

**GENDER AND POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION IN KENYA: A CASE STUDY
OF WOMEN IN LUOLAND, 1895-2002.**

DOROTHY A. NYAKWAKA

**A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School in Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History of
Egerton University**

EGERTON UNIVERSITY

OCTOBER, 2013

COPYRIGHT

DOROTHY A. NYAKWAKA

All rights reserved. No part of this thesis may be reproduced, stored in an retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the author or Egerton University.

© 2012

DECLARATION AND APPROVAL

DECLARATION BY CANDIDATE

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for examination in any other university.

Signature _____

Date _____

Dorothy A. Nyakwaka

Admission No 11/0194/07

APPROVAL BY SUPERVISORS

This thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as the University supervisors

Signature _____

Date _____

Prof. Mildred J. Ndeda

Department of History, Religion and Philosophy,
Jaramogi Oginga University,
BONDO, Kenya.

Signature _____

Date _____

Prof. Catherine Kitetu

Department of Literature, Languages and Linguistics,
Egerton University,
P.O. Box 536,
EGERTON, Kenya.

DEDICATION

To my beloved parents, Mr. Peter A. Nyakwaka and Mrs Philister A. Nyakwaka, for shaping my life, having unwavering confidence in my ability to achieve academically and believing in me. Thank you.

To my sons, Jack P. Nyambok Obudho and Joseph W. Maira Obudho: the source of my inspiration.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have been completed without assistance from a number of institutions and individuals. I wish to thank Egerton University for paying my fees and providing a research grant. I also thank the Council for Research and Development in Africa (CODESRIA) for providing partial grant for this project.

I would also like to sincerely thank my two supervisors, Prof. Mildred J. Ndeda and Prof. Catherine Kitetu. Although they are very busy scholars, both of them patiently read through every chapter of this thesis, and offered valuable advice and encouragement. I am greatly indebted to them.

I also owe gratitude to Professor Bethwell A. Ogot, the Chancellor of Moi University, who, in spite of his busy schedule, found time to discuss this work with me and to participate in the project as one of my informants. I am also grateful to my colleagues in the Department of History at Egerton University, (Prof H.S.K Mwaniki, Dr. Josiah Osamba, Prof. Reuben Matheka, Dr. Isaac Tarus, Dr. Daniel Kandagor and Mr. Evans Kiigi) for shouldering my teaching load while I was studying. My special thanks go to my office-mate, Dr. Kerata Babere Chacha, for discussions on genders issues and for sharing his books and articles with me.

I also owe gratitude to my research assistant, Gordon Onyango Omenya, and the staffs of the various resource centres where I collected data for this study. The centres include the Kenya National Archives and all the major libraries in Kenya.

Special thanks are also due to Mr. Allam Kago for meticulously typing this work, Professor Felicia A. Yieke and Prof Reuben Matheka for editing it, and Mr Samuel Ojode for drawing the maps. I am also grateful to my brothers and sisters,(Tony, Sippy, Ben, Monica, Alphonse and John Mark) for moral support and encouragement.

Finally, I dedicate this thesis to my beloved parents, Mr. Peter A. Nyakwaka and Mrs Philister A. Nyakwaka, for walking with me in my academic journey. This work is also dedicated to my sons, Jack Peter Nyambok Obudho and Joseph Walter Maira Obudho. Thank you for giving me the much-needed peace, support and encouragement when studying and writing this thesis and may God bless you.

ABSTRACT

The impact of colonialism on African women and the transformation of their roles in the social, economic and political spheres has been the focus of many Africanist scholars. However, most of the works focus on African women generally. The current study specifically, focuses on Luo women in Kenya. It is an inquiry into the gendered political transformation the Luo have undergone from 1895 – 2002. It specifically analyses the role of women in pre-colonial Luo society. It also examines how the integration of the Luo community into the colonial system impacted on women. It further discusses how colonialism marginalised the women and how the independent Kenyan state has continued with the same legacy. The study has included the voices of the few female political leaders such as; Grace Onyango, Phoebe Asiyu, Grace Ogot, Mama Uhuru: Magdalene Aboge Alila, Caroline Oguta and Roseline Aricho in the struggle against political marginalisation. Finally, it analyses the democratic transition in Kenya and how it impacted on Luo women. The study used two theoretical frameworks to interrogate the objectives. The liberal feminism and gender theory were used as tools of historical analysis. The two perspectives captured the roles of women in the period under study. The perspectives show how the gender roles were transformed, historically and culturally over time. The theories were used to show how the few women who challenged marginalisation worked within the societal structures to bring about changes for the women. The women politicians worked to change policies and to introduce new strategies such as Affirmative Action so as to have women integrated into national politics. The study is based on data from both primary and secondary sources. The data was analysed using the theoretical tools to explain the gendered political transformation that has taken place in Luoland. The study established that in the pre-colonial Luo society, women were actively involved in every aspect of the societal life, that is, social, economic and political. The political was closely fused with the economic and social spheres. Medicine women and prophetess for example made decisions that impacted the whole community. This fused version of politics would end with the integration of the Luo society and the colonial state, whereby the public sphere and domestic sphere were divided, thus locking women out of politics. The marginalisation of women in politics is as a result of a combination of factors; namely, colonial legacy, lack of education, lack of funds, political violence and abuse, and party-politics to mention but just a few. The study findings show a paucity of women in political positions, reflecting the existence of an unfavourable climate for women's political initiative. In addition, it reveals that the democratisation process, beginning with the introduction of multiparty politics in 1991 has not, empowered Luo women in terms of political gains.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

COPYRIGHT.....	ii
DECLARATION AND APPROVAL	iii
DEDICATION.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
ABSTRACT.....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vii
LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF MAPS	ix
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	x
GLOSSARY OF TERMS	xii
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.0 Background to the Study	1
1.1 Area of Study	3
1.2 Statement of the Problem	3
1.3 Objectives of the Study	4
1.4 Research Premises.....	4
1.5 Justification of the Study.....	5
1.6 Literature Review	6
1.7 Theoretical Framework	14
1.8 Scope and Limitation	18
1.9 Methodology	19
CHAPTER TWO	28
LUO WOMEN BY THE EVE OF COLONIALISM	28
2.0 Introduction	28
2.1 Historical Background of the Luo	28
2.2 Women in Pre-colonial Luo Society.....	30
2.3 Religion	35
2.4 Economic Organization.....	37
2.5 Gender and Political Organisation	41
CHAPTER THREE:	46
WOMEN AND EARLY COLONIAL POLITICS, 1895 - 1939.....	46
3.0 Introduction	46
3.1 The Establishment of Colonial rule In Luo Nyanza.....	46
3.2 The Colonial Tax System.....	47
3.2.1 The Impact of Colonial Taxation on Luo Women.....	51
3.3 Colonial Education and its Impact on Luo Women	55
3.4 Women and Colonial Political Structures	62
3.4.1 Colonial Policies and their Impact on Women	63
3.5 The Impact of Colonial Labour Policies on Luo Women	70
3.6 Conclusion.....	73
CHAPTER FOUR.....	75
WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENTS IN THE LATER COLONIAL PERIOD, 1939 –	
1963.....	75
4.0 Introduction	75
4.1 Women and Taxation in Luoland, 1939 - 1963	76
4.2 Luo Women and Education.....	77

4.3	Women and Colonial Labour Policies in Luoland	82
4.4	Kenya’s Struggle for Independence: Where are the Luo Women?.....	93
4.5	Women and the Mau Mau Movement.....	97
4.6	A Profile of “Mama Uhuru”: Magdalene Aboge Alila	103
4.7	Women Groups in the Colonial Era: The Maendeleo ya Wanawake Movement (Progress among Women Clubs)	108
4.8	Conclusion.....	109
CHAPTER FIVE		111
TRENDS AND TRANSITIONS IN THE POLITICAL SCENE IN KENYA (1963 – 1985): WHERE ARE THE LUO WOMEN?.....		111
5.0	Introduction	111
5.1	Women in the Kenyan Political Scene: 1963 - 1975	112
5.2	Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organisation	120
5.3	Women’s Education	125
5.4	Education for Luo Girls.....	131
5.5	Women’s Labour, 1963 – 1985.....	135
5.6	Conclusion.....	141
CHAPTER SIX.....		143
PROFILES OF LUO WOMEN POLITICIANS AND A REJOINDER FROM B.A OGOT		143
6.0	Introduction	143
6.1	Grace Onyango in Politics.....	144
6.2	Phoebe Asiyu: Most Influential Luo Woman	167
6.3	Grace Emily Akinyi Ogot: The First Luo Woman Assistant Minister	183
6.4	Councillor Caroline Atieno Ogot	190
6.5	Councillor Roselyne Aricho.....	194
6.6	A Rejoinder by Professor Bethwell Allan Ogot: Grace Ogot’s spouse	198
6.7	Conclusion.....	202
CHAPTER SEVEN		204
LUO WOMEN IN KENYA’S POLITICS OF TRANSITION AND DEMOCRATISATION, 1985 – 2002		204
7.0	Introduction	204
7.1	Women in the Era of Political Pluralism.....	205
7.2	The Restoration of Multi-Party Politics	207
7.3	Luo Women and the Challenges of the Multi-party Era	213
7.4	Strategies for Overcoming Challenges.....	222
7.5	The 1995 Beijing Women’s Conference.....	225
7.6	Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Movement	227
7.7	Women, Education and Labour.....	229
7.8	Conclusion.....	231
CHAPTER EIGHT		233
CONCLUSION.....		233
BIBLIOGRAPHY		240
LIST OF INFORMANTS		258

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: Female and Male Attendance in Kenyan Schools in 1953	79
Table 4.2: Second World War Casualties from 3-9-1939 - 30 -9-1946	85
Table 5.1: Membership of Kenya National Assembly by Year and Gender	120
Table 5.2: The Number Of Children By Class 1963	132
Table 5.3: Primary Classes in Kisumu Municipality	135
Table 5.4: Community Development Department.....	140
Table 6.1: The Results for 1979 Elections: Kisumu Town.....	166
Table 6.3: Karachuonyo Constituency, 1979.....	172
Table 6.4: Election Results for 1983 Karachuonyo Constituency	178
Table 6.5: Nomination Results For Gem Constituency 1988	189
Table 7.1: Parliamentary Women’s Participation 1963 – 2002.....	220
Table 7.2: Percentage distribution of population by province and sex in Kenya of reading ability in any language. 1995	230

LIST OF MAPS

MAP 1: THE LOCATON OF STUDY AREAS, GEM, KARACHUONYO AND KISUMU OWN CONSTITUENCIES	xiv
--	------------

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAWORD	Association African Woman in Research and Development
ADC	African District Council
COTU	Central Organization of Trade Unions
CMC	Church Mission Society
CNC	Chief Native Commissioner
CCGD	Collaborative Centre for Gender and Development
DC	District Commissioner
DEB	District Education Board
DO	District Officer
ECWD	Education Centre for Women Democracy
FIDA	International Federation of Women Lawyers
FORD	Forum for the Restoration of Democracy
IPPG	Inter -parliamentary Parties Group
KADU	Kenya African Democratic Union
KAU	Kenya African Union
KANU	Kenya African National Union
KFL	Kenya Federation of Labour
KFRTU	Kenya Federation of Registered Trade Unions.
KPU	Kenya People's Union.
KNA	Kenya National Archives
KICOMI	Kisumu Cotton Mills
KWPC	Kenya Women's Political Caucus
LEGCO	Legislative Council
LNC	Local Native Councils
LUTATCO	Luo Thrift and Trading Corporations
LKWV	League of Kenya Women Voters
MP	Members of Parliament
MYWO	Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organization
NARC	National Rainbow Coalition
NCWK	National Council of the Women of Kenya
PC	Provincial Commissioner

RAWA	Ramogi Institute Welfare Association
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programmes
Sh(s)	Shilling(s)
UN	United Nations (Organization)
YWCA	Young Women Christian Association

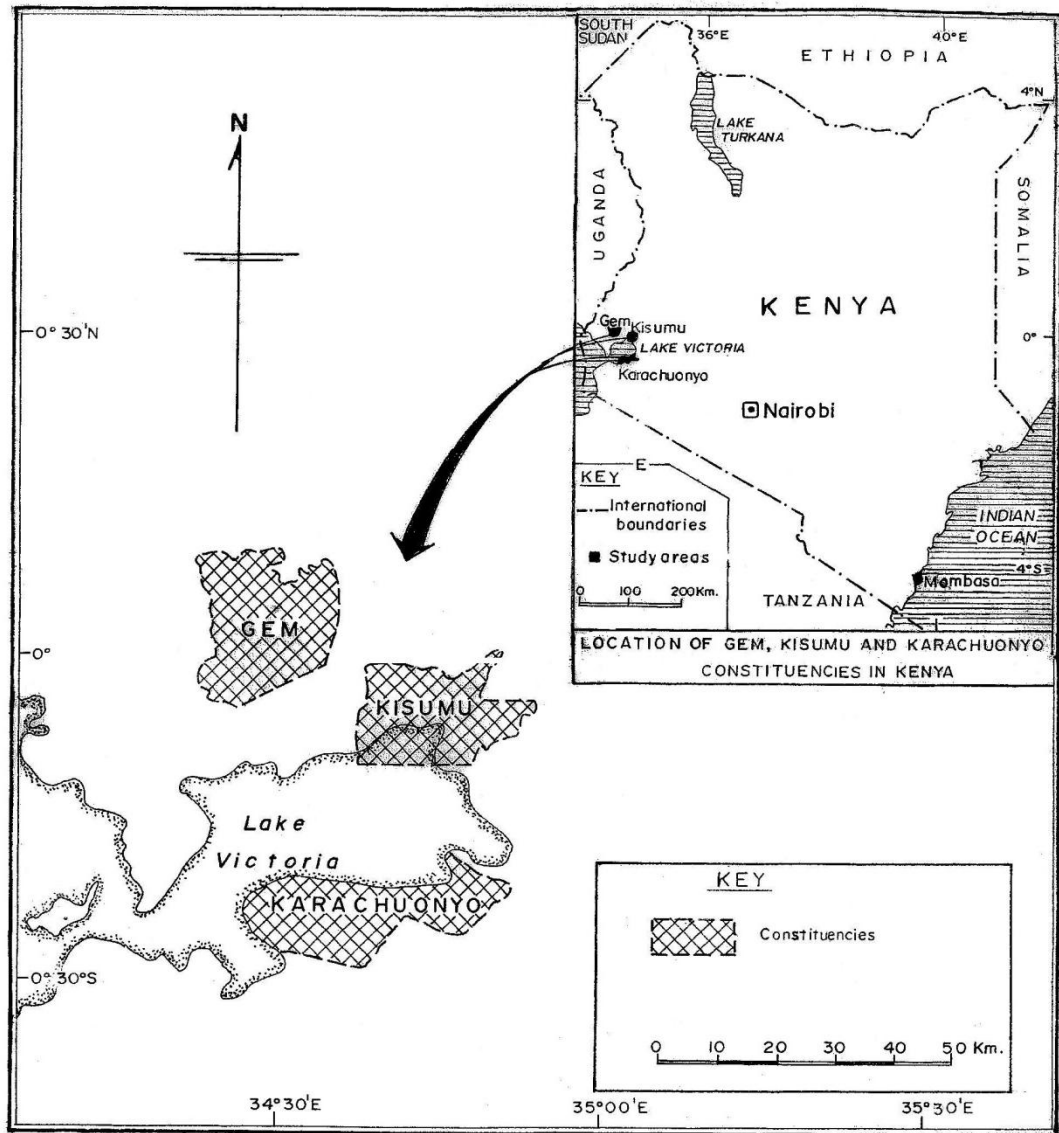
GLOSSARY OF TERMS¹

<i>Anyuola</i>	A group of people descended from the same grandfather
<i>Buch piny</i>	Territorial Council
<i>Dak</i>	A pot for storing grains
<i>Dapi</i>	A pot for storing drinking water
<i>Dhoot</i>	Clan
<i>Jagam</i>	A go- between in a relationship
<i>Joka</i>	“People of” (this or that place)
<i>Jokakwaro</i>	Descendants of the same grandfather
<i>Jodak</i>	Tenants
<i>Jobilo</i>	Medicine men or women
<i>Jonawi</i>	People possessed by spirits
<i>Kit mikayi</i>	The first wife’s stone
<i>Mikayi</i>	First wife
<i>Msumba</i>	A bachelor
<i>Mlolongo (Kiswahili)</i>	Queue
<i>Ndundu ya atumia(kikuyu)</i>	Women’s Council
<i>Nyar</i>	“ Daughter of ”
<i>Nyasaye</i>	God
<i>Nyombo</i>	Dowry
<i>Ohigla</i>	A small pot used for cooking fish
<i>Ogwang</i>	A wild cat
<i>Osumba mrwayi</i>	A military strategist
<i>Pim</i>	An elderly woman or grandmother
<i>Piny Owacho</i>	“The People’s Voice”
<i>Pouth min</i>	Land belonging to one’s mother
<i>Ruoth</i>	Chief
<i>Simba</i>	A hut for a bachelor
<i>Siwindhe</i>	Nursery for young children

¹ All terms are in the dholuo language unless otherwise indicated.

<i>Thuondi</i>	Brave people whether male or female
<i>Wuon dala</i>	Owner of the homestead
<i>Wuon ot</i>	Owner of the house

MAP 1: THE LOCATON OF STUDY AREAS, GEM, KARACHUONYO AND KISUMU OWN CONSTITUENCIES



Source: Kenya Administrative Boundaries Map, SK 81A ed. 4, 1998.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the Study

A sizeable number of studies¹ examine the political, social cultural and economic position of women in Africa. A number of these studies² demonstrate the fact that women's roles in pre-colonial Africa varied extensively across Africa's multiple ethnic communities. In some pre-colonial African communities, women exercised extensive authority³. Boserup, for example has demonstrated that African women were economically productive and independent.⁴ In Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal and Guinea, many women had achieved economic successes as market traders.

On the area of leadership scholars have established that in some countries women were leaders, councillors and spiritual figures. For example, *omu* among the Delta Igbo of Nigeria commanded considerable respect and authority as a leader among her subjects. In some Kenyan communities the people assigned economic, social and political roles and positions to both men and women on the basis of gerontocracy. For example, elderly women among the Kikuyu and Meru communities formed women's councils, which dictated behaviour patterns for their members and enforced sanctions when necessary. This provided Kenyan women with fora for participating in societal matters. Thus, the gender inequality that persists today was not a creation of the pre-colonial era.

Studies carried out among the Luo during this period point out that elderly women were often consulted on a variety of issues, and a few women even had leadership positions in the councils of elders.⁵ Also, the women derived political clout through their roles in the economic and social spheres of society. The women also had a say in the management of women's affairs as well as influencing men's affairs. Politics in pre-

¹ M. J. Hay and Sharon Stichter (eds) *African Women South of the Sahara*, (London, 1991), N. J. Hafkin and E. G. Bay (eds) *Women in Africa: Studies in Social and Economic Change* (Stanford, 1996), E. Boserup, *Women's Role in Economic Development* (New York, 1970) T. Kanogo, *African Womanhood in Colonial Kenya, 1900-1950*, (Oxford, 2005).

² Ibid.

³ M.J.Hay and Stichter(eds) *African Women South of the Sahara*.

⁴ E.Boserup, *Women's Role in Economic Development*.

⁵ M.J. Ndeda, "The women's Subordination in African Independent Churches: The Case of Nomiya Luo Church" *The Eastern African Journal of Historical and Social Sciences Research*, Vol 1: 10-13, 1997, pp. 10-34. See T.O. Ayot, "The Position of Women in Luo Societies: Case study of Jok Onyango, A.D. 1750 – 1920" Ph.d Thesis Kenyatta University, 1990.

colonial society was inclusive in that it was fused with the social and economic aspects of life.

Hay observes that in many parts of Africa, colonialism altered the status of women and reduced their powers through the imposition of western conceptions of state and society, women, family and gender.⁶ The colonial system that was established introduced in Africa, embodied a western notion of state and society with its distinction between the public and the private spheres and its complimentary ideas about women, family and gender⁷. Colonial administration undermined women's traditional bases of influence, authority and power. The administrators who were exclusively male, set out to make African women more like their European counter parts – who were basically housewives.⁸ The colonial administrators also governed through indigenous male authorities, thereby formalizing male institutions at the expense of the female equivalents such as *Omu* (Women leader) among the Igbo. The marginalization of women's institutions was perpetrated through colonial policies such as; education, land, taxation, forced and migrant labour to mention but a few. When colonial authorities began to create a system of private property rights in Kenya, they extended those rights to men only because ownership in the West was historically a male privilege.⁹

A considerable number of studies on the Luo during the colonial and post-colonial periods focus on the impact of colonialism on the economic, political and social spheres of the community.¹⁰ Despite the existence of all these studies, there are no studies on the gendered political transformation that took place in the wider Luo Nyanza in the period between 1895 and 2002. But Luo Nyanza is a unique area owing to the role

⁶ J.Hay, and Stichter (eds) *African Women South of the Sahara*, (New York, 1995).

⁷ S.M. Waiyego, "Engendering Political Space: Women's Political Participation in Kangema, Murang'a District, 1963 – 2002"; M.A. Thesis, Kenyatta University (2004), p.2.

⁸ J. O'Barr, "African Women in Politics" in M.J. Hay and S. Stichter (eds) *African Women South of the Sahara* (New York, 1995), pp. 56 – 62.

⁹ S.M.Waiyego, "Engendering Political Space"

¹⁰ M. J.Ndeda "Women and Development Since Colonial Times" in W.R. Ochieng (ed) *Historical Studies and Social Change in Western Kenya: Essays in Memory of Professor G.S. Were*, (Nairobi, 2002), Atieno-Odhiambo and W.D. Cohen, *Siaya: The Historical Anthropology of an African Landscape*, (London, 1989). J.M. Butterman, "Luo Social Formations in Change: Karachuonyo and Kanyam Kago, 1800-1945" Ph.D Thesis, Syracuse University (1979). M.J. Hay, "Economic Change in LUoland: Kowe, 1890-1945" Ph.D Thesis University of Wisconsin (1972). P.O. Ndege, "Struggles for the Market: The political Economy of Commodity Production and Trade in Western Kenya, 1929 – 1939" Ph.D Dissertation, West Virginia University (1993). W.R. Ochieng, "Colonial Famines in Luoland, Kenya, 1905 – 1945" *Transafrican Journal of History*, vol. 77 (1988). B.A. Ogot "British Administration in the Central Nyanza District of Kenya 1900 – 1960", *Journal of African History*, 4,2. 1953. Oginga Odinga, *Not yet Uhuru* (Nairobi, 1992). B.A. Ogot; (ed) *Politics and Nationalism in Colonial Kenya*, (Nairobi, 1972). T. Ayot, "The Position of Women in Luo Societies: Case Study of Jok Onyango, A.D 1750-1920" "Ph.D Thesis Kenyatta University, 1990.

of Luo women in the struggle for independence and given that Luo women were the first to contest for and win parliamentary seats in independent Kenya. This study therefore seeks to fill the gap by undertaking a historical inquiry into the gendered political transformation that took place among the Luo with a focus on three constituencies; Gem, Karachuonyo and Kisumu Town.

1.1 Area of Study

Luo women, the subject of this study mainly inhabit Nyanza Province in Kenya. A large number of Luo women however live outside the province. This study was confined to the geographical limits of the three constituencies of Gem, Karachuonyo and the former Kisumu Town (Now Kisumu East and West constituencies) (See Map Pg xiii).

Gem constituency is located in Siaya County. Politically, the county has five constituencies, that is Alego Usonga, Ugenya, Bondo, Rarieda and Gem. Gem has a population of 180,697 people¹¹. Karachuonyo constituency on the other hand, is located in Homa Bay County. It is one of the constituencies in the District. Karachuonyo has a population of 153,839 people.¹² Finally, Kisumu Town constituency is located in Kisumu County. The County has many constituencies including, Kisumu Town East and Kisumu Town West which were both created from the original Kisumu Town constituency that Grace Onyango represented. The population for both constituencies is 402,151 people.¹³

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Women in Kenya form about fifty-two percent of the population. They constitute a vital national resource whose ideas, creativity and concern for social cohesion can help bring about positive change in all spheres of the society. By their numerical strength, women have the capacity to influence their representation in decision-making institutions in the country. However, this potential has not been fully exploited anywhere in Kenya in general and in the Luo community in particular. The marginalisation of Luo

¹¹ Government of Kenya, *Siaya District Development Plan 2008-2012* (Nairobi, 2009). See also Government of Kenya, *The 2009 Kenya Population and Housing Census Vol. 1B. Population Distribution by Political Units* (Nairobi, 2009).

¹² Government of Kenya, *Rachuonyo District Development Plan, 2008 – 2012*, (Nairobi, 2009). See also, Government of Kenya, *The 2009 Kenya Population*.

¹³ Government of Kenya, *Kisumu East District Development Plan, 2008 – 2012* (Nairobi, 2009). See also, Government of Kenya, *The 2009 Kenya Population*.

women in politics in independent Kenya can not be resolved without an understanding of its genesis in the colonial era.

This study is a historical inquiry into the gendered political transformation that took place in Luoland between 1895–2002. The study was guided by the following research questions:

- i. What roles did women play in the pre-colonial Luo society?
- ii. How did the integration of the Luo into the colonial state impact on the roles of women in Luoland?
- iii. Did Luo women participate in the struggle for independence?
- iv. What factors influenced the political engagement of a few Luo women in independent Kenya.
- v. Finally, how did the democratic transition in Kenya impact on the Luo women?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

In order to clearly capture the gendered transformation that has taken place in Kenyan political sphere in general and in Luo land in particular, the study was guided by the following objectives:

- i. To examine the roles of women in the pre-colonial Luo Society.
- ii. To analyse the impact of colonialism on Luo women.
- iii. To establish the role played by Luo women in the struggle for Kenya's independence.
- iv. To analyse the factors that influenced the political involvement of the Luo women in independent Kenya.
- v. To examine the status of Luo women in the political transition in Kenya.

1.4 Research Premises

- i. Luo women had important decision-making roles in the community during the pre-colonial era.
- ii. Colonialism systematically undermined political roles of Luo women, through its political and socio-economic policies.
- iii. Luo women participated actively in Kenya's struggle for independence.

- iv. The Kenyan government has continued to undermine the political roles of Luo women even after independence.
- v. Luo women have been marginalised in the recent democratic political transition in Kenya.

1.5 Justification of the Study

In Kenya, women make up fifty-two percent of the population. However, they do not often feature in standard history works. Zeleza¹⁴ notes that the documentation of historical change in Africa has been biased against women. This is also true in the Kenyan case. Ochwada¹⁵ in his work asserts that Kenyan women are invisible in most of the historical works on Kenya. Pala¹⁶ observes that local level research is needed to bring to cognition the social, economic and political realities that grassroots women are subjected to.

This study contributes to the understanding of the debates over the political status of women in the three constituencies that is; Gem, Karachuonyo and Kisumu. The study fills in a gap in Kenya's historiography by making Luo women more visible.

Mama¹⁷ posits that perhaps it is because women are so marginally involved in government in Africa that scholars have been slow to examine the gender dynamics in statecraft and politics. Yet, she adds that it is precisely, in the areas of statecraft, politics and government that at least until recently the bulk of national resources and decision making power has been concentrated, and from which women have been excluded. It is because of this exclusion that the constitutional and legal status of women's participation in all levels of governance have long been taken as key indicators of the general level of a country's democracy. The fact is that in Africa in general and Kenya in particular, women constitute a historically oppressed and marginalised group inspite of the fact that they constitute a key national resource. Women's creative solutions, contributions and concerns for cohesiveness of the social fabric can help change the quality of life in the society. This study contributes useful knowledge in the understanding of gender

¹⁴ P.T. Zeleza, "Gender Biases in Africa's Historiography" In A. Iman, A. Mama and F. Sow(eds) *Engendering African Social Sciences*, (Dakar, 1997) pp. 81-115.

¹⁵ H. Ochwada, "Gender Analysis: The Stunded Discourse in Kenya's Historiography" *Africa Development*, Vol. XX, No 4., (Dakar, 1995), pp. 11-28.

¹⁶A. Pala et al, *The Participation of Women in Kenya Society*, (Nairobi, 1978).

¹⁷ A. Mama, *Women Studies and Studies of Women in Africa During the 1990s*, (Dakar, 1991).

inequality in politics in Kenya. It offers significant historical interpretation that can be useful to those women and men struggling to attain gender equality in politics.

Women hold the winning vote in any democratic political context in Kenya because of their numerical superiority. In spite of all their roles and the fact that all policies effected are likely to affect them more than any one else, they are rarely engaged in the political process. There is a glaring gender imbalance in the political sphere. Thus by looking at the marginalisation of women, changing the long standing colonial practices and traditions which sustain and reproduce gender inequalities is fundamental to the agenda of women's movement in Kenya. This research therefore, is a necessary instrument in influencing some of these changes. Moreover, the study findings are relevant to specialists and developmental agents (project coordinators, economists, agriculturalists, educationists, social workers, women researchers and other interested parties) in their efforts to create a more inclusive society.

Finally, this study also contributes useful knowledge in sensitising Kenyan women to the need to increasingly participate in the governance of their country. It is a tool for analysing changing political situations for women. Luo women are chosen because they were among the first few women politicians in independent Kenya.

1.6 Literature Review

This section examines the relevant literature and related research on the study. Much scholarly attention has been focussed on African women especially in the second half of the twentieth century. However, the issue of women and politics has only recently attracted attention in general political discourse and intellectual analysis. Consequently, relatively little has been written on the subject and studies that have been conducted on African women have neglected the areas of governance, statecraft and politics. Moreover, the few studies on African women tend to focus on issues traditionally associated with women and generally located in the domestic domain such as the family, subsistence economies and other socio-cultural institutions. The literature has been reviewed as per the research problem and thematically.

Beginning with the pre-colonial period, most scholars agree that African women were engaged in both the domestic and public spheres of their societies. O' Barr ¹⁸ while

¹⁸ J.O'Barr, "African Women in Politics" pp. 140-155.

writing on African women in politics, asserts that it is not easy to differentiate economics, religious power from political power in pre-colonial African societies. In this work, she argues that in most accounts of political systems, there is the assumption that the action is with the males and that women are peripheral to the political events. She points out that this view was less true in Africa, where women were economic, social and political actors in their own right. In her work she discusses the various ways in which women were directly and indirectly involved in politics. She states that the women used their political power as individuals or groups. Women's direct political power included the following ; their involvement in selecting leaders, holding elected or appointed offices and using resources for desired ends. Women's indirect powers on the otherhand included the following; withdrawal, evocation of the supernatural and manipulation through males that is, sons, fathers and husbands. This work, though general because it covers the whole continent provides a basis for analysing Luo women's political engagement during pre-colonial period. It is central in our study in that it identifies the economic, social and political roles of African women during the pre-colonial era and also examines the fusion between all these roles. Thus the work provides a framework for understanding African women in this era. The weakness of this work however, is that it covers the whole of sub-Saharan region. The present work on Luo women is a micro study on the women's political engagement; it builds on the foundation of O' Barr's work.

K. Okonjo¹⁹ also focuses on this era and studied the Igbo women in Nigeria. She describes the system that operated among the Igbo in Nigeria as a "dual -sex system" in which political interest groups were defined and represented by sex. Each sex generally managed its own affairs and had its own kinship institutions, age grades, and secret and title societies. This system recognised that the activities assigned to women in the sexual division of labour were explicitly political. Women's realm included control of markets; from this sector emerged the *Omu* the Igbo women monarch, she was regarded as mother of all her citizens, and her roles was complementary to that of the *Obi* the male monarch. The *omu* had her own cabinet parallel to that of the *Obi*. *Omu's* general sphere was the market place and women's interests. But, she had jurisdiction over men too in market matters or when men brought cases involving their wives or other women, that were not settled amicably at the local level. Although, based on a West African community this

¹⁹ K. Okonjo, "The Dual-Sex Political System in Operation: Igbo Women and Women and Community Politics in Midwestern Nigeria" in (eds) N Hafkin and G. Bay (eds) *Women in Africa: Studies in Social Economic Change*, (Stanford, 2005) pp. 45-58.

work is important to the present study in that it provides a framework from which to study Luo women's involvement in politics.

