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A History of Marriage Market in Kiambu County Kenya, 1960 to 2000

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Abstract:

This study sought to analyse and investigate the history of Marriage market in Komothai, Kiambu County Kenya. The underlying objectives of the study were; To investigate the historical factors that led to the growth of Marriage market to 1960, to analyse how the relationship between the traders and locals led to the transformation of Marriage market between 1961 to 1978, to investigate the relationship between the various market policies and how they impacted on the growth of Marriage market between 1979-2000 and to analyse the relationship between the urbanization in neighbouring towns and the fall of Marriage market. The study was based on the Structural Functionalism Theory by COMTE (1984). The research utilized both primary and secondary sources which will be used to acquire data on issues of development of Marriage market in Komothai, Kiambu County, Kenya. The study was done in Marriage market in Komothai, Kiambu County, Kenya. This area was picked in light of the fact that it contains people of assorted tribes carrying out various economic activities in the region and some have been born and raised in the area, hence familiar to the historical changes the market has undergone. The study utilized interviews questions as the main instruments to collect data. The study also relied on both secondary and primary written sources to gather information which was utilized to gather data on issues of development of Marriage market in Komothai, Kiambu County, Kenya. From the findings it is clear that Marriage market thrived to national status by 1960s and 70s, was by the year 2000 an abandoned place with minimal or no activities. A trader who used to bring commodities such as salt from Magadi or tobacco from Meru in the 1970s, who would happen to visit the area by the year 200, would only be welcomed by cows and goats grazing on the overgrown grass, a sign of an abandoned and alienated place. Several factors had contributed to the growth of Marriage market as explained earlier; which included; the population of the surrounding villages, agricultural activities such coffee farming and cattle keeping, peaceful coexistence of locals, strategic location and infrastructure. That factors that led to the collapse of the market on the other hand include rural to urban migration, the collapse of the coffee industry and the rise of new urban centres in close proximity to Marriage market. Among the recommendations that have been offered by the current research include the need of having developments based on merit as opposed to political inclination. Another key recommendation is that the government should come up with policies for rural industrialization. The current study also recommends for the government and non-state actors raise infrastructure standards in rural areas. The need for a policy by stakeholders in the agricultural sector guaranteeing minimum returns to farmers of such crops, to bar them from unfair trade deals and competitions that always kill their hard work has also been offered as a recommendation of the current study.

Keywords: History of marriage market, growth of market

1. Introduction

The history of urbanization is only understood with reference to the densely concentrated populations and built of environments of cities. Globally, most people dwell in urban areas compared to rural areas, with 54 per cent of the world's population residing in urban areas in 1994. In 1950, approximately 30 per cent of the world's population was living in urban (Bencivenga, & Smith, 1997). Research conducted denotes that some of the most affected areas where the rural population has reduced drastically are the Northern America and Latin America with a population of 86 percent and 82 percent respectively in the urban areas (United Nations) (Park, et al.1993). Africa currently has a population of 40 percent in urban areas while Asia has 48 percent in the urban areas as well. Open air markets depend on the workforce from the farms which implies that a decline in the population would lead to a decline in the volume of transactions (Rostow, 1994).

According to (Lewis,2001), urbanization was understood to be a natural by-product and facilitator of industrial development, driven by the growth of employment opportunities in urban areas as a result of industrial investment during the 'take-off' stage of economic development.

Across most of the African capital cities most of the services are found in the city's offices. Unemployment also forces most of the youth and unemployed skilled personnel to go to such areas (Breese, 1986).

The growth of urban centres which are centre of all services needed for both the development of an economic and life of an individual leads to increased settlements in the urban area. Marriage market was a victim of the rapidly growing Nairobi town. Most of the residents moved to Nairobi to search for greener pastures contributing to the collapse of the market. The political interference from the elected leaders also had an aspect with regards to the administration and mismanagement of the tax payer's funds. This creates a gap recommending further research on the area provided for the study.

