother lives, whereas many Kaguru begin to present their own interests, as opposed to the elders' once their mother is dead. Once their mother is dead, men attempt to head their own lineage segments, brothers often breaking with brothers, and men often break from the authority of their mother's brothers when the woman joining them, the mother's brother's mother, is gone. A simple diagram should clarify this:

\[
\begin{align*}
A & \quad B \quad C \quad D \quad E \\
F & \quad G
\end{align*}
\]

C is the leading elder of the lineage members shown here. All members are descended from A, their common ancestress. Were A's husband dead, C would be wise to invite her to reside with him. C is the eldest son of A and attempts to control both his younger brother E and his two sisters, B and D, as well as their children. To varying degrees, all these persons would really like to be independent of C. The main obstruction is the tie which each person feels toward A. All of the elder persons are brothers and sisters, children of A. The inforcement of sibling ties through maternal ties tend to hold such kin together. From A's point of view, her greatest social prestige and power depend on her double role both as mother to many children and as the future ancestress of what may one day be a large matrilineage. An elderly woman usually exerts every effort to secure the continued cooperation between her children and their children in turn. She acts out of her desire for social esteem and power and her hope for some kind of immunity in being remembered by her descendants in their prayers to the dead, as well as out of a genuine desire that her children remain morally one. She does this by playing upon the sentiments and feelings of her children. In part this attachment is due to the manner in which Kaguru children are raised with a prolonged and close relation between mother and child, even after subsequent children are born. The attachment is probably also the result of Kaguru values, that is, the mother-child relation is constantly proclaimed the most valued relation, and so persons try to demonstrate such affection, perhaps even when these emotions may not be quite so keenly felt as the actors maintain. A Kaguru proverb says, "Mother is god [in his gentle, kind aspect]."

Another way of considering these relations is to see a mother as the center of a communication network. She is the only person by whom all those pictured on the diagram may interrelate with one another. Through visits she becomes a relay point for news and a pivot for influencing the various members into taking certain action. E may well wish to control some of his sisters, their bridewealth, and children and resent C's primacy; however, if C has A's support, he will probably be able to dominate all of his fellow siblings and their children. Each of A's daughters will one day occupy a position similar to A's; each will also become an elderly woman with her own incipient subordinate lineage. What stops such a woman from asserting herself (in the purported interest of her sons and daughters) is the force of the moral and sentimental tie to her own mother, who tells her, by words and acts, "You must give in to your brother; I, your mother, tell you to do so!" When A dies, C and E may struggle over the future allegiance of their sisters (B and D). Once A is dead, C's power is diminished along another front. Previously, C might admonish B to urge her children to conform, and A would reinforce his views by insisting upon the importance of brothers and sisters standing together; but once A is dead, no such moral force is available. With A's death C's power is threatened, and it is likely that E will split off from him; even G may insist on his own future. Yet there is no mother to preach harmony and reconciliation. Moreover, each sister sees this division as her opportunity to head her own group, to fill the same role as A herself filled. Within the pattern of any mother-child relation we can predict two sets of disparate, even antagonistic relationships. Loyalities corrode in the acid of time. The force of maternal ties which hold A to B, C, D, and E will split these apart when A dies because the maternal ties of B and D lead each of these sisters to promote her own children, probably through the sponsorship of a particular brother. Parochial solidarity toward one mother leads to sororal separation within a matrilineal system.

It should be obvious by now how widowhood accentuates the prowess of women. Motherhood of mature children in a matrilineage society provides a means for social advance; how much more useful if the woman's role is not impeded by the controls set by a husband and father of her children.

This prowess is modified from situation to situation, depending upon the case; what is important is an appreciation of the values applied in each situation. Motherhood is the ultimate sacred value among Kaguru, yet it is only by the death of certain women (for example, one's mother's mother) that a man advances his position within a lineage. This is a sociological truth which is highly objectionable to those Kaguru who are asked about its significance. The reasons for their distaste is obvious.
Kaguru men have a profound interest in the fertility and sexual desirability not only of their own wives but also of their daughters and sisters, women to whom they are forbidden sexual access. The relation between brother and sister is the most ambiguous in Kaguru society. A brother is keenly absorbed in the fertility of his sisters since they furnish him with heirs; but customary etiquette prohibits any sexual allusions or sexually toned acts in the company of siblings of either sex. Kaguru folklore and jokes abound which indicate tensely emotional but ambivalent feelings between brothers and sisters.

The broad principles of Kaguru kin relations derive from ties set out in my discussion of domestic (household) and lineal relations. However, two ties deserve at least brief mention: those between members of alternate generations of kin and those between cross-cousins. The first depends upon the principle: My enemy's enemy is my friend. Every parent is both an obedient child (the first in a series of followers to his own parent's group) and a rebellious founder of a kin group to which he will attempt to subordinate his own offspring. In a game for power and loyalties an ambitious man's parents and children share common interest in keeping him in check. Kaguru custom abounds in wordplay, etiquette, and reciprocal kindnesses thought to reflect these common interests between grandparents and grandchildren.

Kaguru marry cross-cousins, which fits in with their notion of marrying persons toward whom they have some sense, otherwise unreasonable and problematical relation. The source of this tension is the conflict over inheritance manifested in Kaguru society through contradictory commitments to both lineal and household principles. Cross-cousins then become competitors for wealth, in terms of inheritance and in terms of the favors an elder (their father's/mother's brother) dispenses from day to day. A man, as a good father, will be urged by his wife and children to give them all he can of his resources, while his sister (and probably his mother) will urge him to help her children, his future lineal heirs. Both groups have strong claims upon him, and he would like to please them both. No matter how fairly he tries to act, some are likely to feel slighted. The main affectual pressures on a man come from women; his mother and sister emphasize his lineal loyalties, his wife his domestic ones. It is easy for Kaguru to view the women of their father's lineage, especially their father's sisters, as inimical. Kaguru say that one marries enemies to convert them into friends, and it should surprise no one to learn that all women of one's father's lineage and clan, including his sisters, are potential wives (Beidelman 1966).