Berger²⁰ in her work among the interlacustrine kingdoms of East Africa observes that women were ordinarily expected to know nothing about politics. Yet institutions existed by which women could rise above the subordinate status assigned to them. The main vehicles for this were spirit mediumship cults. Though these cults operated in the religious spheres, there were no hard and fast lines separating religion and politics. There can be no question that women mediums acted in quasi-political roles. For example, when a woman became a spirit medium, she gained political power normally reserved for the men. A woman medium judged in trials, sat on a stool and accepted greetings as a chief. Indeed, a few mediums attained prominence that they presided with the king in ceremonies of spiritual renewal of the entire kingdom. In some instances, according to Berger's work, the women took on the attributes of kings, gathering large entourages, collecting tribute, being carried on litters and consolidating their positions in the manner of male monarchs. Ndeda²¹ tells us in her work that the Luo too had women mediums who had quasi-political power but in certain cases, they had power over the whole community. Both works on women mediums are central for this present day providing the framework for our analysis of Luo women's political roles. Both works show the complex processes through which political power was exerted in pre-colonial societies. The degree or type of women's political participation both as individuals and as a group has been under reported and the present has frequently been mistaken for the past. This work fills in the gap.

Atieno-Odhiambo and Cohen²² in the work on Siaya, discusses the role of the Luo women in medical therapy and psychotherapy. They observe that the elderly women also known as *pim* had vital roles in society. The women were in charge of nurturing and educating young children and socializing them to a world wider than the household. This work is important for the present study in that it expounds on the socialization roles of elderly women. However, it does not say anything on their political roles. This study builds on this work by looking at the political roles of the elderly Luo women. These

²⁰ I. Berger, "Rebels or Status – Seekers? Women as Spirit Mediums in East Africa" in N. Hafkin and G. Bay (eds) *Women In Africa: Studies in Social and Economic Change*, (Stanford, 1996), pp 157-182.

²¹ M.J.Ndeda, "The Women's Subordination in Africa Independent Churches: The Case of Nomiya Luo Church," *The Eastern Africa Journal of Historical and Social Sciences Research*, 1(2):10-13 1997.

²² E.A.A.Odhiambo and W.D. Cohen, *Siaya: The Historical Anthropology of an African Landscape*.

women were always consulted about a variety of issues pertaining to the welfare of the society.

In her work, Butterman²³ dwells on the social change among the Luo. She also focuses on women's economic involvement. This work will be important in this study in that it dwells on economic activities of the Luo women and we would see if the women had any political involvement by virtue of their economic engagement.

Ayot's²⁴ work on the Luo women of Jok Onyango focuses on the position of women in their society. She discusses the various, economic, social and political roles of the women in the community. She points out that a few Luo women had won leadership positions in the council of elders especially the medicine women, the warriors and the prophetesses. This work is important to the present study in that it provides some relevant insights into the women's political involvement. The present study however examines the political transformation of Luo women from the pre-colonial era to the post-colonial era, building on the foundation laid by Ayot's work.

Turning to the colonial period, a number of scholars unaware of the roles of African women in pre-colonial societies, have argued that the advent of colonialism had positive impact on for the African women in general and the Luo in particular. These scholars argue that Christianity and Western education freed African women from agricultural labour, polygamy and forced marriages. A number of scholars have however shown that colonialism had negative effects on African women. According to the latter group African women lost in their economic, social and political influence.

Boserup²⁵ in her pioneering work on African women described how Europeans decided that men were better farmers than women and set out to replace the latter even in areas where they had introduced cash cropping. The European view was that men were superior to women in farming and that for the development of agriculture, male farming had to be promoted at the expense of female farming. The Europeans did all they could to achieve this objective. The main shortcoming of this work is the fact that it is a macro study on the whole continent. There is need for micro-studies on particular communities to find out the women's experiences. This present work fills this gap. The strength of the work is that it is a ground- breaking study on the impact of colonialism on African women.

²³ J.M. Butterman, "*Luo social Formation in Change Karachuonyo and Kanyamkago, 1800-1945*"

²⁴ T.Ayot. "*The position of Women in the Luo Societies: Case Study of Jok Onyango, A.D. 1750 – 1920*"
Ph.D. Thesis, Kenyatta University, (1990).

²⁵ E. Boserup, *Women's role in Economic Development*, (New York. 1970).

African women lost political as well as economic status under colonialism. For example, when they introduced their systems of colonial rule, the Europeans failed to recognise the fact that African women had political roles and institutions in their societies. In Okonjo's²⁶ work, she explains how the dual-sex systems among the Igbo gave way to the single-sex one in which men had all the power. The traditional principles of dispersed and shared political authority had no place in the colonial system. Okonjo's work is important for the present study in that the experiences of the *Igbo* women will be compared with those of Luo Women.

Also writing on Nigerian women, Denzer²⁷ points out that during the colonial era, women were largely deprived of access to education and therefore could not play an active role in the government. A similar pattern of gender discrimination is seen in colonial Ghana, where even the few qualified women were denied entry into the administrative class of civil servants as presented by author Manuh.²⁸ These two works are important for this study, for two reasons. First, both Nigeria and Ghana were British colonies just like Kenya and therefore the colonial policies were more or less similar. Women were denied access to education, consequently, they were also denied access to the civil service and to political jobs. Secondly, this study will benefit from the analysis of the gender dynamics in both Nigeria and Ghana.

Amadiume²⁹ points out that while European women have struggled to gain power in their formal political structures, colonial imposition of European systems in Africa has undermined the traditional empowering structures of African women's socio-cultural systems. She adds that African women have been losing the power of autonomy as European women have been gaining power in the hegemonic European system. This work is important in that it discusses the impact of colonial hegemony on African Women. It therefore provides the framework for our study on Luo Women.

In her work on Kenyan women, Kanogo³⁰ explores the history of African womanhood in colonial Kenya. She focuses on key socio-cultural institutions and practices around which the lives of women were organised. Kanogo's also investigates

²⁶ K. Okonjo, "The duo-Sex Political Systems in Operation: Igbo Women and Community Politics in Midwestern Nigeria" pp 45-58.

²⁷ L. Denzer, "Women in Government Service in Colonial Nigeria, 1862-1945," Boston University African Studies Centre, Working Paper 136, (1989).

²⁸ T. Manuh, "The Status of Research on Women in Ghana". ASA Conference Paper, (1991).

²⁹ I. Amadiume, "Gender, Political Systems and Social Movements: A West African Experience in Mahmod Mamdani and E. Wamba-dia-Wamba (eds) *African Studies in Social Movements and Democracy*, (Dakar, 1994).

³⁰T. Kanogo, *African Womanhood in Colonial Kenya. 1900-1950*, (Oxford ,2005).

among other things the colonial formal education systems and how it impacted on Kenyan women, the Luo included. Kanogo asserts that education provided women with opportunities to move from their old life into the new world of colonialism. The story of the education of Kenyan women, she points out, exemplifies the changes both enjoyed and suffered by women in colonial Kenya. The strengths of the book include the fact that it is the only work that covers the impact of colonialism on Kenyan women in detail. However, it has little or nothing at all on the impact of colonialism on women's political roles. This work on the Luo has benefited from this book especially on the section of education. The present work fills in the gap on the political experiences of Kenyan women during the colonial period. It also argues that colonial education did not prepare women for the political roles in the society. The public sphere was preserved only for men.

African women did not accept their loss of status passively, as a number of scholars have shown. Van Allen³¹ focus on the 1929 Women's War organised by the Igbo women against the colonial tax policies. The women attacked warrant chiefs who were in incharge of the taxation scheme. The British administration reacted the women's protest with police and soldiers, followed by retaliatory punitive expeditions. The strength of Allen's work is that it focuses on a particular community to explain women's responses to colonial policies. This study is important for the study on Luo women in that it provides the framework for the analysis of Luo women's reaction to colonialism control. In the Kenyan Coast, Ndeda³² discusses the outstanding, Menyaziwa wa Menza, popularly known as Mekatilili, who led her Giriama community to resist the British taxation and migrant labour policies that disrupted their family lives, taking away their husbands and sons. The absence of the men also meant increased agricultural work for the women. Mekatilili also castigated the harsh, and brutal methods used by the state agencies like the chiefs, headmen and *askaris* to collect taxes. Mekatilili led the women and men to the administration post and set it on fire and attacked the state agents. As a result, for a short while there were no more labour recruits and no one paid taxes. The present study used this work in the analysis of Luo women's reaction to the colonial era.

³¹ J. Van Allen, " 'Aba Riots' or Igbo 'Women's War'? Ideology, Stratification and Invisibility of Women" in N.J. Hafkin and E.G. Bay (eds). *Women In Africa: Studies in Socio and Economic Change* (Stanford, 2005) pp. 59-86.

³² M. J. Ndeda, *Women in Kenyan History; The Women's Campaign Mekatilili and the Giriama Resistance of 1913 and 1914*, (Nairobi, 1994).

In her study of Kowe community in western Kenya, Hay³³ found that Luo women used various tactics to respond to colonial economic policies. For example, when the men left home to work for wages, in the town and in the settler plantations, the women had to support themselves, their children, the elderly and the men whose wages were low. Apart from these problems, women had to meet the colonial demand for increased agricultural production. Women developed coping mechanisms, such as new agricultural innovations; labour saving crops such as maize, cassava, and groundnuts, new implements and market trade. She asserts that the women of Kowe were agents of change, who managed to meet the demands of the new era. This work is important to the present study. It provides material on how Luo women coped with the new economic demands. However, it does not mention anything to do with their political engagement during this era. The present work provides the material on how the Luo women were involved in politics during the colonial period, even as they also coped with the new economic demands.

In most independent African countries, the marginalisation of women that had its genesis in the colonial era has continued. Parpart and Staudt³⁴ points out that the state has acted primarily as a vehicle for elite male interests, enhancing and extending men's power over women, and offering women limited avenues for participation in the political sphere. This work is important for this study as it provides general views on the history of the marginalisation of women and how the independent states have perpetuated the same. The experiences of women from other parts of the continent were compared to those of the Luo women. In many cases, they were similar. On the same note, Chazan³⁵ asserts that the state policies towards women have continued to be both discriminatory and coercive. Consequently, African women have not played a significant role in statecraft in Africa. The same can be said for the Luo women. Indeed, the gendered inequality of the state is clearly seen in its institutions, such as the cabinet, parliament, judiciary, army, and civil service.

Kabira, *et al* argues that Kenyan women have been marginalised in the political sphere³⁶. However, the women have developed forms of strategies for changing the situation. One of these is the formation of a strong and autonomous women's movement, a development that has facilitated the conscientisation and mobilisation of women as well

³³ M. J. Hay, "Luo women and Economic Change During the Colonial Period" in N. J. Hafkin and E.G. bay (eds) *Women in Africa: Studies in Social and Economic Change*, (Stanford, 2005) pp. 87-110.

³⁴ J.L. Parpart and K. A. Staudt (eds) *Women and the State in Africa*. (Boulder, 1989).

³⁵ N. Chazan, "Gender Perspectives on African States" in Parpart, J.L. and Staudt, K.A. (eds) *Women and State in Africa*, (London, 1989).

³⁶ W. Kabira *et al.* *Democratic Change in Africa: Women's perspectives*, (Nairobi, 1993).

as the identification of women candidates so as to enhance women's participation in governance. The present study examined Luo women's engagement in the women's movement in Kenya. On the same note, Nzomo³⁷ argues that the Women's Bureau and the National Council of Women of Kenya have been ineffective in empowering women and advancing their participation in politics. She attributes this to the fact that these organisations have been under the control of conservative leaders. The leaders have consistently supported the ruling regimes control over the women's organisations. This work is important in understanding the power in women's movement and the role it can play in empowering the women.

Aduol³⁸ examines the issue of women and political experience. She points out that women's limited involvement in political leadership may be attributed to lack of political maturity and experience. At the same time, she asserts that women's preoccupation with domestic and family obligations and the existence of an indifferent attitude towards political activity also limits their engagement. She concludes that their lack of experience due to their numerous household chores makes them remain behind in politics. This work is important to this study because it portrays the situation of women in Kenya. They have been marginalised in the political sphere because of their inadequate experience. The same situation applies to Luo women.

In their work, Nasong'o and Ayot note that women played a critical role in the politics of decolonisation, yet after independence the establishment of patrimonial authoritarianism engendered male dominance of all aspects of Kenyan society and denied women a chance to develop strategic initiatives and gain an audible political voice. The authors contend that the active participation of women in the democratisation process in Kenya is critical to ensuring substantial influence on the direction of national politics. The major constraints to this eventuality, in their estimation, include the social construction of politics as a man's game, complete with an ingrained culture of violence, differential levels of literacy and poverty, patriarchal ideologies of the post colonial state, as well as lack of unity in the gender movement with regard to ethnicity, class, organisational capabilities, clearly stated unity of purpose and vision for the future. The strength of this work is that it provides the framework of the study of the transformation of gendered politics in Kenya. Its main weakness is that it generalises the Kenyan case.

³⁷ M. Nzomo, "The Gender Dimension of Democratization in Kenya: Some International Linkages" *Alternatives*, Vol. 18, pp. 61-73, 1993.

³⁸ A. Aduol, *The Kenya Women in Politics: An Analysis of Past and present Trends*, (Nairobi, 1992).

The present study focuses on the Luo women as a micro study on the gendered transformation that has taken place in Kenyan politics.³⁹

The above literature were an exploration of work on how African women's status has been transformed from the pre-colonial era to the post-colonial period. These works also indicate that to a large extent from the colonial period, African women are a marginalised group generally in Kenya. This present study set out to investigate the forces responsible for the marginalisation of Luo women in politics.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

Feminist historians have applied a variety of approaches to the analysis of women's history. These include feminist efforts to explain the origins of patriarchy, liberal feminism, the Marxian tradition and gender theory. Feminism refers to the recognition of the systematic discrimination against women on grounds of gender and a commitment to work towards changes. Feminists question and challenge the origins of oppressive gender relations and attempt to develop a variety of strategies that might change these relations for the better. Feminism deals with issues of justice and equality and also critiques the male dominated institutions, values and social practices that are oppressive and destructive. Meena⁴⁰ notes that feminists share the same ideas in terms of what gender oppression means but they differ in terms of analysing its origin and what constitutes women's liberation. While feminist theorists focus on the female gender, gender theory that developed from the feminist theory encompasses the male gender.

The theorists of patriarchy give supremacy to the subordination of women to men. This theory is based on the men's desire to control women's sexuality. Patriarchy theorists argue that the sexual relation itself can be used to explain the marginalisation of women and to explain why the system of power operates the way it does. This theory poses problems for feminist and gender historians in that it does not show how gender inequality structures those areas of life that do not seem directly connected to it. The analysis also rests on the physical difference of women and men. It therefore depends on a single variable that is, the biological make up or the physical difference, assuming a

³⁹ S. Wanjala Nasong'o and T.O. Ayot "Women in Kenya's Politics of Transition and Democratization" in G.R. Murunga and SW. Nasongo (eds) *Kenya: The Struggle for Democracy*, (Dakar, 2007), pp.164-196.

⁴⁰ R. Meena, *Gender in Southern Africa: Conceptual and Theoretical Issues* (Harare, 1992).

consistent or inherent meaning for the human body outside social or cultural construction.⁴¹

Marxist feminists, on the other hand, have a more historical approach guided by a theory of history-Marxism. It is the first theory that provides an explanation for the differences between men and women. Marxism is also responsible for providing the analysis for the dichotomy between the public and private spheres. According to Marxist feminists, the central problem creating inequality is capitalism. Karl Marx asserts that in a capitalist economic system, the owners of the means of production exploit their workers through a low wage which is less than the value of work that they do while accumulating profit.⁴² The men are involved in production, which became almost synonymous with the public sphere while women are restricted to the reproduction, which takes place in the private domain.⁴³ Women in the family are seen to represent the labour force-capitalists relationship. Therefore, according to Marxists feminists, women's location in the domestic sphere and their relatively restricted access to paid work are caused by capitalism. Capitalism must therefore be eradicated if women are to gain equality with men. However, this approach has restricted gender to a material or economic explanation. The concept of gender within Marxism is treated as a by-product of changing economic structures. Therefore, gender has no independent analytic status of its own, yet it is clear that gender goes beyond material and economic explanations.⁴⁴

Liberal feminism dates back to the eighteen century. Mary Wollstonecraft, J.S Mill and Charlotte P. Gilman are some of the early advocates. This theory developed and expounded the idea that women have natural rights to the same opportunities and freedoms as men. That both men and women are born with equal potentials to develop a variety of skills and abilities and that it is only through socialisation and educational practices that they can learn to become typically feminine or masculine. Thus to solve the problem of inequality among the different gender, there is need to concentrate on changing attitudes and ideas about gender. They argue that gender roles are learned roles and can be unlearned.

Liberal feminists demand equal opportunities and equal participation of both men and women in all the spheres of the society. This theory relies mainly “on the rational-

⁴¹ J.W. Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis” in the *American Historical Review* Vol. 91, No. 5. Dec.,(1986) pp 200-230.

⁴² R. Tong, *Feminist Thought: A Comprehensive Introduction*, (Boulder, 1989). P17.

⁴³ P. Stamp, *Technology, Gender and Power in Africa*, (Canada, 1989).

⁴⁴ J.W.Scott., “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis”.

legal instruments”⁴⁵ to obtain the required change and its language is restricted by the use of such words as “equality of opportunity and equity”⁴⁶. Liberal feminists argue that women have been excluded from many important public spheres of modern social, economic and political life. Their aim is therefore to incorporate women into the mainstream of contemporary society. Thus, the works of liberal feminists are marked by the emphasis on representation of women, campaigning for changes in laws which discriminate against changes in women and equal rights for both men and women. The liberal feminists demand liberation through legal reforms and increased participation in education and training. This will empower women and open up opportunities in the political, economic and social sectors.

This is the feminism that motivated the United Nation’s Decade for Women, 1975 – 1985. It also counts among its achievement the large number of declarations and conventions promoting human rights.⁴⁷ These declarations have positively impacted on women’s life. The welfare and equity approaches can be described as liberal feminism’s procedural modes and many women in development projects and programmes which are devoted to supplying the practical needs of women fall under its success.

The liberal feminists have been critiqued for being prescriptive and lacking open and clear critique of imperialism and capitalist structures that have impacted negatively on African women in general and Kenyan women in particular. This theory therefore, is limited in the extent to which it can successfully bring about equality between men and women. However, because this theory has more positive aspects than negative ones, it was used in this study to help explain the subordination and marginalisation of Luo women and how to initiate and implement legal changes that can lead to gender mainstreaming in the political sector. This is the feminism that has been behind the affirmative action and equal opportunity campaigns and legislations. Affirmative action was integrated in the New Constitution in 2010.

The concern with gender theory has emerged only in the late twentieth century. The concept as a theoretical construct arose as scholars and researchers mainly anthropologist and historians looked for a way to conceptualise the social construction of femininity and masculinity. As a result, attention shifted from the biological given female-male, woman/man to the social relations among women and men. Gender analysis was no

⁴⁵.Tong, “Feminist Thought”: p.17

⁴⁶ Ibid. p.17

⁴⁷ Ibid. p.38.

longer confined in the home, the private and personal world. It moved out to explore the construction of gender relations in the community, the school, government and the economy. The dichotomies that construed dominant discourses which support male supremacist relations were questioned and critiqued in theory and practice for example public/private, personal/political, base/super structure, production/reproduction, nature/nurture, real/ideal and female/male.⁴⁸

Gender is a constitutive element encompassing social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes.⁴⁹ Gender simply refers to the distinction of male and female, the femaleness and maleness and the social constructs and expectations that influence the way in which gender identity and differences are perceived. Gender is also about power relations between women and men. The changes in representations of power in any social organisation will always correspond to changes in the organisation. However, the direction of the change may not be one way. As an encompassing element, gender involves interrelated elements such as culturally available symbols which have multiple representations. Consequently, women historian reads the various symbols and the contexts that are used, in various situations.

Gender also has normative concepts, which set the interpretations of the meaning of the cultural symbols.⁵⁰ These symbols are expressed in religious, educational and political doctrines of a people. For instance, the structure of patriarchy has been used to ensure the continued dominance of men over women. The term also had different meaning and weight in the pre-colonial era and in the colonial and post-colonial era. For example, the view of men as the ‘natural leaders’ was different in the pre-colonial era where women also had political space in Luoland. During the colonial period, the women were excluded from politics and decision-making organs.

This also brings us to the fact that gender is a subjective element, meaning that historians need to examine the ways in which gendered identities are substantively constructed and relate their findings to other activities, social organisations and other cultural factors.⁵¹ Gender also provides a way to interpret meaning and to understand the connections among various forms of human interaction. The gender theory will be adopted because of its integrationist approach to the study of women’s history. This theory calls for more than simply including women in areas closed to them such as

⁴⁸ P. Stamp, *Technology, Gender and Power in Africa*, (Canada, 1989).

⁴⁹ J.W. Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis”

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

politics and decision-making, or righting previously unfair legislation, for we are interested not only in how women appear in politics but also why they appear in the ways that they do. Gender is significant because of its emphasis on the historical background of practices cultural or otherwise and the recognition of the fact that the society and practices are dynamic and prone to change.

This study uses liberal feminism and the gender theory to analyse the gendered transformation that Luo women have undergone in the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. Moreover, even though Kenya attained independence in 1963, women in Luoland remain marginalised in the political sphere. The two theories are used to explain the impediments facing women in the political sphere. The theories are also used to show how these impediments can be eradicated.

1.8 Scope and Limitation

This study was confined to the geographical limits of the three constituencies of Karachuonyo, the former Kisumu Town and Gem situated in Luo Nyanza. The study focused on the period between 1895 –2002. Although 1895 is indicated as the earliest starting point of the study, it however remains flexible. This is because we needed to interrogate the nature of Luo women’s political engagement in pre-colonial society that could have laid the foundation for their involvement in the later periods. The year, 1895 was significant because it was during this year that Kenya was formally made a British Protectorate. The year 2002 is significant in that it marks the end of the first decade since the rebirth of multi-party politics in Kenya. At the same time, the 2002 elections marked the dawn of a new era in Kenya, after the defeat of the Kenya African National Union Party (KANU), which had ruled Kenya since independence in 1963.

An expansive area had been chosen for the study in order to cover the three constituencies that had elected women to represent them in parliament in Luo Nyanza. Thus, in order to carry out an effective work, consideration was given to the fact that time was limited and optimum use of it had to be applied. Despite the poor roads and lack of a reliable public transport system, especially during the rainy season, an attempt was made to visit the whole area of study. This study dealt with the Luo women’s political transformation. Their economic and socio-cultural engagements were studied only as far as they had a bearing on their political involvements.

1.9 Methodology

This study is largely descriptive, exploratory and analytical in nature. It uses archival data, oral interviews, written texts and life histories to examine the political transformation of Luo women. In order to obtain as much relevant data as possible, this study was undertaken in three major stages: One, analysis of existing literature and other documentary materials, specifically archival material; two, a qualitative field research; and three, data analysis and the writing up of the findings. The use of multi-sources of evidence enabled the investigator to obtain adequate information during the research.

The main objective of the literature review was to determine what studies had already been conducted in the field of study and to help the researcher identify and acknowledge gaps for this project. The secondary sources included mainly written works such as those listed in the bibliography, journal articles, magazines and newspapers, government reports and unpublished theses, dissertations, conference and seminar proceedings. These sources were obtained from the main libraries in the country. Online journals and newsletter articles provided an important contribution to the secondary information. Data from the secondary sources made it possible to situate the study theoretically. It also provided a general background on the place of women politically in Africa in general and Kenya in particular. Primary data was collected through oral interviews, and archival documents.

First, the archival materials obtained from the Kenya National Archives (KNA) in Nairobi were examined. The documents included Nyanza Province Annual reports, Central Nyanza District Reports, and South Kavirondo. The reports were on administration, labour, taxation, politics, education and African affairs. Data from archival sources was cross checked with and supplemented by data from oral interviews and secondary data. Qualitative research method was the primary approach used in the field work. It incorporated, semi-structured oral interview. The strengths of this approach derive mainly from its inductive approach; its focus was on specific situations, of people and its emphasis on words and meaning rather than numbers.

This study was focused on capturing the experiences of women in politics through their own voices, and expressions, thus qualitative and interpretive research method was deemed appropriate. Qualitative research tends to capture a participant's unique experience and makes meaning out of that particular context. Qualitative research utilises description and interpretation to capture the meaning of people's experiences.

Patton emphasises that:

Qualitative research is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there... it attempts to understand the nature of that setting...what it means for participants to be in the setting, what their lives are like, what is going on for them, what their meanings are...and in the analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting..The analysis strives for depth of understanding.⁵²

More importantly, qualitative research is more valuable in conducting social research in Africa because it contextualises the topic of investigation, while deriving greater meaning from the natural setting of the participants. In addition, qualitative research emphasises on obtaining the insider's view of situations and events, revealing the extent of the problem, while presenting an in-depth understanding of the situation as well.

Although qualitative research scholars provide guidelines for conducting a qualitative research, a scholarly assessment of the challenges likely to be faced by a researcher conducting such a research in Africa is lacking.⁵³ The challenges a qualitative researcher faces in Africa are unique. For example, not many respondents in Africa, particularly in rural areas where this research was largely based (apart from Kisumu Municipality within the constituency) have been involved in oral interviews. Many potential female interviewees tend to be suspicious and apprehensive to participate on many areas such as politics. These are seen as no-go zones for women. Furthermore, most of the rural areas have poor transportation and communication infrastructure that can be a source of frustration and stress. However, utilizing the opportunity offered by a face to face interview with the women politicians, listening and speaking, and observing their use of nonverbal symbols, accorded the researcher the opportunity to get to the reality of gender discrimination and how it impacts on Luo women's participation in politics.

The face-to-face interview was semi-structure and amenable, a method supported by feminist historians on grounds that it promotes the notion of giving voice and agency to participants. Moreover, in order to understand what other people think, we need to converse with them. Guidzanwa observes, that, "interviewing allows interviewers to

⁵² M. Patton, *How to use qualitative methods in Evaluation*, (Newberg Park,1987.) Quoted in Choti, O.C.

"Gender and Electoral Politics in Kenya" p.53.

⁵³ C. Choti, "Gender and Electoral Politics in Kenya". P.53.

envision the person's experience and hear the multiple voices in a person's speech."⁵⁴ A disciplined and pre-planned focused conversation usually enables researchers to find out detailed and deeper information than casual conversation might.

Organised and purposeful face-to-face verbal interactions are among some of the most effective types of interviews. Most historians use interviews to probe deeper into the inner worlds of opinions, perceptions, experiences, attitudes, and thoughts of their participants, regarding specific issues of interest to the interviewer. This research used designed research questions that offered an analysis of the participant's familial and societal contexts with respect to gender dynamics that persistently disadvantage female actors in politics.

In addition to oral interviews with the women and men in the constituencies, the researcher also used life histories of five outstanding Luo women. Life history is an extensive record of a person's life told and recorded by another. Life histories of women politicians such as; Grace Onyango, Phoebe Asiyu, Grace Ogot, Caroline Atieno Oguta and Roseline Aricho were analysed. The women's profiles served as roadmaps of the extremely contested terrain of politics. This method included documentation of the subjects own political images and of themselves and their relations with others such as husbands, children, parents the community and the nation at large.

The population of the study comprises the Luo people chosen from various background from the three constituencies. The selected group provided a representative sample of Luo women political leaders; community leaders and citizens in general. Elderly and resourceful local men and women who had witnessed the emergence of the colonial and post colonial period were also interviewed.

The core respondents were identified through purposeful non-random and snowball sampling. A total of sixty men and women were interviewed. This is where one expert was identified with the help of the local chiefs and sub chiefs because they were involved in various political activities or movements for democratic change in the constituency. Also, as experts, these were individuals who were in a better position to provide their insight and perspectives on the subject matter. Once identified, these experts assisted the researcher in identifying more respondents whom she or he knew. This snowballing technique has several advantages. One, the method can enable a researcher develop better field relationship with informants. For instance, when i interviewed

⁵⁴ R. Guidzanwa, "Gender Analysis in the field of Education: A Zimbabwean Example" in A. Imam, A. Mama and F. Sow (eds) *Engendering African Social Science*, (Dakar, 1997).pp 250-280.

informants whom i had been referred to by another expert or participant, it became easier to develop rapport with them. In fact, endorsement by an initial informant provided legitimacy and opened the door for meeting other informants since it acted as a trust building mechanism. The issue of trust is very important especially when you ask people questions that may be politically sensitive. Therefore, when i was introduced by a well known or respected informant, the new informant was more willing to respond to my questions because of trust.

Second, the method helps to bring out the researcher's identity and therefore good for relationship building process. For instance, through the "snowballing" method the researcher was able to identify individuals who are knowledgeable in a given field. And finally, through "snowballing" i was be able to gain access to important pre-existing networks of informants provided by initial informants hence quickening the process of identifying participants and obtaining crucial information. For the purpose of this study, all informants aged fifty years and above were treated as elders. In most cases, informants or respondents were interviewed individually but sometimes group discussions and interviews were administered. The research tool for this study was a semi-structured, in-depth interview that included open-ended questions. The questionnaire sought to capture the respondent's biographical background; leadership experiences, sources of political motivation, electoral experiences accomplishments, successes and challenges. It also captured the respondents engagement with the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial eras in their constituencies and how women's political roles were transformed.

The major task for me as the investigator was to build upon and explore each participants responses to the open-ended questions. The goal of these semi-structured questions was to enable the participants' reconstruct their experiences and knowledge within the topic under study. The semi-structured narrative interview method was preferred over a structured interview method because it is more adaptable and dynamic and is a more appropriate way to obtain a large amount of data in a short time. Open-ended questionnaires were used so as not to restrict the informants in the discussion. However, where the informants delved into 'irrelevancies' they were diplomatically guided back to the right track.

The interviews were conducted by the researcher personally. Before the beginning of each interview, the participant was informed about the nature of the study. All the interviews were conducted in *dholuo*, the local vernacular language of the Luo. Since the researcher hails from the same community, *dholuo* was quite appropriate as a media of

communication. The interviewing process began with the researcher giving to the participant the opportunity to provide personal biographical information, followed by general questions. This helped the respondents to relax and regain their composure as well as re-establish their authority and confidence as experts in the field of study. This initial process was important because, as possessors of the relevant knowledge, they needed to feel in control of the interaction. Then i moved to core questions relevant to the study. The open-ended structure of the questions permitted the researcher to raise supplementary questions whenever unanticipated patterns emerged. Yet, the focus of the study was maintained throughout the whole interviewing process.

The participants were free to raise other issues of concern that they felt needed attention, depending on their personal understanding and viewpoints. In the process, the participants had a chance to reflect back on their careers through the interviewing pattern, as the interview revealed the respondents' perspectives on how they perceived their political engagements as outsiders in politics. The interviewing process ensured direct accessibility to peoples' ideas, thoughts, and memories in the respondents' own words rather than in the words of the researcher. This is vital for the study of women in politics since it breaks centuries of ignoring women's ideas altogether, or having men speak for women.

In some interview sessions, the researcher had respondents who were quite talkative. Most times, this worked to the researcher's advantage as more information was revealed without interruption, extensively covering, and almost all relevant issues. Such freely and plainly spoken responses created openings for further questioning. At times, some of the respondents spoke with deep feelings, particularly in recalling certain unpleasant electoral experiences. From their voices and revelations, it was clear to the researcher that the Kenyan political terrain is very bumpy for female politicians.

The researcher wrote down the respondents' responses and other observations relevant to the study. The researcher documented the settings, underlined phrases and words used that had meaning and could assist in recalling the true picture of the facial expressions, emotions, and body language that conveyed some message at the time and could be translated into written when working on research data.

Field note taking is recommended by social research scholars as essential in qualitative research. R.C Bogdan and S.K. Biklen points out that audio tape misses the sights, the impressions and the remarks made before and after the interview but the field notes provide the study with a personal log that helps the researcher keep track of the

development of the project.⁵⁵ Field notes refers to the written account of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data in a qualitative study. The notes helped me in visualising each research participant using non-verbal cues, and facial expression as the interviewing proceeded.

Apart from field notes, the researcher also used a tape recorder to record the conversation, with the participants. The tape recorder made it possible for me to capture any information left out during note taking. After the interviews, the information was later fully transcribed. The data collection was completed when the informants provided the same information for the same question repeatedly.

