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**The berated politicians: other ways of reading
Miriam, Michal, Jezebel and Athaliah in the Old
Testament in relation to political and gender
quandary in Sub-Saharan Africa, Kenya and
Uganda as case studies**

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A dissertation submitted to
The Department of Theology and Religious Studies
School of Critical Studies
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October 2011

THESIS ABSTRACT

....be very careful to do exactly as the priests, who are Levites, instruct you. You must follow carefully what I have commanded them. Remember what the LORD your God did to Miriam along the way after you came out of Egypt and what he did to Michal and Jezebel. Remember what the priests did to Athaliah in Judah (c.f Deuteronomy. 24:8b-9). These female politicians were cornered, arrested, charged, beheaded and fragmented! Only their heads (names) that were hanged in this public place, the Bible, remained. Nobody would tell that this is Miriam, Michal, Jezebel or Athaliah. Lists of their crimes stand appended to their heads and names in public. When they were all silenced and the kings had sat in their rightful places, all the people of the land rejoiced and there was peace in the cities because these women had been slain (c.f 2 Kings 11:20). So be very careful to follow instruction and rules such that you do not end up like any of them.

(Embellished by the author)

Indeed, Miriam, Michal, Jezebel and Athaliah are politically killed off in the Hebrew Bible. Certainly, no one would tell from the Hebrew Bible that these women were people of significant political and leadership profiles; but merely as wicked in the history of humanity. All their political significance and contributions were literary and ideologically mutilated and separated from their names and left in the wild to be eaten by stray dogs. Their decapitated and fragmented images minus their political profiles have been ingested into an ideological system that regulates gender world order and influences social, intellectual and linguistic discourses and pictorial misogynistic polemics in the modern world.

Figuratively, the remains of these women have been preserved in the way politicians of the ancient times and recent past would keep remains of their opponents. Ancient rulers would preserve a head (skull) of a particular enemy. David in the Bible cuts off Goliath's head (1 Samuel 17:51); and the Philistines cut off Saul's head (1 Samuel 31:9). In the Roman Republic of early 1st Century BC, political enemies like Marius and Sulla were decapitated and their heads displayed in the Forum Romanum. In 1355 Marino Faliero, Doge of Venice in medieval Italy was beheaded and his head

hanged in a public place for staging a coup that was aborted. English traitors especially during the Elizabethan era were mutilated and their heads customarily spiked on London Bridge and other public places. In all these mutilations, other parts of the body were never accounted for. Stray dogs and other scavengers ate them as the case was with Jezebel in 2 Kings 8.

Both head and name are proper national and political identifiers of every individual. So also the name! A head and a name are good identifiers of a person's identity and activities. In modern times, identity documents and political campaign posters bear personal names and portraits. Preserving mutilated remains of an enemy served an ideological purpose of scarring and deterring future oppositions. It also symbolised total subjugation and control of the enemy. In movies about the political history of Uganda, Idi Amin is shown speaking ridiculously to the mutilated heads of his opponents. Preserving names of female politicians in the way they are preserved in the Hebrew Bible narratives merely serves an ideological purpose.

I have argued in this paper that Miriam, Michal, Jezebel and Athaliah are political women. To African postcolonial Bible readers, they are political characters that stand for unconformity, radical activism, dissension, equality and self-reification to lead their people as their male counterparts. Although theirs is leadership based on royalty (and social prestige particularly in the case of Miriam), in their literary form they experience similar chronic maladies of patriarchal stereotype as the modern women whose political participation is based on liberal democracies. They are presented as foreign and aberrant gender in the politics of their time according to the ideological standards of the Hebrew Bible narrator. Their remains in the Hebrew Bible are positioned to ideologically kill off their political significance and portray them as evil women who destabilise the natural order.

The study is contextualised on women and politics in sub-Saharan Africa with Uganda and Kenya as case studies. Both Uganda and Kenya are East African countries, with similar colonial experiences. They are predominantly Christian countries and the Bible is a very significant literature in the lives of people. It is literally the Word of God that does not only prescribe a faith, but a culture, philosophy and ideologies that are perceived as holy and pristine in socio-political intercourse of the people. Though

the recent histories are different between Kenya and Uganda, in both cases the rise in female influence in politics has been paralleled by a rise in linguistic and sometimes physical abuse of female politicians. The similarities between the androcentric cultural worldview of the Bible and the African cultures have fostered a negative attitude against women's influence in national politics. The biblical image of Jezebel is often used as a summary figure of this misogyny. Jezebel, the foreign Canaanite queen turned 'harlot' by the Dtr redactor is used to name a political threat—a foreign gender group infiltrating the political arena in East Africa.

TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Affirmative Action
ACFODE	Action for Development
AIC	African Independent Church
AIM	African Inland Mission
APP	African Peoples' Party
ATR	African Traditional Religion
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia
CMS	Church Missionary Society
CP	Conservative party
CSM	Church of Scotland mission
CUEA	Catholic University of Eastern Africa
DP	Democratic Party
Dtr	Deuteronomist
DYM	Dini ya Musambwa
EAA	East African Association
FBI	Feminist Biblical Interpretation
FDC	Forum for Democratic Change
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FOWODE	Forum for Women in Democracy
GSU	General Service Unite
HB	Hebrew Bible
IBEACo	Imperial British East African Company
JCC	Jerusalem Church of Christ
JPS	Jewish Publication Society
KADU	Kenya African Democratic Union
KANU	Kenya African National Union
KAU	Kenya African Union
KCA	Kikuyu Central Association
KEWOPA	Kenya Women Parliamentary Association
KIM	Kenya Independence Movement
KNP	Kenya National Party

KWPC	Kenya Women's Political Caucus
KY	Kabaka Yekka
LXX	Septuagint
MCA	Mumbi Central Association
MP	Member of Parliament
MT	Masoretic Text
MYWO	Maendeleo ya wanawake Organisation
NARC	National Rainbow Coalition
NAWOU	National Association of Women organisation of Uganda
NCC	National Consultative Council
NCWK	National Council of Women of Kenya
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NIV	New International Version
NRA	National Resistance Army
NRM	National Resistance Movement
NWC	Narc Women caucus
NT	New Testament
ODM	Orange Democratic Movement
OT	Old Testament
PAC	Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada
PNU	Party of National Unity
RC	Roman Catholic
RCs	Resistance Councils
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SDP	Social Democratic Party
UCW	Ugandan Council of Women
UFA	Uganda Federal Alliance
UMCA	University Mission to Central Africa
UNC	Uganda National Congress
UPM	Uganda Patriotic Movement
UWOPA	Uganda Women Parliamentary Association

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PREFACE

During my postgraduate studies in *Bible and Its World* at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, I was privileged to study the Hebrew Bible from its socio-cultural and historical groundings of the ancient Near East. I was taught that the Hebrew Bible in its current form is a historiography, which does not necessarily represent factual historical events of ancient Israel and Judah. I studied about the archaeology and cultures of the ancient Near East, from which I noted great similarities between social life of the Bible world and African traditional religions.

However, what intrigued me was the common motif of negative portrayal of a female gender both in the Bible and contemporary documents. Women are generally secondary to men and they are the cause of evil—always causing man to stray. I realized that this was the same case in Africa, even modern Africa.

What was most interesting to me was the story of Naboth in 1 Kings 21. Guided by Prof. Wayne Horowitz, I studied this passage in relation to Neo-Assyrian commercial documents. Clues emerged from the text that implicated Naboth into violation of legal agreement between him and Ahab, that resulted into his death and the death of his sons (2 Kings 9:26) on charges of blasphemy according to the laws of the time. The ספרים that Jezebel allegedly sent to the nobles denoted a commercial land deed of purchase in the Neo-Assyrian documents.

I was also intrigued by the status of female leadership in the Bible. With few exceptions, women who have challenged male leadership in the Bible have been punished. I felt so sorry when I read about Miriam and Michal. I related their plight to African women who are always “wrong” when in any controversy with men. My study of Naboth’s story had made me have a different picture of Jezebel.

My initial plan was to take a comparative study of the situation of female leadership in any African society and the Bible. I had not realized how significantly the Bible has influenced social life and relations in modern Africa. I was also oblivious about other methodological and theoretical approaches like feminism and postcolonialism in biblical scholarship till I came to the University of Glasgow.

So, I embarked on the exploration of politics and gender dynamics in the Hebrew Bible in relation to the East African countries of Kenya and Uganda; using Miriam, Michal, Jezebel and Athaliah as case studies. At the end of my odyssey, I just

hope that I have added a tiny pole to the building of feminist and postcolonial Bible scholarship. Not that I have something to give or became one of the celebrated scholars in modern history, but I have certainly trekked from the thickets of tropical Africa to open this region of the world to critical Bible scholarship.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A PhD thesis in Biblical Studies is academically, financially, socially and spiritually demanding. I want to thank the individuals, groups of people and organizations that have, at different levels contributed to the entire process of this study.

Prof. Yvonne Sherwood, my principal supervisor has been paramount in informing the process, texture and content of this thesis. Her mentoring and friendly approach bridged the gap that often would exist between a foreign student and a foreign supervisor.

As a mentor she bolstered the pace, motivation and direction of this study. She occasionally threw academic rockets at me, well designed to stimulate my thinking, arguments and communication.

Secondly, I would like to thank members of the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Glasgow and my colleagues for their collegiality, friendship and support that made Glasgow University a good working environment for my thesis. I am in particular indebted to Dr Heather Walton and her colleagues at the Department for making this study possible. I am also very thankful to my colleagues: Samuel Tongue, Anthony Allison and Rev. Malcolm Duff for being there for me in the most difficult moments during this study.

I am indebted to several scholars outside and within the Department of Theology and Religious Studies who read some sections of my research and have offered helpful comments: Dr. Nevada Madhavi, Dr. Sarah Nicholson, Prof. John Riches and Prof Wayne Horowitz; and all those who asked some penetrating questions that helped me to reformulate some of the arguments I presented in this thesis.

Thirdly, this work has been only possible due to the generous support of the men and women of Great Britain who supported me financially. There are no better words to thank them. I am heavily indebted to the Scottish Episcopal Church, the School of Critical Studies and Department of Theology and Religious Studies, the Anglican Church, All Saints Education Trust and the Langham Trust. I hope that I have used the money I have been offered in the best possible way. I am also heavily indebted to Mr Richard Davie, his wife Yvonne and son Adam who offered me a commodious and supportive company that made me feel at home away from home.

Last but not the least, I would like to thank my parents and my son David Williams Wabyanga to whom, I actually dedicate this work, for their endless love and unseasoned support. I thank them for relentless prayers for my wellbeing and success.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis does not include work, forming part of a thesis presented successfully for another degree. I declare that the thesis represents my own work except where referenced to others.

Place: The University of Glasgow

Signature:

Date: October 2011

Name: Kuloba Wabyanga Robert

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1.0 GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The study involves a close reading and analysis of biblical texts in relation to the situation of women in Sub-Saharan Africa,¹ the countries of Uganda and Kenya as case studies. I am concerned with the influence of the hybrid culture produced by African traditional culture and Christianity/the Bible on the status of women in the political arena, with specific reference to female Members of Parliaments (MPs) of Kenya and Uganda. I seek to critically analyse the stories of four Bible women: Miriam, Michal, Jezebel and Athaliah in relation to the cultural milieu of the Bible, and look at how these stories define the position of a woman in national politics in Sub-Saharan Africa and then develop an emancipatory approach by which these texts can be read.

This study is part of the discourse of gender hermeneutics and part of the campaign against gender violence in the Bible and gender violence based on the Bible. The study defines Miriam, Michal, Jezebel and Athaliah as women who have demonstrated leadership potentialities in the patriarchal setting of ancient Israel, but the narrators of the Hebrew Bible have ignored their political contributions on ideological grounds and instead criticised them. The study of the texts employs a combination of approaches with contextual focus on the ancient Near East and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Scholarly works have been carried out extensively on the characters of Miriam, Michal, Jezebel and Athaliah in volumes of theological commentaries, exegeses and hermeneutics. However, have you ever imagined what these women would discuss if they met together over a meal, or a cup of tea? Have you ever wondered what would cause suspicion and anxiety if these women were sighted together in a meeting in a certain place in town? Do you know why the police would call that meeting illegal and unwarranted and would arrest these women for interrogations? Why they would be remanded and denied bail? It would certainly not be theology or religion, but utmost politics, which stands out as an issue of their common interest.

Politics, though central in the Hebrew Bible (HB), is a relatively neglected area of investigation. As Madhavi Nevader has observed, biblical scholarship has had a tendency to ignore the political function of Bible texts and has been inclined to shy away from discussion of biblical notions of politics despite a plethora of material that

¹ Sub-Saharan Africa is here used as a geographical term to describe the region of African continent that lies south of the Sahara Desert. It is a region inhabited by mainly black ethnic groups, with numerous different tribes, languages dialects and cultures; as contrasted from Northern Africa, which is predominantly Arab.

begs evaluation in this light. The Bible author has so often been evaluated as a *homo theologicus* that we have largely overlooked his function as a *homo politicus*.² My approach in the study of these female characters is political. In this study I have argued that Miriam, Michal, Jezebel and Athaliah are prominent politicians in the Hebrew Bible, whose political history has been dimmed and side-lined due to the significance of patriarchal ideology to the narrator.

However, although these women are killed off, the marks of their prominence are still visible within the Hebrew Bible. Though their voices are suppressed, they still whisper and are heard muttering in the literary archives of the Hebrew Bible narratives. They are heard grumbling and bitterly complaining against the literary rendition in which their political legacies have been confined. Their disarticulated stories beg for investigation, analysis and articulation. They helplessly complain against the disarticulated representation and painting of their images to readers. They are not contented with the way written history has tarnished and trivialized their political aura, and given prominence to their male contemporaries. They, like African female politicians, are victims of a negative publicity in the only all-male dominated newspaper—the Bible. They would wish to retell their story and write a fair history that appreciates their efforts in the leadership ramification of their societies.

Though the four figures lived at different times, the narratives give them one common denominator: breaking the rules. They pose a challenge to authority. They are the bad girls of their respective times, which the narratives portray as ungodly, rebellious and illegitimate [politicians]. They stand for antagonism against the establishment—the patriarchy. They destabilize the image of man and rulers—the man as image of God. The audience of the narrators are cautioned about the behaviours of these women for the sake of their own social-religious order.

Most readers of the Hebrew Bible; Jewish and Christians alike approve the way these political characters are presented in the Hebrew Bible: they are evil women because they are antagonistic to the good work of the servants of God by challenging or actually usurping authority from the male appointees of Yahweh. Readers are sympathetic to the narrator's standpoint and tend to believe that the narrator's

² In an academic Paper presented by Dr. Madhavi Nevader, "When Did Yahweh Become God of Israel," in *Biblical Research Seminar* (Glasgow: Theology and Religious Studies, University of Glasgow, 2011-February 7th.).

ideological conviction is what the truth is and what should have been the case. What the narrator approves is what is ideal and what he reprimands is what is wrong. The readers read with what David Clines calls “reading with the grain of the text or reading from *right to left*.”

Clines in his reading of the Ten Commandments, invents a metaphor of reading them from *left to right*. In this metaphor, reading from *right to left* is adopting the ideology inscribed in the text. Literally, reading from *right to left* means falling in with the convention that Hebrew texts are read on that direction; it also signifies an acceptance of convention, and adopting the world of the text, the world and worldview of the author and the original intentions of the text.³ With specific reference to the East African readers of the Bible, the portrayal of Bible female political characters has energised the cultural patriarchal stereotypes against women in political offices.

This study is significantly informed by works of scholars like Phyllis Trible, Grace Janzen, Fokkelien van Dijk-Hemmes, Athalya Brenner, Tinah Pippin, Cheryl Exum, Alice Bach, Carol Meyer, to mention but a few, that seek Bible women buried under the works of patriarchal story tellers of the Bible. My assumption as fore mentioned is that the four female figures of Miriam, Michal, Jezebel and Athaliah were prominent politicians of their time whom the Bible narrators have denigrated though found very difficult to eradicate completely. A critical and open minded reading of the scriptures would hear whispers from these women as they appeal to the cognitive and affective domains of the reader, shouting out in protest against the writer’s misogynistic slurs in the narratives. These are critical instincts in the readers’ mind that ask about value and validity of the information in the narratives. In most cases, readers suppress these whispers or some even don’t hear them. This is because of the colonising effect of the writer’s ideology that has configured readers’ minds to always think that paying attention to these critical instincts is falling prey to the snare of unbelief and human evil.

The study is taken in relation to gender and politics in Uganda and Kenya, with particular reference to female MPs. Uganda and Kenya are East Africa countries and belong to the same historical category of Third World Countries, and part of the margins of the former British colonial empire; still entrapped in an inescapable cobweb of Western imperialism, marginalisation and oppression and patriarchy. Other countries in

³ David J.A. Clines, *Interested Parties: The Ideology of Writers and Readers of the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 26.

the region are Southern Sudan, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi. Kenya and Uganda are separated by the colonial boundary of 1902.

The people of East Africa belong to mainly three ethnic groups and cultures, namely: the Nilotic, Bantu and the Hamitic (Cushitic). The Nilotic are said to have migrated from Southern Sudan into East Africa by 1500 AD, while the Bantu, the earliest migrant group came from the Niger Congo region and had entered into East Africa by 1000BC. The latest wave of Bantu migrants is the Ngoni who escaped from South Africa during the Mfecane between 1800 and 1840. The third group is the Hamitic tribes of Somali and Ethiopic origin. They are relatively few in number and occupy mainly the arid North Eastern parts of Kenya.

These groups are further subdivided into sub-ethnic *families* and tribes. These divisions are mainly due to intermarriages and cultural assimilations during migration processes; in which migrating groups were either assimilated by those they found in place or assimilated them instead.⁴ Due to intermarriages between ethnic groups and cultural assimilations, it is not easy to anthropologically categorise ethnic tribes according to the major ethnic groups. Today, Uganda has about 48 different tribes, while Kenya has as many as 70, which are subdivisions of a single or a combination of two major ethnic groups. The Nilotic ethnic group includes the Luo who occupy the Northern, Western and Eastern Uganda and Western part of Kenya commonly called Nyanza province. Others are the Kalenjin who live in the Great Rift Valley region of Kenya, and the Ateker who live in North Eastern Uganda and North Western Kenya. The Bantu are probably the biggest ethnic group.⁵ In Uganda and Kenya, they occupy the entire interlacustrine region including the Mountain plateaus of Eastern Uganda and Western and Coastal regions of Kenya. They are: Baganda, Banyoro, Gishu, Basoga and Kikuyu. Others are Luyha, Kisii, Akamba, Meru and Mijikenda. The Bantu speak almost similar language, characterised by a common intonation “*ntu*.” They are the first group to come into contact with the Arabs at the Coast of East Africa (from 1000 AD), and through intermarriages (with Arabs), a new breed of people called Swahili was born, and they live in coastal towns of Kenya.

⁴ For instance the Luo migrants who entered Bunyoro region in Western Uganda are said to have been assimilated by the Bantu culturally, while the group that went to Budama assimilated the local Bantu.

⁵ Bantu ethnic group covers almost the entire region of sub-Saharan Africa, including countries like Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Angola, Zambia and South Africa.

Different ethnic tribes have different cultures and traditional religious practices, which are either indigenous or loaned from other ethnic tribes. Africans today would respond to modern controversial issues like feminism, lesbianism and gay relations with remarks as “this is (not) how we do things in Africa!” or affirmatively “that is not African!” to mean that a particular behaviour or action is not normative according to a particular culture.

From a gender point of view, most East African societies are patriarchal. Women, though important and an indispensable mass, are just second to men. In all ethnic groups, cultures dictate that men are superior over women. It is an insult to metaphorically call a man “woman” just as it is a great humiliation for a man to lose to a woman in any public contest. Women are pejoratively thought to be weak and cowardly in character, though whenever they have spoken and acted in public domains, even the strongest men become anxious and insecure. Women have no right to property inheritance; in most incidences a man who had no sons would pass on his wealth to other male relatives but not daughters. In some societies, a widow is to be inherited by relatives of the deceased husband even against her will; and a woman has no right to initiate divorce. In some cultures, a woman marries not an individual but the “entire clan” and even distant relatives of the groom. It was normative for the relatives of the groom especially cousins and even friends to demand sex from a woman married to their kin or kith. Women’s sexuality was also exploited for hospitality purposes; a man would entertain his male guest by freely offering him his bed and wife for sexual indulgence. A woman had no right to refuse, because she belonged to the man. The situation is almost similar to Genesis 19 where Lot offered his daughters to the men of his town for sexual use.

Like in ancient Near Eastern societies, in Africa religious myths, folklores and material language attest to the low status of women. Women are either the genesis of evil or agents of it. Taking the case of Buganda, which belongs to the Bantu ethnic group, death resulted from carelessness of one Nambi, the original woman, wife of Kintu, the original man. Kintu had gone to heaven to get his cow that had gone astray. Guru the god of heaven gave Kintu his daughter Nambi into marriage together with his cow. But before leaving for earth, Guru advised the couple to leave secretly and never to return or else Walumbe (which means death); one of Nambi’s brothers would follow them to the earth and would be killing their children. While on the way, Nambi realised

that she had forgotten millet for chicken, and decided to go back despite the warning (analogous with Lot's wife who looked behind in Genesis 19). It is at this point that Walumbe saw her and secretly followed her to the earth and started killing Nambi and Kintu's children. Guru sent a saviour called Kayikuzi to kill Walumbe. In the process, Kayikuzi commanded Nambi to lock themselves and their belongings into the house while he (Kayikuzi) wages war against Walumbe. After chasing him all over the earth, he finally got him in a hole, but when he was about to kill Walumbe, he was distracted by the goats, which Nambi had unfortunately forgotten outside. Walumbe escaped. Kayikuzi went back to heaven, while Walumbe remained at large on earth causing deaths. This myth is shared among many tribes including the Masai that belongs to the Nilotic ethnic group.

Among the Kikuyu myths, women were the centre of authority for many years, but became domineering and brutal, punishing men for adulterous behaviour while they took multiple husbands. The men conspired to seduce the leading women simultaneously and impregnated them. When they were immobilised at the end of their pregnancies the men staged a coup and the Kikuyu society became patriarchal.⁶

Africans also use proverbs and sayings that demean women. For example, among the Masai, women are wreckers of men: "The prostitute can make you useless"⁷, Women are also thought to be short-sighted: "A woman cannot see her palm."⁸ There is also evidence in the myth about the warrior who was at the edge of betrayal by his sister.⁹ Among the Kikuyu; "Women, like the weather, are unpredictable," "Women have no secure gourds, but only leaking upside down ones;"¹⁰ "Woman's mouth is sometimes covered with a branch,"¹¹ to mean that women cannot be trusted with secrets. They are fond of letting out secrets. It is a common expression in the region to say that "so and so gossips like a woman." This could have been the basis for excluding women

⁶ Kathleen E. Sheldon, *Historical Dictionary of Women in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Historical Dictionaries of Women in the World (Lanham, Md. ; Oxford: Scarecrow Press, 2005), 163.

⁷ A. Ol'oloisolo Massek and J. O. Sidai, *Eneno Oo Lmaasai = : Wisdom of Maasai*, Repr. ed. (Nairobi: Transafrica, 1978), 32.

⁸ Ibid., 29.

⁹ A. C Hollis, *Masai Myths, Tales and Riddles* (New York: Dover Publications, 2003), 4-5.

¹⁰ Njururi Ngumbu, *Gikuyu Proverbs* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1969), 1.

¹¹ G. Barra, *1000 Kikuyu Proverbs: With Translations and English Equivalents* (London: Macmillan, 1960), 92.

from crucial issues like military and political secrets of the society. Among the Acholi of Northern Uganda; “Women have no chiefs,”¹² to mean that women are unruly.

Traditionally, in most cultures like the Kikuyu, Masai and the Kalenjins women have no say in the political administration, and don’t constitute the administrative councils of the society. In some cultures, women are circumcised in order to ensure men’s conjugal security. The philosophy behind female circumcision is that, wives, due to natural urge for sex during ovulation would cheat on their husbands who would be far away either hunting or in war. To reduce the temptation, mutilation of sexually sensitive parts of a female organ was devised. Other tribes, like the Gishu, Kisii, and Akamba circumcise men in order to prepare them for sustained prolonged sexual pleasure. The philosophy behind male circumcision is that a circumcised penis has reduced sensitivity and prolongs sexual intercourse and in the process, a woman would be “satisfied” sexually in order to keep her faithful to her husband. Unlike today where, through research, education and media sexual intercourse has been revolutionarised to ensure sexual pleasure and satisfaction, in the past it was not the case: a man would penetrate a woman whenever he is ready for sex. Due to biological differences that determine sexual impulses in men and women, men would always reach sexual climax at a point when a woman is just beginning to realise the sexual union.

The relationship between female circumcision and male circumcision is that of taming a woman. Reducing a woman’s sexual sensitivity is “dehorning” her sexual impulses, reducing her to a mere object—a punching bag. Reducing a man’s sexual sensitivities is sharpening his longevity during sexual intercourse so as to tame a woman from breaking marital rules.

Religious deities in these ethnic tribes are both male and female. Female deities are either wives or mothers to male deities.¹³ In most of these cultures, when the sex of a deity is mentioned, it is male. Male deities are the only ones revered in national cults while female deities, like their human counterparts ordinarily have domestic rather than communal orientations.¹⁴ Women would consult these female deities on matters of domestic matters like marriage, sexuality and child bearing. This was because in African

¹² Okot p'Bitek, *Acholi Proverbs* (Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya, 1985), 10.

¹³ In Buganda for example, Lubowa, among other deities has a consort, Nalubowa. See Chirstine Obbo, "Healing Cultural Fundamentalism and Syncreticism in Buganda," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 66, no. 2 (1996): 196.

¹⁴ See Marion Kilson, "Women in African Traditional Religions," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 8, no. 2 (1976): 135-136.

cultures, childlessness or giving birth to only girls was blamed on women, but not their husbands.

Dietary rules on certain food stuffs were restrictive mainly against women. For example, among the Gishu and Luyha, women were not allowed to eat chicken, eggs and some rare type of game. This is perhaps related to Marvin Harris' analysis that male supremacism is caused by an imbalance between protein sources and population density.¹⁵ It was probably due to inadequate protein supply, that women were denied recourse to limited proteins that could be available. In most of African cultures, men coined myths to protect their dietary gains over women. For example, a myth that if a woman eats chicken, she would lose her hair or develop skin irritation is so common among the Bantu ethnic tribes.

Special behaviours were expected of girls, which were not the same for boys. In Buganda, a girl has to kneel before greeting or serving foods and drinks as a sign of respect. Among the Gishu of Eastern Uganda, girls were not to sit on chairs as men, but down on mats. Women were to keep their virginity until marriage while boys had an allowance to exercise their sexual prowess as a sign of strength. Girls who lost their virginity before marriage caused disgrace to their families. In some tribes like the Bakiga of Western Uganda, such girls would be killed. Virginity was important for socio-economic reasons; a girl who married while still virgin would attract high bride price pay to her family. There was however no checks and balances imposed upon males who would commit sexual offences like rape. A boy who begot a child before or outside marriage was instead praised.

1.1 Kenya and Uganda as British spheres of influence

Between 13th and 18th Centuries AD, relatively powerful states emerged in East Africa. These included the Buganda, Bunyoro, Toro, Busoga and Wanga kingdoms among others. These kingdoms were founded by both the Bantu and Nilotic ethnic tribes. A case in point is Bunyoro and Buganda: the founder of Bunyoro Kitara is said to have been Isingoma Mpuga Rukidi, a twin brother of Kato Kimera (Luos), a co-founder with Kintu (a Bantu) of the Kingdom of Buganda. The formation of these political kingdoms came with the institutions of queen-mother and princesses in which women played a significant, albeit background roles in influencing the political trends and

¹⁵ Quoted in Peggy Reeves Sanday, *Female Power and Male Dominance: On the Origins of Sexual Inequality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 172-174.

appointment of heirs to political thrones. In some kingdoms like Buganda, queen mothers however played very significant political roles, even independent from the King. She appointed her own ministers and owned land in every part of the kingdom.¹⁶

Kenya became a British protectorate in 1895 and a colony in 1920. The acquisition of Kenya was mainly because of the British interests in Uganda and Zanzibar. Britain was interested in Uganda because of its fertile soils for cash crop production. Zanzibar had enjoyed a reputation of being a trading centre for slaves and ivory and by the mid 19thC was flourishing with plantation agriculture especially the growth of cloves. Kenya was a narrow strip that was sandwiched between two spheres of British interest, with limited resources like fertile areas for arable farming. A huge part of the region, notably north and north eastern are arid, though proudly inhabited by marauding and ubiquitous warrior groups like the Masai, Turkana and the Somalis. The land at the coast of East Africa had long been under the Sultan of Zanzibar who owned almost the whole of the East African coastal towns.¹⁷

At the time of scramble and partition of Africa by European powers, two major powers were interested in East Africa: the British and Germans,¹⁸ who eventually shared the region under the Anglo-Germany treaty of 1886, in which the land between River Ruvuma and Tana was divided by a line from Umba River to the south eastern shore of Lake Victoria. The area south of the line became the Germany territory, while the territory north of the line became the British sphere of influence.¹⁹

The first British imperialistic contact with Zanzibar and Uganda was through William Mackinnon who founded the British East Africa Association, that later became the Imperial British East African Company (IBEACo) by charter in 1888. IBEACo was given the duty by the British Government of creating a territorial expansion from the East African Coast into the interior so as to tap the land resources of Uganda. In so doing, the company officials started treaty signing with African chiefs, asking for their

¹⁶ See; Hally Hanson, "Queen Mothers and Good Government in Buganda: The Loss of Women's Political Power in the 19th Century East Africa," in *Women in African Colonial Histories*, ed. Susan Geiger, Jean Marie Allman, and Nakanyike Musisi (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 221-222.

¹⁷ Benson Okello, *A History of East Africa*, Fountain Uce Study-Books (Kampala, Uganda: Fountain Publishers, 2002), 155.

¹⁸ There had been attempts by King Leopold of Belgium to acquire East Africa under the guise of stopping slave trade in Congo; he wanted to establish routes from the East African coast into the interior, but on learning of the British interests he decided to penetrate Congo from the Atlantic Ocean.

¹⁹ Okello, 155-156.

friendship and hospitality.²⁰ The company was also charged with the responsibility of constructing a railway line to link this remote, but resourceful part of Africa to the coastal sea port of Mombasa.

Christian Missionary activities were already taking place in Uganda. Church Missionary Society (CMS) and Roman Catholic (RC) Missionaries had arrived in the area in 1877 and 1879 respectively. They came at the request of the Kabaka (king) Mutesa I of Buganda, through H.M Stanley to teach his people Western values. During the reign of Kabaka Mwanga (who become King in 1888), there developed conflicts between religious groups. Anglicans vs. Catholics on one hand and Christians vs. Moslems²¹ on the other, in the events resulted into civil wars of early 1890s in Uganda. Fredrick Lugard who had been the IBEACo Military Administrator of Uganda from 1890 was able to defuse the conflict in favour of the CMS Anglican missionaries. Kabaka Mwanga was overthrown and replaced by a puppet king called Daudi Chwa. Anglicanism became a religion of the establishment, which eventually shaped the political landscape of Uganda. While administering Uganda, Lugard surveyed and mapped a large part of the country which included areas around Mt. Rwenzory and Lake Albert on the border with Democratic Republic of Congo. He returned to England in 1892 and praises his findings in Uganda as a bonanza to the British Crown to the then Prime Minister William Gladstone and his cabinet. As a result Uganda was declared a British protectorate in 1894.

Following the collapse of the IBEACo, Britain took direct responsibility of East African territory. In 1896, the British started building what they called the Uganda-Railway as a nexus between the interior (Uganda) and the coast. Uganda then extended territorially to include east side of the Rift Valley, which constitute areas of Busia, Bungoma, Kisumu, Eldoret Nakuru and Naivasha. The railway reached Kisumu on the shore of Lake Victoria in 1901. Coastal territories which IBEACo had acquired from the Sultan of Zanzibar like Mombasa, Taita, Kilifi and Malindi together with the immediate hinterland were declared as part of the East African British sphere of influence in 1895. But because the British Commissioner in Uganda was so busily pre-occupied within

²⁰ One of the stipulations of the Berlin conference of 1884 on the partition and scramble of Africa was that, for a European power to have legitimate claims over an African territory, that power should have signed a number of treaties with the African chiefs and kings in the area being claimed.

²¹ By mid nineteenth century, Islam had also been introduced in Buganda by the Arab traders like Ahmad bin Ibrahim, from the coastal state of Zanzibar. However, Unlike Christianity, Islam had by the close of the Century had a very marginal impact upon the people of Uganda.

Uganda and geographically hamstrung from exercising effective occupation and control of the coast and its immediate hinterland (including the area west of the Rift valley), Kenya was established as the second British East African Protectorate with its capital at Nairobi.²² The boundary between the two initially ran on the east side of the Rift Valley. In 1902, it was shifted westwards to the vicinity of Mt. Elgon. Areas of Busia, Bungoma, Kisumu, Eldoret Nakuru and Naivasha were now in the political map of the Kenyan Protectorate. This became the international boundary between Kenya and Uganda to date. The boundary was drawn to ensure that the marauding Masai lay within only one British protectorate and that the original Uganda Railway was the responsibility of only one administration. It was also aimed at enriching the New East African Protectorate (Kenya) with land and human resources: the areas annexed like the Nyanza, Elgon and Rift valley uplands had fertile soils and supported a high population. The region also had hitherto fallow and virgin forest reserves that would later be useful for colonial exploitation.²³

In both colonies, the British used indirect rule²⁴ (ruling through African chiefs). The two colonies were divided into administrative units like provinces, regions and districts, counties and sub-counties as well as parishes and villages. African soldiers were recruited from the local populations and trained as armies and policemen (askaris) to help British generals in enforcing law and order. In recruiting African administrators and security askaris, the British followed the criteria that favoured only men against women as it emphasised physical strength and height. Only two women ever served under colonial rule as administrators: Mang'ana Ogonja Nyar Ugu was the first woman to serve as a colonial chief in Western Kenya and Eiokalaïne O-M'barugu was an assistant chief in Eastern Kenya.²⁵

The exploitation of resources varied between the two colonies; in Kenya there was settler farming, which came with land alienation and forced labour, while in Uganda preference was given to peasantry farming where Africans grew cash crops like

²² D.A Low, "British East Africa: The Establishment of British Rule," in *History of East Africa*, ed. Vincent Harlow et al. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 5.

²³ Ibid., 20.

²⁴ In areas where traditional political institutions did not exist, the British created some, through which they administered Africans. A case in point is the creation of Laibon among the Masai.

²⁵ "Women Achievers Programme", WERK

http://werkenya.org/werk1/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=71:women-achievers-programme1&catid=1:latest-news&Itemid=53 (accessed 11th February 2009).

coffee and cotton on small peasantry farm holdings. These variations in the use of land and human resources of Africans are responsible for the varied methods employed in the fight for independence between Uganda and Kenya. Kenya's fight was significantly militant and brutal in which both men and women were involved with the concerted aim of chasing away the colonialists and regaining land and freedom from forced labour. Lives were lost on both sides, Africans and Europeans. In Uganda, independence only involved negotiations, in which men like Milton Obote played key roles and eventually received political regalia of Uganda's independence.

The colonial and missionary attitude to African cultures and particularly the attitude to girls' education was negative in both Uganda and Kenya. The education introduced was to brainwash Africans from their "diabolical beliefs and practices." Education for men was given high priority by the colonialists at the expense of women's education. The men's curriculum was enriched as compared to the curriculum for girls, which prepared them for future roles as wives and mothers. Schools were unevenly distributed, with the highest concentration being in areas where whites settled, like Nairobi, Nakuru, Thika and Fort Hall (Muranga) among others in Kenya; and Kampala, Mukono, Entebbe, Mpigi and Wakiso areas of Uganda. Moreover, most schools were established and managed by rival missionary groups, which never admitted students from different Christian faiths or those who had not converted to Christianity at all. The inferior curriculum, inconsistent distribution of schools and discriminatory admission policies later affected the political outlook of Uganda and Kenya. Women were the most affected since majority of them had no good educational background to compete for political offices by independence. Only men had an upper hand both in negotiating for independence and controlling political power in independent East African states.

Today, doctrines of liberal democracy and adult suffrage have been adopted. Multiparty democracy is practiced, with elections taking place after every five years for presidential, parliamentary and local councils. Women's political journey has not been an easy one, though they significantly play roles as voters and election candidates. There are several women organisations in each country, which sensitize women on their rights and roles, socially, politically and economically. In Kenya such organisations are under the umbrella body of National Council of Women of Kenya (NCWK), while in Uganda there is the National Association of Women organisation of Uganda (NAWOU). These are important fora for articulating women's issues. Women

parliamentarians have also formed parliamentary associations in their respective countries as another front for fighting for women's political rights. These are Uganda Women Parliamentary Association (UWOPA) and Kenya Women Parliamentary Association (KEWOPA).

Both Kenya and Uganda have adopted Affirmative Action (AA) to increase women's representation in parliament. Uganda was first to embrace AA as per the 1995 National Constitution. Before the August 2010 constitution, Kenya had only 18 women elected in parliament as compared to over 112 elected female legislators in Uganda (there was also a significant representation in other neighbouring countries like Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania). With the new constitution in Kenya, AA gives hope to Kenya's next Parliament to increase numerical representation of women on the floors of the National Assembly.

Indeed, one of the problematics of AA in these countries is mere numerical representation than real women empowerment and emancipation. The timing of AA in these two countries is circumstantial. Both governments seemed to have used women for political consolidation, depending on the political circumstances that existed. Kenya, which had since independence enjoyed a relatively peaceful political climate, (with the exception of the turmoil of 1982), found it possible and necessary to control women activities with lip service in order to win support of women who were not radical, and at the same time scale down the radical figures without any political or military threat. Kenya, especially under Daniel Arab Moi also employed very harsh measures against political opposition, which discouraged many women from joining politics. However, to day situations have changed. Significant numbers of women have acquired higher levels of education that has empowered them with knowledge about liberal democracy and politics and human rights awareness. Ignoring such a mass of people would be detrimental to any regime. But, disappointingly, six months after the promulgation of the Kenyan constitution, gender biasness was felt during the controversial nominations for offices of Attorney General, Chief Justice, Director of Public Prosecutions and Director of Budgets by President Mwai Kibaki. The President did not include any woman on the list he presented before parliament for approval. The leadership exhibited what one would call "the old wine in the new battles." The list of nominees was highly criticised by women human rights bodies and was eventually rejected by the parliamentary committees on grounds of constitutional anomalies.

Uganda, on the other hand experienced greater intervals of political turmoil, characterised by political unpopularity of regimes, military coups and guerrilla warfare from independence to 1986. Mr Museveni's approach was to include women in his government as a way of building a political electorate, and legitimise his military government on the international scene. Museveni could have known that women constitute the highest number of potential voters in an election; and by including them in his government, he would be in a good position to control women's constituency.

1.2.0 Methodological and theoretical considerations

In this study, I am reading the Bible against the ideology of its writers and the readers who adhere approvingly to Bible narratives. The definitions of ideology are diverse. But in this project I will employ Yvonne Sherwood and David Clines' definitions of the term ideology. According to Sherwood, ideology refers to the ideas that help to legitimate a dominant political power.²⁶ In the same sense Clines define ideology as ideas that serve the interest of a particular group especially a dominant group, and ideas that are wrongly passed off as natural, obvious or commonsensical.²⁷ Ideologies can be communal, inherited or acquired from other people. Ideologies are always thought of as natural and obvious by the adhering individual or group, which is always never aware of what and how much is taken for granted.²⁸

The writers of the biblical histories themselves had an ideological motivation, which controls the exposition of events. However, as Clines has observed, it is not their ideological formation that is a problem. The real problem is created by those modern readers who are so susceptible to the biblical ideology that they themselves cannot allow "a history writing which leaves theological preoccupation out of account."²⁹ As Giovanni Garbini has said, the ideology that distorts reality is the ideology of certain readers of the Hebrew Bible, namely theologians who masquerade as historians.³⁰

Hebrew Bible writers had a case to put and an argument to advance. The name for their case, their argument, their position is their ideology. Their text is a realization of their ideology and a performance of their investment in their ideology. Their ideology

²⁶ Yvonne Sherwood, *The Prostitute and the Prophet : Hosea's Marriage in Literary-Theoretical Perspective* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 25.

²⁷ Clines, 10.

²⁸ Ibid., 12.

²⁹ Ibid., 14.

³⁰ Giovanni Garbini, *History and Ideology in Ancient Israel* (London: SCM, 1988), 2-3;174.

is inscribed in their texts. The Bible is therefore their way of thinking and speaking ideologically.³¹ Readers too have ideological investment in what they choose to read, how they incorporate or fail to incorporate what they read into their own structure of opinions, how they report on what they have read and how they recommend or insist to others that they read the same works.³²

Clines further opines that writers and readers alike are, on the whole, not casual, disinterested bystanders to their own activity, but promoters of their own ideological causes as they write and they read.³³ Ideologies are not just sets of ideas, but ideas that influence people's action, and so the relations among people in the world. Since there is always a dissymmetry of power in relations between people and groups of people, an ideology tends to support and enhance the power of its adherents.³⁴

There is always a tendency of concealment (deliberate or unconscious) by the ideologues of the motivation or rationale (in part or whole) of what they are saying. On the surface their texts lay claim to coherence and rationality, and they give the appearance of sincerity and either moral fervour or objectivity. But beneath the surface there are issues of power, of self-identity and security, of group solidarity, of fear and desire, of need and greed that have also played a role in the production of the text, sometimes a leading role.³⁵

This study names the ideology of the narrator and reader as patriarchy. Patriarchy is from a Greek word Πατριάρχης, which according to Strongs Greek Lexicon is a compound word formed from πατριᾶ (paternal descent) and ἄρχω (to be first in political rank or power). It is closely related to πατριότης, derived from πατρίς, which means fatherland. Πατριότης entered into the English language as patriotism, which is a synonym to nationalism. Both patriotism and nationalism stand for devotion to one's country or land. Patriots or nationalists defend the integrity and interests of their countries. In this study, I define patriarchy functionally as a system of government dominated by males, with one as a supreme. In the HB, the land is for men, the land of the forefathers; it is given by the supreme God, Yahweh. Both the land and its occupants are Yahweh's. The men are appointed as Kings by Yahweh himself as His custodians.

³¹ Clines, 24.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

He assigns them with responsibilities of keeping justice, cultic purity and protecting the political and cultural integrity and interests of the land. God Himself is the Supreme King over the people and the land. He reserves the powers to appoint and dismiss his subjects (kings) the way He feels fit. The relationship between Yahweh, Kings and the people is pyramidal and hierarchical in design, with women and children being at the bottom of the pyramid or hierarchy.

Accordingly, the characters under study are political anomalies to the narrators. Significantly, though the HB is penned and preserved as essentially a patriarchal book, the narrators did not completely eliminate female figures from their narratives, but preserved them skilfully and strategically in scenes that portray them as political anomalies in contention against the establishment—the male authority.

The Bible plays an important role in African lives. Stories contained therein are perceived by readers (both men and women) as pristine and ideal human cultural heritage. Reading of the texts is done approvingly, giving credence to the ideological standpoint of the narrator. This kind of reading is dangerous to the faculties of thought, feeling and judgment because they enslave the reader to the ideology of the narrator and creates a psychic conflict in a reader; a conflict between the unconscious desire to critique the narrative and the fear of daring to commit sin by questioning the authority.

The contextual study of Miriam, Michal, Jezebel and Athaliah is done from the point of view of postcolonial and feminist literary theories. My assumption is that orthodox readerships or reading from *right to left* reinforces supremacy of one gender over another in competitive politics. It imposes the colonizing ideology of the writer upon the reader on one hand and reinforces and concretizes the ideology of the reader on the other hand.

As in all the Majority World, in Africa there are so far three stages of Bible scholarship in history: In the first stage of history it is a colonial tool by which Western colonialists colonized, exploited and underdeveloped Africa. In the second stage, the Bible gave a redemptive window against colonialism and oppression. Africans used the same Bible used to colonize them against the colonizers and gained political and cultural independence. But whereas there is no more direct colonial rule in Africa today, Africa still battles with the monstrous effects of colonialism, which include Neo-colonialism, dictatorship, underdevelopment, poverty and patriarchy. These are

dehumanizing monsters, which leads to the third stage of Bible scholarship—postcolonial Bible interpretation. This calls for a transformative readership of the text.

Patriarchy and its social structures that define parameters and rules for the behaviours of different genders shall constitute an important concept in this study. African cultures, though diverse as the tribes, have one common denominator: patriarchy. Power is in the hands of men who have hitherto enjoyed nobility status in society as chiefs, clan and family heads, heirs of family property, local council members and decision makers. Women are not supposed to be heads or leaders over men or become heirs of family wealth or make decisions that affect an entire society. Ironically, whereas our Bible characters' political context is feudal monarchism (as also some African pre-colonial women) with strong self-regenerated patriarchal structures, modern female politicians are in a liberal democratic political context which advocate for equality of political participation and representation for all. Due to issues of power, greed, self-identity and security, African patriarchal sentiments flare up when a female figure appears on the political platform. The Bible is always a point of reference against women's political participation. In the Bible, an African finds his/her patriarchal cultural ideology affirmed. The Bible in this case ordains patriarchy as holy human relationship and influences people's dispositions on political legitimacy of a female gender. Readers who encounter the ideologically tarnished remains of Miriam, Jezebel or Athaliah find a problem with women in power. Stories and images of these female politicians raise questions of legitimacy in leadership roles.

The rise of women in African competitive politics has come as a challenge to African patriarchal heritage. It is a foreign gender that has infiltrated the domain of men. This has resulted into violence against women in form of linguistic misogynistic jargons, physical violence, psychological violence and domestic violence. Some female politicians have been called or likened to the biblical Jezebel. The African media, which represent ideological values and interests of the African society, further hasten the dissemination of demeaning, patronizing, stereotypical and overtly hostile reports about women politicians, which further reinforce the ideals of gender hierarchy in patriarchal African.

1.2.1 Research problem

Promoting gender equality and empowering women is one of the eight Millennium Development Goals adopted by the UN in 2000, with the set targets as 2015. Women in Sub-Saharan Africa have been encouraged to join electoral politics. The response has been massive in some countries but winning political seats is still limited to men as losing is to women. Some countries have adapted Affirmative Action (AA) as a way of encouraging more women into political participation. All women who join politics either by direct route or AA face similar structural problems. Modern Africa is a product of Colonialism, Christianity and African cultures. Bible is significantly an authoritative text, whose cultural ideologies are viewed by the readers as divine by Africans. The Bible's existence in Africa has had a profound influence on African society for donkey's years. It has led to the emergency of hybrid culture that regulate gender roles (among other aspects of life), and created a socio-political environment that promotes gender inequality. This ideological environment is inimical to full emancipatory mission and an impediment to full and free female political participation. Today, Women emancipation and values related to feminism are perceived foreign and unafrican.

1.2.2 Research questions

This study attempts to investigate the following questions: What is common between the gender ideologies of the Bible-writer and traditional Africa? What was the political significance of female biblical figures, notably Miriam, Michal, Jezebel and Athaliah? How do the stories of these women mirror and resonate with the status of women in Sub-Saharan Africa? What message do these stories have for the African female politician? How did the Bible end up as an Africa book? How should we read these Bible women into the African situation?

1.2.3 Research hypothesis

The ideology of the Hebrew Bible gives prominence to male leadership against female politicians. Political roles of women like Miriam, Michal, Jezebel and Athaliah who have either challenged male authority or taken forefront political roles within the Israelite community have not only been ignored, but their images distorted, tarnished, silenced and killed off. This ideology has influenced and energized African patriarchal traditions against women of political ambitions.

1.2.4 Aims and objectives of the study

The broader aim of the study is to redefine the emancipatory tradition of biblical hermeneutics; challenging gender restrictions of political leadership to males against female figures as cultural and ideological rather than universal and divine.

Specifically, the main objectives are:

To reconfigure and reassess the political images and importance of each one of these four women within their socio-political traditions

To examine the influence of orthodox readership of Bible texts on African patriarchal stereotypes

To examine the contextual relevancy of the Bible's female political characters to political and gender issues in East Africa

1.2.5 Methodology

The following are the methodological and analytical approaches taken in this study:

- 1) Historical approach: In this approach, the study focuses on the history of colonial and missionary enterprises in East Africa. Detailed attention is given to the history and influence of the Bible in the lives of people, specifically the vernacularization and eventual africanisation of the Bible. The histories of women in East African politics and women in the ancient Near East is also presented. The tools used under this approach are library textbooks, internet materials, newspapers and other related media.
- 2). Sociological approach: The study focuses on cultural dynamic of gender relations in East Africa and in the Bible world. The tools used here are: comparative analysis of African culture and the cultures of Ancient Israel and its contemporary ancient Near East; observations and oral interviews (on the subject of gender, power and culture in East Africa), with University students, professors, clergy and lay people.
- 3). Close reading of the Bible: In this study I am taking a close reading of the stories of the four women characters, with the aim of reconstructing their political images. Needless to say, I am reading from the original Hebrew texts. I have used three strategies: reading from *left to right* (reading *against the grain*), defragmenting characters, and fiction. Reading from *left to right* is David Clines' strategy, which he calls a quantum leap from the traditional approaches as historical criticism, form

criticism and redaction criticism. It is an approach that directly confronts questions of value and validity.³⁶ It is a reading by way of critique, which is using the standards and moral values that come into play when reading other literatures like newspapers, essays or novels. In reading any of these literatures, Clines observes, we get engaged as thinking, feeling, judging persons, asking questions as: Is this true? Is it the case? Can I accept it? Will I have to change if I do accept it?³⁷ It would be interesting to imagine how different these stories would sound if one read them from *left to right* or *against the grain*; in the same way as how we would wish to read about Jezebel from the standpoint of a Sidonian narrator, or the story of Athaliah from the perspective of the house of Omri, or how the story of Esther would be told from the Persian theological and ideological standpoint. It would be interesting to imagine what each of the four women would say in a personal interview concerning their work and predicaments.

However, aware of the fact that, as Carol Meyer observes, the Bible is a biased informant in reconstructing the history of women in ancient Israel, Clines' approach is not enough to achieve the desired goal. The Bible was written almost entirely by males: The Pentateuch is in its final redaction a product of priestly activity and only men were priests. Most of the historical books are the works of male literary elites and bureaucrats.³⁸ There is a social distance of females from the makers and shapers of Israelite political history. With the exception of Ruth and Esther, whose information makes book-length narratives, no other female characters in the Hebrew canon dominate the narrative scene for more than one chapter. Information about women politicians like Miriam, Michal, Jezebel and Athaliah is fragmented across a number of chapters and books of the Hebrew canon. Male characters on the other hand have been written about at length; with characters like David, Solomon, and Jehu among others receiving a fair degree of the narrator's sympathies and a well-balanced critique.³⁹

The Hebrew Bible by its very nature is largely concerned with public and/or national life. For most of Israelite history, public life was almost entirely male life. Israel's very existence, in the much fought-over territory of Iron Age (1200-587 BCE) Palestine, was contingent upon military and political manipulation. The army was a

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 27.

³⁸ Carol Meyers, "Women and the Domestic Economy of Early Israel," in *Women In the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Alice Bach (New York: Routledge, 1999), 34.

³⁹ This does not however obscure the fact that the depiction of the male characters is subject to ideological factors.

male institution, as were the political and government bodies. With the public sector being almost exclusively male, the chief public document (the Bible) was inevitably the result of the male literary and chronistic activity.⁴⁰ Biblical literature thus was produced by and for an androcentric community. Women in the Bible are male constructs. They are the creations of androcentric male narrators, they reflect androcentric ideas and they serve androcentric interests.⁴¹ Consequently, as Cheryl Exum has observed, women in these narratives are minor characters in the stories of men. Few stories of women that appear in the Bible are part of the more cohesive stories of their fathers, husbands and sons, which Exum calls “fragments of the larger story that biblical scholarship has traditionally taken as the *story*.”⁴² Women’s story is condensed in the Bible, which makes the Bible in its patriarchal outlook, also a women’s cultural heritage.

Exum argues that so long as we remain within the boundaries of the literary text itself, the study of women in ancient literature cannot become anything other than the study of men’s views of women. Exum advises that the first step in constructing versions of women’s stories from the submerged strains of their voices in men’s stories scholars should subvert the men’s stories by stepping outside the androcentric ideology of the biblical text.⁴³ Exum’s view suggests the use of creativity and extra-biblical sources alongside the Bible to creatively reclaim the image of Bible female politician.

Our second methodological strategy therefore is what Exum would probably call *defragmenting women*.⁴⁴ This is a reading that pieces together the Bible’s fragmented stories of Miriam, Michal, Jezebel and Athaliah in order to create a holistic image of them. In order to reconstruct the political Gestalt of the four female politicians, a lot of borrowing and transfer of knowledge is very important, mainly from archaeological sources, history of the contemporary ancient Near East and to some extent Midrashim. Information from other ancient Near Eastern Kingdoms like Assyria, Edom, Egypt, Babylon, Moab, Tyre and Sidon whose political structures informed the political outlook of ancient Israel and Judah (see 1 Samuel 8:6,19-20) is very vital in our bid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ J. Cheryl Exum, *Fragmented Women : Feminist (Sub)Versions of Biblical Narratives* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1993), 10.

⁴² Ibid., 9.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 42-43;44. Cheryl in defragmenting Michal presents the whole story from her family context mentioning details of her family members before she was declared childless.

I am also using fiction as a tool to give literary characters under study a voice, by creatively imagining what these women would say in a mock interview. This is part of the emerging trend that seeks to reclaim biblical women and their experiences. Scholars like Eleonar Ferris Beach and Athalya Brenner have effectively employed this approach and fictitiously given various biblical women characters a voice.⁴⁵ I am assuming the role of a sympathiser to bring out the untold story of these women. I am interviewing the literary characters so to speak, basing on their reconstructed socio-political environment in ancient Near East. The “interview dialogue” is situated in the study as a preamble or snapshot to the detailed close reading of texts. The wording of the interview questions and the responses given are greatly informed by the socio-political realities of the contemporary ancient Near East and the prisms of modern feminist theory of Bible hermeneutics.

4). African postcolonial biblical criticism (approaches): This approach focuses on contextual study of the Bible. Questions addressed relate to the relevancy of the Bible texts above to women (of Africa). In this section, effort is made to seek liberating ways of reading the Bible women into the African situation, and reading the situation of African female politicians into the Bible. The tools used here are contextual Bible reading approach which is architecture of two African biblical scholars--Professors Gerald West and Justin Ukpong who advocate doing biblical studies with ordinary people. By ordinary people, they mean the poor, the oppressed, the underprivileged, and the untrained in the art of biblical interpretation. Professor Ukpong calls this reading “Inculturation Hermeneutics”⁴⁶ while Gerald West calls it “Contextual Bible reading.”⁴⁷ This hermeneutics “seek to make any community of ordinary people and their socio-cultural context the subject of interpretation of the Bible.”⁴⁸ This approach involves African socio-cultural and religious institutions, practices and thought systems; making the study and interpretation of the Bible a reflection concerns, values and interests of

⁴⁵ Athalya Brenner, *I Am...: Biblical Women Tell Their Own Stories* (Fortress Press, 2004), Eleanor Ferris Beach, *The Jezebel Letters* (Fortress Press, 2005).

⁴⁶ Justin Ukpong, "Inculturation Hermeneutics: An African Approach to Biblical Interpretation," in *The Bible in a World Context: An Experiment in Contextual Hermeneutics*, ed. Walter Dietrich and Ulrich Luz (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2002), 17-33.

⁴⁷ Gerald O. West, *Contextual Bible Study* (Pietermaritzburg, SA.: Cluster, 1993). See also Gerald O. West, "Local Is Lekker, but Ubuntu Is Best: Indigenous Reading Resources from South African Perspective," in *Vernacular Hermeneutics: The Bible and Postcolonialism*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 37, 38.

⁴⁸ Ukpong, 18.

discrete African communities.⁴⁹ In this approach, a biblical scholar sits down with ordinary people and they study the Bible without directing the reading. The trained biblical scholar reads as part of the community and only facilitates the reading process.

I visited the East African countries of Kenya and Uganda in the course of this study. I took a contextual Bible study with students of Uganda Christian University, following the paradigms of Gerald West and Justin Ukpong. Participants in my study were mainly graduate African students, some of whom were serving as teachers of Religious Education in Ugandan schools, and Church Ministers and ordinands in the Anglican church of Uganda. We read stories of Miriam (Numbers 12:1-16; 20:1), Jezebel (1 Kings 21:1-17, 2 Kings 9:30-37) and finally Athaliah (2 Kings 11). Time would not allow us to read Michal in 2 Samuel 6:15-23.

1.2.6.0 Theoretical framework of the study

This study is informed by Postcolonial Bible interpretation and feminist theoretical paradigms in biblical interpretation.

1.2.6.1 Postcolonial biblical criticism

Postcolonial biblical criticism is a branch of postcolonial theory. Postcolonialism arise from the fact that much of the world today is a world of inequality, and much of the difference falls across the broad division between people of the West and those of the non-west. This division between the rest and the West was made by colonialism in the 19thC when European powers controlled the entire world. Colonial and imperial rule was legitimised by anthropological theories which increasingly portrayed the peoples of the colonised as inferior, childlike, or feminine, incapable of looking after themselves and requiring the paternal rule of the West for their own best interests and in order to develop. The land and the populations of the colonised world were feminised and hence raped, exploited and abused by the colonising powers. All the people of the conquered territories were made subjects of their colonial masters. The basis of such anthropological theories was the concept of race: whites versus the coloured races. White culture was regarded as the basis for ideas of legitimate government, law, economics, science, language, music, art and literature (civilisation).⁵⁰ However the

⁴⁹ Gender and power struggle, however cuts across variegates of African communities and social groups in Sub-Saharan Africa. People read the same Bible and emerge from the same patriarchal African heritage.

⁵⁰ Robert J.C Young, *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 3.

structure and system of colonial governments were porous, permitting male subjects into positions of responsibility and not their female subjects. This permeability of colonial systems to only men is what later defined the leadership outlook of former colonies from the latter half of the 20thC to date.

From the East African perspective, postcolonial theory stems from the background that Western Imperialism and colonialism brought political structures and new religious beliefs and practices into Africa in the 19thC. The Berlin conference of 1884, tabled by Otto von Bismarck issued a list of guidelines and procedures to be followed in dividing Africa. After the conference, the delegates had adopted what was termed as the Doctrine of Effective Occupation, which required that European powers establish political and social structures in their African areas of interests. In the end, Britain gained control of Uganda and Kenya (and other countries in Central, West and South Africa), as Germany colonised Tanganyika (and other countries in Central and Southwest Africa). The German colony in East Africa, that later became Tanzania was transferred to Britain after World War 1 as per the terms of the Versailles treaty of 10th Jan. 1920. Britain established socio-political structures which later informed the socio-political infrastructure and orientations in post-independence East Africa. This orientation has favoured men and reinforced patriarchal monopoly of political leadership.

I strongly agree with Musa W. Dube in her argument that the arrival of the Bible in the hands of the European brought imperial subjugation, which converted black Africans' spaces and minds into white European constructs. That colonialism involved a complex network of moulding African minds and space according to and for the material benefits of the West,⁵¹ is uncontested reality. Christianity and imperialism ensnared African minds to think that their history was dominated by savage ungodly cultures and practices. The missionary and colonialist were therefore sent by God to liberate Africans from the wrath of God. Acceptance of the biblical God went hand in hand with accepting the Bible culture and Western ways of worship, culture, names and lifestyle as if Yahweh was European.

These teachings, according to postcolonial theorists like Frantz Fanon instilled into an African an inferiority feeling that before colonialism, their history was

⁵¹ Musa W. Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2000), 19-20.

dominated by savagery and that if the colonialist and missionary were to leave they would fall back into 'barbarism'.⁵² It alienated Africans from their own egos, and self-realisation, creating a cultural vacuum about their past and present. Today an African lives in cultural quandary where he/she tries to mimic the West on one hand and remain African on the other.

Postcolonialism as a literary theory is also based on an understanding that African leaders who inherited political power from colonialists have failed to dismantle colonial institutions and infrastructures that continue to demean African cultural, political, economic and social consciousness. The repressive colonial ideals are kept to safeguard political interests, identities, security and greed for supremacy. The regimes are therefore characterised by dictatorship, corruption, sexism, tribalism and power mongering.

Former colonial powers continued to influence political decisions in Africa even after Independence. Any country that had the nerve to resist its former colonial master, as Robert J. C. Young puts it, does so at its peril.⁵³ Most African governments that positioned themselves politically against Western control have suffered military interventions by the West against them in the form of sponsored military coups. There were numerous coups and attempted assassinations of critical political leaders in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, which were believed to have had Western influence. For instance in 1971, Britain is said to have influenced Idi Amin Dada in Uganda to overthrow the government of Milton Obote who had become so critical of Britain, and was bent towards communism. Amin later became a dictator, killing thousands of people and driving the growing country to the worst extremes of political and economic degeneration. This was the time when it was official to be corrupt by any public servant in Uganda. All these happened at the expense of political stability, maturity and leverage for equal participation as former masters always aimed at insinuating strong and powerful military officials against the sitting presidents. Worth noting is that only men dominated higher military ranks. These were the colonial armies that had been

⁵² Frantz Fanon and Constance Farrington, *The Wretched of the Earth ... Translated by Constance Farrington. (Reprinted.)* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969), 169. Also quoted R.S Sugirtharajah, "Charting the Aftermath: A Review of Postcolonial Criticism.," in *The Postcolonial Biblical Reader*, ed. R.S Sugirtharajah (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 11.

⁵³ Young, 3.

handed over to independent countries. In this political atmosphere and manoeuvres, a female gender always lagged behind.

African economies were designed by the Colonisers to be suppliers of raw materials to the Colonisers' countries. As Stephen Moore has observed:

“[They] did more than extract tributes and other forms of wealth from subjugated people: they restructured the economies of those people, enmeshing them in a symbiotic relationship with their own, and thereby ensuring a constant two-way flow of human and natural resources (settlers, slaves, raw materials etc.) and a one-way flow of profits into their coffers.”⁵⁴

Most African governments are far from reaching a take-off stage to industrialisation. The economies rely on the export of raw Agricultural and Mineral produces like coffee, cotton, cocoa and foodstuffs; copper, gold, diamonds and crude oil without value addition, which fetch very little foreign exchange. In turn they import manufactured goods like machines, cars, clothes and other products, which cost exorbitantly. This trade imbalance positions African States in a more inferior position in their attempt to negotiate for better trade terms with the West. Because African governments and economies depend on the West to buy their Agricultural products, the latter will continue to perpetuate their political, military and cultural dictums upon the former.