The issues raised in this chapter are complex. There is no clear answer to all the problems presented, but the discussion, together with the cases presented here, illustrate some of the factors ordering Kaguru kin relations. Each case illustrates some important factors discussed previously. The reader should have little trouble recognizing the basic social processes exhibited in each and can ponder them in terms of the possible long-term course these affairs might take.

a. Tomasi's Case

Tomasi was an orphan. He lacked immediate kin to provide bridewealth for a wife. Tomasi's mother was a lineal kinswoman to a subchief. This maternal uncle provided Tomasi with a wife, a girl of this subchief's father's lineage. Tomasi's uncle made arrangements so that the ordinary bridewealth was avoided by Tomasi, while the uncle payed off some of the relatives himself. As recompense, however, Tomasi had to move into his new wife's village, that of her parents and his uncle. There, he was expected to provide extra labor for these kin who, in this case, were also his affines. Tomasi sometimes drank, and when he did, he spoke bitterly of his lot as a mere servant among his own kin. One day while drunk he attacked his wife and affines with a knife; later he was forced into abject public apologies with the alternative that if he did not, he would be divorced by his wife. His uncle told him that he could easily be divorced since he had paid no proper bridewealth and that they would keep the children. Tomasi could then hunt on his own for wealth for a new wife. Tomasi stayed on, unhappy.

b. Maria's Case

Maria was the daughter of Emma, a widowed woman who had left her dead husband's kin and returned to live with members of her matrilineage, in this case, a subchief. Emma brought with her not only Maria but also a son, who married and resided in this same village. Her elder, a chiefly kinsman, was pleased to have three new households added to his village and was careful to flatter and encourage his new clients so that they did not return to the dead man's village. Maria's mother was an elderly, clever, aggressive woman and tried to encourage her daughter, a chiefly kinswoman, to have three new households added to his village and was careful to flatter and encourage him in check. Kaguru custom abounds in wordplay, etiquette, and reciprocal kindnesses thought to reflect these common interests between grandparents and grandchildren.

Anna's Case

Anna was born out of wedlock. No one recognized any father for her. It was not simply that her mother's lover refused to pay wealth to legitimize his fathered child; rather, no one was even able to determine who the father might be; Anna's mother would not tell. Anna grew up in her parent's village. She had a matrilineage but no father's kin. She began early to brew beer and take lovers. She now has several children by different lovers and has not disclosed the lovers' names. The children, like herself, belong only to her own lineage and lack paternal kin. Anna's lineage has lost much on account of this behavior in that no bridewealth has been gained for Anna (nor for her mother) and no new kin ties were generated by giving her in marriage to another group. However, Anna's lineage, along with Anna's mother's father, holds uncontested legal and moral control over Anna and Anna's children. Anna herself told me that she was sad in some ways that she was not married and that she had no husband or father to whom to appeal when she felt that her own matrikin were neglecting her. She had no group to pit against them in competition for her loyalty. Her legal security was in the...
hands of her natal kin, on whom she therefore depended unduly. Although what cash she made through brewing and lovers was her own, she had no husband from whom to demand clothing and other goods as her right. Her kin looked forward to the maturation of Anna’s daughters, for they would secure all the bridewealth gained by these girls’ marriages and thereby regain the wealth they considered lost through the failure of Anna’s mother to declare a lover and Anna’s own stubbornness in the same respect. Anna had gained considerable personal freedom, but at a price.

d. Yeremia’s Case

Yeremia’s wife has had tuberculosis for many years. Yeremia has spent considerable money treating his wife, who remains ill and away in a hospital. Yeremia has no help in cooking and working in the fields. Furthermore, his wife seems unlikely to bear any more healthy children. Yeremia and his wife are stubborn in the same respect. Anna had gained considerable personal freedom, but at a price.

e. Musa’s Case

Musa is often the butt of his friends’ jokes. He is unpopular and quarrelsome and a well-known thief. Although handsome and young, when drunk he confesses that he has very unsatisfactory sexual relations with women. He is not considered a desirable match for a girl. An elder of his lineage, in whose settlement he lives, made Musa marry Musa’s dead brother’s widow, for which the lineage had already paid bridewealth. The widow had already borne a child for Musa’s dead brother. Musa was not very happy with the marriage and was said to have proved an unsatisfactory lover. His new wife carried on a flagrant, adulterous affair with another man for whom she bore a child. Musa secured an adultery fine from the man but kept the child and did not divorce the wife. She has now borne a third child, and neighbors wonder who the real father may be. Musa and his wife often quarrel, and Musa is often away from home drunk. His wife is an aggressive woman and shows little inclination to leave her husband.

f. Jakson’s Case

Jakson is an orphan. He married a girl after paying very little bridewealth and built a homestead about 10-minutes walk from his wife’s father, a famous curer and diviner. His wife’s kin continually interfered with his domestic affairs. Jakson and his wife had a son who was not well tended by the wife. Jakson had sufficient education to press for his son to be treated at the local mission clinic, where the case was diagnosed as malnutrition. However, the wife insisted that her father treat the child and it finally died. Jakson divorced his wife, but then found himself with little resources to secure a new wife. Jakson is young and considered handsome. He seduced a girl in a more distant village. He refused to confess his guilt until the child was born, claiming that were he to do so, he might be subject to fines were she to die in childbirth. Later, the girl bore a son and Jakson married her and set up a house in a new settlement far from his affines. He paid only a small bridewealth since the girl’s parents wanted their “ruined” Christian daughter to be married and respectable.

g. Munyesi’s Case

Ndagila took his wife, Munyesi, and her father, Mukomwa, to court. Here is the court’s terse digest of the case:

Ndagila: I want my wife, who is at her father’s house. I sent her there to enjoy Christmas, but now she refuses to return. I also want to complain about this woman and how she behaved when we visited a settlement near Kitete. When we were there, my wife asked me to let her go to a dance but I refused and we quarreled. Later she asked permission to go to the latrine, but she didn’t return. When I looked outside I saw her running toward a certain house. When I tried to catch her from that place, I was beaten up by some people in that house and I had a tooth knocked out. When I went to her father to give him bridewealth, he said that I was not paying enough and that he would not accept what I offered.

Munyesi: This man is not my husband. He is only a boyfriend. He did not marry me because he did not pay any bridewealth at all. What he said is not true.