The data analysis of this qualitative research incorporated the following steps; transcribing the raw data from audiotapes to text from organising the data, generating categories, themes and patterns, coding the data, testing the emergent understandings, and writing the thesis. The selected theoretical framework was also used to analyse the data before the writing began. Documentary review and content analysis were also done. This involved corroborating documentary data with oral data to cater for external and internal criticism. Finally, all the data collected was used to support the research premises and form the basis of our analysis and interpretation.

The data analysis for this study started in the field as the researcher was recording and transcribing the data as the researcher tried to make sense of the data. Data analysis involves “the search for patterns in data and for ideas that help explain the existence of those patterns.”⁵⁶ Data analysis helps “reduce text to the fundamental meanings of specific word. These reductions make it easy for researchers to identify general patterns and make comparison across texts.”⁵⁷ Therefore the aim of data analysis is basically to decipher meanings and understanding from the texts.⁵⁸

The interviews were transcribed and coded to check the adequacy and consistency of the themes. After which the data was classified into several categories and themes in relation to the research premises. Coding categories were used to sort the descriptive

⁵⁵ R.C. Bogdan and S.K. Biklen *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theory and Methods*, (Needham Heights, 1992). P. 74.

⁵⁶ R.A. Singleton Jr. and B.C. Straits, *Approaches to Social Research*, 4th ed., (New York, 2005), P. 337 cited in Osamba, J.O.. “Power sharing and the Management of Ethnopolitical”

⁵⁷ G.W. Ryan, and H.R. Benard, “Data Management and Analysis Methods”, in N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (eds). *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. 2nd (ed) (Thousand Oaks) Pp. 72-73.

⁵⁸ J.O. Osamba, “Power sharing and the Management of Ethnopolitical Conflict in Post-Cold War Kenya” P. 140.

data.⁵⁹Coding refers to data reduction through the process of sorting raw data into categories. That is, the researcher read and reviewed documents and data identifying and highlighting strong quotations marking participant's statements with highlighter pen and sorting them in different categories.

This study also used a thematic and chronological approach in the data analysis. That is the data was checked in relations to who said what, who said different things and how often. During the data analysis, the researcher read and reread the transcripts, marking out important points, ideas, and looking for emerging patterns and connections.⁶⁰ After sorting out the data content into categories the contents were used to descriptively represent the bigger picture of the study.

Documentary sources also formed an important component of this study. The documentary and archival sources were text analysed. The researcher read and reread texts to gain an overall sense of the contents, and then the contents were put into several common categories. In analyzing the content, the texts were transferred onto index cards, coded and analyzed together with other generated data.

Data gathered from the written documents and oral interviews were interpreted, and finally analysed within the theoretical framework and study objectives to explain the gendered political transformation that has occurred in Luoland.

The researcher has adopted a thematic and chronological approach in this study. Key themes make up the chapter headings and are discussed chronologically showing the transformation which occurred in Luo women's political roles.

Structurally the thesis is divided into eight chapters. Each chapter is sub-divided into sub-headings beginning with an introduction and ending with a conclusion. This type of organisation enables the researcher a detailed analysis of facts. Chapter one is the introduction of the study. It highlights the statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research premises, justification, and definition of terms, literature review, theoretical framework, limitations, and methodology of the thesis.

Chapter two focuses on the general background of the Luo people and Luo women during the pre-colonial period. It examines the various roles of women in the economic, political and socio-cultural spheres. During the pre-colonial period all these spheres were merged thus giving women political roles at the family and community levels. In this

⁵⁹ J.O. Osamba, Ibid. P. 141.

⁶⁰ M.W. Bauer, and G. Gaskel (eds) *Qualitative Researching with Text, Image, and Sound. A Practical Handbook.*, (Thousand Oaks, 2000). P. 54.

chapter, we discuss the roles of the women with special gifts such as mediums, and prophetess who played vital political roles in the community in general. In the end, we note that the Luo being a patriarchal society, the men had the final say in formal political. However, the women too had political space, which they have not had in the colonial and post-colonial eras.

Chapter three analyses the dynamics of the colonial state. It begins with the establishment of colonial rule in Luo Nyanza and proceeds to colonial policies such as taxation, education, labour and political structures. This chapter examines the linkage between state policies and the political process that led to the marginalisation of Luo women in particular and women in Kenya in general. In addition, it explores the roots of women's political marginalisation in colonial Kenya. Finally, it investigates the extent to which the colonial state curtailed women's contribution in the formulation of state policies and decisions.

The fourth chapter focuses on the post-Second World War period. It examines the route to and the struggles for independence, and the women's participating in these struggles. It further explores the themes of education, labour and taxation and how they impacted on women's political engagement during this period. The chapter ends with a profile and life history of Magdence Aboje also known as "Mama Uhuru" because of her outstanding roles during the struggle for independence.

Chapter five introduces the post-independence period, focusing again on the themes of education, politics and labour and how they influenced the political involvement of Luo women. It also analyses the development of women's organizations such as Maendeleo Ya Wanawake. It is then followed by the sixth chapter that focuses on the profiles of five Luo women politicians; Grace Onyango, Phoebe Asiyo, Grace Ogot, Caroline Atieno Oguta and Roseline Aricho. These profiles indicate that there were a few women politicians who succeeded in the male-dominated political arena. These women's profiles demonstrated the micropolitical dynamics of gender and the role of individuality in the larger game of politics.

In chapter seven, we focus on the post 1985 Nairobi Women's Conference and the democratic transitions of the 1990s. The analysis draws from the main themes of the study and also the women organisations formed during the democratic transitions. It ends with an exploration of the experiences of the Luo women since the introduction of the multi-party era in the 1990s. It argues that Luo women have been marginalised even more in the multi-party era.

Finally, chapter eight provides conclusion for the study and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

LUO WOMEN BY THE EVE OF COLONIALISM

2.0 Introduction

This chapter examined the historical background of the Luo as a people, setting the foundation of which this study is based. After which we delved into the study of the position of women in the pre-colonial society. The chapter has been divided into the following sections: women in the Luo-socio-cultural setting; religion, women in the economic structure and finally women in the political organization. It is important to note that though divided for the sake of giving a detailed analysis, in the pre-colonial set-up, the socio-cultural, economic and political spheres were closely intertwined. It is not easy to differentiate economic power from political influence or religious authority from political influence.¹

2.1 Historical Background of the Luo

The Luo of Kenya are Nilotes. They belong to the River-lake nilotes group, a sub-group of the Nilotic speakers whose ancestors evolved in south western Ethiopia in about 2000 BC². The other sub-groups of the nilotes include plain and the highland nilotes. The River-Lake nilotes were the first to move out of this cradle land 200–300 BC. They migrated westwards to the Nile river valley, while the other two groups remained in South West Ethiopia, where they interacted with the ancestors of the Cushitic peoples.³

According to Ogot⁴, the River-Lake Nilotes continued to occupy the area south of the confluence of the Bar-el-Ghazel River and the River Nile in Southern Sudan up to the end of the fifteenth century. This was to be the cradleland of the River-Lake Nilotes. The area was an extensive, flat marshy flood plain and its ecology greatly influenced their socio-economic and political organizations.⁵ The Kenyan Luo were able to retain most of

¹ O'Barr. *African Women in Politics* in (eds) M. Hay and Charon Stichter in *African Women South of the Sahara*. (London, 1991). Pp. 140-155.

² B.A. Ogot, *A History of the Southern Luo*. (Nairobi, 1967). See also Cohen and Atieno-Odhiambo. *Siaya*.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

the institutions and systems developed in their cradleland. These include pastoralism, ridge political system with *ruoth*⁶ as the head and fishing.

The fifteenth century once again saw the migration of the River-Lake nilotes from southern Sudan. The reasons for this migration include; the search for better pasture for their livestock, external attacks, internal strife and civil wars, drought and famine, diseases and epidemics affecting both people and livestock and the spirit of adventure.⁷

The ancestors of the Luo moved in many waves over several centuries. They migrated from the River Nile to present day Uganda, and then moved eastwards into Kenya. Their expansion into Kenya marked the final stage of their migration. They settled around the eastern shores of Lake Victoria, their present day homeland.

The Luo migrated into Kenya in four distinct groups, Joka-Jok (1500-1550A.D). This was the first group to arrive and they settled at Ligala in Bunyala, from where they moved to Ramogi Hills in Yimbo, Sakwa, Alego, Seme, Kisumu and Nyakach⁸ as their population expanded. Joka Owiny (1500-1650 AD) was the second group of the Luo people to migrate. They first settled in Samia and later because of the population growth expanded into Yimbo and Alego. Joka Omollo (1540–1600 AD) was the third group and they settled in Gem, Ugenya, Alego, Homa Bay, Rachuonyo and Migori.⁹ Finally, the fourth group was that of the Luo Abasuba, a mixed group of refugees from Buganda and Busoga who crossed Lake Victoria into South Nyanza and the offshore islands of Rusinga and Mfang'ano.¹⁰ They were of non-Luo origin, but they adopted the Luo language and culture.

In Kenya presently, the Luo inhabit seven administrative districts of Siaya, Bondo, Kisumu, Migori, Nyando, Rachuonyo, and Homabay. The Luo are one of the largest communities in Kenya. The study focuses on three Luo constituencies of Karachuonyo, Kisumu and Gem.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ B.A.Ogot, *A History of the Southern Luo*.

⁸ B.A.Ogot, *ibid*.

See also Cohen and Atieno-Odhiambo . *Siaya* (London, 1989) p.14. The two authors point out that *Ligala*, was the first settled compound of the Luo in Kenya.

⁹ B.A. Ogot, *A History of Southern Luo*.

¹⁰ B.A. Ogot, *Ibid*.

2.2 Women in Pre-colonial Luo Society.

African pre-colonial societies have been characterised by a merger between the social, economic and political spheres of activities.¹¹ It is not easy to differentiate economic power from political influence or socio-religious authority from political power.¹² It is important to point out that women in pre-colonial African societies were social actors in their own right. It is from this perspective that we shall discuss the social cultural position of Luo women.

The Luo were organised in territorial maximal lineage which were the largest social units.¹³ These were followed by major segments, *dhoot* meaning ‘door’ or clan. Clans were made up of groups composed of about five to eight generations. The minor segments were known as the sub-clans. The members of these segments were referred to as *Jokakwaro*, which are people from one grandfather or ancestor. *Jokakwaro* comprised a group from a depth of two or four generations.¹⁴ The minimal segment was *anyuola* meaning birth group which comprised of a group of two to three generations. A smaller unit of *anyuola* was the homestead composed of a man and his wife or wives and children. The homestead was headed by a married man. It was made up minimally of one house belonging to one wife or of several houses of several wives whose space in the homestead followed a strict pattern.

The Luo homestead included the cattle compound in the center and a small hut for the owner of the homestead. Unmarried boys of the adolescent stage build their own houses within the compound next to the gate. These houses were known as *simba*. Our informant, Magdalene Aboge¹⁵, observed that seniority governed relations in the homestead; consequently, the oldest ruled the homestead. Wives in a homestead were also ranked in terms of seniority; the first wife shaped and managed the homestead; she was consulted on ceremonial issues in the homestead. When family representation from the wives was required the first wife by virtue of her seniority was the one who took up that role. Sons and daughters were married off or married in order of seniority. The youngest son of the youngest wife normally inherited the homestead. Within the homestead of the

¹¹J.O’Barr, “African Women in Politics” in Margaret J. Hay and Sharon Stichter (eds) *African Women South of the Sahara*, (London, 1991), pp.140-155.

¹² J. O’Barr “African Women in Politics”.

¹³ J. M.Butterman. “Luo Social formations in Change, Karachuonyo and Kanyamkago”.

¹⁴ M. Aboge, Oral Interview, 10/5/06.

¹⁵Ibid.

well-to-do, there were also *jodak* or tenants, who sought land in other lineages because of friendship or misfortunes.

The primary segment was the household composed of a wife and her children. The household formed part of the larger homestead and had land assigned to it. The wife was *wuon ot*, meaning the owner of the house but the husband was *woun dala*, or the owner of the homestead¹⁶. The wife, husband and their children formed the basic social unit. The hut was the woman's private property for her own use with her children. The men used his hut at the centre of the home for public use like entertaining his guests or disciplining members of his homestead. However, kinship was regarded highly and as a result, the extended rather than the nuclear family was highly valued. The father was the head of the family, kinship gave every Luo individual his identity as a member of the wider Luo community. Love and respect for all kinsmen was stressed and codes of behaviour set to govern these relationships.

Marriage was an important rite of passage among the Luo. All members adult women and men were supposed to marry as a means to pro-creation and to ensure the continuity of the clan. A man who did not marry, was known as *msumba*, meaning a bachelor and was despised by the community. A bachelor did not participate in any cultural activities because it was believed he would bring bad omen to the community.¹⁷

All girls of the marriage able age had to get married and to facilitate this, polygamy was encouraged. Any girl who for any reason failed to get a young suitor was married off to an old man or even to a poor man in order to give her an identity in the community. A girl could fail to get a young suitor especially if she got a baby outside wedlock.¹⁸

The Luo practiced exogamy, whereby members of one clan were not allowed to marry one another. Before any marriage took place, a lot of fact-finding was done by both families to ensure no such relationship existed. The fact finding also served to confirm that both the bride and the groom came from good families free from witchcraft, murders, history of early deaths and any other behaviour or characteristics considered undesirable.

¹⁶M.J. Ndeda, "*Nomiya Luo Church: A Gender Analysis of the Dynamics of An African Independent Church Among the Luo of Siaya District in the Twentieth Century and Beyond*" Kenyatta University, History Department. 1994.

¹⁷ S.H. Ominde. *The Luo Girl: From infancy to Marriage*, Kenya Literature Bureau, (Nairobi, 1987).

¹⁸ S. H. Ominde, *ibid*. See also Ogola, M.M. *The River and the Source*, Kenya Focus Books, (Nairobi 2001).

There were different types of marriages.¹⁹ For instance, child engagement was done when a girl and boy were young. The engagement was aimed at sealing friendship between the two families so that when the children became adults; they were married off. Another type of marriage was known as *por* or elopement. This is whereby a girl was forcefully taken away by her would-be husband and his friends. The girl later on sent a message to her family that she was now married. The third type of marriage was whereby a young man ready for marriage would ask a *jagam* or go-between to find a wife from a good home for him.²⁰ This would be an aunt married far away or the mother's brother. The duty of *jagam* is to approach the girl and her parents and if they were positive, then a meeting would be arranged for the two young people.

Several ceremonies were done as a prelude to marriage and they culminated in the payment of *ayie* or bride prize and *nyombo* or bride price.²¹ The bride price involved exchange of gifts by the two families to show their assent to the marriage. A special gift was presented by the groom's family to the bride's mother and aunts. The payment of bride price marked the formalization of the marriage ceremony. The father of the bride was given the number of cattle and other animals previously agreed on during negotiations.

Children were the pride of every married couple. Both women and men acquired greater status after the birth of their first child. As the child underwent the rites of passage from childhood through marriage, the parents' social status also increased. For example, women who were grandparents who had attained menopause were known as *pim*²². This group of women participated in various social activities which the other women did not participate in. For instance, they participated in medical therapy and psychotherapy of the members of the community, in delivering, nurturing and educating young children and socializing them to a world wider than the household. These were the women who become leaders in women issues but were also consulted on other issues affecting the whole community.²³ Among the Kikuyu for example, women of this age distinguished themselves as leaders in the community and became "members of the women's advisory

¹⁹ S.H.Ominde, "The Luo Girl"

²⁰ E.S. Atieno-Odhiambo and W.D. Cohen; *Siaya* p. 109. See also B. Potash, "Marriage stability in a Rural Luo Community" *Africa*, 48, 4 (1978) p. 338., D. Nyakwaka, "Gender and Sexuality Among the Luo of Kenya: Continuity and Change in Khamasi, J. and Susan N.M. Chinkuyu (eds) *Sexuality: An African Perspective: The politics of Self and Cultural Beliefs*, (Eldoret, 2005) pp. 77-94. S.H.Ominde, "The Luo Girl".

²¹ D. Atieno, Oral Interview, 12/08/06.

²² E. S. Atieno-Odhiambo and W.D.Cohen; *Siaya*.

²³ *Ibid.*, See also. R. Apiyo, Oral Interview, 8/8/06.

council, *ndundu ya atumia*".²⁴This shows that there was a link between a women's social status and her leadership roles in pre-colonial society.

Every married couple was encouraged to get as many children as possible mainly to counter the high rate of infant mortality. Both the girl and boy child were important in the Luo community. Ogola²⁵ notes that "...a home without daughters is like a spring without a source" and in the same breath a boy child meant "continuation of life". Therefore, children were valued because in them, the older generation saw the continuation of society. The male child was regarded as a dynamic element in lineal structure²⁶. When a man had only female children, his position was considered dead in that he had no male member to perpetuate his family line. The female child on the other hand brought wealth to her father through bride price but upon marriage she left her own lineage to perpetuate that of her husband. Therefore a girl was referred to as "*ogwang*" a derogatory term meaning a wild cat that would leave home anytime.²⁷

Barrenness was seen as one of the greatest misfortunes for a married couple in the community. However there were many ways of solving the problem. For instance, if it was the women with a problem she would bring her younger sister or a cousin to marry her husband and bear children for both of them.²⁸ Another solution was that a man would be allowed to marry another woman to bear children for him. If however, it was the man who had a problem arrangements were made within the family to get a brother or a close cousin to sire children with his wife. These children then became legitimately his.²⁹

Initiation was another important rite of passage among the Luo. Every youth had to undergo this rite as a sign of having passed from childhood into adulthood. Initiation involved the removal of the six front lower incisor teeth. Any youth who courageously underwent the operation, bearing the pain inflicted during the process showed the ability to tackle the difficulties, and challenges of adulthood. It has been argued that the gap created during the operation was also useful for the administration of medicines in the event of severe sickness.³⁰

²⁴ W.Nyakwea, *Women in Kenyan History: Wangu wa Makeri: A Pioneering Kenyan Feminist*, (Nairobi, 1994) p.5.

²⁵M.A. Ogola. "*The River and the Source*",

²⁶ S.H.Ominde. "*The Luo Girl*"

²⁷ M.A.Ogola. *The River and the Source*. See also
Ludia Njeje, Oral interviews, 5/8/06.

²⁸S.H.Ominde, "*The Luo Girl*"

²⁹ D. Atieno, Z. O. Adiema, Oral Interview, 12/8/06.

³⁰ T. S. Odiyo, Oral Interview, 2/8/06.

During the initiation period, the initiates were taught about their culture, traditions and the community's expectations of them. The boys were taught their roles as heads of the family, while the girls were taught how to be good wives and mothers. They were taught to be clean, neat and to beautify themselves in order to attract suitors. They made decorative markings on their faces and bellies and adorned elaborate hairstyles.³¹

Education among the Luo was part and parcel of life and it was a life long process. The aims of education included the following: training and preparing the youths for adult roles in the community; propagating the acceptable standard of behaviour and enabling the young to adapt to their environment and to learn how to exploit and control it.³² Education was informal, children were taught through experience, observation, imitation and apprenticeship.³³ They also learnt through oral literature, games, music, dances and taboos. Parents were the first teachers and played an important role in education of their children. In addition, all respectable adults such as uncles, aunties, grandfathers and grandmother elders and religious leaders contributed immensely in educating the children. Children were taught the community's values, norms and that undesirable behaviour such as disobedience, cruelty, selfishness, bullying, aggressiveness, theft, adultery and deceitfulness, were not tolerated.³⁴ A large part of children's education was left to the grandparents especially the imparting of oral literature and history of the tribe through telling stories in the evening around the fire place. The children were told the stories of their heroes to impact courage and duty towards their family and the wider community.

Among the Luo, *pim* (old woman) or grandmother played a major role in the education of children. The *pim* lived with the children who had reached an age when they should no longer sleep with their parents, in the *Siwindhe* (nursery).³⁵ Children learnt about the past from *pim*. Cohen and Atieno-Odhiambo points out that:

As the *pim* nurtured and instructed her charges, linking them with the adult world, the experience she brought from outside the enclosure neighbourhood and from outside the patri-group provided the young with information extending far beyond the patrilineage, and gave them elements of an intimate understanding of a complex and physically emotive social

³¹ J. Nyangweso, Oral Interview, 6/9/06.

³² M. Aboge, Oral Interview, 10/6/06.

Z. O. Adiema, Oral Interview, 12/8/06.

³³ M. Aboge, Oral Interview 10/6/06.

Z.O. Adiema, Oral Interview, 12/8/06.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Z. O. Adiema, Oral Interview, 12/8/06. See also Cohen and Atieno-Odhiambo, "*Siaya*", p. 93.

universe.³⁶

This explains the important role played by *pim* in the community. She particularly, taught girls about their sexuality, how to relate with future spouses and in-laws, how to remain virgins until marriage, to mention but just a few. “The *pim* deepened the social and geographical knowledge of younger Luo.”³⁷ The two authors further points out that “the *pim*’s nurturing was the crucible of Luo culture and society in the past”.³⁸ This meant that the pivotal role of women in the nurturing and educating children was highly valued by the whole community. The Luo also used a formal method of instruction to teach the initiates the Luo cultural norms. Formal education was also used to give apprentices new skills in fields like medicine, religion, rainmaking and weaponry.³⁹

2.3 Religion

The Luo were deeply religious. They believed in a supreme creator God, called *Nyasaye*. They held prayers and offered sacrifices to him at sacred shrines. These shrines were often located at places with unique physical features such as huge trees, hills or rock formations, for example, *kit mikayi*, (the first wife’s stone) in Seme in Kisumu district. They also believed in the existence and importance of ancestral spirits (also known as the living dead) who they saw as mediators between them and *Nyasaye*.⁴⁰ These spirits had to be appeased by offering to them sacrifices or naming of children after them so that they would in turn make life favourable for the living, by blessing them, with animals and giving them good health and wealth.

The Luo believed in spirits (*juogi*) and magic.⁴¹ The spirits could either be evil or benevolent. The evil spirits were harmful and were used by witches and sorcerers known as *Jojuogi* to cause harm and destruction to others. However, those with benevolent spirits (*Jonawi*) and medicine people (*Jobilo*) had powers to overturn these evils if consulted. The medicine men and women were however more concerned with the administration of curative herbs and charms. The Luo had their traditional doctors’ men

³⁶ E.S. Atieno-Odhiambo and W.D.Cohen, *Siaya* p. 93.

³⁷ Ibid. p.94.

³⁸ Ibid. p.95.

³⁹ D.Otieno, Oral Interview, 12/8/06.

M. Okele, Oral Interview, 10/8/06.

Z. O. Adiema , Oral Interview,12/8/06.

⁴⁰ M.J.Ndeda, “*Nomiya Luo Church*” p.4.

⁴¹ Ibid. P.4

and women who treated and cured people using traditional herbs. The herbs were obtained from the local bushes and along the riverbanks. The herbs were mainly vegetative thus mainly roots, barks, stems and leaves. Medicine women and men were paid in the form of grains and livestock.

Hafkin and Bay⁴² commenting on spirit mediums in Africa point out that:

Cult activities may serve as avenues of protest against male domination; they may offer women temporary authority in ritual situations; or they may allow individual women to attain positions of wide political prominence.

This was one realm where patriarchy had no control. Tamale⁴³ writing on the Luo of Uganda says that the women assumed the role of divine-mediator-the link between the living and the spirits. A divine-mediator had power and influence because she could heal the sick, predict wars and do many other things, which others could not. The Kenyan Luo women diviners' and prophetesses possessed powers to heal the sick, avert evil, predict war, and communicate with the supernatural. They also enabled the community to understand some of the events which were beyond their comprehension such as, barrenness, epidemics and natural disasters.⁴⁴ Whenever a crisis or problem arose, the diviners were consulted by the community. The diviners would then consult the supernatural powers and communicate the outcome to the community. The diviners were consulted when anyone was sick. They diagnosed the causes of their illness and treated them. They also consulted with the ancestors, offering sacrifices to treat some diseases. For example, some diseases were caused by witchcraft and sorcery and their remedies were not readily accessible.

In the realm of religion and spirit-mediums, the Luo society recognised individual contribution not so much according to the contributor's gender but according to one's ability and capabilities. Luo women *jobilo* (medicine women) like Mang'ana *nyar* Ugu rose to become the chief of Kadem because of her powerful medicine and personality.⁴⁵

⁴² N.J. Hafkin and G. Bay Edna, *Women in Africa: Studies in Social and Economic Change*, (Stanford, 1996) p. 11.

⁴³ S. Tamale. *When Hens Begin to Crow: Gender and parliamentary Politics in Uganda*, (Boulder, 1999), p. 6.

⁴⁴ D. Atieno, Oral Interview 12/8/06.
R. Apiyo, (Oral Interview, 8/8/06) See also Cohen and Odhiambo, "Siaya", discussing an economy of Therapy pp. 88-89.

⁴⁵ T.O. Ayot, "South Nyanza, Historical Texts Vol. 11" Kenyatta University, Dept. of History, 1990, p. 145. See also, Iris Berger, *Rebels or Status – Seekers? Women as Spirit Mediums in East Africa* in (eds) N. Hakfin and E. Bay, *Women in Africa: Studies in Social and Economic change*, (Stanford,

2.4 Economic Organization

African women, the Luo women in particular had varying degrees of economic power and independence despite the patriarchal systems that placed them under the authority of their fathers and husbands.⁴⁶ Under the customary law, Luo women were not expected nor allowed to own land. It belonged to men of her clan and those of the clan into which she was married. Land was allocated to the household once a man got married. Each household was charged with all the activities required for the sustenance and needs of its members, including production, deployment and use of labour power and the determination of economic objectives.⁴⁷

The land of one's mother *puoth min* was shared by the sons as they married. A mother gave her son a part of her farm and his wife retained usufructory rights and this became the property of her sons. The distribution of land to the first wife *mikayi* was the responsibility of the father-in-law and mother-in-law. Therefore, land was inherited by a man through his mother and wife since unmarried men were not assigned land. The man became the owner of the land and the homestead, *woun dala* on which the couple settled. However, his wife became the owner of the house *wuon ot*.⁴⁸ In the home, there were certain rites that governed the day to day activities. All these were tied in the responsibilities of the man and his wife (wives). Most of the activities in the home rotated around the man and wife (wives). For example, when one started breaking the ground for planting, weeding, eating the first fruits from the field and harvesting, all these activities had to follow a laid down procedure. This required a man to sleep in his first wife's house so that she was the first to undertake such economic activities.⁴⁹ Then followed by the second, third wives depending on their number.

All these economic rituals were interlinked to sex, so that if the first wife was not at home, then no farmwork was done. She had to be waited for until she came home. The institution of the first wife, *mikayi* could not be by-passed in any economic matters pertaining to the home and other wives could not substitute for her in event of her

1996). Pp. 157-181. She argues that religious systems in East Africa gave women opportunities to rise above their general status of inferiority.

⁴⁶ N.J.Hafkin and G. Bay, *Women in Africa*, P. 6 See also, Dorthe Von Billow, "Bigger than Men? Gender Relations and their Changing Meaning in Kipsigis Society, Kenya" in *Africa* Vol. 62 No. 4, (1992), pp. 523-546.

⁴⁷ M.J.Ndeda, *Nomiya* p. 3.

⁴⁸ M.J.Ndeda, *ibid*, pp. 3-4.

⁴⁹ M. Aboge, Oral Interview, 10/05/06.

absence. Indeed, failure to wait for the first wife to act first was bad omen and a breach of home discipline.⁵⁰ A number of first wives used their position to assert their economic and political power in the homestead. Often, *mikayi* also participated in the settlement of homestead land disputes.

Every Luo wife basically controlled the crops grown on her piece of land. These crops were used to feed her family or used for exchange for what she needed. She was also responsible for all labour provisions on the farm and afterwards processed the crops. Commenting on the same issues, Ayot⁵¹ asserts that:

...the stores of foodstuff were the domain of the woman; the granaries where produce from the fields was kept were controlled by women. The man could not take possession of any of the produce from the field.

According to the Luo tradition, men were not allowed to climb into granaries to draw grains such as, millet and sorghum. This was a taboo for men. Therefore, a man needed his wife's permission to draw grains from the family granary. The men however, had their own farms and from these farms, they had a different store in the middle of the home. From this store, they could draw grains without his wife's permission.

Apart from agriculture, the Luo economy was centred round livestock-keeping. Livestock were allocated to a man upon marriage. These included: cattle, goats and sheep. They also kept poultry. All the livestock in a homestead belonged to the head of the homestead. If the head of the homestead was polygamous, livestock was distributed to the different households, thus the women became incharge of the livestock of her household.⁵² The number and quality of a man's animals determined his wealth and status in the society. One without livestock was considered a poor man, and not respected.

Hunting and gathering was another economic activity. There were a few men who considered hunting a profession, they were known as *jodwar*, the hunters. They used the hunted animals as a source of protein in their diet. There was a laid down manner for distributing the hunted animal. When the men had slaughtered the animal, the first wife, *mikayi*, was given the responsibility of distributing the different parts of the animal to her co-wives, relatives and friends.⁵³ The men also sold game in cases where they had surplus. Hunting was also the source of rare skins, such as those of leopards and

⁵⁰M.J. Ndeda – “*Nomiya Luo Church*” p. 4.

M. Aboge, Oral Interview, 10/5/06

⁵¹ T.O. Ayot, “South Nyanza Historical Texts” p. 15.

⁵² D.A. Nyakwaka, “Agricultural Change in Rongo Division, Migori District, 1850-63”, MPhil, Thesis, Moi University (1996).

⁵³ Z. O. Adiemba, Oral Interview, 12/08/06.

columbus monkeys which were in high demand as ceremonial outfits. These skins were also used as items of trade. Hunting was basically a male activity; women cooked the meat brought home from the hunt.

The Luo also gathered wildfruits, vegetables, medicinal herbs and insects. Most of the vegetables were wild for example, *Ododo* (*Amaranthus* spp.). East African spinach *Osuga* (*Solanum nigrum*), night shade, *Dek* (*Gynandronis gynandia*) spider hower *Atipa* (*Asystasia Schimperii*), *Susa* (*Thumbergia*), *Mito* (*Crototaria bre videns*), *Odielo* (*Commelina Africana*), *Awayo* (*Commeline sabatula*), *Apoth* (*Corchorus Olitorius*) and many others. They also gathered wild fruits such as *Ochuoga* (*Carica edulis*), *Sangla* (*Rhus Natalerisis*) and *Anyuka* (*Vanguera linearisepala*).⁵⁴ The gathering of vegetables, insects and fruits was mainly done by the women. They also gathered herbs which were used to treat children's fever, and intestinal trouble. Women also treated other women for infertility, repeated miscarriage, and eased child birth and for psychosomatic disorders.

Fishing was another economic activity among the Luo. Fish formed part of the protein diet of the community. It was also traded locally with the neighbouring communities, such as the Gusii. Fishing was done by the men, while the women traded in fish.

The Luo were also engaged in crafts making and industry. This sector of the pre-colonial economy comprised, basketry and pottery-making, iron-melting, the making of iron implements and tanning. The main participants in these industries were men and women specialists. Weaving for example was done by both men and women. Women weaved mainly baskets while the men weaved granaries. Pottery was mainly a women's craft. Women moulded different kinds of pots using locally available clay from the swampy areas and along river valleys.⁵⁵ The pots were of various sizes, structures and patterns. Pots were used for storage of grains, water and cooking food. The different types of pots included: *dapi* (for keeping drinking water) *dak* (for storing grains), and *ohigla* (a small pot used for cooking fish or meat).⁵⁶ Pots were also used for drawing water. They were also traded in locally and across the borders with the Gusii and Kipsigis.

Tamale⁵⁷ writing on division of labour, notes that 'the development of a sexual division of labour in Uganda, as in many other African societies, proceeded the colonial

⁵⁴ D.A. Nyakwaka "Agricultural Change in Rongo Division, Migori District, 1850-63", Mphil, Thesis, Moi University (1996).

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 43.

⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 45.