Postcolonialism comes in to campaign for change. As Robert J. C. Young puts it, it calls for the transformational politics, for a politics dedicated to the removal of inequality, from the different degrees of wealth of the different states in the world system, to the class, ethnic and other social hierarchies within individual states, to the gendered hierarchies that operate at every level of social and cultural relations.⁵⁵ It names a politics and philosophy of activism that fights that disparity, and so continues in a new way the anti-colonial struggles of the past. It does not only assert to justify the rights of Africans to access resources and material well-being, but also the dynamic power of their cultures, cultures that are now intervening in and transforming the

⁵⁴ Stephen D. Moore, *Empire and Apocalypse: Postcolonialism and the New Testament* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006), 8.

⁵⁵ Young, 114.

societies of the West.⁵⁶ Postcolonialism does not necessarily try to idealise the past and reviving “mummified fragments” of African past. It is not aimed at replacing colonial European culture with an uncomplicated, celebratory, and uncritical Black culture.⁵⁷ It does not seek to dwell on the crimes of the past and their continuation but seeks transformation for liberation.⁵⁸ It emerged as a way of engaging with the textual, historical and cultural articulations of societies disturbed and transformed by colonialism. It involved two aspects: 1. Analyze the diverse strategies by which the colonisers constructed images of the colonised; and 2, to study how the colonised themselves made use of and went beyond many of those strategies in order to articulate their identity, self-worth, and empowerment.⁵⁹

One of the key problematics for postcolonial theory is a question of bodies that had been mutilated or absorbed into other bodies; namely ‘To what extent can the wholly digested body be resurrected or recovered as itself?’ Augustine frames this problem perfectly in his book *City of God*⁶⁰ that comes just after a discussion of how dissymetries of the body will be eradicated by the resurrection. In his argument, he asserts that nature will not allow a body of earth to exist in heaven. The early body would have to be raised to a heavenly body in order to go to heaven. Postcolonial theory does not postulate economics of perfect justice and restitution. It does not believe in a transcendent umpire for the atrocities of empire who will, one fine day, command perfect reconstitution and retrieve morsels of body from the digestive tract. Bodies swallowed by the gigantic bodies of colonialism and Christendom are significantly changed or converted into the body of the eater. Though the lost forms can still manifest themselves in accidental side effects, they can never be resurrected whole as their former selves. In the same way, we cannot expect to resurrect the digested African past in its primal form.

Postcolonial biblical criticism situates colonialism at the centre of the Bible and biblical interpretation. In our case, it focuses on the whole issue of domination and control as central forces in defining both the biblical narrative and biblical

⁵⁶ Ibid., 4.

⁵⁷ Sugirtharajah, 11.

⁵⁸ Dube, 15-16.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 17.

⁶⁰ Saint Augustine Bishop of Hippo and Marcus Dods, *The City of God*, Hendrickson Publishers ed. ed. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009), 1061-1064. Book 22, chapters 19 and 20

interpretation.⁶¹ It attempts to dismantle colonizing structures, institutions, ideologies, and philosophies and emancipate the colonized and oppressed.

Stephen Moore, though not writing from the perspectives of Two-Thirds colonised world, instructively observes that postcolonial biblical criticism seems to emerge out of contextual hermeneutics (also called vernacular hermeneutics, cultural exegesis, cultural interpretation, intercultural interpretation, or cultural studies), which fall under the major branch of liberation hermeneutics.⁶² Moore would therefore suggest that postcolonial biblical criticism is a multifaceted literary analysis whose major locus is liberation through creative readership of the Bible texts. To an African reader of the Bible, Moore suggests that contextual biblical criticism should focus on liberation and empowerment, cultural identity, ethnic, racial and national pride and freedom of thought, expression and association for the marginalized. This view is amplified by Musa W. Dube who asserts that to read the Bible as postcolonial subjects is to participate in the long, uncompleted struggle for liberation in African countries and “to seek liberating ways of interdependence.”⁶³ To Moore, as opposed to liberation theologians, the empowerment of the colonised can and must come through criticism of the Bible.—it cannot, as liberation theology, just be mirrored in narratives of liberation.

1.2.6.2 Feminist biblical criticism

This is a product of feminist criticism. The term feminism is commonly used today to describe a movement that seeks to eliminate women’s subordination and marginalization.⁶⁴ The feminist movement critiques masculine supremacy and holds that gender roles are socially constructed rather than innate. According to the movement, cultural common sense, dominant perspectives, scientific theories and historical knowledge are androcentric and therefore ideological rather than objective.⁶⁵

Feminist Bible interpretation (FBI) therefore comes in as a resistance discourse against the androcentric hermeneutics that overshadows the empowering role of the Bible in liberating women as the oppressed and marginalized people in society. It looks

⁶¹ R.S Sugirtharajah, "Charting the Aftermath: A Review of Postcolonial Criticism.," in *The Postcolonial Biblical Reader*, ed. R.S Sugirtharajah (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 17.

⁶² Stephen D. Moore, *Empire and Apocalypse: Postcolonialism and the New Testament* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006), 14-15.

⁶³ Musa W. Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2000), 20.

⁶⁴ Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Feminist Hermeneutics," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday Dell, 1992), 783.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 784.

at patriarchy as a complex social system of the male domination structured by racism, sexism, classism and colonialism. In its campaign for contextual hermeneutics, FBI resists Bible readings that tie women to foreign and obsolete cultural ideologies of the Bible narrator, who was misogynistic in nature. It defines these ideologies as cultural-religious imperialism that has perpetuated the political and economic marginalization and exploitation of women. In light of the imperatives of UN Millennium Goals, FBI aspires for exoneration of women from dehumanizing cultures and practices, and treatment of women as equal to men in all areas of development. As Musa W. Dube puts it, it asks how various forms of national and international oppression affect both women and men, and how gender oppression functions with other forms of oppression such as class, race, ethnicity, age and sexual orientation.⁶⁶ Those traditional patriarchal cultures and religious beliefs that are a barrier to women advancement in domains of leadership, property rights, access to education and economic independence are the main targets of feminist Bible hermeneutics

Postcolonialism and feminism are both liberation movements. They both involve political, cultural and sociological theories, as well as philosophies that are concerned with issues of differences that characterize humanity. Both advocate for equality and campaign for human rights and interests. Both movements are dedicated to the removal of inequality and removal of all hierarchies that operate at every level of social and cultural relations. It is understood that supremacy of one group of people over another is socially and ideologically constructed.

In all these approaches, I am assuming the position of an insider outsider, i.e. I am reading the texts subjectively and apologetically to its redemptive and empowering role to the marginalised. I am reading the Bible as an African, experienced in a number of aspects of African life in Africa: the joys, problems of poverty, ethnicity, hunger, ghetto life, ignorance, disease and natural calamities, communalism, patriarchy and other aspects that define the African culture and society. I am reading as a Christian believer in the transforming power of the Bible. But I am also reading as a metaphorical *non believer* in the value and validity of some narratives of the Bible. I am reading the text objectively as I would read any other literature like a Newspaper or a Eurocentric text of African history, allowing my personal cognitive and affective domains to direct

⁶⁶ Musa W. Dube, "Rahab Says Hello to Judith: A Decolonising Feminist Reading," in *The Postcolonial Biblical Reader*, ed. R.S Sugirtharajah (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 142.

my expositions and arguments. Historical knowledge from the contemporary ancient Near East remains paramount in understanding the image and role of these female politicians from a broader picture of their social-cultural milieu. Ancient Israel and Judah were not isolated entities from their contemporary states. There were a lot of cultural transactions across the borders. We should remember that it is the political organisation of the surrounding kingdoms that influenced Israel to reject Yahweh and demand a human monarchy. They wanted to be like other nations that had elaborate physical political and monarchical institutions.

These approaches in biblical studies should not be mistaken for disrespect for the Bible text. It is erroneous to assume that the community of the faithful would want to hear only the ideology of the Deuteronomist. Readers would also want to hear what has not been said or what can be said in different ways. In the New Testament, Jesus set a good example of reading and interpreting the Old Testament scriptures differently, (in the way that was more meaningful, empowering and redemptive than the Jewish manner of reading (see. Mark 10:1-12, Mathew 5:20-26; 27:27-32, John 8:1-11 among others)). The same is true with Jewish literature like the Midrash and Mishna. These demonstrate how audacious and non-traditional understanding can be. Traditional understanding is not necessarily the truth. The truth is—as long as it is relevant and meaningful to a pertinent question of a particular context.

The history of feminism is long and diverse, which I don't intend to exhaust in this thesis. Indeed, as Susanne Scholz observes, the interpretation of the Bible by women is grounded in a centuries-long tradition.⁶⁷ Beyond written books, there is no information about women who read and silently criticised the Bible in their homes and within their religious cells. The systematic mass movement against sexism started in the nineteenth century in the Western world. Known as the suffrage movement, this socio-political effort found greater success in the twentieth century. Key members of the feminist advocates included: Marie W. Miller Steward, Anne Julia Cooper, Sojourner Truth, Antoinette L. Brown Blackwell, Susan Brownell Anthony, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Susanne Scholz, *Introductions in Feminist Theology: Introducing the Women's Hebrew Bible* (London: t&t Clark, 2007), 12.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 14.

The nineteenth century wave of feminism was not only faced with the challenge of sex but also race. African Americans like Anna Julia Cooper as early as 1892 criticised it for its parochial and myopic views as it addressed itself to the issues of middles-class and white women.⁶⁹ African Americans argued that they occupy a unique position in that they are confronted by both “a woman question” and “a race question” and they are an unacknowledged factor in both.⁷⁰ Some African Americans called themselves womanists, to distinguish themselves from a feminism that does not speak for them.⁷¹

In a series of incremental developments in the West, after World War 1, women gained the right to vote. This period witnessed a rather slower wave of feminist biblical readings that lasted till the end of 1960s when the second feminist movement emerged. During these decades, many of the accomplishments and arguments of the suffragettes were quickly forgotten. Few women were admitted to the ranks of academia and even less made it as biblical scholars, and those who did worked in isolation, enjoying little academic support and collegiality.⁷² Although some managed to publish treatises on women and Hebrew Bible, their works are said to have lacked political zeal and intellectual fervour.⁷³

The second feminist movement emerged in 1970s. At this time, women in the USA started to methodologically examine the systems of patriarchy with theories grounded in liberal feminism, socialist and Marxist feminism, black and post-colonial feminism, lesbian feminism, and radical feminism. Women who were working in religious organisations and in academic disciplines of religious and theological studies initiated a systematic and comprehensive investigation about the impact of patriarchy on the religious life and consciousness of women throughout history.⁷⁴ Also, women who had attained graduate degrees in the Old Testament (OT) allowed their works to be influenced by the socio-political movements of their time. They began reading the Bible with a feminist question on their minds.⁷⁵ Such women included Phyllis Tribble who

⁶⁹ Yvonne Sherwood, "Feminist Scholarship," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Bible*, ed. John Rogerson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 300.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Scholz, 19.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 24.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

published the first book in 1978 (*God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*) on the feminist and academic study of the OT; in which she responded to the challenges of radical feminist, theologian, and philosopher Mary Daly who rejected the Bible as utterly androcentric literature, as a detriment to women's rights that contributes little to the liberation of women from patriarchal oppression.⁷⁶ To Tribble and others who followed her path, a careful examination of the Hebrew Bible leads to a more complex and nuanced appreciation than conceded by the rejectionists. Tribble and later scholars have produced rich, wide-ranging and multifaceted interpretations. Equipped with scholarly methods, tools and investigative procedures, they have developed a plethora of biblical readings from feminist perspectives.⁷⁷

Worth noting is that Sub-Saharan Africa attracted many Christian evangelists as also slave traders and colonialists by the close of the nineteenth century. Today, majority of Africans in this region belong to African Traditional Religion (ATR) and Christianity. Christians are also active members of African Traditional Religions. The permeability of borders between ATR and Christianity allow intercrossing of adherence to both faiths. Both ATR and Christianity dictate the ethical-code of conduct in the lives of Africans in this region.

It is also a place for many political wrangles, guerrilla warfare, tribal clashes, famine, natural disasters and poverty and underdevelopment. The area is a fertile ground for socio-cultural institutions like patriarchy and sexism to thrive. Among the most vulnerable groups of people are women and children. Women have suffered not only from poverty, famine, wars and AIDS, but also from these socio-cultural constructions that perpetuate gender violence. Within African cultural traditions, there are beliefs and practices such as stereotypical gender roles, the ritual impurity of menstruating women, exclusion of females from certain rituals, dietary restriction against women, among others. The Christian Bible also dictates values that perpetrate a patriarchal ancient Israelite culture, which Africans have to accept as the word of God. Feminism, as a global movement, is faced with an uphill task in this part of the world. The war is not only against biblical gender biasness as the case was in the Western World, but also a serious combat against other forms of violence like African Cultures, imperialism,

⁷⁶ Ibid., 24-25.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 25.

poverty and physical violence, which have marginalised and dehumanised the majority of women in Africa.

Various social, political and legal movements (locally and globally, using social, legal and psychological approaches) have been calling for an end to all forms of violence against women. They include: the United Nations Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) 1979, the Nairobi Declaration, 1985, Beijing Action Program 1995 and several United Nations Declarations on the Elimination of Violence Against Women since 1993. Also women activists and women's groups such as Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (CCAWT), Eastern and Central Africa Women-in-Development Network (ECA WIDNET), coalition on violence against women (COVAW), Women Fighting AIDS in Kenya (WOFAK), Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), justice and peace commission of Association of sisterhood in Kenya among others.⁷⁸ Besides, many Governments of Sub-Saharan countries have changed their constitutions to cater for the rights of women" and "promote women empowerment. Nevertheless, African women are still experiencing oppression, dehumanization, humiliation, subjugation, injustices and violation.

By independence in the 1960s there were very few Universities and theological colleges in Africa. According to Knut Holter, there were only Six Universities South of the Sahara, north of post-Apartheid South Africa, and the courses in the Old Testament studies were based on traditional western approaches though with an open attitude towards the relationship between the Old Testament and the African context.⁷⁹ The number of Universities and Theological colleges increased later on after independence, with most institutions establishing Religious Studies departments to teach African Traditional Religions as one of the ways of recapturing African cultural heritage. Old Testament studies were conducted in relation to Africa, which resulted in a rapid number of publications on studies comparing religion and social-cultural parallels between Africa and the Old Testament.⁸⁰ Almost all Old Testament theologians of 1960s and 70s were men and were not concerned with the theology/hermeneutics of liberation,

⁷⁸ Julius Murikwa, "African Christian Theology Presented as a Reaction on Violence against Women" <http://mkep.blogspot.com/2005/12/african-christian-theology-presented.html> (accessed 12th Oct 2008).

⁷⁹ Knut Holter, "Old Testament Scholarship in Subsaharan Africa North of the Limpopo River," in *The Bible in Africa: Transaction, Trajectories and Trends*, ed. Gerald O. West and Musa W. Dube (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 55.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

but establishing the relationship between Africa and the OT. Such Theologians included: Kwesi A. Dickson of Ghana whose focus was on the similarities and differences between Africa and the Old Testament, Samuel G. Kibicho of Kenya who focused on the concept of God, I. Ndiokwere of Nigeria on Prophetism, John Onaiyekan of Nigeria on priesthood and Buame J.B Bediaku of Togo on penitence, while John Mbiti wrote on the concept of God in Africa.⁸¹ The only African female theologian history has preserved is Mercy Amba Oduyoye of Ghana.

The period between 1980 and 1990s is revolutionary in African Old Testament scholarship. It witnessed a growth in the number of Africans doing postgraduate studies in the Old Testament, and a growth in publications in this field. Universities have at this point staff with PhDs in Old Testament studies.⁸² Most of the training used to take place in Europe and North America, but the connection between Africa and the West in this respect used to follow ecclesiastical lines (Catholics: Rome, Evangelicals: USA); and also historical and political lines, (students from former British colonies went to Britain, and those from Francophone countries went to either France or Belgium.)⁸³ Many Universities also introduced higher degrees (Masters and PhDs) and increased scholarly publications in the OT.⁸⁴ The inculturation hermeneutical approaches of the 1960s and 1970s continued to play a major role in the 80s and 90s' African Biblical Scholarship, often based on comparative paradigms which related to certain ideas or motives in traditional or contemporary Africa.⁸⁵

Women biblical theologians were still unheard off in this period. Throughout the decades, the only remarkable feminist biblical critiques are Mercy Amba Oduyoye (Ghana), Musa W. Dube (Botswana), Musimbi Kanyoro⁸⁶ (Kenya), Mmadipoane Masenya (South Africa) and Frances Klopper (South Africa). Others included Gloria Kehilwe Plaatjie, Nyambura Njoroge, Rose Teteki Abbey, Dora Mbuwayesango and Sarojini Nadar. All these women recognise the fact that gender issues in the Bible cannot be studied in isolation of socio-political forces of oppression against women in

⁸¹ Ibid., 56, 57, 58

⁸² Ibid., 59.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 59-60.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 61-62.

⁸⁶ Kanyoro, though not originally a Bible scholar, she has contributed significantly to Bible feminist theology in Africa

Africa. They advocated for a hermeneutics that puts in account African cultures and current political, social and economic realities in Africa.

Mercy Amba Oduyoye was a teacher and theologian. She was born in a Christian family in 1934 in Kumasi-Ghana. She was the sole woman faculty member in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria in the 1970s, before returning to Ghana to teach at Trinity Theological Seminary (still as a sole female biblical scholar). Her experiences with male faculty counterparts put Oduyoye in the spotlight to question the male oriented biblical theology that was being developed by the male theologians. This influenced her career as a feminist theologian, with all efforts made to fight for the liberation of women, using theology as a tool. Her writings and organisations were all meant to create avenues for a theology that includes total liberation of women. As she stated it herself:

“...,and trying to understand the status of women in patrilineal Africa where some of us are matrilineal, I had to write *Daughters of Anowa*, as well as many other articles...It was this experience that led to my taking the initiative that resulted in the formation of the Circle of the Concerned of the African Women Theologian in 1989.”⁸⁷

In her book *Beads and Strand: Reflections of an African Woman on Christianity in Africa*, Oduyoye has argued that biological gender is a given we cannot escape; but gender as a base for building human relations and hierarchies, is of our own making, which we can as well draw out of the centre and find a less conspicuous position for it.⁸⁸ Oduyoye’s view suggests that we can also give a less central position to gender, referring to ability and talent as the ideological centre of gravity in determining our world.

Oduyoye challenged theologians that there cannot be a comprehensive and integrated Christian anthropology if a feminist perspective was left out. In her “Feminism: A Pre-condition for a Christian Anthropology,” Oduyoye argued that:

“Women’s experiences should become an integral part of what goes into the definition of “being human.” It is to highlight what the world and the world view of the

⁸⁷ Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands : Reflections of an African Woman on Christianity in Africa* (Yaounde 2002), ix. See also Faith K. Lugazia, "Gospel and Culture"

<http://www.luthersem.edu/mhess/oduyoye.pdf> (accessed 25th Oct 2008).

⁸⁸ Oduyoye, 105. Also Lugazia.

woman looks like as she struggles side by side with the man to realize her full potential as a human being by shedding all that hampers her.”⁸⁹

Oduyoye contends that theology’s passionate call for liberation is in vain if it takes into account only half of African people and overlooks the abject poverty of women. To her feminism is central to the discussion of both inculturation and liberation, not peripheral to it. She called upon men as equal partners to be involved in women’s liberation and in building a just and peaceful African society.⁹⁰ She has written extensively on feminist theology in the context of Africa, and she is the founder of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (CCAWT), an umbrella organisation for female theological activists in Africa. She also founded Talitha Cumi Center, an institute of women, religion and culture located in Ghana.⁹¹

It can generally be summed up that African feminist theology has a very recent history. The wishes of these daughters of Africa have not been fully realised because of the wider expanse of the patriarchal cultural terrain in African. In some areas, especially in rural Africa, this cultural terrain is difficult to penetrate because the implant of foreign religions like Christianity and Islam has taken root and formed an impenetrable ideological canopy, covering the minds of masses with biased patriarchal doctrines. As mentioned above, ideals of feminism are perceived as western-oriented and against African heritage and Godly order of reality. They are understood as empowering women to equal men or disempowering men to equal women, hence making women stronger and dominant in society. In Africa, a mere idea that men will be under women can result into serious consequences responses. A female gender is generally perceived as weak and inferior. Women represent a class of people who are insignificant politically and militarily, while men represent the political and military elite. A male gender is associated with high status and leadership, and a female gender should be under this superior gender. Any attempt by the latter to be redeemed herself from this ideological stereotype is perceived as rebellion to national and natural order, biblical rules and traditional norms and ethics. Oduyoye has rightly observed that:

⁸⁹ Mercy Amba Oduyoye, "Feminism: A Pre-Condition for Christian Anthropology," *African Theological Journal* 11, no. 3 (1982): 193.

⁹⁰ Pui-lan Kwok, "Mercy Amba Oduyoye and African Women's Theology"

http://www.accessmylibrary.com/coms2/summary_0286-12107951_ITM (accessed 25th Oct 2008).

⁹¹ , www.unaids.org/en/CountryResponses/Regions/SubSaharanAfrica.asp (Ibid.).

“In Africa, the very idea of a ‘free woman’ conjures up negative images.... The single woman who manages her affairs successfully without a man, is an affront to patriarchy and a direct challenge to the so-called masculinity of men who want to ‘possess’ her. Some women are struggling to be free from this compulsory attachment to the male. Women want the right to be fully human, whether or not they choose to be attached to men.”⁹²

1.2.7 Literature review

Feminist theologians have written widely suggesting ways in which scriptures have to be read. The CCAWT, which was formed in 1989, has been a springboard of African feminist theological literature. It will be informative to review some of the approaches suggested by some African feminist scholars in their study of the Bible.

Story Telling

This approach is said to have been suggested by Mercy Oduyoye and promoted by others like Sarojini Nadar, and it is aimed at giving the Bible texts a voice of a suffering and concerned African woman. Oduyoye is one of the popular postcolonial Bible readers in Africa. She has written extensively about African women liberation theology. In her view: “...even those texts that are difficult to read have to be exposed, interrogated, deconstructed and reinterpreted until a liberating message or at least a voice that women can identify with can be found.”⁹³

Women theologians creatively retell Bible stories using African women experiences. They write to raise the voice of female victims who are silenced in Bible text like Dinah, Tamar and numerous virgins in Esther 2:1-18, who are all victims of rape. Stories of these characters are retold from the point of view of the victim in a creative and usually poetic manner.⁹⁴ For example Aruna Gnanadason in *No Longer silent: The Church and Violence Against Women* creatively retells Genesis 34 from the point of view of Dinah with relevance to African victims of rape.⁹⁵ Rose Teteki Abbey, in her article “*I Am the Woman*” rewrites John 4: 3-42 story of the Samaritan Woman

⁹² Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands: Reflections of an African Woman on Christianity in Africa* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002), 69

⁹³ Quoted in Nadar, 78.

⁹⁴ Sarojini Nadar, ““Texts of Terror” The Conspiracy of Rape in the Bible, Church and Society: Case of Esther 2:1-18,” in *African Women, Religion, and Health: Essays in Honour of Mercy Ewudziwa Oduyoye*, ed. Isabel Apawo Phiri and Sarojini Nadar (New York: MaryKnoll, Orbis Books, 2006), 78.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 77.

with reference to the predicaments of an African Christian woman.⁹⁶ While Musa Dube in her *Fifty years of Bleeding*, retells the story of the woman who had a haemorrhage for 12 years in the Gospel according to Mark, with application to the situation of women in African societies.⁹⁷

Cultural Hermeneutics

Musimbi R.A Kanyoro, from Kenya believes that the culture of the reader in Africa has more influence on the way the biblical text is understood and used in communities than the historical culture of the text. She contends that African women should read the Bible with the eyes of their cultures, and apply a mirror-image reading. That this will help them read their cultures and also their cultures can give meaning to the text of the Bible.⁹⁸ Kanyoro adds that this paradigm of self-image reading of the Bible will have to go along with cultural hermeneutics. Kanyoro urges women to read the Bible in search of the female face of God. In this case, bad elements in African cultures that dehumanise women should be rejected by women as well as those in the Bible. Kanyoro's view is consonant with Kwok Pui-Lan who writes that: "...any interpretation of texts, especially a text as traditionally powerful as the Bible, must be assessed not only on whatever its literary or historical merits may be but also on its theological and ethical impact on the integrity and dignity of God's creation."⁹⁹

Taking the case of Sarah and Hagar, Kanyoro states that these two are not mere biblical characters, but a reflection of what happens to her physical environment: envy, jealousy, revenge, competition and others. These vices came as a result of polygamy, and according to Kanyoro women should read this story in light of African cultures that favour polygamy.¹⁰⁰

Kanyoro challenges African feminist Bible theologians to explore the structures and institutions established to support and maintain rites like birth, naming, adolescence,

⁹⁶ Rose Teteki Abbey, "I Am the Woman," in *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible* ed. Musa W. Dube (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2001), 23-26.

⁹⁷ Musa W. Dube, "Fifty Years of Bleeding: A Story Telling feminist Reading of Mark 5:24-43 " in *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible* ed. Musa W. Dube (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2001), 51-60.

⁹⁸ Musimbi R. A Kanyoro, *Introducing Feminist Cultural Hermeneutics: An African Perspective* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 19-20.

⁹⁹ Kwok Pui-Lan, "Making the Connection: Postcolonial Studies and Feminist Biblical Interpretation," in *the Postcolonial Biblical Reader*, ed. R.S Sugirtharajah (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 50.

¹⁰⁰ Musimbi R.A Kanyoro, "Cultural Hermeneutics: An African Contribution " in *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible* ed. Musa. W Dube (Geneva: WCC publications, 2001), 107-108.

marriage and death; and other issues as fertility, dowry, property, ownership among others.¹⁰¹ She contends that cultural ideologies regarding gender roles and power in society are deeply embedded in African life experiences; with some women themselves as perpetrators of gender violence against women: they are excisors of females, instigators of divorce and teachers of feminist 'behaviours.'¹⁰² She encourages theologians to use the Bible to change African cultures that dehumanise women. She asserts that: "As an adult Bible reading woman, I am not looking for models of behaviours but rather for clues as to what might change behaviour."¹⁰³

Critical Reading

Nadar Sarojini in her article "Texts of Terror" has emphasised that: "since the Bible plays such a pivotal role in the lives of women in Africa, it is imperative that we break with these traditional modes of oppressive reading by engaging critical ways of reading the biblical text..."¹⁰⁴ Nadar is concerned with the issue of rape in the Old Testament, in relation to sexual violence against women in South Africa. In her study, she notes the complicity of both the church and society in the crime of sexual violence against women. She asks why and how there are suffering bodies of used and abused women right from biblical times into our very own century in the midst of the people that claim to be religious, and engage in religious discourse. Nadar attributes this problem to the texts that feed the religious discourse, which is the Bible. She argues that unless the way the Bible is read is transformed, not only within the academy but also in the local communities of faith, the justification of rape and abuse of women will continue to be justified.¹⁰⁵ Sarojini's approach also raises issues of value in reading texts and calls for an interface of faculties of thought, feelings and judgment in biblical exposition.

Biographical and comparative reading

Frances Klopper has focused her attention on female figures in the Bible, which she biographically compares to the situation of women in Sub-Saharan Africa. To Klopper, experience is the base of all knowledge. Therefore stories of Bible women are

¹⁰¹ Musimbi R. A Kanyoro, "Cultural Hermeneutics: An African Contribution," in *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible*, ed. Musa W. Dube (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001).

¹⁰² Ibid., 107.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 107-108.

¹⁰⁴ Nadar, 79.

¹⁰⁵ Sarojini Nadar, 79-80

true stories of universal existential struggles. She argues that many biblical women's lives resemble the current hardships experienced by South African and African-South African women. She has written thus:

“...In the autobiography of Rahab, I find the plight of poor women driven off their land and forced into prostitution to make a living; in the story of Potiphar's wife, I hear the plight of scorned women in extra-marital relationships; in the Hannah-story, the plight of barren women in cultures where barrenness is regarded shameful and punishment for sin; in the rape narratives of Tamar and the Levite's wife, I hear the plight of the many abused female bodies in South Africa. In the account of the violence against woman-city Nineveh in the book of Nahum, the voices of female war victims on our war-stricken continent are heard. In Rachel's lament from Ramah I hear the universal, archetypal cry of mothers whose children have been abused. In every one of these stories I pick up echoes of the plight of potential HIV and AIDS victims.”¹⁰⁶

Klopper also observes the ambiguities that exist in the Bible: “Bible as a book...on the one hand endorses patriarchal domination over women, and on the other hand provides the comfort and strength often denied them elsewhere in their lives...”¹⁰⁷ However, Klopper suggests that these ambiguities should be dealt with in a way that gives “dominance to women's experience over the authority of the Bible as Word of God...”¹⁰⁸

Interdisciplinary approach

Gloria Kehilwe Plaatjie proposes that the Bible should be read together with the national constitutions. She asserts that the constitution contains and recognises women's rights. In her suggestion of strategies, she advises reading the constitution as an alternative to the Bible, or even in relation to the Bible as a holy text. In reference to the South African context she encourages a study of African customary laws, post-apartheid constitutional law and the biblical laws analyse the underlying gender and race discrimination and what the Bible, the post-apartheid constitution, and South African

¹⁰⁶ Frances Klopper, "Reflections of a Feminist Scholar from the Threshold between Africa and European Biblical Exegesis," *Old Testament Essays* 19, no. 3 (2006): 889.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.: 886.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

black cultures would say to these structurally entrenched oppression.¹⁰⁹ Her emphasis on the national constitution encourages local women to realise their rights as equal citizens with their male counterparts.

Africanization method

Dube W. Musa has argued that Women in colonised Africa not only suffer the yoke of colonial oppression but also endure the burden of two patriarchal systems imposed on them.¹¹⁰ Dube's feminist approach is combined with African nationalism. She begins her argument with a critique against Western Feminist theology, that it has failed to recognise and subvert imperialist cultural strategies of subjugation, and that their advocacy for women's liberation has firmly retained the right of the West to dominate and exploit non-Western nations.¹¹¹ This, according to Dube has alienated women from the third world, and not offered the chance to participate fully in the articulation of women's liberation precisely because they recognise their counterparts to be jealously guarding their international women's movements, hindering the formation of strategic coalitions that go beyond narrow identity politics.¹¹² Dube advocates for postcolonial feminist practices and strategies, which according to her are not complacent about the imperialistic agenda. Her aim is to highlight the challenges and demands of the postcolonial era. That unless the pervasiveness and persistence of imperial rhetoric in reality and texts is recognised, studied, and called into question, its reinscription will be inevitable, even among well-meaning feminists.¹¹³ In her comment on Schussler Fiorenza, whose works seek to develop a feminist heuristic model that reclaims Christian history as women's history and places them at the centre of early church's missionary activities as equal partners to men, Dube notes that Fiorenza bracketed imperial prescriptions and constructions of the biblical texts, in which she downplays the imperial setting of the early Christian origins and also makes no effort to expose its ideology and its impact. This, according to Dube, continues to maintain the violence of imperial oppression against the non-Western biblical feminists.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ Gloria Kehilwe Plaatjie, "Towards a Post-Apartheid Black Feminist Reading: A Case of Luke 2:36-38," in *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible*, ed. Musa W. Dube (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001), 138.

¹¹⁰ Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, 20.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid., 26.

¹¹³ Ibid., 26-27.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 28-29.

Dube shares her motif with other women like Mercy Oduyoye and Elizabeth Amoah, and Kwok Pui-lan who view the Bible and Christianity as a carrier for Western Imperialism.¹¹⁵ To Dube, the Christian Bible no longer coexists with the Jewish texts alone and no longer belongs to the Western Christians alone, but rather the 3rd World people, Africa inclusive. Dube advocates for the model of reading that takes seriously the presence of both imperialism and patriarchy, and seeks to liberate interdependence between genders, races, nations, economies, cultures, political structures among others.¹¹⁶ Dube favours the African Independent Church's approach of Bible readership and the entire Africanisation of the Bible. Legendary to Dube are female African Independent Church founders like Kimpa Vita of Congo, and others like Ma Nku, Grace Tshabala, Alice Lenshina and Mai Chaza, who became founders and heads of some massive AICs movements in the first half of the 20th Century in South Africa.¹¹⁷

In East Africa professional Biblical scholarship is in its infancy, and the Bible is disseminated more as a vehicle for rudimentary moral/Christian frameworks rather than something to be reflected upon from a specifically African context. And yet, the influence of the Bible in East African life is vast. For example, Bible writings (words and texts) are inscribed on the sides of buildings and motor vehicles. Some personal vehicles have personalised number plates with Biblical texts. In the mid twentieth century, African nationalists like Jomo Kenyatta in Kenya used Bible texts to galvanise their nationalistic slogans and defend their customs and values like polygamy, female circumcision, ancestral veneration, African names and other practices that missionary Christians were campaigning against as pagan. In the next chapter we shall historically examine the influence of Christianity and Bible upon the People of East Africa with reference to Uganda and Kenya.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 31-32.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 39.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

2.0 CHRISTIANITY AND BIBLE IN EAST AFRICA

2.1 Introduction

It is vital to point out that there have been two strands of Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa: that of missionaries and that of African Independent Churches and movements. Foreign missionaries introduced their forms of Christianity from Europe, and later America. They converted Africans and planted churches and mission stations in various parts of Sub-Saharan Africa. These churches, also called institutional churches, operate under umbrella bodies whose headquarters are mainly in Europe and America. They include the Anglican (also called Episcopal or Protestant) churches, the Roman Catholic Churches, the Presbyterian Churches, the Lutheran Churches and the Baptist Churches. Others are the Seventh Day Adventists, the Methodists and the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers).

African Independent Church (AIC) movements were established by Africans and do not refer to Western missions or churches. Most of them broke away from the missionary churches mainly due to disagreements with Western missionaries over traditional African spiritual practices or inherent fanatical fantasies that seek to restore Christianity to the biblical tradition of the early church. In the first case, the founders of AICs accused European Christian Missionaries of cooperating with colonialists and undermining African cultural practices and independence. Reading from the Bible, especially the Old Testament, AICs sought to construct the Social Cultural lifestyle of ancient Israel, which was perceived similar to most African Societies; including institutions and practices like polygamy, bride-wealth, ancestral ideology of land and ancestral veneration. They saw the Bible as more harmonious to the African cultural contexts than the missionaries who were campaigning against African values.

In the second case, Africans who had acquired the skill to read the Bible in the vernacular idealised the teachings of Jesus and the activities of the disciples and the early Church. There were revival or Holy Spirit movements initiated by some African converts who claimed to have experienced the power of the Holy Spirit. These revivalists wanted to restore the apostolic tradition of healing of the sick, prophesy, exorcism, river baptism and speaking in tongues. They identified themselves as Jesus' disciples, who, like the early Church Christians have been given the authority over forces of darkness such as evil spirits and diseases (see Matthew 10:1ff). Almost no European missionaries exhibited these spiritual gifts. Consequently, the African

revivalists seceded from missionary Churches and formed what they called Spiritual churches, whose major characteristics were faith healing, Holy Spirit baptism, prophecy, exorcism and speaking in tongues. Some Africans rejected European medicines and relied solely on faith healing. They viewed reality as a cosmic battleground where diseases have spiritual causes and thus require spiritual solutions. Their doctrines, especially the emphasis of the Holy Spirit, are Pentecostal in character and, indeed, most of AIC are part of Pentecostalism.¹¹⁸

Revival movements were bolstered by the importation of foreign Pentecostal churches that were founded by Pentecostal missionaries mainly coming from Scandinavia and North America. Some of these missionaries and evangelists also held revival and healing crusades creating even more churches. Revival movements and Pentecostalism have a lot in common as they all emphasize gifts and works of the Holy Spirit. In Sub-Saharan Africa, Pentecostal Churches are numerous and growing quickly.

The Holy Spirit Movements emphasize specific spiritual experience and pragmatic interpretation and application of the Bible; which sometimes lead to bizarre exegeses. Apocalypticism is central to their theology. Accordingly, current problems facing humans like HIV aids, famine, earthquakes wars and crime, and issues of homosexuality, lesbianism, “test-tube babies,” among others, are not human problems requiring practical solutions, but spiritual, calling for repentance and for returning back to God through Jesus Christ. Such problems are interpreted as signs that the world is coming to an end. Christians of these Churches tend to interpret life’s challenges in demonic terms.

Most of these assemblies are composed of impoverished and desperate men and women, such as local poor and sickly people, unemployed graduates, and unmarried young men and women. Women constitute the largest portion of these churches’ membership. Church services are always lively and highly emotional. There is usually rousing gospel music accompanied by powerful instruments and fervent choruses and

¹¹⁸ Pentecostalism is an umbrella term that includes a wide range of different theological and organizational perspectives. It is a global movement, and the term is said to have been born in the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century, following the Azusa Street Revival that took place in Los Angeles, California, led by William J. Seymour, in which the Holy Spirit is said to have come upon the people in prayer and enabled them to speak in strange tongues. Pentecostalism as a movement derives its name from the events of *Acts 2*, when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples of Jesus Christ on the day of Pentecost, and enabled them to perform wonders, to preach the gospel boldly without fear and to expand the Christian faith beyond the boundaries of Judea and Asia Minor.

songs. Believers exhibit a deep emotional involvement during praise, worship and prayer. Because of the timing and mode of their operation, these churches have been variously labelled: Pentecostal churches, new churches, spiritual churches, revival churches, apostolic, charismatic, prosperity churches, mushrooming churches and, popularly, *savedees*, which literally means the “saved ones.”

Christianity of Sub-Saharan Africa rapidly expanded in the twentieth century. Two thirds of the population is predominantly Christian. In 1900, out of 107.9 million people in Africa, only 10 million had accepted Christianity. By the close of the twentieth century, there were 380 million Christians in Sub-Saharan Africa. The process of evangelisation is said to have increased rapidly with more African converts themselves being the chief bearers of the gospel.¹¹⁹ According to a 2006 Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life Study, 147 million African Christians were Pentecostals or “savedees”.¹²⁰ Statistics from the World Christian Encyclopaedia suggests that there will be 633 million Christians on the African continent by 2025.¹²¹

2.2.0 History of Christianity in East Africa

An early attempt to introduce Christianity in East Africa was made by the Portuguese who lived along the coast of East Africa between 1498 and 1700. The Portuguese influence and civilisation had, however, been overcome by 1750 by Arabs, which had become the major foreign civilisation on the East African coast. By the nineteenth century, Christianity in East Africa was only represented by Fort Jesus (built in 1593), which stood as the solitary bastion of Christian evangelism at the coastal city of Mombasa, Kenya.

Another important attempt to introduce Christianity was in 1844, when a German Lutheran, Ludwig Krapf, who was employed by English Church Missionary Society, arrived in Kenya and established a mission station at Rabai near Mombasa. Two missionaries later joined Krapf: Johann Rebmann in 1846 and Erhardt in 1849. Their aim was to establish a continental missionary system stemming from the East

¹¹⁹ John Samuel Mbiti, *Bible and Theology in African Christianity* (Nairobi; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), ii, 5.

¹²⁰ Isaac Phiri and Joe Maxwell, "Gospel Riches: Africa's Rapid Embrace of Prosperity Pentecostalism Provokes Concern and Hope.," *Christianity Today* (July, 2007). <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/july/12.22.html> (accessed 6th April, 2009).

¹²¹ World Council of Churches, *New Vision and Challenges to Ecumenism in the 21st Century* (Seoul, 2004). <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/general-secretary/speeches/23-08-04-keynote-address-korea.html> (Accessed 6th April, 2009).

African coast and stretching to West Africa.¹²² The three missionaries had marginal impact upon the people of East Africa, however. Due to mobility and security obstacles, which prevented expeditions into the interior of East Africa, Krapf and his colleagues confined their activities to the coastal hinterland of Kenya, unlike the famous Dr Livingstone.¹²³ By 1850, Krapf, Rebmann and Erhardt had left Rabai after failing to preach Christianity to the Wanyika tribesmen of Kenya. Their presence, however, laid the foundations for the later missionary activities in East Africa. The Rabai mission station was later taken over by the British Methodists in 1863. The CMS founded its settlement for freed slaves at Freretown close to Rabai in 1875.¹²⁴

In that year, Henry Morton Stanley arrived in the court of the King (Kabaka) Mutesa I of Buganda in Central Africa where he had gone to search for Dr Livingstone. Mutesa I is said to have requested that White Christian Missionaries come to his kingdom and teach his people the ways of life of the White people. On 15th November 1875, Stanley wrote a letter that appeared in a British newspaper, *The Daily Telegraph*, sent from the Kingdom of Buganda. The letter described Mutesa I, the conditions for ideal mission, and the character of the missionary required: "Mutesa would give him anything he desired, house, land, cattle, ivory. He might call the province his own in a day...He must belong to no nation in particular, but to the entire white race."¹²⁵ Following this appeal, the CMS arrived in the court of Mutesa I in June 1877 and the White Fathers in February 1879, followed by the colonialist, all heading to Buganda. They started preaching Christianity and in 13 years Christianity had become the established religion of the Kingdom of Buganda, and by the close of the century, they had indeed made Uganda their own, exploiting the resources as envisaged. Buganda became

¹²² Aloo Osotsi Mojola, "The Swahili Bible in East Africa from 1844 to 1996: A Brief Survey with Special Reference to Tanzania," in *The Bible in Africa : Transactions, Trajectories, and Trends*, ed. Gerald O. West and Musa W. Dube Shomanah (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 511.

¹²³ Livingstone exposed the suffering of Africans in his extensive writings on slavery, diseases and poverty. He highlighted the horrors Arab-Slavery inflicted upon the Bantu communities of sub-Saharan Africa. He visualised the growth of steady trade with Europe, which would relieve the poverty, integrate the several tribes and replace the illegitimate trade with the legitimate. His views were received with sympathy in Britain, and they compelled England to promote the wider ecclesiastical policies that missions came to pursue. He is remembered for setting in motion the missionary invasion of East Africa. See Roland Anthony Oliver, *The Missionary Factor in East Africa* (London: Longmans, Green, 1952), 9-11.

¹²⁴ F. B Welbourn, "Impact of Christianity on East Africa," in *History of East Africa*, ed. D. A. Low and Alison Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 384.

¹²⁵ Adrian Hastings, *The Church in Africa, 1450-1950*, The Oxford History of the Christian Church (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 371-372.

a springboard from which Christianity spread to other Bantu and Nilotic regions, including western Kenya and Eastern Congo.

The establishment of the East African Protectorate (Kenya) in 1895 and the transport revolution pioneered by the construction of the Uganda Railway attracted more missionaries into hitherto unoccupied territory in what we now call Kenya.¹²⁶ The railway provided a cheap and safe route across what Oliver has described as ‘the blistering desert of the thorn-scrub lying behind Mombasa, inhabited by the dreaded Masai, to the healthy highlands occupied by the Kikuyu and the dense populations of Kavirondo.’¹²⁷ The CMS Missionary group for instance extended its influence from the coastal region by 1899, and established mission station at Kihuruko, Weithaga, Kahuhia, Mahiga, Kabete and Embu in the Kikuyu-land. From Uganda, a branch of the CMS under Bishop Tucker entered the Nyanza province where Christianity was spread to the Luo, Bantu, Lumbwa and the Nandi.¹²⁸

Kenya also attracted the Roman Catholic Church, which had established a base in Zanzibar. A Catholic mission was established in Kikuyu land near Nairobi in 1899,¹²⁹ followed by the Italian Fathers’ mission 1902 in the districts of Kiambu, Limuru and Mangu.¹³⁰ The Mill Hill fathers from Uganda operated from Nyanza province where they established stations in districts of Mumias and Kakamega in 1903.¹³¹

An American interdenominational group called African Inland Mission (AIM), which was mainly composed of Baptist and Adventists, founded the Kamba mission in 1895 and other stations like Kijabe in 1903. These were seen as a chain of mission stations reaching beyond Kenya into Congo. In 1898, the Church of Scotland mission (CSM) founded a station in Kikuyuland, east of Nairobi.¹³² The Methodists missionaries

¹²⁶ Oliver, 168; Elizabeth Isichei, *History of Christianity in Africa: From Antiquity to the Present* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1995), 230.

¹²⁷ Oliver, 168-169.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 169.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 170.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Bengt Sundkler and Christopher Stead, *A History of the Church in Africa* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 558. Nahashon W. Ndung’u, "The Role of the Bible in the Rise of African Instituted Churches: The Case If the Akurinu Churches in Kenya," in *The Bible in Africa : Transactions, Trajectories, and Trends*, ed. Gerald O. West and Musa W. Dube Shomanah (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 237-238.

who had arrived in Kenya in 1862 later moved inland from Rabi and concentrated on the Meru district, in north-eastern Kenya.¹³³

2.2.1 How Christianity was spread

Christianity was initially preached through direct evangelism by the missionaries. Though there was a language barrier, as all Africans could not understand any of the white man's languages, missionaries succeeded in converting some Africans to their faith. The new converts were taught the basics of the Christian faith in catechism classes and these later became translators and interpreters to the rest of the African audience. Most of these Africans were slave returnees from Bombay, India¹³⁴ whom the CMS trained at their mission in Freretown, where a divinity school was established in 1888. Some of the converts like Apolo Kivebulaya, a Ugandan, became black missionaries to other parts of Africa like the Congo basin.¹³⁵

A larger number of educational institutions were established by White Missionaries through which African school boys and girls were taught about the Christian faiths of their respective denominations. In Kenya, such schools include: Alliance High School (for boys) which was founded by Alliance of Protestant Churches in 1926, Mang'u High School, established by the Holy Ghost Fathers in 1925 in Thika, Nairobi School, Kenya High School and Ngara Girls High School, among others. Out of 3 million native Africans in colonial Kenya, only 3.2 per cent received formal education. In Uganda, the missionary schools included: Gayaza High School, Trinity College Nnabingo, Namagunga Secondary School, Buloba Secondary School, Namilyango, and Budo, among others. With regard to school curriculum there was an insistence on school prayers and the teaching of religious education. It was also common to find the clergyman on the staff of government boarding schools.¹³⁶

In such schools, learners were taught how to read and write their local languages. This helped to foster communication and put the Bible and the catechism into the hands of applicants for baptism.¹³⁷ Applicants had to be taught to read the Bible and other Christian literature. Local language grammar books and dictionaries were made and

¹³³ Sundkler and Steed, 559.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 553.

¹³⁵ See, Yossa Way, "Apolo Kivebulaya C. 1864-1933: Anglican Church of Congo," *Dictionary of African Christian Biography* (2002). http://www.dacb.org/stories/demrepcongo/kivebulaya_apolo.html (accessed 13th April, 2009).

¹³⁶ Welbourn, 415.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 412.

later locally printed to enable the new missionaries learn local languages. Mission bookshops were started, such as the CMS bookshop in Kenya, which became an important general bookshop before it was eventually taken over by a commercial firm.¹³⁸ Literacy revolution enabled the locals not only to read the Bible and Christian literature but also secular literature both in English and in the vernacular. Later on there were advanced classes for catechists and ordinands, who were required not only to understand the faith but also how to teach it to others. As time went on, some missionaries learnt local languages like Kiswahili and other Bantu languages, which they used to communicate to the Africans

The Missionaries realised that the only fruitful source of converts was in the boarding schools and that they had an obligation to train not only professional church-workers but an educated generation to take the lead in social and economic development.¹³⁹ In these boarding schools, African children were drilled regularly in the Christian faith. Some schools had chapel and chaplains where students would go for prayers on Sundays and week-days. Prayers, in the name of Jesus, were said at all assemblies before administrators addressed students. In most cases, because schools were owned by various Christian denominations, all students admitted were subscribers to the Christian faith of the school establishment.

Medicine also provided an effective means by which Missionaries could preach to and convert Africans. A number of health facilities were opened by the missionaries. Africans were treated for a variety of diseases that had defeated local medicines and spiritual solutions. For instance, Sir Albert Cook, a CMS missionary and doctor opened the first CMS hospital in Mengo, Uganda in 1897 and started to train medical assistants in 1917. The first government medical centre in Uganda was opened in 1912 at Mulago in Kampala and was concerned largely with the treatment of venereal and skin diseases.¹⁴⁰ In Kenya, the Kijabe mission hospital was established in 1915 and St. Luke's Hospital in 1934 by the CMS. Others include Kima Mission hospital and Maseno Hospital. In Acholi (Northern Uganda) the Comboni missionaries opened Lacor hospital in 1959.¹⁴¹ Africans who were treated came to recognize the futility and the

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 414.

¹⁴¹ Kevin Ward, "The Armies of the Lord": Christianity, Rebels and the State in Northern Uganda, 1986-1999 " *Journal of Religion in Africa* Vol. 31, no. 2 (2001): 195.

hopelessness of their ancestral methods of healing, and adopted Christianity. Christianity was perceived as a religion of civility and human welfare.

East Africa today has the highest number of Christians. In Uganda, based upon the 2002 census,¹⁴² Christians constituted 85% of a population of 25 million people. In Kenya, based on the 2003 survey, out of 35.7 million people,¹⁴³ Christians make up 88%.¹⁴⁴

Whereas it is beyond the scope of this study to analyse the reasons why Africans easily accepted the message of the Cross, I can state that the role of ATR and influence of Islam offered good social and spiritual infrastructure upon which Christianity was established. Africans already had the idea of God as the spirit and creator. For example the Bantu had Mungu, Mulungu or Mu'ungu, which means spirit and Mubumbi, Mu'mba, Mwumba, Kibumba, all stemming from the root *umba* that means to mound or create. Other words used are Katonda and Umutonda, from the root *tonda*, which means "to create." Africans had ideas about life after death, sin, evil, the devil and divine mediation; priesthood, blood-sacrifice and religious rituals and festivals prior to the arrival of Christianity.

I concur with John Mbiti in his assertion that, with already deeply engrained religious sensitivities, Africans listened carefully to the teachings of the Bible, reflected seriously upon them, and found a high degree of credibility in them. They discovered meaningful parallels between their world and the world of the Bible, and in many cases converted to the Christian faith without feeling a sense of spiritual loss.¹⁴⁵ Mbiti rightly argues that Western missionaries did not introduce God to Africa but *evangelion* about Jesus Christ. Africans already knew God but they did not know Jesus Christ and his gospel. Missionaries brought to African the religiosity of the Bible.¹⁴⁶ The biblical teachings about Jesus were given eschatological ambience drawn from texts like John 3:16, Matthew 24:29-30, and Revelation 19:11-21; 21:1ff, 22:7ff, which induced Africans into accepting the Christian faith with the hope for eternal life at *parousia*.

¹⁴² Uganda-Bureau-of-Statistics, *2002 Uganda Population and Housing Census* (Kampala: Republic of Uganda, 2002).

¹⁴³ "Population and Housing Statistics: Kenya", <http://www.cbs.go.ke/sectoral/population/projections.html> (accessed 6th April 2009).

¹⁴⁴ "Kenya", <http://pewforum.org/world-affairs/countries/?CountryID=106> (accessed 6th April 2009).

¹⁴⁵ Mbiti, 11.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 11, 12.

Islam had been introduced into the interior of East Africa by Arab traders. Fifty years before the arrival of Christian missionaries, there had been Arabs at the court of the Buganda King and quite a number of Baganda had become Moslems. Mutesa I's secretary was an Arab and a mosque had been built within the royal enclosure. Mutesa I had observed a fast in the month of Ramadhan and twice had declared Buganda an Islamic state, though he turned against the Moslems who had become too forthright and executed them.¹⁴⁷ The young pages at the court, who were training for chieftainship and war were the ones mainly attracted to Islam. However, few of them fully converted to Islam, while the majority were completely averse to circumcision that came with the Islamic faith.¹⁴⁸

Islam had introduced to the Africans the ideology of monotheism. But unlike Islam, Christianity did not require taking on painful circumcision¹⁴⁹, which some Africans had dreaded or fasting during the Holy Month of Ramadhan. Moreover, Muslim Arabs were associated with the bloody slave raids in the interior of East Africa, while Christians were associated with an end to Slave Trade. Some African communities accepted Christianity for defensive purposes as they thought that Christian Missionaries would protect them from slave trade raiders or their hostile African neighbours.

2.3 Cultural impact of Christianity in Africa

European missionary Christianity brought significant social and cultural changes to East Africa as they had elsewhere in Sub Saharan Africa. To begin with, missionaries were accused of imposing western cultures upon Africans. That they failed to distinguish between the Christian gospel and western culture and in their preaching they aimed at transforming an African into a better black English/French man rather than to claim heavenly citizenship.¹⁵⁰ Civility and Christianity went together, where by civilisation was understood to be Western culture. To become a Christian, one had to take on a new western name at baptism like Peter, John, James, William, George or Bill. African cultural practices like ancestral veneration, medicine, polygamy, female

¹⁴⁷ Hastings, 375.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Teenage Circumcision was not uncommon in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, as an initiation rite to adulthood especially among the Bantu tribes.

¹⁵⁰ Welbourn, 386.

circumcision and fetishes were labelled barbaric and African converts were discouraged from continuing them. To reduce polygamy, baptism was denied to the children who were born in polygamous families. In 1956, children of 87% of families in one Anglican parish in Buganda were denied baptism for this reason.¹⁵¹ Polygamous men who became converts were advised to divorce other wives and either keep the first wives or a wife of their choices, without consideration of the fate of the women who were being divorced.¹⁵² One Mathias Kalemba chased away his wives and remained with only one. Father Lourdel, the RC missionary wrote in his diary on 7th June 1880 that: “Yesterday, a young man among our catechumens, an overseer of the slaves of a great chief called Mukwenda, an ex-disciple of Protestants and owner of a large number of women, sent them all away except one and then came to ask us to baptise him.”¹⁵³ This parallels with the forceful divorces of foreign wives by the Jewish returnees in Ezra 9:1-2; 10:1-16 and Nehemiah 13:23-30.

In Buganda kingdom, within eight years of the introduction of Christianity, there were already martyrs. The king of Buganda, Mwanga, had become furious because his male servants who had become Christians reportedly refused to go to bed with him and were even attempting to subvert those of his pages still willing to commit sodomy.¹⁵⁴ There was also anger when the newly baptised Princess Nalumansi, a daughter of Mutesa I made a bonfire of all the pagan charms she found in the custodian’s house upon being appointed guardian of the tomb of Kabaka Jjunju. On 22 May 1886, her mother presented her with her umbilical cord, a symbol of the womb and of the totality of ancestral religion. The princess cut it up and threw it away. She, like the young men baptised with her, had all the religious zeal of the newly converted, wholly uncompromising in both what she rejected and what she accepted.¹⁵⁵ Such behaviours were outrageous to the Ganda culture. On 3rd June 31 Christians, both Catholics and Protestants were burnt together in a great holocaust at Namugongo. Others were speared, hacked to pieces, or left to die by the roadside in agony,¹⁵⁶ as was the Ganda custom for dealing with rebels against the King (Kabaka).

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 406.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ J.F. Faupel, *African Holocaust* (1962) 31; Quoted in Adrian Hastings, *Hastings*, 377.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 378-379.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 379.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

Besides cultural defilement, with Christianity came androcentricism to African societies. Europeans and the Bible gave prominence to male authority over women. Patriarchal ideology governed socio-political interactions at all levels of the new Christian Africa. Unlike practices like polygamy, which, though in the Bible, were not part of European culture of the time, other gender imbalances remained uncriticised.

2.3.1 Missionary Christianity and the emergency of African Independent Churches

As earlier noted some Africans rejected missionary Christianity and founded their own churches. In Kenya, the AICs were mainly in protest against colonial land grabbing and missionary undermining of African cultural practices especially female circumcision and polygamy. European missionaries were accused of trying to assimilate Africans culturally. There was however an urge for revival among African Christians who were able to read the Bible. This factor has been under-emphasised by many scholars of African Church history; who are inclined to stress African patriotism. Most of the founders of the AICs are said to have had a special encounter with the Holy-Spirit after reading the Bible calling them to preach the gospel and establish churches as the apostles, like Paul, did in the NT book of Acts. The missionary churches were so nominal that some white missionaries were accused of hypocrisy and double standards in their Christian life. They were not inclined to see the African as their equal and so they were accused of pride and arrogance.¹⁵⁷ African awareness of the white missionary behaviours and lifestyles away from the pulpit was informed by the ability to read the scriptures in their local languages. Translation of the Bible into vernacular languages enabled Africans to read the scriptures, and therewith assess the lives of their missionary teachers. In the Bible, African Christians read about the need for prayer and fasting and the power of the Holy Spirit. They read of the spiritual gifts about which Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:1-11: prophecy, healing and speaking in tongues. When they saw how spiritually empty and flat the leaders of the missionary churches were, they were motivated to pray and to seek the approbation of the Holy Spirit. They also noted the discriminatory tendencies of some white missionaries who did not regard Africans as equals, but as inferiors—contrary to Paul's teachings in the Letter to the Galatians. These resulted in the formation of what came to be called Spirit (Roho) churches. This

¹⁵⁷ Isichei, 236.

name signifies a repeated attempt to recapture Christian origins, to go back to the purer origin as the case was during Renaissance and Reformation in Europe

The AICs in Uganda include: the Bamalaki, founded by Mugema in 1914 and the African Orthodox Church founded by Reuben Mukasa Spartas who broke away from the CMS. At the secession, Mukasa described his church as a: “Church established for all right thinking Africans, men who wish to be free in their own house not always being thought of as boys.”¹⁵⁸

Mukasa initially affiliated his Church with the African Orthodox Church in South Africa, before joining the Greek Orthodox Church. Describing his church as right thinking Africans and not boys, but men wanting to be free in their own house, Mukasa’s goal was breaking away from European mastery. It was an assertion of self-determination, but also innately and overtly bolstered by African patriarchal instincts. He and others were right thinking men, not a women or boys. “Women” and “boys” are derogatory terms for weakness and conformism.

In Kenya, the AICs that emerged included: the Nomiya Luo Mission begun in 1914 by Johana Owalo. This church combined elements of Unitarian Christianity, Islam, Judaism and the Luo traditional practices in contrast to the Catholic and Anglican Christianity.¹⁵⁹ Other Kenyan churches were the African Brotherhood Church founded by Simeon Mulandi who broke away from the Africa Inland Mission in 1942 in Nairobi.¹⁶⁰ As well as the African Orthodox Church led by Gatung’u Gathuna, which merged with the Greek Orthodox Church of Mukasa Spartas in Uganda.

2.3.2 Holy Spirit and Revival Movements

The Holy Spirit or revival movements were started in 1912 by young people within the missionary churches across East Africa. In Kenya, it began in 1912 in an Anglican Church, a Friends African Mission and the Africa inland Mission.¹⁶¹ New spiritual (Roho) churches emerged, like other AICs, as African reactions to a foreign Christianity that had not taken in account an African’s spiritual needs.

¹⁵⁸ Allan Anderson, *African Reformation: African Initiated Christianity in the 20th Century* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2001), 145.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 152-153.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 150.

¹⁶¹ Philomena Njeri Mwaura, "Nigerian Pentecostal Missionary Enterprise in Kenya," in *Religion, History, and Politics in Nigeria*, ed. Chima J. Korie and G. Ugo Nwokeji (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 2005), 248.

The Holy Spirit movement stressed healing of the sick, prophecy, exorcism, Holy Spirit baptism and speaking in tongues. The revivalists identified themselves as Jesus' disciples, who, like the early Church Christians, had been given the authority over forces of darkness as evil spirits and diseases (see Matthew 10:1). They became extremely critical of the missionary churches, labelling the leadership as earthly and hypocritical. Indeed almost none of the white missionaries exhibited the biblical doctrines associated with the Holy Spirit like speaking in tongues, spiritual healing or exorcism.

The revivalists were either excommunicants from mission churches or voluntary deserters. For example, the Roho ("Spirit") movement was founded by Alfayo Odongo Mango (who seceded from the Anglican Church) in 1912. His movement was later named Dini ya Roho (Religion of the spirit) after his death. The African Israel Church Ninevah was founded in 1942 by Daudi Zakayi Kivuli. Kivule was initially supported by the Pentecostal Assembly of Canada (PAC).¹⁶² Legio Maria was founded by Simeo Ondelo in 1962. Ondelo received a calling as a prophet, which was characterized by visions of heaven and hell. In these visions, 'Anglicans were so close to hell that they could feel the heat'.¹⁶³ Several of Nomiyo Luo mission Christians claimed to have received the Holy Spirit in 1960 and started speaking in tongues and prophesying. They seceded from the main Nomiyo church and formed what they called Nomiya Roho Church under Bishop Zablon Ndiege. Other sects developed from Nomiyo Roho Church, which included Holy Ghost Coptic Church, Nomiya Luo Roho Gospellers Church and Nomiya Roho Sabbath Church.¹⁶⁴

In Kenya, revivalists who had been expelled from the Friends African Mission (Quaker) formed a church under the leadership of Jakobo Baluku, which later split into other Holy Spirit churches like Holy Spirit Church of East Africa (1940) led by Japtheth Zara, African Church of the Holy Spirit led by Kafe Ayub Mavuru and Gospel Holy Spirit Church of East Africa.¹⁶⁵ The Quaker mission leadership and the North American

¹⁶² Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 113.

¹⁶³ Isichei, 232-233.

¹⁶⁴ Anderson, *African Reformation : African Initiated Christianity in the 20th Century*, 153.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 156.

mission authorities had discouraged the revivalists and banned public confession of sins and spiritual gifts like speaking in tongues and prophesy.¹⁶⁶

The Akurinu, also known as *Watu wa Mungu* (People of God) is another Holy Spirit movement in Kenya that emerged in 1927. It started as a prophet healing movement in Central Kenya before it went to other areas like the Rift Valley region. Unlike other Holy Spirit churches, the Akurinu Church's history is not so clear and it has remained a subject of speculation: the founders of Akurinu seemed to have had very little contact or influence with western Missionaries. The Church traces its inception from its leaders' reading the vernacular Bible. Joseph Ng'ang'a and John Mung'ara who founded the sect are said to have devoted their time to reading the Kikuyu translation of the Bible and to prayer.¹⁶⁷ They questioned the way Europeans had interpreted the Bible, and they claimed to offer the correct interpretation of the Bible since they possess the spirit of prophecy. They claimed to be guided by the Holy Spirit in Bible interpretation and, for this reason, the Akurinu do not take their pastors for theological training.¹⁶⁸

From 1949, a schism started appeared in the Akurinu movement which saw the formation of several Holy Spirit churches: Samuel Thuku founded the God's Word Holy Ghost Church (1949), Johana Waweru formed African Mission of the Holy Ghost Church (1950); Hezron Tumbo formed the Holy Ghost Church of Kenya (1958), which later became the Holy Ghost Church of East Africa in 1972. Another group formed the Kenya Foundation of the Prophets Church (1960), and the African Holy Ghost Christian Church was formed by Daniel Nduti.¹⁶⁹

Another Holy Spirit movement, called the East African Revival or *Balokole* movement, started in the 1930s at Gahini, a mission station in Rwanda, and then spread to Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. It arose out of differences between "nominal" and "true" Christians in the Anglican Church. It started quietly and imperceptibly in the early 1930s until it became widespread in 1936. This movement, though it is believed to be an African movement, had strong links to discontented foreign missionaries as well. For instance, Pilkington, the CMS missionary who had replaced Alexander Mackey, had reportedly received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit after a prayer retreat in December

¹⁶⁶ Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism : Global Charismatic Christianity*, 113.