Mukomwa: My daughter was taken by this man, Ndagila. They lived together for three years, but I never received any bridewealth from him. He gave me a small amount of money when he took her, but that is an adultery fine.

Ndagila is in a weak position regarding the bridewealth he appears to have paid. Had Munyesi remained with him and agreed with his claims, Mukomwa would not be able to dismiss Ndagila’s claims so lightly. Once some bridewealth has been paid and a girl is living willingly with a man, a court tends to try to maintain the marriage and merely tries to force the husband to pay more bridewealth. When I left the field, this case had not yet been settled, but most felt that Ndagila was unlikely to win out against the combined rejections of his wife and her father.

h. Chitemo and Mugutu

Chitemo married Chifumbe and had two children by her. Then he divorced her and received back his bridewealth. Chifumbe’s mother and brother, Mugutu, disliked Chitemo intensely and were pleased with the divorce, especially since they made some profit in the bridewealth involved on account of the deductions made because Chifumbe had borne two daughters. Later Chifumbe regretted the divorce and went back to Chitemo with the consent of neither the mother nor Mugutu and without Chitemo paying bridewealth. She had another child by Chitemo. Mugutu spent many months in court over this case. These difficulties arose because Chifumbe refused to leave Chitemo and return to her mother and brother, who tended to mistreat her. She would run off whenever they tried to
take her home forcibly. During the dispute Chitemo is said to have burned down Chifumbe's mother's house; Mugutu attacked Chitemo with his bow and arrows; and both men tried to abduct Chifumbe's children. After many months of litigation in which the case was appealed and retried, Mugutu finally won. None of the expensive and time-consuming litigation or other troubles would have occurred, however, if Chifumbe herself had been a cooperative daughter and sister. If Mugutu had been less quarrelsome and thoughtless, he might have been obeyed by his sister. Had Chitemo been willing to give a bit and pay some bridewealth for Chifumbe, he might have secured her for a relatively small amount. In the end, Chifumbe had to pay adultery fines and court fees; but Chifumbe threatens to run away yet again from her kin.

i. Sambasa's Case

Sambasa keeps running away from her husband's village. Her husband left her to work on the nearby estates, leaving her in the charge of his father. Now Sambasa wants a divorce. At present neither she nor his kin know where her husband is, but his father says that he will provide for Sambasa until his son returns. Sambasa's own father does not want to return the bridewealth he received, especially since Sambasa has borne no children. He strongly criticizes his daughter, and when she runs off, he brings her back to her father-in-law. Sambasa told the court that her father-in-law wants her to stay because he hopes that she will get pregnant by someone in his settlement and that he can then collect adultery fines from any lover she might take. Since neither her own kin nor her husband's kin agreed to the divorce and since she had not been physically mistreated, the court ruled that she had to return to her husband's village.

j. Joash and Samwel

Here is a case in which a court no longer supports Kaguru tradition since the custom in question is condemned by the government. The court record is as follows:

Joash: I accuse Samwel of keeping my daughter without having any right to her.

Samwel: My son married Joash's daughter. Shortly after the marriage my son died. Now this girl should stay with us. We paid wealth for her and by Kaguru custom she is our wife and should live with one of our men.

Joash: It is bad luck that your boy died. Now I want my daughter back since her husband is gone. This man Samwel is trying to make a prostitute of my daughter. He hopes that if she stays long enough at his village, she will get pregnant. These are modern times and we have learned that such rules are bad. The government does not approve of this.

Samwel: The girl is already pregnant. You know that a pregnant woman cannot be divorced.

The dispenser from the local clinic was summoned to court and testified that the girl was not pregnant. The court ruled that the girl was to be returned to her kin and that no bridewealth need be refunded.

k. Msulwa's Case

The court record is as follows:

Msulwa: I claim 50 shillings which I loaned to Andrea so that he could marry the daughter of Semgomba. This fellow is my sister's child and he wanted me to help him with this amount which he borrowed. Now I am claiming this amount.

Andrea: Msulwa is my mother's brother and the debt which he says someone owes him may indeed be 50 shillings, but I myself did not borrow it nor do I know if this wife I married was obtained on account of that money. Maybe she knows about this debt. I don't know what arrangements my father made. I myself only know that I have a wife.

Court: Andrea should help Msulwa and should give him the 50 shillings which he claims is owed on account of Andrea's payment of bridewealth for a wife. Msulwa is poor and old and should be helped.

l. Chilimo's Case

Chilimo claimed that Magome owed him one cow as part of the bridewealth which Magome was to pay him for his daughter. Magome admitted that the debt of bridewealth had still not been fully paid, but he claimed that the responsibility for paying it belonged with his son Muga rather than with himself. He told the court, "It is not my concern but his! Let the boy pay! He is sitting here in court. Ask him to pay! It is not my wife but his for whom you are asking that cow!"

Magome maintained that he had gained nothing from the marriage despite having helped with the bridewealth payments, for his son had moved away to another settlement. He had expected the youth to live with him because he had helped him, but he and his son had quarreled and the youth had moved off to the village of his mother's brother, Magome's brother-in-law.

The court ruled that Magome had made the original marriage agreement with Chilimo and it was therefore Magome rather than his son Muga who was responsible for completing the payments. However, the court acknowledged that perhaps Muga had been unfair to his father; it suggested that this could be the subject of a future case if Magome wished.
Neighborhoods and Chiefs: Political Affairs

Defining Political Actions

Many define political actions as those which involve the legitimate use of power within a particular territory. Such a definition, made famous by Weber, may be useful as a starting point in examining various problems, but it soon becomes clear that such a notion is so oversimplified that if taken no further, it blinds us to the most interesting problems in the study of how people are controlled in society. One way to get at these problems is to examine more carefully the three basic concepts in this definition conveyed by the terms "authority," "power," and "territory."