⁵⁷ S.Tamale, *When Hens Begin to Crow* P. 7.

period'. That sexual division of labour was practiced in the pre-colonial Luo society is real as we have seen in our discussion of the various activities. However, the pre-colonial division of labour changed drastically with the introduction of colonial capitalism. Tamale⁵⁸ further comments that; "Ugandan society did not denigrate women's work as it does today. Gender relations at this time (pre-colonial) took on a form that was more complementary than hierarchical". She says that men built houses, hunted, herded and milked, fished and went to war. Women cultivated, processed, and marketed crops; collected fuel and water; cared for the children, the sick and elderly; made pottery, coked, cleaned and washed.⁵⁹ All these duties were positively accepted by the community. As Driberg sums it up; a woman carrying out her duty (was) held in just as high esteem as a man carrying out his and the nature of the occupation (was) of no matter".⁶⁰

What Tamale⁶¹ lists as the work of Ugandan men and women are similar to what we have seen among the Luo women and men. Gender relations in labour were complementary and as concluded by Driberg⁶², all duties both for women and men were held in high esteem by the community.

Dorthe Von Bülow⁶³ writing on the Kipsigis asserts that:

Men had ultimate rights in the important forms of productive resources, land and livestock, but women's status in the house property complex and their role in production allowed them a high degree of autonomy and considerable manoeuvre.

In this quote, Bülow stresses the fact that gender was the basic principle structuring production relations among the Kipsigis a Nilotic-speaking group. From our foregoing discussion on the Luo, it was also true that gender was the basic principle structuring production relations. The men had rights in the important forms of productive resources, land and livestock as *wuon dala* (the owner of the homestead). But women as wives and owners of the house, *wuon ot* had a right to own also house property from her farm, trade activities and skills such as, pottery and basketry. Thus while the husband had the supreme right of control over property, the wife was the holder of the house property and

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ J.H. Driberg, "The Status of Women Among the Nilotics and Nilo-Hamitics" *Africa*, London, 5, No, 4:409 quoted in Tamale, S., *When Hens Begin to Crow*, (Boulder, 1999).

⁶¹ S.Tamale., *When Hens Begin to Crow*, P. 7.

⁶² J.H. Driberg., "The Status of Women Among the Nilotics and Nilo-Hamitics".

⁶³ V. Bülow, "Bigger than Men?"

functioned as the manager in daily life. This also gave the women political say on the use of family resources.

2.5 Gender and Political Organisation

O'Barr⁶⁴ writing on African women in politics asserts that it is not easy to differentiate economic, religious power from political influence in pre-colonial African societies. In most accounts of political systems, there is the assumption that the action is with males and that women are peripheral to the events of politics. However, this was less true in Africa, where women were economic, social and political actors on their own right. Commenting on the same subject, Tamale⁶⁵ adds that in Uganda, politics during the pre-colonial period appeared to an outside observer the "exclusive realm of men" because of the male dominance that existed in patriarchal societies. However, the real picture was that different cultural arrangements between the sexes allowed for women to participate in politics both on a formal and an informal basis. Tamale adds that two main factors have led to the misconception about women's political participation in pre-colonial Africa. The first factor is:

A misunderstanding of the meaning of "public and "private" life in pre-colonial Uganda (as well as in other African societies), which leads to oversimplified cultural evaluations of the sexes based on the domestic/public divide.⁶⁶

In the African pre-colonial societies, women were not restricted to the private or domestic sphere. Their numerous responsibilities cut across the private/domestic/public spheres and shaped the women's political lives.

The second factor that has led to the misconception about the women originates from:

The male-authored and andro-centric history texts. Partly influenced by the current marginalisation of African women from the formal political sphere, mainstream historians tend to assume that women have never played a role in the politics of their communities⁶⁷.

⁶⁴J. O'Barr, "African Women in Politics" P. 140.

⁶⁵S. Tamale, *When Hens Begin to Crow*, P. 4.

⁶⁶ S.Tamale, *ibid*, p. 4. See also Okonji, "The Dual-Sex Political System in Operation.

⁶⁷ S.Tamale, *When Hens Begin to Crow*, P. 5 see also T. Zeleza, "Gender Biases in African Historiography" in Imam, A. et al., (eds) *Engendering African Social Sciences*, (Dakar, 1997).

Commenting on this point, Okonjo,⁶⁸ writing on the Igbo society asserts that this was a patrilineal and patrilocal society where men ruled and dominated every sphere. Therefore, because of the outwardly patriarchal framework, many observers like the male authors of our history concluded that the position of women in these societies was totally subordinate. As a result of their misconceptions, they produced a distorted picture of the “oppressive” African man and the “deprived” African woman.

African women were political actors in their communities. They used political power as individuals or groups. Furthermore, women had both direct and indirect political powers. Indirect powers included withdrawal, evocation of the supernatural and manipulation through males, that is, sons, fathers, cousins, and husbands.⁶⁹ While, direct political powers included; selecting leaders, holding elected or appointed offices and using resource for desired ends.⁷⁰

Indirect political modes such as withdrawal were the simplest way the African women had to exercise their power. Withdrawal is not an effective strategy for the long-term exercise of control. Yet it allows a woman to take a position, it forces others to deal with that position, and it produces control for a brief period of time. Women also used supernatural power which was thought to be more effective than withdrawal. Women in Africa have always used and employed ritual to achieve their ends such as; fertility, punish the community’s well being and in many other ways. Africans have always believed that women’s activities controlled some aspects of the supernatural and that this control was a political resource that women could employ to bring desired ends.⁷¹ African women also controlled their destiny by working through men. That is, in areas whereby women could not get officially recognised positions, they influenced men who were close to them to influence the policy in their favour.

In precolonial Kenya, there were communities that had councils of women which directly dealt with issues of women. Focussing on the Luo political system, it was decentralised. Each area comprised a sub-tribe, *oganda*, made up of several clans under a chief, *ruoth* in many cases a man.

⁶⁸K. Okonjo, “The Dual-Sex Political System in Operation” p. 45.

⁶⁹ J.O’Barr., “African Women in Politics” p. 141.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 141.

⁷¹ J.O’Barr., “African Women in Politics” p. 141 Von Bülow, “Bigger than men?” pp. 523-546. She says this council existed among the Nandi, Tugen and Pokot. See also, Wai Nyakwea, *Women in Kenya: Wangu wa Makeri: A Pioneering Kenyan Feminist*, Kaswanga, (Nairobi, 1994). She discusses the Women’s advisory Council among the Kikuyu.

The family formed the basic administrative unit. Each family was headed by the male parent called *jaduong* (the oldest member). He was in charge of discipline and the daily running of the family affairs. Several families of the same parentage lived in close proximity and formed a lineage group known as *dhoot*. They were referred to by the name of their common great grandfather. Family heads formed a council called *buch dhoot*. This council was concerned mainly with settling family disputes. The next level was the clan, *gweng*. This comprised all the people from the same ancestry. Here too there was a council of clan representatives called *buch gweng* headed by the clan elder. Several clans formed the sub-tribe *oganda*. There was a council of clan elders called *buch piny* or the law of the land. This council was totally in charge of all affairs of the sub-tribe. They served as the chief's advisors, their duties included; settling inter clan disputes, calling for war against their perceived enemies and punishing major crimes like murder.

The ultimate leader of each sub-tribe was the chief, *ruoth*.⁷² He was also the leader of *Buch piny*. The duties of *ruoth* included settling disputes with other sub-tribes, ensuring law and order in his territory, as well as being the custodian of the land. *Ruoth* was also a ceremonial leader who united people under his jurisdiction. The Luo had a military strategist known as *osumba_mirwayi*. He too sat on the *buch piny* council. He advised on military issues and controlled the military issues and strategies like training of warriors, defence of the community and organised cattle raids. He had a standing army which consisted of distinguished brave young men, *thuondi*. However, in times of need, all young men were mobilised to defend their community.

Other important political decision-makers in the community were the religious leaders like spirit-mediums, diviners or *jobilo* and rainmakers. They installed the chief and when necessary, consulted the ancestors on behalf of the community. Therefore, their advice was significant to the people. They also advised for or against war and blessed the warriors before any military expedition.

Examining the Luo governance structure, one may say women were not represented. However, this physical absence did not mean passivity. Ndeda⁷³ aptly puts it that while women were not expected to express their views publicly on important matters, they were consulted privately. Before a man took a decision with repercussions on the family he might say "*We apenj orindi mondi*" (let me consult the head rest before making

⁷²B.A.Ogot, "A History of Southern Luo". See also W.R. Ochieng; *Outline History of Nyanza upto 1914*, (Nairobi, 1974) see also A. Oyando. *The Epic of Gor Mahia*. (Nakuru, 2003).

⁷³ M.J.Ndeda., "Nomiya Luo Church" p. 4.
Magdelene Aboge, Oral Interview, 10/5/06.

the decision). This headrest was a woman, frequently the first wife (*mikayi*). The men consulted with the first wife because she was central in all the crucial rituals in the home. The first wife was also considered the co-owner of the homestead with her husband. When she attained menopause, all sexual relations with her husband ceased but she participated in decision-making. Cohen and Atieno-Odhiambo⁷⁴ in their work dwells on the powers of the elderly women, *pim* in the Luo community. They were regularly consulted on numerous issues of significance.

In the realm of supernatural powers, women distinguished themselves as leaders. Tamale⁷⁵ focusing on the Luo of Uganda asserts that the women assumed the role of a divine-mediator-the link between the living and the ancestral spirits. A divine-mediator carried considerable power and influence since she possessed the skills to heal the sick, avert evil, and predict war and many others. Furthermore, because of their role in society, female mediators could politically mobilise the people whenever the need arose. Tamale⁷⁶ points out, that such mobilisation finds more recent expression in the case of the mediator and warrior, Alice Lakwena who mobilised her people and waged war against Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Movement (NRM) government from 1987 – 1993. After her defeat she ran to exile in Kenya. In Kenya, Menyziwa wa Menza (Mekatilili) from the Giriama community was a divine –mediator who led her people in resisting the British.

Among the Luo of Kenya one famous divine mediator was Mang'ana *nyar* Ugwe of Kadem, who rose to become the chief of her people of Kadem.⁷⁷ Mang'ana is also remembered for mobilising her people to resist European invasion in Nyanza at the turn of the nineteenth century. Women also physically participated in warfare. Some of the famous warriors, *thuond mon* included, Odele Ny'olonde and Ayoo Owigo who led women regiments into battlefield and fought along side with men.⁷⁸ Aduol Nyar Ogot Katawo also fought alongside the Mur warriors of Ng'iya against Gem people. Her brother Tawo Kogot was a renown warrior and military strategist just before the arrival of the colonialists.

2.6 Conclusion

⁷⁴ E.A. Atieno-Odhiambo and W.D. "Siaya". Pp. 85-110.

⁷⁵ S.Tamale, *When Hens Begin to Crow*, pp. 5-6.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁷⁷ T. Ayot., "The Position of Women in the Luo Societies".

⁷⁸ A. Oyando . *The Epic of Gor Mahia*.

During the pre-colonial time Luo women were not as marginalised as they are today, their status was by no means equal to that of men. The men dominated positions of political, economic and social power because the Luo are a patriarchal society. However, women were social, economic and political actors in their own right, they were not passive in any of these spheres. Indeed, in all aspects the Luo society evolved around women. After menopause women were transformed into men and they had a voice in society in their own rights.

CHAPTER THREE:

WOMEN AND EARLY COLONIAL POLITICS, 1895 - 1939

The Colonial State strove to control women not only because they suffered from deep-rooted racial and gender prejudices against African women, but also because controlling the sexuality and mobility of African women offered a means of mitigating the disruptive impact of migrant labour on African family life, and preventing the collapse of indigenous authority structures, especially in the face of growing women's resistance¹.

3.0 Introduction

This chapter examines the establishment of colonial rule in Luo Nyanza. Thereafter, it discusses the various colonial policies, structures and changes which were instrumental in the transformation of the political roles of women. The main policies analysed include, taxation, education, politics, and labour. The women's responses to the policies are also discussed.

3.1 The Establishment of Colonial rule In Luo Nyanza

On June 1894, the British declared a protectorate over Uganda. This protectorate included what was called Kisumu and Naivasha districts. In 1902, South Kavirondo, along with all those areas which had been amalgamated to form the Eastern province of Uganda was placed under the British East Africa Protectorate, which ultimately became Kenya.² In August 1903, Boughton-Knight visited Rusinga Island on his way to Karungu on the South of the District. He had been posted as acting District Commissioner.³ The people of Karungu put up an armed resistance led by their leader Ougo. This resistance was suppressed by the British and an administrative centre was set up at Karungu.⁴ Karungu was chosen as the headquarters of South Kavirondo District because of the alarming border crisis between the German in Tanganyika and the British in Kenya.⁵ This station remained the headquarters until 1907 when the centre of administration was shifted to Kisii. Kisumu was the

¹T. Zeleza, *Manufacturing African Studies and Crises*, (Dakar, 1997). P. 123.

² W.R.Ochieng, *A Pre-colonial History of the Gusii of Western Kenya, C.A.D 100-1914*, (Nairobi, 1974). P. 221. See also,

_____, *"An Outline History of Nyanza"* (Nairobi, 1974) Pp. 84-85.

³ KNA, DCIKSI/3/2 .South Kavirondo District Reports. 1912-13

⁴ T.Ayot, "A History of the Luo of South Nyanza, 1590 -1930" M.A., Thesis, Nairobi University, (1981).

⁵ Ibid.

headquarters of central Kavirondo. The imposition of colonial rule entailed the process of capitalist penetration of African economies. It also led to the integration of the African indigenous political systems with the imperialist systems. This integration led to the marginalisation of Luo women in politics since the colonialists chose to work with the male gender in the public sphere.

3.2 The Colonial Tax System

Taxation provides a major source of revenue which a state needs to finance its activities. Discussing the evolution of taxation, Elias⁶ contends that no single man created taxes or the taxation monopoly, but like all other institutions, it was a product of 'social inter-weaving'.⁷ The same argument can be used for taxation in the indigenous states, whereby tributes and dues, which evolved over a period of time as a result of social inter-weaving of different groups, were paid to kings, queens, chiefs and emirates. However, taxation during the colonial period was imposed by the colonial powers in order to control the people and to finance the colonies. The colonial states tax policies and the fiscal structure in general had a number of adverse consequences on Luo women.

The subject of taxation in colonial Kenya has received considerable intellectual attention in Kenya's historiography. Leys⁸, Tignor⁹ and Wolf¹⁰ all discuss the high taxes imposed on the Africans. This led to the overcrowding of people in huts in the villages as the Africans tried to lessen the burden of hut tax on their families as it was based on the number of huts in a homestead. Zwanenberg¹¹ and Stichter¹² both articulate the issue of taxation and migrant labour, colonial tax policies and their impact on Africans.

The colonial state in Kenya established a fiscal policy which would provide revenue for administration, infrastructure, welfare services and security. This policy entailed taxing the citizens either directly or indirectly in order to raise the required

⁶ N. Elias, *The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners and State Formation and Civilization*, (Oxford, 1996).

⁷ Ibid., P. 425.

⁸ N. Leys, *Kenya*, (London, 1973).

⁹ R.L.Tignor, *The colonial Transformation of Kenya*, (New Jersey, 1976).

¹⁰ R.D.Wolf, *Britain and Kenya, 1870-1930: The Economic of Colonialism*, (London, 1974).

¹¹ R.M.A. Zwanenberg, *Colonial Capitalism and Labour in Kenya, 1919- 1939*, (Nairobi, 1975).

¹² S. Stichter, *Migrant Labour in Kenya: Capitalism and African Responses, 1895 - 1975*, (London, 1982).

money. For a fair taxation policy, the state requires progressive tax policy whereby those who earn more and have more property pay higher taxes compared to the less fortunate members of the society. This was not the case in colonial Kenya. The state favoured the white settlers and Asians who earned more and owned more but paid less direct taxes when compared to the Africans¹³. Lord Fredrick Lugard, a British colonial tax expert justified the taxation of Africans by arguing that:

Direct taxation was a moral benefit to the people by stimulating industry and production ... among the male population ... who had become indolent and addicted to drinking and quarrelling.¹⁴

The colonial mentality was that Africans were lazy and idle. Therefore to make them work they had to be forced to pay taxes. This however, was a stereotyped myth, which was not true considering the many economic activities in which both women and men were engaged in prior to the colonial era.

The colonial state imposed taxes on Africans as a means of removing them from their own farms in order to seek employment in the European plantations, consequently earning money for taxes.¹⁵ The arrangement was that the need for money to pay taxes would force Africans to get involved in modern economic pursuits which would not otherwise have interested them.

The state also introduced a number of new cash crops in the rural areas. These crops, for example, groundnuts, simsim, wattle, led to the commoditization of African household economies in order for the Africans to meet their tax obligations. By 1914, Africans crops made up seventy- per cent of the exports from Kenya.¹⁶

Looking at these scenarios, one may say therefore that taxation was used by the colonial state to an extent as a punitive measure to make the Africans work hard and get engaged in the colonial cash economy. Thus, taxation was not seen as a duty of a citizen which would qualify a person to demand benefits from the state. Ekeh points out that:

The many tax wars and rebellions of colonial history must therefore be seen from the point of view of the resisting Africans, as resentment against a quest

¹³N. Leys, "Kenya".

¹⁴ P. Ekeh, "The Public Realm and Public Finance in Africa" in Himmelstrand, and Kabiru Mburugu, (eds) *African Perspectives on Development: Controversies, Dilemmas and Openings*, (Kampala, 1994) p. 241.

¹⁵ R.M.A.Zwannenber, "*Colonial Capitalism and Labour in Kenya*".

¹⁶ R.M. Maxon, "The Establishment of the colonial Economy" in Ochieng, W.R. and Maxon, R.M. (eds) *An Economic History of Kenya*, (Nairobi, 1992). See also, KNA/PC/NYA/1/2/3, Ainsworth Miscellaneous Record Book.

to yoke them into a new form of domination on the grounds of which they were now expected to pay tributes to alien overlords.¹⁷

It is in this light that we need to understand women's protests to taxation in various parts of the country. Apart from paying the taxes, women had to live with many other negative impacts of taxation. In 1901, the first direct tax was imposed upon indigenous people being raised on huts, whereby a man was liable for taxes on the huts which he owned. This tax was seen as a 'wife tax' which was a tax on property since women were property to be owned by men.¹⁸

In 1910, a poll tax was introduced. This was to be paid by all men over the age of sixteen years. Apart from the two direct taxes paid in cash, the state also, introduced symbolic taxation in the form of communal labour. This type of labour was compulsory for everybody including the older men past working age, women and children.¹⁹

By 1922, Sir Humphery Legget, Chairman of the East African section of Commerce, wrote to the colonial office in London criticizing the tax policy in Kenya. He pointed out that the tax system was destroying the Africans industry and setting them back in every way.²⁰ Sir Humphery advocated for a change of the colonial fiscal policies that would reduce the African tax burden and stimulate production by spending money on the reserves. This protest partly led to a reduction in tax rates in 1922 from sixteen shillings to twelve shillings.

Africans received very little in return for their taxes. For example, in Kitui in Kamba district, in the early 1920s, it cost the administration roughly ten percent of the annual taxes collected to administer the district. The other ninety percent were taken by the administration out of the district²¹. This shows that the taxes from the African districts were a direct consequence of the financial needs of the European infrastructure. Apart from the direct taxation, Africans also paid customs, and excise duties, Local Native Council levies and other direct taxes. When put together, hut and

¹⁷ P. Ekeh , "The Public Realm and Public Finance in Africa" P. 241.

¹⁸R.M.A. Zwanenberg, "*Colonial Capitalism and Labour in Kenya*" Also Tarus, K.I., "*A History of the Direct Taxation of the African people of Kenya 1895 - 1973*" Ph.D Thesis, Rhodes (2003) p. 64. See also M. Aboge, Oral Interview, 10/5/06.

¹⁹ T.Zeleza, "Kenya and the Second World War, 1939 - 1950" in Ochieng, W.R., (eds) *A Modern History of Kenya 1895 - 1980*, (Nairobi, 1989).

²⁰ R.M.Maxon, "The Years of Revolutionary Advance, 1920 - 1929" in Ochieng, W.R.(eds) *A Modern History of Kenya 1895 - 1980*, (Nairobi, 1989).

²¹ R.M.A.Zwanenberg, "*Colonial Capitalism and Labour in Kenya*".

poll tax and custom duties, were responsible for between sixty to eighty percent of the colony's revenue.²²

The colonial state legitimised itself through appointing chiefs in territorial divisions such as locations and head-men in the villages. These chiefs were men who hitherto were 'nobodies' in their communities yet the colonial state gave them both executive and judicial powers hitherto unknown in the communities. This policy proved disastrous in most parts of Africa, and Kenya in particular. It was these chiefs and head-men who collected taxes on behalf of the state. The village was the unit of collection, and the village head was responsible for collecting taxes and taking it to the district head.²³

There were no women chiefs or village heads. All tax policy makers and implementers were men and yet all women, widows and war-widows were not exempted from paying taxes. The colonial state undermined women's participation in the political sphere even at the lowest community levels such as the village.

Tax collection was a crucial ritual because it demonstrated on a yearly basis the power of the state over and the subordination of women and men as individuals to the state. The state invested chiefs and head-men with a lot of power over the collection of taxes, so much so that they misused it. For example, the chiefs and headmen often collected more taxes than the official amount and kept the difference for themselves.²⁴ The women and men who could not pay taxes were whipped in public, their livestock confiscated, huts burnt, homes looted and women raped.²⁵ There were cases of widows being beaten and having their firewood detained for the benefit of tribunal elders.²⁶ This harsh treatment by the state agencies reflected the state-society relations and laid the foundation for anti-tax protests witnessed throughout the colonial period. Indeed, among the Luo, the payment of taxes was a burden to be avoided at all costs. For instance, men knocked down huts in their compounds so that women would share huts

²² T.Kanogo, "Kenya and the Depression, 1929 - 1939" in Ochieng, W.R. (ed) *A Modern History of Kenya. 1895 - 1980*, (Nairobi, 1989).

²³ P. Ekeh, "The Public Realm and Public Finance in Africa" see also R.M.A. Zwanenberg, *Colonial Capitalism and Labour in Kenya*".

²⁴R.M.A.Zwanenberg, "Colonial Capitalism and Labour in Kenya". Dorcas Otieno Oral .Interview, 12/8/06.

²⁵T. Zeleza, "The Establishment of Colonial State, 1905-1920" in Ochieng, W.R. (eds) *A Modern History of Kenya 1895 - 1980*, (Nairobi, 1989). See also Zwanenberg, "Colonial Capitalism and Labour in Kenya".

²⁶ R.M.A.Zwanenberg, "Colonial Capitalism and Labour in Kenya".

and thus, avoid payment. However, on realizing this, the state issued instructions that hut tax was to be payable on adult women and not on their huts.²⁷

Tax evasion was common during the colonial period whether in the rich reserves like Kiambu or in the poor reserves like Elgeyo and Tugen areas.²⁸ There were widespread evasions in South Kavirondo district whereby large numbers of both women and men were reported to have migrated across the border to Tanganyika, to pay lower taxes.²⁹

3.2.1 The Impact of Colonial Taxation on Luo Women

The colonial tax policies had a number of impacts on Kenyan women and the Luo were no exception. One main impact was that the women were separated from their spouses and sons, who joined wage-labour to earn money for taxes.

Lonsdale points out that:

By 1910, up to one third of all adult men in Kikuyu district and in the lowland Nyanza were out for work at any time generally for only a few month.³⁰

During the first twenty years of colonial rule, the separation from families, as men went out to work was for only a few months, but this later became years. Colonial wages were so low that men could not sustain their families in the towns.³¹ At the same time the housing facilities in most of the colonial towns were in the slums where there was no water or sanitation making them unsuitable for families. As a result of the lack of water and sanitation in Nairobi plague broke out in 1911, 1912 and in 1913 and many people died³². Because men could not take their spouses to towns, a number of them engaged in personal liaisons with prostitutes. Prostitution was common in colonial towns because of the acute demographic imbalance of the sexes and the lack of wage opportunities for women.³³ The price for these liaisons with the prostitutes

²⁷ R.M.A.Zwanenberg, "*Colonial Capitalism and Labour in Kenya*" See also Nyanza Province, Annual Reports, PC/NZA/I119- 1914.

²⁸ R.M.A. Zwanenberg. Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., See also Nyakwaka, D.A. "Agricultural Change in Rongo Division, Migori District". And D. Otieno, Oral Interview., 12/8/06.

³⁰ J.Lonsdale, "The Conquest State, 1894 - 1904" in Ochieng, W.R., (ed), *A Modern History of Kenya, 1895 - 1980*, (Nairobi, 1989) p. 27.

³¹ J.Bujra, "Class, Gender and Capitalist Transformation" in Robertson, C., and Berger, I. (eds) *Women and Class in Africa* (New York, 1986).

³² T.Zeleza, "The Establishment of Colonial State, 1905 - 1920"

³³ T.Zeleza, "Kenya and the Second World War 1939 - 1950" See also, White L., "Domestic Labour in a Colonial City: Prostitution in Nairobi, 1900 - 1952" in Stichter, B.S., and Parpart, J.L. (eds) *Patriarchy and Class: African Women in the Home and Workforce*, (USA, 1988).

was the spread of venereal diseases, reported in Nairobi and Mombasa in 1913 – 1914.³⁴ Women's health was jeopardised every time their husbands went home after a work contract in town. This danger continued throughout the colonial period as men stayed away sometimes for up to ten years.

The fact that men left home for wage-labour meant that women were left at home to take care of their families and put in more labour time in the farms, fulfilling men's roles such as clearing fields and breaking the ground before hoeing.³⁵ Thus, there was a gradual change in the social division of functions in the family structure. The low wages paid by the colonialists, meant that women had to raise enough food for the families and surpluses for selling to supplement money for taxation and to feed husbands and sons working in colonial enterprises.³⁶ Indeed, the departure of men intensified women's burden of work without in most cases enlarging their freedom to make decision.³⁷ Towards the end of the colonial era Nyanza which remained a labour reservoir for most of the colonial period, a society of women, children and old men emerged, as young men went out for wage labour. Women became household heads and were the sole supporters of their households.³⁸ Despite the fact that men were away for many years, some even for ever, they remained 'legitimate' heads of homes even though women did all the work. The male control was exercised by old patriarchs who watched over women. However, because of the long absence of their husbands, women, to an extent, became independent in their households as farm managers for food and as the main care-takers of the children and old members of the family.³⁹ Thus, to an extent there was a general remoulding of authority in rural areas such as Siaya, in Nyanza where men were away for between ten to fifteen years.⁴⁰

The hut tax also known as 'wife tax' had an adverse effect on Luo women in that men reduced the number of huts in their compounds. This was aimed at lowering the tax burden. Zwanenberg points out that:

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ T. Zeleza, "The Establishment of Colonial State 1905 - 1920" See also, M. Aboge ,Oral Interview, 10/5/06.

³⁶ J.M.Bujra, "Class, Gender and Capitalist Transformation". See also, Parpart, J.L and Staudt, K.A., (eds) *Women and State in Africa*, (London, 1989).

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ E. Atieno-Odhiambo and W.D.Cohen, "*Siaya*". See also, Silberschmidt, M., *Women Forget that Men are the Masters, Gender Antagonism and Socio-Economic Change in Kisii District, Kenya*, (Sweden, 1999).

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

It had been discovered that the hut tax collectors were being frustrated by the action of people in knocking down individually used huts in order that women might share thus avoid payment.⁴¹

The reduction in the number of huts meant that the women had no privacy since two or three women were forced to live in one hut in order to reduce the tax burden. After more than thirty years as the flagship of colonial property tax, a provision was made for the gradual abolition of hut tax through the Native Act and Poll tax Ordinance of 1934. This act made provisions for the exemption of impoverished persons from the payment of taxes. One fundamental change of the act made was in the provision that made women hut owners liable for the payment of tax.⁴² Colonial administrators argued that since most men were no longer living in reserves but in towns or urban areas this would lead to a reduction in tax revenue. The administrators asserted that it would be profitable to tax men at the centres or in farms where they worked, and that it made sense to tax their wives who stayed behind. It was argued that women held property as trustees of their families. This was one of the recommendations of Lord Moyne when he called for the taxation of widows even if they had passed the child-bearing age since they were in charge of huts.⁴³

In the 1920s, Archdeacon Owen of the Young Kavirondo Tax Payers Association had called for the exemption of widows and old women.⁴⁴ But this was strongly opposed by the colonial state administrators, who argued that women owned most of the huts and to exempt them meant leaving a whole household from the payment of taxes. The government feared that with the exemption of women from the tax net, all huts would eventually be registered in the names of women. In Nyanza province, the total exemptions had reached about Shs 120,000 a year and since some of the customs were changing, so that women then owned huts.⁴⁵ The change in the traditional society's social structure arose as a result of men migrating in search of labour leaving women as heads of households. Women were thus made by the colonial

⁴¹ R.M.A Zwanenberg , "Colonial Capitalism and Labour in Kenya" see also Tarus, K.I.A "History of the Direct Taxation of the African People of Kenya, 1895 -1973".

⁴² KNA/Native Hut and Poll tax Ordinance of 1934 which advocated the introduction of the Kodi stamps. See also Taros, "A History of the Direct Taxation of the African People of Kenya, 1895- 1973".

⁴³ Report of financial commissioner (Lord Moyne) on Certain Questions in Kenya, May 1932, P. 7 &. See Tarus, Ibid.

⁴⁴I.K. Tarus, Ibid.

⁴⁵ KNA PC/NZA/1/3/48/1, Nyanza Province Hut and Poll Tax Ordinance, 1935. See also Taros, K.I., Ibid.

state responsible for the payment of the taxes of their absentee husbands.⁴⁶ The determination of the provincial administrators to collect tax was illustrated by the case of a woman - Kolanya Raboti who in 1935 was charged at the DC's court in Kisumu for failure to pay her taxes. Kolanya was a widow who was destitute and distressed. Her relatives' goats, sheep and cows were seized to pay for the Kshs twelve shillings hut tax that was demanded of her.⁴⁷ One of the most serious burdens of taxation fell upon polygamous marriages. This was due to the cultural practice of wife inheritance. This is a deeply rooted tradition among the Luo whereby widows were to be inherited. This was seen as an economic security for women who lost their husbands' income or property. A man inheritor was responsible for the payment of hut tax for his own family and the families of those he had inherited.⁴⁸ Most taxpayers felt unfairly taxed as a consequence. At a meeting organised in 1935 by the PC Nyanza for all District Commissioners in the Province, it was unanimously agreed that the scale of tax payment be as follows⁴⁹:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------|
| i) Single women | Kshs 5 |
| ii) Single men (polls) | shs 10 |
| iii) A man with one wife | shs 15 |
| iv) A man with two wives | shs 20 |
| v) A man with three wives and so on | shs 25 |

Sometimes Luo men fled to neighbouring Tanganyika, where tax collection was light and not vigorously enforced as in Kenya.⁵⁰ Indeed, in colonial Kenya, women and children residing alone for one reason or another even in desperate conditions were required to pay taxes. The dilapidated huts they were living in were considered as property to be taxed. However, the truth was that women in traditional society did not own or inherit any of the property⁵¹ in the homestead apart from what they had

⁴⁶ I. K. Tarus, "History of Direct Taxation" Pp. 205-206. Oral Interview, L. Akumu, 17/8/06.

⁴⁷ KNA/PC/NZAI/3/48/1, Nyanza Province Hut and Poll Tax Ordinance, 1935. See also Tarus, K.I., Ibid. p.206.

⁴⁸ For an explanation of the wife inheritance tradition, see Cohen, and Atieno-Odhiambo, "*Siaya*". O.I., M. Aboge (Oral Interview, 10/05/10).

⁴⁹ KNA/PC/NZA/2/1/12/53, File on Soil Erosion, 1930-1944.

⁴⁹ KNA/PC/NZA/2/1/12/53, File on Soil Erosion, 1930-1944.

⁵⁰ KNA/PC/NZA/4/2/2/76. This file contains correspondence on taxation and guidance for poll tax collectors, 1931-49.

⁵¹ KNA/PC/NZ/2/19/12, Exemption on Hut and Poll Tax 1931 – 1942.

acquired in their huts. Luo women viewed taxation as a necessary evil which they protested against throughout the colonial period as shown in their political activities later in this chapter.