Nairobi is one of the rapidly growing cities in Africa attracting both local and foreign investors. It offers most of the valuable social amenities, educational activities and employment opportunities to most of the graduates. In the past, Nairobi was just a town being a capital for the British colonialists in the 1950s. Though some of the services were decentralized, most of the services were still not relevant at the time. For instance, if a person needed to process employment that would only happen once in a year implying that such a service would not cause any disparity with regards to the demand of a commodity. At the time infrastructural development was at its core with only a few constructed buildings. Most of the residents therefore earned a living from their rural setting with a major focus on economic activities such as farming, fishing and keeping of animals.

2. Statement of the Problem

There is no comprehensive study which has been done on Marriage market. This study intended to reconstruct the history of Marriage market. Therefore, the underlying rationale of this study was to investigate and analyse the history of Marriage market in Komothai, Kiambu County Kenya. The study intended to establish how Marriage market originated, grew and declined. The study focused on the various trends shaping the evolution and transformation of Marriage market between 1960 and 2000, how it impacted on the economic growth of MarriageKomothai Location and what led to its decline. It was therefore an endeavour of this study to document the history of Marriage market to fill the historical gap which exists.

3. Objectives of the Study

The underlying objectives of the study were;

- To investigate the historical factors that led to the growth of Marriage market to 1960
- To analyse the impact of the relationship between the traders and locals on the transformation of Marriage market between 1961 to 1978
- To investigate the relationship between the various market policies and how they impacted on the growth of Marriage between 1979-2000
- To analyse the relationship between the urbanization in neighbouring towns and the fall of Marriage market.

4. Research Questions

The research questions that guided the study were:

- What are the historical factors that led to the growth of Marriage market to 1960?
- What was the impact of relationship between the traders and locals on transformation of Marriage market between 1961 and 1978?
- What is the relationship between the various market policies and how did they impact on the growth of Marriage market between 1979 and 2000?
- What is the relationship between the urbanization in neighbouring towns and the fall of Marriage market?

5. Reviews

The word market has been described in a number of ways. As per the Encyclopedia Britannica, (1990), marketplaces basically mean the places where goods are traded. It is a place for people to together and trade as well as exchanging products and services. The market is not simply a place in the current economic structure. The word market has been extended to cover a whole geographical region in which vendors operate. Economists recognize that the word market applies to a particular region where different demand and output conditions exist. Buyers and sellers in the area are driven by different and equitable buying and sale practices. In such cases, buyers and sellers are motivated by their personal will, spending power and market prices of a similar goods and services.

Berry (1967) described market places as financial, economic, and social and many other reference places whereby traders meet for sale and buy of commodities and in which the prices given and charged in each case are influenced by the opinions of others. The market is thus a system that creates self-regulation prices. Prices, on the other hand, are the framework linking personal choice and practice. The buyer will often settle for a dealer offering the cheapest price for the same item.

The market has different geographical characteristics categorized under the population density, market size, region and climate. A small retailer may find opportunities in a small market while a large reseller may not find those opportunities. Consumers in various regions of the nation also have different tastes in food and style (Suttle 1998).

Rate of population growth defines the historical changes with regards to the historical setting whereas the members of a society have to adapt the technological changes in order to provide their needed contribution (Moffet, 1994). As

technological changes came up they impacted both positive and negative differences that led to change in the social life.

The change in the social life affected other surroundings as well leading to change in the setting.

Residents who witnessed the activities of the co-operative society in Marriage acknowledged lot of support when purchasing their farm inputs. The cooperatives provided them with inputs such as fertilizers, animal feeds and other agricultural inputs at subsidized prices while under some situations they would be provided in credit terms. The results of the co-operative society were reciprocated through the output produced from the increase in production. Some of the co-operative societies even ended up procuring large chunks of land and property where they later shifted from their ordinary activities by the time the market was still doing well in term of traders and consumers (Central Bank of Kenya 1991).