Legitimacy implies the idea that people willingly approve of something; they concede the moral right of those who constrain them. Legitimacy rests upon commonly held ideas and values, but to what extent are such notions actually held by all the members of a society? Legitimate power, which we conveniently term "authority," is sometimes questioned or resented by those over whom it is exerted. This is especially true in a colonial society; the native inhabitants resent the rules imposed by aliens. However, most of the peace and order within a society, its harmony, rests on the fact that the overwhelming majority of the population hold common notions about how to conduct their lives. Men live in accordance with the law even when they are not always aware of its details. This is because the rules of law are merely a reflection of broader, more basic assumptions about the nature of the world and men. These are learned and internalized outside formal legal or political situations. Where this is not so, where the law and political institutions are not closely enmeshed with the other sectors of social life, we may expect a rise both in repressive actions by those in power and in conflict following attempts by those below to elude or manipulate unacceptable rules through illegal or extralegal means. Those benefiting from the situation may call this corruption or lawlessness, but those being exploited see such behavior as the pursuit of reasonable self-interest or as self-defense against an unjust system.

In large, complex societies many different groups interact together, and each such group has its own somewhat different perspective as to who should control others and how this should be done. Furthermore, it is not always easy to separate authority (legitimate power) from power, which is not considered as part of any formal procedure of control such as courts, administrative groups, chiefs, and village meetings. For example, to what extent do Kaguru disobey government rules because they do not regard colonial rule as legitimate?

This leads us to the third term, "territory;" it is not always clear what limits to set to such a unit. For example, when I lived in Kaguruland, many government policies were determined not by the Kaguru within their homeland but by Europeans residing outside that area, some in the colonial administrative centers and some back in Europe. Therefore, any limits I set in constructing an explanatory model must be somewhat arbitrary. Should I consider only a headmanship? A subchiefdom? All of Kaguruland? An administrative district? A province? The entire colony? British colonial policy as determined by conditions back in Britain? A study of political affairs in a colonial situation provides an excellent illustration of the problem of determining just what factors are important in explaining how people are controlled within various social situations.

Before describing the political system of Kaguruland as it existed in the colonial period when I did most of my fieldwork, I should indicate briefly some of the factors that determined its structure during that time. Without an historical background the structure of Kaguru political affairs during this period would seem odd indeed. In colonial times an administration was formed by two opposing cultural principles, one determined by Kaguru tradition and one determined by the force of alien rules and the attitudes and handicaps of those who tried to govern an alien country. The only feature common to all the actors involved, the native Africans and the European administrators alike, was their desire to maximize their own self-interest or that of their group as defined in terms of the values of their particular culture. Europeans took alien values into account only in those areas of life where the cooperation of Africans was essential to their rule.

The Traditional Political System and Early Colonial Rule

Earlier, I noted that Kaguru clans are associated with various areas which they are thought to own. Thus, in the past Kaguruland was divided into many small, politically autonomous areas; each was dominated by a particular clan, but members of many other clans also lived in these areas. Kaguru themselves tend to speak of this ownership as permanent, but they admit that some clans lost their lands to others. They seem to be suggesting that only so long as a clan was sufficiently strong was it able to make its claims of ownership accepted by others. Thus, while ownership was, in the short term, upheld by conventional values of authority, in the long run, ownership altered with the changing fortunes of groups as these rose or fell in their control of the basic means of power—number, wealth, skillful leadership, and the use of alliances with other such groups. Kaguruland was not traditionally a clear-cut political entity. Various clans exerted influence, but even the most successful controlled only a small part of the area. It was not even true that a common language and customs provided a minimal definition of communality, a kind of moral substratum, for Kaguru at the borders often
resembled their tribal neighbors nearly as much as they resembled Kaguru from the opposite side of the Kaguru homeland. Some Kaguru even made temporary alliances with groups clearly alien to the area, such as Baraguyu and Kamba, in order to raid their neighboring fellows.

Kaguru speak of their earlier chiefs, but such a term should not be interpreted in the same sense as the terms "chief" and "ruler" of centralized and stable political groups such as we might associate with parts of West Africa or the Bantu kingdoms of northwest East Africa. Kaguru have two words often translated as chief: mkedu and moundews. The first term refers to a senior and important person, a "big" man, and can be applied to anyone from one's eldest brother to the head of a court or the most respected man in a neighborhood. The second term relates to the leader of a group; ideva means a group, a herd, a flock, or even a cattle enclosure. The term's significance depends on the context in which it is used. An elderly person is likely, due to his seniority, to be the head of some group, but the important leaders would be those men who, through age and the number of their junior kin, through sagacious marriage and other contacts with allied groups, and through shrewdness and intelligence, manage to assert themselves over their neighbors and kin. One is not born to leadership, and even if one retains influence for years after efforts of strategy, it can be undermined and lost if a person loses sight of the factors he has manipulated to reach his eminence. Whenever really difficult disputes or problems arise, it is said that such a leader will always summon all his neighbors and kin and seek their consent before making a decision on what course of action to take; he would not dare voice such a decision in the form of an order. In any case, he would be unable to enforce it without the support of the majority of his followers.

When the first Europeans arrived and set about trying to colonize Kaguruland, they looked for the leaders of the land, assuming that by winning over and coercing such men, they might rule through them. Because of a distorted stereotype they entertained about all African societies having chiefs (perhaps due to the long European contact with West Africa, where such leaders were more common and influential), they seemed to have assumed that Kaguru would have such leaders. When they arrived with guns and gifts and asked the Kaguru for their leaders, they were surprised that some opportunistic local men stepped forward to claim that they had such powers. In any case, such inquiries made political sense, for upstart leaders, claiming more land and followers than any earlier Kaguru had done, were beginning to appear in Kaguruland, and they were potentially useful to any outsiders wishing to rule the country. These men owed their new found powers to the influx of trade goods and weapons into the area through the caravan trade initiated by the Arabs. Their opportunism made them many enemies, and this encouraged their need for arms. They were promoted, first by the Arabs, then by the Germans and British, since they could unite and bring to order far larger groups of Kaguru than had been previously united. Unification is not only a factor allowing people to resist conquest; it may also be introduced to make a people easier to subdue, control, and exploit.