¹⁶⁷ Ndung'u, 240.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 241.

¹⁶⁹ Anderson, *African Reformation : African Initiated Christianity in the 20th Century*, 159.

1893.¹⁷⁰ He reportedly returned from the prayer retreat to inspire other missionaries and to stir revival. The Church started numerous services and people's growing desire to read the Bible and joy increased. Mr H.R Leakey, a missionary is reported to have said: "Many who had long been looked upon as leading Christians realized a new force and power in their Christian life.... I never in my life had realized the power of the spirit of God present to serve and working in our midst as I did at those meeting".¹⁷¹ Other missionaries, like Joe Church, also believed in the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Church shared biblical lessons about the filling of the Holy Spirit and living a victorious life with Simeon Nsibambi in Uganda.¹⁷²

Like other Holy Spirit Movements, the East African revival Movement, at its beginning had strange phenomena. There were dreams, visions, weeping and shaking among believers. Restitutions were made. Sins were repented of and renounced: theft, adultery, drunkenness and tobacco consumption, among others.¹⁷³ This revival movement, (Balokole or saved ones) was commonly identified with a Luganda chorus popularly known as *tukutendereza* (we praise you Jesus). The movement however remained within the traditional Anglican mainstream Church. They did not break away to form new sects or denominations.

In the 1960s and the 1970s American evangelists like Billy Graham and T.L Osborne visited Kenya and staged powerful crusades. The revivalists were encouraged to learn that revival was a worldwide phenomenon. From this time, revival entered African schools as African students who were from revival backgrounds became ambassadors of their faith. They formed prayer and scripture groups to facilitate their spiritual nurturing.¹⁷⁴ Many lay people became involved in the revival. They later became prominent evangelists and church founders. For example Joe Kayo in Kenya founded the Deliverance Church and David Kimani founded Bethel Mission.

Bear in mind that Pentecostalism in East Africa was not primarily a local enterprise: foreign Pentecostal groups had already been introduced as early as 1912. In Kenya One of the earliest Pentecostal works was initiated in 1912 by a Finnish

¹⁷⁰ Paddy Musana, "The Pentecostal Movement in Uganda: Its Impact With Specific Reference to Kampala City" (Makerere University, 1991), 74.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 76.

¹⁷² Kevin Ward, "Tukutendereza Yesu: The Balokole Revival in Uganda," in *From Missions to Church: A Handbook of Christianity in East Africa*, ed. Zablon Nthamburi (Nairobi: Uzima Press, 1991), 113.

¹⁷³ Musana, 79.

¹⁷⁴ Mwaura, 249.

missionary Emil Danielson. Other foreign Pentecostal missions were led by the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAC) and American Assemblies of God.¹⁷⁵ But these had not been so militant in evangelism as their African counterparts.

Foreign Pentecostalism in Uganda started in 1960 with churches like the Gospel Mission to Uganda by the Glad Tiding Missionary society led by H.D Layzell, an American.¹⁷⁶ As well as, Elim church that was started in Uganda as a fellowship by Rev. Arthur Dodzweit, an American, in 1962.¹⁷⁷ Later other Churches were formed, including the Deliverance Church, the Full Gospel Church, and the Salvation Army among others. By 1970, there were over 15 Pentecostal Churches in Uganda.

Unlike Kenya, political anarchy in Uganda in the 1970s and the early 1980s was disruptive to the Holy Spirit faith. Idi Amin persecuted many Pentecostal Christians, hence forcing many believers in these independent religions backslide. Some went back to the Institutional Religions (Churches). However there were some who, amidst this wave of persecution, continued with their faith even though could not openly express it. They met in secret. Government security forces hunted for and tortured Pentecostal believers. For example, on 12th April 1978, 600 worshippers at Makerere Gospel Mission Church were beaten and dispersed in disarray. Some escaped while 200 were arrested and taken to Nakasero State Research Bureau (SRB), later to Central Police Station (CPS) and finally to Luzira maximum Prison, where they were imprisoned for 3 months. They were ultimately released on 30th June, 1978.¹⁷⁸ Rev. Arthur Dodzweit of Lubiri Elim Church was forced to leave the country. He never returned until his death.¹⁷⁹ His departure was in itself a blow to the Church as some believers regarded him as a pillar of the Church. Other Pentecostals, especially from Eastern Uganda, went to Kenya where the Religious and the Political climates were more conducive later to return and form Pentecostal Churches, especially in the eastern districts of Busia, Tororo, Bugiri, Mbala and Kapchorwa.

Following the overthrow of Idi Amin in 1979, a new wave of hope for religious freedom spread across the country. Churches and sects emerged, including those banned in 1977. But, still, there was no trust in the political situation, both locally and

¹⁷⁵ Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity*, 111-112.

¹⁷⁶ Musana, 87..

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 88-89.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 87..

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 89-90.

internationally. The political future was still obscure. There were five military coups with a period of five years. There was a lot of rebel insurgency, like the NRA led by Yoweri K. Museveni (1981-1986). There were also numerous roadblocks, violation of human rights and suspicions of every organisation that did not have a clear historical base in Uganda. This made it difficult to exercise religious freedoms. International evangelists feared coming to Uganda, though some Pentecostal movements persisted and continued to operate secretly in the country.

From 1980s to the present, the Pentecostal Churches, fellowships and ministries increased. They were both local and foreign in character. International evangelists like Benny Hinn, Reinhardt Bonke, Joyce Meyer, Moris Cerulo, among others, staged revival and miracle crusades in the major towns of Kenya and Uganda.¹⁸⁰ Local evangelists made frequent appearances in playgrounds and parks to stage crusades. Others are busy on the roadsides and Passenger Service Vehicles (PSV) preaching. There are numerous radio- and televangelism stations airing evangelization problems codenamed “morning glory,” “lunch-hour,” “evening fellowship,” or “deliverance;” both in major languages like Kiswahili and English and in local languages like Luganda, Kikuyu and Luo.

2.3.3 The Bible: Political and Socio-Economic impact

The impact of the Bible in shaping the socio-political and even the economic *modi vivendi* of African communities has received a considerable amount of attention and analysis by many scholars at various levels. It has been discussed in symposia, seminars, academic writings and textbooks, though under different themes, topics and foci of different African communities. Scholars working on these topics include Gerald O. West, Musa S. Dube, Justin Ukpong, Holter Knut, Anthony Nkwoka, S.R Sugirtharaja, among others.

Whereas there is a large amount of literature written about various interaction with and interpretation of the Bible, much of what has been written mainly addresses the contexts of West Africa and Southern Africa. Other regions, especially the East African countries, are present in few academic writings about Biblical interpretation and use by ordinary, contemporary people. Taking the case of Uganda and Kenya, I attempt to explore the way the Bible is used and how its interpretations have affected the people of

¹⁸⁰ Mwaura, 249.

the East Africa. A majority of Ugandans and Kenyans are part of the wider African Christian community, albeit with differences in colonial experience and with important cultural divergences. Without underscoring the variations that exist between African communities that beg for a detailed recapitulation, I am reiterating Justin Ukpong's work whose context is West Africa, for purpose of illustration and a preamble to the East African context. There is a great degree of similarities in the diversities of African societies and cultures across the Sub-Saharan region.

Missionaries not only brought the Bible to Africa, but also carried a strong desire that African Christians should be able to read scriptures themselves. They established schools in order to teach Africans how to read the Bible. Some missionary groups insisted that literacy was a prerequisite for Baptism.¹⁸¹ To prepare for baptism, candidates involved had to acquire basic reading and writing skills. Accepting Christianity meant also accepting the Christian Bible and its teachings and ideologies. This meant that Africans enriched their world-view and spiritual reality with the biblical world-view that was perceived as holy and pristine over other world views. Africans who adopted these scriptures expounded them in terms of African culture. Significantly, the English Bible had by 1960 been translated into vernacular languages to various extents. Earlier missionaries like Krapf, Rebmann and The University Mission to Central Africa (UMCA) Missionaries had laid the foundation for local translations when they translated some books of the Bible in Kiswahili dialects.¹⁸² The Swahili Bible had as its audience, "all the Christians in the whole of East Africa and Central Africa."¹⁸³ Other vernacular translations followed which included the Kikuyu, Luyha, Kamba and Dhuhuo.¹⁸⁴

The CMS in Uganda translated and published the Bible into Luganda in 1896.¹⁸⁵ Luganda, as one of the Bantu languages was understood by many tribes in the region like Busoga and Bunyoro. Other tribes that used Luganda were the Luyha in Western

¹⁸¹ Richard Gray, "Christianity, Colonialism, and Communications in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Journal for Black Studies* 13, no. 1 (1982): 68.

¹⁸² Mojola, 511-514.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 517-518.

¹⁸⁴ Samson Kamau Gitau, "The Impact of Scriptural Translations on the Missionary Churches: A Case Study of the Church of the Province of Kenya, Murang District 1903-1988" (University of Nairobi, 1989), 59-60, 63-66 & 85.

¹⁸⁵ Aloo Osotsi Mojola, "100 Years of the Luganda Bible (1896-1996)," in *The Bible in Africa : Transactions, Trajectories, and Trends*, ed. Gerald O. West and Musa W. Dube Shomanah (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 525-526.

Kenya and Bahaya of North western Tanzania.¹⁸⁶ The Catholics also had parallel translations of Bible texts into Luganda, which were printed locally in Kampala for liturgical use.¹⁸⁷ Eventually there developed additional translations into non-Luganda languages like the Runyoro-Rutoro Bible (1912), Alur Bible (1936), Ateso Bible (1961), Runyankore-Rukiga (1964), Lugbara (1966), Lango and Bari (1979), Kakwa (1983) and the Acholi (1986).¹⁸⁸ Other tribes have only New Testament translations. They include Karamojong (1974), Madi and Lumasaaba (1977), Kebu (1995) and Kupsapiny (1996).¹⁸⁹

Justin Ukpong presented a comparative analysis of how ordinary people read the Bible in Africa and in Europe. He took as cases Nigeria and Glasgow, Scotland. According to Ukpong, Africans exhibited what he calls a naïve dogmatic approach to the Bible. The Bible, to an African, is God's own words divinely inspired and communicated to human beings. Africans maintain an attitude of reverence and submission to it as if the words of the Bible were directly communicated to humanity by God. Being the word of God, the Bible is read literally as authoritative over the people and its teachings accepted without question. This is a common stance shared among all African Christians, irrespective of denomination.

Ukpong rightly points out the fact that in Africa the Bible is divinely inspired and it is believed to have magical properties. Africans use the Bible to ward off evil spirits, witchcraft and sorcery; it is placed under the pillow at night while an African sleeps to ensure God's protection against the devil. It is placed in handbags and cars when travelling to ensure a safe journey and it is used in making oaths. It is also used in seeking deliverance from afflictions like poverty, childlessness, etc. which are believed to be caused by evil spirits. Indeed passages of the Bible, notably Psalms, are read and recited as incantations for protection, consolation, enlightenment and prosperity.

Ukpong concludes that the reverence accorded to the Bible as God's word makes it to be regarded entirely as a book of devotion, a rule of life and a norm for morality to the Africans. Africans, as such, do not read the Bible with a questioning mind. Questioning biblical authority is seen by many as a sin and a blasphemy. Africans read the Bible to learn what God is teaching them in life or how God is responding to them in

¹⁸⁶ See Mojola, *Ibid.*, 524, 525.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 534-535.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 536.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

their challenges. In illustrating people's literal interpretation of the Bible, Ukpong drew a question for African Christians from the NT text of 1 Corinthians 11:5-15. He asked; "Should women cover their hair during worship?" In response, almost 75% answered in the affirmative, 21% in the negative and 6.4% were undecided. This teaching, which Apostle Paul sent to the Corinthian believers, is accepted by Africans as dogma and universal in application.¹⁹⁰ It also influences power and gender relations among Africans.

The Bible, especially in the vernacular translations, gives spiritual inspiration, hope and morale to people facing life challenges. Some Christian converts have tried to emulate lives of some Bible heroes like Moses, the Prophets, Jesus' disciples and Paul, apparently to be closer to God. The Bible assured them that their suffering is temporal and, if they endure to the end, they will have eternal life. A case in point was the Buganda martyrs. These Christian converts had chance to survive the persecution by Kabaka Mwanga. Some missionary leaders advised their converts to run away and escape from Mwanga before it was too late. Those who escaped from Buganda survived the persecution. Apolo Kagwa, a survivor of the holocaust wrote in his privately printed manuscript *Ebika Bya Buganda* (1912) that:

"Zakariya Kizito and Nuwa Walukaga remained ... prepared to be arrested. [But when] they saw in the distance the chief executioner... Kizito...remember[ed] how it is written in Matthew 10: 22-23, "That man will be saved who endures to the last. Only, if they persecute you in one city, take refuge in another." And when he had remembered that, he stood up and said to his friend: "Let us flee, because God has directed us to go." But his companion refused. Then he turned to prayer a second time, and when he had finished praying, he stood up quickly and ran and entered the place of Prince Kiwewa, where he hid himself. But when he had just left Nuwa Walukaga, the executioners came and seized Walukaga and took him away... When [Kizito] came out of

¹⁹⁰ Justin S. Ukpong, "Popular Readings of the Bible in Africa and Implications for Academic Readings: Report on the Field Research Carried out in Oral Interpretation of the Bible in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Nigeria under the Auspices of the Bible in Africa Project, 1991-94," in *The Bible in Africa : Transactions, Trajectories, and Trends*, ed. Gerald O. West and Musa W. Dube Shomanah (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 582-593.

[Kiwewa's place], he very wisely decided to remain in hiding until the persecution should stop."¹⁹¹

I am inclined to argue that the Bible greatly determined the fate of Christian converts who were undergoing persecutions: those who became victims of the inferno depended heavily on the promises in the scriptures. Stories where God intervened to save his followers like Daniel (from lions), Meshach, Shedrack and Abednego (from Nebuchadnezzar's furnace) in the book of Daniel 3:17 were highly influential. Others were motivated by the scriptural promises for eternal life. Like the Apostle Stephen who suffered the stoning but at least saw heaven, Uganda martyrs were sure that losing physical life for the course of Christ would be rewarded with eternal life. Matthias Kalemba, one of the people burnt by Mwanga is recorded to have said to Luke Banabakintu, a fellow martyr, "Goodbye my friend we shall meet again in heaven", before he was killed.¹⁹² Some Christian converts who escaped survived the persecution. The few who refused to escape or were intercepted renounced their faith, at least for the moment to save their lives like one Mika Sematimba.¹⁹³

Some Christian converts especially in Kenya used the Bible to promote nationalism. According to Sugirtharajah, those communities that faced disruption due to imperial exploitation like land grabbing, segregation, and forced labour discovered revolutionary potential in the Bible. They recovered episodes in the OT that identified with nationalistic, anti-foreign and revolutionary causes.¹⁹⁴ In the NT, they drew upon the insurrectionary nature of the Apocalypse and reconfigured the Christian concept of the Kingdom as reconquering and recovering the land from the Whites. They selected the biblical insights that easily resonated with their beliefs. Moses was a pivotal figure in the Bible as the liberator, with John the Baptist added from the NT as the ideal diviner-prophet.¹⁹⁵ For the Africans of this era, the truth was found in the books of

¹⁹¹ J. A. Rowe, "The Purge of Christians at Mwanga's Court: A Reassessment of This Episode in Buganda History," *The Journal of African History* 5, no. 1 (1964): 59-60.

¹⁹² J. Faupel, 177; Quoted in Adrian Hastings, Hastings, 379. Emphasis mine

¹⁹³ Mika Sematimba a Protestant chief who lived until 1951 nearly was killed during the persecutions. He attempted to escape to the far west into the kingdom of Ankole but he found his way blocked by the swollen waters of the Katonga River. He returned to Buganda and was presented before Mwanga as a repentant fugitive, and managed to secure the Kabaka's pardon. But in actual sense, Sematimba had not denounced his faith. At a later point, he was caught with a set of New Testament texts by Kabaka's guards, but this time he fled without turning back. See Rowe, Rowe: 62.

¹⁹⁴ R. S. Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World : Precolonial, Colonial and Postcolonial Encounters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 106.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

Deuteronomy and Leviticus and the role of Moses as leader and liberator, and in detailed prescriptions of taboos associated with sex and food.¹⁹⁶ Biblical taboos were a reminiscent of African cultural prohibitions. As seen earlier, African cultures are replete with dietary prohibitions, which reinforced gender differences in favour of men. In Kenya, Mt Kenya and Mt Elgon became iconic as a reminiscent of biblical Sinai (Horeb) to where Kenyan nationalists like Jomo Kenyatta and Elijah Masinde claimed to receive inspiration to their course.

2.3.3.1 The Vernacular Bible and African Political and Cultural Nationalism

Scholars have emphasised the importance of the vernacular Bible in promoting nationalism. Africans were able to read the Bible in their own languages and distinguish between what Missionaries were teaching and what the Bible teaches. Anderson shows how the Bible became an independent source of authority apart from the European Missionaries.¹⁹⁷ The Bible offered the most authoritative tool in defending African customs and values like polygamy, female circumcision, ancestral veneration, African names and other practices that missionary Christianity had named pagan. Exemplary of such Africans was Jomo Kenyatta in Kenya, who was the Mau Mau leader and later the first President of the Republic of Kenya. In his book *Facing Mount Kenya* (1938, 273), Kenyatta wrote:

“The African faced with these problems of seeing how his institutions have been shattered looked again in the Book of Books. There he found polygamy sanctioned by the personal practice of great Biblical characters... But he was shocked to find the missionary again condemning him as a sinner for fulfilling that which is sanctioned in the Ibuku ria Ngai (The book of God).”¹⁹⁸

Samson Kamau Gitau, who has researched about the Kikuyu Bible, has noted that the Kikuyu Christians found mainly three things when they read the Kikuyu translation of the Bible:

1) That the Bible which appeared closed before the translation gradually became a living book, different from other books. Quoting one of the earliest readers of the translation Gitau notes:

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Anderson, *African Reformation : African Initiated Christianity in the 20th Century*, 31.

¹⁹⁸ Quoted by Ndung'u, Ndung'u, 240.

“In our own language, we found that we had full access to god without the missionary intermediaries who used foreign accents between us and the biblical truth; there was no longer that authoritative missionary transmitter of that biblical message. The word of God could now speak to us directly, with full force and authority.”¹⁹⁹

This is, needless to say, a traditionally Protestant move. Unmediated access to the Word of God now turned against the Protestant missionaries and the whole colonial Christian structure.

2) They heard Bible stories about God’s salvation and grace unveiled; that is, in a language they understood with their whole being, a language of their dreams and expectations, of their hopes and of their fears. To them, the Bible became a mirror that reflects or a photograph that records a people’s experience. The Kikuyu realised the cultural continuity or transcendence between the biblical past and their present.

3) The Kikuyu now accessed the whole of the Bible, as translated versions eliminated the selective Bible teachings missionaries were using. Andrew Karega, one of the earliest evangelists in Kikuyuland is quoted as saying:

“We were expected to take whatever the missionaries taught as the gospel truth. They alone had access to this Bible in their language. When we got the vernacular Bible, we felt that we were finally being initiated into the mysteries of the Bible. Ngai (God) was now speaking our language and the Bible was now our Bible. There was a feeling among us that we were now free to apply this biblical message in ways we understood”²⁰⁰

The same is quoted of Maina Emmanuel, who later became a Holy Ghost Church of East Africa member:

“I recall how the Kikuyu Bible was brought in our home by my uncle. This Holy Bible was treasured highly in our family. We used to gather in our home every evening to read this Bible. We came to discover that the missionaries were misinterpreting the biblical message on various

¹⁹⁹ Gitau, 72.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 73.

issues to suit their own end. We vowed to apply this biblical truth in ways we found fit.”²⁰¹

This means that an African inscribed new meanings and ideologies to the Bible passage; meanings and ideologies that mirrored his identity and ideological views of what reality is to him.

The Kikuyu, as did other Africans who read the translated Bible, realised that western missionary came with cultural imperialism. The truly contentious issue was that of polygamy, to which missionaries were opposed, and yet to an African were family values of the Bible. To some Kikuyu, the banning of female circumcision was the nadir of their cultural destruction by missionaries. In the Bible, the word virgin, which refers to the mother of Jesus, had been translated with the Kikuyu word *Muiritu*, which denoted an unmarried but fully circumcised girl.²⁰² The Kikuyu had read from Paul’s epistles that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision was any evil; for all were equal before Jesus Christ (Galatians. 6:15). The term for circumcision, as translated into Kikuyu, *irua* was one which did not distinguish between the male and the female operations. They further argued that among God’s commandments there was none that outlawed such circumcision.²⁰³ To the Kikuyu people, missionary attitude towards their circumcision was not biblical but an attack to their cultural heritage, which the Bible translations favour to preserve. Circumcision of women was a way of ensuring social order.

Some African converts ended up forming independent Christian related religious Movements like Dini Ya Musambwa (DYM), arguing that Europeans’ hatred for polygamy was an arbitrary rule of the Church in Europe, which is not supported by the Bible at all.²⁰⁴ Some Africans argued that their ancestral beliefs and ritual observance which the missionaries had labelled savage and devilish were endorsed by the Bible in the commandment: “Honour your father!”²⁰⁵ African religions and cultures found the Bible useful in ancestral veneration, child naming ceremonies in which ancestral spirits are evoked, and pouring of libations.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 74.

²⁰² Ibid., 78.

²⁰³ Ibid., 79.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 77.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

In many political aspects the Bible has been a central text in public discourses and political criticism in East Africa. Politicians, Church leaders and lay Christians often quote the Bible in political speeches, arguments and observations either as a point of reference to criticise bad regimes or as a way of gracing political rhetoric. In Uganda, the late Bishop Luwum and others criticised Idi Amin on the basis of the biblical theme of good leadership. In Kenya, Christian leaders from the Nyanza, Rift Valley and Western Provinces of Kenya blamed the leadership of Mwai Kibaki for tolerating corruption in government by protecting corrupt officials. Quoting Proverbs 6:30-31, the Church leaders wondered why the government could not bring the corrupt ministers to justice and make them pay back what they have robbed from Kenyans.²⁰⁶ We shall analyse some of the speeches made by President Museveni of Uganda using biblical quotations in the next chapter.

To date, the people of East Africa strongly believe that God reveals his will and manifests himself to the people through the Bible. The sermons are closely related to the biblical passages read, tackling issues of life like poverty and sickness and moral issues like adultery, drunkenness, homosexuality, and crime among others. It is not rare to find confessions from ordinary Christians about the Bible. Even in the State media like Newspapers, we read:

“Don’t take the Bible lightly. Every Word that comes your way, don’t rubbish it; God is talking to you....Scripture whether in the Old or New Testament has a purpose to either correct or give instruction for righteousness among other things...it is important that we must read and memorize scripture and read it again in different versions of the Bible... God is not a man that He should lie. If the scripture is about marriage and you are a widow do not discard it claiming it is not yours.”²⁰⁷

The emphasis on “God is not a man that He should lie” signifies that Bible—the word of God is the unquestionable truth (c.f John 8:32).

²⁰⁶ "Opened Pastoral Letter to H.E. Hon. Kofi Annan Head of the Au Mediation Team, from Bishops and Church Leaders from Nyanza, Western and Rift Valley Provinces.", <http://africanpress.wordpress.com/2008/01/30/opened-pastoral-letter-to-he-hon-kofi-annan-head-of-the-au-mediation-team-from-bishops-and-church-leaders-from-nyanza-western-and-rift-valley-provinces/> (accessed 1st June 2009).

²⁰⁷ Malita Wamala, "Cling onto Every Word from God," *The observer* (1st. April 2009). http://www.observer.ug/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2789:cling-onto-every-word-from-god&catid=43:easy-thursday&Itemid=71 (accessed 4th April 2009). http://www.austria-uganda.at/_museveni_speech.htm

Any religious or moral doctrine is bolstered by its allusion or appearance in the Bible. Moral issues in the West like abortion, homosexuality, *in vitro fertilisation (IVF)* are contested by African Christians either because the Bible out-rightly condemns them like homosexuality and other sexual activities (Genesis 19; Leviticus 18:22, 20:13; 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; among others) or they are contrary to African traditional culture and there is “no biblical account” to justify them at all. Homosexuality in Africa is being challenged in terms of African culture and the Bible, as the major two parameters for value and validity judgement among African Christians.

There was a serious uproar from the Christian community of Uganda when Gadhafi, the “former” Libyan President referred to the Bible as a forgery: “The Bible we have now is not the one that was revealed to Issa (Jesus) and the Old Testament is not the one that was revealed to Musa...it (Bible) has been forged.... We have to look for the Bible and Torah that were sent to Moses and Jesus...”²⁰⁸

Christian leaders in East Africa utterly condemned Gadhafi and described his statement as divisive and unfortunate. A statement issued by Rev. Canon Aaron Mwesigye, the provincial secretary of the Anglican Church of Uganda, responded that: “Many scholars have proven the accuracy of the Bible, and God Himself has shown it to be true.”²⁰⁹

The Bible is key in Holy-spirit Churches. There are a series of weekly or daily Bible study sessions in most Holy Spirit Churches to strengthen the faith of the believers. Believers are advised to read their Bibles on a regular basis for inspiration and divine instructions. During church services there are many Bible references that can be read or mentioned in a single sermon. Prayers are also based on exposition of relevant Bible passages apparently to remind God of what He has promised or said in the Bible. The rhetorical formula used usually consists of words and phrases such as: “YOUR word says...,” “according to YOUR word...”

The major doctrine that seems to surpass others in these Holy Spirit Movements is the central place of healing in the Bible. The promises of God to Israel, such as those

²⁰⁸ Husein Bogere, "Bible a Forgery, Says Col. Gadaffi," *Monitor Online* (March 20, 2008) (2008). <http://www.monitor.co.ug/artman/publish/news/Bible_a_forgery_says_Col_Gadaffi_62350.shtml> (accessed 1st June 2009).

²⁰⁹ Husein Bogere and Jane Nafula, "Gadaffi Remarks Anger Christians," *Monitor Online* (March 21, 2008) (2008). <http://www.monitor.co.ug/artman/publish/news/Gadaffi_remarks_anger_Christians_62401.shtml> (accessed 1st June 2009).

recorded in Exodus 15:26, Deuteronomy 7:15 and Jeremiah 30:17 are perceived by Africans to be a direct inheritance of all those who have accepted Christ as their Lord and saviour.²¹⁰ The mission of Jesus as a healer and exorcist affirms these Old Testament promises that good health is actually an African believer's entitlement (c.f Mark 7:25-30).²¹¹ Isaiah's prophecy ("...and with his stripes we are healed." Isaiah 53:5), also quoted by the writer of 1 Peter in 2:24 is interpreted christologically, that by the stripes of Jesus "we are healed," is a highly acclaimed credence among African believers.²¹² It is believed in Africa, as a whole, on the basis of the Bible and African traditional religion that diseases and serious sickness have supernatural causes; and hence the call for supernatural healing. At the time of this study, a number of young people born with HIV in Uganda have reportedly abandoned antiretroviral drugs, commonly called ARVs in favour of spiritual healing in revival churches.²¹³

In African Traditional Religion (ATR), sick people would be healed when a particular god is appeased or a malignant spirit is exorcised by a more powerful spirit or a god whose services are enlisted through prescribed sacrifices.²¹⁴ From a biblical perspective, diseases and sickness vanish when Jesus casts out the spirit of infirmity or forgives the sins of the patient. Confession of sins is essential to obtaining God's mercy and, once properly done, the Name of Jesus is invoked in the power of the Holy Spirit in driving out the spirit of infirmity.²¹⁵

This can be illustrated by the practices of the Nabii Christian Church of Kenya. Supplicants are asked to prepare for the ritual by confessing their sins and sometimes by fasting. They are also asked to bring 24 candles of white, blue, yellow and green colours together with a certain amount of money depending on the severity of the problem. The ritual takes place in the prophet-healers' home where he has a permanent altar.²¹⁶ During

²¹⁰ Anthony O. Nkwoka, "The Role of the Bible in the Igbo Christianity of Nigeria," in *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories and Trends*, ed. Gerald O. West and Musa W. Dube (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 330.

²¹¹ Jesus is said to have told the Syro-Phoenician woman that healing is first meant for the Jews, who in the African's case stands for the African Christian.

²¹² Nkwoka, *Ibid.*

²¹³ "Teens with Hiv Prefer Religion to Arvs", New Vision <http://www.newvision.co.ug/D/8/13/735009/> (accessed 9th December 2010).

²¹⁴ Nkwoka, 330.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 331.

²¹⁶ Philomena Mwaura, "The Old Testament in the Nabii Christian Church of Kenya," in *Interpreting the Old Testament in Africa: Papers from the International Symposium on Africa and the Old Testament in Nairobi, October 1999*, ed. Mary Getui, Knut Holter, and Victor Zinkurature (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 167

this ritual Psalms 35 is read. This is a lament and prayer for deliverance in which the writer asks for protection against friends who have turned into enemies.

During the ritual, a circle is drawn on the floor next to the altar. The candles are placed on the circle and lit and the supplicant is asked to stand inside the circle. The supplicant is then given a Bible to hold, on which is placed an envelope containing some money, a list of people who are believed to have caused his suffering like relatives who have died, and the Psalm to be read. The prophet-healer, wearing a green or red cassock and cap, then reads the psalm and asks the supplicant to repeat after him the following words:

“Dear Lord, I come to you humbly and in pain to accuse before you those responsible for my suffering. Please fight this battle for me. Confuse them and frustrate all their plans against me. Close all their doors. Deliver me and when you triumph over them, I will give glory to you and continually praise you. I ask all these in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.”

After this, the prophet then concludes the prayer by pleading with God on behalf of the supplicant. He also prays for the suppression of the dead who could be responsible for the supplicant's distress.²¹⁷ The presence of colours and light in the healing process is significant. White stands for holiness, blue for faithfulness, green for hope and yellow for light. Evil spirits are said to fear the red colour, which could stand for fire or the blood of Jesus. This is why the prophet puts on the red garment. The ring of fire is also believed to be a protected area where evil spirits cannot harm the supplicant.²¹⁸

Faith healing is an incontrovertible aspect of African Christianity. The faith healers believe that they do not possess any magical or healing powers. They are commissioned by Jesus Christ who Himself does the healing through them as human mediums. Believers in these churches hold that they have authority over sickness and evil spirits. Such belief is based on Matthew 10. Therefore, strong faith in Jesus Christ is emphasised, and so in many cases the patient must first be “born again” and promise to continue in the faith after the healing.²¹⁹ In these Churches, Bible is believed to have

²¹⁷ Philomena Mwaura, "The Old Testament in the Nabii Christian Church of Kenya," in *Interpreting the Old Testament in Africa: Papers from the International Symposium on Africa and the Old Testament in Nairobi, October 1999*, ed. Mary Getui, Knut Holter, and Victor Zinkurature (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 167.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 168.

²¹⁹ Nkwoka, 331.

magical efficacy. In some of these Churches, the Bible is used as though it transmits some mystical powers which change things. In prayer for spiritual healing, some Christians like the Akurinu in Kenya and local Pentecostals pray while placing the Bible on the patients.²²⁰

The centrality of the Bible in African Christianity can be observed also in the Jerusalem Church of Christ (JCC), one of the New Religious Movements in Kenya. The preacher claims that God reveals to her the verse of the Bible to read for the day and when to conduct the Bible ceremony. During marriage unions in the JCC (as in most revival churches of this category), the prophetess places the Bible above the head of a couple to bless them. While praying for her members, the bible is always held in one of her hands. The Bible is also used during exorcism, especially from mentally ill patients. During these ceremonies, the patient is hit hard with the Bible on his head or his shoulder to scare away demons from the victim.

During the Bible ceremony, all the JCC members are softly hit with the Bible by the prophetess on their chest. Areas of ailments are also softly hit. Photographs of friends and relatives and personal documents are softly hit to bless them.²²¹

JCC also take the Bible as a manual of instruction in all aspects of life. They observe dietary restrictions, such as not eating pork or meat from a dead animal. Leviticus 17:10-11 is given as a reason for not eating blood, while Jonah 1 is a reason for not eating big fish like Nile Perch. Everything in the JCC is justified by the Bible. Women's meetings which take places on Fridays are justified by Titus 2:4. Women's submissiveness to their husbands is highly emphasised and so justified.²²² In the JCC, the Bible is performative and literal.

African Churches and religious assemblies are also characterised by lively worship. Believers sing indigenous and foreign (language) songs while clapping hands, drumming and dancing. Others use guitars, pianos and other musical instruments. This mode of worship is justified on the biblical basis of Psalms 150, 47 and 1 Chronicles 25.²²³ In Uganda and Kenya independent gospel singers and musical bands have evolved along with rock music shops and homes with gospel songs. Secular artists have also

²²⁰ Ndung'u, 241.

²²¹ Jacob O. M. Nandi, "The Jerusalem Church of Christ: A Prophet Healing Independent Church in Kenya" (University of Nairobi, 1993), 148.

²²² Ibid., 151-152.

²²³ Nkwoka, 331-332.

found it fashionable to compose gospel songs, apparently to get support, audience and legitimacy of a big Christian population that is opposed to secular music.

Another role of the Bible has been the discovery of tithing. Tithing is popularised on the biblical books of Malachi 3:8-10, Hebrews 7:1-10 and Mathew 23:23. It has been emphasised that receiving without giving is unbiblical. And that tithing is a requirement lest the person be simply robbing God and attracting God's decreed curse (Malachi 3:9). In Pentecostal churches, tithing has become an established practice and an important source of revenue generation for their churches and ministries.²²⁴ Expositions of the Bible are made before tithes and offerings are collected. Case studies are drawn from the Bible as are sometimes life testimonies in which real or created of people have given and prospered. This serves to remove doubts and indignation from the tither. It is not clear where the money collected in these churches goes. Believers give to God but they do not receive receipts from Him. In some churches with large congregations of believers millions of shillings are collected in a single church service. Apart from operational costs like electricity, water and salaries, much of the earnings end up in personal accounts of the ministers to finance expensive lifestyles. Most of these Church leaders live in very expensive houses and drive very expensive cars, some with personalised number plates, with their children attending very expensive schools locally or. Interestingly, the tithers remain poor but hopeful. They are manual labourers, retail shopkeepers, roadside and open-market vendors of mainly food-stuffs and charcoal. Churches have become so lucrative that every enterprising believer would contemplate having one. This is what accounts for the many, and still mushrooming, evangelical churches within the small radius of an African town or village.

Some Christian Assemblies practice the ritualistic OT practices like removing of shoes before entering church (Exodus 3:5), ritual cleanliness after child birth (Leviticus 12:1-8), and raising of hands up during prayer (I Kings 8:22-23).²²⁵

Popular Bible interpretation has brought with it extremism that has brought some Christians into conflict with government programs and authorities. In Uganda, there was a controversy over Pupil Identification Number (PIN) system introduced by the government for all children accessing Universal Primary Education (UPE) in the

²²⁴ Ibid., 332.

²²⁵ Ndung'u, 241.

country. Under the PIN system, all pupils are supposed to be given an identification number so that they might be easily traced, monitored and catered for by the government. Some Christian parents, especially those that belong to evangelical churches have withdrawn their children from schools because they fear that the PIN system is the 666 satanic mark which is talked about in Revelation 13:16-18. These parents have also instructed their children to boycott the national head counting of pupils that was done throughout the country to enable the government efficiently manage the running of the UPE program.²²⁶ This was reminiscent of OT ideals of counting. David counted people and a disaster resulted. In some organizations, followers have gone to the extreme of not owning phones or having bank accounts because these facilities would identify with some number, which they believe to be devilish.²²⁷

The Bible is now an African book. African women and men read this Bible privately, in groups, in church sermons, marriages ceremonies and burial ceremonies; and also use it as an authority in politics and courts of law. It is the most revered *fetish* (as an embodiment of God's will). It is where Africans meet and speak to what history knew as God of Israel. The God of Israel is now God of Africa by the power of the Bible. Bible texts articulates issues like ancestors, patriarchy, authority, land, rape, oppression, gender, diseases and suffering, which mirror African life experiences. Through the same Bible, Africans find hope and answers—God who can change their situation. The Bible has been snatched from its writer(s), and has indeed become an African Book, and its God, the God of Africa.

Conformity to biblical teachings and Christian traditions is essential in African Christianity. Any behavior that contradicts Bible teachings and Christian traditions would tantamount to sin and obviously compromises the chance to attain paradise. Christianity is now so engrained in African cultures that children are born and grow up knowing that they are Christians, with the Bible as the word of God. Mosala, who writes from the context of South Africa, has pointed out that:

“The Bible plays a crucial role in the lives of black... Africa. It has such a grip on the minds and hearts of the majority of them that often they do not have the luxury, as

²²⁶ Fred Siminyu, “Six remanded over 666 Biblical Figure” Daily Monitor (5th August, 2009). http://www.monitor.co.ug/artman/publish/regional-special/six_remanded_over_666_Biblical_figure_89141.shtml. (Accessed 5th August 2009).

²²⁷ Fredrick Kiwanuka, “Luwero Cult Members Arrested” Newvision (18th March 2009). <http://www.newvision.co.ug/D/8/19/675057/666%20biblical%20figure>. (Accessed 5th August 2009)

do members of other classes and races, of choosing to be or not to be Christian. For many of them, to believe in the Bible and thus to be Christian is natural.”²²⁸

Some Bible Scholars like Happy Chifwafwa Mhango have argued that the coming of Christianity and the Bible helped the recognition of women as full human beings and encouraged women to participate fully in church and society.²²⁹ Whereas this assertion is plausible to some degree, in my opinion missionary activities and the Bible in connection with African cultures, sanctifies and ordains patriarchal power over women. Christianity and Bible texts are layered with androcentric ideologies which legitimized African patriarchy. Readings from Bible texts serve to re-emphasize the subjugation of women from household levels to community levels: obedience to male authority is a Christian and biblical virtue. Men are referred to as heads (1 Corinthians 11:3), and women as weaker sexes (1 Peter 3:7) who should not speak in public gathering and not to exercise authority over men (1 Timothy 2:12). Almost all missionaries' Church leadership was under men, and women could only do roles of choir members and mother's unions. Women who had advisory roles advised only women but not men in issues related to Christian morals.²³⁰

The schools built favoured men against women both in number and curriculum. The Roman Catholic Church (RCC) brought in the institution of nunnery, which secludes women, limiting their freedom without any promise of ordaining them into priesthood as their male counterparts. The ordination of female priests is still a controversial issue in the RCC. Also, the icon of the Pope (papa) and the Bishop of Canterbury, as authoritative respective heads in the administrative hierarchies of the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches, further heighten and emphasis the special position of a man against a woman in leadership. To date, it is almost wishful thinking to consider the possibility of a woman becoming Pope.

It is important to emphasize that the fusion between Christianity and African cultures fossilised into a concrete resistance to social changes like feminism. With a majority of Africans remaining rural and local readers of the Bible, liberal emancipatory

²²⁸ Itumeleng J. Mosala, "Race, Class and Gender as Hermeneutical Actors in the African Independent Churches' Appropriation of the Bible," *Semeia* 73, no. (1996): 43.

²²⁹ Happy Chifwafwa Mhango, "Reading the Bible through the Eyes of Women and the Oppressed: In Search for Justice and Liberation in Malawi" (University of Glasgow, 2004), 68-69.

²³⁰ Ibid., 71.

movements still experience strong resistance. But the spirit of change, breathed by globalisation²³¹ from the West is moving through the thickets of the tropics and the rolling expanse of the Savannah; it is hovering upon the waters and archipelagos of the Great Lakes with a wave of change against dehumanising forces of colonialism, domination, poverty, sexism and patriarchy. Women and men of African should embrace this change. Whereas it can be thought that feminism and liberalism are foreign imports, we have to appreciate the ethical imperatives of these waves. Jesus Christ asked the Pharisees and experts in the Jewish traditions this question: “Which is lawful on the Sabbath? To do good or to do evil; to save life or to kill?” (Mark 3:4). Are we doing good or evil to our African daughters when we continue mummifying patronising and oppressive traditions? Should we continue eating our firstborns in the interest of keeping traditions against foreign influence? Bible scholarship should be done critically and creatively to address contextual social-cultural concerns of our people. Efforts should be geared to dismantling all dehumanising traditional institutions. Bible students and scholars of African origin should be the agents of this change. In the next chapter, we shall examine ideas from some of the voices that have read the Bible with an African but liberative mind; the postcolonial Bible interpreters.

²³¹ The contributions of globalisation to an African continent are complex. Without underplaying its salient flaws like neo-colonialism, marginalisation of African states and people, economic exploitation, globalisation has exerted strong push for liberal democracies, free market economies, environmental sustainability, gender equality, and transcontinental and transnational communication networks among others.

3.0 POSTCOLONIAL BIBLE CRITICISM IN EAST AFRICA

3.1 Introduction

Before the vernacularisation and Africanisation of the Bible, reading and interpretation was done only by missionaries. African converts were passive, but curious recipients of the Word. As already mentioned, missionaries did not differentiate between what was European norms and Bible norms. Their aim was to “civilise” Africans into a comprehensive culture using the Bible as a tool. In some cases, emphasis on the European culture superseded Bible knowledge. African converts were urged to abandon their cultural lifestyles, which were perceived as barbaric, and emulate western “civilised” culture as the *sine qua non* to being a good Christian and going to heaven.

In terms of gender norms, European cultures and Bible culture did not differ from African cultures in their assignment of women to low status in society. In all, hegemonic masculinity was upheld. The Missionary and the Bible prescribed patriarchal orientations in socio-political relations among the people. The Hebrew Bible in particular, with its patriarchal ideology, conspicuously assigns a woman to an inferior status. It is silent to the plight of the offended women, and information about prominent female figures is only presented in fragments. Local and national leadership is largely men’s domain. Women are categorised as part of men’s possessions. They are always the objects but not the subjects of any discourse. They are portrayed as weaklings, prostitutes and always seducers of men. The colonialists equally came with patriarchal tendencies. They recruited only men into colonial ranks as chiefs and armies to facilitate their rule. In African cultures, women are excluded from political roles and decisions. They are equally seen as weaklings and men’s property. Any knowledge or idea developed by women is regarded non-serious, trivial, gossip, superstitious, unrealistic and misleading. Women have suffered, among other things, political marginalisation. Men are rulers and women are their voters, followers and objects.

In my experience as a student of Religious Studies at Makerere University in late 1990s, Bible was taught thematically, and students were required to have attained standard knowledge of what the Bible says by the end of a particular course, with a broader aim of influencing character formation of the learners for better citizenry. During examinations, students were in some cases required to apply acquired biblical

knowledge to their social, political and economic situations. The majority of us would apply Bible knowledge to condemn corruption in the public service sector, theft, prostitution and selfishness, among other social ills. These vices are obviously unbearable in any civilised society. Most interestingly, we would reprehend the views of radical readers, especially feminist readers, as fallacious and regard certain aspects of African cultural heritage as unbiblical. There were no efforts to teach the Bible from the Afro-centric point of view in defence of the African culture or as a liberation tool against socio-economic and political maladies affecting modern Africa. This was and is still reinforced by the pulpit sermons especially in the Missionary founded Churches. No emphasis was placed in situating the Bible in the realm of liberation struggles, or isolating (with the aim of rereading or reconstructing) the colonising and totally demeaning overtones which the Bible writer presents. A classic example is the status of women in texts like Genesis 34, Numbers 12:1ff, 2 Samuel 13: 1-22, 1 Corinthians 11, 14:34 and 2 Timothy 1:2. Students were taught the “standard and proper” way of interpreting scriptures. This method is damning to modern biblical scholarship as it enslaves the Bible to orthodoxy and anthropological interpretations instead of being a critical discipline with relevance to challenges of a modern society. I remember many times making a joke to my course-mates that in the future we shall need to call for the Bible Review Commission in order to make important changes in the Bible and make it fully humane.

Of significance is the comment made by Late Mzee Jomo Kenyatta in colonial Kenya. In his book *Facing Mount Kenya* (1938), he wrote: “The white man in Africa was very clever: he came with his Bible, he preached and sang hymns, and we Africans were very amused. He then said, ‘Close your eyes and let us pray.’ When he said, ‘Amen!’, and we opened our eyes, he had taken over our land and we were holding the Bible!” Mzee Jomo Kenyatta was one of the relentless African ant-colonial-fighters. He founded and headed Mau-Mau rebellion, and was the first President of the Republic of Kenya.

Mzee Kenyatta’s idea is closely related to Thomas Jones Barker’s British pictorial allegory of empire (1863) titled “The Secret of England’s Greatness.” In this portrait, the depiction of Queen Victoria presenting a Bible in the Audience Chamber at Windsor to an African man is the epitome of the empire conveying Western civilisation

and Christianity to its subject.²³² A close observation of Mzee Kenyatta's statement reveals that: the "cleverness" that was exhibited by the Missionary was cunning, crafty and subtle in nature, synonymous to the one exhibited by the serpent in Genesis 3:1, which in Hebrew is represented by עָרוּם other than חָכְמָה (Proverbs 1:7 and 9:10; Psalms 111:10, 1 King 10:4). חָכְמָה is associated with לֵב שֹׁמֵעַ (1 Kings 3:9) that has the sense of righteousness and justice. To Kenyatta, missionaries were sagacious and sapient in character, whose major scheme was to alienate and exploit African land for the benefit of their mother countries. Christianity was imperialism and capitalism in disguise. To Kenyatta, the Bible was used to confound African minds with eschatological fantasies, which made Africans oblivious to the insidious motive of higher imperialism of the nineteenth century. Kenyatta suggests that Africans only realised the White man's motive when their social, political and economic antecedents were radically changing, and the locus of livelihood was shifted: The land had been taken away; their independence eroded and their status as men in their castles was seriously being compromised. Men had become women and boys in their own citadels. They were forced to provide labour and pay taxes. The environment had suddenly become very hostile. Africa was no longer for the Africans but for the imperialist and the colonialist who had stretched his tentacles into all the facets of African life. Things had fallen apart! Africans had either taken long to open their eyes or the prayer was so long. Their eyes opened when a lot had changed. They however had a new faith and the Bible, which the missionary had placed into their hands. The Bible became part of them. The God of Israel had now become God of Africa—with His teachings condensed in this small literary magic—the Bible.

Mzee Kenyatta's statement does not merely describe the denudation and contamination of Africa socio-cultural infrastructure and disposition of economic and political independence at the advent of colonialism, but more so expresses grief and bitterness towards European Christianity. European missionaries became heralds of colonialism and icons of Western imperialism. They are accused of using scriptures both systematically and ad hoc to warrant the conquest and colonisation of Africa and other parts of the world.

²³² "The Secrets of England's Greatness",
<http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw00071/The-Secret-of-Englands-Greatness-Queen-Victoria-presenting-a-Bible-in-the-Audience-Chamber-at-Windsor> (accessed 1st April 2010).

Land to an African represents a total sum of his life. It is a political, cultural, economic and social embodiment of his society. It is where life comes from, where the ancestors and spirits that regulate the society live, where umbilical cords of newly born babies and foreskins of graduating adults after initiation rites are buried (hence connecting the living and the dead). It is from where water and food for humans and animals is attained. It is what Kings, Chiefs, Clan leaders and even gods call their domain. Taking an African man's land meant castrating him and impairing his life in its holistic sense. It is more than a factor of production to an African. It is an epitome of totality, autonomy and identity. Kenyatta's statement was sentimental and meant that Christianity and colonialism affected the economic, political and social fabric of Africans holistically. Metaphorically, Africa was swallowed and digested into capitalistic system by colonialism and Christianity. The colonial powers ate and digested Africa, and then defecated and excreted refuse whose smell today stands as tribalism, wars, patriarchy, corruption and underdevelopment among others.

Africans kept the Bible, read it, and kept reading it. Today they are still reading it. The Bible became a social book, a manual of instruction, a Standing Order, point of reference and moral principle in African communities. One would fail to find any literature in an African home, but at least find a Bible text, either in a foreign language or vernacular. The message of the Bible became vivid and familiar to the Africans, and with the advent of vernacular Bibles, "God was speaking to Africans directly in their own languages." God was not speaking an unintelligible language but African tribal tongues. Africans realised that they are actually better readers than their missionary teachers. This is when the Bible became more meaningful to them (and thus the truth) as they interpreted it locally in relation to their local situations. To Africans, the Bible became a living book. The Word, which had in the beginning been with a missionary had now become embodied and enfleshed by an African culture and spirit. It spoke to them individually and corporately as a group. Today the Bible is never thought of as a white man's Book but the "Bible for Africa". This is the same Bible Africans read back to the colonisers "with equal creativity" 50-60 years ago, and as Stephen Moore puts it, they have continued to cause 'the white man's book' to turn and convict him in African... accents.²³³

²³³ Moore, 10.

As in the rest of Africa, biblical scholarship is a very recent enterprise in East Africa and more so is postcolonial biblical criticism. East African still trails behind West Africa and Southern Africa where gigantic efforts have been geared to carry laudable biblical research. There are a few scholars, nevertheless, who have carried and written some research work on general biblical studies in the region. They include Dr. John Mary Waliggo (late), Dr. John Mbiti, Dr. Victor Zinkurati, Dr. Mary N. Getui, Dr. Teresa M. Hinga and Dr. Bette Ekeya. Prof. Jesse Mugambi, Dr. Jonathan Gichaara, Serapio Kabazzi Kisirinya among others. Most of these scholars attained their training as Religious Leaders from Western Universities. Postcolonial criticism being a recent invention, most of these scholars did not use it as a paradigm for biblical criticism. Consequently, postcolonial Bible readership has not taken ground in East African region. There has not been enough effort to incorporate Bible hermeneutics with liberation ideals. Few feminist writers like Kanyoro Musimbi have written from a Christian perspective about women liberation without necessarily engaging the Bible at length. Others like Teresa M. Hinga and Bette Ekeya are conversant with popular feminist theology. The majority of East African writers have written about general Bible exegesis and themes that are related to Africa, ignoring the views of radical, popular and creative readers of the Bible, which in most cases are seen as heretical. There is scant critical readership that takes the postcolonial paradigm of Bible interpretation.

A popular gospel musician in Kenya, Faustin S. Munishi, came up with a song in early 1990s titled *Msiabudu Amerika*, loosely translated as “do not worship America.” Although in the title of the track Munishi mentions America, in my view America here is a summery figure of the entire Western world that would include North America (USA and Canada) and European countries notably Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, and Italy to mention but a few. Munishi’s song which was produced in tapes and CDs, both audio and video tracks, and now even preserved in Youtube internet database is a protest against western political and cultural imperialism (Neo-Colonialism). The song is sung in Kiswahili as a gospel track, in which he warns African leaders against the hypocrisy of the West. He states that the world belongs to God who made it, and it is not for the West. He observes that the aid given by western nations (America) is meant to promote western imperialism that would force the subaltern nations to adore the West. The mission of *America* in the world today (as also other Western States) is meant for no one else but safeguarding the political, cultural and economic interests of her people

back home. Munishi in his song mentions personalities and countries like Mobuto Seseseko of the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire) who were initially darlings of the West but later plunged their countries into political chaos because of their refusal to comply with neo-colonialists' conditions.

In another song, Munishi blames the West for their immigration restrictions against the people of the Third World. He reasons that unlike the West that came to colonise Africa, African immigrants have no agenda of colonising the west in revenge but visit as tourists, students and workers. He argues that the whole world is God's. And if Christians shall go to Heaven without Visas, what is the West that they should not visit? He idealises heaven as a blissful place with big estates and golden cities and streets. To Munishi, entry into the West (America) should not be restricted because in the first place, it was the unpaid labour of African slaves that built the infrastructure the West boasts of.

There are other voices of East Africa who read the Bible in a different light: as a decolonising, empowering and dignifying text. As noted earlier there is very little information documented about this region. The information presented in this work has been gleaned and gathered from oral sources, observation and newspaper articles and books of social science. These voices are in form of religious movements, popular theologies and personal biblical expositions.

The Dini Ya Msambwa (DYM) formed its theology by mixing Bible stories about deliverance of the Israelites with African traditional myths and beliefs. It was founded in western Kenya by Elijah Masinde in 1940s. One of the teachings of the cult was that of deliverance, led by God's appointed leader (Moses, locally called Musa) who will confront the evil forces of colonialism as Moses confronted the Egyptians in the Bible story of Exodus. This liberator will lead the people of Kenya to Canaan (which stands for independent Kenya), and the reign of the White rule would end completely. Mount Elgon offered significant religious symbolism to the Msambwa cult as Sinai was to the Israelites during the exodus. There were other sects like the Mumbo and Bachwezi Bashomi with similar doctrines as DYM.

In the area of medicine Africans have been challenged to rid themselves of negative colonized images of African traditional medicine and healers. Africans traditional "pharmacies and pharmacists" and the entire healing sector suffered many

misnomers of colonial mentality as dirty, occultism, mumbo-jumbo and demonic.²³⁴ It is now being emphasised that Jesus Christ, who is the founder of Christianity embraced the Jewish culture and most of its traditions and customs. He was not ashamed to be called Jesus of Nazareth, although Nazareth was considered an infamous region in Judea (John 1:45-46). Jesus has been likened to a traditional healer, as he adopted the practices of traditional healers of his own time. Jesus also used symbols and practices from the Jewish culture, and enrich them with new meaning, as also Africans healers use rituals and ceremonies. As Jesus promoted what saved life, even against the Sabbath traditions, Africans traditionally wish to promote whatever gives life in abundance (c.f Mark 3:6). The perception to African medicine has changed. It is no longer seen as fetish, juju, and unscientific. As a result of this interpretation, traditional healers and African medicine are respected and used by many people in curing a number of illnesses. They are registered and recognised by the National Drugs Authorities.

There is a popular theology that identifies East African region with ancient Israel and roots of Christianity through biblical patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob together with his sons, and the entire population of Israelites that lived in Egypt survived on the waters of River Nile, whose source is Lake Victoria that is shared among the East African countries. Baby Jesus with his parents escaped to Egypt when King Herod killed all male children in ancient Palestine. This serves to identify and highlight the importance of East Africa as a region in the salvation history of Israel and Christianity hence giving the region a sense of supreme religious significance.

Of interest is the way Mr Yoweri Museveni, the president of Uganda creatively uses the Bible in his public addresses. In a number of his speeches, Mr Museveni will use the Bible to rebuke and scorn to his political “enemies,” make points of encouragement or warning or even just for humour, but most importantly to stress his point. I will take a few examples for this study: Alluding to Deuteronomy 28:43 while addressing the 9th Parliament of Uganda at National Prayer breakfast in Kampala, Mr Museveni said: “Deuteronomy says that countries which borrow and don’t lend are cursed. The Africans are outside the fence of God and have been so for a long time. When you see countries which borrow and don’t lend, which keep begging but don’t

²³⁴ Like traditional names, traditional medicines were symbolic; they became a target by the conquerors

give, are outside the fence of God...”²³⁵ Relating Museveni’s comments in terms of street beggars, whose main job is to beg and eat, Museveni would infer that Africans are the unlucky children, who have been dislodged from their homes, the deprived ones without homes, sources of wealth, are victims of war and socio-economic hardships. To be in God’s fence to an African (as also to the writer of Job) is to have enough and more—to be blessed materially, lead a good life, have healthy children and provide for others in need.

But Mr Museveni seems to know the reason why Africans are beggars and where the “curse” came from. In his communication at the African Speakers’ Conference on 18th August 2009, Mr Museveni attributed African poverty and unequal trade exchange between African countries and the West to the colonisers who groomed Africa as a source of raw materials, without creating the industrial infrastructure, after dwarfing and killing traditional industries. He stated that the colonisers encouraged quantitative growth that led to increased production of coffee and cotton, without paying attention to qualitative growth. Consequently, African Agricultural goods lack value addition. He regrets that coffee producing countries are still getting peanuts from their products while the developed countries are reaping the bulk of the profits. Quoting Matthew 7:16-20 Mr Museveni reminded his audience that a good tree is known by its fruits, therefore the mandate of African leaders is to build and improve infrastructure like roads, communication and provision of cheaper energy so as to lower the cost of production and facilitate industrialisation.²³⁶

Mr Museveni further used the biblical parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30, Luke 19:12-25) to encourage Africans to develop marginal propensities to invest and save for the multiplier effect to take place. By this, Africans will exonerate themselves from poverty and the curse of being borrowers.

On another occasion, while addressing the parliament of South Africa in 1997, Museveni quoted from the eschatological passages of Isaiah 11:7 and 65:25, urging South Africa to engage in economic partnership with the rest of Africa:

²³⁵ Alfred Wasike and Cyprian Musoke, "President Museveni Castigates Aid," *The New Vision* (8th October, 2007). <http://www.newvision.co.ug/D/8/13/590865> (accessed 4th April 2009).

²³⁶ Mugira, "African Speakrs' Conference Ends", African News http://www.africanews.com/site/list_message/21776?data%5Bsource%5D=rss (accessed 25th. August 2009).

“May I urge you to use South Africa's unique position to engage in partnership with the rest of Africa in the form of investment, trade and tourism...I know that the Bible promises us that there will come a time when the lamb will lie in the bosom of the lion. However, that is all in the kingdom of heaven. Here on earth, lions still eat lambs.”²³⁷

It should not be surprising that Museveni uses this text in the context of South Africa. The economic infrastructure which the apartheid era left like industries, roads, financial institutions, human and financial capital, education and technological institutions, which make South Africa far more advanced from the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa indeed puts South Africa in a unique position in relation to the rest of the sub-Saharan states. However, the People of South Africa, Museveni suggests, should not be complacent with the victory over apartheid gains. They should not think they have reached “heaven.” They are still on “earth.” The time, which the Bible heralds, when lambs shall lie in the bosoms of lions, has not dawned. “All that shall be in Heaven.” On earth, South Africans are still victims of the inescapable Lions, which are the agonising forces of Western Imperialism,²³⁸ unemployment exploitation and poverty, ignorance and diseases, which dehumanised the people of South Africa during apartheid (lion) regime. In Africa poverty still looms at large, and South Africans are urged to join hands with other regions in the struggle to attain sustainable levels of economic growth and development on the African continent.

To discuss further the significance of Bible in regulating political power and gender dynamics in East Africa, it is worth understanding the past and present trends in female political activism in the region. The following chapter is devoted to historical and critical analysis of women’s political involvements and disengagements in Uganda and Kenya.

²³⁷ "Address by H.E. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda, to the Republic of South Africa's Parliament, Cape Town, 27 May 1997," Republic of South African parliament (South African Government information, 1997).

²³⁸ Imperialism is perceived to be an inescapable phenomenon. Western Nations are believed to be in a binomial relationship with nations of Africa, Asia and Latin America; a relationship that is characterised by subordination to Europe and North America, economic and human exploitation and general inequality.

4.0 WOMEN AND POLITICS IN EAST AFRICA

4.1 Introduction

The pre-colonial women in sub-Saharan Africa are said to have enjoyed substantial access to public power and authority. This was through both single-sex associations and specialised political and religious offices as queen mothers, royal wives, priestesses, healers and spirit mediums as well as membership in the older women's age grade.²³⁹ In some tribes, wealthy women who could afford to pay dowry for their brothers' wives exercised right of authority as 'husbands' and commanded some degree of influence, not only in the family but also clan affairs.²⁴⁰ Sylvia Tamale's research presents isolated cases of women who performed charismatic leadership skills in East African region. For example: Nyabingi of Kigezi, Nambi of Buganda, Nyangi of Bunyoro-Kitara, Bagaya of Toro and *Namasole* of Buganda.²⁴¹ Such women, according to African legends possessed divine powers that made them to be feared in the patriarchal African settings even by men. Anthropological research from the Great Lakes Region of East Africa has revealed that this female spiritual charisma functioned as "thinly disguised protest movements" against the patriarchy and offered women unusual degree of authority and long term positions of high status.²⁴² As such they could significantly influence political decisions and trends in society. There are rare cases in West Africa where women enjoyed a lot of autonomy and authority as representatives of women in specific issues that concerned them, such as the regulation of markets.²⁴³

These cases in my opinion were indeed isolated and seemed to have been in areas with centralised or semi centralised political structures like Buganda, Bunyoro, and Toro among others. Beside, like the women of the Bible under study in this thesis, these African women were women of royal descent and operated within the precincts of the royal palaces. These isolated cases only serve nostalgic purposes but not as evidence that women in the pre-colonial Africa were less marginalised than today as scholars like Tamale want us to believe. In her argument, Tamale falls in the 1970's feminist circles

²³⁹ Iris Berger and E. Frances White, *Women in Sub-Saharan Africa: Restoring Women to History* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), 6-7.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁴¹ Sylvia Tamale, *When Hens Begin to Crow: Gender and Parliamentary Politics in Uganda* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1999), 6.

²⁴² Iris Berger, "Rebels or Status-Seekers? Women as Spirit Mediums in East Africa," in *Women in Africa*, ed. Nancy J. Hafkin and Edna G. Bay (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), 157.

²⁴³ Rhoda E. Howard, "Women and the Crisis in Commonwealth Africa," *International Political Science Review* 6, no. 3 (1985): 292.

that postulate primitive matriarchal societies that are claimed to have fallen into patriarchy.

Moreover, the type and impact of marginalization in the African past were different from the marginalization experienced today. The degree of marginalisation extended to total violation of fundamental human rights as we know about them today. East African region, as other parts of Africa had patrilineal family system and showed a high degree of class divisions. Religious beliefs and practices were used to bolster the coherence of this family system and larger political units.²⁴⁴ A man commanded high degree of authority in a family, and clan councils constituted only men whose jurisdictions extended into the sphere of women affairs. No women would be present among men, or even speak while men were deliberating upon pertinent issues affecting the society. Men had customary rights to inherit property of their parents like land and cattle.²⁴⁵ Women generally occupied a socially subordinate position. They were home keepers and child bearers. The many children a woman could produce were a source of pride for her husband. In wars women suffered abuses of all sorts. They were taken as part of war booty, and means of population increase through polygamy. The act of killing males and sparing females at war did not signify sympathy of the invaders, but that women are easily assimilated and dominated through child bearing. Chinua Achebe presents a case that was a custom among the Igbo of West Africa. A young virgin and a lad were demanded as an indemnity for the murder of an innocent person of Umofia village by the neighbouring village. Whereas the virgin was made a wife for one of the elders, the young lad (named Ikemefuna) was ritually killed.²⁴⁶

It has been argued that the genesis of women political marginalisation in Africa, and East Africa in particular was the British colonialism of the 19th Century. This theory in my opinion is very idealistic and strongly influenced by pre-colonial nostalgia, which presupposes that a more ideal society existed before the coming of Christianity and European colonialism. Scholars of this view like Rhoda E. Howard, argue that the British imposed their own ethnocentric version of male-dominated politics that completely ignored and eroded women's political roles. Accordingly the British made no attempt to accommodate rights for women in Africa as they could not grant them to

²⁴⁴ Berger, "Rebels or Status-Seekers? Women as Spirit Mediums in East Africa," 159.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 160.