Marriage markets enjoyed proper management system where the society valued the importance of the markets, with minimal political interference. The location of the Market, along the highway and further from the city, enabled the market to enjoy free and fair competition. In addition, the residents near the area adhered to the farming activities which led to a continuous supply of the agricultural produce from the farms. The willingness of the consumer helped categorize market as psychological in nature. These defining characteristics of Marriage market in Komothai included; activities, attitudes, opinions, values and interests. One may add a consumer activity such as the participation of clients in weaving of baskets. A trader may identify customer opinions upon interaction with the customers on the product (Brockerhoff, 1990). The rise of Marriage market in the early times can also be traced to the agricultural activities that were being carried out in the market. According to the article by Velayudhan (2016), Marriage market is located in a place that is agriculturally productive. The place being surrounded by different forests such as Githunguri forest and limuru forest, receives high rainfall which makes the place a good agricultural land. The place is also strategically situated between two rivers, river Komothai and Ruiru River. Water from these two rivers offered enough supply for irrigation during dry seasons. The residents of the place who were mainly kikuyus who had migrated to the place in late 19th century, were mainly farmers and mainly relied on land cultivation and grazing (KNA undated). These activities used to provide Marriage market with the necessary products for sales. At time when the economy largely relied on farming than manufacturing, those who had large tracks of productive land had a higher completion when it came to wealth and social status. Marriage residents were industrious and grew foodstuffs such as bananas, cassavas, yams, as well as vegetables such as kales and cabbages.

6. Methodology and Design

Combinations of different designs were used to obtain fundamental data in this study. The research was based on accessible literature, oral literature, focus groups and archival materials. Archival materials to be consulted included both official and non-official documents. Most of these documents were to be found in Kiambu County Council archives and Kenya National Archives Nairobi. Field Research will be conducted in Komothai Location Kiambu County. Oral interviews were conducted based on structured questionnaires.

This study employed historical research design. The study was done in an attempt to gather information from people so as to decide the present status of that populace. According to Maxwell (2012), research design refers to an arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to merge relevance with the research purpose. It is the conceptual structure within which research will be conducted. The specialist in this way intended to find a graphic overview plan proper to investigate and analyse the history of Marriage market in Komothai, Kiambu County Kenya.

As indicated by Mugenda & Mugenda (1999) a study population refers to an entire group of individuals or elements that have at least one thing in common. The researcher utilized both secondary and primary sources which were used to acquire data on issues of development of Marriage market in Komothai, Kiambu County Kenya. The study targeted 100 respondents but utilized purposive sampling to come up with 15 respondents who seemed to have reliable information on the subject of study.

7. Historical Factors Leading to the Growth of Marriage before 1960s

7.1. A Meeting Place

Marriage market used to be one of the greatest social centres where people from different cultures and group used to meet for some various social functions. The greatest of those social gathering was a function which used to be held once in every two or three years. Due to the strategic location of Marriage market, and the presence of Komothai River which acted as a sacred place for the function, many inmates came from different ridges and localities to attend the rite of passage ceremony. Karanu (O.I., 2019) said,

'My father used to narrate how Marriage was the central point where initiates from different areas used to meet before the start of the traditional ceremonies.....'(Interview data and demographic information)

7.2. Agricultural Giant

Marriage market is located in a place that is agriculturally productive. The place being surrounded by different forests such as Githunguri forest and limuru forest, receives high rainfall which makes the place a good agricultural land. The place is also strategically situated between two rivers, river Komothai and Ruiru River. Water from these two rivers offered enough supply for irrigation during dry seasons. (Wacera, O.I., 2019).

'On arriving here, we were received by chief Magugu, who gave us shelter until we got a place to stay. Within a short time, we had started trading in the market and we had bought a plot and settled'(Interview data and demographic information)

7.3. Peace in Marriage Region

Unlike other regions which were cattle-killing related crimes, Marriage region was welcoming and had provided a peaceful ground to all the residents and migrants. The residents of the region were generally peaceful to all locals and migrants.(Irungu, O.I., 2019).

