

FIELD ASSIGNMENT #3.

COURSE: SSI12 - INTERCULTURAL CROSS CULTURE COMMUNICATION.

WEEK 10 ASSIGNMENT.

CULTURAL PRACTICES AND FOOD IN KALENJIN COMMUNITY.

Kalenjin community mostly lives in the Rift Valley, but there are some who moves to other parts of the country for work and employment. I visited a family that lives in Embu of Mr. and Mrs. Hosea Kibet. The family is in Embu due to employment of the husband, and they moved from Kericho their homeland.

A highly honored and respected person like a pastor is welcomed with “Mulsik” sour milk mixed with some charcoals of a certain herb. The herb is burned and the black substance is mixed with milk, for flavor and digestion. It is put into a gourd that is ornamented. There is usually a gourd for ‘Mzee’ (husband) and one another for the mother and the children. The husband can’t share his with the wife or the children, but he can share with a friend or a person of higher candor. I felt an ease to take, but it was presented with great respect, that I could not resist. Mr. Kibet was served with a bigger mug that was almost two times bigger than mine. That was a normal cup for the husband, unequal to that of the wife or children or even for the visitor.

The Kalenjin community does take traditional and indigenous foods. Breakfast comprises of enriched sorghum and corn flour porridge and arrowroot or sweet potatoes for the morning bite. It helps the family to be strong until lunch hour where the usually take brown ugali and indigenous vegetable called ‘Mrenda’ that is commonly used by the Luhya and Luo communities. Brown ugali is prepared using flour from different cereals such as corns, millet and wheat. These are very strong foods to build up the body and the immune system and are given to people of all ages and sexes. Men usually get the bigger share than the rest.

Woman, regardless of her job or title is the cook. Men don’t get into the kitchen as long as there is female around. It is a taboo. But this tradition is fading away especially in urban settings, where both husband and wife are working. Men are forced by the circumstances to cook for the family. When the family menu is chicken, the man is given a thigh and chest to symbolize his position of authority and leadership. Men are always served first at all times. I also noted that the family is fond of tea. This is from the influence back at home because they grow tea as the cash crop and also Kericho is a bit cool place and so tea acts as a body warmer. When other people go for margarine on the bread Kalenjin do pure honey. Interestingly, although they live in town, they usually go for these commodities, back from rural area which is approximately three hundred kilometers from Embu. I finally enjoyed their provision and gave some to take to my family. I learnt that food is part of the culture and they define who people are. Women don’t have much say

in decision making about the family issues and so many of their rights are suppressed.