²⁴⁶ Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (London: Penguin, 2006), 26, 57.

their own women at home.²⁴⁷ Admittedly, colonial administrative structure eroded powers of queen mothers and other royal women in kingdoms like Buganda. Traditional female political figures were not necessary for the imperial politics of the colonisers. But worth noting is that not all African communities were centralised and not all centralised societies had women playing key political roles. I contend that, on a wider scale, African women did not exercise political authority in African pre-colonial societies. Only men constituted clan, tribal and state councils, which functioned like legislative bodies. Men also served as politicians, military and legal personnel. European colonialism found in place an already well-structured patriarchal political system, which they found easy to work with. They influenced and energized the African patriarchal system through the colonial policies and programs introduced like Central-Governments, cash crop economy, education and imperial politics designed to suit imperialistic interests. I strongly argue that colonialism galvanised African patriarchy, concretised it and institutionalised it as part of the network of capitalism in which an Africa woman eventually found herself entrapped. This has become the case in African liberal democracies that are founded on the political structures laid by colonial governments.

The introduction of cash crop economy reduced the status of women to objects of wealth production for men through labouring in Agriculture. Moreover, the colonial governments, through their systematic and deliberate policies ensured that women were distanced from decision-making in agricultural production and other forms of production. Shifting decision-making from community and clan levels to colonial capital cities lessened women's opportunities to influence political decision-making; because women had relied on influencing their male kin informally.²⁴⁸

The colonial government also introduced disarticulated formal education in East Africa. The schools built were not regionally balanced and the curriculum seemed to favour boys than girls. In Kenya, the central region where White settlers lived had the highest number of schools like Alliance High School (Alliance of Protestant Churches), Mang'u High school (Holy Ghost Fathers), Nairobi School, Kenya High School, Ngara Girls High among others. In Uganda, missionary schools for girls like Gayaza High

²⁴⁷ Howard: 292.

²⁴⁸ Sylvia Tamale, "Point of Order Mr Speaker: African Women Claiming Their Space in Parliament," *Gender and Development* 8, no. 3 (2000): 10.

School (CMS), Trinity College Nnabingo (RC), Namagunga Secondary School and Buloba Secondary School were located in the Southern region, which benefited the girls in the South at the disadvantage of those in the North, hence creating a disparity between the two regions. The women of the South had better opportunities which increased their level of social, political and economic activism as compared to those from the North who remained unexposed, except for the few who managed to go to school in the South. Moreover, these Schools were primarily geared toward providing educated men with good wives and home makers.²⁴⁹ Miss Allen, the missionary Headmistress of Gayaza Girls High School (1905) is quoted to have said:

“My staff will do their best to teach Domestic Science, House-wifery and Hygiene as it is taught in England”²⁵⁰

Educated housewives were valued by the colonialists as capable of becoming consumers of white goods, and would motivate their husband’s productivity in order to maintain a western lifestyle. In fact, by 1914 girls and boys in England were not receiving the same quality of elementary education. Girls were taught by almost only female teachers, and received training in subjects like cookery, laundry work and domestic economics which were meant to prepare them for future life as wives and mothers.²⁵¹

School curricula emphasized subjects that involved psychomotor and affective domains of the learners. This deprived women of courses as Literature, History and Civics, Law, and Political Science that would prepare them for analysis, synthesis and evaluation of situations in preparation for informed public debates, decisions and national politics. The subjects, as Tamale points out, relegated women to a redefined, subordinate domesticity as compared to the status of men.²⁵²

After World War II, British colonial office started preparing its colonial territories for formal independence. For the case of East Africa, all negotiations for independence took place between the coloniser and the elite male collection of indigenous politicians that had been groomed by the colonial government; men, who

²⁴⁹ Tamale, *When Hens Begin to Crow: Gender and Parliamentary Politics in Uganda*, 13.

²⁵⁰ *Uganda Church Review*, (Oxford, 1930), 115., quoted in Tamale, *When Hens Begin to Crow: Gender and Parliamentary Politics in Uganda*, 11.

²⁵¹ June Purvis, "Women and Education: A Historical Account 1800-1914," in *Equality and Inequality in Education Policy*, ed. Liz Dawtrey et al. (Bristol: Multilingual Matters Limited, 1994), 15-16.

²⁵² Tamale, *When Hens Begin to Crow: Gender and Parliamentary Politics in Uganda*. Also, Tamale, "Point of Order Mr Speaker: African Women Claiming Their Space in Parliament," 10.

would later constitute the political oligarchy in East Africa. Women were deliberately ignored not only by the colonial authorities but also by their male fellow citizens.²⁵³

Colonial economic policies

The primary reason for the nineteenth century scramble, partition and colonisation of Africa was the need to acquire tropical raw materials for European factories. Upon successful acquisition of East Africa, the British laid down strategies to exploit and ship resources to Britain.

Mineral resources were surveyed and cash crops like cotton, coffee and sisal were introduced. In Uganda, the mode adopted for cash crop production was peasantry farming while in Kenya preference was given to a “well-endowed, self-sufficient type of White settlers, who would contribute substantially to the country's economic development, and would not be a burden upon its limited resources when faced with any financial setback.”²⁵⁴ From 1904 there was an influx of white settlers into Kenya, mainly British nationals from South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, heading for the fertile plains of Kenyan Highland and the area around L. Victoria, the land which the colonial government had forcefully alienated from the locals as per the Crown Land Ordinances of 1902 and 1915. The White settlers in the highlands grew maize, wheat, barley, coffee, potatoes and vegetables and fruits. Other crops included coco-nut, sisal, rubber, cotton and tobacco. There were also extensive grazing grounds in the highlands with large stocks of cattle and sheep and a few ostrich farms. By 1920 over 500,000 acres of forest land had been granted by the colonial government for timber exploitation. African natives were required to provide labour to the white farms, mining and lumbering companies. As a result, there were cases of forced labour and introduction of tax which was thought would force African to work for a pay. The loss of land constituted serious consequences for the African natives, both men and women. The issue of land and forced labour later became iconic in African nationalist struggles in Kenya, in which both men and women participated.

²⁵³ Tamale, *When Hens Begin to Crow: Gender and Parliamentary Politics in Uganda*, 13-14.

²⁵⁴ Low, 50.

4.2.0 WOMEN AND POLITICS IN KENYA

4.2.1 African secondary resistances and the role of African women

The British had by the World War I successfully defeated primary African nationalists (resistors) like the Nandi in Kenya and Bunyoro in Uganda, and had established effective occupation and administration of their East African sphere of influence. *Mutatis mutandis*, the colonial economic and social policies affected Africans so negatively that rebellions were inevitable from as early as 1920s, the zenith of which was what came to be called the Mau-Mau rebellion of 1952-1960.²⁵⁵ In these rebellions, women played a very significant role as nationalists resisting the heavy yoke of colonialism.

The Abagusii Rebellion 1907-08

This was a rebellion led by an Abagusii Prophetess named Moraa. Moraa prophesied the coming of the white rule, and warned that if Whites were permitted to stay, they would colonise the Abagusii people. She organised people to revolt against British rule, which left G.A.S Northcote, a British officer in Kenya wounded by one of Prophetess Moraa's fighters. She was later arrested and punished.²⁵⁶

The Giriama Rebellion 1914

The Giriama²⁵⁷ from the coast of East Africa also staged a resistance led by a woman called Me-Ketilili wa Menza. The reason for resistance was that Europeans were encroaching upon the forest reserves and destroying sacred shrines. Me-Ketilili wa Menza was a strong and brave woman who organised her people to resist the land appropriation of the colonial administration. As a result of her activities, she was deported to Mumias in the western region by the British, hundreds of miles away from her home. While in exile, she reportedly established ties with the Kisii in the west who finally assisted her to escape from prison. She is said to have gone back to the coast on foot and resumed her war against the British administrators. Puzzled by her formidable strength to escape from prison, walk a long distance and reorganise her followers, the British named her a witch, driven by witchcraft to misguide people against the good

²⁵⁵ Mau Mau is a Swahili acronym which stood for *Msungu Aende Ulaya M'afrika Apate Uhuru* (literally; A European should go back to Europe and African gets independence)

²⁵⁶ Wanjiku Mukabi Kabira and Elizabeth Akinyi Nzioki, *Celebrating Women's Resistance*(Nairobi: African Women's Perspective, 1993), 38.

²⁵⁷ Giriama are one of the 9 ethnic groups that form the Mijikenda (nine towns), which occupy the coastal strip of East African stretching from Lamu in the North, southwards to the border with Tanzania, and inland by 30KM.

intentions of the Queen's government in Kenya.²⁵⁸ This resonates with our Bible story of Jezebel, where she is equally named witch and sorcerer by her enemy as we shall see later.

The Harry Thuku riot 1922

In 1922, there was a nationalist movement lead by one Harry Thuku (the founder of East African Association-EAA), in which women participated and forced the colonial government to change its policies. It came as the result of the colonial policy to force Kikuyu women and juveniles to offer labour on the white settler farms. The conscription into forced labour was brutal, associated with long hours of work, beating and sexual harassment by colonial security officials. African women and girls were raped by colonial armies with impunity under colonial immunity; and some African adolescent girls ended up with unwanted pregnancies and physical and psychological afflictions. In response, Harry Thuku challenged the Colonial government to change their labour policies. Upon the arrest and imprisonment of Thuku, women led by Mary Nyanjiru staged a riot demanding for his unconditional release. They composed and sung songs in praise of Thuku and mockery of colonial officials in a noisy disturbance.²⁵⁹ In response the administration appointed a male team of six men as leaders to represent the crowd in discussion to end the protest. The outcome of the discussion was an agreement that the government will "look into their grievances" after the crowd has dispersed. Women however insisted that their leader who was held in the station be released to them and they were not willing to leave without him. They refused to be cowed by security officers and ultimately charged forward. Mary Nyanjiru asked men to remove their trousers and give them to women if they were afraid to rescue Thuku; which according to Muigai Wanjiru was a symbolic call for reverse of gender roles, because men, who are presumably brave, were ready to submit to the demands of the administration, while women were determined to free their leader.²⁶⁰ The security guards opened fire at that point and shot an estimated two hundred people.²⁶¹ Some women lost their lives and others were wounded as the result. Despite the bloodshed, women's riot is said to have

²⁵⁸ Wanjiru Muigai, "Apolitical Versus Political Feminism: The Dilemma of the Women's Movement in Kenya," in *Legitimate Governance in Africa: International and Domestic Legal Perspective*, ed. Edward Kofi Quashigah and Obiora Chinedu Okafor (London: Kluwer Law International, 1999), 86.

²⁵⁹ Audrey Wipper, "Kikuyu Women and the Harry Thuku Disturbances: Some Uniformities of Female Militancy," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 59, no. 3 (1989): 304-305, 309, 313-316.

²⁶⁰ Muigai.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 85.

been one of the most outstanding episode that epitomised the struggle against colonial domination.

Thuku and some of his supporters were deported and EAA was later banned by the British colonial authorities and all supporters were threatened with arrest. It was replaced by the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA), which was only men's party with women's participation restricted to cooking, fetching water and serving food.²⁶² With the zeal for nationalism, women formed their own party called the Mumbi Central Association (MCA).²⁶³ Membership of the MCA was however geographically limited to women from the central region, and as such did not have a nationwide impact.²⁶⁴

Women also participated in the establishment of the African Independent Schools, which came as a protest to the colonial administration. For example Kikuyu women assisted in the setting up of Githunguri School in which they raised funds for the establishment of a girl's wing.²⁶⁵ The education provided by both missionary and government schools by 1920s not only numerically presented an imperceptible figure for girls but also unevenly distributed in the country. African girls who received at least primary education were very few in number and none had received secondary education at all.²⁶⁶

The Mau-Mau rebellion 1952-1960

From 1952-1960, Colonial Kenya was in turmoil due to Mau Mau rebellion. Women still constituted a strong force that colonial authority had to reckon with. Some women joined the forest forces and served as combat troops, with some women like Muthoni wa Gachie, Wagara Wainana, Priscilla Wambaki and Rebecca Njeri²⁶⁷ playing leadership roles. Notable at this time was the character of Wamuyu Gakuru. She was born in Mathira, Nyeri district of Kenya. She headed a group of girls who were said to be prostitutes but were in actual sense Mau Mau operatives. She and her girls infiltrated the Kigonjo KAR garrison, acted as cultural dancers and entertained the soldiers. They befriended soldiers and extracted information and stole their guns and other provisions

²⁶² Ibid., 78, 81.

²⁶³ Ibid., 82.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 81.

²⁶⁶ See T. Walter Wallbank, "British Colonial Policy and Native Education in Kenya," *Journal of Negro Education* 7, no. 4 (1938).

²⁶⁷ Cora Ann Presley, "The Mau Mau Rebellion, Kikuyu Women, and Social Change," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 22, no. 3 (1988): 508, 509, 510, 514.

for freedom fighters. She was appointed the leader of more than 200 women in the forest, and represented women at Mau-Mau meetings. She also fought in battles like the Rui Ruiru battle, where security forces mistook her for the leader of freedom fighters.²⁶⁸

Others who were termed by colonialists as 'passive wing' or non-combatant forces played roles of supplying information, smuggling arms, food, clothing, and medicine to the guerrilla army, and maintained the lines of transit for recruits who wanted to join the Mau-Mau military forces in the forest. Others converted their homes into armouries for storing guns.²⁶⁹ The Colonial authorities responded by indiscriminately rounding up women in abrupt military sweeps, with a hope of arresting the leaders and the more active Mau Mau adherents who were not in the forests. Women were arrested, detained, and imprisoned in large numbers. By 1956, almost 15000 women were in prisons on account of being involved in the Mau-Mau rebellion.²⁷⁰ Conditions in prisons were appalling, especially the notorious Kamiti and Athii River prisons where women suffered several beatings, congestion, sanitary problems, inadequate food and clothing and excessive manual work.²⁷¹

Some colonial officials viewed women who were involved in the Mau-Mau as either victims of Mau-Mau or prostitutes who, through personal contact with male nationalists, were drawn to Mau Mau while resident in Nairobi.²⁷² In the first case, women were viewed as being forcibly compelled to take the oath of allegiance to Mau-Mau.²⁷³ This was partly because there were some cases where people were forcefully compelled to take an oath of allegiance by the Mau-Mau fighters.²⁷⁴ This is consonant with patriarchal mind-set that has it that women cannot, on their own challenge a

²⁶⁸ Kabira and Nzioki, 38.

²⁶⁹ Maria Nzomo, "Kenyan Women in Politics and Public Decision Making," in *African Feminism: The Politics of Survival in Sub-Saharan Africa*, ed. Gwendolyn Mikell (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 233.

²⁷⁰ Presley: 512.

²⁷¹ Ibid.: 513.

²⁷² Ibid.: 504.

²⁷³ Ibid.: 505.

²⁷⁴ The 1952 Special Branch report on intimidation in oathing recounted the forced oathing of a Catholic Kikuyu woman. She was stripped naked, severely beaten to the point of unconsciousness, and upon her revival compelled to drink raw blood from a bottle, and perform other rituals of Mau Mau. Another incident was in Nyeri, in which there were forcible oathings of women and children. In the Lari Massacre of 26th March 1953 eighty-four Loyalists were killed, two-thirds of the victims women. During 1952 Mau Mau military actions killed twenty-three loyalists of whom two were women and three were children. While the rebellion was in progress, a popular British tactic was to portray women as Mau Mau's principal victims. However, only ninety eight of the 1024 Kikuyu killed by Mau Mau were women. See Presley, Ibid.

patriarchal system unless they are guided by men. Those who do—are either misled or are women of foreign character—prostitutes (c.f the biblical motif of a foreign woman as a prostitute).

That an African female freedom fighter was a prostitute only served to undermine the course of women and discourage other women from joining the movement. It was meant to make women think that it was an act of indecency to join anti-colonial struggles. It was designed to have a belittling effect of women's political impetus and to ensnare their minds to always think that it was the work of men and prostitutes to participate in political demonstrations. The derogative term was first heard from district and provincial administrators when the Kenya African Union (KAU) successfully staged mass rallies. For example, a rally in Nyeri on 26 July 1952 was reported by the District Commissioner as: "Over 20000 men, women and children attended. KAU insinuated over 40 bus loads of Nairobi thugs and prostitutes, who were clearly under instructions to excite the crowd."²⁷⁵ Colonial authorities also attributed the success of the Mau Mau in acquiring arms from government soldiers from 1950 to 1952 to "a network of communication with prostitutes, who lay 'tender traps' for African askaris, of ambushing the African askaris in dark streets and abducting and later suffocating them to death."²⁷⁶

Derogative association of female politicians with prostitution is inherent in patriarchal cultures. Women who get involved into matters of public concern are perceived to be crossing gender borders to a foreign dominion and behaving in manner foreign to the customary patriarchal expectation of her. In patriarchal cultures, the evil woman was always described as prostitute, without necessarily engaging in commercial sex as we know of modern prostitution. In biblical literature, such women were described as זרה, which means strange or foreign (Proverbs 5:3a, 22:14a, 23:27b). זרה shares two root letters with זנה a Hebrew word for prostitute. In Proverbs 23:27, the two are used in apposition of each other:

שִׁיחָה-כִּי נִכְרְיָה עֲמֻקָּה זֹנָה וּבְאֵר צָרָה (that is: *For a whore is a deep ditch; and a strange woman is a narrow pit*), which presents a picture of a deep and narrow pit—a tender trap. Without engaging into exegetical analysis at this point, I can assay that the

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

terms were used to refer to women who crossed gender boundaries to involve in activities that were list expected of their gender. It was strange for a woman to leave her domestic realm and get into the public arena (c.f Proverbs 7:10-12). In colonial Kenya women who participated in nationalist uprisings were perceived as crossing their gender boundaries. They acted foreign and they were a foreign gender infiltrating a males' sphere and making colonial patriarchal hegemony anxious.

Women were a threat to the colonialists who were consolidating and preserving the integrity of their colony. Women who were list expected to engage in resistance were fighting alongside men. Colonialists were trying to preserve the territorial tranquillity, but women were disturbing their rule. The government soldiers were accused of falling prey to the seduction of these women, and in the events their guns were stolen; making the deep and narrow ditch effective. Women in this case are not said to have engaged the government soldiers for money, as we know of what prostitution is, but for a hidden motive of getting guns. This would suggest that the women in question used methods that made the colonial Askaris amorous of them, and in the end, they were trapped, killed and weapons confiscated without necessarily engaging commercial sex with these soldiers. But whether sex was involved or not, the fact remains that these African women were freedom fighters. Wherever they felt sex was necessary as a lethal weapon in skilful warfare, they could use it. The enemy had to be attacked from his weakest point. Wars involve both psychological and physical engagements.

The colonial administration office in Kenya argued that large numbers of women were actively involved in Mau Mau because they had had less exposure to British institutions such as missionary schools. It dawned upon their minds that, women, a mass they had naively or intentionally side-lined, was now a formidable force that was making their hegemony in Africa anxious, and forcing them to sit down and rethink their policies. Indeed, women had fewer opportunities for employment in settler economy, and were more "primitive" than males who had become "westernized." In the pre-colonial period women farmed land, the land that was later alienated by the Crown. Loss of land produced scarcity. Africans had been pushed into reserves, which resulted into overpopulation and land pressure. They were now forced to provide labour on white farms. Missionaries had also given low priority to educating girls and only boys had some chances for schools. But the measures taken by colonial office to civilise women

were that of depoliticizing women. In prisons, the government ran a re-socialization process whose goal was to get women to renounce Mau-Mau and be “cleansed.” The department for Community Development, together with the Christian missionaries involved in rehabilitating prisoners; some prisons like Kamiti conducted classes in which Mau-Mau women prisoners were given instructions in animal husbandry, hygiene, health, agriculture, and local government.²⁷⁷ The Christian Council of Kenya sent representatives to the camps to hold Christian services and “cleanse” women prisoners of their radical beliefs.²⁷⁸ By 1960, the re-socialisation program had worked successfully for the colonial government that the Mau-Mau women who were released from prisons were “... processed straight to their homes”²⁷⁹ never to remember Mau-Mau nor forget lessons learnt in prisons.

The colonial Government also introduced villagization program, which radically altered village *modus vivendi* as part of its war against Mau-Mau. To curtail the supply of food, weapons and information to the Mau-Mau bush fighters from the villagers, the entire Kikuyu population was semi-imprisoned in guarded villages. They lived under guard behind barbed-wire fences. From these villages, women were escorted to their fields by armed home-guards to farm, and then back behind the barbed-wire fences by 4:00 p.m.²⁸⁰

The colonial government also formed, as a section in the Department of Community Development a ‘progressive’ club for women called Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organisation (MYWO), loosely translated as organisation of women’s progress, in order to improve the lifestyle of women in Kenya. The progressive name given to this organisation was meant to call women to renounce Mau-Mau and settle down for “progress,” a move that heralded political quietism for women. It was aimed at organising women and teaching them basic Western techniques in housekeeping, childcare and other stereotypically designated woman tasks. The organisation was under the patronage of upper class minority white women in the colonial government who were not into politics but devoted to social justice and humanity.²⁸¹ The motive served to combat political unrest that was emerging from social discontentment of African

²⁷⁷ Ibid.: 512.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.: 513.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.: 516, 517.

²⁸¹ Muigai, 87.

women. The MYWO members were exempted from hard labour and the club members of the organisation were paid salaries by the government as government employees.²⁸² The organisation was to be non-political in nature from its formation, a stand it was to pursue for a long time.

MYWO became a colonial tool to undermine African resistances in their struggle for independence. By 1955, it was praised as doing a tremendous amount of work to overcome Mau-Mau. Owing to the priority agenda of the government, MYWO represented government interests as opposed to the interest of African population living under colonisation. It created a vehicle to keep women from the liberation movement and by implication any militancy that women would engage in to demand their rights specifically or those of Africans generally.²⁸³ The name given to it was meant to intimidate women who were in the Mau-Mau, as it signified that women who were in the organisation were progressive, modest and decent as opposed to the “primitive,” apathetic and indecent women in the Mau-Mau, who were called witches, evil and prostitutes.

4.2.2.0 Women and post-colonial politics in Kenya

As elsewhere in the British sphere of influence, Kenya was being prepared for independence after the Second World War. Political parties were allowed to be formed, though with so many restrictions. Kenya African Union (K.A.U.) was formed in 1946 out of the Kenya African Study Union, which had been created to advise and assist Eliud Mathu, the first (nominated) African member of the Legislative Council.²⁸⁴ Its genuine efforts to become a nationally-based party were continually and effectively stifled by the administrative restrictions on meetings and on the movements of its leaders.²⁸⁵ The party was proscribed in 1953. Latter towards the close of the decade, other parties were formed which included Kenya National Party (KNP), Kenya Independence Movement (KIM), Kenya African National Union (KANU) and the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU). Others which came later included African Peoples' Party (APP) and Social Democratic Party (SDP).

²⁸² Ibid., 88.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Clyde Sanger and John Nottingham, "The Kenya General Elections of 1963," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 2, no. 1 (1964): 2.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

In 1961 there were elections for the Legislative Assembly in Kenya, in which KANU led by Jomo Kenyatta won with 72% of the popular vote. Kenyatta, who was also a Mau-Mau fighter, was at this point still in prison. KANU as such held 24 seats out of 65 in the Legislative council (Legico). Of all the 24 KANU members elected, there were no women. The same trend followed in the 1963 pre-independence elections in which KANU won an overwhelming majority that made Jomo Kenyatta the prime minister and later the president of the Republic of Kenya in 1964. In 1962, Kenyatta had led a delegation to the Second Lancaster House Conference where the post-independence constitution of Kenya was cobbled together. Priscilla Abwao was nominated as the sole female delegate. At this conference Abwao argued that African women were not asking for a special position in the soon-to-be independent Kenya but to “be treated as equal partners in the new society that was in the offing.”²⁸⁶ She was however a lone female voice amidst a jungle of male voices. Her words remained in the conference room without having any impact in the independent Kenya. By 1969 only two women (Ruth Habwe and Grace Onyango) had joined the National Assembly.²⁸⁷

KANU remained the dominant political party, although the constitution of Kenya continued to allow for multiparty political system. Several members of other parties crossed the floor to join KANU, and by 1969 it was only KANU that held parliamentary elections. The country was declared a one party state later by an emendation of Section 2A of the National Constitutional in 1982 under the presidency of Daniel Arab Moi.

Of significance is KANU’s choice of a cock, locally called *Jogo*, as its party symbol. A Cock in an African homestead stands for power and authority. It has zero tolerance to opposition and competition from other cocks. If no any other cock can crow in its range without triggering of a fight, the situation can be precarious when hens begin crowing. A cock would feel anxious and emasculated, and will fight to ensure its sole dominion—its natural endowment, which is to dominate and control so many hens and

²⁸⁶ Phoebe Musandu, “Daughter of Odoro: Grace Onyango and African Women's History” (Miami University, 2006), 66.

²⁸⁷ Shadrack Wanjala Nasong'o and Theodora O. Ayot, "Women in Kenya's Politics of Transition and Democratisation," in *Kenya: The Struggle for Democracy*, ed. Godwin R Muranga and Shadrack W. Nasong'o (London: Zed books Limited, 2007), 179-180. Also; Maria Nzomo, "From the Women's Decade to Multi-Party Era: Women's Political Participation in Kenya", Friedrich Ebert Stiftung <http://www.fes.de/fulltext/iez/00060005.htm> (accessed 10th. February 2009)., Nzomo, "Kenyan Women in Politics and Public Decision Making," 235.

other fowls. It stands for patriarchal authority and respect, and with its long life expectance, it is sometimes called *Mzee*, a Kiswahili word for an old but authoritative, respectable and influential man. Interestingly, all presidents of Kenya from Jomo Kenyatta to Mwai Kibaki have this *Mzee* title. In Uganda, Yoweri Museveni is now addressed as *Mzee*. Hens however are good mothers when it comes to protecting their chicks, some of which grow to become cocks. They punitively fight predators like crows that encroach on their chicks. A hen would shout on the top of her voice and even physically engage the enemy; but interestingly a cock does nothing. That is a hen's business! A cock is only sensitive in matters that affect its lofty hegemonic position, symbolically kingship and governance—but a governor or king who does not protect his subjects. It is a good replica of masculinity. With zero tolerance to competition, the sound or sight of a hen crowing would obviously make a cock restless.

Until 1992: anyone who wished to vote or contest for political office had to be a member of KANU. Many women right from the grassroots up to the national level participated as voters and as members of KANU in the national electoral processes that used to take place every five years but would hardly make it through to Parliament.

In 1974 Dr. Julia Ojiambo was the first woman to be appointed to the front bench as an Assistant Minister of Culture and Social Services, and latter Assistant Minister of Education in 1979. The portfolio of Assistant Minister became the standard allotment for women in Kenya's parliament almost throughout the period of KANU and thereafter.²⁸⁸ In 1991, out of 188 elected and nominated members of parliament, there were only two women elected and only one nominated. Within the KANU party hierarchy, women had difficulty participating at the national executive level. Until 1989, when the KANU secretariat created the position of director of women and youth affairs, no woman had ever been elected or appointed to any of the national executive positions within the ruling party.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁸ Other women who later became assistant ministers included: Grace Ogot (1991-93) as Assistant Minister of Culture and Social Affairs Winifred Nyiva Kitili Mwendwa (1992-1995) as Assistant Minister of Public Works and Housing, Agnes Mutindi Ndeti (1996-97) as Assistant Minister of Education, Marere wa Mwachai (1998-2002) Assistant Minister of Gender and Community Development; then Assistant Minister of Home Affairs, National Heritage, Culture and Social Affairs and again as Assistant Minister of Heritage and Sports.

²⁸⁹ Nzomo, "Kenyan Women in Politics and Public Decision Making," 235.

KANU started interfering with the activities of MYWO by ensuring that the organisation's internal politics and projects are closely monitored and manipulated in order to curtail possibilities of radical voices of women from emerging. Key positions of the organisation were headed by family members of prominent politicians of the KANU government. For example in 1970s, Jane Kiano was elected to head the Organisation because her husband was a key politician and government minister. This assured KANU of loyalty of women under MYWO.²⁹⁰ In December 1989, the KANU government officials significantly objected to women's initiative to start up a bus project. Women under MYWO in Nakuru district of Kenya had proposed to open a public service bus operation in the district. It was however rationed out that the project will suffer mismanagement by men, since women would not be employed as drivers and conductors. The reason why women could not be employed was stated by the government representative that: "We shall ruin homes if we employ women as bus drivers and conductors because they will be arriving home late at night or fail to return home at all if a bus breaks down."²⁹¹

The organisation confined its women's agenda to domestic chores like raising children, housekeeping, baking and techniques of setting a commodious home for the husbands than pursuing ventures that would lead to political or economic empowerment.

In 1987, the MYWO became formerly affiliated to KANU and attained a new name KANU-MYWO. This co-optation came at the moment when the Moi government was facing political uncertainties especially following the revolutionary government change in Uganda led by President Museveni and the National Resistance Army (NRA).²⁹² Kenyan government became absolutely intolerant to any political opposition in the country especially *Mwakenya*, which was an internal opposition movement established in Kenya in the early 1980s.²⁹³

²⁹⁰ Muigai, 91.

²⁹¹ Kabira and Nzioki, 3.

²⁹² In the same year, Ugandan forces crossed into Kenya armed with sophisticated anti-aircraft guns and missiles and engaged Kenyan military which resulted loss of life and property.

²⁹³ It has been alleged that *Mwakenya* was being supported by Ugandan military and Libyan President Muama Gaddafi who was a good friend of President Museveni in Uganda. Gaddafi and Museveni are said to have been seeking information on the activities of Kenya's opposition leaders, and secretly had trained anti-government forces in Uganda. Moi arrested several students at the University of Nairobi, charging them with espionage and agitation on behalf of Libya. He expelled from Kenya the Libyan diplomats, charging them with "gross interference in the internal affairs of Kenya and ordered for the closure of the Libyan embassy in Nairobi." The Uganda ambassador was expelled and the border between Kenya and Uganda was closed hence, denying the land-locked Uganda access to the sea port of Mombasa. See

The separation between MYWO and KANU occurred in 1990s following the widespread calls for political liberalism and multiparty democracy in Kenya. Worth noting is that despite the merger, MYWO evidently had little influence on the political establishment. There were no women in the government hierarchies of the party. It was only in 1990 when the President promised that KANU-MYWO would soon be represented in the party's National Governing Council and the National Executive Committee.²⁹⁴ Women were discouraged from taking strong positions on issues affecting them and all issues that conflict with the government interests.²⁹⁵

4.2.2.1 The 1990's Multiparty politics and women's role in Kenya

1992-93 Elections

Multiparty politics in Kenya was re-introduced in December 1991 after constitutional amendment. This paved way for popular participation in what is now viewed as democratisation process. Numerous interest and pressure groups emerged all demanding their interests to be included in the new democratic agenda. Popular struggles for democratisation and development were everywhere, the conferences, seminars and even street demonstrations.²⁹⁶ Women were among those who came out strongly demanding that their voices be heard crowing and their gender based interests be included and main streamed in the new democratic agenda, and that they participate on equal footing with men in the democratisation process of Kenya.²⁹⁷ The first National Women's convention was held on 22nd February 1992. Its aim was to discuss and map out the women's agenda in the democratisation process.²⁹⁸ During this convention, Kenyan women resolved that they would scrutinise all policy documents to ensure that fundamental issues affecting women were mainstreamed in the development-policy programs of the various political parties, and that they would lobby for repeal of all laws discriminating against women.²⁹⁹ In addition, awareness programs would be set up to sensitize and educate women at the grassroots level about their rights as citizens and the

William Pascoe, "How the U.S. Can Help Kenya", The Heritage Foundation: Leadership for America <http://www.heritage.org/Research/MiddleEast/bg642.cfm> (accessed 10th. February 2009).

²⁹⁴ Muigai, 93.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 94.

²⁹⁶ Nzomo, "Kenyan Women in Politics and Public Decision Making," 234.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 243.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 244.

political choices made available to them by democracy. In particular, it was agreed that women voters should be made aware of the power of their vote and the need for women to elect committed women rather than gender-insensitive men.³⁰⁰ It was also resolved that there was need to build women's confidence in themselves and to encourage a lot of capable women to stand as candidates for political offices in the December 1992 civic and parliamentary elections. The convention's high wish was to increase representation in parliament to 35%.³⁰¹

In July 1992, the first ever National Capacity Building Workshop for Women (NCSW) was held in Nairobi in which Prof Wangari Maathai was endorsed as the women's choice for presidential candidate although she did not contest.³⁰² More than 250 women stood for civic and parliamentary seats of which only 6 women candidates won parliamentary seats. The election was reportedly marred with harassment, intimidation and discrimination within parties, financial hardships and mass rigging.³⁰³ The 6 seats women won not only fall short of the women's target of 35% in parliament but also numerical increase in cabinet appointment remained a wishful thinking.³⁰⁴ The sound of hens crowing was not received well by the KANU government cocks, especially shrill squawking and intimidating crows from women like Prof. Wangari Maathai.

2002 Elections

The turning point in women's parliamentary representation probably took place in 2002, when several political parties formed a coalition known as the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) that defeated KANU. It is the year Mr Moi who had served Kenya for 24 years decided to retire from Presidency.³⁰⁵ Women initially kept silent and their silence was in Maria Nzomo's opinion detrimental in the fight for their political numerical increase in parliament at this crucial moment when power was changing

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Ibid., 245. Nzomo has argued that had the electoral process provided a level political playing ground, and had elections been truly fair, there is no reason why as many as hundred women could not have won civic and parliamentary seats. As women organised for elections, they faced considerable public resistance from men. Some women were molested as punishment for seeking public political office.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Moi had chosen Mr. Uhuru Kenyatta, the son of late Jomo Kenyatta to be the flag bearer of KANU and the President. The choice of Kenyatta sparked off a lot of resistance from KANU loyalists, arguing that Kenyatta was a new comer as compared to KANU *historicals*. As such the rival faction abandoned the party and allied with the opposition parties in the NARC coalition to defeat Mr. Kenyatta.

hands. According to Nzomo, had women started earlier laying strategies for the 2002 elections and loudly trumpeted their constitutional review debates; they would have constituted a formidable force to be reckoned with by NARC coalition.³⁰⁶ Women at this point are accused of lacking unity of purpose, which had galvanised their organisation in the pre-1992 elections.³⁰⁷ They lacked agility to timely forecast the political trend in the country. Their frantic efforts to form a forum that was initially labelled women for NARC and then NARC Women (NWC)³⁰⁸ came so late in Nov 2002 when NARC, the political jet was on the runway, full of male politicians on board with already agreed strategies on how to snatch and share power from the ruling KANU.

Nevertheless, NWC joined NARC with a short term political mandate of ensuring that NARC won the 2002 elections. For two months, NWC members volunteered their time and resources to produce and disseminate presidential and party campaign materials. They organised and conducted training for election party agents, participated in the presidential campaigns and monitored the election-day polls.³⁰⁹ The key long term objective for this spirit of volunteerism was to obtain a guarantee from the male dominated NARC that, if the party won the elections, it would incorporate women as equal partners in the post-election power sharing and would complete and engender the new constitution and governance process generally.³¹⁰ Unfortunately, the proposed Memorandum of Understanding to formalise the envisaged partnership was never tabled nor documented. There was ultimately no guarantee and the post-election power sharing deal was never achieved, except the nomination of five women out of seven NARC nominees.³¹¹

After the landslide victory of the NARC coalition in the 2002 elections, the newly elected leadership led by Mwai Kibaki as the president was faced with a challenge of forming a government of national unity: a government that will “ensure not only broad based participation in decision making by all the diverse communities in Kenya, but also would respond to the need for gender equity and justice (for all groups)

³⁰⁶ Maria W Nzomo, "The 2002 General Elections in Kenya: Women's Performance and Prospects in the Parliamentary Politics," *Wajibu: A journal of social and religious concern* 18, no. 1-2 (2003). <http://web.peacelink.it/wajibu/18issue/p2.html> (accessed 9th Jan. 2009).

³⁰⁷ Ibid.; In 1992 women were considerably united, which partly lead to increase in women's representation to at least 6 in the house of parliament.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Ibid.

in the representation and participation in all key political and other public decision making [domains].”³¹² Worth noting is that for the first time since independence, nine women were elected as MPs in 2002, with eight of them winning under the NARC party ticket and six women got ministerial positions under NARC government.

2007 Elections

The December 2007 elections saw a high participation of women candidature and activism in Kenyan past history. There were 269 women who stood for parliamentary seats under different political parties. The major political parties at play were Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), Party of National Unity (PNU) and Orange Democratic Movement-Kenya (ODM-Kenya), NARC, KANU, among others. But out of 269 female candidates, only 18 won parliamentary seats and they are currently part of the 224 legislators of the Kenyan parliament. The election exercise was unfortunately bloody, characterised by violence, assassinations, vote rigging and tribal clashes.

Although to date it is difficult to know who actually won the 2007 presidential elections in Kenya,³¹³ these 18 women unquestionably won their parliamentary seats, against their male contenders.

4.2.3 Women and political quietism in Kenya

Women’s political participation was progressive in the period before 1960s. But the period between 1962 and 1990 was characterised by a political lapse for women in Kenya. Voices of political activists of the colonial times had become quiescent. The songs of resistance to oppression sung before the 1960s were forgotten and outmoded. The MYWO became absolutely politically docile and victim of political manipulation by Kenyan governments. The only lone female voice among juggling voices of cocks was that of Philemena Chelangat Mutai, MP for Eldoret North (1972-76). But she was

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Preliminary results indicated that Raila Odinga who was the ODM candidate was having a comfortable lead over Mwai Kibaki of PNU. But in the turn of events, at the last minute when all Kenyans were informally but confidently celebrating Raila’s victory, Mwai Kibaki was “miraculously” declared by the Electoral Commission of Kenya the winner of 2007. The declaration of Kibaki’s victory was in a matter of seconds followed by his swearing in as the President of the Republic of Kenya for the second term. This decision resulted into clashes that befell Kenya with high ferocity in which hundred of people, men and women were killed and thousands of others displaced. The current state of Kenyan parliament is characterised by a highest number of opposition MPs affiliated to the ODM. This demonstrated how partisan and absurd the electoral systems in Africa are especially for women candidates who lost to their male opponents at either the primary or parliamentary elections and their voices have not been heard. It demonstrates absolute aura of electoral ensemble in the absence of real democracy.

bullied and eventually eliminated by the Kenyatta government for opposing the bill to increase the president's powers over the rulings of the High Court of Kenya. Philemena Mutai was arrested and charged with inciting violence among his constituents to destroy a private sisal plantation in Uasin-Gishu.³¹⁴

Later on Kenya witnessed tendrils of female political activism crowing up, with people like Wangari Maathai challenging the state to reintroduce multiparty democracy and give attention to women's issues in Kenya. Others like Charity Njiru started political participations with the audacity to contest for parliamentary seat and later presidency. The women representation into parliament sluggishly increased; by 2011, there were at least 18 women MPS, though remained an insignificant figure in comparison to other parliaments in the region.

The lamentable representation of women in Kenyan Parliament despite the fact that women constitute over 50% of the total population of Kenya, triggers off serious questions for investigation. Although it can be argued that colonial brutality against women who were involved in the Mau-Mau rebellion undermined women's nationalism and political participation, the attainment of independence should have revamped women's political consciousness and activism, armed with the assurance of the peace and freedom dawned by independence. But that was not the case. I attribute this to the underlying influence of patriarchal ideology; which embeds the socio-political and economic strata and manifests in different forms.

To begin with, Women's political lapse was due to the attainment of independence. The end of colonial rule and the return of alienated land, end of forced labour, torture, taxation and a shift of political machinery from the hand of a white man (Mzungu³¹⁵) to the hands of an African was *detum perficiemus munus*. Mau-Mau slogans of "Mzungu aende ulaya Muafrica hapate Uhuru" loosely translated as "Europeans should go back to Europe and Africans get independence" materialised on 2nd December 1963 when Kenyan independence was declared, with Jomo Kenyatta an African as the ruler of Kenya. Under colonialism, Africans longed for the far past *golden* days when they were free from foreign rule. They longed for the time colonialism would end and they become free. Independence gave a psychological

³¹⁴ A. Kiprop, "Chelagat Mutai," in *Kalenjin online* (Nairobi: 2007). See also a documentary film by Hilary Ng'weno, "The Making of a Nation: A Political History of Kenya," (Kenya: 2007).

³¹⁵ Which also means foreigner

satisfaction for self-rule. Women were satisfied with the fruits of their struggle—the African man on the throne, as was the case in the past. Kenyatta’s reign witnessed no women activism. Repressive colonial policies like forced labour, taxation and torture ended, and freedom of movement was granted. MYWO became more progressive and supportive for women through training of skills that increased upon the household income. Politics was dominated by KANU males and the *Hens* did not crow.³¹⁶ Kenyatta, who was well known as *Mzee* died in 1978, and he was succeeded by Daniel Arab Moi. Relegating politics to only men was a revival of pre-colonial nostalgia where the art of state management was in the hands of men and succession to the throne was from fathers to sons. African women were part of this pre-colonial cultural heritage. Moreover, colonial leadership had been male centred, which marked a significant transition at the time Power was changing hands.

Political dictatorship that characterised Kenya from 1980-1991 was also responsible for poor women participation in politics. Following the failed coup plot of 1982, KANU government under president Arab Moi became very repressive to all political groups. General Service Unite, popularly known as GSU used very brutal measures against opponents of Moi’s government, which involved excessive force and torture. Some women’s groups adopted non-political stance to circumvent the harassment. They disassociated themselves from any political groups that are seen as a threat to the ruling party KANU. Political confrontation is believed to be the way of men only. Any woman who is politically confrontational is foreign in character and becomes a target for political and media insults. Such women are the ones called Jezebels, iron ladies, men, unmotherly and so on. Some women groups are said to have become conformists to the KANU government with a hope for support from the political powers in the country.³¹⁷ Moreover, with KANU as the sole political forum, there was limited space and high competition for political office that left out women from participating.

Moi government paid no attention to women’s political interests. Women’s activities were suspicious, and always dimmed as influenced by Western ideologies,

³¹⁶ In contrast to Sylvia Tamale’s book, *When Hens Begin to Crow: Gender and Parliamentary Politics in Uganda* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1999), in which she discusses the turning point in which women started to have a significantly wider and active participation in parliamentary and local politics in Uganda.

³¹⁷ Muigai, 102.

which are foreign to Kenya. Female activists were foreign women within their country. For example, in 1984, leaders of women's groups made inevitable demands to women empowerment, which included women involvement in decision-making processes and an end to discriminatory practices against women in employment. Women at this point were preparing for the 1985 U.N International Women's Year Conference in Nairobi. But the government responded with a strongly worded warning to Kenyan women "to avoid making statements and demands that could create problems for them... (and) talking about their rights; as indeed all Kenyans have their rights but do not talk about them."³¹⁸ From this view, one would ask these questions: Who is the government in relation to women? Who are the rest of Kenyans who have rights but don't talk about them? In my opinion, the government is certainly a group of men in authority, and all women are the subjects, who should avoid disturbing men's peace with statements that make the government anxious. The rest of Kenyans, are categorically men (and women) who are not in government but are contended with the system. Women were further reminded that they "had little to complain about as they were adequately represented in various fields in the country."³¹⁹ This highlights the patronage of the male authority over matters of the state. Males are ones to determine where and where not women should have 'adequate' representation but not in politics, which should be a domain for men. The government response was a manifestation of anxiety over political demands. The government was aware that the demand for political participation was part of women's rights, but was not comfortable with these demands from women, mainly because their political monopoly shall be challenged. This resulted into silencing women with threats. Women's urge to crow politically was intimidated to the effect that some women reportedly cowed out and disassociated themselves from political demands.³²⁰ The urge to crow politically by women made the irascible gerontocratic cock-led government of Mr Moi anxious and arrogant.

By manipulating the elections and leaderships of MYWO, KANU government dwarfed women's political senses as it was ensured that radical and anti-KANU government candidates never gained the leadership of the organisation and women were

³¹⁸ Maria Nzomo and Kathleen Staudt, "Man-Made Political Machinery in Kenya: Political Space for Women?," in *Women and Politics Worldwide*, ed. Barbara J. Nelson and Najma Chowdhury (London: Yale University Press, 1994), 421.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Ibid.

constantly advised to keep away from politics. The regime also witnessed numerous brutalities, detentions and imprisonment of political women activists, a move that discouraged women politically compelling them to leave politics for men.

The absence of Affirmative Action (AA) in Kenya since 1963 till 2011: Unlike Uganda and Rwanda the ideals of AA in Kenya took long to be realised. AA was to ensure that women have a constitutional right to certain number of seats in parliament as the case is in neighbouring Uganda and Rwanda. Attempts to introduce AA before the 2010 constitution were futile. The first attempt was made by Phoebe Asiyo a woman member of parliament in April 1997. The motion was defeated in the male dominated KANU parliament. This however resulted into the birth of Kenya Women's Political Caucus (KWPC), an organisation constituted to lobby for and influence issues relating to constitutional review, economic participation and legal rights of women.³²¹ In 2000 Beth Mugo a female member of parliament resurrected issues of AA but was again defeated.³²² Another attempt was in 2007, but the bill was reportedly boycotted by the male MPs, and was eventually shelved. Women in Kenya had demanded that through AA, 50 Parliamentary seats (17%) be reserved for women constitutionally and other elective seats be attained through competition against men. It was rationalized that women need to take about 30% of seats in Parliament in order for them to begin exercising influence of parliamentary affairs and ensure political equity between the sexes.³²³ The absence of AA in the Kenyan constitution presented a major bottleneck in assuaging the historical disadvantage against women and other minority groups not only in political representation, but also other spheres of life. There was no any legislation to ensure that women are adequately represented in all key decision-making bodies, in politics, bureaucracy and other public and private institutions.³²⁴ The refusal to accept women's course was a frustration to many women. Ida Odinga, the leader of National Women Leaders Negotiating Committee expressed on behalf of other women their disappointment: "...we want the men MPs to know that Kenyan women are

³²¹ Winnie Mitullah, "Gender Inclusion in Transition Politics: A Review and Critique of Women's Engagement.," in *The Politics of Transition in Kenya from Kanu to Narc*, ed. Walter O. Oyugi, Peter Wanyande, and C. Odhiambo Mbai (Nairobi: Heinrich Boll Foundation, 2003), 218.

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Joyce Mulama, "Legislation to Get More Women in Parliament - the Next Chapter...," *Interpress Service News Agency* (2008). <http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=38955> (accessed 27th Nov. 2008).

³²⁴ Maria Nzomo, "The Status of Women's Human Rights in Kenya and Strategies to Overcome Inequalities," *African Studies Association* 22, no. 2 (1994): 19.

disappointed with them. They have failed to... make Kenya be counted when it comes to issues of affirmative action”³²⁵

The concerted zeal to defeat AA in Kenya was enforced by male legislators, apparently with the intention to maintain the status quo of keeping women where they traditionally belong—domestic and private realm.

4.3.0 WOMEN AND POLITICS IN UGANDA

Women resistance to colonial patriarchal policies and system had started as early as 1940s when the Ugandan Council of Women (UCW) was established. Women resisted political marginalisation and oppressive socio-cultural and economic cocoons into which they had been bound. It marked the watershed for the contemporary women’s movement in Uganda, though women’s voice remained excluded from the national politics.³²⁶ In 1953, the Kabaka of Buganda was forced into exile by the colonial power.³²⁷ A group of YWCA women clothed in traditional bark cloth stormed the State House of Sir Andrew Cohen, the British governor who had ordered the Kabaka’s exile, demanding his return. They threatened to spend a night on hunger strike in his compound, which forced Sir Cohen to give them audience.³²⁸

The membership of the UCW was a melting pot of multiracial women, and through it women gained political acumen. UCW members rallied around collective women’s rights issues such as citizenship, civic education, and voting rights and they actively pushed for increased female participation in national politics.³²⁹ In 1960 the UCW held a big conference on the status of women in relation to the laws of marriage,

³²⁵ Mulama.

³²⁶ Tamale, *When Hens Begin to Crow: Gender and Parliamentary Politics in Uganda*, 10.

³²⁷ The deportation of the Kabaka came as a result of the refusal of Kabaka Muteesa II of Buganda to accept his kingdom (Buganda) to be part of independent Uganda. Buganda had by the terms of the 1900 Agreement with the British been accorded special privileges and protection in the British protectorate. On 30th June 1953, the Colonial secretary in London, Oliver Lyttleton made in a speech the possibility of East African federation. Creating a federation of East African states would have submerged Buganda Kingdom. In response the Kabaka, on behalf of the people of Buganda objected, not only to the federation but being part of independent Uganda, despite a series of protracted meetings with Sir Andrew Cohen, the British governor. The Kabaka wanted Buganda to become independent from the rest of Uganda and the federated East Africa. Sir Andrew Cohen was forced to withdrawal his recognition of Kabaka Muteesa II as the traditional leader, and signed a declaration for Kabaka’s deportation that occurred on 30th. November 1953. See, Crawford Young, "Buganda," in *African Kingship in Perspective*, ed. Rene Lemarchand (London: Routledge, 1977), 214-218.

³²⁸ Ibid. Also, Kenneth Little, *African Women in Towns: An Aspect of Africa's Social Revolution* (London: Cambridge University Press), 72.

³²⁹ Tamale, *When Hens Begin to Crow: Gender and Parliamentary Politics in Uganda*.

divorce, and inheritance. This conference was a big boost to women's movement, serving as a vital signal to the government and the nation that women were dissatisfied with the oppression and subordination society had subjected them to.³³⁰ Worth mentioning is the fact that women did not demand for active political involvement but raised fundamental issues that affect them socially and economically. It is clear that to this point many women still recognised politics as a sphere for men.

From 1952, political parties started in Uganda, with the first one as Uganda National Congress (UNC); followed by others like the Progressive Party- PP (1954), Democratic Party, DP (1956) and Uganda People's Congress, UPC (1958). These parties had a lot in common: They were not all-representative as they excluded low social groups such as peasants and women from their ranks. They were ethnocentric and rallied around personal acquisition of power.³³¹ They were all backed by the then conservative patriarchal institutions: DP by the Roman Catholic Church, and the UPC by the Anglican Church, Kabaka Yekka (KY) by the Buganda royalists.³³²

The first African woman to enter the colonial legislative council (Legco) was UCW member Pumla Kisosonkole, who joined British born Barbara Saben in 1957.³³³ These two women were among the 49 nominated members, and sat with their 47 male counterparts as legislators.³³⁴ The Legco elections of October 1958 though saw the exit of both Saben and Kisosonkole, brought in three women; Joyce Mpanga, Sarah Ntiro and Frances Akello. These women were nominated to the Legco by Governor Crawford to contribute to the law-making process that preceded independence.³³⁵ Most of these women belonged to the elite class and had fathers and husbands who were notables in the Uganda politics of that time. They had to be just nominated than elected as it was very difficult for women to be elected to the Council. Only one woman stood in the 1958 Legco elections but lost.³³⁶ Prior to this, eight women had stood and vigorously campaigned for the Buganda Lukiiko (Parliament) seats. But the evening before polling days, the Kabaka is said to have issued a proclamation that only men had to be voted

³³⁰ Little, 73.

³³¹ Tamale, *When Hens Begin to Crow: Gender and Parliamentary Politics in Uganda*, 13. Also; Samwiri Rubaraza Karugire, *A Political History of Uganda* (Nairobi; London: Heinemann Educational, 1980), 168.

³³² Karugire.

³³³ Tamale, *When Hens Begin to Crow: Gender and Parliamentary Politics in Uganda*.

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Ibid., 11.

because it was not right for women to participate in politics then. The proclamation was passed on the electorate, which was mainly male, by the county chiefs. Some women confronted the Kabaka for the position of county chieftaincy, but they were only given peripheral positions such as board membership to municipal councils.³³⁷

On 9th October 1962, Uganda was granted independence. Unlike Kenya, Uganda's transition to Independence has been described in history as less painful and swift. It took place simultaneously with the evolution of legislative and parliamentary institutions. As David Apter states, the transition occurred so smoothly that a ramified system of local authorities and parliament were already in place by Independence.³³⁸ Mr Milton Obote, who had won elections in April 1962, was the country's executive Prime Minister, while Sir Edward Mutesa II, the Kabaka of Buganda was a ceremonial President and Head of State. English was the National Language, and the National Assembly that replaced the colonial Legislative council was put in Kampala City. The social political structures which colonial governments established remained in place: judiciary, army, civil service, cabinet, religion, and the educational system that became the framework on which the state was founded. These structures perpetuated the colonial ideologies in the independent Uganda.³³⁹

In summary, the formulation of the colonial state was based on the British model. It was characterised by the male hegemony. At the time of independence, Uganda inherited a structure whose ideology was designed to systematically promote male privilege and power on the political echelon while concretizing women's subordination modelled with the western and capitalist outfit. There was no political ideology to challenge men's domination or specific gender agendum to elevate women to challenges male political monopoly. All socio-political structures were full of male authority.

4.3.1 Women and post-colonial politics in Uganda

The first post-colonial government had serious internal problems which needed decisive action. Already there was a schism between Mr Milton Obote, the executive Prime Minister and the Kabaka of Buganda, Sir Edward Mutesa II who was also the

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ David E. Apter, "Democracy for Uganda: A Case for Comparison," *Daedalus: The Quest for World Order* 124, no. 3 (1995): 161.

³³⁹ Tamale, *When Hens Begin to Crow: Gender and Parliamentary Politics in Uganda*, 14.

ceremonial President of Uganda. The crisis worsened following the outcomes of the 1964 referendum in which the people of the lost counties of Bunyoro voted to go back to Bunyoro Kingdom than remaining under Buganda Kingdom.³⁴⁰ The Kabaka of Buganda refused to sign into law not only the referendum exercise but also its outcomes. Mr Milton Obote, the Prime Minister on the other hand honoured the referendum, and took his executive prerogative to endorsing the results, which officially authorised the transfer of the lost counties back to Bunyoro in 1965. Obote's action worsened the relationship with the President (Kabaka of Buganda). In the subsequent event, the Prime Minister overthrew Mutesa II in 1966 and declared himself the president of Uganda with full executive powers. He also abolished the 1962 constitution with traditional monarchies probably with the aim of building Uganda as a republic other than a cohort of traditional kingdoms. He made a new constitution that vested him with great powers.

Under the UPC government of Milton Obote, parliamentary elections were scheduled for 1971 and the UCW prepared to participate in these elections. As a strategy to winning elections, the UCW approached the UPC secretariat asking for support mainly in speech writing, campaigns, and transportation, since most capable female candidates were late comers and inexperienced in Ugandan politics.³⁴¹ But Felix Onama who was the Secretary General of UPC responded to them that "it would be discriminatory to give women special aids to ensure their election because this action would emphasize the fact that they are women and de-emphasize their political competence."³⁴² Whereas Onama's opinion was logical for purposes of argument, he failed to put into consideration the fact that Ugandan women at the time were historically disadvantaged and politically handicapped by African cultural and colonial patriarchal structures. They were incompetent to act unaided on the slippery political terrain of Uganda. The 1971 parliamentary elections unfortunately did not take place because the government of Milton Obote was overthrown in a bloody coup staged by Idi Amin Dada.

³⁴⁰ As per the terms of 1900 Buganda-British agreement, the territories of Bunyoro, namely Buyaga and Bugangaizi (presently in Kibale District) were given to Buganda as a token of appreciations for Buganda's role in defeating Bunyoro. The final defeat of Bunyoro by the British conquest took place in 1899 when king Kabalega was arrested and exiled on the Island.

³⁴¹ Tamale, *When Hens Begin to Crow: Gender and Parliamentary Politics in Uganda*, 15.

³⁴² Ibid.

In January 1971 Idi Amin came to power through a military coup as the president of Uganda. He abrogated the 1966 constitution which Obote had made and ruled by decree with an iron fist. All the political organs: Judiciary executive and legislature were put under his thumb. The whole of his regime that lasted for almost a decade can well be described as diabolical: it witnessed widespread violation of human rights. All potential sources of opposition were debilitated. Numerous murders of his political critics became a daily practice. Economic mismanagement followed. Most NGOs including women's organisation like Action for Development (ACFODE), were associated with opposition and hence were banned in 1978.³⁴³ The regime was so whimsical and buffoonish that it does not deserve a mention in the chronicles of modern human history. From the gender point of view, the regime viewed a woman as a sexual object whose fundamental use is sex willy-nilly. Amin himself had unspecified number of wives and concubines, while his soldiers and government officials raped and abused women with impunity and immunity. The National Council of Women which he formed in 1978 in order to control local and national women's associations was virtually ineffective in realising global goals of integrating women in political arena. It was instead meant to control women's political activism.

Idi Amin as a person was a true son of his parents and a true product of colonial artisonry. Born among the Nubian tribe of North Western Uganda, Amin served as a British colonial soldier. He is remembered to have threatened nomadic Turkana people of Kenya with cutting off their penises if they continued giving colonial authorities in Kenya trouble. Amin's view of leadership encompassed authority, power, force and physical confrontation. Diplomacy and dialogue was womanish and a sign of weakness. His gigantic body structure (6ft 4inch) equipped him with pride over others. He is the Saul of his time; the *Jogo* (cock) of his time and the only bull (dog) in the African kraal. Other men like Julius Nyerere (former President of Tanzania) whom he described as a coward, an old woman and a prostitute were no match to his physical strength. He said he was in love with President Nyerere and would want him to put on a *gomesi* (Ugandan traditional dress) such that they get married. Describing Nyerere as a woman was meant to show that the latter is weak physically, and his leadership style of dialogue,

³⁴³ Ibid. Winnie Byanyima, "Perils and Promises; Living Feminist Politics in Uganda," *African Gender Institute Panel Discussion on International Women's Day* (2004). <http://www.gwsafrica.org/knowledge/winnie.html> (accessed 19th Nov. 2008).

diplomacy and consultation and constitutionalism, in Amin's understanding, made him (Nyerere) "less powerful." He further announced that he wanted Queen Elizabeth to send him her 25 year knickers in celebration of her 25th coronation anniversary.

Following the overthrow of Idi Amin in 1979 by the Uganda exiles, with the aid of Tanzanian forces, an interim legislature called National Consultative Council-NCC was put in place. It was charged with establishing a framework for a return to democratic government in Uganda. It was to lay down the modalities for multiparty presidential and parliamentary election in the following year. Only two women entered NCC as legislators. They included Rhoda Kalema, who was elected and Namirembe Bitamazire who joined as an ex officio member having been appointed minister of education.³⁴⁴ This interim government was followed by a general multiparty election in Uganda in 1980. DP, UPC, Conservative party (CP) and Uganda Patriotic Movement (UPM) were the four political parties that participated in the elections. Milton Obote of UPC became the president of Uganda again. Only five women competed in the elections, under different parties, except DP and CP: Theresa Odongo-Oduka (UPC), Cecilia Ogwal (UPC), Robinah Kasadha (UPM), Rhoda Kalema (UPM) and Freda Lule (UPM). Of these, only Odongo Oduka was successful and she became the only female MP in the house of 145 members of parliament. She was appointed deputy minister of health.³⁴⁵

Under the Obote II government, the NCW still served as an umbrella for all women's organisations, but was subject to the manipulations of the Women's Wing of UPC, which treated it like a party organ though many of the surviving NCW members to day say that they were neither UPC members, nor appreciated UPC interference in their organisation.³⁴⁶ ACFODE was again re-established in Uganda in November 1985 shortly after the overthrow of Obote II government in another coup led by Basilio Okello and Tito Okello Lutwa. The Okellos ruled Uganda for only six months and were overthrown by the NRA/M fighters in 1986.

Following the war victory of the NRA/M, NCW was placed under the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Community Development and later under the Ministry of Local Government and finally in 1988 it was placed under the Ministry of Women in

³⁴⁴ Tamale, *When Hens Begin to Crow: Gender and Parliamentary Politics in Uganda*, 15-16.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 16.

³⁴⁶ Aili Mari Tripp, "The Politics of Autonomy and Cooptation in Africa: The Case of the Ugandan Women's Movement," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 39, no. 1 (2001): 123.

Development, and its name was changed to: National Association of Women's Organisations of Uganda (NAWOU).³⁴⁷

1986 to date

January 26th 1986 was a watershed in the political history of Uganda. It is a day that ebbed with a revolutionary change in political landscape of the country. It witnessed the downfall of dictatorial regimes, and the rise of a new political era headed by H.E Yoweri Kaguta Museveni who had in 1980 launched guerrilla warfare against what he called the dictatorial Obote II regime. His rebel group was called National Resistance Army (NRA) and the political umbrella was National Resistance Movement (NRM). After coming to power, the NRM that later on became a political party became the umbrella body for all political activities under his governance. Museveni's ascension to power tackled many pertinent issues affecting Ugandans. One of those issues was gender parity, which was hoped to be realised through Affirmative Action (AA) to promote women participation in the transformation of Uganda. While still in the bush, Museveni's army was composed of women soldiers fighting side by side with men to liberate the country. Such, among others included Lt. Col Nalweyiso and Capt Olive Zizinga. Other women played *intelligentsia* roles outside the war zones. They included Gertrude Njuba and Winnie Byanyima, while others like Janat Mukwaya were significant players as enforcers of law and order in the political wing of the NRM/A.³⁴⁸

In the post war 1986 Uganda, efforts were made to mobilise Ugandans for development and to establish firm local and national political administrative network. Local committees called Resistance Councils (RCs) were formed throughout the country. Every local council constituted nine people in every village. On these committees of nine, one position was reserved as secretary for Women's Affairs, and all others were open to both men and women. These local councils later became the basis of local government structures, which exist in Uganda today. The role of Secretaries for Women's Affairs was two-fold; First, to ensure that women get involved in issues of general concern to all citizens, at a local and national level; and secondly, to ensure that issues of specific interest to women, issues reflecting women's specific oppression, are expressed and taken up in general decision-making forums. For example during the

³⁴⁷ Ibid.: 125.

³⁴⁸ Janat Mukwaya (Hon.) MP Mukono South Constituency, Ugandan Parliament), in interview with the writer, 6th August 2010

1995 constitution conference, the Secretary for Women's Affairs would help women in her constituency to voice their ideas in order to ensure that their needs as women and those of society are articulated in the new constitution. She would then give her report to a special committee that was travelling around the country listening to women's ideas about women's concerns for the constitution in 1995.³⁴⁹

Before AA was introduced in 1989, there were only four women in the national committee—National Resistance Council (NRC). The NRC in this military government played the roles of a legislative body since 1986. Such women included: Betty Bigombe, Victoria Sekitoleko, Gertrude Njuba and Olive Zizinga. The NRC was later replaced by the Constituent Assembly (1994) and finally National Assembly (1996) when the first non-partisan Presidential and Parliamentary elections were held.

A ministry for gender, labour and social development was formed in 1988 to cater for women affairs. This was seen by many as a milestone in promoting women's visibility in the decision making process. This was followed by a number of action plans which include the 1997 National Gender Policy and the 1999 National Action Plan for Women.