Our forefathers came here in 19th century from Muranga after population increase in the region'(Interview data and demographic information)

7.4. Completion of Railway Line

The completion of the railway line in 1900, gave a great boost for Marriage market to grow. With the railway in place, other traders came from Meru to bring tobacco and tea produce which they traded with agricultural produce, and other products such as arrows from kamba traders.(Kimotho, O.I., 2019)

'With high demand of land produce in Nairobi City market, I used to buy cassava and yams from the residents of Komothai location and take it to Nairobi City Market. The returns were so good that, within six months I had bought a plot which I later constructed a shop.'(Interview data and demographic information)

8. Transformation of Marriage Market

8.1. Factors Contributing to the Growth of Marriage Market after 1961

Majority of the people who were interviewed were those who were employed in the coffee estates in areas neighboring Marriage market. One of the respondents, Wacera (O.I., 2019) said,

'I used to trek every day from my residence in Marriage to search for cheap labor in the coffee estates nearing the market.'

Her sentiments matched the ones found by Bevan among others in research to know the effect of booming of coffee farming in Kenya, in which they claim that, many young men would relocate from other parts of the country to the coffee growing zones in search for better jobs but *'found themselves in a coffee plantation where they used to pluck coffee from 8 in the morning to 6 in the evening and earn peanuts'*(Bevan, Collier & Gunning, 1989).

Another person in the focus group figured up how farmers in the areas near the market started growing new varieties of crops that were mostly demanded in the market since many people had migrated from other areas to come and work in the estates near the market.

'I abandoned growing cassava and started growing potatoes which I sold to the Dutch since it is the staple food in their mother country'. (Kimotho, O.I., 2019)

Mr. Mwangi explained how the steady supply of agricultural commodities led to the growth of the market, *'There was construction of different structures in the market including shades that were used by the traders to protect them as well as their goods from severe sunshine or even rainfall'*, (Mwangi, 78, 2019).

According to another interviewee very few of the businesses that served food and beverages fell. Majority of coffee estates that developed in the areas around Marriage town as a result of the poor selling land to the rich led to creation of employment opportunities for various people and eventually the growth of the market.

'I moved from Nyandarua and settled in Thuita in the year 1958 where I worked as a secretary in one of the coffee estates', (Njoki, O.I., 2019).

9. Market Policies Effect on Growth of Marriage (1979 – 2000)

Various market policies contributed to the growth and the imminent fall of Marriage Market. The growth of population in the urban centers and majorly Nairobi as the capital of Kenya increased the demand for farm products and other commodities. One old man who claimed to have traded in the Marriage Market since 1965 recalled that *I had traders who would come all the way from Nairobi to buy cattle for slaughter. The demand had increased in 80s where I used to sell 50-100 sheep and goats on a market day'*

The market cleanliness was also maintained more by the traders collectively as opposed to the local council. This had given them a sense of ownership where they felt as members of Marriage community as opposed to just traders. Mr. Mwangi said that

'I used to take bananas to the market and would always get ready buyers. I would then proceed to the grains section and buy beans and other grains from Kamba traders'(Mwangi, O.I., 2019).

Growth of technology and other advancements fuelled the growth of Marriage market. The market had gotten connected to the national electricity grid in the early years of independent which acted as attraction for the new traders. A respondent who was a farmer within the region noted,

'Initially we used to carry our small produce to the market but later bigger traders would come directly to our shambas and buy our produce for resale in the market.'(Kimotho, O.I., 2018).

9.1. Factors and Market Policies That Contributed to the falloffMarriage Market

The period between 1979 and 2000 is characterised with rapid urbanisation across most countries in Africa Kenya included. This urbanisation is as per the most of respondents one of the blessings which was a curse to them. As Nairobi grew and more industriesand governmental jobs increased, many residents of Komothai and the surrounding started to migrate to Nairobi in search for greener pastures. This took away the working capital and the customer base that the market relied on. As Mr. Karanu, (O.I., 2019) replied,

'My father who used to run a retail shop in the market relocated to Nairobi after learning that there were more returns and demands in the city due to high population in the city.'

The economic growth of the time also affected the Marriage market negatively. A country which had experience a stable and a promising economic growth had started to experience a declined growth with rising inflation. At the same time the government embarked on large borrowings which contributed negatively to the economy. As Mr. Mwangi explained

'The Kenyan shilling had started to lose value and a dollar which would be exchanged at 20 Kenyan shillings per dollar had risen to 50 Kenyan shillings by late 80s'(Mwangi, O.I., 2019).