Therefore, when the Germans arrived, they found some Kaguru leaders who with the help of Arabs and African outsiders, had gained control over fairly large areas, stretching even beyond the traditional boundaries of a particular clan. These leaders raided unfriendly neighbors while protecting others from Arabs and some Africans in return for tribute. The Germans found this practice as useful as had the Arabs, but they preferred to trust coastal Africans rather than unsophisticated upcountry Africans such as the Kaguru. As a consequence, they recognized certain prominent local Kaguru leaders, but they did not pay them any salaries or give them official prerogatives, though they were held responsible if their subjects misbehaved. These men were considered mere local spokesmen for their people. The Germans conveyed their orders through coastal African agents (akidas) whom they paid to reside in the area. German rule was brief and harsh, though not as harsh as the anti-German postwar propaganda of the British made it out to be. The akidas were unpopular because they had no ties with local people and therefore could not be restrained by those they governed. During this time Kaguru appear to have been only loosely governed. German administrators visited the area mainly during times of crisis, relying otherwise on their African agents. The German administrators were few and the areas they supervised immense. Roads were few and poor, and travel into Kaguruland could be made only after hikes on foot for several days or a week out of the administrative fort. Considering all these handicaps, we can understand why African agents were poorly supervised by the Germans and why the Kaguru themselves were often able to avoid many German policies. The political changes in the lives of Kaguru at this time sprang more from the pressures exerted by their own ambitious leaders, who sought to use their roles to seek favor from the Germans so as to advance local influence and wealth.

Recent Colonial Rule

The British defeated the Germans and took over most of German East Africa after World War I, instituting important changes in the formal political structure of the entire colony, including Kaguruland. These were formulated on what was then called the policy of Indirect Rule, a plan modeled after colonial experiences in India and northern Nigeria, where the British had encountered vast populations and indigenous, highly developed centralized political states. Many now consider such policies to have been, at best, naive and inept and, at worst, used cynically to divide, retard, and exploit a subject people. In Kaguruland they created a peculiar and paradoxical political system. They recognized certain prominent local Kaguru leaders, but they did not pay use their roles... 

1 The situation was not as peculiar as it first appears. It occurs in all highly heterogeneous societies in which power is lodged in only a few geographically segregated subgroups, for example, urban governments with large ethnic ghettos, state governments with economic and population imbalance between urban and rural areas, and national governments of nations with important regional differences.

2 Ironically, Cameron's speech was apparently found radical in the 1920s, whereas it seems reactionary today. For details on his policies see Cameron 1939:31-36, 75-82, 171-177, 194-197, 282-285.
visors according to native custom, we immediately give the natives a share in the government of the country and, that, moreover, on lines which they themselves understand and can appreciate. The position given to the chiefs in this way will be jealously guarded by them and their people, especially against the assaults which may in the course of time be made against it by Europeanized natives seeking to obtain political control of the country and to govern it entirely on European lines. We are not only giving the natives a share in the administration of the country but we are at the same time building up a bulwark against political agitators. At the same time a discipline and authority by the Chief which the people will understand will be preserved and we shall avert the social chaos which would ensue if every native could do exactly as he pleased so long as he did not come into conflict with the law. The Chiefs are much better equipped to punish their tribesmen than we are under a system of British laws and we have given them their own Courts for that purpose. To break down the only form of discipline and authority that the natives know and to try to carry out that they are rapidly becoming more and more ill-disciplined is merely to admit failure, and to admit it without realizing the causes that underlie [sic] that failure.

There is no doubt at all in my mind that the economic progress of the country must be set back if a condition of affairs arises in which the influence that the native can do as he pleases. [Great Britain 1927:7-9.]

These policies were clearly inconsistent, for it was claimed at one and the same time that Indirect Rule would gradually train colonial peoples to rule themselves but that it would also establish or strengthen local traditional groups which would resist attempts toward modern political movements such as nationalism and anticolonial self-determination. In the final period of British rule in Kaguruland there was deep animosity between local administrators of Indirect Rule and the young militants who later became the new leaders of an independent African nation.

The British initiated this policy in Kaguruland in the 1920s under the governorship of Cameron, a former civil servant in Nigeria. However, these policies were hardly applied in the same manner throughout the colony. Although it was said that the new policies would make use of tribal groups as bases for government, some government districts were formed otherwise. The Kaguru as a group were ignored in drawing boundaries. Kaguruland was divided between two different provinces: two-thirds, the eastern portion, where I did fieldwork, was allocated to what the British called the Eastern Province, and the remainder, to the west, to the Central Province. This division has continued since African independence. It created difficulties for Kaguru living nearby one another but in different provinces. For example, these Kaguru might wish to take one another to court or try to draft common policies on livestock control or health, but they are forced to work through two different provincial administrations with all the red tape and higher policy decisions invariably involved in a government bureaucracy.

The procedures by which Indirect Rule was set up in Kaguruland differed in the two provinces; I describe how this was done in the Eastern Province, where I worked. The province was divided into several districts, each headed by a European district commissioner assisted by two or three assistant district commissioners. There were also a number of specialists such as an agricultural officer and a medical officer, who directed services in the district. The commissioners

were in charge of administration and controlled and articulated the activities of the other European officials, but were in turn directly responsible to their respective officers at the provincial level. At times there were conflicts and differences between policies instituted in different services. In the eyes of Kaguru, the European colonial service presented a homogeneous front, but in reality the colonial administration was a complex hierarchy with tensions caused by the competition of its various administrators, seeking to advance their careers through the records of their achievements and their standing as contrasted with competing officers and other departments. Many inconsistencies and reversals in policies which mystified Kaguru were due to the internal struggles for power and prestige by ruling Europeans. The Europeans themselves consciously strove to present a solid front to those they governed. A mere handful of Europeans attempted to govern an area the size of a small American state with over a quarter of a million people speaking five or six languages. The Europeans and most of the Africans spoke the lingua franca of East Africa, Swahili, though it was not a language much spoken by locals themselves except in the towns and market centers, where there was a mixture of tribal groups. In the rural areas the traditional languages persisted.

Thus the British administrators faced many difficulties: They were few in number while the area was large in population and size; the range of tasks assigned was huge, yet they were relatively ignorant of local problems and traditions; they spoke Swahili but not the local African languages; their service itself was divided into competing and semiautonomous administrative units; and transport within the area, especially during the rainy season, was difficult. Furthermore, local policy prevented an administrator from gaining deep familiarity with his district, for men were sent home on leave after three years of service and were not usually allowed to remain in a particular district more than two consecutive tours, supposedly because circulation would give them the broader perspective necessary for advancement to higher positions later on.