The promulgation of the National Constitution in 1995 was a tipping point in the history of women and politics of Uganda. The constitution provides legal basis for equality between the sexes and AA in favour of women. Seats in parliament were created and reserved for women legislators from all Ugandan Districts. Accordingly, every district elects a woman as a representative to parliament, besides other female MPs who have trounced male contenders and won parliamentary seats of their constituencies. Today, Uganda has over 110 districts, each with a female district representative. Through AA, the number of female legislators in Ugandan has increased considerably: women in Uganda currently hold over 30% of total seats in parliament, and about 20% of cabinet positions. With these, President Museveni has not only been the “darling” of women in Uganda, but also applauded locally and internationally for being head of one of the first post-colonial governments to embrace AA. Museveni crowned his gender achievements when in 1995 appointed Specioza Wandira Kazibwe as the first female Vice President. The leadership of Specioza W. Kazibwe as the VP of Uganda, 1995-2003, with special emphasis to the perils and challenges of female

³⁴⁹ Barbara Klugman, "How Are Women Incorporated into Political Struggle? Ideas from Uganda," *Agenda* 6 (1990): 64-65.

leadership in a patriarchal African country shall be discussed at length later in this thesis.

4.3.2 Affirmative Action in Uganda

“Affirmative Action” (AA) means positive steps taken to increase the representation of people from previously and presently marginalized and historically excluded from public social political and economic spheres of society.³⁵⁰ It is positive discrimination in favor of the marginalized.

AA is an international phenomenon and it has been adopted by International Bodies like the UN and the Beijing Platform for Action as the cardinal means of increasing women as representatives in government organs.³⁵¹ It is based on mainly four considerations:

- 1) It is seen as a form of justice to women,³⁵² who have been subjected to injustice associated with male dominance in society, and who would otherwise find it difficult to be in the legislative assembly. This is concretised by the Beijing Platform for Action (1995: para. 181) recommendation that “Women’s equal participation in decision-making is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women’s interests to be taken into account.” It carries the notion of justice and respect for human rights.
- 2) It is also based on the understanding that the presence of women in parliament will improve on the status of women outside parliament. Women will feel respected as all other citizens in their respective countries. It would give women more impetus to challenge men in other spheres of life as equal partners. Indeed as Sawer puts it:

“...[the] visible presence of women in public life raises the aspirations of other women, the ‘girls can do anything’ effect.”³⁵³

³⁵⁰ See; Tom L. Beauchamp, "In Defence of Affirmative Action," *Journal of Ethics* 2, no. 2 (1998): 143. Susan Opatow, "Affirmative Action and Social Justice," *Social Justice Research* 5, no. 3 (1992): 219. Bill Shaw, "Affirmative Action: An Ethical Evaluation," *Journal of Business Ethics* 7, no. (1988): 763.

³⁵¹ Ironically, the export and import of this western value produces greater representation of women in politics of former colonial countries than in the west. According to statistics, Rwanda and South Africa tops the list of women representation in national parliaments at 56.3% and 44.5% respectively as compared to 22.0% and 16.8% for UK and USA respectively. (see: "Women in National Parliaments", <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm> (accessed 12th May 2011).)

³⁵² Affirmative Action in Uganda has not only brought women to politics but other groups like disabled, workers and youths.

³⁵³ Marian Sawer, "Parliamentary Representation of Women: From Discourses of Justice to Strategies of Accountability," *International Political Science Review* 21, no. 4 (2000): 362.

It would result in their recognition as a formidable force in nation building by their male counterparts.

3) Women's political representation is a symbol for the legitimacy of political institutions. The Legitimacy of political institutions will be undermined if significant sections of the community, in this case women appear to be locked out of them.³⁵⁴

4) There is also the principle of the equality of all humans. Women's participation in politics and public life as people is a matter of their right, which has to be exercised without hindrance. This is also stated in the United Nations instruments, notably Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and Article 7 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Accordingly, talent is not confined to one gender; women are as talented as men, and their absence from parliamentary positions is a consequence of direct or indirect discrimination.³⁵⁵

Historically, programs of this nature were first introduced by colonialism and were termed as "Indigenisation" or "Africanization." They sought to incorporate indigenous peoples in areas of the civil service and elsewhere from which they had been previously excluded.³⁵⁶ Unlike in the Western countries where AA is implemented in the spheres of employment and education, in the non-Western countries, it is experimented mainly in politics. It is a deliberate decision by African governments like Kenya to cover their patriarchal political bias with gender balance. In these situations, women in politics are like cosmetic surgery; a superficial means of legitimising a regime before the international communities. Women are in most cases "a suit and a tie" to make regimes look civilised. In a real sense women have no power and when placed in positions of power and influence, they are made assistants and deputies to men.

It is worth noting that when AA was introduced in Uganda, it was a strange phenomenon. President Museveni's 27 points program had no agenda for women, but on coming to power, his government at least overtly showed how it appreciates the role of women in national development. Museveni was born in 1944 in a patriarchal and pastoral tribe of Banyankole in western Uganda. He went to School in Kyamate elementary school, Mbarara High School and Ntare School which are both boys'

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.: 365.

³⁵⁶ Tamale, *When Hens Begin to Crow: Gender and Parliamentary Politics in Uganda*, 22.

secondary schools located in Mbarara district. He later went to the University of Dar es Salam (Tanzania) during the UJAMAA period and studied Economics and Political Science. He read the works of socialists like Fanon, Lenin, Marx, Rodney and Mao.³⁵⁷ He headed a students' association called University Students African Revolutionary Front (USARF) which was formed as a reaction against the rightist University Staff. USARF was closely identified with Mozambican Liberation Front (FRELIMO), a Mozambican nationalist movement that received most of its support from China and USSR at the time. It is obvious that Mr Museveni had digested the socialist ideals of captivating the will of the masses to legitimize a movement. Museveni schemed and planned his political project wisely: He learned that women in Uganda constitute the highest number of potential voters; and by integrating this part of the population into active political participation, he would not only gain legitimacy for his regime but would be assured of a sizable block-vote that would strengthen his political grip on Uganda Presidency.

Museveni's later attitude and responses to feminist causes clearly reflect that on his agendum he was no feminist; he merely wanted a significant numerical representation of women in politics but not feminists in politics. Had he been Australia's Peter Walsh³⁵⁸ he would complain that the trouble with AA was that you "do not end up with women...you end up with feminists."³⁵⁹ Walsh, who advocates for free market political competition without any interference states that AA was achieving little other than giving 'jobs to hairy-legged Stalinists' (women/feminists, who are *behaving like men*) from women's organisations.³⁶⁰

Women activists in Uganda have noted the attitude of Museveni government to feminist causes. For example President Museveni was opposed to the Domestic Relations Bill, describing it as shallow and unable to address the development needs of

³⁵⁷ Government of Uganda, "State House: The Republic of Uganda" <http://www.statehouse.go.ug/president.php?category=The%20President> (accessed 17th. January 2009).

³⁵⁸ Peter Alexander Walsh is a former Australian senator and labor party politicians. He served in Australian government as minister for Resources and Energy (1983-1984) and later Finance minister (1984-1990). In his book (Peter Walsh, *Confessions of a Failed Finance Minister* (Milsons Point: Random House Australia, 1995), 291.)

³⁵⁹ Sawyer: 363.

³⁶⁰ See Marian Sawyer, "Liberal Reformists or Hairy-Legged Stalinists? Writing the History of the Women's Electoral Lobby" http://wel.anu.edu.au/National_Library_2.htm (accessed 19th February 2009).

Ugandan societies.³⁶¹ The Bill advocated for greater equality for women and girls in matters relating to marriage, divorce and family property. It would also make marital rape illegal. Also in February 2005 the government refused to allow a drama show called the Vagina Monologues, which was described by the government as senseless pornographic and anti-male. Sylvia Tamale in her book notes that: “Beyond affirmative action policies, there is very little evidence to suggest that the men in the NRM government are fundamentally different from those in the pre-1986 regimes in showing a real commitment to women emancipation.”³⁶²

Revealingly, in his parabolic book “Sowing the Mustard Seed” President Yoweri Museveni has written a parable, which I am tempted to embellish in an aristocratic manner as follows:

A subject...did a distinguished service for the king. And the king asked his subject how he could reward him. He said to the king: ‘My Lord the King, your servant does not want any gift from you. All I want is that when we are in a public place, may my Lord the King call his subject by name...it will help me very much because if the king calls his servant by name in front of so many people, everybody will wonder who I am and they will all come to your subject and help him.’...this is what we did for the women.³⁶³ Emphasis is mine.

Museveni’s parable reveals some important questions: what distinguished service did women provide for Museveni’s political career? In which way has the government paid off this service and to what effect? What is this public place? Patriarchy keeps power in the hands of men as Kings. Museveni’s proverb reveals tensions between democratic ideals of equality and ideals of sovereignty where men as kings award and revoke positions of power and recognition to their subjects. It projects a wishful image of a docile subject, a woman, happy to be a servant so long as she is called by name and title. She is one with modest aims, and she would face a harsh response were she to attempt asserting influence in her own right or make claims that make the king anxious.

³⁶¹ Women of Uganda Network, "Response to President Yoweri Museveni's Views on the Reform of the Domestic Relations Bill by Hon. Sheila Kawamara Mishambi, Member, East African Legislative Assembly April 17, 2003 " <http://www.wougnet.org/Alerts/drbrresponseSKM.html> (accessed 20th January 2009).

³⁶² Tamale, *When Hens Begin to Crow: Gender and Parliamentary Politics in Uganda*, 20.

³⁶³ Yoweri Museveni, Elizabeth Kanyogonya, and Kevin Shillington, *Sowing the Mustard Seed: The Struggle for Freedom and Democracy in Uganda* (London: Macmillan, 1997), 191-192.

Women activists have surmised from the above that AA in Uganda is meant to serve the interests of the government. Indeed, some women activists have labelled this contribution to women's political activism as tokenism. For instance; Specioza Wandira Kazibwe's appointment as vice president (VP) was regarded as *tokenism* since it did not come with full political power that should be associated with the portfolio. By becoming VP, Dr. Specioza Wandira Kazibwe had on the surface become the second most senior politician in the country—the public place, but in actual sense real political powers lay elsewhere. Her appointment led to what one Byanyima has called the deputy-factor. There was a gap between her apparent power and real power she wielded, which made it hard for her to settle down in a specific political role.³⁶⁴ Also, most women in Uganda's cabinet and local councils serve as deputies. In local district councils, district chairmen have appointed women as their deputies. The dilemma is that, in these local governments, women deputies hardly chair sessions as the substantive male chairmen always ensure that meetings take place when they are present.³⁶⁵ This has left women more as political dummies in the public domain without clear-cut duties in national and local government bodies.

In relation to his parable above, the president reflects a high degree of paternalism. He is the *Mzee*; the patriarch and gerontocrat whose recognition to women (subjects) is bestowed at his will and it can as well be removed from them at his will or when the servants become un-loyal.

I personally regard President Museveni as a very savvy politician in sub-Saharan Africa. In 2011 general elections, Museveni beat the imaginations of many who look at him as old and tired and irrelevant to Uganda, a country that needs young and dynamic leadership, when he came up with a rap song “You want another rap!” He sung this at a pre-nomination rally in Kampala. This caused a lot of excitement throughout the country. The *Mzee* can sing. “He still has stamina!” many of his supporters say. He was the first to realise that in the era of adult suffrage, democracy as a means of legitimising a political regime, by naming a woman vice-president, his government will on the surface appear like a pro-women structure, devoted to complete women empowerment. In that way, women would see his government as a pillar of hope, and he would get the vast number of women's votes to perpetuate his stay in political power. Indeed, General

³⁶⁴ Byanyima.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

Elections in Uganda since 1996 have shown that Museveni has good support from women.

4.3.3 Challenges of Affirmative Action in Uganda

There is no doubt that AA has served its purpose of increasing numerical representation of women in Ugandan Parliament. It has, however, come under scrutiny as to whether it is the best mode of action to bring an end to women's political marginalisation in Uganda. AA is criticised on the basis of being class-centric, largely benefiting an educated elite minority among Ugandan women, leaving the majority of women (mainly rural peasants and lower class urban based but uneducated women) to face the brunt of oppression and marginalisation.³⁶⁶

It has been argued that the major problem, which affects Uganda and probably other developing countries is not the increased number of women in politics, which AA advocates for, but rather androcentricism that affects the entire social political structural transformation. For AA to be effective there should be a fundamental change in the entire social and political structure. Tamale thinks that there should be an establishment of a theoretical framework that will integrate gender dynamics into the analysis of female and male legislators.³⁶⁷ It is argued that cultural socialization experiences transmitted through parents, education, peers and the media among others, create stereotyped expectations of the sexes by society. Girls are oriented towards feminine roles that include mothering and wifely roles, which limit their perception to domestic domains while boys are aligned into roles that nurture aggressive and ambitious traits to venture into the world beyond the domestic and local arena.³⁶⁸ Girls are trained for stable marriages and homes through lessons aimed at imparting humility, obedience and endurance to men. In churches and Christian fellowships, they are reminded that they are a weaker sex (1Peter 3:7), and as Christians, they should be like the women of the Old Testament such as Sarah who addressed her husband Abraham as Master (1Peter 3:5). In this respect, even AA simply makes women appear as intruders into a political institution, leaving their 'rightful place', which is a domestic home.

³⁶⁶ Tamale, "Point of Order Mr Speaker: African Women Claiming Their Space in Parliament," 12.

³⁶⁷ Tamale, *When Hens Begin to Crow: Gender and Parliamentary Politics in Uganda*, 27.

³⁶⁸ Ibid., Maria Nzomo, "Women in Politics and Public Decision Making," in *African Perspectives on Development*, ed. Ulf Himmelstrand, Kabiru Kinyanjui, and Edward Mburugu (London: James Currey, 1994), 204-205.

AA is also said to have created a gendered enclave for women's political participation in Uganda. Some of the electorates assume that the reserved seats are the only legitimate spaces for women candidates. For example, during the 1994 Constituent Assembly elections, in which 39 women ran against male candidates for county seats, some candidates were told by voters not to compete in the election for county representatives, but to wait for the separate election a few weeks later for the seats representing special groups.³⁶⁹ On a more positive note, however, some are said to have used the AA seats as a foothold into competitive politics.³⁷⁰

From 1989 to 2002 women under AA had a very narrow political playground. There were no realistic political options in Uganda outside the NRM which was more or less a single party system. Most of the women organisations were co-opted by the government, and there were no other social-democratic alternatives with any prospects for electoral success. The NRM government, as the sole political omnibus gave a very narrow forum for political activism and participation. Most women organisations were so closely associated with President Museveni and the NRM that appointment to any office by the NRM was based on individual MP's loyalty to the government and, in particular, the President. As a result, some female appointees have paid lip service to the women's causes and strongly supported the government's stand on certain issues that affect women in general.³⁷¹ Tripp has noted that:

“(Although) a larger group of women government leaders are interested in advancing women's status,... if asked to choose between NRM policy and a conflicting concern being promoted by the women's movement, they end up toeing the NRM line because their political survival depends on their allegiance to the NRM.”³⁷²

For instance, the Domestic Relations Bill, which was tabled by radical women like Hon. Miria Matembe was rejected outright by male legislators. Some female MPs loyal to the government supported their male colleagues in rejecting the Bill. Miria Matembe, who was the Minister of Ethics and Integrity and her colleague Winnie

³⁶⁹ Anne Marie Goetz, "Women in Politics & Gender Equity in Policy: South Africa & Uganda," *Review of African Political Economy* 25, no. 76 (1998): 250.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ Tripp: 118.

³⁷² Ibid.

Byanyima, the Publicity Secretary for the NRM, lost their ministerial portfolios in the next cabinet reshuffle due to their stand against wishes of male authority.

In 2005, Ugandans opted for multiparty politics against the Movement system which had been leading the country for 19 years. Of interest is the way President Museveni exhibited his shrewdness when he surprised many by abandoning the Movement system, which he had nurtured, and started campaigning for a return to Multipartyism. The return to multiparty politics certainly opened up a new chapter for Ugandan politics, especially the Museveni leadership. Museveni's political relevance was now being assessed by the rules of the new game—multipartism.

At the time of this study, there are about ten active political parties in Uganda. With the formation of multiparty politics, women's space for political participation became wider. In the 2011 general elections, more female candidates contested for parliamentary seats as fronted by different political parties. Only one woman, named Betty Kamywa of Uganda Federal Alliance (UFA) contested for presidency, but she lost. Earlier on, Ms Miria Obote of Uganda People's Congress (UPC) contested for Presidency in 2006, but she lost, as well. Since then there have been several by-elections in which various parties have fronted women candidates.

Multiparty democracy has divided the loyalty of women between Museveni and the NRM party on one hand, and other political parties' bosses on the other. This feature has put feminist politicians in a quandary. It has made competition for the presidency and parliament sharper and even deadly in some parts of Uganda. Because of competition for parliamentary seats, it has now become a game of survival for the strongest and richest, hence reintroducing what one Onyango Obbo has termed remasculination of Ugandan politics.³⁷³

4.4 Challenges faced by female politicians in Uganda and Kenya

Women politicians are faced with many challenges and perils as they try to navigate the political terrain. This section of study is informed by personal interviews with female legislators from Uganda and Kenya. The challenges faced are generally the resultants of the patriarchal ideologies that govern African societies. The political

³⁷³Charles Onyango Obbo, "Are Women Now a Dying Breed of Uganda Politics?," *Daily Monitor* (2008). http://www.monitor.co.ug/artman/publish/Charles_Onyango_Obbo/Are_women_now_a_dying_breed_of_Uganda_politics.shtml (accessed 19th. January 2009).

landscape is rough, rugged by androcentric ridges and patriarchal apathy. Cultural roadblocks and potholes are a common menace to women political advancements. Patriarchy affects all female politicians irrespective of whether they came to parliament through affirmative action or the direct route.

There is a section of Africans, from male and rural folks who contend that the concepts of women emancipation, equality and feminism are foreign in Africa, and they have distorted the social order of societies. Professor Douglas Waruta of Nairobi University thinks that for Africa to go feminism that the West is trying to champion, it will be a very unhappy continent.³⁷⁴ Jacob Ondik, a Postgraduate student of Philosophy and Religious Studies of Nairobi University also argued that “to enforce gender differences giving prominence to the nature set up.” Using the analogue of a mother hen looking after her chicks, Ondik reasoned, “it is a woman’s role in a home to look after a family.”³⁷⁵ Ondik therefore, it can be said, despite his University education exposure assumes the traditional view that relocates women to the realms of domesticity, and men (supposed to be cocks) societal responsibility, which includes politics.

A professor of Religious Studies at the University of Nairobi stated that “Now the roles are so mingled up. Before, the roles were so structured that when you would be going wrong you would be corrected. But today the roles are so mixed up that you wouldn’t know when you are starting to interfere with somebody’s sphere.”³⁷⁶ Most societies in Africa cherish separate spheres in male-female relationships, which stress the assignment of women to the domestic realm and men to the public one; and also the physical separation between both spheres, and the social prestige attached to the public domain. With the influence of Euro-American liberal democracies, there is a growing tension between the sexes, with the female sex fighting to remove the rigid social and ideological boundaries and permeate into areas hitherto known for men. There is a commendable level of success as women have entered into education, workforce and politics in larger numbers, although men still find it odious getting involved in family life like domestic works. Indeed, as one interview respondent observed: “Men also find it hard to accept that women are supposed to be in power over them. A woman being in

³⁷⁴ Douglas Wanjohi Waruta, (Prof.); Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, University of Nairobi, in an Interview with the writer, 20th July, 2010

³⁷⁵ Jacob Ondik (University of Nairobi), in interview with the writer, 17th July, 2010

³⁷⁶ Anonymised respondent (University of Nairobi), in interview with the writer, 17th July 2010

power over a man or being bread winner is seen as a social mismatch in Africa and it is in most cases responded to aggressively by men.”³⁷⁷

As Judith M. Gerson and Kathy Peiss³⁷⁸ have observed, the concept of boundaries also suggests permeability. Boundaries mark the social territories of gender relations, signalling who ought to be admitted or excluded. There are codes and rules, which guide and regulate traffic, with instructions on which boundaries may be transversed under certain conditions.³⁷⁹ For African women who have crossed these boundaries, and entered the public arena of politics and public domains, they are expected to do so within the dynamics of their cultural assignments as homemakers, mothers and wives.

Patriarchy cuts across the spectrum. Both women and men are members of the patriarchal cultural heritage. Children grow up knowing they are women or men, who should do X and not Y. From the bottom to the top of socio-political strata, gender differences influence the way people behave and interact. In political circles, Sylvia Tamale has observed that, gender inequality affects the social interactions of male and female legislators, and remains an integral part of the parliamentary institutional framework.³⁸⁰ Women are expected to assume a submissive and non-confrontational approach in their interaction with males.

Women are marginalised by the very people they lead or aspire to lead, both male and female. Most of my respondents observed that women don’t want to be led by fellow women because of a cultural mentality that states that men are leaders and women are supposed to be followers. Professor Zinkuratire has observed that in Kenya male voters sometimes seem to do better than female voters in appreciating performing female politicians. Women in general prefer a male leader to a female one.³⁸¹ Another respondent from Kenya gave an example of his mother’s attitude to a female aspirant in one of the presidential elections:

“I know my mother particularly. [When in 1997 Charity Ngilu contested] for the position of presidency in Kenya, it was very clear in her mind that in the position of

³⁷⁷ Beatrice Mbula and Sylvia Wanjiku (CUEA), in interview with the writer, 16th July 2010

³⁷⁸ Judith M. Gerson and Kathy Peiss, "Boundaries, Negotiation, Consciousness: Reconceptualizing Gender Relations," *Social Problems* 32, no. 4 (1985): 319.

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

³⁸⁰ Tamale, "Point of Order Mr Speaker: African Women Claiming Their Space in Parliament," 12.

³⁸¹ Victor Zinkuratire, Prof. (CUEA, Nairobi)

presidency there is no woman who can be. She said “no! a woman cannot do that job...this is not for a woman a woman cannot do this job.”³⁸²

He added that:

“Such [people] would see a woman as interfering into the realm of men. Such political women are seen as activists and divorcees who are just out to disturb people and order of things. They try to dismiss them as people who have failed to their marriages and are just there looking for prospects and trying to ‘fit their feet in shoes meant for men.’”³⁸³

That for a woman to succeed in a political campaign, she must be as twice as strong and tough as a man, in order to compete with male contestants, is a common belief in East Africa. She must be more than a man. Strength is assessed by one’s abilities to fund campaigns, vigorously campaign and manipulate the electorate, and agility to neutralise all slurs and malicious propaganda of the opponents.

In most elections, majority of an African electorate would not mind whom they vote for as long as that candidate is not a woman. One of the respondents recalls two incidents that happened in her constituency in Kenya in which a female candidate unfairly lost in elections:

“I remember in my constituency there was a woman who contested in a by-election after the death of an area MP. Her name was Esther Passari Muthoni.”³⁸⁴ She has all the best qualities as compared to other candidates. She was not voted for because she is a woman. She is a successful business woman owning a lighting company in Kenya called ‘Adopt a light’. Society as we have it is not well levelled to favour women in national politics.”³⁸⁵

This attitude is as the result of apathetic stereotype against the female gender, a stereotype that maintains that women are a weaker sex that should be under male authority. As another respondent puts it;

³⁸² Jacob Ondik (University of Nairobi)

³⁸³ Jacob Ondik (University of Nairobi), also Nancy Khamale (University of Nairobi), in an interview with the writer 20th July 2010.

³⁸⁴ Esther Muthoni Passaris stood as an ODM candidate in Embakasi constituency by-elections in Nairobi in June 2008.

³⁸⁵ Abigail Apondi Oloo (University of Nairobi)

“...generally female politicians are devalued. Even us women we devalue these female politicians. Majority of them are singles and have rioted from their marital homes. Much as they may have some points, in no way they can be treated on equal footing with male politicians. Much as they have points and charisma, they are women and more so single women.”³⁸⁶

And yet another one observes that:

“If a woman contests for presidency, people would not vote for her. The public would not mind about whom they are choosing as long as it is not a woman. They fear that a woman would rule over them, something an African man is not willing to subject to. A woman is supposed to be under a man not the vice-versa. A common Kenyan woman would not vote for a female candidate because they have a mentality of leadership being the prerogative of men. Women would rather vote for a male figure.”³⁸⁷

I interviewed female MPs of Uganda and Kenya. A total of 9 female MPs were interviewed. The questions asked were mainly related to their experiences as MPs, the social-cultural challenges they face and their cultural expectations as African women in politics. I carefully asked the female legislators this question: What do you hate about politics? Different respondents approached the question in different ways, but the common factor in all their responses was that they answered a question I did not ask them to answer: what they like in politics. They stated that politics gives them chance to participate in the process of shaping their country. Hon. Christine Bako, Parliament of Uganda with a sense of pride stated that: “I feel I am part of the democratization process of my country and trusted by my people to represent their interests at the national level.”³⁸⁸ Janet Mukwaya likes politics because it has created for her a family of committed people, ‘giving me confidence in people and people in me, bonding a high degree of trust.’ She stated that ‘I walk with a feeling of pride and satisfaction when I pass in my constituency, and I see people’s lives improved. They now have blankets and live in good houses.’³⁸⁹ To Hon. Nampijja Lukyamuzi, her participation in politics is a

³⁸⁶ Elizabeth Munini (University of Nairobi), interview with the writer, 19th July, 2010

³⁸⁷ Esther M. Mbuki (University of Nairobi)

³⁸⁸ Bako Christine Abia (Hon.) Woman representative Arua district, The Parliament of Uganda, in interview with the writer, 9th August. 2010.

³⁸⁹ Janet Mukwaya (Hon.)

clear realisation of equality, which her foremothers did not have chance to enjoy. Hon Lenah Kilimo likes politics because it has helped her to pacify her constituency which had been well known as notorious cattle raiders. Kilimo states that as a woman, “I stand as a neutralising factor in between the Marakwet (her constituency) and the Pokot (the neighbouring tribe); I use my position as a woman, exploiting traditional gender advantage to urge the two tribes to be at peace. I challenge them that I am just a woman. In our traditions we all know that it is only a coward who will fight a woman.”³⁹⁰ Kilimo is one case of a female politician who has managed to use her gender to circumvent the rough cultural terrain of African politics.

All the legislators whom I interviewed however complained that politics is so male centred. They complained that society and culture seem to favour men over women. Kilimo observes that all political parties are formed and headed by men, so a Kenyan woman should always fight hard beginning with the party nominations in order to win against a man. Hon. Nampija Lukyamuzi Susan observed that the standards set for a woman are so high. The public is keen watching the life of a woman but not a man: what she has done today, what she has said, with whom does she associate and so forth, are what the public wants to know.³⁹¹ While Hon. Janet Mukwaya hates the way society gossips about female members of parliament for even trivial mistakes they make.³⁹² Hon. Oliver Wonekha of Uganda parliament lamented that:

“As a woman you are still expected to stick to the culture: you are expected to be submissive to the men and even when putting up an argument in parliament or your constituency, you still have to remember that you are an African woman in an African setting. Even the way you dress, you have to be very mindful.”³⁹³

She adds that:

“You cannot be exactly like your male colleagues. After a parliament session they rush to pubs and clubs where they exchange ideas, lobby and strategize, while you have to

³⁹⁰ Lenah Kilimo (Hon).

³⁹¹ Nampija Lukyamuzi Susan, (Hon.) MP Rubaga South Constituency, Ugandan Parliament, in interview with the writer, 11th August 2010

³⁹² Janet Mukwaya (Hon.)

³⁹³ Oliver Wonekha, (Hon). Member of Parliament Women representative for Bududa District, Parliament of Uganda, in an interview with the writer, 5th August 2010.

rush home and make your spouse comfortable with the work you are doing and the hours you arrive home.”³⁹⁴

Hon. Kilimo states her ordeal:

“As a girl from the pastoral rift valley Kalenjini community, I have to balance between my cultural expectations as an African woman in order to appeal to my people that I am behaving in accordance to their cultural expectations. I operate two lives: when I am in town, I have to behave like a town woman, and when I am in village, I have to behave and dress like a village woman so that the men may not think that I am challenging their ego.

Also taking a mentality that a woman has to be a servant, I take a servanthood approach in representing my people in parliament. It is a woman who is always serving in a home. One has to be conscious not to step on the toes of men, who are the custodians and gate-keepers of the customary norms.”³⁹⁵

Hon. Kilimo further narrated how her culture has been very hostile to her political image. She comes from the Kalenjini (Nandi) community which practices Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), which she managed to escape. She has as such been ridiculed by her political opponents who describe her not as a grown up woman worth sending to Parliament (because is not initiated through the FGM rite) but as a child who should remain back and look after cattle.³⁹⁶

During the study, I also asked female Legislators about their perception in the eyes of the public. All the 9 respondents stated that their public image is a negative one as compared to that of their male counterparts. The respect accorded to them is not similar to that accorded to the male legislators by the public. Hon. Erinah Nagudi, the MP women representative for Mbale district stated that:

“Our public perception is bad. We are seen as People who are big headed, uncontrollable by their husbands, People who have loose morals because we mix around with men. Women are supposed to be introverts. [We are seen as]

³⁹⁴ Oliver Wonekha, (Hon).

³⁹⁵ Lenah Jebii Kilimo (Hon.)

³⁹⁶ Lenah Jebii Kilimo (Hon.)

people who can't make homes since we are always in politics.”³⁹⁷

Another MP from Northern Uganda who did not consent to being named in this paper stated that the African society views a political woman as a prostitute, who has sold her body for political fortunes.

“Any conversation or social time with a male colleague in or outside parliament will be interpreted as romance. The following day there will be a fabricated story in tabloids or news-papers. They think we are loose and desperate for men since we are perceived as unmarriageable.”³⁹⁸

It should be noted that, the major problem affecting female political activism, in this respect is their gender—in relation to the African culture and religious heritage, which are patriarchal. This patriarchal heritage influences the way society reacts to a woman when she is vying for a political post and when she gets it. It influences the way society reacts to the media and how people read and interpret issues. Much of what is produced by the media whether print or broadcast reflects the societies' cultural, religious and ideological consciousness—the patriarchy.

African patriarchal ideology views women as secondary to men. Men are associated with leadership qualities like courage, openness, humility, impartiality and honesty in most African communities, while women are viewed as weak, impartial and emotional. This attitude against women in the African society is the major adversary to women political advancement.³⁹⁹ Presidents like Jomo Kenyatta, who originated from the Kikuyu tribe where women are circumcised, had no intuition to set precedence for his successors by encouraging women figures in national politics. His KANU party denied one Ruth Habwe's support when she contested for a parliamentary seat.⁴⁰⁰ Habwe was then dismissed from KANU when she contested as an independent

³⁹⁷ Erinah Wangwa Nagudi, (Hon.) Mbale Women Representative in Parliament, parliament of Uganda, in an interview with the writer, 13th August. 2010

³⁹⁸ Anonymised (Hon.) Northern Uganda, parliament of Uganda, in interview with the writer, 17th August 2010

³⁹⁹ See Nasong'o and Ayot, 178-179. Nzomo, "The Status of Women's Human Rights in Kenya and Strategies to Overcome Inequalities," 18. and Nzomo, "Women in Politics and Public Decision Making," 210.

⁴⁰⁰ Ruth Habwe was the first chair person of MYWO. She demonstrated leadership abilities, and had a relatively good education background. She became the first woman to demonstrate courage to stand political elections.

candidate and later the government ruled out women qualification for political office.⁴⁰¹ In her response, Ruth Habwe identified a case of cowardice in men that men “harbour the inevitable fear that men being superior to women, if women reached the same level, they would fall from the exalted stature they have exploited for so long”.⁴⁰² Ms. Charity Ngilu who became a political icebreaker when she contested for Kenya’s presidency in 1997 under Social Democratic Party (SDP) lamented thus: “It is very difficult for a woman to really campaign and win seats, not because they do not qualify... [but because] of the obvious bias that comes from the communities...”⁴⁰³

Mr Moi who succeeded Jomo Kenyatta was probably the most conservative patriarch in modern history. His 24 years in Kenya left the nation with a very poor female representation in parliament. Despite activism by Kenyan women for equal participation in the political process, Daniel Arab Moi continues to undermine their political potential. He is noted to have said that one of the things that hinder women from making progress is because they have small brains. He precisely said: “You [women] can achieve more, can get more but because of your little minds, you cannot get what you are expected to get...”⁴⁰⁴ For purposes of analysis, Mr Moi’s view should not be mistaken to mean women have little brain, but as he states it “little mind.” What has dwarfed the mind of an African woman is the patriarchy, which is an ideological construct and stereotype that limits women’s expectations and therefore achievements. Interestingly, it is the same patriarchal institution that is mocking women and expecting them to do very much. Ironically, where women have exhibited a big mind by venturing into areas which had hitherto been for men (politics), they have made the patriarchy anxious and in return have been threatened with or suffered physical and psychological violence.

In 1992, a female contestant, Mwarere wa Mwachai won a parliamentary seat under Moi’s party (KANU). It would have been obvious that the newly created Ministry for Women and Youth Affairs would be given to Hon. Mwarere wa Mwachai as a full cabinet minister, but it was instead given to Mr. Maalim Mohamed, and Mwarere wa

⁴⁰¹ Nzomo, "Kenyan Women in Politics and Public Decision Making," 235.

⁴⁰² Ibid., 237.

⁴⁰³ "Kenyan Women Push for Mps Quota", <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6936419.stm> (accessed 29th Nov 2008).

⁴⁰⁴ Margret Vuchiri. “Has feminism failed to feminize society?” The Monitor, 8th March. 2005. Kampala-Uganda. Monitor Publications.

Mwachai was appointed as his Assistant Minister.⁴⁰⁵ This appointment meant that no woman would sit in the government cabinet given that only full ministers were accorded that privilege, and this obviously implied that there was no one to fight for women rights effectively.

Patriarchal ideology dictates that women are conscious of their “inferior” status in society. In a public address, a female politician will not forget to mention that “I am a woman,” among other things, while her male counterpart will obviously not mention his gender. Naming one’s gender, though naively done, symbolise a degree of an inferiority complex in relation to the other gender. As mentioned earlier, African women, like their biblical counterparts, are part of the patriarchal cultural heritage, which always reminds them of their ‘proper’ place. This trait is enshrined in African attitude against women in public life. A woman would be quite ill-mannered to speak in the assembly of men. Manners, needless to say, are judged according to traditions and ethical standards of a given society. African ethics meant that men are above women. This is why some prominent female politicians view themselves as unequal to men. For example, Dr. Specioza W. Kazibwe in 1993, while she was a minister of women and development youth and culture, gave a speech, in which she said, ‘women should not confuse emancipation with equality lest they “jeopardise the total effort for liberation.”’ She continued, ‘When the NRM ushered in peace, Ugandan women began their equality rhetoric. This rhetoric would only prejudice men’s rights and baffle women’s attempts at total emancipation. Whether women like it or not, they will never be equal to men.’⁴⁰⁶

The male-dominated media in East Africa is a challenge faced by women politicians. The media represents one of the patriarchal structures that continue to immortalise male supremacy and gender subordination and oppression of women. It is biased in its coverage of women’s political roles and activities. A study carried out in Uganda by Deepening Democracy Organisation between October 2010 and February 2011 indicated that during the presidential and parliamentary elections in this period, all the print and broadcast media gave very little attention to women aspirants. A total of 443 women contested in Parliamentary elections and only one in presidential. The media gave only 4.6% coverage for women as compared to men which stood at 95.4%. The

⁴⁰⁵ Judith Achieng, "Polls Leave Women More Marginalised," *Interpress Service News Agency* (1998). <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/36/021.html> (accessed 23rd Nov. 2008).

⁴⁰⁶ Tripp: 118.

study also found out that 9/10 journalists preferred to quote male politicians on topical issues during elections.⁴⁰⁷ This state of affairs is due to the ideological stereotype that male politicians are more serious opinion leaders than women.

News reporters, journalists, and editors have a tendency of portraying women politicians as intruding into a serious and difficult domain of politics which is meant to be for men. A woman in politics is thought to be having a male remote backing in exchange for sexual benefits. For example, in the December 2008 by elections in Kyadondo North constituency (Uganda), one Pallyne Grace Nakabuye contested on the FDC ticket. A few days later after she had lost the elections, a story emerged in one of the newspapers that her candidature was influenced by a key FDC official who is in love with her.⁴⁰⁸ These ideas are internalised by the public to always think that women who join and succeed in politics have slept their way to the top. This as Tamale says creates and fuels feelings of resentment towards women who participate in formal politics.⁴⁰⁹

Generally, the media portrayal of female MPs certainly bolsters misogynistic sentiments against women leaders in East Africa. Both the print and broadcast media reflect patriarchal mind-set of the wider public. There is also popular theatre that takes the form of plays and comedies which are aired on televisions and staged locally in market places and pubs, satirically portraying some female politicians in a negative manner. The media prides in trivialising female politicians; issues reported about female politicians concern their sexuality and body appearances. For instance, in May 2011, a major Newspaper researched and published what was called the sexiest female MPs of the 8th Parliament, based on the views of 60 male MPs. In the survey male MPs gave their responses and expressed sexual interests and wishes about their female colleagues in Parliament.⁴¹⁰ In all these, the mental picture of African patriarchal stereotype against a female political figure can be summed up as sexual. A woman, no matter her profile, is

⁴⁰⁷ Nelson Wesonga, "Report Faults Media, State on Female Participation in Polls", Monitor Publications <<http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/-/688334/1166196/-/c1gr1tz/-/index.html?relative=true&title=Report%20faults%20media,%20state%20on%20female%20participation%20in%20polls>> (accessed 20th May 2011).

⁴⁰⁸ Gerald Bareebe, "'Love Triangle' Blamed for Fdc's Kyaddondo Seat Loss," (2008). http://www.monitor.co.ug/artman/publish/inside_politics/Love_triangle_blamed_for_FDC_s_Kyaddondo_seat_loss_76351.shtml (accessed 7th Dec 2008).

⁴⁰⁹ Tamale, "Point of Order Mr Speaker: African Women Claiming Their Space in Parliament."

⁴¹⁰ Elizabeth Namazzi, Elizabeth Agiro, and Moses Mulondo, "Nabilah Naggayi Most Beautiful Mp", The New Vision <http://www.sundayvision.co.ug/detail.php?mainNewsCategoryId=7&newsCategoryId=123&newsId=754145> (accessed 8th May 2011).

a sexual good for a man. Because she is assumed to be a sexual dolly for a man, she is not to be taken seriously in anything she says. This idea permeates the whole socio-political strata of the wider society. At one of the forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE) seminar in Uganda, female legislators confronted a press media representative with the following blunt question: “Why does the press portray women politicians in such a negative manner?” He defended the media by arguing that it simply reflects the values and interests of wider society and reminded female MPs of the fact that theirs was a business; ‘we only report what we think will sell.’⁴¹¹

Patriarchy has significantly sexualised politics. Men tend to think of female politicians as only sexual figures. Her political acumen is understood to include her sexual body. Any successful female politician who is placed in a high political rank is believed to have ‘slept her way up to the higher political office,’⁴¹² and that the position she holds is accorded to her as a favour for her sexual loyalty and service to the nation—the male leaders. The sexualised nature of politics is further bolstered by the media. In the Kenyan Standard Newspaper of 22nd March 2010 a photo showing the legs of female legislators of the Kenyan parliament was published. It then became a tale of humour and laughter by male legislators in parliament; with others tabling motions that when their female colleagues don’t cover their legs they make them sexually uncomfortable. The photo was taken by a female journalist under the title: *Politically incorrect: a skewed look at the political scene*.⁴¹³ The “political scene” here ambiguously presented to include the woman’s sexual body. During my visit to East Africa for field research, I carried a copy of the newspaper article into the field seeking people’s opinions about the photos. My respondents had mixed reactions to the photos. Some Respondents especially young females found it very unfair for the modern parliament to discuss women’s legs as if it had run out of crucial issues to discuss. Other respondents who were mainly male and elderly women seemed to agree with the male MPs that female Legislators should dress in what was described by many as *decently* and motherly with long dresses and skirts as African mothers according to the African cultural standards. Some respondents were against women Legislators putting on trousers in public places.

⁴¹¹ Tamale, *When Hens Begin to Crow: Gender and Parliamentary Politics in Uganda*, 189.

⁴¹² Muthoni M. Maina (University of Nairobi), in interview with writer, 19th July 2010

⁴¹³ Tabitha Otwoli, "Politically Incorrect: A Skewed Look at the Political Scene," *The Standard*, 22nd March 2010.

The notion of appropriate dress code seems to be a common motif in all patriarchal cultures. In the Bible (as also the Quran 24:31), there is emphasis on modest in the dress code of women and restriction on putting on clothes that belong or resemble those of the opposite sex (Deuteronomy 22:5, 22:11, 1 Timothy 2: 9, 1 Peter 3:2-5, and 1 Corinthians 11:4-7). A woman who engages in politics should be modest in the way she dresses and speaks before men. She should be a woman in politics but not *a man in a woman*. Her dress should reflect the sartorial splendour of African cultural expectations. Crossing the boundary into politics should come with complete desexualisation so as to exude stability and good judgement of male colleagues.

Many women legislators have complained about sexual harassment. Tamale's research revealed that some male MPs reach the extent of making sexual physical contact with female MPs.⁴¹⁴ Tamale identifies two cases of female MPs who had been sexually harassed by their male counterparts. In one case, it was in one office where the female MP had been called in by the male counterpart. In this room, it is reported that she had her breasts fondled in a sexual manner by a male colleague under the pretence of contact-by-mistake.⁴¹⁵ In the second case, Tamale presents the unfortunate case of an MP, whom she names Akwasi:

“Akwasi: One time I went over to say hello to a male colleague. I don't know, maybe I caught him at a bad time ... maybe he had had other things on his mind (chuckles nervously) and then he sort of grabbed me here (points to her crotch). I was shocked; I literally went down on my knees. I said, 'Please, please, I have a lot of respect for you'...”⁴¹⁶

In her analysis of the two cases, it was revealed that male MPs have no respect for their fellow honourable female MPs. It would be common sense, and also highly expected by the female legislators that their personal attributes and status as MPs would protect them. Unfortunately to their male colleagues, they are women first and foremost, and their parliamentary roles are only secondary. Inevitably, women MPs have faced psychological shocks, and increased self-consciousness of their sex, which significantly affects their level of political interaction.

⁴¹⁴ Tamale, "Point of Order Mr Speaker: African Women Claiming Their Space in Parliament," 12-13.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.: 13.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

Some female legislators have suffered verbal and physical harassment, not only from African societies but also male legislators. These are women who challenge the patriarchy—the ego of men. Patriarchy dictates that men are naturally feared and respected by women, regardless of their weaknesses or faults. African women, who like Michal in the Bible tell “kings” that “you are naked!” are harshly criticized. Hon. Kilimo in an interview complained against the Kenyan public that: “They (public) use a lot of vulgar language against us. When men perceive you as challenging their ego, they will come thundering with all sorts of names against you. For anything wrong that happens in the family, it is always a woman to blame and not a man.”⁴¹⁷

In Uganda, Specioza Kazibwe earned herself sharp insults from male Legislators and public when she fearlessly pointed out that it was a disgrace for some male MPs to come to the house with smelly socks. As a medical doctor, Specioza was probably conscious of hygiene issues in the house. Like Michal, who became unpopular when she rebuked King David for dancing naked in public, Specioza became unpopular among her fellow male politicians for her open admonitions. Consequently, attempts were made to persecute her in many ways, which included political backstabbing and dogging her with allegations financial mismanagement. Another case is that of Hon. Miria Matembe who is remembered in the Ugandan Parliament as the “iron lady” of her time.

Female politicians are a target for physical harassment by their opponents, government authorities or the public. In 2007 campaigns in Kenya, one woman was assassinated and two other women were attacked, robbed and stripped naked by the supporters of opposing candidate in Kenya.⁴¹⁸ Njogu relates a case where her opponent threatened to get her gang sodomised or gang raped.⁴¹⁹ One Philo Ikonya who aspired for Kiambu constituency near Nairobi had her car front tyre’s bolts loosened apparently by her opponents with the intention to cause an accident.⁴²⁰ One Peris Chepchumba, who trounced 11 men in the 2007 parliamentary race, is noted relating her experience

⁴¹⁷ Lenah Jebii Kilimo (Hon.) Member of Parliament, Marakwet constituency, (Kenyan National Assembly), in interview with the writer, 20th July 2010

⁴¹⁸ Report on Kenya Elections, 2007, http://www.quakernet.org/Peace/Kenya/report_on_kenya_elections_decemb.htm (accessed 11th. February 2009).

⁴¹⁹ Cathy Majtenyi, "Female Candidates in Kenya Say They Face Discrimination, Violence," (2007). <http://www.voanews.com/english/archive/2007-12/2007-12-24-voa28.cfm?CFID=11005373&CFTOKEN=97481261> (accessed 21st Nov. 2008).

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

with male contestants: "My rivals were fighting me just because of my gender. They openly said that it was better for them to lose to a man than to a woman."⁴²¹

In Uganda, similar experiences have been noted. Susan Nampijja, an MP for Rubaga South in Kampala was slapped by a gang of men in the market;⁴²² Betty Achan, an MP from Gulu district was slapped by a man while addressing a rally on women's Day celebrations in Gulu.⁴²³ Hon. Janet Mukwaya survived four armed ambushes during the 2006 presidential and parliamentary campaigns in Mukono South constituency.⁴²⁴ Violence is catalysed by cultural stereotypes about women. In competitions, men have to ensure that they defeat women, mainly because of the belief that it is reproachable in African Tradition for a man to lose to a woman in any public contest.

The most horrendous form of harassment was the June 10th 2008 incident, which saw one female MP, Ms. Nabilah Sempala beaten and undressed before her constituents by the police for holding an illegal rally. Nabilah Nayiga Sempala is the Female Legislator for the Kampala District in Uganda, affiliated to an opposition party called Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), which automatically assigns her the title of opposition Member of Parliament. On this fateful day, Ms Sempala held a peaceful but illegal rally at St. Balikudembe market, popularly known as Owino. The illegality of the rally was that Ms Sempala had been told by the police to hold her rally from a particular place, but not Owino market. She defied the orders and insisted on holding it in the banned Owino venue. The practice of defying police orders was not limited to Ms. Sempala. The opposition, notably the Democratic Party's (DP) Erias Lukwago and FDC's Kiza Besigye, have staged rallies, which have always resulted into direct conflict and skirmishes with the police, which are always garnished with teargas, water cannons and sometimes live bullets. These rallies usually end with arrests detention and torture. People are arrested and detained before being released. However, the way Ms Sempala was arrested was exceptionally traumatic. It was more of gender harassment than

⁴²¹ Onyaro Kwamboka, "Women Stood up to Be Elected," *all Africa.com* (2008). <http://allafrica.com/stories/200801240142.html> (accessed 23rd Nov. 2008).

⁴²² Robert Mugagga, "Uganda Police as Shame to the Profession," *The Weekly Observer* (2008). http://www.observer.ug/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=517&Itemid=66 (accessed 16th Nov. 2008).

⁴²³ Margaret Wokuri, 2008. "Did Mp Nabilah Try to Undress the Cop?," *Monitor online*, Monitor, <http://www.monitor.co.ug/artman/publish/opinions/Did_MP_Nabilah_try_to_undress_the_cop_66963.shtml> (accessed 21st June 2008).

⁴²⁴ Janet Mukwaya (Hon.) MP Mukono South Constituency, Ugandan Parliament), in interview with the writer, 6th August 2010

political. She was manhandled and undressed in public. Ms Sempala in her own words relates her agonising ordeal: "My blouse got torn as they were trying to undress me...it was embarrassing! I think they wanted to remove my knickers."⁴²⁵ She added: "They ruthlessly pounced on me. I was almost stripped naked by uniformed Police led by the OC Taxi Park Police post. I was forced to sit on the floor,"⁴²⁶ Ms Sempala's mistreatment by police forces was widely condemned by women activists. Margaret Wokuri, one of the gender activists in Uganda has said: "The desire to [undress] the Hon. MP is just part of the wider problem of violence against women."⁴²⁷

What is further astonishing is that some senior government officials like Moses Mwanga, the area police commander, and Dr. Ruhakana Rugunda, the minister of internal affairs, defended the police in Nabilah's brutal arrest.⁴²⁸ Gen. Kahinda Otafiire the Local Government Minister, however had to find the problem with Nabilah's physical beauty: "I have always told you that your problem is that you are beautiful. That is why the police are running after you."⁴²⁹ In my opinion, Hon. Otafiire's remarks represent the inclinations of the local communities about beautiful women. A beautiful woman is associated with many things; she is a prostitute, lazy, proud, unsocial woman who is unfriendly to men and women of lower ranks like the Police constables. The common word used to refer to such attributes is *Lugezigezi*, which is a lingo used to describe all sorts of antisocial behaviours associated with pride. It was worse for Ms Sempala given her political significance as an MP. Her class of socialisation and association is higher than that of the local police constables.

Undressing a woman by a man signifies triumph over her, either forcefully or by consent. For the case of Ms. Sempala, it was a forced one. At the moment of arrest, the police men could not have seen Ms Sempala in her political profile, but a beautiful woman full of *lugezigezi* or a sexual idol. Nabilah's treatment was a case of rape. She was raped of her integrity and dignity.

⁴²⁵ Risdal Kasasira and Sheila Naturinda, 2008. "Mp Nabilah Weeps as Investigations into Police Brutality Begin," *Monitor*, Monitor Publichers, <http://www.monitor.co.ug/artman/publish/sports/MP_Nabilah_weeps_as_investigations_into_police_brutality_begin_69780.shtml> (accessed 7th Nov. 2008).

⁴²⁶ Milton Olupot and John Odyek, 2008. "Mps Slam Rugunda over Police Report." Newvision online article, 19th June 2008, <http://www.newvision.co.ug/D/8/12/634581> (accessed 10th. Nov 2008).

⁴²⁷ Wokuri. Also, Olupot and Odyek.

⁴²⁸ Yasiin Mugerwa, "Undressing Nabilah Was Justified, Says Police Commander," *Monitor online*, 24th Sept. 2008 2008.

⁴²⁹ "Otafiire's Answer," 2008. *The New Vision online*, New Vision, www.Newvision.co.ug/D/8/459/638362 (accessed 10th July 2008).

Analogously, a woman's body is a symbol of the national or political realm. Sexual violation of women has been used as a way of attacking enemies since ancient times, starting with primitive communities through the Babylonians, the Greeks and Romans, and medieval societies leading all the way up to the American Civil War, World War II, and the Vietnam War. In Rwanda Hutu troops were ordered by their leaders to rape Tutsi women as an integral part of their genocide crusade in Rwanda. These violations of women were paramount insults to the governments, nations, families, fathers, husbands, or other group of men these women represented or belonged to. In biblical times, the rape of David's wives by Absalom signified David's humiliation (2 Samuel 16:21-22). Also, the Babylonian invasion and defeat of Judah is said to have been characterised by rape of women and virgins of Zion, (Lamentations 5:11; see also, Zechariah 14:2). By undressing Nabilah, the constables did not only rape her of her pride and privacy but also violated the political party she represented.

African patriarchal culture also dictates that for a woman to be a politician, she must not only be married, but must also have the permission of her husband in order to join politics. The issue of rights for women to act as they wish is not what patriarchal ideology stands for when it comes to public issues. African communities operate three systems of often contradictory laws concurrently, namely: statutory/constitutional law, customary law and religious law. Although in theory, statutory law is viewed as constituting the supreme municipal law, in practice customary and religious laws tend to prevail, especially on issues deemed to be private rather than public in nature such as marriage, divorce, custody of children, inheritance, property ownership and reproduction.⁴³⁰ In gender issues, the customary and religious laws disadvantage women, as men are viewed as heads in families and women as owned by men for sex, childbirth and domestic support. These laws are the embodiment of old patriarchal ideals passed on from past generations, and mummified by cultures deeply engraved on the psychic slates of society as the *modus vivendi*. The belief that men are hierarchically above women demands that women must be married and seek the permission of their partners to engage in politics. Interestingly, this does not affect only political candidates seeking a political office. Under same terms, men have controlled women's votes. In Kenya when the notion of secret balloting was removed in 1988 and replaced by

⁴³⁰ Nzomo, "The Status of Women's Human Rights in Kenya and Strategies to Overcome Inequalities."

queuing system (where voters queued publicly behind a picture of their preferred candidate to cast their votes) husbands used this chance to monitor their wives' voting and dictate that they vote for a particular candidate. Some wives were battered by their husbands for voting for candidates not preferred by their husbands.⁴³¹ There have been similar reports in Uganda where wives have been seriously beaten by their husbands for supporting and voting against a certain candidate.

It is normative that a woman's public life should be under the patronage of her male spouse. Unmarried women who are involved in public life are always regarded as prostitutes. In some parts of Kenya, it is said that a woman spotted walking alone at night would be arrested by the police and be charged with loitering with the intention of engaging in prostitution.⁴³² A woman as such not only faces domestic resistance to participate in politics but also a social stigma if she does not have a man as her patron. One Ann Njogu, who contested for Kamukunji⁴³³ constituency in 2007, recounts her disappointment when voters insisted that her husband must grant her permission to campaign: "I never expected to be asked to produce my husband. In several times, the meetings would not start until my husband arrived. [At] one incidence... we had to postpone the meeting because my husband was held up, and they would not talk to me."⁴³⁴

Marriage however presents a catch 22 situation for women. It has become damning to women as honourable MPs and ministers failing to maintain balance between their public political duties and the demand for loyalty and service at family levels by their husbands and children. As one Jackie Assimwe of the Uganda Women's network has said: "Even the liberal man has certain expectations at a family level. He wants a woman who works and also one who serves him dinner."⁴³⁵ A nationwide survey carried by some newspaper reporters in Uganda has brought to light men's fears of having their wives in national politics. One man is quoted saying:

"It is now a luxury to see my wife. Before she became a legislator, we spent a lot of time together. My greatest challenge is the void her political involvement has left in

⁴³¹ Nzomo and Staudt, "Man-Made Political Machinery in Kenya: Political Space for Women?," 423.

⁴³² Nzomo, "The Status of Women's Human Rights in Kenya and Strategies to Overcome Inequalities," 18.

⁴³³ Kamukunji is one of the suburbs of Nairobi city

⁴³⁴ Majtenyi.

⁴³⁵ Rachel Scheier, "In Uganda, a Woman Can Be V.P but Have Few Rights," *The Christian Science Monitor* (2003). www.csmonitor.com/2003/1226/p01s04-woaf.htm (accessed 15th Nov. 2008).

our relationship. We rarely go out together, something that stresses me. I sometimes regret why I let her join politics...At the moment, everything else, including the children and I comes second. Her priority is politics...she is rarely around to take care of us.”⁴³⁶

Another spouse thinks he has paid a high price for the decision he made of allowing his wife join politics. He is quoted:

“Frankly, it is not easy to have a politician for a wife. They are so busy, even when she is around she is away in her thoughts. A home in the African sense means a husband, wife and children. During the last campaigns, I spent nine months without seeing my wife because she was campaigning and I was...with the Children.”⁴³⁷

And yet another one gave an advice:

“It is very important for your husband to understand what you do. Make sure that you keep him updated about every move you make. It won’t hurt if you tell him ‘my committee is going to sit till late’...female MPs have to remember that they are wives first and politicians second. If you are not able to be home before a given time, tell your husband and explain why, otherwise, you will have no marriage by the time you quit with politics.”⁴³⁸

Such sentiments reflect a lot about the African man. The regrets expressed by these men, husbands of female politicians, highlight the significance of male authority. They are the ones who permit or deny their wives from joining politics—the public domain. They wish they retained their wives for themselves in the private sphere—kitchen, house and bedroom. Politics here is visualised as a public domain that is dangerous to family values. It has swayed women away from the private domain where they belong. Priorities are no longer family, husbands, children and home, but public rallies, committees meetings, cabinet meetings and other political duties. A woman has become an anomaly in the eyes of African cultural and biblical patriarchy. Political experience thus contains severe consequences for the woman not only for her political

⁴³⁶ Elizabeth Namazzi, Susan Muyiyi, and Elizabeth Agiro, "Mps Marriages Falling Apart-Survey," *Sunday Vision: Uganda's leading weekly* (2009).
<http://www.sundayvision.co.ug/detail.php?mainNewsCategoryId=7&newsCategoryId=123&newsId=667620> (accessed 11th. January 2009).

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

career, but also her marriage and family security. It reveals that as a woman, she is expected to have sufficient time for the family.

She should be constantly conscious about her husband and children whom she should ensure are happy. One spouse is reported saying, “A woman’s role is to take care of the home, regardless of what else she does. If she decides to become an MP, she should be able to perform her duties as a wife.”⁴³⁹ Unfortunately, she has been entrusted by the electorate to carry their political mandate and her performance is what determines her re-election. In fact it is reported that some other men whose wives are MPs have taken on second wives in a bid to cope with the situation. In some cases, instances of domestic violence have ensued due to women participating in national politics. For example, Specioza Wandira Kazibwe who, although was the Vice President, suffered violence from her husband, Engineer Charles Kazibwe. Specioza openly discussed her family horror in 2002, and subsequently sought for divorce in a court of law to end her 20 year old marriage with Charles Kazibwe. Before the court, Charles admitted that he slapped the Vice President more than once when she could come home late without a good explanation.⁴⁴⁰ A year after, Specioza resigned from active politics and as a Vice President, opting for graduate studies at Harvard University, USA. Interestingly, her open declaration of domestic violence was received with negative reactions from her fellow male politicians, religious people and the public in the East African region who regarded it petty. One legislator from Kenya was quoted grumbling that the whole matter was a good example of why women should not be allowed into politics at all.⁴⁴¹

It has also been found out that the long absences of some female MPs from their families due to official duties has created doubts and feelings of mistrust. In Uganda and Kenya, Parliaments are found in respective capital cities of Kampala and Nairobi, and most of these legislators represent far away constituencies. A big fraction of East Africa is still rural with a very poor transport network. It is not possible for some MPs to be commuting from upcountry to the Parliament in the capital on a daily basis. As such, most legislators stay either within the capital or in outskirts and visit their families once in a while over weekends. This absence has reportedly caused mistrust towards women. One spouse from Northern Uganda is quoted complaining:

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ Scheier.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

“I appreciate the fact that my wife has to live in Kampala because of the nature of her job. However, when my wife is away I feel bad, especially after hearing so many stories about what goes on in Parliament. I know that her work demands that she should travel but should it be that often? ...no human being is immune to temptation.”⁴⁴²

This mistrust stems from the fact that MPs meet many people of the opposite sex on the political platform. With media fabrication, these political interactions leave their spouse's trust hang in the balance, since they suspect that the level of interaction extends to personal levels of affection and intimacy. Moreover, some of the men whose wives became MPs are local men of low social-political profiles. This exacerbates worries about the possibility that these women, whose social status has changed due to politics, abandon their homes. This resonates with the philosophy for female genital mutilation as seen earlier. The social distance and worries for sexual temptations forced societies to tame women by mutilation.

To save their marriages, some women have decided to run several homes in different parts of the country. For example Rebecca Lukwago, the woman MP for Luweero in Uganda's 8th Parliament, with her husband and children have three homes; in Kampala, Kitgum and Gulu, such that they would travel all as a family whenever duty called for it. Others have decided to migrate near Kampala and only go up country as a family occasionally. It is however very expensive to maintain more than one home. Moreover, staying in Kampala with families is not only very expensive, but it is far from respective constituencies. All of this signifies the reversal of gender roles where women are the ones now renting homes and determining family equilibrium.

Patriarchy is very defensive against women's emancipation. Cultural traditions and religious slogans are used to perpetuate women's subordination. There is an indication of apathy from the male legislators and general public to change. Any move that makes the patriarchy anxious is opposed and challenged as foreign and elitist. Winnie Byanyima of Uganda observed that despite many years of promoting women in politics through Affirmative Action (AA) policies, there is still broad resistance in society against women in politics. She observes that a progressive leadership can respond to women's demands and create a space in the political process, which provides a powerful opportunity for challenging patriarchy and women's subordination and

⁴⁴² Namazzi, Muiyiyi, and Agiro.

oppression. But a predominantly rural and patriarchal society resists change and creates ambivalence among progressive leaders. This results into the fact that though women can take their place in the representative bodies, they receive little support from progressive male colleagues and meet societal resistance in gender equality advocacy.⁴⁴³ Hon. Kilimo has noted that this type of apathy and attitude in Parliament among the male colleagues was responsible for the delay in introducing AA in Kenya. She states that the Bill to pass AA was regularly defeated in parliament because male legislators had always voted against it. They argued that if 18 female MP are already too many, what would happen when they reach 75 in number?⁴⁴⁴ This demonstrates underlying fears by men to welcome en-mass women into political circles.

Although loosely connected, patriarchy has also commercialised politics in East Africa. The money factor plays a great role in who wins an election and who will win next time. All the female politicians I spoke to in the course of this study complained of the enormous financial demands they get from their constituencies. Most of my respondents complained that people of their constituencies take advantage of their gender to over demand material benefits from them. They regard them as mothers who should provide for their children. Some do not understand or separate what an MP should do from what they or the government as a whole should do. They expect an MP to build them roads, schools, provide them with school fees, clean water and other demands. Hon. Wonekha observed that:

“Principally an MP is supposed to represent his or her people within parliament in terms of legislation: what will this law mean or affect my people and what they would love to see as far as legislation is concerned. Secondly, the oversight functions of parliament on the executive like passing the budget, how are they spending the money and why should they spend it that way. But instead, a member of parliament here is expected to be present at every funeral or function in his or her constituency and make colossal financial contributions which must be known by the community.”⁴⁴⁵

She adds that:

⁴⁴³ Byanyima.

⁴⁴⁴ Lenah Jebii Kilimo (Hon.)

⁴⁴⁵ Oliver Wonekha, (Hon).

“A Member of Parliament is never expected to be broke. The emoluments given to the MP here in terms of expectations are too little. Most of us are heavily indebted because we are trying to live up to the expectations of the people whom you represent.”⁴⁴⁶

Hon. Kilimo states that as a female Legislator, you are perceived as a mother. People want you to get them jobs even when they do not qualify, and they expect you to use influence and push for jobs. We are perceived as human cash machines.⁴⁴⁷ The emphasis on motherhood is strongly influenced by the African patriarchal stereotype which holds that a woman has nothing to do with her money, since a husband provides for the family. Women are typically expected and seen to be more approachable, less repressive and more willing to share even the little they have, than men are.

Most women lack logistical support from their parties or other sources to finance their campaigns. To join politics, one must have a lot of money. Politics is for the rich. From colonial times, it was only rich men who could afford political campaigns. Addressing masses of poor voters with tantalizing speeches and great ideas does not win in African politics. There is a lot of logistical support required. Wealthy men usually sail through no matter their political manifestos. One Pamela Mburia, a parliamentary contestant on one of the smaller party tickets in the 2007 Kenyan elections has this to say: “I ask my potential voters to look at the bigger picture, what lies ahead for them once I am their MP. But as soon as my opponents pour money to them, my promise of visionary leadership is forgotten”⁴⁴⁸

The economic disparity between male and female politicians is strongly linked to patriarchal circumstances. During the early years of independence, there was an ascending class of wealthy men who gained considerable political power inside the government. Others had close access to insiders in government ministries, and hence ended up accumulating more wealth through state subsidies, state licenses and employment contacts, while women were isolated from the opportunities.⁴⁴⁹ The majority of women were busy in small scale businesses as grocery shopkeepers, roadside retailers and itinerant vegetable traders in rural areas and towns like Nairobi and Kampala. To date most Nairobi and Kampala local markets and suburbs have the

⁴⁴⁶ Oliver Wonekha, (Hon).