3.3 Colonial Education and its Impact on Luo Women

Colonial policy on education was among the potent factors adversely affecting the relative position of women in Africa.⁵² As in Victorian Europe, educational opportunities in colonial Kenya were disproportionately provided to males. At the initial stage of the colonial state, African education was spearheaded by the missionaries. Missionary education for girls was primarily geared towards providing educated men with good wives and homemakers.⁵³ At the same time, the educated housewife was seen by the colonisers as a potential consumer who would motivate her husband's productivity.⁵⁴

The education offered to the women denied them the intellectual skills needed to participate in the Western system of politics imposed by the colonialists. It also introduced new gender roles that, in turn, drastically altered gender ideology in Kenya. Consequently, women were relegated to redefined, subordinated domesticity, while the status of men, was elevated.⁵⁵ The introduction of formal Western education also had detrimental effects on women since they did not have access to the formal education and they could not compete effectively with men. However, despite the fact that missionary education for girls was relatively inferior to that for the boys, it offered women the opportunity to become better exposed, self confident and more amenable to activism.⁵⁶ The missionaries in Kenya were the main providers of western education. They were driven by the desire to convert Africans and to train catchists to read and understand the Bible.⁵⁷ However, as education became more familiar to Africans and consequently more in demand, the missions recognised that their control of education gave them a large impact on African societies and won many converts. Thus, the missionaries sought to retain a prominent role even as the colonial state assumed

⁵² S.Tamale *When Hens Begin to Crow*. P. II See also, A. C. Choti, *Gender and Electoral Politics in Kenya: The Case of Gusii Women, 1990 - 2002*, Phd Thesis (2005), p. 68.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ S.Tamale, Ibid P. 12.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ R.I.Tignor "*The Colonial Transformation of Kenya*".

greater educational duties in the colony. Tignor points out that, in the early colonial years however, the financially hard-pressed Kenyan government was happy to delegate most educational responsibilities to the missionaries.⁵⁸

Thus, before the First World War, the colonial state played a minimal role in African education. A major government report on African Education was issued by J. Nelson Fraser from India in 1909, calling on the government to emphasise industrial education for the African population. Thus the government emphasised on industrial education paying £2 to missions for each student enrolled for technical training and £5 for each person who completed the course and successfully passed a state examination. The colonial state was interested in creating a low cadre blue-collar working class that would be used by the settlers in their farms and as support staff in the state offices. The jobs were mainly for men only.

It was not until 1911 when the state created a Department of Education headed by J. R. Orr as its Director. Before this time, the state was content from 1909, to allocate small sums of money to the missions in order to facilitate their educational programmes. Before the First World War, the missions at work among the Luo included: The Church Missionary Society (C.M.C.) also known as the Anglican Church, the Catholic Church and the Seventh Day Adventist Church.⁵⁹ For example, in 1909, the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) church established a mission school and hospital at Gendia mission, in Kendu Bay.⁶⁰ Three years earlier, the Church Mission Society had established Maseno School in Kisumu.

During this early period, the focus of the early educators was on the chiefs sons. The Nyanza Provincial Commissioner, J. Ainsworth pointed out in his Annual Report in 1910:

The more enlightened chiefs and headmen are anxious that their sons should be educated and have in several instances moved the matter themselves and so at present there are a number of such youths being educated in the Church Missionary Society and Mill Hill Missions. I trust, however, that Government will eventually take upon itself the cost of education of chiefs sons under a set and regular code.⁶¹

It is clear from this report that the colonial state was focusing on the boys' education. The sons of chiefs were particularly targeted because they were the future

⁵⁸ R.I. Tignor, *Ibid*, P. 111.

⁵⁹ M. Ouma O. I., 6/8/06, Ludia Njeje (Oral Interview 5/8/06).

⁶⁰ KNA/PC/NZA/5/5/-1910 Annual Reports for Nyanza Province.

⁶¹ *Ibid*.

administrators. Girls education was not valued since they were not thought of as future leaders, but as wives and home-keepers. The socio-cultural norms continued to dictate that the women's ideal role was as mother and wife. Moreover, parents steeped in the patriarchal social-cultural values, believed that it was a waste of resources to invest in female children who would grow up and leave their paternal homes⁶². Female children were referred to as the wild cat, *ogwang*’ an indication of the interaction between the old and the new to relegate women to a subordinate position.⁶³

By the 1920s, the government was taking a greater interest in education. Although it continued to provide missions with financial support in aid of their educational programmes, the government also insisted that the missions improve the curriculum and the qualifications of their teachers.⁶⁴ In general, the missions were slow in attracting young men and women to attend their rudimentary schools. Even those who were eventually persuaded to go to school often deserted after a short while. The reluctance of African parents to send their children to schools stemmed in part from the fact that the young were such a vital part of the local economy.⁶⁵ They looked after the livestock and helped with the cultivation of crops. However, equally important was the African people's realization that the missions constituted a dynamic threat to their traditional ways of life. The missionary wanted a break with African traditions, a renunciation of ways which they characterised as barbaric, primitive and irreligious.⁶⁶ For example, they forbade drinking and smoking, traditional clothing- skins, rings and beads and polygamy. The converts were to be baptised and change names and to wear Europeans clothes.⁶⁷ The Catholic Missions were eager to have their converts live around the mission station, physically set off from the 'pagan' community. They set up mission villages for their converts. While, the protestant churches insisted that their converts could marry only Christians and that a male convert could only take one wife, and that a female convert could not marry a man who had another wife.

The initial missionary impact in education in Nyanza was limited. The mission school attracted few individuals. Classrooms had few students and suffered greatly

⁶²M.J. Ndeda “Women and Development Since Colonial Times”, in Ochieng, W.R. (ed) *Historical Studies and Social Change in Western Kenya*, (Nairobi, 2002). P.233.

⁶³ R.I. Tignor, “*The Colonial Transformation of Kenya*”.

⁶⁴Ibid., P. 126.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., P. 127.

⁶⁷ T. S. Odiya, O. I. 2/8/06. See also H. Ochwada, “Church Missionary Society and the Re-construction of Gender Roles in Western Kenya, 1919 – 1939” In W.R Ochieng., (eds) *Historical Studies and Social Change in Western Kenya*, (Nairobi, 2002), Pp. 158-181.

from desertions and absenteeism. However, by the 1920s, the Luo, like the Kikuyu were clamouring for more and better schools. In 1921, the Luo formed the Young Kavirondo Association that fought to redress issues that affected the Luo, such as taxation and better education. They demanded to be provided with functional formal education that would equip them with work skills.⁶⁸ In order to deal with the potential protests of Africans against the colonial system, the British administration responded by providing the sons of the chiefs with more formal education.⁶⁹ The Director of Education, J. R. Orr provided a rationale for expanding educational opportunities for Africans pointing out the benefits of Western education as improving the productivity of African labourers.⁷⁰ As for the girls' education, the Director favoured substituting what he called the three B's that is baby, bath and broom to the three R's (that is reading, writing and arithmetic) for the boys.⁷¹ He argued that women were to be prepared for their roles as wives and home-keepers.

By 1925, the director identified three types of schools in Kenya. Schools like the Machakos Industrial School and the Native Industrial Training Depot which emphasised on technical training and served European needs - a supply of trained boys to join the Railways, Public Works department and settlers requiring the services of trained artisans.⁷² Another type was the mission schools which were intended to effect conversions and eradicate African traditions.⁷³ Finally, the third type of school was to be established in the African reserves, training young men and women to improve village life and develop their rural economics.⁷⁴

In the 1920s, the Phelps - Stokes Fund sponsored two education Commissions to investigate and report on African education. The Commission emphasised the need to maintain the ideology of domesticity in girls' boarding schools.⁷⁵ It also encouraged the building of girls' boarding schools with a concern in food preparation, household comforts, the care and feeding of children and occupations that were suited to the interests and abilities of women. This type of education did not prepare girls for roles in politics, administration and decision - making.

⁶⁸ H. Ochwada, "Church Mission Society and the Re-construction" . P. 168.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid, Pp. 168 – 169.

⁷¹ R.I. Tignor, "The Colonial Transformation of Kenya" P. 206.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid. p. 212.

⁷⁵ H. Ochwada, "Church Mission Society and The Reconstruction"

In the same breath, the Commission commended the efforts of the colonial government for encouraging boys to take industrial skills. While the educational curriculum in girls' school emphasised domestic science, that of the boys aimed at producing clerks, masons, tailors and general administrators within the colonial system.⁷⁶ The Commissioners felt that girls' education that trained them to be homemakers should remain in the hands of missionaries. A report by Mrs. MacGregor Ross on the progress of missions in Kenya in 1922 stated that ninety - nine percent of African women in Kenya were likely to marry. Therefore Mrs. Ross recommended that girls be trained along a line that made them to become good wives and mothers. Thus she asserted that:

Self - control, sense of responsibility, self-respect and powers of observation should be inculcated, and in addition, they ought to be taught cleanliness, preparation of food with regard to its differing values improved dress, hygiene and physiology.⁷⁷

This philosophy was in line with the British aristocracy on domesticity that was promoted in Britain and in her colonies such as Kenya. However, the boys' curriculum was increasingly overseen directly by the colonial administrators. Thus the colonial government controlled schools such as Maseno, and Kisii while girls' boarding school such as Ngiya started in the 1920s remained in the hands of the Christian missionaries.⁷⁸ The colonial school and the missionary school in Kenya, in general, and among the Luo, in particular, were not focal points for politically empowering the girls but centres for domesticity with clear division as a result of the educational structure. House hold roles also got redefined. Men increasingly appeared in the public sphere as women retreated into the private sphere.⁷⁹

In 1925, the government created Local Native Councils, and gave them power to levy small taxes and to use revenue for programmes of local betterment. In the Nyanza districts, the Local Native Councils (LNCs) took advantage of this opportunity to raise revenue and drew up proposals for educational expansion.⁸⁰ The government suggested that the LNCs funds be handed over to the mission and let the mission

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ H.Ochwada ,Ibid. p. 171. See also "Report on the Kikuyu Conference of January 23rd – 27th, 1922" International Review of Missions, xiii 47 1923 Pp. 413-40.

⁷⁸ H.Ochwada, Ibid, Pp. 170-171 See also M.J Ndeda, "Women and Development Since Colonial Times" p. 233.

⁷⁹ H.Ochwada, ibid p. 171.

⁸⁰ R.I.Tignor, "*The Colonial Transformation of Kenya*", p. 258.

expand schooling but the LNCs refused.⁸¹ By 1928, the LNCs were calling for the development of their own schools. The objectives of these schools were:

To train boys in such a way that they may go back and improve life in the Reserve by practising better habits of cleanliness and industry. To turn out boys who are really efficient for the demands of modern civilisation and able to carry out technical work on farms.⁸²

The aim of the LNCS was to encourage parents to send as many boys as possible to attend school in order to gain functional skills to enable them to work in the colonial economy. Unfortunately, girls' education was not discussed in the LNCs meetings. The colonial world was a man's world.⁸³

In 1928, H. S. Scott took over at the Education Department. He too held racist ideas about education arguing that the schools in Kenya must be adapted not only to the rural, village environment of the country but to the education capacity of Africans.⁸⁴ Scott began to formulate new education policies aimed at reorganizing elementary education. The 'A' or bush schools were to be run by the missions.⁸⁵ The 'B' schools (that is standard one to four) were also to be run by the missions.⁸⁶ The 'B' schools were to be staffed by African teachers.⁸⁷ The group 'C' schools from standard four to seven were to be run by the missions and most would be under the colonial state. They would provide vocational courses, with emphasis on teacher training, as well as access to secondary schools.

By 1929, Africans were boycotting mission schools and refusing to turn over LNCs funds to the missions. In his Annual Report for Education Department, Scott wrote that the Africans were awakening to the fact that what the missionary gave them as schooling was inadequate and they were demanding for something more, something different.⁸⁸ The Africans, as mentioned in 1921 by the Young Kavirondo Association in Nyanza, wanted more formal education that would make them more relevant in the colonial state.

⁸¹ Ibid, p. 258.

⁸²H. Ochwada, Ibid p. 169. See also Kenya National Archives Nyanza/KNA/NZA/12/13.

⁸³W.Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. (London, 1983).

⁸⁴R.I.Tignor, "Colonial Transformation of Kenya".

⁸⁵ Ibid P. 260.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ R.L. Tignor, Ibid p. 263.

In 1934, the state passed a District Education Bill which was to bring the LNCs into closer touch with the administration in matters affecting education, which was the main interest of many LNCs.⁸⁹ In African districts, Education Boards were formed, composed of six African members nominated by the LNCs, four persons nominated by heads of schools in the district and government officials.⁹⁰ The Boards had the power to allocate revenue to elementary and sub-elementary schools from the Director of Education and the Local Native Council.⁹¹

By 1937, the government appointed the first two Africans to the Central Advisory Committee for African Education: Paul Mboya a chief from Nyanza and Eliud Mathu, a teacher at the Alliance High School.⁹² By 1938, Kenya had only four African Secondary schools, run by missions and aided by the state. These included: Alliance High School, Kabaa in Machakos, Maseno School and Yala in Nyanza.⁹³ All these four were boys schools. When one looks at post-secondary school training, there was NITD for training artisans. The other trainings such as: medical, veterinary, agriculture and public works was done at Makerere, in Uganda.⁹⁴

By the end of 1930s, Kenya had made little provision for girls. Their education was constructed in order that they might become better wives, mothers and guardians of the family and household, essential to a stable society. Such a system could hardly promote political empowerment. Rather it aimed at moulding women efficient in their domestic roles, subordinate to and separate from men. The role of the *pim* in the indigenous Luo community was taken over by the female missionary in charge of mission girls. She would supervise the external transformation and re-socialization of the girls. The mission station therefore became the new *Siwindhe* in Luoland.⁹⁵ Table 3.1 below shows some of these earliest schools established by the missionaries in Luoland.

⁸⁹ Ibid p. 266.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid pp. 266-267.

⁹³ Ibid p. 267.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ T.Kanogo. "African Womanhood in Colonial Kenya, 1900-50" p. 208.

Table 3.1: The Missions and the Dates on which schools were established in Nyanza

Mission	Name of School	Date
Roman Catholic Mission (Mill Hill)	Roman Catholic, Kibuye	1904
Roman Catholic Mission (Mill Hill)	Roman Catholic, Mumias	1905
Seventh Day Adventist	Lumbwa Industrial Mission	1905
Church of God	Church of God, Bunyore	1905
Church Mission Society	CMS, Maseno	1906
Roman Catholic Mission (Mill Hill)	Roman Catholic, Kakamega	1906
Seventh Day Adventist	SDA, Gendia	1909
Seventh Day Adventist	SDA, Kamagambo	1911
Seventh Day Adventist	SDA, Kisii	1911
Roman Catholic Mission (Mill Hill)	RCM, Aluor	1912
Roman Catholic Mission (Mill Hill)	RCM, Asumbi	1913
Roman Catholic Mission (MII)	RCM, Rangala	1920
Roman Catholic Mission (MH)	RCM, Kibuye	1922
Friends Africa Mission	Friends Kaimosi	1922
Friends Africa Mission	Maragoli School, Vihiga	1922
Pentecostal Assemblies	Nyangori School	1924

Source, KNA/PC/NZA/2/11/10. Schools, 1924.

3.4 Women and Colonial Political Structures

Kenya colony had a governmental organization typical of a British Crown Colony. The chief organs of the government were the Governor, the Executive Council and the Legislative Council. The Governor, as the personal representative of His majesty was the chief executive and was responsible to the Imperial Authorities. All

ordinances of the Legislative Council had to be presented to him.⁹⁶ The Governor was assisted by his Departmental Heads in administration; for example, the Director of Education, Health, and Labour to mention but a few. The Executive Council was the Governor's advisory body, but he was not bound by its recommendations. The Legislative Council was to make ordinances, subject to the restrictions laid down in the colony's office.⁹⁷ The Governors presided in the Legislative Council.

The colonial provincial organization dates from 1929 when a re-organization of local government was made to focus the interest of both African and non-African groups at local points.⁹⁸ The Governor created ten provinces under the provincial commissioners who were to act as liaison officers between the District Councils in European areas and Local Native Councils in African areas.⁹⁹ African areas were also administered through Council of Elders, Chief and Headmen. The 1912 Native Authority Ordinance was the foundation of the administration system in the African areas. The Governor was empowered to appoint headmen, chiefs, and groups of elders¹⁰⁰. He also appointed District Commissioners or assistant District Commissioners. Looking at the administrative structure of the colonial state, there were no female administrators. The councils of elders for women among the communities like the Kikuyu and the Meru were done away with. These moves led to the marginalisation of women in decision - making.

Political representation is one of the crucial issues when it comes to empowerment and disempowerment. People represented in the political structures are likely to dominate and have more say in the everyday running of the country's matters. Kenyan women in general and the Luo in particular, were invisible in colonial political structures since public politics was basically men's domain.

3.4.1 Colonial Policies and their Impact on Women

The introduction of colonialism in the nineteenth century had a profound impact on African women's position in the society, especially in the political sphere. Women were ignored and deprived of their power. All colonial officials shared the

⁹⁶ R.M,Dilley., *British Policy in Kenya Colony*, (London, 1966) p.16.

⁹⁷ Ibid. P. 22. see also J.B. Ojwang, "Government and Constitutional Development in Kenya, 1895 - 1995" in Ogot, B.A. and Ochieng, W.R., (eds), *Kenya: The Making of a Nation*,(Maseno, 2000) P. 149:.150.

⁹⁸ R.M.Dilley, "British Policy in Kenya Colony", p. 24.

⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 24.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 27.

belief that the role of women was that of household helpmate to men. Therefore, women were outside the proper realm of politics as understood by the colonialists¹⁰¹. The colonial powers in Africa did not try to manipulate female leaders because in many cases they did not know that female leaders existed.¹⁰² O'Barr points out that:

Among the Igbo, for example, the British made the male *Obi* into a salaried official, but by-passed his female counterpart, the *Omu*, thus destroying the 'dual-sex' political system.¹⁰³

The colonial administrators were exclusively male and they set out to make African women more like their European counterparts who were basically housewives. The European administrators came from societies that had rejected prominent and public political roles for women and thus empowered men to represent women's interests. The African traditional principles of dispersed and shared political authority had no place in the colonial system.

The British transplanted their own ethnocentric version of male-dominated politics and completely ignored African women's political roles. As noted by Smock:

Colonial policies had a rather important influence on sex role definitions and opportunities for women. Christian missionaries and colonial administrators brought with them Victorian conceptions concerning the place of women in society. Generally, they did not appreciate the significant contributions frequently made by women and their sense of independence.¹⁰⁴

Indeed, where there had been a blurred distinction between private and public life in pre-colonial Kenya, as shown in the previous chapter. British structures and policies focused on a clear distinction between the private and public space, guided by an ideology that perceived men as public actors and women as private performers.¹⁰⁵ Colonialists also worked with the African patriarchs to develop inflexible customary laws, which evolved into new structures and forms of domination.¹⁰⁶ However, faced with colonial oppression on the one hand and gender oppression on the other, women

¹⁰¹J. O'Barr, "African Women in Politics" p. 144.

¹⁰²Ibid.

¹⁰³Ibid p. 145, See also Ifi Amediume, "*Male Daughter, Female Husbands, on the Institution of Ekwe*" which she says was banned by the colonialists. This title was both a social and political acknowledgement of female economic success.

¹⁰⁴J. Smock, Quoted in, S. Tamale, "When the Hens Begin to Crow".

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 9. See also E. Schmidt, "Patriarchy Capitalism and the Colonial State in Zimbabwe" *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 16, No. 4.(1991): 732 -756.

in Kenya rallied together to challenge the structures of domination. Kenyan women struck back through resistance to colonial imposition and policies.

African women drew on their position as spirit mediums to lead their communities in anti-colonial activities. Spirit mediums that existed in the pre-colonial era were responsible for guiding people's access to ancestors and for assisting in important decisions concerning social well-being. For example, there is the case of Charwe, a woman possessed by the female spirit of Nehanda who was a pivotal actor during anti-colonial struggle among the Shona of Zimbabwe in the 1890s. In Southern Uganda, Muhumusa, was possessed by the Nyabingi spirit. She led raids and protests against the British among her people and she and her followers remained a problem in the colonial eyes for many years, with attacks on colonial installations occurring until 1920s. Also, among the Kamba of Eastern Kenya, resistance to colonial taxation emerged in the form of traditional religious practices and belief in super natural powers.¹⁰⁷ The Kamba medicine men had been the leaders of the Kilumi dance for the exorcism of evil spirits, in which the participants were mostly women. Between 1911 and 1913, the Kilumi dance was effectively used by the Kamba of Machakos and Kitui as a channel of expressing women's opposition to the colonial administration. It was a woman Syotune wa Kathuke who used these dances to spark off an anti-colonial movement.¹⁰⁸ With her collaborator, a man known as Kiamba and others, she led an organization known as *Ngai Ngoma* (God's Dance). With a large following, Kathuke formed a small army of women and mounted guards and sentries in villages to monitor those collaborating with the colonial administration.¹⁰⁹

She and her supporters ordered people not to pay the hut and poll taxes and instead asked them to stay at home and also not to work as porters. They also demanded the removal of all Europeans from Kenya and the return of land that had been alienated for white settlement. Syotune wa Kathuke mobilised the women, led them to the District Commissioner's office where they performed a frenzied dance, uttering anti-colonial and anti-European statements. The impact was that the people of Maputi and Mwaala locations and the western part of Machakos District refused to pay taxes and provide labour for sometime.¹¹⁰ This alarmed the colonial government that

¹⁰⁷I.K. Tarus, , "A History of the Direct Taxation" p. 132.

¹⁰⁸Ibid. p.133.

¹⁰⁹Ibid. See also, D.A. Nyakwaka, "Women the state and Tax Protests: The Case of Colonial Kenya, 1895 - 1963" A paper presented at CODESRIA Governance Institute, (Dakar, 1999).

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

saw the movement as a political threat.¹¹¹ The government sent troops to suppress the movement which they effectively did. As a result, Siotune was arrested and deported for two years to Wasin Island in Mombasa where she later escaped back to her people.¹¹² This movement was among the first of many others where Kenyan women came out to challenge the forces of colonial political domination.

Another woman who was actively involved in the political sphere during the imposition of colonial rule was Menyziwa Wa Menza (Me Katilili). She was born in Kaloleni in Kilifi District but most her life was spent in Galana in Malindi District.¹¹³ Mekatilili was a respected woman elder who used to take part in the community's oath-taking ceremonies. She also traveled long distances to persuade and to bring people to the Kaya observations that the British officials near her home made tax and labour demands among the North Giriama.¹¹⁴ Ndeda notes that:

Mekatilili was not legitimate as a leader but her legitimacy emerged from her charisma. She was an effective emotional speaker. She began to publicise the injustices. She felt and found many Giriama willing to listen. She desired the revival of the Kaya, and the traditional Kambi, a return to the numerous Giriama customs that seemed to have been abandoned or diluted and absolute rejection of the demand, made on the Giriama by the British. Mekatilili acted like a charismatic politician coalescing the interests of Giriama women, the powerless young men and ageing elders to meet the challenge by reviving the old customs and opposing all Giriama who were assisting the British.¹¹⁵

During these meetings, she mobilised and frequently addressed the huge crowds condemning the British colonialists referring to them as cowards who ran away from their motherlands.¹¹⁶ A number of factors made her rise as a leader among the Giriama. Mekatilili was a charismatic speaker. She argued that taxation and labour policies were interfering with Giriama women and their families.¹¹⁷ The Women's husbands and sons were driven away from home as wage labourers and to earn money for taxes. The absence of the men and boys also meant increased agricultural work for the women, because they had to take over the clearing of land; work that had been

¹¹¹I.K.Tarus, "History of the Direct Taxation" p. 133.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³M.J.Ndeda, *Women in Kenyan History: The Women's Campaign: Mekatilili and the Giriama Resistance of 1913, and 1914*, (Nairobi, 1994). p.7.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, pp. 10-11.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, pp. 10 - 11.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., See also I.Tarus, , "A History of the Direct Taxation" P. 138 - 139.

earlier on done by the men.¹¹⁸ Mekatilili also castigated the harsh and brutal methods used by the state agencies like the chiefs, headmen, and askaris to collect taxes. The Giriama who could not pay taxes were humiliated, whipped and their women raped and huts burnt.¹¹⁹ She also protested the fact that the traditional authority of the elders was being undermined by the colonialists. As a result of these grievances, Mekatilili led the women and men to the administration post and set it on fire and attacked the state agents and because of her appeals and actions, there were no more labour recruits and no one paid taxes for sometime.¹²⁰

As a result of this resistance, as many as 250 Giriama were killed, 70% of all Giriama houses were burnt and 6,000 goats were captured, a fine of 33,000 goats was imposed and the Giriama were made to supply porters for the First World War.¹²¹ Mekatilili was arrested and deported to Kisii in Western Kenya from where she later escaped and walked back to the coast.¹²²

In this resistance, we see women taking leadership into their hands and successfully making their people not pay taxes to the British. In fact, the elders admitted that Mekatilili and the women were the initiators of the campaign.¹²³ Giriama women were interested in the preserving the unity of their families, that was endangered by the colonial contract labour, that took their sons and husbands away to work in the towns.¹²⁴ After this campaign, the state stopped its plan of turning the Giriama into a wage labour reservoir. Thus, to an extent the women succeeded in keeping their husbands and sons at home and by extension maintained their families intact. The women had returned order into their lives. The Giriama women refused to let the colonial state destroy their families.

Focusing on the Luo women, they too actively participated in movements that resisted the imposition of colonial rule. The women actively participated in the two main early anti-colonial movements in Nyanza. The women were the majority participants in the Mumbo Cult and the Nomiya Luo Church.¹²⁵ Both churches were

¹¹⁸M.J. Ndeda, "Women in Kenyan History".

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid, p. 18.

¹²⁵ M.J.Ndeda, "Nomiya Church, See also. Magdalene Aboge, Oral Interview, 10/05/06.

started by the men who were resisting colonialism and calling on the Luo to resist the colonial system.

During the inter-war period, Kenyan women continued their protests against colonialism. They were aware of the harsh colonial policies which led to the formation of African political associations. The leadership of these associations was made up of men but the women were part and parcel of these new strategies of fighting colonialism. One of these associations was the Young Kikuyu Association led by Harry Thuku. He articulated African grievances such as taxation, forced labour, especially where the young girls were forced to work in the settler plantations.¹²⁶ The colonial state officers arrested Thuku on the 14th, March, 1922 in order to bar his increasing popularity and support. As a result, a crowd of between 7,000 and 8,000 people including 150 women, gathered outside the police station where Thuku was held to demand his release.¹²⁷ The men could not have him released.

Mary Muthoni challenged the men to use force to release Harry Thuku from police custody. To emphasise the extent of female dissatisfaction, she resorted to a traditional insult known as *gaturuma*. Kanogo points out that:

This act, which entailed the exposure of a woman's genital to an offending party, was the ultimate recourse of those consumed by feelings of anger, frustration, humiliation or revenge.¹²⁸

After this challenge to the men, leadership for the next few moments passed to the women.¹²⁹ They pushed forward until the bayonets of the police were pricking their throats and then the police started firing. The police killed 21 people, four of them were women, and many people were injured.¹³⁰ Thuku was deported to Kismayu.

In Nyanza province, some local Luo and Luhya elites such as Jonathan Okwiri, Benjamin Owuor and Simeon Nyende, among others, formed the Young Kavirondo Association.¹³¹ The association was also known as *Piny Owacho* (people movement). It was launched at a meeting held at Lundha North Gem on 23rd, December, 1921, and

¹²⁶ T. Kanogo, "Kikuyu Women and Politics of Protest and Mau Mau" in P. Macdonald and Ardner, A. (eds) *Images of women in Peace and War, Cross-Cultural perspective* (London, 1987), pp 82-120.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid, p. 82

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ T. Kanogo, "Kikuyu Women and Politics of Protest" p. 82.

¹³¹ J.O. Osamba, "Colonial African Labour in the Asian Owned Sugar Plantations in Kisumu District-Kenya" p. 64. See also, Nyanza Province Annual Report, 1922, KNA/DC/KSU/13/1 South Nyanza Political Records.

was attended by approximately 1,000 men and women.¹³² The movement made demands such as the abolition of forced labour camps in Nyanza province and the Kipande System. It also registered its opposition to the increase of hut and poll tax, and the lowering of the African wages, the burning down of huts, confiscation of granaries of maize, millet, for non payment of taxes. During the meeting, the women protested over widows being forced to pay taxes while they had no source of income.¹³³ The women also complained about being crowded in huts as the men knocked down huts to lower their hut taxes.¹³⁴ Governor, Edward Northey met the officials of *Piny Owacho* movement and consented to some of their demands. For example, he announced the abolition of the labour camps and reduction of taxation from 16 shillings to 12 shillings.¹³⁵ However, the Luo women were not excluded from paying taxes unlike the Igbo women in Nigeria who were excluded from paying taxes in 1929 after the women's riot against taxation.¹³⁶

In the sphere of forced labour, the *Piny Owacho* movement protested to the colonial government pointing to various issues. It also pointed out that the chiefs and headmen were forcing people to join wage labour as well as forcing juveniles, women and old men to perform communal labour.¹³⁷ Due to the protest, the then British Colonial Secretary of State, Winston Churchill, sent a dispatch to the colonial government, stating that forced labour should only be used in government undertakings and other essential services.¹³⁸ It was not until 1933 that a law was passed specifically designed, for the first time, to curb the worst effects of female and child labour.¹³⁹ But passing a law was one thing and implementing it was another as forced labour was used by the state during the Second World War.

These cases discussed in this decade show that African women resisted colonial encroachment on their prerogatives. These cases do demonstrate in particular that the Luo women like other Kenyan women were politically aware and were able to challenge the new institutions and policies being imposed upon them by the colonial

¹³² Ibid, p. 64.

¹³³ M. Aboge, Oral interview, 10/5/06, See also K.M. Okaro-Kojwang, "Origins and Establishment of the Kavirondo Tax-payers Welfare Association" Ngano, (Nairobi, 1969) pp. 111-131.

¹³⁴ M. Aboge, Oral Interview, 10/5/06. And see also J Hay and Sharon. *African Women* p. 147.

¹³⁵ J. Osamba, Ibid, P. 65. See also Nyanza Province Annual Report, 1922.

¹³⁶ J Hay and Sharon. *African Women* p. 147.

¹³⁷ KNA/DC/KSU/13 Annual Reports, South Kavirondo District 1924-34.

¹³⁸ J. Osamba, Ibid, p. 65.

¹³⁹ T. Zeleza, "Colonial Labour System" p. 175.

state. In many parts of Africa, Kenya included, colonial notions of men as sole actors in the public sphere also further restricted women's access to political positions. Women's access to public life via religious roles, as spirit mediums, who acted as key mediators in local disputes and authority figures in situations of natural disasters, lost their political role in the clear separation between political and religious, domains.

3.5 The Impact of Colonial Labour Policies on Luo Women

Labour is a very important resource in any community. Its control is vital to the state. Those who provide labour need to have access and control of the benefits of their labour. Unfortunately, this was not the case in colonial Kenya. Wage labour in colonial Kenya, was a colonial creation. The colonial government introduced labour policies which aimed at facilitating a supply of cheap African labour for government projects and for European settlers.¹⁴⁰ Following the imposition of colonial rule in Kenya, a massive supply of African labour was required by both the government and the settlers to lay the foundation of the colonial economy. In 1903, settlers began to arrive in large numbers, and from 1908, their increase was rapid. About this time labour difficulties began. From 1907, the government announced that the officers of the Administration and of Native Affairs would do their best to supply labour for settlers, planters and contractors.¹⁴¹ However, by 1910 the government withdrew from labour recruitment and gave rise to the professional recruiter, whose activities required regulation and control. Two years later, the government formed the Native Labour Commission to find ways and means of inducing Africans to work in order to fill in the labour short-falls. The Commission found that the shortage was as a result of a number of issues: that communities rich from land, stock, and trade profits did not need to work for wages to live, the methods of recruiting agents discouraged the flow of labour, the administrative staff was insufficient, that those areas best administered were the ones providing the most labour, and the fact that labour conditions were harsh, unsuitable diet, bad housing, and ill-treatment.¹⁴²

As a result of the Commission, a number of Ordinances were passed between 1915 and 1920 to solve the labour crisis in colonial Kenya. The 1915 ordinances

¹⁴⁰J. Osamba, *Ibid* p. 45.

¹⁴¹R.M.Dilley, "*British Policy in Kenya Colony*". p.216.