The Kaguru Native Authority

The formal administrative unit by which Kaguru were to govern themselves was called the Kaguru Native Authority. This was a miniature replica of the colonial administration with a hierarchy of African officials responsible to the European administrative officers and Africans employed in the specialized services. The Kaguru Native Authority was officially said to be semiautonomous, but it was recognized by everyone that, in fact, all important decisions rested with European supervisors. Some British administrators intended to dominate in this way, but in part this situation was simply due to the fact that most of the Kaguru in such posts were so poorly educated that they were unable to make administrative decisions responsibly. There were, of course, educated Kaguru, but the salaries paid to Kaguru Native Authority officials were too small to attract competent men. The salary of the average headman was less than half that of a domestic servant in a European household, while even the salary of the paramount chief was far less than that of the lower qualified African elementary teachers.
Officially, the Kaguru Native Authority could issue rulings and was responsible for how part of the taxes collected in the area were used; in practice these decisions were made by the British. Kaguru were said to be allowed to elect their own headmen and chiefs though these had to be approved by the British and could be removed by them without grounds or justification.

The British claimed that since Kaguru put forward their own traditional leaders to be officials in the Native Authority, these would have the cooperation of their people. But the needs of the British were opposed to tradition. The British required a hierarchical administration with a paramount chief at the top, four subchiefs under him, and headmen below, whereas in the past, at least before the Arabs interfered with Kaguru affairs, leaders were not ranked but equal. Although the British recognized clan membership as the criterion for election of such officials, that is, one for each separate clan-owned area, they were not prepared to accept over one-hundred such officials. Instead, they created fifty-four headships, putting unrecognized clan areas under those that were. In creating four subchiefdoms, they simply chose four sites which were geographically convenient for building administrative centers, and the clan owning such a site provided the subchief. Many Kaguru bitterly remarked how some clans were indeed lucky with colonialism. The main prop to this system was the Native Authority court, where persons could bring disputes for settlement and where the government prosecuted wrongdoers. These courts could fine, imprison, or dispense corporal punishment (flogging), but large fines (over 1,000 shillings, or $140), long imprisonment (over one year), and capital punishment could only be dispensed by European magistrates. These courts enforced judgments on civil divorce, repayments of debts, and other disputes. Each subchief and the paramount chief had a court and had from six to nineteen headmen under him. Judgments by the subchiefs could be appealed to the paramount chief's court. The largest court area was controlled directly by the paramount chief and contained over 17,000 people, while the smallest, a remote mountain subchiefdom, had only 5000 people. Some of the headmen looked after areas which were inhabited by over 4000 people and were 80 square miles in size, while some in the mountain areas had only 200 or 300 subjects and an area of only about 8 square miles.

The offices created through the Native Authority were sources of considerable power, but they created difficulties for those who assumed them. These officials stood between an alien colonial administration and their own people and were able to use this pivotal position to their own advantages. It was assumed by his people that a headman could better explain and judge their problems to the Europeans than they themselves could; he could work out matters as benefited the local situation and then present some version of this to the outsiders which would lead them not to interfere. Conversely, the Europeans, with their ignorance about the details of local affairs, depended on headmen for on-the-spot implementation of colonial policies. It has been said that colonial rule, as formulated officially on paper, was unrealistic, unworkable and unenforceable; but a semblance of the official model of rule could be preserved because of the gap in communication between the various levels of government. Local Kaguru leaders reported only what seemed to their advantage or, at the most, only those additional bits of unpleasant information their superiors seemed likely to learn anyway. In conveying colonial policies to their people these same Kaguru officials often modified them to their own advantage. Manipulation occurred at the higher levels of European administration as well. Different departments withheld and doctored reports in order to increase their budgets and prestige within the civil service, while junior administrators groomed reports in order to present a good image to their superiors to secure advancement. At all levels there was great discrepancy between official written reports and the realities of the situation.

Tax collection provides a good illustration of these processes. Every year the government collected taxes from the local Kaguru population. These provided the major source of income for the government. The staff at local courts collected funds, and their clerks issued lists of living taxpayers which were checked against census figures to estimate the number of new payers each year due to birth and

A similar situation exists in many bureaucratic organizations, especially those such as government, highly subsidized business, and the military, where real economic profit and efficiency are not always criteria for survival.
migration. Local officials were expected to remit taxes corresponding to the amount estimated. Inevitably, these figures were somewhat inaccurate. From this arrangement sprang the power of local officials, for every local official was allowed to waive taxation in some cases and could also use discretion in deciding when young men were eligible to be put on the tax rolls. Now headmen control such information and pass this on to their subchief or chief at the court center. A headman must make most people pay taxes, but he can blame this necessary evil on the government; furthermore, he can favor those who have helped him, bribed him, or are related to him and can punish his enemies by selectively enforcing or overlooking the rules. Within this marginal area of cases which the headman may enforce, modify, or ignore lies a field in which he can reward or punish those subjects who are of most concern to him in keeping order and advancing his own influence. It does not require many cases for a headman to demonstrate his power, if not directly, then by example of what may happen to others in the future seeking his support. How much a headman can manipulate is related to the number of people he governs, but it is also dependent upon the chief's evaluation of his tax returns which are submitted to the British.

The same pattern may be found in other activities where the discretionary powers of headmen are important, such as drafting labor for government work, settlement of disputes outside of court, testimony for or against one by a headman in court cases, reporting of offenses, for example, assault, improper agricultural practices, or wife beating. Sometimes headmen will overlook such offenses if news does not leak out from his area, but whether he does or not depends greatly upon his attitude toward those involved.

The headman represents the lowest level of government official whose proper commands should be followed by Kaguru. However, he himself cannot legally judge disputes, exact fines, or give punishment. Headmen often delegate unofficial assistants considerable power even though such men are not recognized by the government and the creation of unofficial deputies is officially illegal. Headmen also often hear cases and exact fines. Kaguru may first try to have a headman hear a case rather than take it to court, for one must pay a fee to go to court and then entrust judgment to an official who may not be sympathetic or responsive to one's own needs. In some cases, such as divorce, adultery, or assault between kin, those involved may want to avoid the public exposure at court if at all possible. It often happens that they will bring a case to a headman for settlement and illegally pay him a fee for his time and trouble. This is only possible where the disputants are kin or neighbors subject to common moral pressures to work out their differences.