⁴⁴⁷ Lenah Jebii Kilimo (Hon.)

⁴⁴⁸ Kwamboka.

⁴⁴⁹ Nzomo and Staudt, "Man-Made Political Machinery in Kenya: Political Space for Women?," 419.

highest number of women as small scale traders, selling second-hand clothes, vegetable and milk and others running beauty salons. The money earned is only sufficient for family basics like food, water and first aid medications. This leaves women with hardly enough funds to finance expensive campaigns. Few women who have attempted political races are daunted by their male counterparts often seen in a convoy of expensive cars, with several of their supporters in their wake. Some men own aircrafts which ease their mobility to leap “from campaign rally to campaign rally like birds of the air.”⁴⁵⁰

Patriarchy dictates that a man should have a lot of money in order to stay on top of the hierarchy. Male politicians have higher propensities of accumulating wealth by all means, even dubious ones. They have a tendency of being corrupt as a means to amass wealth. This conception is backed by Transparency International reports and other documents that show that higher levels of female participation in social, political and economic life are associated with lower levels of corruption as compared to men. Women are less tolerant to corruption and more likely to punish corrupt behavior than men according to the report.⁴⁵¹ This is, however, not idealising women, and does not mean that there are no women who are corrupt in Africa. There is no study to prove that women’s intolerance to corruption is a moral virtue or a means to gaining positions of influence. In Kenya, corruption was rampant during the reign of Mr Moi when the country never had an effective anti-corruption body. It is on record that Moi’s government officials squandered loads of public funds. Among the top most corrupt officials close to Mr Moi was Nicholas Biwott⁴⁵² who ranked high on the list in the parliamentary committee into corruption in 2000. Mr Biwott who held six different

⁴⁵⁰ Martha Musee, "Lack of Economic Muscle May Dim Women's Prospects in Polls," *Gender and Governance programme in Kenya* (2009). <http://www.gendergovernancekenya.org/cuttings/35> (accessed 13th. January 2009).

⁴⁵¹ Transparency International, *Gender and Corruption: Are Women Less Corrupt?* (2000). David Dollar, Raymond Fisman, and Roberta Gatti, *Are Women Really The "Fairer" Sex? Corruption and Women in Government* (1999).

⁴⁵² Biwott is considered one of the richest men in Kenya. His riches were acquired as vast personal fortune during Moi’s rule mostly associated with the Goldenberg Scandal. He was one of the most feared politicians in the country. In December 2004, Biwott was banned by the U.S Department of state from entering the United States for alleged corruption. On December 20th 2007, the British High Commission also banned him, together with Mr. David Mwiraria and other two businessmen from traveling to the United Kingdom on corruption charges. The High Commission issued a circular to airlines that fly to the UK, informing them of the ban. "Us Revokes Visa for Key Moi Ally", <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/4062541.stm> (accessed 8th February 2009). Also, "Uk Travel Ban for Kenyan Minister", <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/7155379.stm> (accessed 8th February 2009).

ministerial posts between 1978 and 2002 was one of several ministers named in an inquiry into the siphoning of \$700m of government funds between 1990 and 2000. Under Moi government, Kenya earned a bad reputation of being the most corrupt country in the world and the International Monetary Fund suspended a \$220 million loan to the country in 1997.⁴⁵³ Later government officials under NARC like Moody Awori, Kiraitu Murungi, David Mwiraria, and Chris Murungaru have also been implicated in corruption.⁴⁵⁴ This forced the EU to suspend \$50 million in Development Aid to Kenya.⁴⁵⁵ Government officials and other prominent people owned supply tenders to various government departments like health, education and military in which they sometimes supplied air and inflated prices, which resulted in misappropriation of public funds. In 2010, some male politicians and business men were named in illegal drug businesses, from which they had made huge sums of money. In the civil service, there are hardcore corrupt officials involved in payroll fraud. A case in point is the 500 million Kenyan shilling payroll frauds at Egerton University which was revealed in Sept 2007. Similar cases are to date being investigated by the Kenya ant-corruption commission (KACC).⁴⁵⁶ With millions of money at exposure and disposal of men, it becomes an uphill task for women to compete and win in a national election.

As already mentioned, Western Education has favored boys more than girls since colonial times. Many African female children were not taken to school. They were to remain home to help their mothers with domestic chores. The home became their education institutions as they prepared for marital roles. Their training was to prepare for the private domain. To some Africans, a female child belonged to the family of her husband. Investing in her education would be waste of family resources as there are no envisaged immediate returns to the family.⁴⁵⁷ Boys on the other hand were the family assets. They were prepared for the public domain. They would improve on family infrastructure by erecting better houses in a homestead. They would earn their parental families prestige when they got jobs as lawyers, bankers and politicians. Boys therefore

⁴⁵³ "Moi Says Economic Crisis Will Worsen in Kenya Because of Corruption", AP <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P1-19425445.html> (accessed 8th February 2009 2009).

⁴⁵⁴ Xan Rice, "The Looting of Kenya," *The Guardian* (2007). <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/aug/31/kenya.topstories3> (accessed 8th February 2009).

⁴⁵⁵ Michele Norris, "Profile: Corruption Remains a Problem in Kenya Nearly Two Years after the Election of President Mwai Kibaki," *NPR All Things Considered* (2004). <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P1-104426470.html> (accessed 08th. February 2009).

⁴⁵⁶ , <http://www.kacc.go.ke/Docs/AnnualReport06.pdf> (accessed 8th February 2009).

⁴⁵⁷ Nasong'o and Ayot, 179.

had higher chances of attaining western education which became a qualification for acquiring government salaried jobs, while girls who were less educated became wives or did poor jobs like domestic assistants. Also inheritance of family property is passed on to the male offspring. Most men have inherited property from their parents like land, cattle and other assets, which they can convert into cash to finance political expenses.

In the next chapter the study looks at women and politics in the Bible world. Analysis of the literary texts on Miriam, Michal, Jezebel and Athaliah is made in relation to the contemporary ancient Near Eastern context. It is not an anomaly to point out that though modern politics in Africa is greatly influenced by the liberal democracy of Western countries, it exhibits great similarities with feudal sovereignty, which is characteristic of the biblical ideology where leadership is the prerogative of God as King, and a royal class where sons are kings and the daughters are no bodies, and the rest of the people are subjects.

5.0 WOMEN AND POLITICS IN THE BIBLE AND THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

5.1 Introduction

Our analysis of the biblical characters is informed by other histories of women in ancient Near Eastern politics. Information from other societies like the Mari, Ugarit, Egypt, Babylon and other neo-Assyrian territories is significant in our attempt to reconstruct the political images of decapitated and fragmented queens of the Bible. The challenge with this approach however is that it is hard to present a full catalogue of political activities of ancient queens due to limited data archaeology has so far unearthed. Nevertheless, the little known can suffice in shading light on what the political iconography of a queen in ancient Near East was.

History from this region shows that women especially of royal status accessed and exercised political authority. The institution of queens and queen mothers were well known than they appear in the Hebrew Bible. In Mari a queen was called šarratu, a feminine form for šarru “king.” In the Hebrew language, šarru is semantically related to שָׂרָא (which means prince or king. See 2 Samuel 10:3, 19:6; 1 Kings 9:22) whose feminine form hypothetically should be שָׂרָת or שָׂרָה. In Assyria, the queen was called aššat šarri “wife of the king,”⁴⁵⁸ while in Ugarit, the queen was called mlkt.⁴⁵⁹

In the Bible, it would be expected that the word מַלְכָּה be used as title for kings’ wives, but it is not the case. The only occurrences of this title are in relation to foreign queens (1 Kings 10:1, Esther 1:9, Song of Songs 6:8) or a Hebrew woman residing in a foreign court like Esther (Esther 2:17, 22). In limited cases, the word מַלְכָּה is used denoting a king’s wife (Nehemiah 2:6 and Psalms 45:10). It is related to the neo-Assyrian title ša ekalli, which literally mean she-of-the-palace.⁴⁶⁰

There is the institution of גִּבְיָרָה (gebirah)⁴⁶¹ featuring significantly in the Bible narratives, though sidelined by the narrator. The word gebirah in this case stood for both

⁴⁵⁸ Hennie J. Marsman, *Women in Ugarit and Israel : Their Social and Religious Position in the Context of the Ancient near East* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2003), 326.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., 334.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., 338.

⁴⁶¹ The word גִּבְיָרָה has principally three meanings in the Bible and the ancient Near East: 1 mother or wife of the reigning sovereign (1 Kings 11:19; 2Kings 10:13, Jeremiah 29:2; 1 Kings 15:13; 2 Chronicles

queens (King's consorts or wives) and queen mothers (1 Kings 11:19 and 1 Kings 15:13). The distinction between the political significance of queens and queen mothers is not clear, but I suppose they played more or less similar duties.

Though the Dtr redactor has great antipathy to women in politics, in the narratives he approves the behind-the-scene political activities of queens like Bethsheba, daughter of Eliam (2 Sam. 11:3) and the wife of David and mother of King Solomon; Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah (2 Kings 23:31) mother of King Jehoahaz and Zedekiah; and finally Nehushta, the daughter of Elnathan (2 Kings 24:15) mother of King Jehoiachin. All these women are significantly associated with Davidic dynasty and are daughters of Jerusalem.

Egypt at different points had female Pharaohs: Sobeknefru (1798-1794), was the last Pharaoh of the 20th dynasty. She used the title of Kingship and statuary of nemes headdress, uniquely a king's diadem; and also uniquely included in the kings' lists and acknowledged as king.⁴⁶² Hatshepsut who was the ruler of the 18th dynasty (1479-1458) reigned after the death of her husband Thutmose II, as a regency of Thutmose III. She reinforced her authority by drawing on the kingly iconography, titlature and actions. She eventually abandoned the title and insignia of the queen and adopted that of a king.⁴⁶³

Women played a significant role of strengthening international relations between ancient kingdoms. In some societies kings used dynastic marriage to strengthen their political control of vast empires. For example, among the Mari, Zimri Lim used dynastic marriages to secure elegance. Wherever he married off his daughters, he vested them with political authority to act out their "father's hegemony."⁴⁶⁴ These daughters were in effect serving as ambassadors of their dynasty and certainly regulated the centre of gravity of national and international politics both within and without kingdoms. They were effectively helping their father in administration as provincial governors of the imperial politics of that time. In the early dynastic period of Assyria (2600-2350 BCE), Baranamtara wife of Luganda of Lagash did business with other Mesopotamian cities.

15:16, Jeremiah 13:18. (2) A female ruler, governess (Isaiah. 47:5, 7); (3) mistress in relation to maidservant (Genesis 16:4, 8, 9; 2 Kings 5:3; Psalms 123:2; Proverbs 30:23, Isaiah 24:2.

⁴⁶² Ibid., 350.

⁴⁶³ Ibid., 351.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid., 331.

She maintained diplomatic relations with the Kingdom of Adab.⁴⁶⁵ Baranamtara, it can be said strengthened international and diplomatic ties with other nations. She was in essence a foreign affairs minister of her time.

Queens and queen mothers and other women of the court played significant political and administrative roles. In some States, women were the heads of the royal crown, while in some occasions they ruled alongside their husbands and sons as consorts and regencies and queen mothers. In Mesopotamia, Sammuramat, wife of Shamshi-Adad (823-810 BCE) ruled Assyria for 5 years after the death of her husband because her son Adad-nirari III was still young, and even remained very influential during the reign of her son.⁴⁶⁶ Though served as a regent, it did not demean abilities and personal will to exercise political authority over the kingdom. Among the Hittites Queen Pudubepa is said to have been a very influential woman in national and international politics of her time. For example she discussed marriage politics with King Ramesses II of Egypt in place of her husband. Her frontline political activism significantly kept the kingdom together at a critical moment when her husband was ill.⁴⁶⁷

Abi-Simti, wife of the UR III ruler of Shulgi and mother of Shu-Suen administered Uruk after her son.⁴⁶⁸ Addu-duri of Mari was also a woman of great political influence and prestige. She served in a political capacity in the palace of king Zimri-Lim. Her jurisdictions included palace administration, temple and the administration of the whole city. She was in charge of supplies for the palace such as wool. She was also involved in settling legal matters, investigating disputes about property; and was concerned with the runaway palace slaves.⁴⁶⁹ Zimri-Lim is said to have heavily relied on her for her trustworthiness, competence and ability.⁴⁷⁰

Queen Shibtu also helped Zimri-Lim of the Mari in his administration. She is the one who wrote royal correspondences, which positioned her as a very influential woman in Mari Kingdom. She conveyed messages of all sorts to the King, which included also prophecies.⁴⁷¹ She deputised for Zimri-Lim; whenever he was absent, she supervised

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid., 327-328.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., 347.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid., 329-330.

⁴⁶⁸ Rivkah Harris, *Gender and Aging in Mesopotamia : The Gilgamesh Epic and Other Ancient Literature* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000), 113.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid., 114.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁷¹ Marsman, 326.

various departments, which included administration, the palace and the temple and then reported to him in her correspondences.⁴⁷² In the scroll of Esther, Queen Esther issued letters in the name of King Ahasuerus with his seal with commands relating to the fate of the enemies of Jews (Esther 8:8). Such royal orders, albeit not royal initiative, possessed full legal validity and were irreversible (Esther 8:8).⁴⁷³ From the Hebrew Bible, this seems to have been the duties exhibited by Queen Jezebel in Samaria. A king's consort would use the King's seal and write royal correspondences. The only limited information we have concerning Jezebel is only the vilified story of Naboth's vineyard.

In Ugarit, a queen was her husband's assistant: when King Kirtu was sick and could not attend a banquet, it was Queen Hariya his wife who presided over the meal instead of his heir Yassubu. In times of crisis, a queen's advice could be sought by the King. Among the Ugarits King Pubala was advised by his queen on strategies of defeating his adversary king Kirtu who had besieged the city.⁴⁷⁴ It is interesting to note that King Ahab of Israel has always been portrayed as weak; his political, military and economic successes cannot be attributed to Yahweh since he was a condemned King. The probable force and voice of a queen apparently Jezebel in the socio-political, military and economic successes of this weak King has been completely muted by the narrators.

Queens and queen mothers played a key role in political successions. They always fronted sons of their choice—through whom they would exercise power, as kingly candidates. Aḥatmilku, the wife of Niqmepa, king of the Ugarit in the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries BCE, helped her young son Ammistamru II to succeed to the title, although he had older brothers.⁴⁷⁵

Tm, the wife of Hayyah, king of Y'dy-Sam'al (nineteenth century BCE), was behind the accession of her young son, Kilamuwa, who had an older brother.⁴⁷⁶ And Naqi'a-Zakûtu, the wife of Sennacherib, king of Assyria between eighth to seventh centuries BCE, was behind the decision of her husband to choose their younger son,

⁴⁷² Ibid., 329.

⁴⁷³ Helena Zlotnick, "From Jezebel to Esther: Fashioning Images of Queenship in the Hebrew Bible," *Biblica* 82, no. (2001): 487.

⁴⁷⁴ Marsman, 335.

⁴⁷⁵ Michael Heltzer, *Internal Organization of the Kingdom of Ugarit* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1982), 183.

⁴⁷⁶ F.M Fales, "Kilamuwa and the Foreign Kings: Propaganda Vs. Power," *Welt des Orients* 10, no. (1979): 6-22.

Esarhaddon, as his royal heir, notwithstanding the fact that he had an older brother. After her son's succession, she acquired enormous influence in the realm and was consequently able to intervene on behalf of her grandson, Ashurbanipal, who succeeded as king rather than his older brother, Šamaš-šum-Ukin.⁴⁷⁷

Adad-Guppi of Babylon 6th Century BCE acted as the motive force in setting her son, Nabonidus, on the throne of Babylon, although he was not of royal blood. She herself attained considerable influence in the kingdom,⁴⁷⁸ and even died a heroic death while accompanying the Babylonian army led by her grandson, prince Belshezzar.⁴⁷⁹ And Atossa, the wife of Darius I, king of Persia (6th Century BCE) was able by virtue of her distinguished lineage to place her son, Xerxes, on the nation's throne, although he had older brothers who preceded him in the line of succession.⁴⁸⁰ In the Hebrew bible, Bathsheba is ironically put in state of agency to the will of Nathan in the succession mediation of Solomon to the throne of David (1 Kings 1:13ff). This underplays Bathsheba's personal initiative and role in the political elevation of her son, Solomon. Elsewhere, Hamutal fronted Jehoahaz as king before his elder brother Jehoiakim (2 Kings 23:31, 36.), Nehushta fronted Jehoiachin, at the age of 8 years against Zedekiah; his brother who was 21 years of age (2 Chronicles. 36 9-11).

Some of these women acted against the general ancient practice of fronting the elder sons for kingship, by fronting their young sons.⁴⁸¹ This, as Ben-Barak argues, was in order for these women to obtain positions of influence and power in their sons' realms. Being aware of the circumstances that brought them to power and in particular the singular roles of their respective mothers, the sons granted enormous power and authority in the realm of the kingdom in gratitude and continued dependence to their mothers. For example, Maacah was able to assume a high station during the reign of Abijah, and Nehushta's power was regarded by Nebuchadnezzar as a threat. He felt compelled to include her among the principal captives who were sent into exile.⁴⁸²

⁴⁷⁷ Harris, 115.

⁴⁷⁸ C.J Gadd, "The Harran Inscriptions of Nabonidus," *Anatolian Studies* 8, no. (1958): 311-312.

⁴⁷⁹ Harris, 116.

⁴⁸⁰ H. Tadmor, "Autobiographical Apology in the Royal Assyrian Literature," in *History, Historiography and Interpretation: Studies in Biblical and Cuneiform Literatures*, ed. H. Tadmor and M. Weinfeld (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1983), 56-57.

⁴⁸¹ Bathsheba fronted Solomon against Adonijah, Maacah fronted Abijah (2 Chron. 11:18-23), See Ben-Barak, 181.

⁴⁸² Ben-Barak, 182.

From the above evidence, it can be deduced that the gebirah in Israel and Judah was a woman of high political stature. There are a number of clues to this effect in the Bible: in 1 Kings 2:19, King Solomon rose to meet Bathsheba bowed to her and sat her on his right side.⁴⁸³ Jehu executed 42 men who had gone to pay allegiance to the gebirah in Israel (2Kings 10:13), and then immediately went to claim Jezebel's life. In the lamentation of the mother in Ezekiel 19, it is probably Hamutal being referred to in the lament.⁴⁸⁴ In the case of Nehushta, the gebirah is mentioned immediately after her son, king Jehoiachin in the passage concerning the exiles sent into Babylonian captivity (2 Kings 24:15). Also in the order of precedence in conjunction with Jeremiah 13:18 ("say to the king and the gebirah: take a lowly seat, for your beautiful **עֲטָרָה** (crown) has come down from your head") suggest that the high stature and importance of the gebirah. Like the king, she also wore **עֲטָרָה**.⁴⁸⁵ The enemy regarded her as equally dangerous as the king, which caused her to merit banishment.

The Dtr redactor assigns no official position for the office of the gebirah in ancient Israel. It is probably on these grounds that it is not explicitly mentioned that Jezebel had put on a crown but instead used ambiguous phrase of "she adorned her head" in 2 Kings 9:30.

The woman who tried to assert political influence as Head of the Crown after the death of her son Ahaziah was Athaliah, the Queen of Judah. She successfully and peacefully ruled over the kingdom for 6 years. She is however presented in the narrative as usurper of the political seat and a murderer of rightful heirs to the throne of David. She was overthrown in a coup that was led by a galaxy of men and the temple priest.

⁴⁸³ See also Zafira Ben-Barak, "The Status and Right of the Gebira," in *A Feminist Companion to Samuel and Kings*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 173.

⁴⁸⁴ Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20 : A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 354-359.

⁴⁸⁵ Ben-Barak, 174.

5.2.0 THE BIBLE TEXTS: A CLOSE READING OF FOUR WOMEN LEADERS

5.2.1.0 The Story of Miriam

5.2.1.1 Fictional Interview with Literary Miriam

Qn. How would you describe Moses' childhood?

Ans. I am an elder sister of Moses and his brother Aaron. Moses is the youngest of us three. Moses was born under special circumstances in Egypt. I do not feel comfortable going into details, so I request to leave that part out if you do not mind. But as a child, Moses though had a speech problem was a very courageous, forceful and passionate boy, which greatly influenced his future career as a leader.

Qn. What was the mood of the family when Moses disappeared for so long before coming back to Egypt?

Ans. It was very stressful. I personally thought he had been killed or eaten by wild beasts, but at the same time had hope that he was alive somewhere somehow. I kept on encouraging my parents to take heart and stay hopeful.

Qn. How did you as a family feel when Moses returned with a crown of leadership to liberate the Israelites?

Ans. It was hope fulfilled! But I would not take it as solely Moses' mission. Yahweh, the God of our fore fathers had chosen us (Exodus 3:18, 5:3) as a family to lead the Children of Israel out of Egypt. Yahweh had been speaking to me and Aaron in dreams and visions and really preparing us for that mission. Moses' call was just the fulfilment of our dreams. That is why he commissioned Aaron to speak for Moses, and I Miriam to act as a priestess and leader. As a woman, I understood the plight and needs of the Hebrew society especially women and children much better than my male counterparts.

Qn. What were your roles as a leader?

Ans. The primary role was that of leadership; to deliver the exodus into the Promised Land. There were secondary roles of ensuring order and purity within the community and priestly roles that included songs of praise. I was a medium of instructions from Yahweh to the community—in essence a prophetess.

Qn. It is written that you were struck by leprosy. Do you think it was justified?

Ans. Offenders are commonly punished in the Bible. So as one of those who had offended Yahweh by criticising Moses, I accept the responsibility. But have you ever imagined why Aaron is presented unpunished? Whereas I would not love to dwell so much on that story, my enemy here is not Yahweh, but the narrators who masculinise and tyrannize Yahweh against feminine figures. The literary creation is meant to distance me from the creation of history of Israel. That is the reason I was silenced throughout the rest of the journey until pronounced dead. But actually the leprosy got healed and I continued with my work.

5.2.1.2 Numbers 12:1-16

Miriam is mentioned as the daughter of Amram and Jochebed in Numbers 26:59 (cf Exodus 6:20). She is a sister to Aaron and Moses although very little is known about her from the Bible, since the narrator is more interested in Moses' life and activities which constitute the biggest fraction of the Pentateuch.

The book of Exodus vaguely mentions a young girl who play a heroic role of saving a Hebrew boy named Moses in the Sea of Reeds. Her naïve courage yielded positive results after the dramatic discovery of the baby by Pharaoh's daughter. She got chance to participate in the historical making of the man who will not only become the political and religious leader of the people of Israel but also whose name is iconic in all liberation polemics. She tactfully arranged for Moses' motherly care and nourishment, which groomed Moses into the man to identify with his people; a leader and servant of God whose authority no woman would challenge and go scot-free. Thanks to the daring character of the little girl.

Moses' father is kept out of context and picture from all these events that make Moses. Events involving Moses' survival are purely played by women, which is a clear manifestation of patriarchal stereotype of gender roles: child nurturing is women's job. Moses' father is also kept away from sexual scenes of bathing women at the river (c.f 2 Samuel 11:2-4).

The young girl is not named in the texts, but from the rabbinic literature and unfolding events of the exodus episodes, she was apparently Miriam. She is not named in Exodus 6:20 among the children of Amram and Jochebed, but named in Exodus 15:20 and Numbers 26:59 as a Levite, sister to Aaron the brother of Moses (Exodus 4:14, c.f 2:1 and Numbers 26:59).

If Miriam was the girl at the shores of River Nile, who reunited Moses with her family, then that defines her character as a keen woman right from her childhood. In Midrash, we learn that this very sister, Miriam, is actually one of the two midwives in Exodus 1:15. She is Puah, and Jochebed is Shiphrah (their Hebrew names suggest their roles in saving babies).⁴⁸⁶ She had a unique personality of ambition, aggression and bravery that were required of a leader of her time. In Midrash, Miriam was brave

⁴⁸⁶ Enid Dame, "A Paradoxical Prophet: Jewish Women Poets Re-Imagine Miriam," *Bridges: A Jewish Feminist Journal* 12, no. 1 (2007): 5.

enough to tell the Egyptian Pharaoh that he would be punished by God for his cruelty to the Hebrews. She challenged her father Amram to return her mother after divorcing her as a result of the cruel edict referring to the exposure of the children and she sang and danced on the day of the remarriage of her parents. She predicted to her father the birth of Moses who would liberate the Hebrews from the Egyptian slavery, and when Moses was born her father kissed her and said, “Your prophecy, my daughter, is fulfilled.”⁴⁸⁷ She was a woman of prophetic calibre and significantly influenced family decisions. As Enid Dame has put it, Miriam is a powerful but a silenced woman. She is doubly silenced: in the text (by God) and in the arrangement of the texts, by writers and editors who reduce her story to a few brief mentions.⁴⁸⁸

Our study of Numbers 12 presents a sad and enigmatic situation that involved Miriam, Aaron and Moses. Accordingly, Miriam and Aaron spoke ill of Moses on two accounts: Moses’ marriage to a Cushite woman, and Moses’ claim of prophetic monopoly. God reprimanded them both in defence of Moses, but punished Miriam alone severely. Due to difficulties associated with studying this text from its historical context (as also the rest of the Pentateuch), this paper will therefore focus on the ideological overtones of the story of Miriam’s plight following the theophany.

Verse 1 begins with a grammatical problem in relation to the verb **וַתִּדְבֹּר** which is 3rd person feminine singular but referring to Miriam and Aaron as subjects. It is apparently meant to mean that Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses. The cause of their speaking against Moses was that Moses had married a Cushite wife. The verb **לָקַח** (to take), when its direct object is **אִשָּׁה** means to take a woman as wife (Genesis 24:3 and Deuteronomy 24:1). Moses married a Cushite wife. Cush designates the Sudan (Nubia), land south of Egypt though is sometimes identified with Ethiopia (Genesis 10:6, 8; Isaiah 11:11; 20:3, 5; and 43:3). However there is no evidence in the Bible to suggest that this area included Moses’ sphere of activity. Martin Noth however opines that the area could be identified with Cushan of Habakuku 3:7 where the reference is to a tribe or confederacy of tribes mentioned as a parallel to Midian.⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁷ Isidore Singer and Jacob Zallel Lauterbach, "Miriam"

<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=655&letter=M&search=Miriam#1> (accessed 20th February 2010).

⁴⁸⁸ Dame: 9.

⁴⁸⁹ Martin Noth and James D. Martin, *Numbers : A Commentary* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1968), 94.

In verse 2 a new reason is introduced for Miriam and Aaron's slander against Moses. It is not the case of Moses' Cushite wife but about prophetic revelation and authority. The verb **וַיֹּאמְרוּ** is 3rd person common plural with wav consecutive, which means that a challenge to Moses' prophetic authority was made by more than one person, apparently both Miriam and Aaron unlike in verse 1. The phrase that **הִרְקֵ-אֶת-יְהוָה בְּנִי דִבֶּר-הֵלֵא נָם--בְּמִשְׁפָּה דִּבֶּר יְהוָה** suggests that both Miriam and Aaron challenged Moses' prophetic monopoly. God heard both Miriam and Aaron in their crime.

In verses 4-5 God intervenes. He spoke to all the three: Moses, Aaron and Miriam. In this verse, there is a reverse of names order between Miriam and Aaron unlike in the previous verse. Here Aaron comes first and Miriam last. God summoned three of them to come out into the tent of meeting. It seems to be common in the Hebrew Bible that before the deity man comes first then a woman last.

In verses 6-9 God speaks to Aaron and Miriam in the presence of Moses. The scene is outside the tent of meeting under the cover of the clouds. Yahweh addressed Aaron and Miriam in defence of Moses.

יְהוָה נְבִיאָכֶם-אֵם בְּחֵלֹם יְהוָה בְּמִרְאָה אֵלָיו אֶתְוַדַּע בּוֹ-אֲדָבָר is apparently addressed to Miriam and Aaron. But unlike Miriam, there are no allusions to Aaron as a prophet in the Hebrew Bible. In Exodus 7:1, Aaron is to act as a prophet to Moses, which has a sense of being Moses' mouth piece. Aaron is a priest. **נְבִיאָכֶם** is commonly translated as prophet amongst you. The personal pronoun **כֶּם** constructed to the noun is apparently referring to Miriam and Aaron.

Accordingly, to other prophets Yahweh speaks in dreams and visions, but to Moses He speaks to him **אֵל פֶּה-פֶּה** because Moses is trusted in His house Moses is set apart as a special prophet and leader from others like Miriam. God rhetorically asked Aaron and Miriam why they could not fear speaking against His servant Moses. Verse 9 describes God as angry against the slanderers, both Aaron and Miriam.

In verses 10-12, God's presence departs and the cloud is rolled away. What is left behind is a spectacle of Miriam who is stricken by **צִרְעָת** and a clean Aaron who is startled by the theophany and fearfully dismayed at Miriam's critical condition.

Aaron pleads with Moses to heal Miriam. Moses is addressed as a superior with an entreaty **כִּי** followed by **אֲדָבָר** (see Genesis 44:18, Joshua 6:13, 1 Samuel 1:26).

In verses 13-15 Moses intercedes for Miriam. However Yahweh refused to heal her because He wanted her to suffer for seven days, in which Miriam remained a leper.

5.2.1.3 Discussion

Readership of Miriam's story today reveals that, she was discriminated against on the basis of her gender. Though text presents a lot of inconsistencies associated with general lack of cohesion we are intrigued with a situation of bias in dispensing divine justice between two culpable siblings. The scene in the narrative is situated at a key point when leadership was crucial and about to change hands.

There is a deliberate play on the ambiguity of **וַיִּבְרַח** in verses 1, 2 and 8. In 1 & 8, it connotes a deliberate rebellion against Moses (c.f Numbers 21:5-7; Psalms 50:20) while in 2 it means *speak to Moses* (Numbers 12:6, 2 Samuel 23:2, 2 Chronicles 18:27). The text presents two accusations made by Miriam and Aaron against Moses: Criticising Moses' marriage and challenging Moses' prophetic "monopoly." The use of **וַיִּבְרַח** in verse 1 may not be accidental, but to out rightly emphasize the mind-set and attitude of the writer against Miriam.

The woman in question is most likely not Zipporah, who is identified as a Midianite woman (Exodus 2:21). Scholars like Robinson and Levine think that Moses could have married the Cushite woman, as second wife during Zipporah's absence.⁴⁹⁰ According to Robinson, Moses' marriage to a second foreign woman (besides the Midianite Zipporah who was married in Egypt) upset Miriam. Robinson contends that Miriam was punished because she was the one who took the initiative of criticising Moses. Robinson's argument comes as a negation to the view that Aaron was equally guilty but was spared because of his priestly rank or that because he was a male.⁴⁹¹ To Robinson Miriam was a Prophetess and was therefore in position to question any ideas that Moses had a monopoly of divine guidance, but Aaron could not with credibility make such a claim on his own account, since he was not a prophet of God, but a prophet of Moses.⁴⁹²

If the Cush referred to Moses' wife means an African region near Egypt, then we read of a slander, which was racial ridicule of Moses' wife, or an objection to taking on

⁴⁹⁰ Bernard P Robinson, "The Jealousy of Miriam; a Note on Num 12," *ZAW* 101, no. 3 (1989): 429-430., Baruch A. Levine, *Numbers 1-20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible (London: Doubleday, 1993), 328.

⁴⁹¹ Robinson: 429-430.

⁴⁹² Ibid.: 431.

a second foreign wife. Eryl Davies conjectures that it could have been due to the later motif, which regarded relations with foreign women as precarious, since those of vulnerable disposition would well be seduced into committing apostasy.⁴⁹³

In verse two, the accusation against Miriam and Aaron changes from Moses' marriage to that of Moses' prophetic authority. Accordingly, Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses' prophetic authority, claiming that they equally had divine revelations from Yahweh. This is the very reason Yahweh comes down to intervene and clarify to Moses' relationship with Him.

As already noted, the challenge to Moses' prophetic authority was made by both Miriam and Aaron. But the theophany left only Miriam afflicted **צִרְעַת**—a form of leprosy. **צִרְעַת** in ancient Israel was not an accurate term for leprosy. It was believed to be a punishment from God like all other diseases. Miriam's afflictions became a basis for the post biblical Jewish interpretation that regarded **צִרְעַת** as a punishment for malicious talk.⁴⁹⁴ Zakovitch in his study of 1 Kings 5 has demonstrated that in all the biblical narratives in which a person is punished with **צִרְעַת** the punishment is due to his or her failure to submit to the proper authority; the authority which the narrator approves.⁴⁹⁵ Failure to serve the right party with full loyalty would result into affliction. In Babylon, the Akkadian equivalent of **צִרְעַת** was *saharsubbû*. In the treaty between Ashurnirari V and Mati'ilu, the latter was threatened with *saharsubbû* as punishment for not serving the former in full loyalty.⁴⁹⁶ In 2 Kings 5 Gehazi is punished with **צִרְעַת** for undermining prophetic authority of Elisha. In Numbers 12 Miriam is punished with **צִרְעַת** for challenging Moses' authority; and when Aaron appeals to Moses to heal Miriam in verse 11-12 he is acknowledging Moses' prophetic authority over that of Miriam, which he and Miriam had challenged.⁴⁹⁷ It demonstrated that neither Miriam herself nor Aaron can speak directly to God to get healed but only Moses.

⁴⁹³ Eryl W. Davies, *The New Century Bible Commentary: Numbers* (London: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 119.

⁴⁹⁴ Levine, 332.

⁴⁹⁵ David Shalom. Sperling, "Miriam, Aaron and Moses; Sibling Rivalry," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 70/71, no. (1999-2000): 48 and note 64.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid.: 48 and note 66.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid.: 48-49.

Leviticus 13 elaborately outlines the impact of leprosy and other related skin illnesses. Accordingly, **צִרְעָת** has an effect of uncleanness and isolation from the general public to avoid contamination. A leper was confined into the private and was inadmissible to the public. In our text, **צִרְעָת** also had a silencing effect on Miriam. She became unclean and perpetually removed from the leadership story. Another person who challenged authority and was silenced was Michal in 2 Samuel 6.

The thematic discontinuity between the criticism of Moses in verse 1 and the criticism in verse 2 has been observed by a number of scholars from antiquity to the present. They have sought to either harmonise the two verses or to separate them. Jewish sources from late antiquity through medieval times applied midrashic technique to connect verses 1-2 by identifying the Cushite woman with Zipporah the wife of Moses according to Exodus 2:21 and 18:2, 5-6. In these midrashic traditions the verb **לָקַח** is taken as a pluperfect, that is, Moses had previously married Zipporah, a beautiful women, referred to by the dysphemism “Cushite” as a precaution against the evil eye.⁴⁹⁸ Subsequently however, he had divorced her, or on another account, had stopped having sexual relations with her. The divorce tradition is based on Exodus 18: 2-6. In either case, Miriam and Aaron had attributed Moses’ dismissal of Zipporah to his haughty belief that prophetic office precluded sexual intimacy. The complaint by Miriam and Aaron was that inasmuch as they too were prophets, and had not abandoned their spouses through either divorce or marital celibacy, there was no need for Moses to abandon Zipporah his Cushite wife.⁴⁹⁹ Miriam and Aaron were therefore not against Moses’ marriage to a Cushite woman, but that they are siding with her to challenge Moses’ status of marital celibacy.⁵⁰⁰ This view is consonant with other midrashic views on Miriam as a family builder. Miriam, as early noted, is said to have restored her parent’s marriage after her father had divorced her mother. Midrashim also reveal that Miriam has always suffered violence as a consequence of her efforts: After reuniting her parents and prophesying about the birth of a saviour, Amram and Jechobed got Moses. When Moses is born, Amram kisses Miriam and says, “My daughter, thy prophecy has been fulfilled.” But when it comes time to release the baby Moses onto the river,

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid.: 42.

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid.: 46, also notes 46,47 and 48.

⁵⁰⁰ See Irntraud Fischer, "The Authority of Miriam; a Feminist Rereading of Numbers 12 Prompted by Jewish Interpretation," *Exodus to Deuteronomy* (2000): 167.

Jochebed strikes Miriam on the head, saying “What happened to your prophecy?”⁵⁰¹ In our texts of study, the midrashic tradition would suggest that Miriam’s effort to fight for the marital rights of her sister in law was followed by a rude divine rebuke that left her sick and completely silenced. As her parent strikes her on the head, God strikes her entire body with leprosy. Yahweh the big dad spits to Miriam’s entire body and Miriam had to suffer the shame for seven days. Her role as a family watchful guardian has defined Miriam as an insolent girl (playing a boy) in the family.

Origen, one of the early church fathers has also commented on the thematic disunity in the verses 1-2. To him Numbers 12 should be treated as an example of a scriptural pericope that demanded an allegorical rather than a literal interpretation. On Origen’s analysis, had chapter 12 been intended to be taken literally, then verse 2 would have continued the criticism voiced in verse 1, by suggesting that Moses takes an Israelite wife, preferably a Levite. The shift to an attack on the uniqueness of Moses’ prophetic office demonstrates to Origen an allegorical reading that Moses represents the spiritual law and the Cushite woman the gentile church.⁵⁰²

Among modern scholars, there are variations between those who seek to find a thematic unity in the chapter and those who wish to break the pericope into individual components or literary sources.⁵⁰³ J. Licht for example sees here a (hypothetical) external tale in which Miriam alone spoke against Moses criticizing his marital choice, and a (hypothetical) internal tale in which both Aaron and Miriam denied the existence of a qualitative difference between the prophecies of Moses and their own.⁵⁰⁴ Others like Jacob Milgrom⁵⁰⁵ connect verses 1 and 2 in a literary fashion, viewing the criticism of the Cushite wife as a pretext employed by Miriam and Aaron in order to challenge the prophetic priority of Moses, which was their real concern.

Worth emphasising is the fact that Aaron in verse 11 is presented interceding for Miriam, while at the same time repenting for his part. Aaron in his plea clearly admits that he was an active part in the crimes committed against Moses. What remains startling in this text is that Miriam alone was harshly punished for the crime(s) but

⁵⁰¹ Dame: 5-6.

⁵⁰² Sperling: 47.

⁵⁰³ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁴ Quoted in Sperling, Ibid.

⁵⁰⁵ Jacob Milgrom, *Numbers (במדבר): The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New Jps Translation*, 1st ed., Jps Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990), 94.

Aaron was left unpunished for the crime he admits to have committed. There are varying opinions about this issue. The popular view held is based on the order of names that place Miriam first in verse 1. It is thought that because she is named first, she must have been at the forefront of the accusation and Aaron followed her opinion. Aaron's sin is that he just compromised with Miriam. Like Adam in the temptation story of Genesis, Aaron appears to be unable to say "no" and is a passive accessory rather than an active co-agent.⁵⁰⁶ Also Sarah is blamed for the expulsion of Ishmael; the woman attracts the guilt and makes her man relatively innocent.

Generally, information about Miriam in the Bible is very scanty. There are few allusions that present the significance of Miriam: In Exodus 15:20-21, she is described as "מִרְיָם הַנְּבִיאָה" (Miriam the prophetess) though her prophecies and teachings are not recorded. She is a priestess and leads women in the celebration dance at the Sea of Reeds with a timbrel (Exodus 15:20), one of the traditional ritual implements of Near Eastern priestesses, and leads the people (וַתַּעַן לָהֶם מִרְיָם) in choral song, another priestess role. Prophet Micah regards her as one of the leaders who brought the Israelites from Egypt (Micah 6:4). Though Miriam seems to have had well-grounded prophetic, priestly and leadership roles, working in trinity with Moses and Aaron during the exodus event, much information about her remained in the private annals and not preserved in a public document—the Bible. Miriam is silenced forever with pronouncement of her death as the final nail on her coffin into silence in Numbers 20:1 in the wilderness of Zin. Her role as the girl who watched over and protected baby Moses on the banks of River Nile and led women and danced at the shore of Red Sea or Sea of Reeds disappears significantly from history. No mourning or burial rights are recorded about her unlike her brothers (Numbers 20:28-29 and Deuteronomy 34:5-8). No successor is named after her death to carry on her roles (cf Numbers 20:27 and Deuteronomy 34:9). Her punishment with leprosy rendered her unclean, distanced and silent from the leadership roles. Moses was set aside as God's chosen leader, while Miriam ornamented as an iconoclast in the leadership ideology.

Naomi Graetz has instructively argued that "Miriam was punished with leprosy because women in the biblical world were not supposed to be leaders of men, and that

⁵⁰⁶ Naomi Graetz, "Did Miriam Talk Too Much?," in *A Feminist Companion to Exodus to Deuteronomy*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), note 9.

women with initiative were reprov'd when they asserted themselves with the only weapon they had, that is: their power of language...⁵⁰⁷ This can be well connected to the warning in Deuteronomy 24:9 which recalls Miriam's plight: "Remember what the Lord your God did to Miriam on the way as you came forth out of Egypt." It is apparently meant to make Miriam 'a marked woman, a warning for generations to come',⁵⁰⁸ against questioning the authority, namely patriarchal authority. Both the Hebrew Bible and the NT assign men to positions of authority in leadership. Paul in 1 Corinthians 11 quotes the OT in his teaching about male authority. To Graetz, Miriam's punishment was a discriminatory decision against her, and has the effect of ending Miriam's legitimate public aspirations.⁵⁰⁹ Indeed, one would have been interested in knowing how these events affected the future of Miriam's career: How did Miriam conduct herself thereafter in relation to her brothers? What came of her leadership activities? What was Miriam's psychological state after the disaster? What was her self-esteem? Did she ever lead fellow women again, sing songs and probably influence issues as she had been doing? Did she pride in saving Moses and reuniting him with his mother? Was she again grateful of the Lord's salvation? Or she joined those who wished they had remained in Egypt? What became of her relationship with Moses' wife or wives? What is clear is that Miriam's leadership and prophetic career ended there, and we never hear from or about her again. Her duties as a female leader were removed from the history of male leadership. She became a warning to all similar voices in Deuteronomy 24:9 to women's political activism. The Bible is silent on this. Miriam's story portrays another case of a woman forced into the private, leaving the public space for men.

David Sperling has argued instructively that Pentateuchal narratives are all set temporally in the period before the rise of the Israelite states. They refer to events and institutions of the Israelite states and then of the Jewish communities in the years between ca. 1200-300 B.C.E. He maintains that these same narratives are not primarily antiquarian, but rather ideological, in that they advocate positions intended to influence the contemporaries of the authors in matters which to them were of contemporary

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid., 233.

⁵⁰⁸ Phyllis Trible, "Bringing Miriam out of the Shadows," in *A Feminist Companion to Exodus to Deuteronomy*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press Limited, 1994), 179.

⁵⁰⁹ Graetz, 235.

concern.⁵¹⁰ He therefore reads the story of Miriam in relation to Aaron and Moses an ideological investment on the subject of authority.

Fischer however opines that Numbers 12 is meant to explain the circumstances that led to the death of Miriam in the latter chapters. She argues that God's view was that Miriam, Aaron and Moses would have to die before reaching the boundaries of the Promised Land. "The reason for the decision that Moses and Aaron must die is given in the story of the waters of Meribah (Numbers 20:2-13; see especially v. 12 and the reference in v. 24), where their guilt is defined."⁵¹¹ Fischer argues that the narrative needed to explain Miriam's death since she was not present at Meribah.⁵¹² The problem with Fischer's opinion however is that Miriam's death in Numbers 20:1 is not associated with the events of chapter 12 since she was healed after seven days.

Deborah and Huldah are exceptional cases. The story of Deborah who operates as Judge and Prophetess is apparently meant to highlight the feebleness of the Israel's enemies (Judges 4:9) before Yahweh. Yahweh can use an army not strong enough and led by a woman to defeat a strong army led by Sisera. She is leading men in war against the enemies of Israel. Prophetess Huldah (2 Kings 22:14; 2 Chronicles 34:22), as also Deborah has her name and prophetic office mentioned alongside her husband's name. This is probably meant to stress that though they were prophetess and leaders, they were under the authority of their male partners unlike Miriam whose sexual life is not mentioned.

5.2.1.4 The Story of Miriam and African postcolonial Bible interpretation

Numbers 12 presents a creative story of a female leader who is discriminately punished, humiliated publically and eventually dismissed from the leadership office. The text overtly tells Miriam that "yes you are also a leader, but you are not a man...You are a woman and should not challenge or equate yourself to men! If men challenge each other like Aaron has done, you should be modest and decent in your conduct... So because you have played a man and challenged male authority, you are more guilt than Aaron and alone should you suffer leprosy...With this leprosy you are made unclean and you shall be expelled from leadership and your name shall never be

⁵¹⁰ S. David Sperling, *The Original Torah: The Political Intent of the Bible's Writers*, Reappraisals in Jewish Social and Intellectual History (New York New York University Press, 1998). Also, Sperling, "Miriam, Aaron and Moses; Sibling Rivalry," 39.

⁵¹¹ Fischer: 171.

⁵¹² Ibid.: 172.

heard of again as a leader from this moment till you die!” Like her brother Aaron, Miriam did not know what she was questioning. To her, Moses was a brother and a co-leader as Aaron. Miriam understood “leadership to embrace diverse voices, female and male.”⁵¹³ She probably had learnt how Egyptian women played significant roles in political leadership while still in Egypt. The presence of her mother and brother in Pharaoh’s courts probably availed Miriam opportunities to observe Egyptian princesses and queens and other women of royal origin activities freely and exchanged opinions. But in the theophany, which was partly a tutorial scene about Moses’ unique relationship with God, Miriam was taught a new lesson about dynamics of power and gender hierarchies, which situated her at the bottom of the pyramid.

Miriam can be read as representing African female nationalists and politicians like Mary Nyanjiru (1922) and Mau-Mau fighters of colonial injustices, who although fought with stamina and impact, are hardly remembered in the political history of East Africa. Prominence has been given to male politicians like Jomo Kenyatta and his colleagues. The colonial government in Kenya heavily punished female sympathisers and fighters of Mau Mau especially in Kamiti and Athii River prisons where women suffered several beatings, congestion, sanitary problems, inadequate food and clothing and excessive manual work. Women were eventually relegated to political silence as members of the MYWO and hostages in colonial villagisation schemes. Women were reminded that they were women who should not challenge colonial men. Theirs was just basic skills in home economics as wives and mothers. Political authority in Kenya was left in the hands of men like Jomo Kenyatta. Jomo Kenyatta’s government did not have a woman as if the war against colonialism was fought by only men. Priscilla Abwao the sole female delegate in Lancaster House Conference (1962) had argued for equal treatment and representation of men and women in the New Kenya but none of her appeals was taken serious by her brothers who became the political leaders of the nation.

Ironically, Janet Museveni seems to have good attributes of Miriam: Miriam and Janet Museveni are political women who keep families together. Janet Museveni, while launching “The Love Wheel” campaign advised married couples to remain faithful to each other. Mrs Museveni urged couples to value marriage, saying it was a spiritual,

⁵¹³ Phyllis Trible, "Miriam: Bible" <<http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/miriam-bible>> (accessed 20th February 2010).

emotional and physical bond between husband and wife, a great privilege and an expression of God's perfect love for all creation.⁵¹⁴ "The Love Wheel" is an innovation tool aimed at strengthening marriages and promoting mutual fidelity among couples. The wheel was developed by a team of 12 relationship experts. It contains love tips for married couples.⁵¹⁵ Family status is a key factor in the lives of African female politicians. Hon. Janet Museveni and her matrimonial family are perceived as a model of decency for female politician. It is interesting however to note that, Janet Museveni is the only one used as a yardstick for that measure. Little is known and said about her husband, H.E Yoweri Kaguta Museveni's sexual integrity as a person. Unlike Miriam, Janet Museveni's miriamness is that of motherliness and promotion of sexual decency. Janet Museveni promotes values, but within the traditional patriarchal setting. In essence, Janet Museveni can be said to be a patron and promoter of African traditional patriarchal values. Miriam is an outspoken character and a critique of male authority. Though her sexual life is not mentioned in the text, she is the vocal arrogant, ummotherly woman who does not respect men. The exposure of Miriam to public humiliation for 7 days resonates with African female politicians who have suffered public humiliations like Nagayi Nabila Sempala who was undressed in Uganda by government authorities and Wangari Maathai who was indecently assaulted by Kenyan government authorities. Significantly, number 7 (seven) in Bible theology stands for totality, which translates to complete humiliation of political victims.

5.2.2 The Story of Michal

5.2.2.1 Fictional Interview with Literary Michal

Qn. Your relationship with King David seems to have started long ago. Can you tell us more about you and David?

Ans. As you all know I am Michal, daughter of King Saul whom David succeeded. David was one of my childhood friends. We used to play together and make childhood jokes as a couple, until he was promised by my father King Saul that I would be given to him officially as a wife upon satisfying a particular requirement.⁵¹⁶

Qn. It is written that you loved David so much. Was that the case?

Ans. He loved me too. The idea that it is me who loved David is simply the narrator's construction of David's masculinity basing on the narrator's cultural norm, which

⁵¹⁴ Mary Karugaba, "Mr. Museveni Cautions Married Couples on Fidelity", New Vision Publishers <http://www.newvision.co.ug/D/8/13/738918> (accessed 21st December 2011).

⁵¹⁵ "Uganda: Can "Love Wheel" Stop Infidelity in Marriage?", <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?ReportID=91875> (accessed 12th February 2011).

⁵¹⁶ I imagine Michal here as coyly referring to the 200 foreskins of the Philistines, which David collected and presented to the Saul for pride price. (1 Samuel 18:27).

desexualises men. Accordingly, a strong male is the one who is casual about women and that women are so marginal to the lives of the protagonist. He is one without sexual desire, no love stories, no romances, no wooing, no daring deeds for the sake of a beloved, no flowers, no valentines no romantic dinners and so forth. They can neither watch a romantic movie nor have little time to listen to a romantic music track.

The reality is that David was a very romantic man, whom I always jealously wanted to protect especially from these young and beautiful maids in the courts. David could not withstand a beautiful woman. Have you not read the story of Uriah's wife? There are many other dirty stories you people do not know about my husband—King David.

Qn. It is written that you were a very disrespectful woman to the King that resulted into a sour relationship between you and David. Is that true?

Ans. David to Israel was a King. To me as Michal daughter of Saul, he was a husband. I am not Israel. I am his wife. What caused problems between me and the writer of the story is my "point of order" to the King for being naked in public; which was mistaken for political opposition to the leader, especially from a person from a rival royal family.

Qn. But is it that you did not have children?

Ans. I would rather not say much. But not having a male child with David named in the narratives does not mean that I did not have children. For which significance would he have been anyway to the narrator who is so averse to the house of Saul? You read for yourself 2 Samuel 21:8

Qn. What was your most embarrassing moment as Queen?

An. My most embarrassing moment was when David danced naked; and all these girls are looking at him swinging in the crowd like a base fellow. I don't think King Saul or any other King in the Near East would debase himself to that degree.

Qn. What is your message to the readers of your story?

Ans. My message is that the Bible is a biased ideological written to serve the interests of its makers. The writers wanted to glorify and purify the kingship of David against any other dynasty of ancient Israel. That is why there is concerted effort to annihilate each and every offspring of King Saul, except the lame and harmless Mephibosheth son of Jonathan.

5.2.2.2 1 Samuel 14:49-50

Michal was the younger daughter of King Saul and his wife Ahinoam (1 Samuel 14:49-50), who was given as a consolation prize/trap to David. Saul did not actually want David to be his son in law but wanted him to be killed in battle against the Philistines while trying to fulfil the conditions of collecting 100 foreskins of Philistines as bride-price in order to marry his (Saul's) daughter. David was initially meant to marry Merab, Saul's elder daughter, but he was given Michal instead because Merab had been given to another man in marriage. Michal was therefore a replacement for Merab (1 Samuel 18:17-20). It is also written that Michal loved David.⁵¹⁷ Michal saved David from being killed by her father Saul (1 Samuel 19:11-12) by enabling him to

⁵¹⁷ David is presented several times as an object of love rather than subject: 1 Samuel 18:3, 16, 20, 28, 20:17.

escape through the window. Michal did not see David for a number of years after his escape. David married other women like Abigail and Ahinoam. The political tension seemed to have ended Michal's marriage with David. Michal was given into marriage to another man called Phalti son of Laish (1 Samuel 25:42-44). When David replaced Saul as King over Israel, he demanded Michal back. She was taken away from Phalti and became one of David's wives. Michal, daughter of King Saul, marrying King David, the man she loved and compromised her life to save from death probably came as a package of fortune for becoming a queen and queen mother. It was an opportunity for her to revive and perpetuate her royalty and royal lineage of her father—King Saul. But this optimism was whimsical as her ending was mournful.

2 Samuel 6:15-23, presents a dramatic scene in which Michal's destiny is finally sealed with political quietism and mortality; because of her attempts to admonish David for his unkingly behaviour in a public- dance. David's garment fell off as he was ecstatically dancing during the transfer of the ark and his nakedness was revealed. According to the text, Michal's view is that the King should have danced for the Lord but with dignity. Regrettably and polemically, Michal is presented as an evil woman who attempts to interfere with the king's divine relationship with Yahweh. She is said to have died without children as a result of the remarks, and perpetually silenced. Our text of study is less ambiguous in highlighting the attitude of the writer towards Michal and more so to the house of Saul.

Verses 15-16 set the background to the scene. It is the second leg in the process of transferring the ark to the city of David. The Ark had been at Obed-edom the Gittite in Kiriath-jearim for a long time after its return from the Philistines who had captured it during the war with Israel (1 Samuel 5-6). During the first leg, the mission of transferring the ark to David's city aborted when Yahweh struck Uzzah and his brother dead for their attempt to safeguard the ark from falling (2 Samuel 6:6-7). As the jubilant convoy approached the city with the ark, Michal, described here as Saul's daughter and strategically situated at the window (נִשְׁקָפָה בְּעֵד הַחַלּוֹן), saw King David "leaping and dancing before the Lord" and despised him in her heart. The phrase וַתִּבְזֶה לוֹ בְּלִבָּהּ raises questions about the credibility of the narrator's source. It implies that the narrator got information from the source that reports on matters that take place in people's hearts. The verb used for despise (וַתִּבְזֶה) is from root בִּזָּה, which in the context

of Genesis 25:34 reveal Esau's attitude to his birthright. He traded it for a soup that eventually cost him blessings and determined his fate and the fate of his descendants (cf Hebrews 12:16-17). Michal's attitude towards David's dance style was detrimental to her future political portrait.

In verse 20 David returns to bless his own household after successful transfer of the ark and after sacrificial ceremony in which he blessed and sent off the people peacefully to their respective homes (verses 17-19). He is confronted by Michal, who is defined as the daughter of Saul for the second time. She sets out to meet David, and attacks him with these words: How honoured (מִיּוֹם נִכְבְּדָה) today the King of Israel who uncovered (נִגְלָה) himself today before the eyes of the maidservants of his servants as one of the vain fellows (הַרְקִיָּם) would uncover himself? Accordingly, the scene of Michal's meeting with David is apparently half way before David was to meet and bless his family. Michal's concern is that the king did not honour himself by uncovering himself before his servant's maids like one of the vain fellows (הַרְקִיָּם). Michal's tone according to McCarter is thought to be aristocratic: "As one of king's daughter and another's wife she does not hesitate to refer to all the young women of Israel, whether slave or free, as the maidservants or wenches of the king's servants."⁵¹⁸ הַרְקִיָּם is a plural form from רִיק, which means "empty", or "vacillating." In Judges 9:4 and 11:3 it is used as an insult directed against a person in the grip of cultic ecstasy. The verb used to describe David's indecency is from גִּלָּה, which may stand for uncover or display. It appears 3 times in Michal's statement.

Verses 21-22 contain David's response to Michal's observation: he was dancing before Yahweh who chose him above Michal's father and his house to be a prince over Israel. He promised to dance more again before Yahweh, and he contrasts Michal's observation that he will be honoured before the said maid servants.

Verse 23 pronounces Michal's fate or verdict: she remained childless till her death. She is once again identified as the daughter of Saul.

⁵¹⁸ P. Kyle McCarter, *2 Samuel : A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1984), 187.

5.2.2.3 Discussion

Michal's admonition to the king was that of a "Point of Order:" "Is it in order for His Majesty the King to honour himself by uncovering himself before his servants' maids?!" It was a Point of Order not addressed to any other audience but the King himself. It was meant for the King to observe royal protocol in public domain.

Michal is defined as the daughter of Saul. Saul was the first king of Israel, and Michal was therefore the princess of Israel, a significant political figure by right of royal birth. She becomes David's wife because she loved David right from the old days. David here, as already stated is the one loved by Michal. His picture is slightly similar to that of Idi Amin of Uganda, whom women loved so much that they could share him in bed. It is alleged that Amin has a high sex libido, and that women loved his gigantic body structure, which was also associated with an impressively big penis. Michal by becoming David's wife, she ideally doubled royal credentials: a royal birth certificate and royal marriage certificate made her a woman of political importance. Though David's nakedness was in public, it is presented as a petty detail, which Michal capitalises on to challenge or undermine the King. Her point of observation is presented as the window, similar to how Jezebel staged herself at the window to despise Jehu.

Exum in her book *Fragmented Women* has equated the window to a woman's vagina. Michal birthed David to freedom through her vagina (and the bed), her window into the larger world away from death (1 Samuel 19). However, Exum continues, whereas a window plays an important part in both stories, the bed remains conspicuous in 2 Samuel 6.⁵¹⁹ Exum's view would suggest that Michal despised David through her vagina, which may imply denying him recourse to conjugal reunion. She did not love him (anymore), the fact that the narrator wants to obscure by stating that she loved him. It could be on this account that Michal could not have children with David, whom after all had fallen short of her expectations and standards.

Michal's audacity to question the King and David's response presented in a way that provide so much information about himself vis-à-vis Michal signify much about Michal in David's palace. The verb שָׁקַף has been used of people who seem to exhibit authority or challenge. It is first used in Genesis 18:16 by the angels who had brought news that Abraham and Sarah shall have a son. In 2 Kings 9, Queen Jezebel addresses

⁵¹⁹ J. Cheryl Exum, *Fragmented Women : Feminist (Sub)Versions of Biblical Narratives* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1993), 47-48.

Jehu through the window. In Proverbs 7:6 the verb is used in relation to an authoritative father or wise man giving instructions to his son or minor.

Michal apparently assumed a lot of royal prerogatives and rights in the life of David and Kingdom. She was a daughter of King Saul (princess) and played a very vital role in saving David from death. Her royal background as the daughter of the King made her assume special royal status in David's family. She is now the wife of David and as such a queen and a potential queen mother. Having been fetched from Phalti's home by King David probably made Michal rightly feel special and indispensable to David. With her political experience as King's daughter and affectionate connection to King David, She was effectively in a stature of David's consort. Her political significance became more pronounced as she stood as pivotal point between the two royal house of David and Saul. It is this queenly authority over the man who is portrayed as "womanless" that the Dtr narrator vilifies.

The verb used for uncover is in niphal from root גלה, which in Michal's speech appears 3 times. The question worth asking is: what did David uncover that Michal found unpleasant? גלה as used elsewhere involves exposure of sexual organs (see Leviticus 20:19). There is no reason why Michal would mind if David's shirt fell off his shoulders. She would however be too mindful if his trousers or underwear fell off in public. Michal is specifically concerned with the maidservants seeing David's nakedness. Michal's attack was not on the transfer of the ark. Her concern was how the King danced and exposed his manhood.

The story of Michal shares some motifs with that of Ham, one of the sons of Noah who saw the nakedness of his father and his son, Canaan was cursed as a result, while his brothers Shem and Japheth who moved backwards and covered their father's nakedness were blessed (Genesis 9:20-27). Ham saw Noah's nakedness and talked about it; but his brothers ironically "did not see it" but they knew he was naked. They just covered it. The verb גלה is used to refer to Noah's indecency, and what his other two sons do (covering him) is from root כסה that also means to conceal (as secret) (see Genesis 18:17, Psalms 32:5 and Proverbs 10:11). Michal, like Ham did not conceal what she saw. To see some body's nakedness is to challenge or humiliate his or her authority. Authority and nakedness do not go together. To become naked is disempowering,

subjugation, defeat and humiliation.⁵²⁰ In the prisoner stele of Sargon, an Akkadian soldier escorts naked prisoners of war with their hands bound behind their necks at the wrist (humbled)⁵²¹ as contrasted to King Sargon who stands fully dressed in royal robes touching the ground in the victory stale of Sargon.⁵²² In Isaiah 20, the Prophet walks naked and barefooted to dramatize the humiliation Egypt and Nubia would go through under Sargon. To Michal, the King dishonoured himself when girls saw his nakedness. David's response however is a contrast to Michal's view: he will be honoured because he was dancing for Yahweh.

Both Michal and Miriam are presented as enemies to the male authority—males as servants of God. Interestingly they are presented as antagonists to the men they had earlier on in life played a role to save from death. Michal is an enemy of David: One who sees the King's nakedness, and speaks (challenges him) about it. She is not like other wives of the king, the maidservants and other servants who concealed David's nakedness. She is significantly referred to as the daughter of Saul. Saul, it can be stated with certainty was an enemy of David. As a woman, her challenge to the male authority was an anomaly. Asserting authority over men in the ancient patriarchal societies showed social mismatch. It meant that male authority was being humiliated. Because authority is male, Michal, like Miriam transgressed by challenging the authority. Allowing a woman's influence meant selling one's heart to evil as the case was with King Ahab (1 Kings 21:25), it also stood for weakness, a vice which the narrator wants to purge of David's kingship.

In his response, the King reminds Michal that she has no authority over him. He has the divine favour over her and over her father's house. He is a prince and she is none since Yahweh rejected her father's house. Michal is made aware of the fact that he (David) is the King over the people of Israel, and she is just his subject. Only God is the ruler over him and that he cannot submit to any admonition from a woman. Her Point of Order was therefore trivial, whimsical and “out of order.” In the narrative, David tactfully avoids the subject of his ecstatic dance exposure.

⁵²⁰ Hon. Nabilah Naggayi Sempala of Uganda can be said to have been disempowered before her audience by the Ugandan authorities.

⁵²¹ William James Hamblin, *Warfare in the Ancient near East to 1600 Bc : Holy Warriors at the Dawn of History* (London: Routledge, 2006), 85.

⁵²² Ibid.

Clines in his book *Interested Parties* has analysed the character of David from the masculinity perspective of his ancient world. Among other features of maleness, to be a man, one had to be womanless. That is to say, males had to be casual about women, and women were marginal to the lives of the protagonist. A man had not to show sexual desire, no love stories, no romance, no wooing, and no daring deeds for the sake of a beloved. A man had not to long for women.⁵²³ David is the one presented as the object of love. Michal loved David. David's response was that he cannot succumb to the admonitions of a woman.