¹⁴²R.M.Dilley, "*British Policy in Kenya Colony*" p. 221. See also KNA/PC/NZA/3/20/4/2 Compulsory Labour circular, 17th, March 1925. See also Tarus, 1. "A History of the Direct Taxation.

provided for the registration of all male Africans of sixteen years.¹⁴³ It was however implemented in 1919. This ordinance led to the introduction of labour contracts and the Kipande or pass system in Kenya. This ordinance was supported by the settlers but was unpopular among the Africans. Then followed the Resident Native Ordinance of 1916. This targeted "squatting" to ensure that those Africans living outside the Reserves were working for a farmer under a regular contract.¹⁴⁴ After the First World War, there was a labour crisis because of the increased number of plantations, high wages outside the protectorate, lack of control of Africans and increased production in the Reserves. This led to the 1919 Labour Circular which stated that African Labour was needed for settlers' farms and other Government Development. Consequently, all government officials, including, provincial commissions and district commissioners, were to recruit labour. The Circular led to the policy of "encouragement" whereby African authorities were to provide labour needed by the settlers and the government. African Authorities were to use any possible lawful influence or force to get labour, including women and children to work on public works and farms near the Reserves. In Kisumu District, the women and children worked as paid casuals in the Asian Sugar Plantations.¹⁴⁵ They were engaged in planting cane and weeding. They also worked in Kisumu town.

Colonial labour supply had its effects on theories of taxation and of land ownership. For instance, the colonial government had introduced the policy of land alienation and the creation of small African Reserves in Kenya. This, it was hoped would help force Africans to seek labour in the settler plantations and towns. The African Reserves were supposed to act as labour reservoirs to serve the needs of the settlers and the colonial government. As one settler farmer put it:

.... From the farmers point of view, the ideal reserve is a recruiting ground for labour, a place from which the able bodied go out to work returning occasionally to rest and beget the next generation of labourers.¹⁴⁶

Indeed areas like Nyanza remained major labour reservoirs throughout the colonial period. Sharon Stichter has shown that by 1915 about 30% of the Luo people

¹⁴³T. Zeleza, "The Colonial Labour System in Kenya".

¹⁴⁴ R.M.Dilley, *British Policy in Kenya Colony*. P .223. See also, T. Zeleza, "The Colonial Labour System in Kenya" p. 175.

¹⁴⁵J. Osamba, *Ibid*, p. 47. See also, KNA/PC/NZA/3/20/17/1, Employment of Juveniles 1925-28.

¹⁴⁶ V. Harlow and E. M.Chilver, (eds) *History of East Africa*, Vol. II (Oxford, 1965), p. 246.

around Kisumu had entered the wage labour market.¹⁴⁷ This was because of the co-operation of the local African Chiefs, as well as the proximity of the area to the in the Sugar Plantations and Kisumu Town.¹⁴⁸

With the introduction of the colonial cash economy, relations were greatly influenced by women's and men's relationship to capital.¹⁴⁹ The rights that men had to their wives' labour were strengthened, and they gained a firmer grip on women's productive and reproductive labour during the colonial era.¹⁵⁰ Women's subordination was further secured through their exclusion from wage employment, so that the power that comes with a pocket boom for the man at the end of each month was bound to restructure gender relations in the household. Roberts summaries in his work why capitalism increased the subordination of women in the non-capitalist sectors:

The intensification of female labour in peasant economies released male labour for the production of cash crops ... Their [women's] productive labour was intensified to ensure the subsistence basis of labour reserve areas while their reproductive labour ensured the maintenance and reproduction of labour power at no cost to the capitalist wage.¹⁵¹

Men were encouraged to leave their homes in search of wage labour while women remained in the reserves to produce food to feed families and to supplement the low wages of their spouses.¹⁵² In Western Kenya, labour migration was the dominant form of capitalist penetration. For instance, between 1895 and 1918, the area witnessed the first stage of transformation to migrant labour for settlers, public works and other sectors.¹⁵³ The migration of a large proportion of adult male population altered gender relations in the household. One main characteristics of this labour migration was that as men were unable to support themselves and their families on low wages, they maintained economic social and political links with the rural reserves.¹⁵⁴ Another major characteristic of the labour force was its exclusion of women either as

¹⁴⁷ S.Stichter, *Migrant Labour in Kenya: Capitalism and African Response, 1895-1975* (Essex 1982) p. 47.

¹⁴⁸ J.Osamba, *Ibid*, p. 52. See also KNA Kisumu District Annual and Quarterly Report (KDA), 1915-1919. 34.

¹⁴⁹ S.Tamale, *When Hens Begin to Crow* p. 8.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid* p.8. Roberts, P, "Feminism in Africa: Feminism and Africa". *Review of African Political Economy* 27/28: 175 - 184, 1984. Quoted in S. Tamale, *When Hens Begin to Crow* p. 8. See also M.J. Ndeda, "Women and Development Since Colonial Times" p. 2.

¹⁵¹ H. Roberts, "Feminism in Africa: Feminism and Africa". *Review of African Political Economy* 27/28: 175 - 184, 1984. Quoted in S. Tamale, *When Hens Begin to Crow* P. 8.

¹⁵² M.J.Ndeda, "Women and Development since Colonial Times" p. 234.

¹⁵³ *Ibid*.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*.

dependents on their working husbands or as wage earners. Until the mid-1940s, even the domestic jobs, which women came to dominate later, were not open to women.¹⁵⁵ Labour migrancy led to destruction of family life, impoverishment of rural areas and rural decay. Women were also left with enlarged roles in agriculture. They were expected to work in the fields, cultivate crops and look after the homestead or household.¹⁵⁶

The British introduced cash crops such as cotton, tobacco, coffee and tea, which provided raw materials supply for factories in the metropole. Men were engaged in the production of these primary products to meet their tax obligations to the colonial government. Men cultivated economic crops while women continued to cultivate food crops as well as cash crops on a subsistence level.¹⁵⁷ Thus women provided most of the labour that increased their workload and working hours. While women's role was limited to the provision of labour, men contributed both the means of production and surplus.¹⁵⁸ Similarly, with the introduction of the cash economy, there were changes in the land tenure system which limited the arable land available for cultivation of subsistence crops like sorghum, eleusine, potatoes and cassava.¹⁵⁹ These were basically women's crops. These changes weakened the female participation, power and control of agricultural production.¹⁶⁰ The net result was the stripping off of Kenyan women's social, economic and political roles during the colonial period and lowering their status relative to that of men.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter we focused on the establishment of colonial rule in Luo Nyanza. We discussed colonial policies on education, taxation, and labour and their impact on Luo women. We also examined the colonial political structures and how they omitted women. It has been pointed out that most of the colonial policies marginalised Luo women. However, the women did not take this lying down. We have discussed how they protested colonial marginalisation in various ways. Luo women joined their men in the political associations and the anti-colonial movements where they expressed

¹⁵⁵Ibid,

¹⁵⁶Ibid p. 235.

¹⁵⁷S. Tamale, *When Hens Begin to Crow*. p. 9.

¹⁵⁸ M.J.Ndeda, "Women and Development Since Colonial Times" p. 235.

¹⁵⁹Ibid..

¹⁶⁰ C. A Kombudo, Oral Interview, 12/5/06.

their dissatisfaction, with the colonial system. The implantation of male government under colonialists and the depoliticisation of most women's issues in the private sphere came to be institutionalised in nationalist politics and thereafter in modern African states, Kenya included.

CHAPTER FOUR

WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENTS IN THE LATER COLONIAL PERIOD, 1939

– 1963

4.0 Introduction

The Second World War was one of the major landmarks in the world's history during the twentieth century. The colonial state in Kenya was engaged in this war, just like in the First World War, by mobilizing resources in terms of personnel and raw materials in support of the metropolitan. Unlike during the First World War, when the Germans in Tanganyika captured parts of Vanga District, Kenya's territory was never under any serious threat. The only potential military threat was to the Northern Frontier District from the Italians who had occupied Somaliland, but who were soon defeated.¹ However, the demand to mobilise for the general war effort involved the Kenya colony through the Kings African Rifles, where most men were in combat in Burma against the Japanese and in other parts of the world.² From the experience of the First World War, the colonial state had begun to value the necessity of attaining a possible degree of economic self-sufficiency to survive the war years. Thus, as the war progressed in other parts of the world, demands upon the colony were made for the enlistment of soldiers, the supply of raw materials like fibre, the supply of food like maize and more importantly, livestock for meat.

It is from this background that this chapter proceeds to analyse colonial policies on taxation, labour, education and politics and how they impacted on women. In this chapter, we also analyse the role that Luo women played in the struggle for independence. Also, we capture the life history of "Mama Uhuru," Magdalene Aboge Alila, in order to further demonstrate the role of Luo women in the struggle for independence. The chapter ends with Kenya's independence in 1963.

¹I. K. Tarus, "A History of the Direct Taxation of the African people of Kenya, 1895 – 1973", p. 213.

² Ibid. See also B. Berman, *Control and Crisis in Colonial Kenya: The Dialectic of Domination*, (London, 1990) pp. 233 – 236.

4.1 Women and Taxation in Luoland, 1939 - 1963

The Luo community, like the rest of Kenyans, continued meeting their tax obligations to the colonial state during the last decades of colonial rule. The burden of paying taxes to the colonial state had become part of the life of the Luo, men and women. Naftali Apiyo,³ a Second World War veteran, observed that he met his tax obligations during the period from his savings from war-time employment. Andrew Owiti⁴ recalled that he used part of his wages as a government clerk to pay his taxes in 1940s and 1950s. However, most people in the three Luo constituencies, sold part of their agricultural produce in order to raise money for taxes. Indeed, while the settler economy had slumped during the depression, 1928-1930, African peasant producers had managed to survive, since they produced for the local market and it is to them that the state looked for major contributions towards the war effort.

During the inter-war period and in the course of the war, the colonial state, however, offered tax exemptions to those who could not afford to pay their taxes. For example, in Nyanza tax exemptions had been provided to various deserving cases. For instance, the DC of South Kavirondo, Storrs Fox, on 16 October 1939, pleaded for the exemption of widows from the payment of hut tax. He also recommended that widows of those who died in the war be exempted from the payment of taxes for life.⁵ However, the women continued to suffer as a result of the colonial tax policies.

By 1947, African taxation had achieved its goal of revenue generation for the government and helped perpetuate colonial rule. However, Africans questioned the disparity between the payment of taxes and the benefits they received. It was through the activities of the LNC with minimal support from the government that Africans got certain benefits like education, roads and veterinary services. Through the LNCs, people continually devised ways of circumventing colonial control. As the colonial period progressed particularly after the Second World War, Luo women and men continued to demand better working conditions, wages, and equitable system of taxation.

³ N. Apiyo, Oral Interview, 06/7/94 quoted in D.A. Nyakwaka, "Agricultural Change in Rongo Division." Pg 110

⁴ A.Owiti, Oral Interview, 13/08/06. I.Tarus, "A History of the Direct Taxation". Pp. 213-270

⁵ Ibid. p. 213-214. See Dorcas Otieno, Oral Interview, 12/8/06.

4.2 Luo Women and Education

Throughout the colonial period, British administrators and Christian missionaries gave more formal education to boys than girls. However, where the colonial state and missionaries provided girls with formal education the emphasis was on domestication and housewifization, that is, turning them into good wives and home makers. In 1924, Phelps-Stokes Commission, which was charged with the responsibility of looking into ways of improving African education, in the British colonies, emphasised the need to maintain the ideology of domesticity in girls' boarding schools. It encouraged the building of girls' boarding schools with concern in food preparation, household comforts, the care and feeding of children and the occupations that were suited to the interests and abilities of women.⁶ On the other hand, the Commission praised the efforts by the colonial state in Kenya to encourage boys to take industrial skills. Thus, while the educational curriculum in girls schools emphasised domestic science, that of boys aimed at producing clerks, masons, tailors and general administrators within the lower ranks of the colonial system. As mentioned earlier, girls' curriculum emphasised the three B's representing baby, bath and broom while that of boys emphasised, three Rs – writing, reading and arithmetic which were deemed crucial skills for boys in the colonial system.⁷

Therefore, boys' education prepared them to join the colonial wage labour system, while that of the girls prepared them for domestication. As long as girls' education trained them to be homemakers in the western style, the Commissioners felt the curriculum should remain in the hands of the missionaries. Boys' curriculum on the other hand came increasingly under the control of the colonial administrators. This attitude explains why the colonial state controlled schools such as Maseno, while girls' boarding schools such as Ng'iya and Kamagambo remained in the hands of missionaries with some grants in aid from the government.⁸ Thus, the colonial school system locked out girls from participating in the labour system and the administrative structures of the colonial state.

⁶ H.Ochwada, "Church Missionary Society" p. 170. See also Higher Education in East Africa: Report of the Commission Appointed by the Secretary of the State for Colonies (London 1937) Pp. 65-72.

⁷ Ibid., See also F.N. Chege and D.N. Sifuna, *Girls' and Women's Education in Kenya, Gender Perspectives and Trends*, (Nairobi, 2006) pp. 20-29.

⁸ Ibid.

The colonial experience introduced clear divisions between the public and private spheres. Household roles also got redefined. Men with formal education increasingly appeared in the public sphere as women retreated into the private spheres. This trend continued throughout the post-World War Two period into the independence era, whereby domestic sciences were still taught mainly to girls while boys continued to be socialised and educated in ways that would make them local leaders and bread winners.⁹ Thus, the masculinisation of education and the public sphere, led to the exclusion of women from the colonial public domain. For example, during this period those who wielded power—such as chiefs, court clerks, court messengers, and administrative clerks were all men.

The low numbers of women participating in formal education continued during this period thereby, effectively limiting their responsible positions in the colonial state. Women could not participate meaningfully in the political life of their countries beyond the level of their local communities without formal education.

By way of supplementing education, the colonial administration adhered to the racialised structures in which education was clearly tiered according to perceived superiority and inferiority of the dominant racial groups in the country. These were Europeans, Asians and Africans in the order of their educational advantages. A large part of the education budget was allocated for the education of European children and a relatively small one for the education of Africans. In 1950, for example, the government allowed one British pound per annum for the education of an African child, while the Asian had 8.3 pounds and the European had 56 pounds spent on education per child.¹⁰ It is clear from these figures that in terms of offering quality education, the investment of one British pound for every African child (mostly likely a boy) could not compare with that of 56 pounds for every European child.¹¹

After the World War II, educational opportunities for girls' education started to expand in the urban areas such as Kisumu. Many parents in urban areas began to take their daughters to school. But the numbers were still low compared to those of boys. However, in spite of the relatively increased numbers of girls going to school, the government was slow in opening up training opportunities for expanding occupational structures for women. For example, it was not until 1950 that the first training school

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Chege and Sifuna, "Girls' and Women's Education", p. 26.

¹¹ Ibid.

for women in the country–Jeannes School type was started.¹² Most of the students for the school were married women with the sole aim of producing women leaders in the communities. Women’s curriculum comprised the following subjects: cookery, housewifery, laundry, hygiene, childcare, first aid, home nursing, needlework, handiwork, games, curios, agriculture and simple accounting.¹³

The low numbers of girls attending formal school in comparison to boys up to 1950s is captured in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Female and Male Attendance in Kenyan Schools in 1953

Primary	Year 1	Year 2	year 3	Year 4
Male	71,229	50,822	41,694	39,127
Female	28,279	18,223	12,934	10,115
Intermediate	year 5	year 6	year 7	year 8
Male	20,134	14,152	8,263	5,440
Female	4,629	2,814	1,760	955
Secondary	year 9	year 10	year 11	year 12
Male	2,072	946	398	298
Female	347	108	25	11
Post-Secondary	year 13	Year 14		
Male	31	18		
Female	Not given			

Source: Shepherd, 1955 – “African Women in Kenya,” Nairobi Department of Community Development, quoted in F.N. Chege and D.N. Sifuna, *Girls’ and Womens Education in Kenya*, p. 28.

This Table shows low female enrolment compared to that of males in 1953, ten years prior to Kenya’s attainment of independence from colonial rule. It is estimated that during the last two decades of colonial administration, girls constituted about 25 per cent of all African children enrolled in elementary schools.¹⁴ Within the secondary

¹² Ibid. p. 28.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

education sector, the distribution between sexes was extremely skewed with 5 to 10 per cent of the pupils being girls. Post-secondary education for girls was dismal.¹⁵ Thus, girls remained barely visible in the colonial education structures, meaning that they would be invisible in formal jobs and public administration structures that required formal education.

Although the colonialists would have wished to blame the low female participation in education on traditional cultural norms, evidence reveals that the curriculum offered to girls was of low quality and did not offer any incentive for the labour market, which women found much more attractive than remaining in their rural homes performing domestic chores. Indeed, colonial education portrayed women and girls as being of relatively low value, thus discouraging African men from investing in female education. Official policy together with the betrayal by traditional leaders, who colluded with the colonial administration, is largely to blame for the gender inequality in education in Kenya during the colonial period. The new value systems that were linked to formal western education favoured men, thus influencing many parents against sending their daughters to school even when they could afford it.¹⁶

In his report for 1945, the Nyanza Senior Education Officer shows that:

There have been very little increases in the number of girls attending school, who remain at about 25% of the total attendances in aided schools. In unaided schools, however, the percentage of girls is nearly 50% and the fact is once more emphasised that the girls are as yet content with only the rudiments of literacy.¹⁷

According to this report, the demand for education among the Luo had increased, although, there was very little increase in the numbers of girls going to school. The majority of those who went to school attended the unaided schools, mainly organised by the missionaries who gave mainly domestic education with very little formal education.

The same report points out that the total number of children on the rolls of all schools, both aided and unaided, was 115,000 and if as believed, the total child population of school age was about 325,000. The percentage of children who received some form of education was about 55%.¹⁸ The number of qualified teachers had

¹⁵ Ibid. pp. 28.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 29.

¹⁷ KNA, ARC (M.A.A) 2/3/10 Vol III Nyanza Provincial Annual Reports.

¹⁸ Ibid.

continued to rise to totals of 661, who were nearly all men, but there were still 327 unqualified teachers employed in all schools.¹⁹

In South Kavirondo, the principle had been established of Local Native Council elementary schools, and the Council voted sums of money for construction of buildings which were under way at the close of 1945. When the idea was first mooted there was considerable opposition from mission supervisors, but after careful explanation, and subsequent consideration, very many of them were won over, to support the idea.²⁰ Throughout this Report, the Officer emphasised the demand for education by the Africans in the province, which the colonial state was not able to satisfy.

In the late 1940s, girls began to have better educational opportunities in the country. For example, the first high school, for girls in Kenya was started in 1949, from the high school they could go to Makerere for higher Education. However, the education for girls continued being viewed just as a tool for socialising women towards domestic roles, and to assume dependent position vis-à-vis the male independent public sphere of wage-earners and administrators.²¹ Male children continued being taught to be outgoing career seekers in schools while women were trained in their traditional supportive roles.

In Nyanza, Ng'iya Girls School and others continued to grow in the post-war period. One of the famous Luo women politicians, Grace Ogot studied at Ng'iya between 1942 and 1945, from where she proceeded to Butere Girls' school, between 1946- 1948. From 1948 –50, she was in Uganda training as a Registered Nurse and Midwife.²² By 1955, Ogot got a Church Missionary Society scholarship to go to Britain for advanced studies in nursing. During the same year, her former school Ng'iya Girls boarding school had a total of 130 girls, while the Day school had a total of 200 pupils who were both boys and girls. The Ng'iya Teacher Training College had a total of fifty men and women students.²³

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹M.J.Ndeda, "Women and Development Since Colonial Times" p. 233 See also, T. Kanogo, *African womanhood in Colonial Kenya, 1900-50*, pp. 197-238. See discussion on girls are frogs: girls, mission and education.

²²Ibid. pp. 198 – 202.

²³H. Richards., "Fifty Years in Nyanza, 1906 – 1956". p. 45. See also T. Kanogo, Ibid. pp. 198-202. She notes that, Grace was the first Kenyan State Certified Midwife to be trained in England. She graduated in 1956 and proceeded to obtain a Diploma in Methods of

4.3 Women and Colonial Labour Policies in Luoland

During the Second World War, there were large demands placed on manpower. The colonial state acquired broad powers of coercion over labour. The 1940 Defence (Native Personnel) Regulation gave the Governor power to order provincial commissioners to produce quotas of workers for military and essential services.²⁴ The coercive powers were used to mobilise and recruit labour for the army and other services designated as essential and also for settler farmers and private employers. Many Kenyans, the Luo included joined the King's African Rifles. A number of the soldiers were captured by chiefs and district commissioners' orders and sent to join the army. The men were ordered to get into lorries at recruitment centres to be taken to work places, only to find themselves at military training depots.²⁵ Others were removed from schools and sent to the army.²⁶ Labour was also recruited for works of urgent operational necessity such as the construction and extension of airfields, roads, harbours and military training camps.

During the war, there were about 98,000 Kenyans who served in the armed forces in one capacity or another, at home or in military campaigns and as far away as Burma.²⁷ The maximum total serving at any one time appears to have been some 75,000 men.²⁸ African labour was also recruited for settler farmers since agriculture was considered the largest war contribution for Kenya. Crops such as, sisal, sugar, pyrethrum, rubber and flax were designated as essential for the war, therefore workers were to be conscripted for their production.²⁹ Thus, to meet the labour target for the military and agriculture, the colonial state made moves to control the influx of Africans into the towns.

It was the government policy to evict the unemployed, women and children from towns, so that they could work on the settlers farms. For example, in 1943 about 10,000 people of whom 6000 were women and children were evicted from Nairobi

Teaching at St. Thomas Hospital, England, in 1957. After which she returned to Maseno Hospital as a staff nurse and tutor.

²⁴ T. Zeleza, "Kenya and the Second War. 1930 – 50".

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid. P. 148. See also T.A. Onduru, "Some Aspects of Economic Change" P. 143.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

alone.³⁰ Unrest among the Africans against the labour policies continued. This included desertions, which in many cases were provoked by extreme coercive labour recruitment and control. The war marked the last time the colonial state would use forced labour control system on a large scale.

Hay³¹ observes that the three Kavirondo districts together provided half the number of men who were needed for civilian and military labour needs. In South Kavirondo for example, conscription for the East African Military Labour service started in 1940. At the beginning of the year, a war report on the area read:

In the last War the Jalu contribution in men was considerable. Their present one has exceeded expectations. For their East African Military Labour Service they have contributed 1,200 recruits.³²

The September 1940 Report Observed:

Locally in South Kavirondo the administration is now faced with recruiting at the rate of 400 men per month for an indefinite period and there is probability of calling for more.³³

From the above observations, many able-bodied men were drained out of Nyanza. This trend continued in the following year 1941 when the Assisted Recruitment Scheme was instituted for recruiting both civil and military labour. The quotas were handed down to the chief of every location who divided them among the headmen, who in conjunction with the clan elders decided on who was to be recruited.

As in the First World War, the chiefs employed high handedness to obtain recruits. They used force, moving from homestead to homestead recruiting able-bodied men. Consequently, a number of the young men from South Kavirondo District ran into the forest or self-exile in Tanganyika.³⁴ Apiyo³⁵ recalled how one day the village headman came to his father's homestead and took him away using force. Because his father was poor he could not afford to bribe the headman not to recruit him. The recruitment of the young men meant that the women, children and the elderly were left to manage the homes. Consequently, they could not cope with the task of farm work efficiently. Agnes Ofuona observed:

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ J. Hay "Economic Change in Luoland: Kowe, 1890 – 1945" Ph.D Thesis, 1972, pp. 224.

³² G. Ndege, "The Transformation of Cattle Economy in Rongo Division, South Nyanza District, 1900-1960" M.A. Thesis, 1989. pp. 138.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ N. Apiyo, Oral Interview, 06/7/98.

³⁵ Ibid.

The period 1942 to 1943 was quite difficult for us. Many young people in this village had gone for war. Mbaka, son of Ong'are, went to Tanganyika to avoid being conscripted. Only Tobias was in Kisii School. I had to help Joram (husband) in many tasks, such as in looking after cattle and milking, when he was sick. Remember I had also to look after children. Drought came but even then what we had in the garden was not enough. Two people could not do much.³⁶

Indeed, the labour demands during the war period disrupted the labour patterns in the rural areas such as, Karachuonyo and Gem. This meant that women's workload increased tremendously. War time conscription claimed about one man from every homestead and tended to draw in those men who had previously remained at home.³⁷ The long-term absence of men had an impact on the sexual division of labour, with women and children assuming a greater share of agricultural work than ever before.³⁸ Before the 1930s, most work on European farms had been seasonal, meaning that men had gone out to work only during the slack periods in the agricultural cycle.³⁹ However, as double cropping became more common and agriculture more intensive to make up for declining yields and the loss of soil fertility, these slack periods dwindled away, but men continued to leave rural areas for outside employment in ever-increasing numbers.⁴⁰

In her analysis of Economic Change in Kowe, referred to previously, Hay points out that by 1945, labour had become a way of life for Jo-Kowe. She attributed this to the effects of famine, depression, gold-mining (in Seme) and to the conscription during the war. The same can also be said of Jo-Karachuonyo, Jo-Kisumo and Jo-Gem.

³⁶G.Ndege, "The Transformation of Cattle Economy", p. 139

³⁷ T.Onduru "Some Aspects of Economic Change in Kano, Kenya, 1850 – 1963" Hay, "Luo Women and Economic Change During the Colonial Period".

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Table 4.2 below shows the casualties suffered by the people of Central Kavirondo District during the Second World War.

Table 4:2: Second World War Casualties from 3-9-1939 - 30 -9-1946

Description	Number
Killed in Action	77
Died of wounds while in action	11
Died of other war conditions	3
Death accidental	80
Deaths other causes	310
Suicide	2
Executions	-
Deserters	7
Total	490

Source: Onduru, T.A. “Some aspects of economic change in Kano, Kenya, 1850-1963”, M.A. Thesis, 1992 University of Nairobi.

It was women in these three areas who bore the burden of the transition in the sexual division of labour. Women met the problem by adopting labour-saving innovations in agriculture and reinvesting the labour saved in other economic activities, mainly trade. At the same time during the War years, some of the absent men began to “work with money” that is, they sent their wives money with which to hire someone to help with clearing, hoeing or weeding. In other words, the migrant labourers paid substitutes to perform their normal share of the agricultural labour.⁴¹ However, the concept of ‘working with money’ tended to be a characteristic of the labour elite, and therefore the rural women could not count on it.⁴² Women therefore adopted patterns of innovation in agriculture that reduced the required labour inputs. For instance, they began to plant cassava not only because of its drought-resistant qualities, but also cassava flour could be added to sorghum flour to make it last longer.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 106.

⁴² C. Odindo. Oral interview, 13/06/06.

Other innovations adopted in order to save labour included, improved hoe blades, hand or water-powered grinding mills and ox-drawn ploughs.⁴³

Indeed, the extent to which the Luo male migrant labourers numbers intensified during this period can be well understood by looking at the growth in membership of the Luo Union. The Union was founded in Nairobi during the early 1920s. The migrant male workers, assembled with others from their home areas to create social networks. Within these networks, welfare associations were formed to provide a social, and potentially an economic, safety net. Most of the early associations were based on clan or location identities. These clans associations later joined to form the Luo Union. After 1945, the Union adopted a regional focus, driven by mission-educated elites from western Kenya who took control of it. Old boys of Maseno School, such as Oginga Odinga, Walter Odede, and Achieng Oneko, began to call for a larger organisation, one that would help unite the community.⁴⁴ Odinga, argued that the Luo needed to build a sense of unity, common purpose and achievement, hence the motto for the Union-*Riwruok e Teko*, meaning, Unity is Strength.⁴⁵

The colonial state encouraged associations such as the Luo Union that provided needed social services to its members without the expense of public funds, at a time of growing interest in African welfare. Indeed, the Luo Union was often called a model for similar associations elsewhere in Kenya. For example, the Native Affairs officer of Nairobi suggested in 1944 that a proposed Kipsigis-Nandi Union be modeled after the Luo Union. Oginga and his colleagues formed the Luo Thrift and Trading Corporation (LUTATCO) as a self- help local Cooperative. This was to be the economic wing of the regional union. Odinga believed that the the Luo needed economic independence, in order to fight for political independence.⁴⁶ Odinga and his partners travelled across East Africa, visiting the growing Luo settlements, selling the LUTATCO shares and promoting the Luo Union. From, 1945 to 1953, the leaders registered new branches and promoted a reorganisation of the Union, with the aim of relaunching it as an East African Based association. During this period, its base was also moved from Nairobi to Kisumu, the Luo dominated city. By 1953, the Union had greatly expanded, and was officially renamed the Luo Union (East Africa). Colonial officials encouraged the

⁴³J. Hay, "Luo Women and Economic Change" p. 107. Clement Odindo, Oral Interview D. Otieno, Oral Interview, 12/08/06.

⁴⁴M. Carotenuto. "Riwruok E. Teko: Cultivating Identity in Colonial and Post Colonial Kenya" in *Africa Today* (2006) pp. 56-75.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶O. Odinga, *Not Yet Uhuru* (Nairobi, 1969) pp. 76-94.

organisation. The Nyanza Provincial Commissioner observed in his 1952 report that, “the Luo Union is plainly a loyal and reputable body in this part of the world”.⁴⁷

In forming this relationship with the colonial state, the Luo Union sought to disassociate itself from politics. Its members emphasised the association’s non-political activities in publications, speeches and correspondence with government officials.

During the 1950s, the Union gained favour with the government publicly denouncing the activities of the Mau Mau fighters in Central Kenya. This was after the murder of Luo Union official and prominent city Councillor Ambrose Ofafa in Nairobi.⁴⁸ The Union was also involved in policing dholuo-speakers suspected of involvement in Mau Mau activities. For example, the Union’s Nairobi branch in 1954 expressed the desire to arrest any members of its community found to be associated with the movement.⁴⁹ However, the Union’s stand did not block the Luo from joining the Mau Mau movement as seen in the section on politics during this period. Luo men such as, Oluoch Okello and Oloo Otaya were arrested and detained for participating in Mau Mau activities. As a result of these public activities, many of the Union’s officials and prominent members gained access to posts in the colonial government open to Africans.

It has been observed that employment opportunities for Luo workers in urban areas increased during the state of emergency because of the removal of Kikuyu, Embu and Meru labourers suspected to be Mau Mau sympathisers.⁵⁰ In 1954, during the Operation Anvil, the PC for Nyanza noted in his Annual Report for the year that, Operation Anvil restored confidence, resulting in a heavy outflow of Luo families in search of ready employment and high wages in towns and plantations.⁵¹ Thus, during these last decades of the colonial era, the numbers of the Luo men seeking employment increased. In 1953, Odinga was elected a Cultural Leader (*Ker*), a non political post. In 1957, he resigned from the position of a cultural leader in order to pursue politics. However, the members of the Union remained his staunchest political

⁴⁷ KNA. PC/NZA/3/1/3/6, Luo Union, PC Nyanza to Luo Union, 18 June, 1952.

⁴⁸ KNA/PC/NZA/3/1/3/6 Luo Union to PC Nyanza, 23 July, 1954.

Mathew, C., *Riwruok E Teko: Cultivating Identity in Colonial and Post colonial Kenya*” p. 5

⁴⁹ KNA/PC/NZA/3/1/3/6, Luo Union to PC Nyanza 23 July 1954.

⁵⁰ M.C , “Riwruok E Teko: Cultivating Identity” p. 60.

⁵¹ KNA/PC/NZA/4/4/63, Central Nyanza Annual Report, sp. 1, 1954a

supporters throughout his career, showing that the Union did serve as an important medium for grassroots support.⁵²

The African worker was exploited by the colonial employers. Throughout the colonial period, Africans received inadequate wages, forcing them to depend on foodstuffs from their families in the reserves in order to survive.⁵³ The colonial administration and European settlers subscribed to two racially influenced arguments in justifying the low wages paid to the Africans.⁵⁴ One of the arguments was that the financial reward the African workers received on working on a settler's farm was not as significant as the moral benefits he gained from living in a better atmosphere than present in an African reserve. The second argument maintained that since Africans were not used to cash, they only needed it for paying taxes.

Rodney has also identified three factors which made the colonial government and the settlers to under pay the Africans.⁵⁵ Firstly, the colonial state had monopoly of political power. This enabled the government to decide on wages to pay Africans. Secondly, the African working class was very small, dispersed and very unstable owing to their migratory practices. Lastly, European capitalists in Africa believed that the black man was inferior and therefore deserved low wages.