Every Kaguru neighborhood is made up of many homesteads or hamlets (kaya). A few men, because of their kin affiliations, age, and experience, are recognized as leaders or spokesmen by many of the inhabitants of a settlement or neighborhood. A headman often states publicly that such men are his assistants. He will make a point of drinking with them, and asking them to accompany him to court when cases concerning their neighbors are heard to provide them the prestige of association with his office. These men are said to have his ear and gain influence with their own subordinates. In return they provide the headman with information and advice on local affairs. In practice each headman has a number of subordinates who represent the leadership of the most important factions within his area. There are no formal rules to such a relationship; it is simply a reciprocal tie of mutual advantage to be broken by either.

A headman has few formal punishments which he can legally apply without consulting his chief or subchief; his own power is kept in check since he requires a minimum of popular support by these leaders if he is to secure the information and cooperation for fulfilling his obligations to his superiors. An unpopular headman can be sabotaged effectively by his people. He is dependent upon "delivering the goods" to at least some of his people if he wants the bribes, favors, and gifts they give him in return for smoothing their way in difficulties with the government. A headman is selected by the owner clan. Usually he is a member of that clan; less often he is the son of such a man. He is chosen because he can be controlled by his elder kinsmen since they remain the sources of much of his power; after all, they are usually the largest single clan group in the area, and they are already bound to him in terms of various marriage payments and debts and through the sentiments of kinship. Sometimes a weak person, perhaps a mere son of a clan man, may be elected as a "front" behind whom an elder who dislikes publicity and confronting Europeans may then actually direct affairs. In any dispute a headman is said nearly always to favor his kin if at all possible.

Kaguru Court Cases

I now consider ten cases brought to Kaguru courts. Each illustrates one or more facets in the wide range of powers by which Kaguru officials manipulate their people. I present each case and then comment upon it.

Case A

Masige brought Chisengo to court; Chisengo had married Masige's sister but was said not to have paid all of the bridewealth agreed upon. In anger, Masige has harassed and threatened Chisengo. In revenge Chisengo had burned down Masige's mother's house in Masige's village. The subchief of X ruled against Chisengo and fined him heavily. Chisengo appealed the case to the paramount chief's court, which reversed the decision and let Chisengo off. Shortly thereafter, Chisengo brought a case to the court of the subchief of X. He accused Masige of assault with a deadly weapon. Furious after the house-burning incident, Masige had attacked Chisengo. Masige tried to justify himself by saying that Chisengo was sleeping with his sister without having paid proper bridewealth and that the couple had a daughter for whom no payments had been made. The subchief of X fined Masige very lightly and then advised Masige publicly to register a case against Chisengo. The subchief said, "Adultery and taking a child which is not yours are serious crimes. You make a case against Chisengo and he will be punished more heavily than you have been."

The conduct of the two courtheads, the subchief of X and the paramount chief, makes sense only if one knows more about local Kaguru politics. The two chiefs had openly quarreled and insulted one another. The paramount chief had
supported the European use of forced labor even though its legality was highly questionable. He had gained wealth from this but was disliked by many Kaguru.

The subchief of X refused to support forced labor and sought to use his own opposition to foster his political ambitions, which were directed toward forming several parapolitical associations outside the formal Native Authority. These associations resembled vigilante groups such as those found in the Old American West. It was said by Kaguru that the enmity between the chiefs probably led the subchief of X to reverse the other's judgment. Chisengo had long been critical of the West. It was said by Kaguru that the enmity between the chiefs probably led the one chief to reverse the other's judgment. Chisengo had long been critical of the subchief of X. He sought to use the enmity between that subchief and the paramount chief to his own advantage. However, many Kaguru felt that this was unwise. Thus, even when Chisengo had a just case, he received only minimal satisfaction and the subchief openly aided his enemy, Masige. Now it is true that Chisengo could continue to appeal his cases to the paramount chief, but this would cost much time and trouble and be a gamble. The subchief seemed likely to continue to stir up difficulties for Chisengo, who, with his bad temper and domestic troubles, was prone to many disputes. Kaguru say that it is foolish to offend a headman or subchief even when you are in the right and, for the moment, might win, for the official can always wait for other occasions when you are in the wrong and will need his help.

It may be asked how a courtholder would be allowed to make such partisan comments (by European standards) in a colonial court. For one thing,

4 I discuss these elsewhere (Beidelman 1961b).
any pronouncement upon the issue of the legality of Headman Amosi’s attempt to banish Chiduo, an act which indeed had no legal basis. Chiduo was told that since he had no proper case, he would lose the fees paid for making the case and that he would have to pay the expenses of the seven witnesses which the accused had brought to court for his defense. These costs amounted to 24 shillings. By Kaguru standards this was tantamount to a fine against Chiduo for having made a case in court against a headman popular with the court. One cannot help suspecting collusion between the court and Headman Amosi in the allowance of such an unusually large number of witnesses whose expenses were paid by the plaintiff. The case was not recorded in the court records.

