

# The kikuyu culture

Sociology



It is still from the Kikuyu tribe that Africa's first African female Nobel peace prize winner called Wangari Maathai comes from (Bennett, Patrick R 2008)

A child is considered as a blessing in the Kikuyu culture where the family identity is carried on by naming the first boy after the father's father, and the second after the mother's father. The same happens to the girl child, where the first is named after the father's mother and the second after the mother's mother. The rest of the children are named after the brothers and sisters of the grandparents beginning from the oldest to the youngest. The greatest value of a child in this culture is attached to the belief that the deceased grandparents' spirit that the child was named after would come into the new child. The child, male or female is greatly respected. However, the belief does not hold for the grandparents who are still alive, as their spirit still lies within them. (Bennett, Patrick R 2008)

Most of the families under Kikuyu culture do not have many children. A 1999 survey by the Catholic University of Eastern Africa showed that the average is three children per family, where the relationship between the parents and their children is mainly based on respect. As children grow, the value of male and female children changes. The boy child is considered to be the protector of the family in the absence of the parents, a fact that results in the girl child being neglected. There is a cultural tendency in the Kikuyu tribe to educate the boy child whereas the girl child is left at home to keep the home tidy. This is to prepare the girl child to be a good housewife. (Bennett, Patrick R 2008)

#### The Rites of Passage for Males and Females

According to Frederick Mowlem (2006), " every modern culture, knowingly or otherwise depends on the aspects of their forefathers". The rites of passage

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for both the male and female used to be circumcision until the late 1950s when the church began fighting against female circumcision. For males, the circumcision ceremony is currently organized by age sets of about five year periods, where the boys become part of the same age-set, known as Anake, where the old ones teach the young ones the cultural expectations that they should abide with. On the other hand, the females have ceased to undergo circumcision as a rite of passage adopting a three-day retreat organized by the older women (50 and above) where the young women are taught about the duties and cultural behavioral expectations that they should abide with.

#### Kikuyu Children's Participation in Education and Labor

Unlike the olden days when education was considered to be essential for boys only, there is currently a tendency for girl's education to be taken equally as important. The Kikuyu are known to have a desire to have the knowledge and it is believed that all children should receive a full education. (DeLancey, V. 1990). Given the fact that the labor market in Kenya has always valued male and female workers equally, both the male and the female child has equal chances for employment as long as they are qualified. However, this has not always been the case because of the way children are raised, which might have an impact on the work mentality i. e. girls are raised to work in the household chores and the boys to work.