In 1954 the Carpenter Commission Report found out that the urban minimum wage provided only a minimum of living essentials for the single man. The low wages could not enable one to support his family leave alone purchase some basic commodities. The report argued that the low output and inefficiency of the African workers, long cited by the colonial administration as the reason for paying African low wages, were actually due to the low wages themselves, which affected the acquisition of skills.⁵⁶ The low wages which the African workers earned made it impossible for workers in towns and on settlers' farms to live with their families. A wife could visit her husband in a town for only some few days or a week, and then she returned home. The low wages made it impossible for some Luo people unable to live with their families in towns and on settlers' farms.⁵⁷

⁵² KNA/PC/NZA/3/1/3/6 Luo Union to PC Nyanza, Dec, 1955, 1951 – 1955C.

⁵³ M. Juma, Oral Interview, 14/8/06 See also A.O. Timothy, "Some Aspects of Economic Change".

⁵⁴ R.M.A.Zwanenberg, *The Agricultural History of Kenya to 1939*, p. 35. See also T. A. Onduru, *Ibid.*, p. 150.

⁵⁵ W. Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, (Dar-es-Salaam, 1976) p. 163. See T.A. Onduru, *Ibid.*, p. 150.

⁵⁶ S.Stichter, "*Migrant Labour in Kenya*".

⁵⁷ M. Juma, Oral Interview, 14/08/06, See also T.A. Onduru "Some Aspects of Economic Change.." p. 151.

Another development in labour during this period was the entry of African women into wage employment in steadily increasing numbers from about 35,000 in 1946 to just over 40,000 by 1952 3,453 of these women being in non-agricultural employment.⁵⁸ The number of women joining the colonial service also increased. For example, the chiefs in Kisumu District were informed to avail women for recruitment into the colonial service. The names of some women forwarded by chiefs were; Philister Onyinge, Apeles Akinyi, Magdalene Oloo, Sara Adhiambo, Akinyi, Itayari, Kalava Mala.⁵⁹ The women were to be employed for a two years contract service as warders. Women without children were preferred. The contracts were usually extended for one or two years, thus making it three or four years.⁶⁰ At the same time, during this period, the Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children (Amendment) Ordinance, raised the age restriction on children employed in industry from twelve to fourteen years.⁶¹

Women continued being engaged in the informal sector, in order to survive economically in the towns. For instance, when Kisumu Township African Advisory Council held its first meeting on the 17th July 1940, members appeared more concerned about prostitution than other township problems. They wanted to reduce the number of prostitutes in the town.⁶² Six years later, the Ramogi Association was formed in Kisumu with the objective of restraining immorality amongst women in Luoland. Thus, as the number of women joining employment increased. So did those in the informal sector but not without opposition from the male dominated associations, like Ramogi African Welfare Association, that felt that the working women in the towns were immoral. Ramogi African Welfare Association (RAWA) was a rival group to the Luo Union. It started policing “wayward women” in Kisumu in the late 1940s.⁶³ As a result, some Luo men sought the assistance of the Luo Union in denouncing the RAWA activities. For instance in 1952, a man in Kisumu wrote to the Luo Union for protection claiming that Ramogi officials invaded his house at midnight and arrested his legal wife as one of the vagrant women in the town.⁶⁴ By 1950s,

⁵⁸T. Zeleza, “Kenya and the Second World War, 1939 – 1950”.

⁵⁹ KNA/DC/KSM/1/27/3 – Recruitment of Warders – Prisons General, 1930 – 1957.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ KNA/ARC/MAA/2/3/10 Vol. I – Administration Nyanza Annual Reports, 1939 – 1940.

⁶² KNA/DC/KSM/1/1/16 Provincial Intelligence Report July, 1940.

⁶³ KNA/DC/KSM/1/1/16 Provincial Intelligence Report, December, 1946.

⁶⁴ KNA/PC/NZA/3/1/3/21, 1952-1955a. Institutions and Associations, “Complaints against Ramogi”, 31, May, 1952.

RAWA was challenging Luo Union over the control of the community. RAWA officials argued that they had been given the sole right by the Provincial Commissioner of Nyanza as early as 1946 to deal with all “complaints against their womenfolk” and that the Luo Union had no authority to stop them from interfering with their work.⁶⁵ A verbal battle continued for a number of years between the two associations with the Luo Union having the last word. In 1955, the Secretary of Luo Union, Walter Odede wrote to RAWA declaring that:

There is one thing however which I should make more explicit to you. The Luo Union for a long time had been the sole responsible for persuading undesirable Luo women and those who left their husbands to go back and in some cases which were quite rare repatriated some to their homes. This was not done without the co-operation of the authority. Under no circumstances shall this Union agree to the encouragement of immorality among the Luo community.⁶⁶

One finds that the action of the Luo Union in regard to women were often given support by Local Native Councils in Nyanza, further legitimising their leadership in negotiating the moral boundaries of the Luo community.⁶⁷ Unfortunately, most of these limits by the Union were aimed at controlling the freedom and movement of Luo women by using sexual morality as a tool to keep young women under male control. This also limited their involvement in formal labour which was mainly available in the colonial town centres and by extension limited their involvement in politics. Indeed, the Luo Union exercised unequal measure of social control in regard to gender issues in the urban centres, attempting to recreate rural social life in towns. At the same time, the Union expressed the same views as the colonialists, that all African women in towns were potential prostitutes and treating their economic activities as adjuncts to prostitution.

In 1945, *Ramogi* a biweekly vernacular newspaper was founded in Nairobi, by Luo Union members; Achieng Oneko and Zablon Oti.⁶⁸ This was to be one of the longest-running vernacular papers in colonial Kenya. This paper created communication networks for sharing, debating, and reporting important events

⁶⁵ KNA/PC/NZA/3/1/3/21, 1952 – 1955b. Institutions and Associations, RAWA to Luo Union, 15, December, 1954.

⁶⁶ KNA/PC/NZA/3/1/3/21, 1952 – 1955c. Institutions and Associations, Luo Union to RAWA, 1st, December, 1955.

⁶⁷ KNA/DC/KSM/1/16/48, 1949 – 1957, Monthly Report African Affairs.

⁶⁸ O. Odinga, *Not Yet Uhuru*. Pp. 80-81.

concerning the Luo community. The aim of the paper according to its founders was to promote literacy among the Luo and to cultivate political and social consciousness. The newspaper also aimed at promoting Luo solidarity through the activities of the Luo Union and its economic partner, Luo Thrift and Trading Corporation (LUTATCO).

In the pages of *Ramogi*, the Luo across the East African region engaged in debates around issues such as culture, language, gender, economics, labour and politics. For example, in regard to the Union's desire to control young women seeking employment in the towns, a 1948 article from Nairobi remarked that:

“Luo girls do prostitution while pretending to stay with relatives. Instead of going to town, now they go to farms because of the Luo Union. They should be watched by the Luo Union, and any relative found allowing these girls to be prostitutes should be punished.⁶⁹

Indeed, articles on female sexual morality were an overwhelmingly popular topic in *Ramogi* throughout its history. However, the newspaper also provided space for Luo-women to react, and publish their opinions. Thus in response to the above quoted article on the decay of life in town, a female correspondent reiterated that:

“As soon as these young men get employed in towns, they find they cannot do without women and begin keeping prostitutes, with the result that all the money they earn is spent on them and perpetual drinking. Their wives and children in the meantime were suffering in the reserves without help.⁷⁰

Thus, according to this correspondent, the men were to blame too for the issues of immorality. At the same time, they neglected their wives and children in the rural areas. Statistics may not be available, but suffice it to note that migratory wage labour caused the spread of venereal diseases among the Luo women by the men who had gone out on migratory wage labour. According to the Hon. A.C. Hollis, Secretary for Native Affairs he noted:

Large numbers of Kavirondo had contracted syphilis and other venereal diseases when at work, and the chiefs are averse to the young men leaving their reserves and inflicting the women also on their return.⁷¹

⁶⁹ M. Carotenuto, “Riwruok E. Teko” p. 66.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ East African Protectorate: Native Labour Commission, 1912 – 1913: Evidence and Report, pp. I.

Apart from sexually transmitted diseases, the poor working conditions which the African labourers were subjected to caused poor health and death among the African labourers. Many of the labourers lived on a poor diet, under poor housing and sanitary conditions.⁷²

Although economic differentiation existed among the Luo, wealth was assessed by the large number of livestock one had, good harvest and many wives. However, the developments of migratory wage labour introduced cash as a new factor for determining wealth. Those who went out to work were being seen as a special group of people. They were now being referred to as *Jopango*, meaning those who live in town or *jonanga*, meaning those who put on clothes.⁷³ Some of these people were generally respected because they were living a better life compared to those who were only involved in crop production and livestock keeping at home. Many of them managed to put up decent homes and also to educate their children.⁷⁴

Wage labour brought about changes in relations between men and women. The absence of men in villages meant that women, children, and the old were the only ones who now stayed at home. Women therefore took over the social responsibility of running the homes. Among the Luo in the pre-colonial era, the man was the one who made sure that all was going on well in the home, while the women took care of the house. The development of migratory wage labour shifted both the responsibility to the women. This social change took place because it was the woman who was at home all the time.⁷⁵

Migratory wage labour also affected the development of agricultural production in the three constituencies. The large number of able-bodied men who went on wage labour drained the areas of their labour force. For example, the 1955 Central Nyanza District Annual Report stated:

Mention must once more be made on the chronic shortage of adult male manpower in the district. This shortage jeopardises not only the future development and intensification of agricultural production in the district, but also the maintenance of the present fertility of the district. So long as this district is treated as a

⁷² T.Onduru, "Some Aspects of Economic Change" p. 153.

⁷³ John Osano: Oral Interview, 15/8/06.

⁷⁴ T.Onduru "Some Aspects of Economic Change.." p. 154 John Osano Oral Interview.

⁷⁵ L. Njeje Oral Interview, 5/08/06)

See also Ndeda "Women and Development since colonial times" W.R. Ochieng (ed) *Historical Studies and Social Change in Western Kenya*; (Nairobi, 2002) pp. 232-233.

reservoir of able-bodied males for works throughout the East African territories, it is feared that agricultural production will deteriorate than develop.⁷⁶

Nyanza as a whole was to be the labour reservoir for the colonial state throughout its existence. Two years later in 1957, the District Commissioner for Central Nyanza, Mr. Entee had the following to report:

The chronic lack of male labour in the district due to the fact that so many go out to work, has proved to be a major problem, as all betterment schemes are immediately faced with the problem of man-power. It is fair to say that the ordinarily average inhabitant of Central Nyanza does not regard farming of the land as anything more than modest support for his wife and family. He therefore goes out to find work. This attitude is one of the main stumbling blocks to instituting a better system of agriculture.⁷⁷

As stated above men migrated to towns in search for wage labour. Women were left to fend and farm to sustain their children and the old in the rural areas.

4.4 Kenya's Struggle for Independence: Where are the Luo Women?

When the Second World War broke out in 1939, political organisations in the country were banned and their leaders detained at Kapenguria. These organizations included; the Kikuyu Central Association, Taita Hills Association and Ukamba Members Association. Thus during the war, African political activity remained comparatively limited for some time. By the end of the war, 97,000 Kenyans had been in the military service, as infantry men, clerks, plumbers, bakers, truck drivers, welders and in a number of other military duties.⁷⁸ The Second World War had a number of effects on Kenya's political sphere. These included, a growing pride and self-confidence among the soldiers based on their military achievements, increased political sensitivity and aspirations as they interacted with other races during the war, and finally, towards the end of the war, many educated elite from secondary schools, and outside the country, provided political leadership.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ KNA/DC/CN/1/1/10 Central Nyanza District Annual Report, 1955, p. 23.

⁷⁷ KNA/DC/CN Central Nyanza District Annual Report, 1957, p.11.

⁷⁸ B.A. Ogot (ed) *Politics and Nationalism in Colonial Kenya: Hadith 4*, (Nairobi, 1972), See also Ochieng, W.R. (ed) *A Modern History of Kenya, 1895-1980*, (London, 1989). Ross, W.M., *Kenya from within: A Short Political History*, (London, 1968). Bogonko, S.N., *Kenya 1945-1963: A study in African National Movements*, (Nairobi, 1980).

⁷⁹ Ibid.

In 1944, the colonial state nominated Eliud W. Mathu, a product of Balliol College, Oxford, as the first African representative in the Legislative Council. This decision was made in an effort to channel the emergent voice of African nationalism toward the support of the colonial administration. On the advice of the Governor, the Kenya African Study Union (later KAU) was formed as a colony-wide African organisation, which would advise to Mathu on problems affecting the Africans and to strive for the advancement of African's social, economic and political interests. The formation of KAU was an important landmark in the political development of Kenya because it marked the first sustained effort to create a political organization covering the whole country.

The founding members who met in Nairobi included; Eliud Mathu, James Gichuru, J.D. Otiende, Jonathan Njoroge, John Kebaso, Henry Mwaniki, Francis Khamisi, Kamau Njoroge, Albert Awino, S. Otieno Josiah, Barrack Okello, Ambrose Ofafa and Harry Thuku who was elected the first president.⁸⁰ The objectives of the organisation were to unite the African people towards an African nation and to foster the social, economic and political interests of the Africans. In 1946, Jomo Kenyatta returned from Britain after a fifteen-year stay and assumed the leadership of KAU until the declaration of the state of Emergency in 1952. KAU was the militant mouth piece of African nationalist expression. The party saw its foremost duty as that of contradicting any racist pronouncements made by the settlers.

Within KAU there was a constant disagreement between the moderate and the militant elements.⁸¹ At times the internal disputes between members who were ready to compromise with the authorities and those who wanted action paralyzed the Association. In 1948, Jomo Kenyatta visited Kisumu, where he met Jaramogi Oginga Odinga. Kenyatta was also accompanied by Ambrose Ofafa one of the leading founder members of KAU. KAU was a nation wide party unlike the earlier associations.

Therefore, there was no doubt, that the Luo and the Gikuyu were united in their common struggle against colonialism that had earlier on been regionally based.⁸² In 1950 the Kisumu branch of KAU was formed and it sent a letter to Kenyatta inviting him to address a meeting. Kenyatta did not make it to Kisumu. However, Tom Ambrose Ofafa, treasurer, visited the Kisumu branch. A great meeting was held, and

⁸¹O. Odinga, *Not Yet Uhuru*.p.97

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 97.

the Nairobi and Kisumu branches became among the most influential in the whole country.⁸³ In 1952, Kenyatta visited Kisumu and met with Oginga Odinga before addressing a mammoth crowd.⁸⁴ It was after this encounter that both Achieng Oneko and Oginga Odinga threw themselves into the work and spirit of the Kenya African Union.⁸⁵ Therefore, there was no doubt, that the Luo and the Gikuyu were united in their common struggle against colonialism. More KAU meetings were planned for in Nyanza, but they were banned by the government. By the Africans were impatient with the colonial state slow measures of integrating Africans into the government. KAU's central Committee was summoned to an urgent meeting in Nairobi.⁸⁶ During this meeting, Jomo Kenyatta and Achieng Oneko were summoned by the colonial state officials, the Attorney General and the police, warned them that their speeches were inflammatory.⁸⁷ Odinga, chaired the meeting in the absence of Jomo Kenyatta. The members spoke with bitterness against the colonial state, and they stated that they would face anything that the future would bring. A few days, after this meeting Achieng Oneko was arrested together with Jomo Kenyatta and the other KAU, officials. This marked the beginning of the State of Emergency in Kenya.

The militants in KAU, some of them like Bildad Kaggia and Fred Kubai had opted to join an underground movement which was already oathing its members against the British. This group resorted to oathing in preparation for a violent attack. Only people of proven sincerity, honesty and courage were admitted into the movement.

In January 1952 a committee known as the Central Committee was formed under the chairmanship of Eliud Mutonyi, with Isaac Gathanju as secretary. Its aim was to control the activities of the anti-colonial movement and to organise oathing on a larger scale. The committee had twelve members most of who belonged to KAU. It was this Central Committee that started Mau Mau with its headquarters at Banana Hill. As membership increased, and greater secrecy became necessary, a new body known as the Group of 40 was formed. This group ensured that the orders of the Central

⁸³ Ibid., p. 99.

⁸⁴ Ibid, pp. 100-101.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 102-103.

⁸⁷ Ibid., See also A. – Odhiambo, “Seek ye First the Economic Kingdom: A History of the Luo Thrift and Trading Corporation (LUTATCO) 1945 -1956”. in B.A. Ogot (ed) *Hadith 5: Economic and Social History of East Africa*, (Nairobi, 1979).

Committee were circulated far and wide. It was also the link between the committee and the districts.

The period between 1945–1952 also witnessed the rise of militant trade unionism.⁸⁸ The Unions were opposed to colonialism and were prepared to demonstrate their opposition through strike. The first of these Trade Union movements was started in Mombasa when Chege Kibachia tried to organise riots and looting throughout Mombasa. In the general strike which followed, Kibachia was arrested and deported to Baringo in the Rift valley. Other trade unions that emerged before 1950 included Bildad Kaggia's Clerks and Commercial Workers Union, Markhan Singh's Labour Trade Unions, Congress of East Africa and Fred Kubai was not only president of the Trade Union Congress, but he was also the chairman of KAU.⁸⁹

By 1951, Most of these trade unions operated as the militant wing of KAU. They all moved their offices into Kiburi House, which also became the headquarters of KAU. Thus, Kiburi House became the Headquarters of political and trade union activities among the Kenyans. By 1951, the government could no longer withstand the pressure for the recognition of the growing trade union movement. Thus, it encouraged a rival trade union organisation, the Kenya Federation of Registered Trade Unions, (KFRTU) which later changed its name to the Kenya Federation of Labour (KFL) led by Tom Mboya.⁹⁰ The women who had increasingly joined wage labour also joined trade unions in protest against the low wages, poor working and living conditions. For example, by 1952, there were 27,589 women and men paid up union members.⁹¹ The trade unions organised strikes, which rocked the country between 1947 and 1950. The women became active participants in these strikes.

After the Second World War, the British government initiated the plan to finance the African Land Development programme earmarked for soil conservation projects. The projects, although good in that they were aimed at controlling soil erosion, the bulk of the additional labour fell on women, their labour hours were dramatically increased because up to 50 percent of Kikuyu men were migrant labourers.⁹² Women were not allowed to grow cash crops. This meant that they had no motivation for additional work, which did not provide them with cash for their taxes or

⁸⁸ O.Odinga, *Not Yet Uhuru*, p. 108.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ T.Zeleza., "Kenya and the Second World War, 1939 – 1950".

⁹² T. Kanogo, "Kikuyu Women and Politics of Protest: Mau Mau".

domestic obligations. Women resented the fact that they were expected to work at the conservation sites early in the morning when they had to attend to their farms. At the same time, communal labour required in these conservation sites was equated to tax in which women paid by giving their time to the state for free, yet they also paid taxes.

In Murang'a District, on 20th July, 1947, a KAU meeting decided that women should abandon soil conservation work. On 14th April, 1948, 2500 women marched to the District Commissioners office singing and saying they would not work at the soil conservation sites, protesting that they had enough work at home. Although the colonial state did not yield to the demands of the women after the protest, they got some concessions such as individual as opposed to communal terracing. But more importantly, the women demonstrated that they would challenge the violation of their rights.⁹³

In adjacent Kiambu District, women's protests took a different form. In October, 1947, women stopped picking coffee in Kiambu because they wanted the prices per measure, that is the *debe* (twenty kilograms tin) increased by fifty cents.⁹⁴ To ensure solidarity among the women, their leaders threatened to apply a traditional practice of putting a curse on anyone going to pick coffee.⁹⁵ The women were keen on the price per measure because they depended on this money for paying taxes and fees for their children.⁹⁶

Women's protests to the new soil conservation measures which consumed so much of their time was not limited to Kikuyu women. In Nyanza, Luo women also protested these new measures. In South Nyanza, the colonial state officials carried out intense campaigns on soil conservation. The aloe plant was planted, to strengthen earth banks, wherever practicable lines of trash or stones were built on contours. At the same time, trenches were dug as part of the drainage system to avert soil erosion.⁹⁷

4.5 Women and the Mau Mau Movement

On the eve of the Mau Mau rebellion in 1952, there were many contradictions in the Kenyan society. There was a breakdown in the symbiosis between rural

⁹³ Ibid. See also S.Waiyego "Engendering Political Space: Women's".

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷D.A. Nyakwaka, "Agricultural Change in Rongo Division"

household economy and migrant labour modes of production, which had held earlier on⁹⁸. There was unemployment. The changes in the job market were felt more by the women who lacked education and skills required by the job market. This was because the colonial system of education as we have seen was discriminatory against women. The colonial government gave priority to male students especially sons of chiefs and local administrators. Most of these educated men left the rural areas for the more lucrative “white collar” jobs in the towns. The educated men also participated in the political sphere during the colonial period.

A lot of research has been done on Mau Mau in general.⁹⁹ However, in this work, we will focus on the women’s roles in the struggle for independence. Women’s roles come out overtly during the Mau Mau rebellion and the period of the declaration of the state of emergency. When the Kenya African Union mobilised the jobless in Nairobi in the late 1940s and people started taking oaths as a protest against colonial solidarity in the protests against the colonial state, women were not left out. The women in Nairobi joined the movement and were used to pass information to members secretly.¹⁰⁰ In rural areas, women were sabotaging crop production by refusing to carry out agricultural conservation measures. Kenya women had realised that the grievances economic and others had to be articulated within the context of colonial domination and the only solution once and for all was by fighting for independence. The violence escalated in the rural areas and towns and on 7th October, 1952, Senior Chief Waruhiu was murdered. This was a sign to the state that its domination was being contested and that the state-society relations which had been wanting for a long time had broken down.

The colonial state declared a State of Emergency and the Mau Mau rebellion broke out in full scale. Women were actively involved in the rebellion. They undertook risky tasks such as carrying food into the forests, hiding firearms and written messages under their skirts from the village to the detention camps and giving food to the Mau Mau warriors.¹⁰¹ The village women provided shelter to freedom fighters whenever their lives were in danger. It was usual for the freedom fighters to go to the villages on

⁹⁸J. Hay and S. Stichter. *African Women: South of the Sahara*.

⁹⁹ O.Odinga., *Not Yet Uhuru.*, S.N. Bogonko, *Kenya 1945 – 1963: A Study in African National Movements*, W.M. Ross, *Kenya from Within: A short Political History*, B.A. Ogot, *Politics and Nationalism in Colonial Kenya: Hadith 4*. (Nairobi, 1979).

E.Caroline., *Britain’s Gulag: The Brutal End of Empire in Kenya*, (London, 2005).

¹⁰⁰T.Zeleza., “Kenya and the Second World War, 1939 – 1950”.

¹⁰¹E.Caroline *Britain’s Gulag*. See also T. Kanogo, “Kikuyu Women and Politics of Protest: Mau Mau

military errands and operations. At such times, they sought shelter from women. During the day they were also assigned duties of fetching firewood, cooking, washing and guarding the hiding places for Mau Mau warriors. Women were also used as spies in the urban areas. They spied on security forces and colonial administrators from whom they obtained information on military plans and operation for use by the freedom fighters.¹⁰²

It has been pointed out that the Mau Mau rebellion would not have lasted as long as it did if the women had not made many sacrifices to keep their husbands and sons alive as they fought their oppressors. Some of the women were co-opted into the political arena and some women like Muthoni Ngatha rose to the senior position of field marshal.¹⁰³ Women thus played major roles in the rebellion both as officers and in the rank and file. The following is a quote from a woman who participated in the struggle for independence; sixty five-year old Wanjira wa Kang'ethe from Kariobangi in Nairobi remembered:

I was seven months pregnant. The homeguards had been told that I was keeping money to buy boots for the freedom fighters. Two of them came with a white man. They dug my house everywhere looking for money. Of course I did not keep it in my house. I knew they were bound to come sometime or other. The white man then beat me up with a whip. All I could do was put my hands across my stomach to protect my seven-month-old baby that I was carrying. He beat me so badly that I removed all my clothes and put my hands up and told him: "Shoot me and right through my stomach so that my baby and I can die together". He looked at me. I think he thought I was mad. He took his stooges the homeguards and went away. I don't think anybody suffered more than the women during Mau Mau. It is only that we don't know their stories.¹⁰⁴

Many women died during the Mau Mau rebellion. For instance, during the Kirwara Massacre of 1954, around twenty women were killed together with twenty-four men.¹⁰⁵ Others lost their husbands and children. In 1956, the rebellion was finally

¹⁰²W. Kabira and Nzioki., *Celebrating Women's Resistance: A Case Study of Group Movement in Kenya*, (Nairobi, 1993).

¹⁰³ Ibid. p. 36. See also T. Kanogo, "Kikuyu Women and Politics of Protest: Mau Mau".

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. p. 35. See also Elkins. *Britains' Gulag*. For more of the Women's shocking narratives about their experiences during the Mau Mau. You hear many stories of women who were raped, beaten, murdered, jailed, detained, and generally harassed during the struggle for independence. At the same time the women were forced to meet the sexual needs of the male warriors.

¹⁰⁵S. Waiyego, "Engendering Political Space: Women's Political Participation in Kangema." p. 56.

crushed with the capture of Dedan Kimathi but the colonial state made drastic changes in its economic, social and political policies.

Focusing particularly on the Luo community, they too were part and parcel of the Mau Mau struggle, although in small numbers compared to the Kikuyu. The Luo people who worked on the farms in Central province and even Nairobi were recruited to fight in the revolt. For example, many Yimbo workers lived in Nairobi and Gikuyu towns such as Nyeri, Ruiru and Nyahururu during the Mau Mau rebellion and were involved in it.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, Magera, Sayusi and Oyamo Islands of Lake Victoria, in western Yimbo, formed the second largest Mau Mau detentions after Manyani, between 1953 and 1958.¹⁰⁷ Most of the Luo in the rural areas heard about the Mau Mau rebellion with the Declaration of the State of Emergency in October, 1952 over the state radio, with the arrest of a popular Luo politician Ramogi Achieng Oneko.¹⁰⁸ His arrest did not go well with KAU activists in Yimbo. The registered KAU members such as Alban Nyamhore, Timothy Omondo, Absai Manyua, Girson Obongo, Yona Omollo and John Owuor Mahondo travelled all over the area spreading anti-British propaganda.¹⁰⁹ The KAU members drummed support for the arrested KAU leaders, and Mau Mau and pro-Kenyatta songs and quips were composed and spread by chorus girls and guitarists.¹¹⁰

A typical pro-Kenyatta song is recalled

Dholuo	Translation
Jomo wuod okuyu ma wasungu	Jomo son of the gikuyu is being
Sando	tortured by the British
Jomo Kenyatta	Jomo Kenyatta
Jomo wuod okuyu ma wasungu	Jomo son of the gikuyu is being
Sando	tortured by the British
Jomo Kenyatta	Jomo Kenyatta
Dine wabed gi ndege dine	If we had war planes we would

¹⁰⁶ O.Odinga, *Not Yet Uhuru*, p. 112. See also W.R. Ochieng, "Thunder from the Islands: Mau Mau in Western Kenya" in W.R. Ochieng (ed) *Historical Studies and Social Change in Western Kenya*, (Nairobi, 2002) Pp. 181-193. E.A. Miguda "Mau Mau in Nairobi: 1946 – 1956: Case Study – The Luo Experience, M.A. Thesis, 1987.

¹⁰⁷ W.R.Ochieng, "Thunder from the Islands: Mau Mau in Western Kenya" p. 181.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 184.

Wariembe odieche	Have dislodged the British
Jomo Kenyatta	Jomo Kenyatta
Dine wabed gi ndege dine	If we had war planes we would
Wariembe odieche	Have dislodged the British
Jomo Kenyatta ¹¹¹	Jomo Kenyatta

This propaganda was drummed throughout Nyanza by the the Luo Union. This Union remained the mouthpiece of the Luo leaders led by Oginga Odinga. He noted that:

Everywhere we spoke government agents followed us and recorded our speeches but we were not deterred. We advocated thrift and self-help, community effort and unity, but under cover of seemingly innocuous speeches we were keeping close to the people and damping down tribalism and the propaganda blared out by the loudspeakers on the touring government vans trying to recruit for the home guard and the police force.¹¹²

The Luo supporters of Mau Mau put up a spirited fight both in Nyanza as seen in songs and in Nairobi where they took oaths.¹¹³ A number of the Luo who supported Mau Mau were also detained with the rest of Kenyans. Odinga, observed that:

When I got to Kisumu there were many gaps among our people. Walter Odede who had become KAU president on Kenyatta's arrest was in detention; Oluoch Okello was arrested soon after my arrival and sent to Mackinnon Road camp (he was later removed to Lodwar, Manyani, and Hola among other camps), Oloo Otaya who had welcomed me back with a slaughtered rams, was accused of organizing an oathing ceremony and was arrested, brutally beaten and taken to Manyani camp.¹¹⁴

Thus, as indicated in this quotation a number of the Luo faced the same consequences as all the other Kenyas who supported Mau Mau. In spite of all the efforts put up by the supporters of Mau Mau, the provincial administration in Nyanza reacted by banning the pro Mau Mau songs. They also mounted anti-Kikuyu propaganda. For example, the colonial administrators organised *barazas* or meetings in which they spread messages on the evils of Mau Mau. However, the Luo continued

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 184.

¹¹² O.Odinga, *Not Yet Uhuru* p. 127.

¹¹³ W.R.Ochieng, "Thunder from the Islands" p. 186-192. in this work we find examples of Luo, like Richard Aduonga and Ochieng Afwamba who had joined Mau Mau and taken Mau Mau oaths in Nairobi.

¹¹⁴ O.Odinga, *Not yet Uhuru*, pp. 128 – 129.

to rally behind KAU and Mau Mau. For example, in February, 1953 during the Kapenguria defence of Kenyatta and the rest of KAU officials, the Luo Union members helped to raise funds to offset the cost of the case.¹¹⁵

In November 1954, the murder of Ambrose Ofafa, a prominent Luo Nairobi City Councillor and treasurer of the Luo Union would turn the tide of the Luo-Kikuyu support system. Ochieng points out that, his murder was a tactless act on the part of the Gikuyu, as it simply drove the Luo into the hands of the British.¹¹⁶

Infact according to Odinga, the week after Ambrose Ofafa was murdered, numbers of the Luo were enrolled in the Homeguard and the government encouraged, what seemed like a successful incitement of an inter-tribal clash between the Luo and the Kikuyu.¹¹⁷ Again under the umbrella of the Luo Union, Odinga held a meeting in Nairobi, beseeching the Luo not to avenge A. Ofafa's death. Instead he initiated a collection to build a constructive memorial to A. Ofafa. The end result was the Ofafa Memorial Hall in Kisumu, seen as the Luo Centre for traditions and for national unity.¹¹⁸

However, the Luo anger against the death of A.Ofafa did not drive them to collaborating with the colonial state. For example, the Luo Union members continued their support for Mau Mau. They sheltered detainees escaping from Mageta and Sayusi islands on Lake Victoria. The Luo provided the escapees with food, and clothes and camouflaged them by having them carry bundles of grass on their heads as is the Luo custom when gathering grass for thatching, and guided them away from Nyanza and back to the forests.¹¹⁹ Odinga further points out that:

During the later years of the emergency, I managed to get in contact with detainees in some of the camps and by letters smuggled in and out we planned to further inter-tribal unity at all costs.¹²⁰

Indeed as stated above, the colonial state's propaganda and the death of A. Ofafa did not totally destroy the Luo-Kikuyu unity that was vital for the struggle. The unity between the Luo-Kikuyu continued throughout the emergency and after, leading to the formation of Kenya African National Union.

¹¹⁵ O.Odinga., *Not Yet Uhuru*, p. 128.

¹¹⁶ W.R.Ochieng., "Thunder from the Islands". p. 186. See also O. Odinga, *Not Yet Uhuru*, p. 132.

¹¹⁷ O.Odinga, *Not Yet Uhuru* p. 132.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*,p. 132.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 133.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

Women's struggle for self-determination continued after the Mau Mau rebellion. There were some women, like Margaret Kenyatta and Jael Mbogo who continued to articulate the problems of the women. In 1958, Jemimah Gecaga became the first woman to be nominated to the Legislative Council.¹²¹ This was a major achievement for the women whose interests throughout most of the colonial period had been represented by the men. And when eventually the pressure from within and from the international community was too much for the colonial state, it initiated changes which led to Kenya's independence in 1963.