According to one of the interviewees husbands left their homes to be employed into the cities due to the changing times.

Families needed money to take their children through school. Education had become a basic demand therefore parents were mandated with the responsibility to educate their children.

'I left the village because two of my sons were supposed to join high school so I needed reliable income to be able to support them'. (Kimotho, O.I., 2019)

10. Effects of Neighboring Towns to Marriage Market

10.1. Overview of the Urbanization of Areas Surrounding MarriageMarket

The growth and urbanization of emerging towns and centers always have a reciprocal effect on the existing ones. The reason is that traders, as well as customers, compare prices and competitive advantage of the new markets with the existing ones, wherein many instances, the new markets beat the old ones as they come with advanced infrastructure and technology as well as the psychological effect of the newness.

10.2. Urbanization of Nairobi and Other Towns

The first blow of Marriage market was the urbanization and industrialization of Nairobi City. As the country's capital industrialized in the late 70s and early 90s demand for human capital went high. This demand was filled by residents of the adjacent districts, with most of Komothai youth in which Marriage market is located migrating to Nairobi in search for greener pastures. Mr. Mbugua (79, 2019) explained how his two younger brothers left home for Nairobi, where they hoped to get employed in the Industrial area.

10.3. The growth of City Markets

As most traders bypassed the local market to the city market, locals also started going to Nairobi markets for their purchases. According to a respondent,

'My husband who was then working with Kanjo, used to go to Nairobi every Saturday to buy us clothes and foodstuffs, where they were cheaper and modern as compared to the ones at Marriage market.' (Victoria, O.I., 2019)

10.4. Technological Advancements

As the technologies advanced with advancement of industries and imported technology by traders, new means of farming were devised. One of these devices was the machine to pluck tea in the tea farms. This dealt a big blow to employees who were working in these farms such as Limuri tea farms near Komothai location.

'Every end month the Market experienced good sales due to the salaries of the coffee farms employee. I used to sell three bales of clothes on an end-month market day, but when the employees were fired after the introduction of coffee-plucking machines, the sales went down to barely one bale.' (Macharia, 86, 2019)

10.5. The Effect of Karatina Open-Air Market

Other than Gikomba and City market, there was Karatina market in Nyeri County which was starting to thrive. The location of Karatina market, in lowlands of Aberdare hills and being near to Mt. Kenya Mountain, made the market strategic for farmers within these regions.

10.6. The Effect of Kwamaiko Shopping Centre

When the Nairobi-Kiambu-Kibichoi highway was completed, other markets emerged along the highway that nailed the last nail to the dying Marriage market. One of these markets was Kwamaiko market. The market which is in Githunguri was the greatest beneficiary of the new highway as the road went through the market. Kwamaiko shopping centre, which had operated as a small centre but with some activities such as Kwamaiko polytechnic, exploited the benefits of this new development, which had sidelined Marriage market after passing a hundred meters away from the Marriage market. New activities started to mushroom in the market, and some factories were built within its proximity such as Githunguri Dairy Farmers Co-operative Society Factory.

11. Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

11.1. Summary and Conclusion

In conclusion, Marriage, a market which had thrived to national status by 1960s and 70s, was by the year 2000 an abandoned place with minimal or no activities. A trader who used to bring commodities such as salt from Magadi or tobacco from Meru in the 1970s, who would happen to visit the area by the year 2000, would only be welcomed by cows and goats grazing on the overgrown grass, a sign of an abandoned and alienated place. Several factors had contributed to the growth of Marriage market as explained earlier; which included; the population of the surrounding villages, agricultural activities such coffee farming and cattle keeping, peaceful coexistence of locals, strategic location and infrastructure.

Nevertheless, from 1979, various factors and policies brought down Marriage market to its knees by early 2000s. Urbanization in the urban centres did a major blow to rural centers, where Marriage market was one of, and shifted the population and businesses to urban centers. Some political policies also played a role in the fall of the market. Others included infrastructure alienation, where a highway was constructed far from the market; other neighbouring centers grew taking the business away from Marriage Market, and fall of the agricultural sector, more so the coffee sector.