For David, sex is mainly perfunctory and politically motivated rather than an act of love. In the Bathsheba episode, sex is an expression of royal power and it is more of rape than love.⁵²⁴ David does not actually like women very much. In the ancient world, a real man could get along fine without women, he could have several women in a casual kind, but he had nothing to gain from them except children and he owes them nothing. Hanging over every woman was a spectre of fatal attraction; like the wily woman of Proverbs 7, every woman was potentially a road to Sheol, away down to the chambers of death (Proverbs 7:27).⁵²⁵

What is interesting is that Michal is still in the private—operating from the bedroom and window. Her approach to the king was done in private. But because she was referring to a public issue—David's kingship, the narrator ensures that he disempowers her right from the private for attempting to exercise influence upon the king. Michal's point of order merely showed that King David conducted himself awkwardly than what Michal knew of how a King and other royal figures should behave before their subjects. Michal, like all other ancient queens, had a duty to ensure the dignity of the king, and the honour that should go with it. In her attempt to ensure her royal prerogatives, she is repulsed by an arrogant king.

Michal is described throughout the text as the daughter of Saul (the rejected King). According to Carlson this repeated emphasis is to highlight Saul's disobedience toward Yahweh and his law, leading to his dismissal as *nagid* over Israel.⁵²⁶ Clines also suggests that the rendering is probably because she was not behaving properly as

⁵²³ David J. A. Clines, *Interested Parties: The Ideology of Writers and Readers of the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 225.

⁵²⁴ Ibid., 225-226.

⁵²⁵ Ibid., 226.

⁵²⁶ Rolf August Carlson, *David the Chosen King: A Tradition-Historical Approach to the Second Book of Samuel* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1964), 94.

David's wife but as his opponent i.e. she is acting as the true daughter of Saul.⁵²⁷ Anderson thinks that Michal could have been proud in her attitude as a daughter of a king that is why David reminds her that he is Yahweh's chosen king while she is but the daughter of rejected and dishonoured king.⁵²⁸

The portrayal of Michal is ideologically packaged to denigrate her as queen and woman of political iconography of Saul's lineage in the political life of David. Her background becomes a springboard of insults and ridicule as one who had no right to question the public morals of her husband. She is disempowered and further removed from the political history of Israel just like all other descendants of Saul.

Michal's story is summed up as dying childless. It is possible that Michal had had children in her previous marriage. Moreover there is a story in 2 Sam 21:8–9, where David hands over "the five sons of Michal, Saul's daughter" to the Gibeonites to be killed. From the standpoint of view of the Deuteronomist, the bareness of Michal is that of not having children with David, since the ideological motif is that of interest in Davidic lineage and kingship. This in itself was significant for political disposition of Michal and the entire house of Saul.

Michal's lack of children with David could mean that David abstained sexually from her or that she refused to offer herself to David sexually (which explains why he killed her children). Her childless death had severe political implications: she was an unhappy woman who had no hope of becoming a *gebirah*. She was absent at the time power was changing hands from David. Her rejection by David also meant that she ceased being the queen. The event led to the final removal of the house of Saul from claiming legitimacy to the throne of Jerusalem.

In final analysis, Michal's Point of Order to the King was consequentially disastrous: David's response was completely disempowering and dethroning from royalty. Her silence spoke loudly that she had no say in the political administration of Israel. Her childlessness meant that she had not child to be considered for kingship. Her marriage to David lost its political flavour. Indeed her political silence and absence of a child's cry in her story remain to be loud in the Bible.

⁵²⁷ D.J.A Clines, "X, X Ben Y, Ben Y: Personal Names in Hebrew Narrative Style," *Vetus Testamentum* 22, no. 3 (1972): 272.

⁵²⁸ A A Anderson, *Word Biblical Commentary: 2 Samuel* (Dallas: Word Books Publ, 1989), 107.

5.2.2.4 The Story of Michal and African Postcolonial Bible Interpretation

From a postcolonial African perspective, we are reading a story of a female politician who upon challenging the patriarchy on matters of social and political order is punished. We read a case of a verbal ridicule and harassment that is meant to dim the political profile of the female politician. We read a story that biologically and politically assassinate the character and the figure of a female politician, and relegating her to total political quietism and mortality. Michal stands for the political opponent. She is that African female politician who speaks out on the nakedness of the leader; she does not conceal or cover the leader's nakedness. She instead tells him to dress up.

In Africa, Michal is the voice of women like Philemena Chelangat Mutai former MP for Eldoret North who challenges the Presidency of Jomo Kenyatta and Daniel Arab Moi on matters of socio-political order, which resulted into arrests and judgement with fabricated case of inciting violence.⁵²⁹ They are the women who suffer political uncertainties because of their challenge to the establishment. They are the Betty Kanya, Winnie Byanyima and Miria Matembe of Uganda, Wangari Mathaai and Martha Karua of Kenya among others.

Michal is a voice of a female politician, speaking with pride in her attitude as a daughter of a rival political party, with intention to uncloud the spirit of the party she stands for—the opposition.

Michal is a voice of women like Specioza Kazibwe, whose 'Point of Order' is to put men in order of washing their feet or put on clean socks before coming to parliament. No matter the response she gets, her 'Point of Order' is taken by the Hon. Speaker of Parliament, though perceived by others as 'out of order.' She will however become an object of ridicule and a focus of the ideologically biased media.

Michal's story triggers off questions about public decency. To Michal public nudity is not admissible, yet to David there was no apparent danger with exposing his manhood to the public. In Africa, nudity of a female politician is one perceived out of order because male politicians become uncomfortable, which has called for the motherly and decent dressing rhetoric in African parliaments. Whereas Hon. Sempala's nudity was forced and an insult on her as a person and the Political Party she represented, that of David was probably deliberate. Her nudity was meant to make her a spectacle of

⁵²⁹ Kiprop.

public laughter and warning to other women. Michal's critique against nudity on the other hand earned her verbal insults and a response that relegated her destiny in the annals of rejection and quietism; which also serves as a warning to other women not to tell "kings" that they are naked.

5.2.3 The Story of Jezebel

5.2.3.1 Fictional Interview with Literary Jezebel

Qn. Can you introduce yourself again for the sake of this interview?

An. I am Queen Jezebel wife of King Ahab of Israel, the Queen of Israel and Queen mother of Israel and the Princess of Sidon. My father Ethbaal was king of Sidon and he was an absolute monarch and a very strong man of his time.

Qn. It is written that you and your husband led Israel to sin by introducing and institutionalising Baal cult. What do you say about that?

Ans. That is not true. Baal worship was already in place in the land of Israel. Israel was not an isolated entity from the rest of the Levantine states. For me I simply came from Sidon with my faith, and Ahab also remained with his faith though he respected mine. Our children as their father worshipped Yahweh, and they were given theophoric names like Ahaziah, Joram and Athaliah.

Qn. It is written that you were a very evil woman who misled Ahab from ruling according to the laws and traditions of Israel. What do you say about that?

Ans. I did not mislead Ahab. I helped him to rule. I used my prerogative and mandate as Queen to help King Ahab. It was the practice of the time that Queens help their husbands to govern. Read from the Mari documents: Queen Shibtu helped Zimri-Lim. She is the one who wrote royal correspondences. She supervised several departments. The same was the case with Queen Puduhepa of the Hittites. In Ugarit, a Queen was her husband's assistant: when King Kirtu was sick and could not attend a banquet, it was Queen Hariya his wife who presided over the meal instead of his heir Yassubu. Queens advised kings on certain issues: King Pubala was advised by his Queen on strategies of defeating king Kirtu who had besieged his city. In your Bibles you also read about Queen Esther advising the Persian King to save Jews.

By the way during my days as a queen and queen mother in Israel, those laws and traditions were not in place. They were formulated later. But what would one expect of a leader of my time? Might was right! A strong monarch had to govern as he or she wished.

Qn. Is that why you instigated the death of Naboth and took away his vineyard?

Ans. Yes and No! As queen over Israel I was helping my husband the King to show authority. But Naboth had actually broken the ancient law by disrespecting and insulting the institution of kingship. The elders of Jezreel were witness to this. That is why he was stoned to death. What you read from the texts is a literary creation meant to attribute Naboth's murder to me, just as the murder of sons of David is attributed to Queen Athaliah of Judah. It was my duty as Queen to write royal correspondences to the nobles for them to implement the law.

I really pitied my husband. There were moments he really acted and behaved like a small child on issues that concerned the royal court. I had to use my experience and royal prerogative to step into many situations just to save the image of this court.

Israelites are a very stiff necked people that really needed a strong ruler. Only by that did I manage to keep the kingship strong and intact from Ahab, to his sons--Ahaziah and Joram.

Qn. What are you proud of as your legacy in your political history?

Ans. We put Israel on the world map. Politically and militarily Israel was a very strong and stable country. We defeated Ben Hadad when he attacked Samaria, Hazael the Aramean tried to destabilize us but failed. Jehu's success was a mere conspiracy. Otherwise his end would have been worse than that of Zimri.

Qn. What is your message to the readers of your story?

Ans. My message is that the Bible is a very biased literary creation. It is not actual history of what happened. It is actually worse than those African media that speak negatively about women of influence. The Bible will never say anything good about Jezebel, Miriam, Michal or Athaliah. It is a literary creation meant to exalt the kingship of Judah against that of Israel. It is essentially ideological propaganda coined by some men from Judah, who were opposed to the ties between the house of Omri and the house of David.

The story of Jezebel in the Hebrew Bible (HB) starts from 1 Kings 16:31 where she is introduced as the foreign queen to King Ahab; and ends in 2 Kings 9:30-37 where she is not only overthrown from her queenly position but also brutally assassinated by men. She was ignominiously thrown out through the window by her male bodyguards and domestic servants, at the command of a military general called Jehu. Her destiny ended in a melancholic epitaph: she died like a villain, becoming food for wild beasts of Jezreel, and in the annals of the kingdom of ancient Israel her name was registered as a queen who did not receive a dignified burial and a fallen queen without remains and royal tomb. Only the skull and limbs are what defines Queen Jezebel's remains in historical narratives.

Jezebel was the daughter of Ethbaal the King of Sidon. Her marriage to Ahab was ostensibly unacceptable to the Dtr Historian throughout the HB. It is counted as part of the failures of Ahab that drew God to anger. This is attested in the introductory lines on Ahab in 1 Kings 16:31, where taking Jezebel for a wife is described as an addendum to Ahab's sin of walking after sins of Jeroboam. The immediate proclamation of draught and famine in Israel by Prophet Elijah in Chapter 17:1 is a protest against Ahab's decision to marry a foreign queen. Jezebel is said to have introduced the Canaanite cults of Baal-Melqart and Asherah into Israel, and lured her husband into service to these foreign gods. It is claimed that he built the institutions and centres where Baal and Asherah were worshipped.

It is almost impossible to read the story of Jezebel in isolation from the entire reign of King Ahab and the reigns of his two sons Ahaziah and Jehoram. Ahab's reign and family are presented in Kings as cursed and utterly rejected by Yahweh for committing cultic sins. Queen Jezebel must have been a key woman in Israelite politics not only during the reign of Ahab but also in the reigns of her two sons, where she was apparently the Queen Mother.

This section of study will closely analyse the Hebrew Bible story of Jezebel. We shall also examine the afterlife of Jezebel stereotype in post-biblical cultures, societies and literature, with particular reference to the African political situation later on in the next chapter.

5.2.3.2 1 Kings 16:31

The passage opens with the word נִקְלָהּ with interrogative הֲ. נִקְלָהּ is apparently from the root קָלַל which means small or little account (1 Samuel 2:30 and Job 40:4) or 'be of no account' as the case is in Genesis 16:4. The form in our passage is in niph'al, which also appears in Ezekiel 8:17. The LXX uses (οὐκ...) ἱκανόν, from the root ἱκανός, which means considerable or sufficient (Mark 10:46, Acts 11:24, 26 among others).

In this text, Ahab's marriage to Jezebel worsened his sinful state of not abolishing but implementing cultic sins of Jeroboam. The details of Jeroboam are recorded in 1 Kings 12:26-33. Ahab's marriage to Jezebel made him guilty of evils far beyond that of Jeroboam and all other kings of Israel.

It should be noted that Ahab's marriage was not the first one of the kind in the history of ancient Israel. Solomon married many foreign wives and also built temples for their gods. Foreign marriages served the purpose of sealing international relations. Ahab's marriage therefore made Israel and in particular the Omrid dynasty accepted and respected by Sidon. However, foreign marriages are prohibited by Dtr narrator for ideological reasons. Ahab married from the dreaded Canaanite community—Sidon, which was ideologically and theologically unacceptable. Foreign marriages had consequences: - Solomon's foreign women stole his heart from Yahweh (1 Kings 11:3-4), and the result was division of the Kingdom (1 Kings 11:11, 13 and 31).

In the Hebrew Bible, beginning with the fall of man in Genesis 3, the agency of bad things that happened is displaced on to women. Jezebel in this chapter is significantly introduced as the daughter of Ethbaal the King of Sidon. Historical accounts have it that Ethbaal became King while serving as a priest of Astarte.⁵³⁰ Jezebel, his daughter was therefore undoubtedly brought up in a religiously fanatical home and was theologically a deviant. Her presence in Israel would drive the king and the land to worshipping other gods. She carried her faith, together with a legion of prophets of Baal and Asherah to her matrimonial home. She reportedly came with 450 prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:22). On this basis she encountered a conflict with the zealots of Yahweh in the land of Israel.

5.2.3.3 1 Kings 19:2

In 1 Kings 19:2 Jezebel is presented confronting Prophet Elijah for killing the prophets of Baal. In an oath, she threatened to take action against Elijah. However, in her oath the expected **יְהוָה** is missing (c.f 2 Samuel 3:35, 19:14, 1 Kings 2:23, 2 Kings 6:31) in the MT. Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS) critical apparatus states that many manuscripts and all other versions like the LXX complete the oath formula by inserting **יְהוָה** as a result of the standardization process. The LXX has *ταδε ποιησαι μοι ο θεος και ταδε προσθειη*. It also has identical occurrences of the oath despite different renderings in the MT. With the exception of Ruth 1:17, which has *ταδε ποιησαι μοι κυριος*, all oath formula contain *ο θεος* in the LXX.

Despite this contradiction in the oath, a number of biblical scholars like Keinänen and House have interpreted Jezebel's oath as a live threat to Elijah. Keinänen sees Jezebel as "furious, intending to wreak revenge on Elijah who fled to save his life."⁵³¹ House opines that "Elijah has no reason to doubt her. Her threats indicate her true intentions."⁵³² But others like Robert Merez surmise that Jezebel may have had no intentions of fulfilling her threat. Merez logically argues that "if she really wanted to

⁵³⁰ Merrill F. Unger, "Unger's Bible Dictionary," (Chicago: Moody Press, 1977), 327.

⁵³¹ Keinänen Jyrki, *Traditions in Collision : A Literary and Redaction-Critical Study on the Elijah Narratives 1Kings 17-19*, Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society (Vandenhoeck: Finnish Exegetical Society, 2001), 164.

⁵³² Paul. R House, *1 and 2 Kings: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture.*, The New American Commentary, vol. 8 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1995), 221.

kill Elijah, she would have sent a killer and not a messenger.”⁵³³ He understands Jezebel’s oath as a clever tactic used by Jezebel to make the prophet run away rather than turning him into a celebrated martyr. His escape, much more than his death, would undermine his victory at Mount Carmel.⁵³⁴ According to Merez, whenever the oath includes the preposition phrase **לְ** + a personal pronoun or a personal name, some actions are undertaken by the person under the oath/curse to secure the fulfilment of the words. However, as in 1 Samuel 14:44 such actions are not undertaken in 1 Kings 19:2, which does not specify the person under the oath/curse.⁵³⁵ This, according to Merez, suggests that there was no intention of the speaker to do whatever was said under the oath. In the case of 1 Samuel 14:44, Saul’s oath did not make Jonathan his son die because of his disobedience to the king’s orders. Saul’s oath equally did not specify who was to be punished by God should the matter not be followed through. The king was therefore not intending to kill his son. Jezebel, equally did not have intentions to follow up on her oath, but just warn Elijah who escaped from the country as the result.⁵³⁶

Worth noting at this point is that the Dtr writer is less interested in all other activities of Jezebel from the point of her marriage up to the point she threatens Elijah. Rather, Jezebel is depicted as an antagonist and socio-political dissident—the foreign woman. She is in conflict with the establishments of Yahweh. She is only important as a shadow-story of Israel, the antagonist of Israel and the progenitor of apostasy in Israel.

5.2.3.4 1 Kings 21

Jezebel again reappears in 1 King 21 in a story that involved the royal alienation of Naboth’s property. In this story she is the protagonist in the murder of Naboth and alienation of his land to the crown. The story implicitly presents Jezebel operating in the palace at Samaria.

Verses 1 and 2 introduce Ahab’s desire for Naboth’s Vineyard. The Vineyard was near Ahab’s palace in Jezreel (verse1). The verbs used, **וַיִּתֵּן** and **וַיִּתְּן**, point to the nature of the discussion; *give and I give* (exchange). Ahab is asking Naboth to give, and that Ahab will also give in exchange for a better vineyard or money. The reason why Ahab wants Naboth’s Vineyard is that it is near his (Ahab’s) palace and he would want

⁵³³ Robert J. Merez, "Jezebel's Oath (1 Kgs 19,2)," *Biblica* 90, no. (2009): 257.

⁵³⁴ Ibid.

⁵³⁵ Ibid.: 258.

⁵³⁶ Ibid.: 258-259.

to turn it into a vegetable-garden.⁵³⁷ Ahab's proposal appears very clear, without any hint of sinister motive. He offers either an exchange for a better vineyard or to buy Naboth's Vineyard with money. The proximity of Naboth's Vineyard to the king's palace made the property desirable and of value to the crown.

In verse 3, Naboth responds negatively with a profanation. The word חָלִיל לִי לַה is used in oaths of profanation like Joshua 22:29, ... חָלִיל לָנוּ מִמֶּנּוּ לְמַרְדּ בַּיהוָה. (*Far be it from us that we should rebel against the LORD...*); See also 1Samuel 24:6-7. The LXX uses a more straightforward construction: μή μοι γένοιτο παρὰ θεοῦ μου δοῦναι κληρονομίαν πατέρων μου σοί "My God forbid me that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers."

The verb used in Naboth's negative response was מִתִּתִּי (also from root נתן which is mentioned for the third time after two incidences in verse 2) and is preceded by an oath חָלִיל לִי מִיְהוָה.

In verse 4, Ahab's failure to secure the Vineyard is followed by an emotional response: He became sullen and refused to eat. His reaction is described by the adjectives סָר וְזָעַף. סָר could probably be translated as turn aside or physically departing, which suggests root סוּר as in Exodus 3:4, Numbers 12:10, 14:9, Judges 16:20; although there is also a connection with root סָרַר that means 'refractory' or 'rebellious' as in Hosea 4:16. זָעַף is translated in Hebrew Lexicon as "out of humor" or "vexed." In Genesis 40:6, it connotes a state of despondence and melancholy as a result of bad mood or troubling thoughts. These adjectives are also used to describe Ahab's response to a prophetic oracle in 1 Kings 20:43.

Ahab is described as lying on his bed and turning away his face and refusing to eat. אָתְּ יִסֵּב אֶת פָּנָיו is rendered differently in the LXX version where the verb συνεκάλυψεν (which means conceal or cover up) appears, which would suggest that the translators read וַיִּכְס from root כָּסָה (see Exod 10:15, Jon 3:6) instead of יִסֵּב which is from סָבַב.

⁵³⁷ JPS and many other English translations prefer the translation 'garden of herbs'. RSV translates it as a 'garden of vegetables.'

In verses 5 and 6, Jezebel is introduced in the narrative as the concerned wife, keen to understand why the king was angry and hungry yet not eating. Ahab relates his disappointment over the aborted trade deal he suggested to Naboth (v.6). Ahab alleged that his emotional despondence was because Naboth said: **לֹא אֶתֵּן לְךָ אֶת כְּרָמִי**. The scene at this point was apparently in the royal bedchambers in Samaria where Ahab was lying down, so to speak away from the Dtr cameraman.

In verse 7, Jezebel urges Ahab to exercise kingship over Israel in her overcommentarized statement: **אִתָּה עַתָּה תַעֲשֶׂה מְלֹכָה עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל** and encouraged him to be cheerful at heart and stop his fast. She promised to provide Ahab with the coveted Vineyard. Various commentaries and Bible versions have translated this phrase differently. Mordechai Cogan prefers: “Now you will exercise kingship over Israel!” The JPS, NKJ, RSV and ESV render the phrase as a rhetorical question: “Do you now govern Israel?” But JPS Tanakh (1985) translates it as an insinuation by Jezebel: “Now is the time to show your-self king over Israel...!” The LXX offers a straightforward translation: *συ νυν ουτως ποιεις βασιλεα επι ισραηλ* (‘you now do/exercise kingship over Israel). In my translation, in relation to Ahab’s mood at this point, I have preferred to treat **תַעֲשֶׂה** as an imperfect thus; “*You! Is that now how you will rule (literally do/exercise kingship) over Israel?*” To me, this translation (which is similar to NIV rendering) fits well the context especially where; Ahab is depicted as a weak character. Jezebel seems to understand how royal power is to be exercised in such situations.

In verse 8 and 9 Jezebel is placed in action: She writes and seals letters with Ahab’s seal with explicit instructions to the elders of Jezreel to kill Naboth. They were to proclaim a fast and set Naboth at the head of the people and set two men, base fellows before him, to witness against him, saying: “You have cursed God and the king.” Consequently Naboth would be stoned to death on the accounts of blasphemy.

From verses 10 to 15, the elders and nobles of Jezreel carried out Jezebel’s instructions, which resulted into execution of Naboth. Jezebel granted Ahab the coveted Vineyard, and the king went to inherit it. Josephus (*Ant.* Viii. 13, 8), in agreement with the MT⁵³⁸ tells us that Ahab was very pleased with what had been done, and so he

⁵³⁸ The MT (Massoretic Text) states that Ahab on hearing that Naboth was dead went down to inherit the vineyard.

sprang up from his bed, and went to see Naboth's vineyard;⁵³⁹ anticipating no more resistance as in verses 2-3. The story is followed by a prophetic pronouncement that indicts Ahab and Jezebel by Elijah for unlawfully inheriting Naboth's Vineyard.

In modern biblical exegesis and hermeneutical polemics on this passage, Jezebel is unsympathetically condemned and demonized: she illegally used Ahab's seal; she is a tyrant, manipulator of the legal system, and a usurper and abuser of kingly power, a misleading agent, liar and murderer of the innocent. Ahab is portrayed as passive and completely ignorant of his wife's alleged mischief. However, in this study, there are several intriguing clues that present Jezebel as a victim of manipulation and wrong publicity.

What is critical in this narrative is the conversation between Ahab and Jezebel in the royal bedchambers vis-à-vis what Ahab had discussed with Naboth at Jezreel. Ahab had initiated a transaction for Naboth's Vineyard, promising to pay for it with money or offer another Vineyard, which was much better than Naboth's. The reason why Ahab wanted Naboth's Vineyard was to convert the land into a royal garden since it was near the palace at Jezreel.

Naboth's reply with a profanation would suggest that the proposed act of sale had great religious significance and would be a desecration. It is an act that had to be avoided at all costs. In comparison to how this profanation form is used elsewhere, it seemed that Ahab's suggestion to Naboth was incongruent to the Dtr ideology of the land. Selling his Vineyard is prohibited by Yahweh. Naboth further defined the Vineyard as ancestral inheritance (נַחֲלָה) of his fathers. Selling it will not only offend Yahweh, but also his ancestors. He was meant to keep it and only pass it on to his offspring in a lineage. As Ahab gave probably contemporary conventional logical reasons for wanting Naboth's Vineyard, Naboth had conservative ideological reason (backed by the philosophy of the Israelite relationship with the Land) to refuse Ahab's generous offers.

Ahab gives a rather distorted version of Naboth's objection to a mere "I will not give to you my Vineyard." Significantly, whereas Naboth himself regards the Vineyard as נַחֲלָה, Ahab refers to Naboth's land as כְּרֶם. Ahab omitted the ideological

⁵³⁹ J. Rawson Lumby, *The First Book of the Kings with Maps, Introduction and Notes* (Cambridge: University Press), microform.

significance of נַחֲלָה and regarded the matter as a personal refusal by Naboth to sell his property. He barely reveals the religious exclamation by which Naboth characterized selling his property as a profanation. He omits the reason why he desired the Vineyard and also places his financial offer before his offer of another Vineyard. He also does not describe the Vineyard he is offering in exchange as better than Naboth's. Naboth was framed by Ahab as simply unreasonable in his refusal, which painted Naboth as disrespectful to the king.

I maintain that the course of action which Jezebel took to acquire the vineyard was based on what she heard from Ahab. Her advice to the king to exercise power over Israel resonates with what Jezebel knew of an ancient monarch: the king had powers at his disposal to eliminate a disrespectful Naboth and inherit the vineyard.⁵⁴⁰ As the king could not exercise his power over Israel, Jezebel as the queen assisted to acquire what was deemed necessary to the crown. David did a similar thing when he wrote letters to the commander of the Israelite army with instruction to put Uriah to death in order for David to inherit his wife. In fact, King David's action was worse because he first acquired, used and then killed to own.

Ahab knew very well the reasons why Naboth could not sell his vineyard. It was his ⁵⁴¹ נַחֲלָה (inheritance). The term נַחֲלָה seems to be a central ideology in the book of Joshua, which looks at land as a cluster of family allotments. The divine act of granting the land culminates in the act of dividing the land into identifiable lots with recognizable boundaries. These lots are assigned to ancestral families⁵⁴² (משפחות) of the tribes of

⁵⁴⁰ Jerome T Walsh and David W Cotter, *1 Kings*, Berit Olam (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 1996), 320.

⁵⁴¹ The term נַחֲלָה is often used to designate: (a) the land of Israel as being Yahweh's possession and (b) the people of Israel as being Yahweh's special community. The expression can stand for the land and the people simultaneously. H. O. Forshey, in his study of The Hebrew Root NHL and Its Semitic Cognates (1973), has argued that: the term נַחֲלָה was a form of special land tenure which was granted by feudal lord to a devoted servant as a fief. He contends that since such fief was hereditary, the term was eventually extended to include the meaning 'inheritance' to covenant community, which occurred in the exilic period. See Theodore J. Lewis, "The Ancestral Estate (נַחֲלָת אֲבוֹתָם) in 2 Samuel 14:16" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 110, no. 4 (1991): 598-599. Also W. Janzen, "Land," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 145.

⁵⁴² מִשְׁפָּחוֹת here is not a single family but a grouping of several family units into a large self sufficient and self-protective organism. See Christopher J. H Wright, *God's People in God's Land: Family, Land and Property in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1990), 48.

Israel at various locations within Canaan. The allotment of each cluster of tribal families designated its *lot*,⁵⁴³ according to Joshua 15:1, 16:1, 17:1, 18:11, 19:1.

The *lot* of each family and extended family is explicitly identified as its divine entitlement (נחלה). Each entitlement, given by divine *lot* became the inheritance of its ancestral family and household in subsequent generations.⁵⁴⁴ נחלה is sometimes used to denote the land holdings of an individual Israelite household head, in 1 Kings 21:3 (נַחֲלַת אֲבֹתִי) and also Ruth 4:5 & 10. בית־אב was the basic unit of Israel's land tenure.⁵⁴⁵ By the nineteenth century BCE, it had become normative that land (נחלה) belonged to the family (בית־אב) rather than to the individuals.⁵⁴⁶

A number of measures were taken to protect the rights of the family to its נחלה. For instance, the Israelite ancestors set up boundary stones to mark land borders. In the land grant ceremony at Mt Ebal, a curse was invoked on any who dared to remove these boundary markers (Deuteronomy 27:17).⁵⁴⁷ The 8th and 10th commandments overtly prohibit encroachment upon other people's land. Wisdom literature and Prophets forbade the removal of boundary markers (Job 24:2-4, Proverbs 23:10-11 and Hosea 5:10).⁵⁴⁸ This guaranteed the inalienability of a family נחלה which remained under the patrimonial⁵⁴⁹ custody.

Also in the prophetic tradition, the land is viewed as Yahweh's נחלה (Jeremiah 2:7 and 17:40); Canaan was Yahweh's נחלה for which the people of Yahweh were destined after being delivered from Egypt. This land is metaphorically referred to as the

⁵⁴³ The term *lot* designates the action of casting lots to determine the divinely approved allocation, but later came to mean allotted land or estate. The allotment was done by Moses by Moses (Josh 13:8,15, 24, 29, 32) in the Transjordan and later by Joshua at Shiloh (Josh 18:1)

⁵⁴⁴ Habel, 56-57.

⁵⁴⁵ C.J.H. Wright, "Family," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 763.

⁵⁴⁶ J. D. Douglas, "The New Bible Dictionary," (London: Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1962), 562.

⁵⁴⁷ Habel, 50. Lipinski, "נחלה," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 327.

⁵⁴⁸ Wright, *God's People in God's Land: Family, Land and Property in the Old Testament*, 55-56+119-140.

⁵⁴⁹ The tribe and the family in Ancient Israel, as in many other ancient societies, was patriarchal. In the division of the land, allotments were given according to the twelve sons of Jacob, as tribes. Within a tribe, there were sub-tribes, clans and families that were identified their family (house) heads commonly called אבות. The expression בֵּית־אָבִי denotes one's family identity. James A Sanders, "The Family in the Bible," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 32, no. 3 (2002): 1-2+3,4.

vineyard chosen for planting Israel, Yahweh's chosen vine (Jeremiah 2:21; 31:27-28). Yahweh is the one who sends the rain, cherishes the land and nurtures it as a vineyard (Jeremiah 33:3; 5:24 and 31:12).⁵⁵⁰ In the same sense, Yahweh is a peasant planting a people in the land. He carefully chooses vines from the purest stock (Jeremiah 2:21).⁵⁵¹ This conveys a message that the land was meant to be the Israelites possession and home, since they were planted there by the owner.

As land was considered the trust of the family (which was the basic unit of a tribe), expressed through its actual possession but used by specific individual owners, inheritance was only acquired through legitimate children born in a family or clan.⁵⁵² Individuals who inherited land would also pass it on to their descendants or close relatives.

Losing one's inheritance was tantamount to losing identity as a member of the people and the privileges that went with that identity. The right and obligation to participate in the legal assemblies, to act in common ventures like defence, and to be present representatively at the festivals, were all grounded in the inheritance.⁵⁵³

Why was the ancestral **נחלה** so important? Lewis has suggested that one of the primary reasons may have had to do with burial rites.⁵⁵⁴ Brichto has also identified land as an essential religious concept, to which a family is attached as the notion of the burial place and ancestral home.⁵⁵⁵ In Joshua 24:32 Shechem was the burial ground of Joseph's remains, which also became the inheritance for his children. Joshua 24:30 and Judges 2:9 describe Joshua's burial within the borders of his inheritance (**נחלה**). Clan solidarity was strengthened and promoted through cults of the dead in ancient Israel. There is a Deuteronomistic phrase of "lying with one's ancestral fathers" recurring now and then in the Hebrew Bible (1 Kings 2:10, 11:43, 14:31, 22:40 among others). As an ancestral estate contained the family tombs, losing it would probably symbolise losing one's links with one's fathers.

⁵⁵⁰ Habel, 76-77,78.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid., 79.

⁵⁵² Ziony Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches* (London: Continuum, 2001), 627.

⁵⁵³ Mays, 63.

⁵⁵⁴ Lewis: 608.

⁵⁵⁵ Herbert Chanan Brichto, "Kin, Cult, Land and Afterlife: A Biblical Complex," *HUCA* 44, no. 1-54 (1973): 5.

Makhosazana K. Nzimande, in her *Imbokodo hermeneutics* acknowledges the fact that Jezebel was a strong political figure in ancient Israel as Queen and Queen Mother. However, according to Makhosazana, as far “as Jezebel’s role in the story of Naboth’s Vineyard is concerned, firmer ground needs to be laid and more convincing reasons need to be given to support the perception that murder and disposition of Naboth is a lucid demonstration of Jezebel’s wisdom and outstanding leadership skills.”⁵⁵⁶ Otherwise, Jezebel, (and other Queens and Queen Mothers of similar nature in Africa) shall remain a despotic and oppressive against the people. Whereas, Makhosazana’s view has to be understood from the socio-political context of South Africa, it is disconnected from the political world of Jezebel where might was right. Makhosazana’s observation in my opinion is a micro representation of how people judge Jezebel and other ancient monarchs using modern laws and moral standards of human rights and justice. In this thesis, needless to say, I am not defending Jezebel but reconstructing her political world and image. I strongly argue that Jezebel’s actions in relation to Naboth’s Vineyard were in accordance to the dispensations of power and authority in ancient Societies.

In light of the above, had Ahab told Jezebel what truly happened, we would be reading a different story. But Ahab told a lie. Jezebel’s actions should be assessed in relation to what Ahab told her: “I will not give you my vineyard.” This is the response that prompted Jezebel to wonder what type of king Ahab is over Israel as suggested in her response and course of action. To Jezebel, all land belonged to the king (as it was the ideology in all other ancient Kingdoms). Naboth referring to his property as *my vineyard* (as Ahab puts it) was undermining the king’s supremacy over the land, and in practice blasphemy. Jezebel took a royal prerogative as the queen to exercise authority and acquire the desired Vineyard. The act of killing so as to inherit was a common practice, as already seen in Davidic story of Uriah’s wife Bathsheba. Jezebel’s action therefore was in accordance to the praxes of the ancient Near East.

I am inclined to praise Jezebel for the work well-done. Though she does not give a reason for the fast, she understands that fasts in biblical Israel expressed grief and

⁵⁵⁶ Makhosazana K. Nzimande, “Reconfiguring Jezebel: A Postcolonial Imbokodo Reading of the Story of Naboth’s Vineyard (1 Kings 21:1-16),” in *African and European Readers of the Bible in Dialogue: In Quest of a Shared Meaning*, ed. Hans de Wit and Gerald O. West (Boston: Brill, 2008), 244-245.

sorrow and were sometimes accompanied by rites of mourning,⁵⁵⁷ (c.f Joel 2:12; Jonah 3:7-8; and Nehemiah 9:1). It was believed that through these acts Yahweh's mercy might be aroused and the transgression forgiven (see 1 Samuel 7:5-6; 2 Samuel 12:22; and Isaiah 58:3).⁵⁵⁸ Jezebel's communications therefore indicated that the town had fallen out of grace, and the elders and nobles would have to implore Yahweh in (prayer and) fasting. According to 2 Chronicles 20:3; Jonah 3:5, 7-9, and also 1 Samuel 7:6, it seems that the king in the Ancient Near East had the power to proclaim a fast to avert the wrath of God, which for some reason was threatening the welfare of the community. In Assyria, the king declared a national fast when Jonah the prophet delivered a message of destruction to the nation (Jonah 3:7). In fact some commentators like Mordechai Cogan observe that, because this incident occurs within the Elijah complex, the fast could have been initiated in response to the great drought of 1 Kings 17:1 (and the two false witnesses were to testify that they heard Naboth fixing a blame for the crisis on the king and Yahweh).⁵⁵⁹

She is a leader with charisma of her days. She was a lawyer in practice who seemed to understand very well the legal basis on securing victory in a court contest. Jezebel knows that conviction on a criminal charge was only secured on the evidence of at least two witnesses, as per the law in Deuteronomy 17:6, 19:15; Numbers 35:30.⁵⁶⁰ The prescribed penalty for the breach of the criminal law was death. This was the only way the Israelites thought would propitiate Yahweh and secure the maintenance of the covenant relationship.⁵⁶¹ The whole community was involved in the execution and punishment of criminals (Judges 20-21) in the assembly. This served as a moral lesson for them and was witnessed by them as a legitimate execution.⁵⁶² Being earlier community in history, there was always the difficulty of proof to the council in determining justice: it was a loose-knit society, without means of easy communication,

⁵⁵⁷ Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 479.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁹ Cogan, Ibid.; John H Walton, Victor Harold Matthews, and Mark W Chavalas, *The Ivp Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 383.

⁵⁶⁰ Anthony Phillips, *Ancient Israel's Criminal Law : A New Approach to the Decalogue*(Oxford: Blackwell, 1970), 23. Evidence from the Neo-Assyrian legal and commercial documents reveals that this was the common practice in the ancient Near East. See: Wayne Horowitz, Takayoshi Oshima, and Seth Sanders, *Cuneiform in Canaan: Cuneiform Sources from the Land of Israel in Ancient Times* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2006).

⁵⁶¹ Phillips, 23.

⁵⁶² C. Umhau Wolf, "Traces of Primitive Democracy in Ancient Israel," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 6, no. 2 (1947): 103-104.

without police, and machinery for forensic investigations; and as Daube says, was precarious to allow for exceptions.⁵⁶³

Blasphemy was one of the criminal offences that were punished by stoning in the OT, though there is no word for it in the Bible. Incidences of blasphemy are represented by words like נקב (See Leviticus 24:11 and Proverbs 11:26) and קלל (and its euphemism ברך), which means cursing (see Genesis 8:21, 12:3, Exodus 21:17, 2 Sam 16:5).⁵⁶⁴

The inauguration of the law against cursing Yahweh is probably Leviticus 24:10-16 and 23⁵⁶⁵ in the wilderness story of a boy who was arrested for blasphemy and was stoned to death as a consequence. In paraphrase, the Law states:

“Bring out the blasphemer outside the camp and all those who heard him blaspheme should lay their hands on his head, and all the people should stone him to death...’ Say to the children of Israel: When any man blasphemes his God, he has to bear his sin. He has to be put to death and all the people should cast stones upon him...So Moses spoke to the children of Israel and they brought the Blasphemer out of the camp and stoned him as Yahweh had commanded Moses.”

This story implies that an illegitimate mentioning of the name of God would be tantamount to a curse⁵⁶⁶ because it probably broke the taboo by its mere use.⁵⁶⁷

Cursing a ruler was also banned by biblical law according to Exodus 22.27. As Blank has suggested cursing God and a ruler has a double prohibition and probably far

⁵⁶³ David Daube, *Ancient Jewish Law: Three Inaugural Lectures*(Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981), 53.

⁵⁶⁴ But in reference to 1 Samuel 2, it seems cursing God, קלל, is not confined to a spoken word alone but involves actions and attitudes: sons of Eli are condemned for their disgraceful abuse of their office by their attitude to the sacrificial offerings (2:12ff) and their sexual immorality with sanctuary personnel (2:22ff). It would consequently mean total breach of the covenant stipulations of the Sinai Decalogue that is the criminal law. See: Herbert Chanan Brichto, *The Problem Of "Curse" In the Hebrew Bible*, Journal of Biblical Literature. Monograph Series, V. 13 (Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis, 1963), 148-151,157.148-151,157; and Phillips, 42.

⁵⁶⁵ J. B. Gabel and C. B. Wheeler, "The Redactor's Hand in the Blasphemy Pericope of Leviticus Xxiv," *Vetus Testamentum* 30, no. 675 (1980): 227.

⁵⁶⁶ Weingreen thinks that the verb קב? is from root נקב, which to him contains no notion of blasphemy or invoking against a taboo. His view is problematic that given that the verb is used in the context of a curse (קלל). See J. Weingreen, "The Case of a Blasphemer," *Vetus Testamentum* 22, no. 1 (1972): 120.

⁵⁶⁷ Rodney R. Hutton, "The Case of a Blasphemer Revisted (Lev. Xxiv 10-23)," *Vetus Testamentum* 49, no. 4 (1999): 533-534.

reaching consequences on the whole community.⁵⁶⁸ An Israelite king was understood as God's chosen and anointed representative (מַלְכִּי),⁵⁶⁹ and Yahweh himself as the King (Psalms 29:10; 24:1-10; 93 among others).⁵⁷⁰ As such, it is the responsibility of the whole community to punish the blasphemer as a sign of disassociation with the culprit and the crime committed. This story has vicious hints that Jezebel was a significant political and administrative icon in Israel she was a consort to the king. Other administrative and political deeds of Jezebel have been ignored as irrelevant by the writers, but only this, which presents her at crossroads with the ideological interests of the writer.

5.2.3.5 2 Kings 9

Jezebel again reappears in 2 Kings 9. After her husband's death in 1 Kings 22, the leadership of the Northern Kingdom was passed on to her sons Ahaziah and later Jehoram. Jezebel herself was now Queen Mother. Jezebel's name in this chapter first appears in verse 7 in an oracle given to Jehu with instructions to extirpate the house of Ahab. Jezebel is presented as the killer of Yahweh's prophets and servants whose blood is to be avenged through Jehu.

Jezebel is then mentioned in verse 22 by Jehu who described her as the harlot and the witch, whose harlotries (זְנוּנִים) and witchcrafts (כְּשָׁפִים) are many (רַבִּים) in the land of Israel. The language of this verse is similar to that of Nahum 3:4&7 in a lament against Nineveh the wicked city, whose harlotries and witchcrafts are many.

⁵⁶⁸ Sheldon H. Blank, "The Curse, Blasphemy, the Spell, and the Oath," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 23, no. (1951): 85, note 44. According to Blank, a curse upon the king and God derives from a consideration that weakening of these is at the same time a weakening of their subjects and worshippers. Since a curse upon one's self affects no others, it need not be prohibited by law, but a curse upon God or king affects an entire people and a curse upon parents an entire family, and so these are of public concern and must be prohibited.

⁵⁶⁹ Baruch Halpern, "The Constitution of the Monarchy in Israel" (Revision of thesis (Ph D), Scholars Press, 1981), 13ff.

⁵⁷⁰ The Exodus events seem to be the ground for Yahweh's kingship among Israelites. Miriam's poem in Ex. 15 recounts YHWH as divine warrior with victories over the foe. It begins with the cohortation to exalt Yahweh (vs 1-2) and proceeds to note his martial prowess (v 3), and a more detailed account of specific achievements follow. This kingship was sealed by the covenant at Sinai, in which people agreed to be Yahweh's (Ibid.: 69-70,71.). Human Kings are, but mere human representative of YHWH. Their rule was to be guided by the principles outlined in Deut 17:14-20. A human ruler had to be an Israelite (under covenant) and had to study the law in order not to fall into temptation. In essence, Israelite Kingship was to be different from the rest of the Canaanite communities. See Gerald Eddie Gerbrandt, "Kingship According to the Deuteronomistic History" (Thesis (Doctor of Theology), Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, , 1979), 103-113.

Harlotry, from the Hebrew root זנה, is a standard biblical metaphor for abandoning Yahweh to take up the ways of foreign gods.⁵⁷¹ Elsewhere in the contemporary ancient Near East, political rivalry at the Hittite court caused king Murshili II (14th CBC) to utter similar charges against the widow of Shuppiluliuma. The old queen who had retained a position of influence after the death of her husband was accused of witchcraft and sorcery.⁵⁷²

Jezebel's encounter with the invasion of Jehu starts from verse 30. On hearing that Jehu was advancing towards Jezreel, Jezebel painted her face and attired her head. The verb נָתַתִּיב is a hipheal form from root יָטַב "to make good." In relation to 1 King 1:47, where people come to bless the king and asked God to glorify (יִיטֵב) Solomon, to attire the head has the sense of a crown.⁵⁷³ To glorify means to aggrandise or make great in power and honour. Jezebel being a queen mother put on her royal crown (See Jeremiah 13:18) in order to address Jehu in her full royal regalia and capacity not only as the Queen Mother but much more as the reigning Queen since Jehoram had died.

With her royal regalia, she looked down (תִּשְׁקֹף) through the window from where she addressed Jehu. This is typical of the ancient practices of addressing the royal audience (through the window). As noted earlier, the verb שָׁקַף has been used of people who seem to exhibit authority or challenge. In 2 Samuel 6:16, it is used on Michal who challenged David for dancing like a lunatic before his servants.

Unlike Jehoram and Ahaziah who went to meet Jehu, Jezebel waits for him from her palace. She neither goes out to meet Jehu at the gate nor does she invite him into the palace. She addresses him from a raised point, the window, which gives her an elevated platform to address her subject. Her first words: הַשְׁלֹם זִמְרִי הָרֹג אֲדֹנָי were meant to insult Jehu. The reference to Zimri is interesting. Zimri overthrew Baasha king of Israel and became a king, reigning for only 7 days before he was overthrown by Omri, Jezebel's father in-law. Her address to Jehu portrays him as either a mere belligerent General without charisma to rule for long or that he had just ruled for hours after the

⁵⁷¹ Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings : A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 1st ed. ed. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1988), 110, Note 22.

⁵⁷² Ibid.

⁵⁷³ See Gale A. Yee, "Jezebel," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman and Garry A. Herion (London: Doubleday, 1992), 848-849.

death of Jehoram, but now she is the one in power. Jehu evidently simply conspired with the insiders of Queen Jezebel's palace who threw her down. As a reigning Queen, throwing Jezebel down through the window symbolised her removal and assassination through a military coup. Her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses; and she was trodden under feet of the horses (verse 33).

In verse 34, Jehu replaced Jezebel. He ate and drank—whatever was meant for Queen Jezebel. It was only after eating his fill that he remembered that Jezebel given her royal status deserved a decent burial. Worth noting is the fact that Jehu does not refer to her as the queen and queen mother. She is referred to as the king's daughter, meaning her father King Ethbaal of Sidon; which serves as an affirmation of her royal paternal ancestry other than her profile in Israelite politics.

5.2.3.6 Discussion

Jezebel's attire and address to Jehu from the window is significantly far from seductive exhibition as scholars like Simon B. Parker⁵⁷⁴ would argue. Even the literary motif of 'the prostitute at the window' in Proverb 7:10-21 is not similar to that of Jezebel's encounter with Jehu. The seductive prostitute in Proverbs lures the youth with sweet words in order to get him into her house. Jezebel on the contrary unequivocally insults Jehu without any hint evident to suggest that she was enticing him into any insidious arrangement. Calling Jehu Zimri, (who led a coup similar to that of Jehu and only governed for seven days) Jezebel simply attempted to intimidate and emphasis to him that killing Jehoram doesn't create a power vacuum for him to fill. She is the one with the royal insignia and reign as Queen over Israel after the fall of her son. Indeed, Jehu did not manage to bring down Queen Jezebel on his own. He had to conspire with the insiders (the two or three servants). It was actually the internal conspiracy that defeated Jezebel other than external force by Jehu. It is interesting to read that she was pushed down, apparently with significant force of a couple of eunuchs. Throwing her down from the window symbolically suggests being dethroned from her elevated status.

⁵⁷⁴ Simon B Parker, "Jezebel's Reception of Jehu," *Maarav* 1, no. 1 (1978): 67-78.

Unfortunately, as Jehu, the equally hungry marauding scavenger dogs of Jezreel had not spared Jezebel's body. Only her hands and legs were left; and Jezebel ended up as a fallen queen without the royal grave.⁵⁷⁵

Jezebel's political image has been distorted in Bible narratives. Only scenes that portray her as evil are preserved in the Bible. There is nothing mentioned about her success story as **נְבִיָּה** of Israel collectively.

Jezebel's political credentials stemmed from two or three sources: royal birth, royal marriage and royal motherhood. According to Josephus, Jezebel's father Ethbaal was a priest in the Phoenician cult of goddess Astarte. The Phoenicians, as was the Mesopotamians practice, appointed the king's daughter as the high priestess of the chief local god, in his case, Baal Melqart.⁵⁷⁶ As in all ancient Kingdoms, politics and religion were interwoven. With the king as the high priest and his daughter serving as high priestess, the nexus between the politics (monarchy) and religion enabled Jezebel to wield substantial political, economic and religious power and influence. Jehu acknowledges this when he said that "Bury her, for she is a king's daughter" in 2 Kings 9:34. Jezebel married Ahab when she was already well acquainted with active politics of ancient monarchies.

As queen, Jezebel was an active partner in her husband's rule. Her religious and political skills made her a natural colleague and political sidekick to Ahab. The Naboth story indicates that her letters written in Ahab's name and the use of the king's seal were her royal routine and duty as queen, rather than an illegitimate usurpation of authority as portrayed by the readers of the Hebrew Bible. She had authority to use the royal seal in royal communications. She was an experienced and dependable politician according to the ancient standards in resolving political and legal issues such as property acquisition for the crown. In addition, Jezebel was a queen mother to the two kings of Israel. 2 Kings 10:13 relate the visit of the kinsmen of Ahaziah of Judah to the sons of King

⁵⁷⁵ The curse of non-burial for Jezebel was grained in I Kings 21:23. The spectacle of wild dogs dragging off the carcass of a dead person and scattering the bones on the streets and fields brought horror to the ancients; for the spirit of the dead, deprived of proper burial, was believed to be destined to roam about endlessly. The analogous conception is preserved in the curse literature of ancient Mesopotamia, for instance, 'may dogs and pigs eat your flesh;' 'may your spirit have no one who cares for libations.' It also appears in Jeremiah's pronouncements against Jehoiakim: 'he shall be buried like an ass, dragged about and left unburied beyond the gates of Jerusalem' (Jeremiah 22:19). See Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings : A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 107, Note 10.

⁵⁷⁶ Gale A. Yee, "Jezebel," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman and Garry A. Herion (London: Doubleday, 1992), 848.

Ahab and the gebirah who were apparently still alive in Samaria. Adorning her head with a crown in 2 kings 9:30 at the time her son King Jehoram had died presents Jezebel as the reigning queen.

5.2.4 The Story of Athaliah

5.2.4.1 Fictional Interview with Literary Athaliah

Qn. Briefly talk about your background

Ans. Though some people associate me with the Sidonian royal origin, I come from the royal line of Omrids. I married the King of Judah and we were blessed with Princes and Princesses. I served as a gebirah in the Judean royal court.

Qn. It is written that you were one of the most heartless women and ruler in ancient history. What do you say about that?

Ans. The problem is not me Athaliah. The problem is the priests of Anathoth with their pre-occupied doctrine of purity of the house of David. There was a general fear and anxiety against the ever growing ties between the house of David and the House of Omri in the North. This made the priests of Anathoth, led by Elisha to plot ways of ending the ties. Your Bibles have been ideologically designed to portray the house of Omri as evil. That is how my name ended up in that form.

Qn. But it is said that you killed all the “sons of David” who were potential heirs to the throne.

Ans. Look into your Bibles and see the many inconsistencies! Your Bible says Jehu killed Athaliah's sons and their brothers—42 of them in number (2 Kings 10:13-14). Where these not sons of David? If all these were killed, what was left of me to kill? The priest's choice of Jehu was a tactical blunder as he did not act in their expectations. Jehu himself boasts in the Tel Dan inscription for killing many kings from the house of David.

Accusing me of killing sons of the king was ideological propaganda to fill in the gaps of lack of a male successor to the throne, which had resulted from their own miscalculation of anointing a mad man to be their ruler.

However, even if I had to get rid of some politically dangerous people, was that not the motif and practice of the time? So many kings have killed their rivals but they have not been written about the way narratives portray me.

Qn. But you did not have a legitimate right to inherit the throne of Judah. Did you?

Ans. Yes of course! Who said in the ancient Near East women were not supposed to be monarchs? I was a Queen Mother of Judah. The queen mother was the second most powerful person in ancient Kingdoms. In Mesopotamia Queen Sammuramat wife of Shamshu-Adad V (823-810) became ruler of Assyria after the death of her husband because her son Adad-nirari III was a minor. Egypt at different points had female Pharaohs: Nitokret and Sobeknefru. What you read in the Bible are creations of the Deuteronomic writers. I had been a Queen of Judah and a Queen Mother and I had adequate administrative skills and experience to lead the nation. I had to take over Judah as Queen as Queen Jezebel had done in the North. Queen Jezebel as myself had lost her son during Jehu's rebellion. None of my subjects complained of misrule in the 7 years I was in power.

All my sons had been killed. What would remain of the throne? The remaining little grandson I had left, Joash was too young to be a ruler. In the chaos that ensued after the assassination of his father, the little boy was abducted by some unknown people.

Qn. What do you have to say about the circumstances that surrounded your death?

Ans. That question brings back bitter memories: it is sorrowful to note that the only little grandson, who would have been my successor and reteller of the history, had been abducted by Jehoiada the priest. Jehoiada indoctrinated the innocent little boy over seven years with fallacious doctrines, and eventually forced him to be king. It is so ironic that as Voltaire, one of the French philosophers later said "I would rather be ruled by one fine lion than two hundred rats of my own species," the men of Judah preferred to be ruled by one rat than a lioness.

I was dethroned and killed innocently. Jehoiada clearly knew what he was after. He knew that I was innocent that is why his plot was secretive. Why do you think he ordered his soldiers to put to sword whoever came to my aid? Why was it that my killers would not take away my life from the temple courts? The temple would definitely be impure with shedding innocent blood.

The events took me by surprise as to the entire nation.

Qn. How would you comment on the political events that came after your death?

Ans. What comes by sword shall go by the sword: Was Joash not assassinated? Was Jehoiada's son not murdered by the orders of Joash? Was Amaziah Joash's son and successor not killed or Uzziah, Joash's grandson not struck by leprosy? Read Chronicles 24:21-22, 25, 27 and 26:21

Qn. What did you enjoy in being the Queen of Judah?

Ans. Peace. I enjoyed the trust of the people of Judah and peace and prosperity that blossomed. There were no senseless wars that characterised Judah before and after me. See what happened after the coup: Aram invaded Judah, Israel attacks Judah and loots temple treasures, and there were so many internal security problems.

Qn. What is your message to the readers of your story?

Ans. My message is that what you read from the Hebrew Bible is not historical truth, but ideological narratives.

5.2.4.2 2 Kings 11

Athaliah is introduced in political historiography of ancient Israel and Judah as a family member of King Ahab⁵⁷⁷ (2 Kings 8:18, 26), wife of King Jehoram of Judah (2 Kings 8:16-18) and mother to King Ahaziah of Judah (8:25-26); before becoming Head of the Crown in Judah. She was the princess of Israel, Queen and Queen Mother, and eventually monarch in Judah. She was the gebirah.

⁵⁷⁷ The exact parentage of Athaliah is not clear from the Bible. In 2 Kings 8:26 and 2 Chronicles 22:2 she is called the daughter of Omri. But in 2 Kings 8:18 and 2 Chronicles 21:6, she is referred to as the daughter of Ahab. The Lucianic branch of the LXX tradition eliminates the contradiction by reading 2 Kings 8:26 as 'Ahab.' Josephus also calls Athaliah the daughter of Ahab. See; Winfried Thiel, "Athaliah," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (London: Doubleday 1992), 511. T Ishida, "The House of Ahab," *Israel Exploration Journal* 25, no. (1975): 137. Also, H.J Katzenstein, "Who Were the Parents of Athaliah," *Israel Exploration Journal* 5, no. (1955): 194-197.

Athaliah's marriage to King Jehoram is remarked negatively by the Dtr redactors. She is an icon of the northern disease (baalism) in the Judean palace. Like Ahab's marriage to Jezebel, Jehoram's marriage to Athaliah caused him to do "evil in the sight of Yahweh" (2 Kings 8:18).

As in all other cases, the Dtr redactor is not interested in the political activities of Athaliah of any sort. As the Head of the Crown Athaliah is portrayed as a political usurper and anomaly; who massacres the royal line and takes up the royal throne of the kings of Judah. She was an illegitimate ruler of Judah who had to be overthrown in order to enthrone the legitimate king on the throne of the kings of Judah.

The following study will involve a close reading of 2 Kings 11, in light of the contemporary politics of ancient Near East. In my analysis, I argue that Athaliah's ascension to the throne of Judah and her reign was a protest against the patriarchal political monopoly; which to the Dtr redactor was a violation of political custom (תִּשְׁפֹּט), hence presenting an ideological pollution and inconsistency that had to be purged of the political throne of Judah.

5.2.4.3 2 Kings 11

Versel introduces Athaliah as the mother of King Ahaziah of Judah. King Ahaziah had been entrapped in Jehu's coup against Jezebel in Israel. He was wounded, and eventually died at Meggido before reaching Jerusalem (2 Kings 9:27). Athaliah, upon learning that her son Ahaziah was dead, rose up (וַתִּקָּם) to destroy (וַתִּאַבֵּד) זֶרַע הַמַּמְלָכָה. הַמַּמְלָכָה, from root קוּם is here used to indicate the urgency by which Athaliah acted. זֶרַע הַמַּמְלָכָה is constructed differently from other incidences like 2 Kings 22:22, Ezekiel 17:13 and Jeremiah 41:1 where we have זֶרַע הַמַּמְלָכָה. The noun זֶרַע denotes male offspring (Genesis 4:25). The same root word is used for semen (Leviticus 22:4). In Greek it is σπέρμα, which became sperm in English. Athaliah in this verse was bent to completely exterminate the royal seed of Judah, apparently even the unborn one. Killing of the royal seed is what defines her evil in the story. The scene of Athaliah's actions is apparently the palace in Jerusalem.

Verse 2 introduces Joash the baby boy, the remnant that survived the alleged massacre. He was saved by Jehosheba, the daughter of king Joram, sister of Ahaziah, probably Athaliah's daughter. Jehosheba stole (וַתִּגְנוֹב) Joash away from among the

King's sons that were being slain. The royal seed (זֶרַע הַמֶּלֶךְ) refers to only sons of the King in this verse. The daughters and sisters of the King, including Jehosheba who saved Joash were not exterminated.

In verse 3 Joash is in hiding as Athaliah reigned over the land (מִלְכַּת עַל הָאָרֶץ). Athaliah was the Head of the Crown of Judah at this point—but as an imposter and illegitimate head. She was the queen, which according to the narrative was a contemporary of Jehu, King of Israel (2 Kings 10:36).

Verse 4 introduces another scene: the coup plot against Athaliah. The conspiracy was staged by Jehoiada the priest. This happened in the 7th year of Athaliah's rule. The scene of the coup plot is the temple. Jehoiada called the security officials into the temple and made a covenant to them and made them to swear probably to secure their trust. וַיַּכְרֵת בְּרִית לָהֶם is different from וַיַּכְרֵת ... עִם (1 Samuel 20:16, Hosea 12:2) which expresses mutuality between equal partners. The presence of the preposition ל here apparently indicates granting of treaty or coming to terms (Deuteronomy 7:2, Joshua 9:16, 9:15, 2 Samuel 5:3, 1 Kings 20:34).⁵⁷⁸ This form appears mainly in situations where former enemies are changing allegiance and loyalty to the master (former enemy). The master grants them the treaty to instil confidence and a sense of security in them. This would suggest that Jehoiada is taking a superior's character over the military guards. Covenants (בְּרִית) were strong commitments made among people or between gods and people in the ancient Near East. Breaking a covenant had devastating consequences (Isaiah 24:5-6, Jeremiah 22:8-9 etc.). Jehoiada's covenant was not only made, but the army generals were also made to make an oath of loyalty to Jehoiada and his cause. He then showed them Joash, here defined as the King's son (בֶּן הַמֶּלֶךְ), apparently to highlight his legitimacy to the throne of his father Ahaziah.

Verses 5-9 entail Jehoiada's instructions to the Generals. Generals are to ensure maximum security for the king, all-round.

In verse 10, Jehoiada supplied the Generals with the heroic weapons, which had been used by the legendary King, David. The fighters are numbered to be over

⁵⁷⁸ These cases also denote “granting treaty” or “coming into terms” with former enemies who are changing allegiance and loyalty to the master (former enemy). The treaty granted is to instil confidence in them, to feel secure before their master or for the master to feel secure.

hundreds. The weapons had been kept in the Temple. The royal weaponry mentioned probably serves a nostalgic and ideological purpose for the fighters and readers alike of redeeming Davidic kingship from an illegitimate ruler. The detailed preparation of the army and weapons suggests that they were ready for any eventuality of resistance from the masses.

In verse 11, the armed guards took their strategic positions surrounding the King. Joash is described as the King already before he is even crowned.

In verse 12, the coup is successfully staged. Joash, here called the King's son, is crowned and anointed and blessed.

Verses 13-14 reintroduce Athaliah to the scene. Athaliah is here identified by her proper name other than her title as queen, which contrasts her political legitimacy with that of Joash in verse 7. The coronation applauses had attracted her curiosity to investigate the scene at the temple (verse 13). Honour was accorded to the new young leader with the crown and royal insignia, standing by the pillar (see 2 Kings 23:3), with full security details as per the custom. What is the custom (מִשְׁפֶּט) in this case? Not all kings as recorded in the Dtr literature stood by this platform. The custom as the Head of the Crown had to be a male figure—the King. Athaliah's case as the Head of the Crown of Judah was contrary to the custom. She had crossed the gender boundaries to be where she was not supposed to be, against the custom.

The people, here named as עַם הָאָרֶץ were rejoicing and blowing trumpets. Although the term עַם הָאָרֶץ may refer to the totality of the population, i.e. the people of Judah living in their land, it also denoted a distinct social group in the kingdom of Judah, whose activity at the time of dynastic crisis is recorded several times in 2 Kings. They intervened after assassination of Amon (21:23-24) and death of Josiah (23:30) to elevate a proper Davidide to the throne; cf. too 14:21. Jeremiah (1:18, 34:19, and 37:2) juxtaposes the People of the land with other strata of society, and Ezekiel 22:29 berates for their oppression of the poor, the destitute, and the sojourner; these contexts suggest that they were an elite group of citizens.⁵⁷⁹ Only a small fraction of the people of the land were active participants in their communities, these were naturally the wealthy who by dint of their influential position could direct public affairs, as they did so often during

⁵⁷⁹ See also Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings : A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 1st ed. ed. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1988), 129.

monarchic upheavals in Judah.⁵⁸⁰ צה in the Hebrew Bible is also used to mean the army (Numbers 31:32, Joshua 10:7; 11:7, 1 Samuel 11:11, 1 Kings 20:10), which presents a possibility that the army's allegiance and loyalty had been firmly secured and betrothed to the young king by the power of the oath.

Athaliah was devastated by the coup and responded by tearing her clothes. Tearing one's clothes in the OT occurs in sombre circumstances. Reuben in Genesis 37:29 was devastated when he found that Joseph was not in the pit where they had held him. See also Genesis 37:34, Joshua 7:6 and Isaiah 37:1, etc. Athaliah calls the coup a conspiracy.

Verses 15-16 introduce Athaliah's fate in the hands of the coup plotters. Jehoiada gives instructions to the guards to kill Athaliah and to kill with the sword anyone who follows her. She is dragged and slain by the way of the horses, apparently the back entrance of the palace.

In verses 17-18, Jehoiada mediated a covenant between God and Joash and the people. This was followed by the rhetorical destruction of Baal institutions as a way of cleansing the throne and the land back to the rightful authority of male kingship.

In verse 19, the new King is moved from the Temple area and taken to the palace. He is enthroned on the throne of the kings. The procession to enthrone the king took the way of the gate of the guards, apparently the main entrance to the palace.

The narrative ends with verse 20, which describes the political climate of Jerusalem after the coup as quiet, with people of the land happy because Athaliah was slain.