Case C

Dansoni is a member of the paramount chief’s matrilineage. One day, according to Dansoni, he saw Chibaibai leaving his (Dansoni’s) house. Chibaibai is a close, joking relative (father’s sister’s son) to Headman Yubi, a headman under the paramount chief. Both Headman Yubi and Chibaibai are notorious philanderers, and one of the usual people with whom one can get help in sexual affairs is one’s cross-cousin. Dansoni strongly criticized both Headman Yubi and Chibaibai, who serves as the headman’s deputy. He told Chibaibai that he would not tolerate either Chibaibai or Yubi near his house. Chibaibai reported this to Headman Yubi, who came to Dansoni and ordered him to leave his area. Dansoni refused and reported the affair to the paramount chief, who summoned Headman Yubi. The paramount chief threatened to dismiss Headman Yubi if he did not pay adultery fines for himself and Chibaibai. He is alleged to have told Yubi, “If a headman can tell his subject to leave his land, then a chief can tell his headman to leave his land as well.” I know of no case in which a paramount chief has made such a threat, but then this does not seem to have been the real gist of the chief’s words. He seems to have been telling Yubi that he thought Yubi had tried to intimidate Dansoni by illegal means and that this could be reported to the British—for no one can banish a person from his area (except the British, who did so on occasion). Furthermore, the paramount chief could complicate Headman Yubi’s affairs in court cases and government affairs so that Yubi could hardly afford to exacerbate the chief’s ill will. Yubi paid a fine of one goat and 80 shillings, which was divided between the chief and his kinsman, Dansoni. Local Kaguru now feel that Yubi has lost considerable prestige and Dansoni has felt safe in publicly insulting Yubi. It is likely that Yubi was drunk when he threatened Dansoni, otherwise he might not have acted so recklessly in a way which cost him wealth and influence. A headman may legally be dismissed by a subchief or the paramount chief, but this is unlikely. In any case, the support of a courthead is very important to a headman’s power, and any withdrawal of such authority, even in the case of a recalcitrant man such as Headman Yubi, would often bring him to heel. Headmen and chiefs need not be friends, but they need one another to bolster their mutual authority. With the support of a chief’s court, a headman is able to weather the anger of a larger group of his own subjects; without it, even his ordinary subjects may give him difficulty. Correspondingly, a chief needs his headmen to provide him with information and the taxes and labor the British require.

Case D

Some members of the dominant clan of Y resented their headman, Tutiyo. One faction supported Headman Tutiyo, while the other demanded his replacement by their favorite. Each faction insisted that its rivals were not of the dominant clan but were only freed slaves who had usurped clan rights. The issue had come to a head over the slaying of a cow to celebrate the opening of a new school in the Y area. Tutiyo had provided a cow and then requested contributions from the other members of his clan to recompense him for this. His supporters contributed, but the other faction refused. The dissidents sought the support of the local court subchief, but he supported Headman Tutiyo since he and Tutiyo had cooperated together in court cases for years. This dispute was then brought to the court of the subchief and decided in favor of Headman Tutiyo. The other faction contested this decision and appealed to the paramount chief. Both Headman Tutiyo and the subchief of X had quarreled with the chief over the issue of forced labor. The paramount chief was invited to Y and was entertained by the dissident faction, which, according to many Kaguru, may have given him many gifts. The subchief’s verdict was reversed by the paramount chief when the case was appealed to him. Headman Tutiyo and the subchief of X then appealed the case to the district administration, which supported Tutiyo, saying that it disliked frequent changes in the administration and the use of Native Authority posts as “footballs” in clan politics. Tutiyo himself had an excellent record as headman. The case was appealed to the provincial administration, which supported the district administration.

Case E

The following statement is part of a court’s verdict on an assault case:

The accused has admitted his offense of having beaten his mother while he was drunk. The court levies a fine of 20 shillings and a payment of 10 shillings compensation to the mother. If the accused does not pay this amount of 30 shilling because he has no goods, he will be locked up in jail for one month hard labor. When he returns, he must pay 10 shillings compensation.

Such procedure is not usually resorted to unless the court is already fairly sure that the accused has kinsmen who will make such a payment once he has been jailed. Otherwise, a smaller payment may be asked by the court, which has little desire to confine a prisoner. Confinement is inconvenient in a Kaguru jail, for the
licenses and that since she had purchased no license, she had no right to com-
plain at all. This seemed rather hypocritical on the part of the court since it was
commonly accepted in Kaguruland that beer licenses were very costly and that
one person would buy a license and then, for a small payment, allow many
others to sell at his place under the one covering license. Hogla was advised
to stop complaining if she herself did not want to be prosecuted for brewing without
a licence. The plaintiff suddenly found herself to be the accused, for the court
judge was a close kinsman of the proprietor of the beer club where Hogla
usually sold her beer.

Case I

A man accused his sister of keeping a cow which had been part of his
inheritance from their dead brother. The woman brought two of her sisters and
her son as witnesses to support her defense. However, the court supported the
accuser even though he had brought no one to support his claim against these
witnesses. An elderly kinsman of the litigants, a man of the deceased's father's
matrilineage (a traditional spokesman at funerals) strongly condemned the
accuser and supported the women. He said, however, that he could see that the
case was lost because of the court. I did not understand the meaning of his bitter
remarks or why the court discounted the testimony of the many people supporting
the accused. The chief of the court awarded the cow to the accuser and then said,
"Now see my nephew since you now have wealth!" I asked others at the court
what he had meant and learned that over a year before, the court chief's sister's
son had loaned the accuser 100 shillings and that until now the accuser had given
many excuses for not repaying his debt.

Case J

The subchief of P ruled that a Native Authority road should be widened
in the vicinity of his court. Kaguru with fields on the land in question were told
to resign themselves to the loss of the crops planted but still unharvested upon
the land. Some of the land was cleared, but two Kaguru, a schoolteacher and
a former schoolteacher, protested and threatened to write to the British in the
district headquarters. This was not necessary, for after their complaints, their
fields were left untouched by the road builders.

Conclusions

The preceding cases indicate the basic features of Kaguru political affairs
and how the organization of local government supported the powers of certain
individuals. One of the ironies of local government during the colonial period
is that it intensified tribalism. Kaguru were able to use their monopoly of local
government to intimidate tribal minorities in their midst. The creation of a

Native Authority along tribal lines meant that many sources of power and profit,
such as local government jobs and education in Native Authority schools, fostered
tribal consciousness. The policy of governing "on the cheap" also meant that the
underpaid jobs of the Native Authority failed to attract well-educated and vigor-
ous younger Kaguru, who, if not employed by the mission, went into work outside
the area and became interested in the politics of national independence. As a
result, local Kaguru officials were conservative in outlook and aware that they
continued to exist only so long as the British supported an artificial power struc-
ture, which worked only so long as these foreigners themselves provided the
know-how and funds to supplement the inherent inefficiencies and ineptitudes of
such ill-trained local personnel. This was convenient to local British officials, who
 tended to use the local Native Authority government as a rubber stamp for their
own political decisions.

7 Elsewhere I expand on many of these points (Beidelman 1967b, 1968, and see Further
Readings, under The Kaguru, Beidelman 1961c).