Marriage market had a geographically strategic location that favoured it over other centers making it a marketing bee-hive. As learnt from the research, the strategic location of Marriage market; Thuita, Ruiru River and Mburiyagi ridges, offered Marriage market as a meeting center which in return allowed for the market to thrive. The market also benefited from its vicinity to Nairobi. Being close to the capital city of the country made traders, who by then used to go for products and more so agricultural products from rural markets, to flock Marriage market for their shopping.

The colonial leadership and post-colonial leaders in the Marriage region played a major role in the growth of the market. Unlike many other centers at the time, Marriage Market enjoyed political calmness and peaceful environment courtesy of local administration. The researcher found that local chiefs such as chief Magugu had ensured that the locals remained in harmony with one another as well as to visitors. This made visitors feel welcomed, and would, therefore, camp in the area without fear of any attack. The locals went further to giving shelter and water to Masaai cattle brought in the market for sale. As security is a major factor in the growth of any center, the security of Marriage Market played a positive role in growing the village market to national status.

Another factor that had led to the growth of Marriage Market was its agricultural activities. Marriage market was situated in an area with high agricultural productivity. The climate and soil type of the area allowed for farming of different types of crops. Coffee farming, which was largely an activity of whites-only by the early 60s, had been open to locals on small scale farming.

With Kenya gaining independence, many factors changed politically. Elected leaders started directing developments to some areas considered politically favourable to them as opposed to others. Marriage market, which had enjoyed peaceful coexistence of its people and political calmness, was subjected to political correctness.

12. Recommendations

Many factors that led to the fall of Marriage market were local and political factors, which could have been avoided or rectified with political goodwill. Though the research was limited to historical factors leading to the growth and fall of Marriage market, the factor might have similar effects in other markets and centers as well. The researcher, therefore, came with some recommendations which if implemented can help to revive Marriage market, but also help other centers and markets which may be on the same route of Marriage market to recover. These recommendations are:

- Developments should be made based on merit as opposed to political inclination. Marriage market had thrived well when it was under the management of chiefs, who were not elected and thus not politically inclined. When the market was left to elected leaders, political policies took off the resources away from the market to other areas and this led to the fall of the market. The researcher, therefore, recommends that regional development policies be left to non-political leaders who are competent and who will issue these developments as per the regional needs.
- The government should come up with policies for rural industrialization. One of the major reasons for the death of the Marriage market was found to be urbanization. This urbanization had been caused by industrialization in the urban centers which made residents of Marriage and other rural areas migrate to urban centers in search of jobs. Had these industries been built in these rural areas, people would have remained in the rural areas and work and spend locally which would have saved the market from its collapsing. The government should, therefore, encourage more industrial investments in rural areas, through policies such as tax exemption and free land to investors targeting these regions.
- The government should raise infrastructure standards in rural areas. As one of the major drives of investments is infrastructure, governments both national and local governments should strive to raise infrastructure in rural areas. Road networks and modern communication networks such as fibre cable network should not be a preserve of big towns. Youths in the villages should as well access these services which will help them not to leave to town centers in search of these services. Basic amenities such as learning institutions and medical facilities should also be developed in rural areas as it is one of the factors that make people migrate to urban centers to search for them.
- One of the major income-earning activities in rural centers, as seen in Marriage market, is farming. Most rural residents rely on farming as their source of income. However poor pay of agricultural products such as coffee

had made Marriage traders and residents in the area to count huge losses which made them unable to continue trading in the market. It is therefore recommended that policy is established by government guaranteeing minimum returns to farmers of such crops, to bar them from unfair trade deals and competitions that always kill their hard work. Establishing of such kind of policies, coupled vigorous marketing for these products by the government, will reward farmers, and make many youths who run away from farming due poor returns to return in the villages and raise farming to a higher level. As they do this, they will spend locally, and provide a customer base for these markets to thrive.

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