5.2.4.4 Discussion

The attitude of the Dtr redactor against Athaliah's rule is clear: she is the monstrous killer of the royal male children of Davidic descent. Her political objective to be queen is ostensibly portrayed as ambitious and onerous. The narrative manipulates the readers' instincts on the ideology of motherhood against Athaliah: she is the heartless grandmother who kills her own flesh and blood due to greed for political power. The portrait of her swiftness to eliminate the royal family is detached from her legitimacy and credibility as the *gebirah* to replace the fallen monarch. To the redactor,

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid.

the sole legitimate heir—are royal seed, as the male offspring and sons of the royal family. There is no information about the female children or even details about the mother of Joash. Jehosheba who saved Joash is mentioned only once in the narrative. Athaliah is not identified with her royal title but a proper name throughout the narrative.

The narrative presents contradictions about the death of Davidic sons, which in this respect are either Ahaziah's sons or brothers. Jehu had massacred other brothers of Ahaziah (אֲחִיזַחְיָהּ) when they had gone to pay homage to Queen Jezebel in Israel (2 Kings 10:13-14). If the אֲחִיזַחְיָהּ were other sons of Athaliah whom Jehu killed, the royal throne of Judah remained with only Ahaziah's sons who were the legitimate heirs to the throne. This does not side-line other royal members who claimed ancestry to the royal house of David. The narrative is silent about Ahaziah's personal family life and the number of sons he had, which leaves us with the possibility of only the infant Joash at the time of his death in Megiddo.

With the death of Ahaziah and the massacre of his brothers in the hands of Jehu, the political succession of Judah was in balance. Athaliah was the immediate politically experienced person in the political arena. She had been queen and probably king's consort, and now queen mother—the gebirah. As seen earlier, gebirahs were significant in ancient Near Eastern politics. They were political advisers to the kings, administrators, cultic leaders, and enjoyed a commendable degree of political privileges and prestige. Virtually no information is provided by the Dtr writer about Athaliah's political roles prior to the death of her son Ahaziah.

The discovery of the Tel Dan Inscription in the land of Israel was probably a watershed in the study of ancient Israelite politics. Among other things, and though the inscription is fragmented, the writer of the royal inscription boasts of having killed kings from the house or dynasty of David. He also tells of himself that he was crowned by the Aramean King. Scholars like Wesselius think that the writer of the inscription was Jehu.⁵⁸¹ Admittedly, in 2 Kings 10 Jehu staged a coup that brought him to power at the time Israel was at war with Aram. Jehu killed Jehoram king of Israel and inflicted heavy wounds on Ahaziah king of Judah that eventually killed him. Jehu proceeded to Jezreel from where Jezebel was assassinated. The entire Omrid family was reportedly

⁵⁸¹ J.W. Wesselius, "The First Royal Inscription from Ancient Israel: The Tel Dan Inscription Reconsidered," *SJOT* 12, no. (1999): 175-76.

eradicated by Jehu. In 2 Kings 10:13-14, Jehu killed 42 brothers of Ahaziah. These, needless to say were sons of David's dynasty, and potential political successors to the throne of Judah.

Athaliah's actions in this narrative, notwithstanding historical and factual flaws are an illustration that in biblical times, there were women of great political ambitions, who would seize chances to advance their political interests. Athaliah was one of politically ambitious women, who were operating in a hostile environment but would circumvent cultural obstacles to reach high echelons of power. Athaliah's actions were a resistance against the patriarchy. Whether by just assuming the throne or killing the male members of the Davidic dynasty, Athaliah knew that a male heir, no matter his political experience or ambition would be sought. The בְּנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ were politically dangerous to Athaliah just as they would be to any other person. King David systematically eliminated the house of Saul that constituted a political threat leaving only the lame Mephibosheth (2 Samuel 9).

The overthrow of Athaliah was a resistance against a foreign gender that had infiltrated politics of Judah. In the understanding of the men of Judah, notably the priests of Anathoth like Jehoiada, it was legitimate to be ruled by a small boy than a woman. Joash at the age of seven was very young whose only political act at that time was to sit on the throne as a symbol of legitimate male authority. He did not wield any significant political authority and influence. The Political mechanism of Judah was in the hands of Jehoiada the priest and his loyal guards who had organised a coup.

Although Athaliah is acknowledged as ruling the land, the Dtr redactor tactfully omitted details regarding her coronation and enthronement. Athaliah is presented as a leader without support and the will of the people. There is completely no information about her 7 years of reign. Her rule is not granted full legitimacy.⁵⁸² There is neither an opening nor closing formula given as is the case with all other heads of the Crown either in Judah or Israel. What is left of her in the narrative is only her name s her identity and the evils she allegedly committed and the punishment she suffered, which further highlights the intention of the writer to fragment or distort Athaliah's political image.

The revolt against Queen Athaliah was not a popular uprising to suggest discontentment among the people of Judah. It was a conspiracy against her rule by

⁵⁸² See also Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings : A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 1st ed. ed. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1988), 133-134.

Jehoiada the priest. Jehoiada used his religious position as the priest in the house of Yahweh to influence a section of the army against Athaliah. He tactfully planned the coup when he sought the alliance of the Heads of the section of the ancient fighters. Jehoiada first had to harness the military loyalty by entering into agreement and oaths. This indicates that he was aware of the possibility of the army turning against him and the entire coup plot and convicted him on charges of treason. The agreement and oaths were made from the Temple of Jerusalem where Joash was hidden.

The coup was properly organised and coordinated in the security ranks to ensure maximum security for young Joash and for the plot to succeed. The organisers seemed aware that any loophole would constitute a formidable counter measure from Queen Athaliah and her supporters. The rebels were ready to wage war against any resistance from the people or sections of the army that would support Athaliah. The location of weapons in the temple helped the stealthy coup to succeed as no people of the public, as also Athaliah would smell a rat from a spectacle of armed military on streets of Jerusalem.

It has been rightly observed by Richard D. Nelson that throughout the events that overthrow Athaliah, God does not do or say anything. The prophets, so visible in previous chapters are not present here. The word of God which is the prime mover of events is replaced by the word of Jehoiada the priest which is the chief planner and instigator of the coup.⁵⁸³

5.2.4.5 The Story of Jezebel and Athaliah in African Postcolonial Biblical Interpretation

Biblical stories of Jezebel and Athaliah present two but similar cases of women under political and literary denigration. Though both belong to the chronistically minimised Omrid dynasty of Northern Israel, they represent a rather subdued institution of queenship (gebirah). They are a foreign gender that had infiltrated the political arena of the ancient Kingdoms. Both monarchs are presented as evil women who interfered with male leadership—a leadership, which is decreed by Yahweh. They had to be overthrown and replaced by male authority as a way of restoring the land to the original order of leadership. The institution of queenship is downplayed consistently by the Dtr narrator who gives prominence to kingship.

⁵⁸³ Richard D. Nelson, *First and Second Kings* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1987), 212-213.

From a postcolonial African point of view, we read in memory of women like prophetess Moraa of Gusii, Me-Ketilili wa Menze of Giriama, and Kikuyu women like Mary Nyanjuru, Muthoni wa Gachia, Wamuyu Gakuru among others—all who fought against colonial rule in Kenya. Some were brutally beaten and killed for their political front-lining.

We read from the two stories about victims of misogynistic cultural bias against women in political leadership. Majority of African cultures are patriarchal, and even in this era of liberal democracy, women are perceived as an anomaly in political podiums. In situations where they are accepted, they are not expected to be involved in activities that challenge male authority. They are expected to adhere to an African ideology of a woman as motherly, modest, decency and wifely in character. She is not supposed to cross-dress, present or involve in topical issues that make the paradigm of hegemonic masculinity anxious.

In the two stories we read about female political figures whose political activism has been sexualised. The portrayal of African female freedom fighters as prostitutes in Kenya for example is a reminiscent of the picture of Bible readings and interpretations that Queen Jezebel attempted to seduce Jehu by painting her eyes and beautifying her head, as a way of laying a tender trap against Jehu.

In Jezebel and Athaliah's stories we also read about women who have suffered violence from men and authorities like Police and the Military units. They are those African women who have suffered verbal, physical, emotional and cultural hostilities with the sole aim of forcing them to leave politics for men. They are the so-called Jezebels, witches, sorcerers and prostitutes who have been mentioned in East African political histories. We read about African female politicians who have survived ambushes and other assassination plots staged by their male political opponents.

We read about those African women who are condemned by church authorities because of their political offices. For instance, Specioza Kazibwe former Vice President of Uganda was condemned by the Catholic Church for not upholding to family values due to her political occupation, when she divorced her husband over domestic violence.

The Bible stories are a reminiscent of a biased African media which lampoons female political figures and amplifies malicious stories, propaganda and trivialities about them with the concerted aim of satisfying curiosities of the patriarchal audience. The political stamina and achievements of the female politicians are ignored. This

introduces us to the next chapter of the study, which looks at how Bible ideology has influenced African readers of scriptures in undermining women's legitimacy in political ascendance.

6.0 BIBLE IDEOLOGY AND AFRICAN INTERESTS

6.1.0 Introduction:

....when Africans read the Bible...it becomes at once a living book. From the Bible Africans hear and see a confirmation of their own cultural, social and religious life in the life and history of the Jewish People as portrayed and recorded in the pages of the Bible. Africans feel that their own lives are described and affirmed in the Bible, and therefore they belong to the world of the Bible.⁵⁸⁴

African traditional cultures (the embodiment of African customary laws) have had a significant influence on the way Bible scriptures are interpreted and applied in African societies. Reading some texts from *left to right* as David Clines does or reading against the ideology of the writer has been difficult in African societies where the Bible is layered with cultural and ideological artefacts similar to those of Africa societies. From the missionary era, an African has read the Bible as an interested party. The Bible, especially the OT mirrors the reader's social cultural and religious heritage and environment. The thematic correlation between these two ideologies has helped to energise some values in African cultures, and aligned the reader's world view of certain aspects of life. A case in point is the gender world view. Both the Bible and African Traditional Society (ATS) uphold patriarchal ideology.

The African customary law, which is embedded in African traditional cultures is pivotal in regulating social relations, particularly gender relations: women are still seen as second to men, whose primary roles besides biologically given ones as child bearers and mothers, are socially defined as objects of sexual satisfaction, home makers, domestic workers and wealth generators in terms of dowry and ensuring a stable supply of food and revenue for the home through agriculture and small businesses. Any political and social engagements should be limited to children or fellow women but not to control or compete with the male folks of her society. There is always tension between laws, rights and responsibilities in Africa. Most Africans live by the religious and customary laws than statutory law. It is more common to get responses like “our religion does not allow us to do this...” or “in our culture doing X-Y is a taboo”, than “it

⁵⁸⁴ Mbiti, 26-27.

is against the laws of the land or constitution.” There is always a crisis in people’s choice of which law to follow. In gender relations Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religions (ATR) give men power over women right from family level. A man has a duty and ‘right’ to ‘discipline’ his wife as he would also discipline his child. Women are designated to be under men. But the statutory law ideally states that all people are equal before the law irrespective of their gender. Rural women (mainly) faced by acts of domestic violence have to interpret their situation from traditional or religious legal point of view, or risk being a laughing stock by dragging husbands to courts of law. In some courts of law, such acts of domestic violence are not taken seriously. Most often women are advised to settle matters customarily out of court with their husbands.

Globalization has however emitted eclectic particles of western cultures and ideologies: gender equality, women emancipation, higher education and international exposure. These have ushered a modern African Bible reader living in Afro Christian cultural environment in an ideological quandary. International organizations like the United Nations have urged African governments and international policy organs to adopt these precepts into their local policy documents to call for equality between sexes. These Western ideologies have been adopted in local and international policy documents, calling for equality of men and women in all spheres of life, (political social and economic) in their societies. The documents therefore call for a paradigm shift from traditional gender relations to modern ones. There is therefore a clash of loyalties i.e. should we listen to our cultures and the word of God (as the Bible is often called), or Western (often called elitist) paradigm. This has resulted into dichotomization of an African society into pro-modern and conservative Africans, with majority of Africans switching between loyalties depending on circumstances.

In my recent visit to Africa for research on this subject, I took a contextual Bible study with students of Uganda Christian University near Kampala. I followed the paradigms of Gerald West and Justin Ukpong who advocate for a reading with ordinary people. My Participants were mainly graduate African students, some of whom were serving as teachers of Religious Education in Uganda’s schools, and Church Ministers and ordinands in the Anglican church of Uganda. They were not trained in the art of biblical interpretation. We read the stories of Miriam (Numbers 12:1-16; 20:1), Jezebel (1 Kings 21:1-17, 2 Kings 9:30-37) and finally the story of Athaliah (2 Kings 11). Time

could not allow us to read Michal (2 Samuel 6:15-23). There were three groups, each studying a different text in a different session. A total of 50 students participated in the study.

To each group, a text was read aloud. After the text had been read, participants were asked to read the text together again in small groups, and share with each other what they thought the text is about. Each small group was then asked to report back, in summary to the larger group. After the report-back, the participants returned to their small groups to discuss the following questions:

1. Who are the main characters in the story and what do we know about them?
2. Identify and state the role of each of the male characters in the story
3. What is the status and response of the female character in the story?
4. How can we relate the story in the passage to East African contemporary politics?

When the small groups had finished their discussion, each group was invited to present a summary of their discussion.

Worth noting is that the reading and exposition of the texts was greatly influenced by the readers contemporary knowledge of politics and cultural mind-set. Ideals like political legitimacy, Christian code of justice, law, peace and fair rule were a salient feature during the discussion.

6.1.1 Numbers 12:1-16; 20:1

Each subgroup presented its discussion to the plenary group. Main characters were identified. Miriam, the sole woman in the story was defined as a co-worker with Moses and Aaron in leadership. Each subgroup expressed concern why Miriam was punished alone for the offense she supposedly committed with her brother. However, each subgroup adopted a defensive position of God's action, arguing that the omnipresent and omnipotent God must have known that it was Miriam who was on the wrong. They rationalized that Miriam was punished because she was an imposter, since there is no evidence in the text that she was called to co-work with Moses and Aaron. The group also argued that Aaron was spared because he was called to be a prophet to Moses. Miriam, in the understanding of this group was envious and a jealousy woman who was contemplating a coup against Moses' leadership. Miriam was likened to an

unmarried sister in her father's homestead who is so critical of her brothers and their wives; who exhibits masculine characteristics to emulate her brothers.

6.1.2 1 Kings 21:1-17 and 2 Kings 9:30-37:

Male characters were identified, and Jezebel was identified as a sole woman player in the circle of men. She is generally described as a conspirator, manipulator, greedy and evil woman who misled men to kill the innocent and alienate his property. Jezebel was placed in the centre of power and justice as an agent of misrule and injustice.

In relation to society conscious question, the participants related the story of Jezebel to women and power in East Africa. She is one who manipulates men and effect political decisions from the bedrooms. Some ordinands complained about their Bishops' wives whom they accused of influencing their husbands in decision related to management of dioceses. Jezebel was likened to women like Lucy Kibaki, Martha Karua, Specioza Kazibwe, and Miria Matembe in Kenyan and Ugandan politics.

6.1.3 2 Kings 11

The discussion portrayed Athaliah as a tyrant queen mother, coup planner, brutal murderer, self-imposed but courageous female ruler. All participants viewed Athaliah as a trespasser as the throne of Judah was not meant for a woman. Participants argued that though Ahaziah's son Joash was still an infant to succeed his father, there would have been a male caretaker of the throne but not Athaliah.

Jehoiada the high priest was applauded as a risk bearer, tactical and strategic for the right cause of enthroning the rightful king to the throne of Judah. Athaliah as a queen mother, participants argued was not supposed to become a ruler of the people. One group drew a case study of African pre-colonial kingdoms, which although had queens and queen mothers political leadership of the kingdom was customarily for men. The participants however expressed interest in finding out whether Athaliah had the support of the people. A section of participants rationalized, basing on verse 20 that she was unpopular but just tolerated.

From the contextual study it was revealed that the female protagonists are portrayed as bad women who rebelled against traditional custom of leadership. They are generally described as imposters, trespassers, conspirators, manipulators, greedy,

jealousy and coup plotters. They interfered into affairs of legitimate authorities that resulted into divine interventions and punishments. The disposition of the Bible texts was influenced so much by the readers own cultural and religious understanding of gender roles, which raised issues of gender legitimacy in politics. The readers of the texts, it can be concluded approve the ideology of the writer. To argue otherwise from the point of view of the narrator would be challenging the authority of the Bible as the word of God. As already stated, participants in the Miriam text wondered why Miriam was punished alone; but they then took a defensive position by rationalising that God, the omniscience and omnipresent knew that Miriam was the culprit.

In another phase of the research, I interviewed a section of people who included students of theology (both male and female) and academic professors and female Members of Parliament (MPs). In chapter three, we are informed about the situation of female politicians basing on the interviews I conducted with female MPs. A total of 47 students and 3 professors were interviewed. Students were randomly selected from departments of Religious studies and Theology, while professors who were interviewed were the “experts” of either Biblical studies or African Traditional Religion. In this phase, the major questions I asked were about women in the Bible, women in African traditional cultures and women in politics in modern African states.

Bible is one of the documents that ostensibly identifies with African cultural ideology—especially in gender ideology. African cultural heritage is an unprinted text that has remained on the social slate of many African societies and is as powerful as the Christian/Hebrew printed Bible texts. In both texts, women are portrayed as secondary to men (1 Corinthians 11:2-15). The social roles of women are similar: Home makers and wealth creators for their homes (Proverbs 14:1, 31:10-31), objects of honour for men (Proverbs 12:4, Titus 2:1-15) and inevitably child bearing (Genesis 30:1, Psalms 127:3-5) and well-upbringing of children (Proverbs 10:1, 15:25). One respondent noted that: the Bible gives a woman the position that African Traditional Culture gives to a woman. God chose only males as prophets and rulers, and God himself is portrayed as a ‘He’ and angels and the entire heavenly hosts are all male.⁵⁸⁵ Both ATS and Bible ideologies associate a female gender with contagious evil. Women lead men to evil. One respondent, with some level of exaggeration asserted that there is a mention of a

⁵⁸⁵ Nelson Munyauki Mwithi (University of Nairobi), In interview with the writer, 19th July 2010

prostitute in almost every single book of the Bible; and that the only place where men are implied as evil is when Gomorrah and Sodom are mentioned.⁵⁸⁶

The interplay between the Bible and African cultures has not only strengthened Christian faith by making Christianity and the Bible an African faith and book respectively, but has energized the patriarchal stereotypes against women. Accordingly, a woman has to be under a man. One respondent who doubles as Christian and politician revealed that:

“It is a big challenge convincing some Christians that a woman can also be a leader, because they look at you and say that the Bible says the woman is not the head. How can the woman be the head? I have tried to overcome that by all the time covering my head before the religious people of my community in order to comply with what Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 11. In such a community I do not put on a trouser. They insist that they want a Member of Parliament who is married. So some time I have had to move around with my husband for them to see that I am married. In my area, marriage and family status plays a key role in African politics.”⁵⁸⁷

All the respondents generally seemed to agree that African culture and the Bible are repressive to women. In the Bible there are very many “don’ts” for women than for men especially in regards to sexuality and social relations. As one respondent puts it, an

“African girl is supposed to abstain from sex until marriage; a grown up African girl having sex before marriage is a taboo and it is treated as a disgrace to her parents. This has put African girls at the crossroads of modernity and traditions. Modernity has come with diversity of knowledge that includes sexual awareness, which traditions aim at hiding from unmarried girls. Given the nature of society we are living in today, very few people can afford to suppress their sexual desires to suit cultural demands, and as a result one becomes a slave of one’s self and ends up living a double standard life or guilt conscious.”⁵⁸⁸

There was a general consensus that Christianity and the Bible has reinforced male superiority over women in Africa. All respondents agreed that the Bible speaks of

⁵⁸⁶ Esther M. Mbuki (University of Nairobi), in interview with the writer, 19th July 2010

⁵⁸⁷ Lenah Jebii Kilimo (Hon.)

⁵⁸⁸ Abigail Apondi Oloo, (University of Nairobi), in interview with the writer, 17th July 2010

mostly men. Professor Douglas Waruta of the University of Nairobi asserts that ‘both African and the biblical story are extremely patriarchal. The idea that man comes first and a woman is defined by a man is a dominant cultural heritage in Africa. It is a culture that is unfair to women.’⁵⁸⁹ He adds that:

“Our African story makes women feel un-affirmed in their societies. Councils of elders were dominated by men, and women were not listened to in public. It is the same theme with the Bible story also where women are held down in performing roles in society...There are some Christian groups that would prefer to interpret the Bible in the way that limits women’s role in political and religious leadership in order to justify their preconceived ideologies that women should not do certain roles in society.”⁵⁹⁰

This presupposition is also shared by Professor Victor Zinkuratre who contends that: “The Bible seems to be affirming some of the traditions and cultures that have no relevance in modern Africa. Women in the Bible were marginalized. Africans who want to give prominence to some of those cultures have always appealed to the Bible.”⁵⁹¹

Professor Victor Zinkuratre is convinced that the negative influence of Bible on African culture is based on what he calls “pre understanding of the scriptures.” i.e. Africans interpret the Bible according to the knowledge they already have: cultural background and political conditions.⁵⁹²

“Modern Africa,” which Zinkuratre refers to is the Africa that has resurrected or still resurrecting from colonial rule and colonial Christianity. It is Africa which resembles the former colonial masters and the west in many aspects; the Africa which is part of the global socio-economic niche. Waruta and Zinkuratre’s observations affirm that Africans read the Bible with invested interests in the writer’s ideology in order to justify certain selfish precepts, which they regard as natural and benign.

Beatrice Mbula and Sylvia Wanjiku observed that the Bible has clauses that strengthen men’s status over women. They noted that: “Very few women are mentioned in the OT as leaders. There are no women who are brought up as strong women by the

⁵⁸⁹ Douglas Wanjohi Waruta, Prof. (University of Nairobi)

⁵⁹⁰ Douglas Wanjohi Waruta, Prof. (University of Nairobi)

⁵⁹¹ Victor Zinkuratre, Prof. (CUEA, Nairobi), in an Interview with the writer, 21st July 2010

⁵⁹² Victor Zinkuratre, Prof. (CUEA, Nairobi)

writers of the OT. How comes there are no female monarchs in Israel? This has created a mentality that all authority belongs to men.”⁵⁹³

The issue of authority as a prerogative of men has been raised a number of times during the course of this study. “What is it about authority that men want most and that women would rather be objects to?” remained a central question. A belief that men are superior over women and that authority is a prerogative of men has been engrained in histories of many traditions. It has created a behavioural pattern that scholars have called hegemonic masculinity syndrome.

Hegemonic masculinity is not a new concept in the field of social research. Many people have widely written about it. According to R.W Connell and James W. Messerschmidt hegemonic masculinity ideologically legitimizes subordination of women to men.⁵⁹⁴ It refers to the pattern of practice that allows men’s dominance over women to continue; and this dominance is achieved and reified through cultures, institutions like religions, and persuasions.⁵⁹⁵ Male domination is perceived as natural. This naturalness of male domination is, according to Peter Jackson rooted in essentialist notions about inherent biological differences between men and women which all kinds of social consequences are alleged to follow.⁵⁹⁶ Arthur Brittan has summarized masculinism that: it takes it for granted that there is a fundamental difference between men and women, and accepts without question the sexual division of labour, and it sanctions the political and dominant role of men in the public and private spheres.⁵⁹⁷

In situations where a female political candidate demonstrates greater strength and charisma, she is pejoratively called a man. Respondents brought up cases of female politicians like Martha Karua and Wangari Mathaai of Kenya and Betty Namboze of Uganda. Their great political militancy, oratory and organisational skills and fearless confrontational and assertive character have earned them the title of a ‘man.’⁵⁹⁸ Such female characters are understood to be acting in a way that is least expected of a woman. A woman is expected to be humble, submissive, modest, reserved and

⁵⁹³ Beatrice Mbula and Sylvia Wanjiku (CUEA)

⁵⁹⁴ R.W Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept," *Gender and Society* 19, no. 6 (2005): 832.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁶ Peter Jackson, "The Cultural Politics of Masculinity: Towards a Social Geography," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 16, no. 2 (1991): 201.

⁵⁹⁷ Arthur Brittan, *Masculinity and Power* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 4.

⁵⁹⁸ Damalie Nalubwama (Uganda Christian University, Mukono), in interview with the writer, 29th July, 2010

respectful to men. She is not expected to compete with men in society. In reference to Betty Namboze, one respondent said with disgust that: “there is no woman in that one!” Another pejorative term for such women is Jezebel.

6.2 Jezebels in East Africa

Jezebel is a Bible female political character. She suffers negative portrayal of Bible narratives and in theological literature and polemics, her name surfaces as an epitome of evil and misrule in political history of ancient Israel and beyond. In East Africa, there is a generally stereotyped figure of Jezebel in relation to female politicians. Jezebel seems to be an emblematic figure of women who break the patriarchal rules.

In the United States, according to Tina Pippin and others, Jezebel has contracted largely into a sexual meaning in her afterlives: Jezebel is a woman who gets around; not ashamed; someone who is wild, free, and comfortable with her sexuality; a beautiful woman; ladysh but not necessarily nice; slinky; powerful, ambitious (in a personal, sexual sense) self-centred, sensual,⁵⁹⁹ and a temptress.⁶⁰⁰ In *From Mammy to Miss America and Beyond*, K. Sue Jewell shows how Jezebel has been conceptualized as a tragic mulatto – “thin lips, long straight hair, slender nose, thin figure and fair complexion.” She is a figure for “bad-black-girls.”⁶⁰¹ During slavery, Jezebel was used as a rationalization for sexual relations between White men and Black women, especially sexual unions involving slave-owners and slaves. The Jezebel was depicted as a black woman with an insatiable appetite for sex especially with White men.⁶⁰²

In East Africa Jezebel is used to name a political threat—a foreign gender group infiltrating the political arena. These uses are closer to the primary biblical texts because the women called Jezebels wield real power—because the power they have is not just the power of sex. As with the foreign Canaanite queen, the political threat they represent is discussed in terms of their sexuality, but it is still very much a political threat.

Surprisingly, apart from the Professors, majority of the respondents did not have knowledge about biblical Jezebel. During the interviews, I asked the following question:

⁵⁹⁹ Tina Pippin, *Apocalyptic Bodies : The Biblical End of the World in Text and Image* (London: Routledge, 1999), 32.

⁶⁰⁰ Tina Pippin, "Jezebel Re-Vamped," in *A Feminist Companion to Samuel and Kings*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 196.

⁶⁰¹ K. Sue Jewell, *From Mammy to Miss America and Beyond : Cultural Images and the Shaping of U.S. Social Policy* (London: Routledge, 1993), 46.

⁶⁰² Ibid.

‘In your own words, can you retell the story of Jezebel in the Bible?’ The views I received from the respondents were attributes and some were totally inconsistent with what we know about Queen Jezebel in the Hebrew Bible. They gave answers like: She was evil, a devil worshipper, she was eaten by dogs, a prostitute, and a bad leader among others; and worst of all “she was supposed to marry Solomon.” Others admitted that they have heard about Jezebel but they do not know her story in the Bible. Of interest is the fact that respondents know Jezebel and her gender—a woman who interfered with the political and social order of the Bible world. I am of the view that the distortion of information about Jezebel is characteristic of how readers and hearers inscribe new meanings to the texts, depending on their interests. To call Jezebel a devil worshipper results from a form of hated occultism in East Africa in which people are believed to be worshipping Satan, carrying out human sacrifice and eating and drinking human flesh and blood. Jezebel is named in the church of Thyatira in Revelation 2.20 (NT). The love and patience of the followers of Christ at Thyatira is contaminated only by their tolerance of the ‘woman Jezebel who calls herself a “prophetess”’. The crimes of this Jezebel—obviously a leader—are of leading the community to eat food sacrificed to idols: syncretism updated to a first century context. These were apparently the pressing theological problems experienced by the church during John’s time. She and those who commit metaphorical ‘adultery’ with her are to be thrown into great tribulation, and her children are to be struck dead.

Respondents enthusiastically named people they think are the Jezebels in their political communities. The names given were all for female politicians. Most common answers given were: Lucy Kibaki, Martha Karua, Wangari Maathai, Margret Wanjiru, Specioza Wandira Kazibwe, Miria Matembe and Betty Namboze. The reasons for naming a particular legislator Jezebel range from marital status, relations with male colleagues and political activism.

The table below shows names of women politicians who are associated with Jezebel as named by a total of 80 respondents (47 in interviews and 33 in contextual Bible study), percentage number of the respondents and the reasons why these women are jezebelised:

Name of Jezebels	%age of respondents	Reasons
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Lucky Kibaki	88%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dominates her husband • Never respect her husband • Behaves as though she is the president of Kenya • She is brutal • Unmotherly • Manly in character • No respect for men • No public manners
Martha Karua	70%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tough woman • Divorced • Not married • No respect for men • Too authoritative • Unmotherly
Wangari Maathai	45%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divorced
Margaret Wanjiru	75%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Left church leadership to join partisan politics • Rigged Elections • Not married
Specioza W. Kazibwe	85%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divorced • Arrogant
Miria Matembe	50%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iron lady • Wanted rape suspects be castrated • Very assertive • Manly in character • Criticized government when she was sacked from cabinet
Betty Namboze	25%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A liar • Tribalist • Rebel • Manly in character
Female activists	20%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black mailing men with a view of making men feel guilt of social and cultural injustice • Unnecessarily critical against African cultural heritage • Exaggerate the situation of African woman • They are very arrogant • Behave immaturely • They are unmotherly

Jezebelisation of these female politicians has also been done in the media, notably weblogs and private or independent (mainly web based) newspapers and magazines. Though these sources are not prestigious as national Newspapers, they seem to reflect what we may call “not politically correct views worth publishing in national media,” of the wider public. In these publications, some women who are in or associated with national politics are called Jezebels. For example, Ms. Lucy Kibaki’s has been described as the ‘dreadful First Jezebel of Kenya’ who ‘has become a law unto herself and literally out of the bounds of legal restraint and due process. In one of the weblogs, the writer in response to the 2007/8 election in Kenya (that led Mwai Kibaki to win his second term) is disappointed: “I had hoped I would be writing about the electorate slapping down of that dreadful First Jezebel of Kenya – Lucy Kibaki, the President’s wife – with a much deserved rejection. She has become a law unto herself and literally out of the bounds of legal restraint and due process....”⁶⁰³ In another case, “Kibaki, Michuki and Lucy will have to answer before God like Queen Jezebel and her husband in the Bible. They cannot bury the truth. The blood of the slain lies at their doorstep as much as it lies in the hands of the “panga” wielders.”⁶⁰⁴

In 2006, Martha Karua was described by Kenyan Scandinavia Democratic Movement (KESDEMO) as “the biblical Jezebel, a dirty woman who will do anything to protect the thieving Mafia, her tribesmen and the corrupt ruling class who have failed our Nation.”⁶⁰⁵

And later on in 2008:

“Martha Karua is a picture of Lucifer the old serpent. Jezebel indeed! I don’t understand how she will live with her conscience if she becomes the reason for a future prolonged civil war. God forbid. Are the few wise men if

⁶⁰³ Akin Akintayo, "The First Jezebel of Kenya" http://akin.blog-city.com/they_damned_the_consequences.htm (accessed 5th April 2009).

⁶⁰⁴ Matt, in *The Red Cross has a difficult time trying to offer humanitarian aid as violence persists in the Rift Valley*. (Nairobi: Nationmedia, 2008), <http://politics.nationmedia.com/vids.asp?v=2VbgGqYu5d4> (accessed 5th April, 2009).

⁶⁰⁵ Martin Ngatia and Okoth Osewe, "Kenya Socialist Website: Vote out Narc Kenya Mafia in the Next Election" <http://www.kenyasocialist.org/kswsfiles/2006/vote%20out%20narc%20kenya.htm> (accessed 16th February 2010).

any left in PNU seeing what this woman is doing to the country with her careless talk?"⁶⁰⁶

From the above, it can be observed that PNU, as the governing political party has been taken hostage and dominated by Martha Karua. All the men in the party have succumbed to her evil. Karua is perceived here as a contaminating factor and an agent of misrule. The call for the few wise men if any left in PNU to rise against Karua is a call for purification of the Party from her corrupting influence. It is a prophetic call for an Elijah and Jehu, the wise men to rise in Kenya to cleanse the PNU against Karua's witchcraft and harlotry—so to speak, which had corrupted men including the president.

Following the election crisis that hit Kenya in 2007/2008, Martha Karua headed the Kenyan Government team at the crisis talks with the Opposition team that had claimed that their victory had been stolen by the government. Kofi Anan, former UN Secretary General led a team of eminent African personalities who included some Heads of States as mediators between the government and the opposition in order to resolve the election dispute that had resulted into deaths and homelessness of thousands of people. Karua is said to have expressed anger towards the mediator Kofi Anan over comments on resolving the election disputes. Mr Anan had hinted that both sides had agreed on a transitional government for two years, after which fresh presidential elections would be held. But Martha Karua said this had never been discussed, arguing that Anan's statement about a transitional government caused distress and great embarrassment to the Kenyan Government as it had misrepresented their position.⁶⁰⁷ Karua's reaction attracted a lot of attention and criticisms from those who opposed her.

According to a weblog posted by Amkeni Ngugu Zetu on Siasa Duni website, Martha Karua was categorically labelled unladysh in her remarks and behaviour at the crisis talks meeting. The writer went as far as describing her physical body—her legs as scarred. In the blog, Karua is described with the following words: proud, beacon of defiance, patron saint of the arrogant, goddess of the impervious and one who no man could ever pin down.⁶⁰⁸

⁶⁰⁶ Africanpress, "Breaking News: USA Releases List of Banned Kenyan Top Politicians and Businessmen" <http://africanpress.wordpress.com/2008/02/15/breaking-news-usa-releases-list-of-banned-kenyan-top-politicians-and-businessmen/> (accessed 7th May 2010).

⁶⁰⁷ BBC, "Kenya Government Anger with Annan", BBC <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/7242451.stm> (accessed 8th May 2010).

⁶⁰⁸ Amkeni-Ndugu-Zetu, "Martha, Martha Wherefore Art Thou, Martha?," in *Siasa Duni* (<http://siasaduni.blogspot.com/2008/02/martha-martha-wherefore-art-thou-martha.html>)(2008).

The blog went ahead, at least in every way to contrast Karua with Graça Machel, wife of Nelson Mandela, who reportedly quelled her (Karua) down during the meetings:

“...it had to take a lady to lay her low. Martha Karua was put in her place by the gracious lady of the South, in a good and proper dressing down reminiscent of a wayward school girl's encounter with the Head Girl...At which point the iron lady from Kirinyaga (Martha Karua) quickly thawed out and shrivelled out of our lives, leaving Mr Oren go and Mr Ruto to share broad grins.⁶⁰⁹

In response to Amkeni Ndugu Zetu comments on Karua, one unnamed responded said: “Martha Karua is operating under the spirit of Jezebel and wilding all that demonic spirit of sorcery, she confuses even Kibaki...”

From the above views, Martha Karua is described as proud, arrogant, defiant and non-conformist to male authority. These are attributes associated with a bad woman according to African and biblical gender ideologies. Martha Karua is portrayed as playing a man—in excess. As a woman she is expected to conform to male authority. There ambiguity of the verb “to lay her” suggests sexual overtones. As a woman, Karua is “naturally” expected to be laid under a man, but she defeats men and instead conforms to a fellow woman. Her behaviour is incongruent to African culture. She was placing herself so high above the men, making some like Mr Orengo and Ruto anxious. She is behaving foreign—that is the spirit of Jezebel. The intervention of Machel shrivels her down to her size that the African culture of the writer approves. Only in that way did the men get a sigh of relief and chance to share broad grins.

In 1992, it was reported in the media (Uganda Confidential newsletter) that Janet Museveni had been involved in a land wrangle with a certain family in Ntungamo district of Western Uganda. It was alleged that the land dispute made Janet to arrange for the murder of one of the boys, Aaron Kagondoki who was an undergraduate student of Makerere University. This media story influenced some enraged readers to equate Janet Museveni to the biblical Jezebel at least in practice:

“Mrs Janet Museveni and Her husband can be compared to Queen Jezebel and her husband in the Bible....(We still remember) the story of Aron Kagondoki,... a young Makerere (University) undergraduate who was greedily

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid.

murdered by Janet Museveni's boys around 1990 for daring to protest the seizure of their family land by Janet... Jezebel killed Naboth in order to take over his vine yard and give it to her husband king Ahab. In the same way Janet Museveni killed Aron Kagondoki to take over his piece of land which he had rightly refused to sell to Janet Jezebel Museveni"⁶¹⁰

Interestingly this is one of the few cases where the Jezebel link is grounded in the Old Testament text, and particularly the land-grab from Naboth. The very nature of the analogy points to land-ownership and public presence, like the problematic power of biblical queens. As in the Bible, where for example Sarah is blamed for the expulsion of Ishmael, the wife attracts the guilt and makes her husband relatively innocent. However, when I presented examples of contemporary Jezebel accusations to a group of graduate students of Uganda Christian University for analysis along other biblical stories of Jezebel in the Old Testament, 100% of the participants out rightly ruled out the validity and authenticity of the story, arguing that Janet Museveni, as popularly called Mama Janet is well a model of women and Christians in Uganda, who should not be equated to Jezebel in any way. The story was described as a malicious propaganda with intent to dim Janet Museveni's aura of respectability. The views of the participants in this contextual Bible study seemed to correspond with the general public views of lay people as Janet Museveni's name did not feature among the list of Jezebels. It can be said that according to the criteria used, Jezebel Museveni does not qualify to be Jezebel. From the foregoing analysis, one can confidently assert that Bible disposition and use is bizarre and selfishly designed to promote cultural ideological dispositions in favour of the patriarchy. We shall continue with this analysis in the next chapter where I am also advocating for a reading that will voice out the political portraits of biblical female politicians against the ideology that perpetuate the ostentatious iconography of political illegitimacy of the female gender.

⁶¹⁰ Mary Karooro Okurut, "Museveni Not Scared of Janet's Influence in N.R.M," *The Independent* (18th March, 2009). <http://www.independent.co.ug/index.php/column/insight/67-insight/716-museveni-not-scared-of-janets-influence-in-nrm> (accessed 5th April, 2009). In commenting to Okurut's article on-line, some people in Uganda likened Mrs Museveni to the Old Testament Jezebel. Three comments were posted by someone who is only identified as S.S, on 19.03. 09 at 18:08:24, 18:13:32 and 18:19:51 respectively.

7.0 FINAL ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

As stated earlier, the key problematics for postcolonial theory is a question of bodies that had been mutilated or absorbed into other bodies. East Africa as the rest of former colonial territories was mutilated and swallowed and digested by the western powers. The attainment of independence in 1960s so to say did not mean restitution of former colonial territories to their pre-colonial status. The resurrected countries have a lot in resemblance with the big bodies that had swallowed them. African was significantly changed and converted into the system of the colonizer and it is part of an inescapable global political and socio-economic niche, regulated by global communication and socio-economic forces. As global forces of liberation and empowerment sweep across the globe, Africa is not left out. I have to emphasize that we should dismantle socio-cultural institutions that still hold back the sections of humanity from effectively contributing to the transformation of their countries. The Bible, as a very powerful socio-religious and ideological tool, should be read in ways that is empowering and liberating. Colonizing and oppressive texts should be isolated and read in ways that give meaning and purpose to life.

Though the Bible is a very powerful book we cannot side-line its negative significance in Africa right from its advent in the nineteenth century. This has come mainly as a result of abusive, selfish and bizarre exegesis, in which readers have had a tendency of emphasizing Bible clauses that reinforce their own ideology and selfish motivations. The ideology and culture of the narrators is often mistaken as historical truth, which results into superimposing colonizing ideas with the end result of manipulation and paternalism over a certain section of the population. European imperialists used this method of Bible exposition during colonialism to their success; as also African nationalists who used same scriptures to fight back against the colonizer.

A great section of Africans revert to traditional gender roles when confronted with the question of women in politics. Women activism and political participation is understood as foreign—mainly western influence, and unafrican. Bible expositions are made to buttress African ideological gender bias that a woman has to be under a man. Bible ideology is understood as the natural, pristine and holy order of things as dictated by God and the patriarchy as ordained and holy human relations. The Bible, it can be

affirmed, offers religious credit and capital for African patriarchal ideological investments.

In this study I am advocating for a critical reading, or call it subversive reading of the Bible, which appreciates the standard and moral values; a reading that interacts with cognitive and affective domains as thinking, feeling and judging. It is a reading that asks questions of value and validity as “Is this true?” “Is it the case?” “Can I accept it?” It is a reading that goes back to the times of the writer and attempts to explore the environment and peculiar circumstances that influenced the writers’ choice of information as presented in the scriptures. This approach is what David Clines has called reading from *left to right*.

Reading the stories of Miriam, Michal, Jezebel and Athaliah subversively has revealed that royal women in the Bible had power and exercised a great degree of influence. Evidence from extra-biblical documents reveals that it was a common practice in the ancient Near East for royal women to exercise political significance locally and internationally. They were leaders with authority as queens and queen mothers significantly influencing national and international politics of their time. However, the narrators of the Hebrew Bible in their theological history of Israel and Judah do not give approval to the political roles of women in the socio-political development of Israel and Judah. The theo-political heroes of the narrators are men, who are servants of a male deity-Yahweh. They are the kings and Yahweh’s servants. The institution of queenship has been significantly killed off from the narratives.

The story of a woman as a leader in the Bible is not only ambiguous but also a sad one. A woman would not be appreciated when she takes a forefront role as a leader in the company of men or attempt to challenge male leadership. Such female politicians, as it has been done with Miriam, Michal, Jezebel and Athaliah, would be identified, tarnished and punished and then literally killed off by the narrators to pave way for continuity of male leadership legacy. The consistence by which female leadership is presented serves an ideological purpose that leadership is a gamble of men with the divine being.

The study reveals that the female biblical characters under this study have a common identity as radical women who challenge the patriarchy and are at the forefront of political leadership and activism. Challenging male leadership sums up into challenging the divine, which results into divine condemnation, punishment and death.

Their political and diplomatic roles are ignored by the writers. Identities of these female politicians are left to be deciphered from their names and their alleged crimes but not political resumes. Readers of the Hebrew Bible are left with an ambiguous imagination about the real nature of these women in ancient histories. Other queens and queen mothers, who are strategically presented inline of Davidic leadership, play the behind the political scene roles. These include Bathsheba, daughter of Eliam (2 Sam. 11:3) and the wife of David and mother of King Solomon; Maacah, the daughter of Abishalom (1 Kings 15:2), mother of king Asa; Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah (2 Kings 23:31) mother of King Jehoahaz and Zedekiah; and finally Nehushta, the daughter of Elnathan (2 Kings 24:15) mother of king Jehoiachin. They represent a type of queenship, which narrators approve, leaving activism of Michal, Jezebel and Athaliah as foreign and illegitimate to the political ideology of the Bible.

The challenge faced by a modern African Women is no longer White rule (imperialism), but patriarchy which dictates that only her brother is the local and national politician, and herself as a subject and a domestic servant. Patriarchy has been well institutionalized. The advent of colonialism and Christianity coalesced with African traditional cultures to concretize patriarchy. Patriarchy became the natural order, not only of colonial establishments, but also African heritage and biblical standard. Patriarchal stereotypes that the private is for women and the public (national) for men; which translates into ‘politics for men and homes for women’, have been inscribed and energized against the legitimacy of female gender in national politics.

Although the political system in the Bible is theocratic, monarchical or feudal, different from African liberal democracies, there is a great degree of similarities in relation to women freedom and right of political participation. In all, politics and women are meant for male domination. A woman is not supposed to challenge men. Both the Bible and African culture reprimand women who challenge men with isolation and negative publicity (portrayal). That “he, who pays the piper, calls the tune” is indicative in both biblical politics and African liberal democracy. The men, who own both politics and women, define rules for the women they admit into political circles: they should be women who exercise modesty and decency in their politicking.

Officially, liberal democracy promotes the equality of all human beings and the equal rights of women to leadership. But this is rarely realized, ironically even in the so called super democracies of the West (with UK’s women parliamentary representation

at 22% and USA at 16.8%). It goes beyond the remit of this study to look in depth at figures like Angela Merkel, Hilary Clinton, or Margaret Thatcher in 'Western' liberal democracies, but the complexities around their public personae are not entirely separate from the issues under discussion here. Potentially, there is a conflict between the old feudal tribal order in East Africa (bolstered by colonialism) and the new order of democratic constitutions. There is also a potential conflict between the Bible, and the doctrine of equality (including potentially equality in leadership). But in practice, the conflict is only technical, since female leadership is rarely realized in liberal democracies. And in countries like Uganda and Kenya, the Bible, the colonial legacy, older tribal cultures, and modern constitutions tend to get on rather well.

The Bible in Africa is a *living book*, in the way it addresses life issues of the people that are related to power, survival, life and death. It is also live and relevant to the ideological, social and spiritual biasness of life in Africa. Readers nourish their biasness with relevant scriptures (leaving out irrelevant ones) depending on life circumstances. Biblical clauses that promote patriarchal biasness are accepted and internalized where male authority is insecure.

A female gender in African politics causes anxiety and raises questions of legitimacy. Doctrines of gender equality and emancipation are perceived as foreign and feared to be dangerous and disturbing to the national and natural order. Women's political claims are understood to be unnatural and unnational. They are foreign demands that are contrary to national (internal) order and not supported by the godly words of the Bible. What is natural is that which is godly and national.

The rigidity of political prohibitions for female gender however, seems to depend much on women's level of political activism and how they impact on men's political security. In both the Bible and modern Africa, women are accepted into political circles, but only if they adhere to certain rules of modesty and decency, and maintaining the natural order of gender hierarchy. In the Bible, Bathsheba in Davidic kingdom is the model of that woman, but not Miriam, Michal, Jezebel or Athaliah.

The *left to right* reading of the stories of Miriam, Michal, Jezebel and Athaliah gives us what the *right to left* (traditional) reading does not enable us to capture and conceptualize. It is revealed that the political significance and activities of these biblical characters are creatively painted with colours of reprobation and malevolence, with their mutilated remains preserved in mausoleums of political rebels of ancient societies'

times for ideological purposes. They however remain a strong voice for the women of our times. They are a voice of women who have suffered political persecutions but have remained resilient to the political course against monopoly of the patriarchy, waging a good fight for the transformation of their societies. They are women whose political profiles can be retrieved and read with appreciation, than merely being referred to as evil women in history.

Politics and leadership in Africa, as also the Bible is much sexualized. In the story of Michal and Jezebel, these political leaders are placed in a sexual scene of a woman in the window.⁶¹¹ Jezebel is presented as beautifying herself to seduce the army general. Michal is presented in love for David and complaining about his sexual exposure in his naked dance in public. She is portrayed as a sexually jealousy women who is displeased with other women seeing David's nakedness. David on the contrary is presented as oblivious about the sexual implications of his dance. Michal is further denied conjugal relationship, and that marked the end of her political life in the history of Israel.

In Africa a political woman is a sexual figure. From colonial times, women who have participated in political struggles are called prostitutes. A woman's political success is today attributed to her sexual loyalty to some men. The society and the media are very critical about women's social and political interactions which are always sexualized. The notion of appropriate dressing code is significant as a way of desexualizing female politicians in accordance to African expectations of decency and modesty.

It is interesting to note that, Miriam and Michal in their stories sexualise men. Miriam complains about Moses' sexual life with a Cushite woman, while Michal complains about David's sexual exposure. In both cases, women are punished for sexualising the men. What is it about sexuality that earns these female politicians punishment? Whereas it is beyond the remit of this study to engage this topic further, as earlier noted nakedness and authority are immiscible. Nudity is sexual and sexuality is nudity. A combination of sexuality and authority is seen as a sign of weakness on the side of a leader. It is probably on this account that men like David in the Bible are

⁶¹¹ It is instructive to note that there are same occurrences in the Bible where the window scene is not sexualised: Sisera's mother is at the window (Judges 5:28), which is not sexualised. The window stress the location in the private sphere.

presented as womanless. To challenge the king's sexuality is otherwise telling him that "you are naked."

Besides, in Africa as also in the Bible, not all female politicians are 'prostitutes.' Women like Miriam, Deborah, Huldah and Esther, and also queens of Davidic line are not associated with "prostitution." In Uganda and Kenya, women who conform to the certain rules of decency, modesty, motherliness and behind—the scene politicking are not sexualized.

Family plays a significant role in modern African politics. In the Bible, Michal's family became an issue when she criticized David, and Miriam is punished and not her brother Aaron because she criticized her brother Moses. She is certainly put second before the male members of her family. Michal is identified severally as daughter of Saul. She is reminded of the fact that her family was rejected by Yahweh in political history of Israel. Dying childless signified that she had no male child to perpetuate her father's political and family history. Jezebel's family is mentioned in the story as daughter of Ethbaal, which is the basis of her unpopularity in Deuteronomic literature; and Athaliah is presented as a daughter of the Omrid royal family of northern Israel. She is presented as eradicating male members of her family. In African setting, female politicians have been required to be women who are married and with children. They are expected to be mothers and motherly. The unmarried or divorced politicians are called Jezebels and unmotherly. In some societies permission has to be sought by a woman from her husband before she contests for any political office. In some cases female politicians have had to move along with their husbands during campaigns to satisfy a marital requirement before their voters. Seeking for spousal permission and moving around with husbands reinscribes male authority over women; and undermines the legitimacy of a woman in her initiative to seek for public and political trust of her society to serve as a politician. Marriage however is a catch 22 situation for African female politicians. Whereas it is a requirement to enter politics, it becomes very difficult for the married politicians to balance their marital and motherly responsibilities with their political duties. On one hand, time spent in parliament or political field would mean time and rights denied to the family, and on the other attention given to the family would have serious political consequences for a female politician since she will become incompetent in her political duties and will not have time to lobby and strategize in preparation for the next elections as her male counterpart.

The misogynistic attitude towards female politicians in East Africa is summarized in the Jezebel figure. A political Jezebel in East Africa is a woman who is in the public domain; that has no respect for men and challenges the egos of men; who is not married or divorced; one with authority or asserts authority and a woman who exercise freedom of thought and will and has a great degree of independence from men. She is a woman who politically and sexually cross-dresses: who plays the man, usurps male authority. She is the queen behind the throne who exerts too much influence on the king. Jezebel is a woman who has left the private and stepped into the public domains; one who is out of the Kitchen and Bedroom and has entered into the boardrooms and legislative chambers on equal footing with men. She is speaking in public—in the council of men. She is the ill-mannered one who speaks when men are speaking. She is the woman who challenges the patriarchy and makes the entire paradigm of hegemonic masculinity anxious. She is too vocal, arrogant, not modest, not decent in her talk and dressing and disrespectful to men. She is a woman politician who is divorced, unmarried or unhusbandable; authoritative and masculine in character. She is a woman who cannot stay home and look after her husband and children. She is mobile and unmotherly according to African cultural expectations. This view is not just expressed by men; it is echoed and internalised by women. As one delegate to the 1995 Constitution draft put it:

“...women in politics, I am impressed they have come up but I would like to caution them on one thing. When they come to parliament they should behave in a motherly manner. It is embarrassing sometimes when a lady is in parliament and she conducts herself in a manner, which is unbecoming. It is not good for her moral turpitude and it affects her performance in her constituency....we need mature ladies in the House because those ones are more motherly and know how to respect themselves...another thing is that some ladies should avoid being arrogant to the opposite sex.”⁶¹²

The above view re-echo the inclinations of the African patriarchal ideology. Africa largely upholds to the strong tentacles of hegemonic masculinity, which dictate terms and set political parameters and boundaries for power and gender. The moral turpitude and performance of a female MP here envisaged is as a result of her political behaviour in relation to the paradigm of gender hierarchy. The one who respects men is

⁶¹² Tamale, *When Hens Begin to Crow: Gender and Parliamentary Politics in Uganda*, 123.

one who is well mannered and likely to perform better in her constituency. The relationship between a woman's political behaviours and performance at her constituency is totally unfathomable, and the fears expressed in the view above merely serve to highlight the anxiety in patriarchal system. The call for mature ladies in the house reveals a yearning for women who are custodians of patriarchy as promoters of gender differences, decency and modesty, but not those who challenge the patriarchy. The caution about more motherliness and less arrogance presupposes a call for conformity to certain rules by women in order to be accepted into men's club. The rule is that women can cross into politics (due to necessity) but they should remain wifely, motherly, decent and modest in speech, action, and dress-code. It is only by obeying these rules that they would be regarded as mature and well mannered.

Women who have failed to obey these rules are the social anomalies and are the Jezebels. They are the spoiled women of Africa who have rioted from the hegemonic masculinity and raged from exercising modesty and decency as expected of them by the African community and the readers of the Bible. Conversely, women politicians who are not Jezebels are those who are understood to have conformed to the rules. To return to the case of Janet Kataha Museveni, who was unanimously liberated from the category of 'Jezebel' by the respondents, Janet is perceived as a true African woman, who, although the wife of the president, Minister and MP has maintained decency and modesty right from her home, dress code to general conduct in parliament and public. In contrast with other women like Miria Matembe, Hon. Janet Museveni has not been an outspoken politician on controversial and topical issues like female emancipation. She is most vocal in promoting Christianity and traditional African morality in campaigns for virginity for young girls and poverty alleviation programs—both of which are associated with motherhood in an African setting. She remains an unrivalled icon of modest and decency across the region. She has for long won in the media survey, the title of "the best woman of the year" on grounds of proper dressing, Christian ethics, good wifely and reservation from political controversies. To the majority of Ugandans, Janet Museveni is known as mamma Janet. Because she has revered traditional values, mamma Janet Museveni is reciprocally protected by a pliant media:

“...behind the pristine and heavily-guarded gates to State House, Mr Yoweri Museveni and Ms Janet Kataha live like an ordinary African couple, lavishing and chiding

their children... Publicly, the First Lady appears reticent and calm. Associates say, in spite of the vast power that she wields, Ms Kataha has remained the dignified 'African' wife – letting Mr Museveni play the family head in the traditional sense."⁶¹³

"...she dresses traditionally and plainly, and tends towards a somewhat simplistic, New Testament view of the world, regarding herself as a Christian soldier called upon to fight the good fight for the moral revival in administrative public life."⁶¹⁴

In comparison with her Kenyan counterpart, the media reports that:

"Unlike in Kenya where First Lady Lucy Kibaki is generally viewed as a powerful but often disruptive presence on the political scene, Janet Museveni's behind-the-scenes hand in the unfolding events of Uganda's political landscape has never been in question."⁶¹⁵

Mamma Janet is therefore a model of ideal African female politician. She is the mamma—the motherly one; who is not arrogant and exhibits great respect for African patriarchy. She is less confrontational although very powerful in influencing political issues from behind the scenes. She is decent and modest in her politick. She is the modal of Bathsheba in the political sphere of Uganda.

What this study has showed me is that African women are brought up from their earliest years in the environment that believe that they should be submissive to the control of dominant male authority. African women grow up as part of the patriarchal heritage. As noted earlier, in her public appearances a female politician would mention her gender, strategically and significantly to send messages that she is recognizing the male authority of her audience. Men therefore expect and indeed want to be naturally respected by women. Although western civilization has brought in Africa tremendous social changes as both women and men are exposed to same opportunities and challenges (like education and civil service), the concept of equality is very superficial in African communities. When men's interests are threatened and their egos are challenged, men tend to disagree with gender equality and instead revert to their patriarchal sentiments. Men become defensive of biblical and African gender ideologies and show selfish attitudes towards female opponents. Biblical scriptures are interpreted

⁶¹³ Tabu Butagira, "Janet Museveni Opens up on Love, Family and Politics", Monitor publishers <http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/-/688334/923188/-/x061bu/-/index.html>.

⁶¹⁴ Timothy Kalyegira, "The Woman of Power", Daily Nation <http://www.nation.co.ke/News/africa/-/1066/533192/-/13r9nn7z/-/index.html> (accessed 7th October 2010).

⁶¹⁵ Ibid.

selectively and selfish to emphasis those texts that reinforce patriarchal cultural traditions. Women who have reached high political echelons remain haunted by the patriarchy. Specioza Kazibwe had to be beaten by her husband because she was not honouring the patriarchal pyramid of authority due to her demanding duties as the Vice President; that left her with no time to attend to the patriarchal dictates of a house wife. Other women like Miria Matembe have had to be called arrogant and unmotherly by their male counterparts, because they “speak like men.”

Current governments, as also colonial governments tend to legitimize a regime by introducing cosmetic reforms, which they use to control women’s political activism and consolidating positions in power. Though women have played significant roles in anti-colonial struggles and liberation movements as soldiers and intelligent persona, traditional gender roles are automatically redefine after victory, in which political leadership largely remain a prerogative of men, while women are demobilized or remain modest as men lead. There is a continued tendency to appoint women in positions of leadership as deputies to men. In Kenya, most women who hold ministerial posts are assistant ministers to men. The same is the case in other public offices, which has resulted into what is called the deputy syndrome.

In this study, it was revealed that all governments right from colonial times have or claim to have done *things* for women. Even tyrannical governments like that of Idi Amin claimed to have instituted policies to promote the course of women. However, the degree of what and how much is done is determined by political circumstances locally and internationally. The colonial government in Kenya introduced *Maendeleo ya wanawake* (MYWO) as a measure to tame women from participating in nationalistic movements like Mau-Mau, which had made the colonial government unpopular. The organization was inherited by the subsequent governments of Jomo Kenyatta and Arab Moi, but only as a means of checking and numbing women’s political nerves. In Uganda, Women organizations like Ugandan Council of Women (UCW) were sidelined and ignored by both colonial and post-colonial governments in national issues because women initially did not constitute a serious political threat. Later on, Idi Amin transformed UCW into the National Council of Women (NCW) in 1978 at the time his government was at its zenith of unpopularity, facing numerous criticisms and rebellions locally and internationally. Amin’s aim was to control local and national women’s association, and also petticoat his personality and government as one promoting the

welfare of women. Idi Amin realized that his government had committed numerous abuses against women; and rightly associated women organizations like ACFODE (which he suspended) with opposition to his government. He was nervous about women's opposition and their capability to oust his regime. NCW was later changed to National Association of Women's Organizations of Uganda (NAWOU) under NRM government of Mr Yoweri Museveni in 1988, which was placed under the ministry for Gender, Labour and Social Development. Other women's organizations followed and the course of women was crown by the introduction of Affirmative Action (AA) in the 1995 Constitution. Museveni is so proud of women achievement that he delights in reminding them about their past. On 8th March 2008, while presiding over the National Women's Day Celebration, the president said:

“Before the NRM came to power, women were considered as second class citizens whose role was to produce children, fetch firewood and cook food. When we came in we reversed all this and today women play a central role in society on the domestic to international scene”⁶¹⁶

In his statement the president is out rightly underplaying the female agency. The president claims that he and his colleagues gave women agency, a view that reinscribes the secondary status of women in politics. His statement serves to warn women that before he came to power, they were politically insignificant. He and his colleagues are the good angel or God figure being who gave women the political space. It serves to warn that, because he invited women into men's domain, it is him and his colleagues to set the rules. As evidenced by his reaction to radical and critical women like Miria Matembe, the rules of the game are that the president shall not condone any disloyalty, and expects total discipline, loyalty and humility of women constituency to his government. In this respect (for all Museveni's strategic use of, and distancing from, the Bible in his politics) he has a lot in common with the biblical God and the narrators of biblical texts, and as one who has paid the piper, he decides which tune he wants to hear.

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Appendix 1: List of Interview participants

1. Ainebyoona Augustus, Uganda Christian University, Mukono
2. Akankwasa Emmanuel, Uganda Christian University, Mukono
3. Akwech Chrysostom, Uganda Christian University, Mukono
4. Anonymous (Hon.) Northern Uganda, parliament of Uganda
5. Anonymous (Prof.) University of Nairobi
6. Apondi Oloo Abigail, (University of Nairobi)
7. Ariko Julious, Uganda Christian University, Mukono
8. Bagaga Laston, Uganda Christian University, Mukono,
9. Bako Christine Abia (Hon.) Woman representative Arua district, The Parliament of Uganda
10. Bibiana Winnie, Catholic University of East Africa (CUEA), Nairobi
11. Bonareri Nancy, University of Nairobi
12. Bwabale Alex Abraham, Mukono University,
13. Bwambale Alex Abraham, Uganda Christian University, Mukono
14. Driwaru Beatrice Fefia, Uganda Christian University, Mukono
15. Higenyi Johnick, Uganda Christian University, Mukono
16. Hunja Dorothy, Catholic University of East Africa (CUEA), Nairobi

17. Katungi Jackson, Uganda Christian University, Mukono
18. Khamale Nancy (University of Nairobi)
19. Kilimo Jebii Linah (Hon.) Member of Parliament, Marakwet constituency,
(Kenyan National Assembly)
20. Kiprop Fred, Uganda Christian University, Mukono
21. Kwambukha Winifred, Uganda Christian University, Mukono
22. Kwarisima Patrick, Uganda Christian University, Mukono
23. Kwikiriza Wilson, Uganda Christian University, Mukono
24. Kwogyerwa Ephraim, Uganda Christian University, Mukono,
25. Makua Benard, Catholic University of East Africa (CUEA), Nairobi
26. Masaba Paul, Uganda Christian University, Mukono
27. Matundura Godfrey, Catholic University of East Africa (CUEA), Nairobi
28. Mbuki M. Esther (University of Nairobi)
29. Mbula Beatrice Catholic University of East Africa (CUEA), Nairobi
30. Mukwaya Janet (Hon.) MP Mukono South Constituency, Ugandan Parliament)
31. Mulindwa Samuel, Uganda Christian University Mukono
32. Munini Elizabeth (University of Nairobi)
33. Munyuauki Mwithi Nelson (University of Nairobi)
34. Muthoni M. Maina (University of Nairobi)
35. Nagudi Erinah Wangwa, (Hon.) Mbale Women Representative in Parliament,
parliament of Uganda
36. Nakayima Sarah Igambi, Uganda Christian University, Mukono
37. Nalubwama Damalie (Uganda Christian University, Mukono)
38. Nampija Lukyamuzi Susan, (Hon.) MP Rubaga South Constituency, Ugandan
Parliament
39. Nangole Bilihah (University of Nairobi),
40. Nantaba Alice, Uganda Christian University Mukono
41. Nayiga Nabilah Sempala, (Hon.) Kampala Women representative in Parliament,
Parliament of Uganda
42. Ngatia Peter, Catholic University of East Africa (CUEA), Nairobi
43. Njoki Joyce, Catholic University of East Africa (CUEA), Nairobi
44. Njoroge Emanuel, Catholic University of East Africa (CUEA), Nairobi
45. Nsereko Gaster, (Rev.) Uganda Christian University, Mukono

46. Odiambo Victor, Catholic University of East Africa (CUEA), Nairobi
47. Oirere Daniel, University of Nairobi,
48. Orodriyo Pamela, Uganda Christian University, Mukono,
49. Wabwire Juliet N., Uganda Christian University, Mukono
50. Wairimu Anita Wanjohi, University of Nairobi
51. Wadada Bosco, Uganda Christian University, Mukono
52. Wamanya Alex, Uganda Christian University, Mukono,
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