One such change was the new constitution which was drawn up during the Lancaster Conference in London. Though actively involved in the nationalist struggle for independence, women in Kenya were sidelined during the negotiations for independence.¹²² For example, there was only one woman, Priscilla Abwao, out of about 80 or so Kenyan delegates at the Lancaster House Conference in London, where Kenya's independence constitution was negotiated. Indeed, the fact that Kenya's independence constitution was a product of a male dominated discourse, negotiated and drafted also in the metropolis, ensured that women's perspectives and unique gender experiences were not taken into consideration.¹²³ At the same time, the British largely influenced the recruitment of the 70 or so Kenyan delegates who negotiated for the independence constitution, some not very alert to fully comprehend the complexities of constitution-making.¹²⁴ Thus, because of these factors, the independent constitution marginalised women's issues, despite the fact that the women had been on the frontline with the men during the struggle for independence. The role of Luo women in the struggle is illustrated by the profile of "Mama Uhuru".

4.6 A Profile of "Mama Uhuru": Magdalene Aboge Alila

Luo women were active in the struggle for independence. One of the main actors was Magdalene Aboge Alila also known as "Mama Uhuru" because of her active role in the struggle for Kenya's independence. Aboge was in 2010 an official of the Luo Council of Elders. She was born in 1920 to peasant farmers in Kisumu rural.

¹²¹S.A. Khasiani and E.I. Njiro, *The Women's Movement in Kenya*, Nairobi, 1993, see also M. Nzomo, *Women in Politics*, (Nairobi, 1991).

¹²² S.W.Nasong'o and T.Ayot, "Women in Kenya's Politics of Transition and Democratisation" p. 176.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

Magdalene attended Kibuye primary school but dropped out, after sitting the Common Entrance Examination due to lack of support for girl-child education at the time.

After leaving school, she got involved in petty trade in Kisumu town. Initially she traded in grains, mainly maize that she obtained from Western Kenya.¹²⁵ Eventually, she got involved in wholesale trade and was based at Jubilee Market in Kisumu Municipality. Magdalene also traded in second hand clothes which she at times took out of Kisumu town to markets such as, Kibos and Muhoroni. It was in line with her economic interests that she got involved in politics.¹²⁶ Magdalene points out that it was not easy for Africans, leave alone women to trade in Kisumu Municipality, where commerce and trade sectors were dominated by the Asians.

In 1959, Magdalene began her political journey, when as a vendor in Kisumu, she mobilised women vendors to rebel against the colonial local authorities. This was after the colonial government issued a decree barring all Africans from selling their trade ware within the town centre.¹²⁷ This rebellion by women was Magdalene Aboge's spring board into politics. It made her an instant star among politicians and trade unionists. As a result, outspoken Luo politicians of the time people like, Dickson Oruko Makasembo, Otieno Oyoo and Ombok, incorporated her into the African District Association (ADA) that was secretly plotting to overthrow the colonial government.

This Association had been formed as a welfare group in the late 1950s to serve the interests of Nyanza people. However, it quickly turned into a forum for articulating Africans demands for independence. Aboge was appointed leader of the female wing of ADA, in Central Nyanza. As the leader of the women's wing, Aboge transversed other parts of Nyanza, for example like Homa Bay sensitising women on the value of struggling for independence. She told the women that with independence, they would be able to trade freely. Aboge asserts that she joined politics because she hated the fact that women could not be given trade licenses to trade in their own country.¹²⁸ Thus she was ready to fight for Kenya's independence. Aboge worked closely with Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, Mbiyu Koinange, Munyua Waiyaki and other nationalists. At the local level, ADA also pushed for the release of Mzee Jomo Kenyatta and his co-detainees

¹²⁵ M. Aboge, Oral Interview, 10/5/06.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid. See also John Oyua, "Still searching for elusive Uhuru" Sunday Magazine, *The Standard* March 15, 2009.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

from Kapenguria. Aboge points out that her late husband Elizaphania Alila, was not interested in politics. He was a religious man and often supported her efforts and encouraged her efforts in fighting for the good of all in the society.

After independence in 1963, Aboge's continued her active participation politics. She joined a group of women picked by Jaramogi Odinga, to visit Sudan, Egypt, Romania and Russia as part of plans to expose them to international politics. She aptly puts it:

Jaramogi wanted us to travel and learn more from countries that had strong governments. We went to Cairo and Moscow and we were also joined by women from Uganda and Tanzania.¹²⁹

She also points out that they came back with about eight scholarships from the trip. As a result, eight women from Kenya got the opportunity to go for further studies. They included Messella Osir, Regina Yongo and Elizabeth Arika, among others.¹³⁰

Magdalena was also among the key Nyanza politicians who met former Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi when she visited Kenya in the mid 1960s at the invitation of Jaramogi Odinga. This was long before Indira became India's Prime Minister. Aboge asserts that she met Indira Gandhi at the offices of Ramogi Press in Kisumu and discussed many issues about the political liberation of women. "Indira Gandhi was impressed with my commitment to politics and invited me to visit her in India".¹³¹

However, her troubles with the government began soon after independence. During a Kenya African National Union (KANU) meeting in Nairobi, some people questioned the continued presence of colonialists in the newly formed government. Aboge asserts that, this did not go down well with the administration which felt we were agents of some secret group from the western part of the country who wanted to overthrow the new government in favour of certain pro-communist radicals.

Thus upon her return from her trip to Russia and other countries, she was arrested by government officials and subsequently jailed. Aboge was arrested alongside eight men on suspicion that they were planning to remove President Kenyatta from power. This was despite the fact that she had been part of the team that

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

demanded for President Kenyatta's release from prison in Kapenguria.¹³² She was the only woman in the group of nine people. Aboge was sent to Langata Women's Prison where she spent three months behind bars. She recalled that Phoebe Asiyo, who later became the Member of Parliament for Karachuonyo was the Commissioner of Prisons at the time of her arrest. Aboge was visited by Asiyo while in prison. Aboge, also remembers that she was kept in her own room while in prison because of her role in the political sphere. Later, when Asiyo joined politics she campaigned for her. The group was finally released after a deal between President Kenyatta and his Vice-President Jaramogi Oginga Odinga.

After her jail term, Aboge continued working with women, this time in the Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organisation. She also worked with other women like Margaret Kenyatta who was the Mayor of Nairobi. She travelled through Kikuyuland addressing women on various issues. In the mid 1960s, she supported and campaigned for the first woman Councillor, later Mayor and Mpf for Kisumu town, Grace Onyango. Aboge was happy that despite stiff competition from the male contenders, Grace was able to win the seat. The Mayor worked very well according to Aboge. For example, Grace put lights in many parts of the town that had no lights, worked with the women and gave some of them jobs.¹³³ It was as a result of her work that four years later when Grace Onyango campaigned for parliamentary seat for Kisumu town, she defeated her many opponents. Aboge was one of Grace's main supporters and campaigners.

The politics of Kenya in general and Nyanza in particular during this period was marked, by the black day in 1969 when President Kenyatta clashed with Jaramogi Odinga, at the opening of the Nyanza Provincial Hospital. Aboge was on the scene with Jaramogi Oginga Odinga when fracas broke out at the meeting and the police shot people. By this time, President Kenyatta and his Vice President Jaramogi Odinga had fallen out after the latter resigned as the country's Vice President to form Kenya People's Union (KPU). The first opposition party in independent Kenya.

Aboge aptly describes the incident:

I was in a group that shielded Jaramogi as bullets, chairs, and stones, flew. Kenyatta's bodyguards had opened fire after a bitter exchange of words between the two degenerated into chaos. We took him (Jaramogi) to an office on the first floor of the hospital for safety because we knew he could have become an easy target for

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

the pro-Kenyatta team. Once inside the room, he changed his mind and attempted to return to the battlefield because one of his wives was in the crowd.¹³⁴

Jaramogi would not take refuge and hide when his wife and supporters were in danger. However, Aboge and her team managed to keep him in safety until the guns went silent.¹³⁵ The Kisumu bloodbath saw many people lose their lives and was just one of the many challenges that Aboge faced during her political life. Soon after the confrontation, President Kenyatta proscribed KPU and Jaramogi and many of his supporters were detained.

Aboge's political activism continued as she argued that women had fought the total war against the whites leading to Kenya's independence. However, women were not rewarded for the role they played in this war. She has nothing to show for fighting for independence. Aboge asserted that the women must be ready to fight for their rights as women. Thus throughout her political career, she supported and actively campaigned for women in Nyanza. These included, Grace Onyango, Phoebe Asiyu and Grace Ogot as women members of parliament. She also supported women councillors. Aboge also pointed out that women could use women groups as vehicles for getting and winning political posts.¹³⁶ However, she asserted that women must work as one, form a strong movement that they could use to fight for their rights, since unity is strength.¹³⁷

In the 1990s, when Jaramogi Odinga teamed up with other opposition leaders like Kenneth Matiba, George Nthenge, Oyangi Mbaja, Martin Shikuku and George Anyona to rekindle the clamour for multi-party politics, Aboge joined them. She was a common figure at the meetings organised by the original Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (FORD) party that later split into Ford Asili and Ford Kenya. Jaramogi's death in 1994 devastated her, but she remained strongly involved in politics. She argued that the fight must continue until Kenyans get what they have always wanted since independence and that is good governance.¹³⁸ Raila Odinga, Kenya's former Prime Minister once described Aboge as a scion of liberation politics in Kenya.¹³⁹ He

¹³⁴ Ibid. See also John Oywa, 'Still searching for elusive Uhuru'

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ J. Oywa, "Still Searching for elusive Uhuru"

added that, without people like Mama Aboge, Kenya might still have been under the colonial yoke. She also gave us, the strength to match on into the Second Liberation.¹⁴⁰

4.7 Women Groups in the Colonial Era: The Maendeleo ya Wanawake Movement (Progress among Women Clubs)

During the 1950s, there were efforts by the colonial state to organise women into groups or clubs. This was to be started under the auspices of the colonial governments Department of Community Development and Rehabilitation in 1951 to promote the advancement of African women and raise their standards.¹⁴¹ The result of this decision was the establishment of *Maendeleo ya Wanawake* or Progress among women clubs, which were essentially self-help organisations for women. The name of the organisation was chosen by the female students at the Jeanes School.¹⁴² The clubs were a replica of women's institutes in England. These clubs main objective was to teach women to sew, knit, cook, look after babies well, and to be thoroughly hygienic in their homes. Thus to achieve these objectives for the clubs, women were trained at the Homecraft Training Centres and the Jeanes school. It was these women who went to the grassroots to begin the clubs. The clubs activities were supervised and guided by staff under the direction of the Commissioner for Community Development and Rehabilitation.

In Nyanza, some of these clubs were opened at Nyahera (40 women members) Maseno (8 women) and Manyasi (about 150 female attendees). All these clubs were started by Mrs R.E. Wainright and Miss Riddock. At the beginning, many accepted the Maendeleo ya Wanawake. Through the clubs many were taught better methods of agriculture, animal husbandry, and health nutrition and child welfare¹⁴³. On the 12th of May 1953, the Kisumu Homecraft Centre opened its doors to the first students. It offered women a five months' long course, after which the women returned to their clubs.¹⁴⁴ The clubs were well received both by the colonial state and the local community because they were raising the standard of living of the Africans. The women were better equipped to bring up their children in a clean environment. In terms of management, Maendeleo was the colonial state's vehicle manned by its

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ M.J.Ndeda., "Women and Development since colonial Times" P. 242. See also Elkins. "*Britain's Gulag*". pp. 261-262.

¹⁴² Ibid., See also, KNA/CD/5/203,1951.

¹⁴³ M.J.Ndeda., "Women and Development since Colonial Times" pp. 244-245

¹⁴⁴.KNA/CD/9/26, 1953. See, Magdelene Aboge,(Oral Interview, 10/5/06), Kisumu, May, 2006.

personnel, run with its funds and only impacted on a small number of women, the rest of the women were left unaffected by its existence and operations.¹⁴⁵

By 1960, the leadership of Maendeleo ya Wanawake, especially at the national level were handed over to African women, because of the political changes taking place in the country. However, the organisation continued relying on the Department of Community Development for supervision, guidance and training of leaders whose salaries were paid by the local authorities.¹⁴⁶ By 1961, most of the women had lost contact with the organisation. The organisation faced many challenges such as leadership and lack of funds to pay the salaries of the various leaders. Thus, the number of the clubs was reduced for efficiency. It was also decided that the women sit in Local Native Councils and African District Councils meetings in order to be informed on what was required of them to assist in the economic progress of the country. It was strongly believed that no country could be said to be advanced until its women were fully playing their part in public life. Thus, women in the groups were to be encouraged to generate cash for the well being of their homes.¹⁴⁷ Thus, to an extent these movements were a sign that the colonial state had realised that women could not be locked out of public life as it had perceived earlier on. Women groups remained a major vehicle for rural development even after independence. The Movement also remained a major springboard for women who wanted to join politics. The Luo women Politicians captured in this study were former members and leaders of the movement.

4.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have discussed the taxation, labour, education and political policies of the colonial state, during and after the Second World War and their impact on women. We have noted that the marginalisation of women that began at the beginning of the colonial period continued into the last two decades of colonial era. The chapter also captured the struggle of the Luo patriarchal system to control women's education, employment, sexuality and movement. Kenyan women in general and the Luo in particular continued to bear the burden of the colonial policies that discriminated against them. However, they continued with the protests that they had began in the earlier years, by joining the men in the struggle for independence. The

¹⁴⁵, M. Aboge, Oral Interview, 10/5/06 Ndeda. "Women and Development since Colonial Times". p. 249.

¹⁴⁶ KNA: Social Services Annual Report, 1960, 3.

¹⁴⁷ KNA/DC/KSM1/35/21, 1961:15.

women too had realised that only total independence from their colonial masters would solve their economic, social and political problems as demonstrated in the profile of “Mama Uhuru”. The formation of the MYWM during this period played an important role in integrating the women in the colonial economy and local political organs such as the local councils and boards. The movement also provided a spring board for the women who were interested in joining politics.

This chapter ends with Kenya’s independence in 1963. The following chapter focuses on the state of women in independent Kenya.

CHAPTER FIVE

TRENDS AND TRANSITIONS IN THE POLITICAL SCENE IN KENYA (1963 – 1985): WHERE ARE THE LUO WOMEN?

“As we share with our menfolk in the upbringing of our children and the improving of our country. And as partners, we seek to share in the policy making, which affects our children, our country and us”¹ Priscilla Abwao

5.0 Introduction

The previous chapter, examined the last decade of the colonial era and how Kenyan women, the Luo included were active actors in the struggle for independence. This chapter marks the beginning of the post-colonial era; the era of independent Kenya. However, the granting of independence to Kenya did not change the status of women. Women remained marginalised and subordinated despite Kenya’s Republican constitution that rejected racial, ethnic, class or sexual discrimination. This was inspite of the fact that the government’s Sessional Paper No. 10 on African Socialism, the blueprint for development also stated clearly, that participation by both men and women would be on equal terms including vying for elective offices. We also examined the role of Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organisation as the women’s movement and vehicle for participation in the public arena.

At independence, the patriarchal relations that had characterised the colonial era were solidified with the new male leaders consolidating political power and relegating women to the periphery. Worse still, the male political elites that comprised the ruling government Kenya African National Union (KANU) did not recognise the role women had played in the struggle for independence. Independence to women only meant a shift from one form of marginalisation to another. This chapter, therefore, seeks to analyse the state policies on politics, education and labour and to what extent women were integrated in the independent state.

¹ P. Abwao, “Memorandum on Behalf of the African Women to the Kenya Constitutional Conference in London, February, 1962” in Wanyiri Kihoro (Ed.). *A Vision of the Future from the Past: Essential Public Documents in the making of the New Kenya Constitution*, (Nairobi, 2002), p.29.

5.1 Women in the Kenyan Political Scene: 1963 - 1975

The year 1963 was a landmark in the political history of Kenya. The country attained self-government from Britain, her former colonial master. The year also witnessed the surfacing of long-simmering issues about ethnicity and gender. On the gender issue questions were asked and answers were sought on what would be the role of women in the period leading to Kenya's self-government and in the new political dispensation. During the Second Lancaster House Conference of 1962, where the post-independence constitution was written, Priscilla Abwao, the sole female delegate argued that Kenyan women were "not asking for a special position for ourselves".² What women wanted in the soon to-be-independent Kenya was to "be treated as equal partners in the new society which we are creating, as well as in the endeavours to create that society".³ The same sentiments of equal partnership were expressed by Phoebe Asiyo, one of Kenya's outstanding women at independence.

At the 1962 Conference, Abwao was representing women who had been marginalised in representative politics. For example, in 1957, the colonial government under pressure from Africans organised the Legislative Council (LEGCO) elections in which Africans were for the first time to participate as voters and as candidates, albeit under measures that restricted their full participation. All eight candidates who participated in this election were African males. Up until then, the colonial government had insisted on nominating an even smaller number of non-Africans and Africans to serve as representatives of Kenya's African populace in the Council.⁴ Both the colonial government and African men, who were persistent in their demands that African representation be increased, did not address the absence of women in the government's legislative arm. In 1958, however, one woman, Jemimah Gecaga was nominated into the LEGCO but it was too little, and too late just like the inclusion of Abwao in the delegation that went to the Lancaster Conference, four years later in

² Priscilla Abwao, Memorandum on Behalf of African Women to the Kenya Constitutional Conference in London, February, 1962, cited in Atsango Chesoni, "Two Steps Forward, One step Back: Women and Constitutional Reform 1997 – 2002" FIDA Annual Report 2002, P.7 <http://www.1web.co.ke/fida/reports/fidaannualreport> 2002.pdf.

³ Ibid.

⁴ The first African to be nominated to the LEGCO, was Eliud Mathu, in 1944, whose appointment was occasioned by the retirement of Rev. J.W. Arthur. In 1947 he was joined by Benaiah Ohanga who replaced Canon Beecher. Before Ohanga joined the LEGCO, Fanwell Odede had served in an acting capacity in what became Ohanga's position in 1946. In 1957 Mathu and Ohanga both lost their seats in the first elections in which Africans were restrictively allowed to participate as voters and candidates. Other LEGCO nominees included former President Daniel Arap Moi, who was nominated to LEGCO in 1955 to replace the Rift Valley Province nominee, J.K. Tameno and Wycliffe Awori, North Nyanza representative in 1952 – 1956.

1962. Nzomo observes that Abwao's inclusion was a political act of tokenism and "an afterthought and could hardly be expected to effectively represent women's gender concerns at that historical moment".⁵

The 1962 Conference led to the production of a new constitution under which general elections were held. The two main contending parties were Kenya African National Union (KANU) and Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU). The former emerged victorious and engaged itself in consolidating a hold onto power as the sole political party in the country. Kenya attained self-government on June 1963 (Madaraka Day) with a constitution that diffused power from the central government to the regional blocks or *majimbo*. It also had a bicameral legislature with an Upper House, the Senate, and a Lower House, the National Assembly.

KADU, the main opponent of KANU was made up of leaders from ethnic groups that were numerically smaller than those who they argued were dominating KANU politically; the Kikuyu and the Luo. KADU favoured a federal system of government which its proponents viewed as a buffer against the potential excesses of the majority upon the minority.⁶ The government of Prime Minister Jomo Kenyatta, however, was determined to fortify the powers of the central government. Thus, by December 12, 1964 when Kenya became a Republic, the Kenyatta government succeeded in getting KADU losers to dissolve their party to join the KANU government. Kenyatta became President of the Republic after the necessary constitutional amendments. Kenya became a *de facto* one-party state and the Kenyatta government dissolved the bicameral legislative system. Even though there was no formal declaration of one party status, the government viewed any future attempts to form an alternative party as a hostile act. According to political scientist Jennifer Widner, KANU failed to develop systems that could deal with internal dissents.⁷ There was thus no alternative political framework to act as a check on the government. Consequently, when opposition increased within the government in the mid-1960s, it split the government.

⁵ M. Nzomo, "Engendering Governance through the Constitutional Review process" Constitution of Kenya Review Commission: Official Website; <http://www.Kenyaconstitution.org/docs/09cd.002.htm>. see also, Phoebe Musandu, "Daughter of Odoro: Grace Onyango and African Women's History" p.67.

⁶ P. Musandu, "Daughter of Odoro" p. 67.

⁷ J. A. Widner, "The Rise of a Party State in Kenya: From "Harambee!" To "Nyayo!" University of California, Berkeley, (1992) pp. 30-31 quoted in Phoebe Musandu, "Daughter of Odoro" p. 67.

In 1966, Oginga Odinga and Bildad Kaggia, Vice-president and Assistant Minister respectively, led 27 KANU members of parliament in a rebellion against their party. The MPs argued that the government had become too powerful, rich and self-serving and had distanced itself from the populace at the grassroots.⁸ Kaggia particularly criticised the land redistribution efforts that had followed independence. He argued that only a selected few had benefited from the distribution of formerly British settler land.⁹ These two politicians formed the Kenya People's Union (KPU) which Grace Onyango later joined. The Kenyatta government immediately branded Odinga and the members of KPU as communists. The former Vice-president had openly used Soviet funds to set up the Lumumba Institute, which had been officially opened by President Kenyatta.

Odinga argues in his autobiography that the Institute's goals were to train KANU leaders with the aim of bringing them closer to the citizen at the grassroots level. He also maintained that while he respected some of the goals of communism, he was in fact not a communist.¹⁰ The government abruptly called for a by-election soon after the formation of KPU and used the might of government machinery to frustrate the campaigns of KPU candidates. Some like Grace Onyango survived the elections but many others did not. In 1969, the Attorney General Charles Njonjo deregistered the KPU party and all its members, and whoever wished to continue their political careers were forced to re-join KANU.

The Kenyatta government did not fundamentally change the colonial system and its structures. Kenyatta retained the British system of government and education. D.C. Savage and C. Taylor viewed Kenyatta as a man who's "vision of the future was conservative. This led to an authoritarian system of government which in many cases simply rebaptised the former colonial structure with new terminology".¹¹ Indeed, the new independent state was a colonial legacy with all the colonial structures left intact. In inheriting the colonial state and its stately apparatus and instruments of power, post colonial Kenya offered minimal political opportunities and democratic space for effective individual initiative and participation.¹² It is from this scenario that issues of

⁸ O.Odinga, *Not Yet Uhuru*, Nairobi, 1967.

⁹ B. Kaggia, *Roots of Freedom, 1921 – 1963: The Autobiography of Bildad Kaggia*. (Nairobi, 1975).

¹⁰O. Odinga, *Not yet Uhuru*.

¹¹ D.C. Savage and C. Taylor, "Academic Freedom in Kenya" *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 25, No. 2 (1999) p.310.

¹² C. O. Choti, "Gender and Electoral Politics in Kenya: The Case of Gusii Women, 1990 – 2002" PhD, dissertation, 2005. p. 70.

gender were not addressed. The presidency was overwhelmingly powerful and personalised. For all practical purposes, Kenyatta manipulatively utilised the inherited colonial institutions and structures such as the provincial administration to consolidate power.

At independence, Kenya inherited a highly centralised state, which was characterised by the institution of provincial administration, whereby the country was divided into seven administrative units known as provinces, each placed under a powerful provincial governor. All these governors who were men were directly appointed by the president.¹³ Each province was divided into districts, which were under powerful district commissioners who were also all men. The Districts were further divided into divisions, and lastly into locations, each under a chief assisted by assistant chiefs. All these administrators were men appointed by the office of the President.

It is clear that on attaining independence, Kenya did not change the status of women despite the fact that they were actively engaged in the struggle for independence. Indeed, after independence, the establishment of a political system based on authoritarian and over-centralised state structures engendered male dominance in all aspects of Kenyan-society.¹⁴

The first few national development plans and official documents of independent Kenya made no specific reference to women as a target group for development. The 1974–1978, Development Plan set a new trend in Kenya’s development planning by having a bias towards activities which promoted directly or indirectly women’s integration in development. This plan was formulated during the United Nation’s Decade for Women (1975-1985). For the first time, women were referred to directly in the development plan. The subsequent development plans merely repeated and re-emphasised the trend set by the Third Development Plan, 1974-1978. The implementation of a male government under colonialism and the depoliticization of most women’s issues in the private sphere came to be institutionalised in nationalist politics and thereafter modern Kenya. For instance in 1963, women gained the right to vote, but between 1963 and 1969, there was not a single woman member of parliament. It was not until in November, 1969 that the first

¹³ Ibid., p. 70.

¹⁴ S. W. Nasong’o. and T. O. Ayot., “Men in Kenya’s Politics of Transition and Democratisation” in Gordon, R.M. and Shadrack, W.N. (eds) Kenya: The Struggle for Democracy, (Dakar, 2007), pp. 163 – 196.

woman Grace Onyango was elected into the National Assembly and one more woman nominated to sit in the legislative body with eleven male nominated members.¹⁵

However, in the 1970s, there was a rise in the public awareness of the importance of women's issues, partly fostered by the International Women's Decade (1975–1985), followed by the International Women's Conferences (Mexico, Copenhagen and Nairobi Women). Among the most significant issues articulated during the Mexico Conference was the concept of women's development that emphasise, Equality, Peace and Development of women.¹⁶The Women in Development Approach advocated for women's development in terms of education, employment and empowerment. Education in this case was understood as a prerequisite for improvement in women's status. Access of girls and women to formal education was encouraged in terms of equality. The UN Women's Commission discovered that legal rights for women had been downplayed and that though most governments had constitutions that granted women equality, too often these rights were not enforced in the face of custom and patriarchy. This, they argued resulted into the marginalisation of women in both political and economic participation. The Conference also encouraged the participation of women in income generating activities to help poor women improve their economic status in society.

During this period, women's representation generally improved slightly. At the same time, governments in different parts of the world established ministries of women's affairs or women's bureaus to institutionalise and legitimise a concern with the status of women. In 1976, the government established the Women's Bureau. This was a sign of the mounting recognition of needs and concerns of women. The mandate of the Bureau was to focus on the development and integration of women in national development. The principle objectives of the Women's Bureau, in the 1979-1983 National Development Plan included; the formation of relevant programmes to meet the needs of women, the coordination of all women's programmes in the country, to encourage women through women's groups, to engage in income earning opportunities in agriculture, small industrial and commercial business, and the provision of relevant

¹⁵M.Nzomo. "Engendering Democratization in Kenya. A Political Perspective" pp. 9-10.

¹⁶ K. Staudt., "Gender Politics in Bureaucracy: Theoretical Issues in Comparative Perspective in Staudt K. (ed) *Women International Development and Politics*, (Philadelphia, 1999). Pp. 100-130.

training in leadership, craft development and other special skills as a requirement for a successful women's programme.¹⁷

During this decade, the number of women members of parliament slightly increased. Julia Ojiambo was appointed Assistant Minister for Culture and Social Services. This was the highest office in government ever held by a woman. Other women members of parliament included; Phoebe Asiyo, Winfred Nyiva Mwendwa, Grace Onyango, Eddah Gachukia, Jemima Gecaga, Philomena Chelagat Mutai and Anarita Karimi.

The independent state did not deliver democracy. Women's issues were not integrated into the national agenda. Violence, intimidation, detention and police harassment constituted the political culture that characterised Kenya's politics during the 1960s and 1970s. And because of this harsh environment, many women were scared stiff and kept off politics apart from a few. Relationships of political domination and control developed quickly as men dominated Kenya's political scene and women retreated to the domestic sphere. Nasongo and Ayot assert that:

The die of the public-private divide, indelibly cast during the colonial era, was thriving. Social and political structures were in place; law religion and the educational system ensured that this ideology remained embedded not only in the socio-political stratum but also within the consciousness of independent Kenya.¹⁸

Thus, the marginalisation of women that had begun during the colonial period was carried over into the independent state. The colonial state had ignored and denigrated women's informal political activity and turned exclusively to men whom they gave authority when they established local administrative offices. Colonial agents were all men; the colonial state was a man's world. The post-colonial state inherited the same structures using only men as their agents.

Lisa Aubrey points out that:

The patriarchal disposition of the state disempowers women as it empowers men, the spill over of which creates a gender hierarchy that subordinates women, as gender group to men. This is also a global phenomenon...Specific to the African context, gender hierarchies are resultant of both internal processes and external

¹⁷ B. Wamalwa, "Limits of Women's Groups as a viable Channel for the Development of Women in Kenya" in T. Wallace and C. March (eds) *Changing perceptions: Writing on Gender and Development*, (Oxford, 1991), pp. 245-253.

¹⁸ S. W.Nasong'o. and T. O.Ayot, "Women in Kenya's Politics of Transition and Democratization" pp. 178.

contact. That is the genderedness of public life and the subordination of women (1) are embedded in African traditional cultures, (2) were exacerbated in the period of Islamic expansion and European colonialism, (3) are stringently enforced by post-colonial state policy and practices, and (4), are reproduced by the gendered cultures of politics.¹⁹

The position of women in the first two decades of independence can be explained within the above framework. The men continued to provide the administrative framework for the post-colonial state supervising appointed provincial commissioners, district commissioners, chiefs and headmen in every location and directing communal labour, agricultural betterment campaigns and tax collection. The poor representation of women persisted into independent Kenya. Women remained appendages of men even after independence and were therefore, to be represented by the men in the government.

In 1966, after a series of rigged KANU elections, KANU fell apart and Odinga immediately announced the creation of a new political force, known as the Kenya People's Union (KPU). This party was backed by roughly a fifth of the parliament, among them Kikuyu and Luo members who defected from KANU. The goal of KPU was to create a more left wing party to oppose the growing conservatism of the Westminster orientation of the KANU leadership and to try and replace the ethnic basis of politics with a cleavage based on ideological, class or socio-economic grounds.²⁰ This was however not to be, as Kenyatta disbanded KPU in 1969. During this brief phase of multi party politics, KANU exercised strict control over the political process, refusing to accept the legitimacy of the opposition. From then onwards, KANU remained the sole political party up to the early 1990s, when political pluralism re-emerged.

Kenyatta then began a scheme of power concentration around himself and a clique of loyalists as the distinction between KANU and the government faded into oblivion. For instance, for one to vote or contest for any political office, one was required to be a member of KANU. Any dissenting voices were sacked or deployed from public offices, as was happening during the colonial era, when loyalty to the European meant access to 'better' jobs. In addition, apart from the removal of racial

¹⁹ L.M.Aubrey. "Gender, Development, and Democratization in Africa" in Stephen Ndegwa (ed) *A Decade of Democracy in Africa*, (Leiden" Brill) p. 89.

²⁰ Waiyego, "Engendering Political Space"

connotations in the colonial constitution, there were only a few if any significant changes that were adopted by the ruling government. Therefore, the officially sanctioned oppression of the citizens continued.²¹ Worst affected were women who were hardly recognised by the male political elite around the president. This is what the leaders had inherited from colonialism.

The religious and ideological rationalisation of colonialism was that of a civilizing mission and from this viewpoint, the gender of the African was inconsequential.²² Moreover, since the imposed legal order was rooted in Victorianism, in which women were perceived as inferior beings, disenfranchised and lacked many rights; the African woman was seen and treated as a lower species.²³ Therefore, in the inherited post-independence system of governance, the place of the woman was in the kitchen.²⁴ They were not supposed to hold public office and even the few like Margaret Kenyatta and Jane Kiano, among others, who were appointed to head the Women's Bureaus and the Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organisation (MYWO) owed their allegiance to the President or his close allies. This is what is known as the feminisation of neo-patrimonial politics.²⁵

Women remained relegated to the periphery, especially in the realm of politics. Though women formed more than half of the Kenyan population, very few actively participated in politics as candidates for elective offices. The majority only participated as voters, in the preparation and distribution of food in meetings, leafleting, and dancers and mobilisers during elections.²⁶ In 1969 there was one elected and one nominated women sitting in the legislative body along with eleven male nominated members.²⁷ Therefore, of all the total number of elected legislators between 1969 and 1974, women formed 0.56% and 5% of nominated members.²⁸ The general trend during President Kenyatta's reign was one of women's marginalisation in political decision making at the local and national levels and, by implication, lack of inclusion of women's issues in the legislative agenda.²⁹ Table 5.1 below captures women's representation during this period.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ W. Kabira and P. Wasamba, *Reclaiming Women's Space in Politics*, (Nairobi, 1998).

²⁷ S. Waiyego, "Engendering Political Space"

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ M. Nzomo, *Women in Politics*, (Nairobi, 1991).

Table 5.1: Membership of Kenya National Assembly by Year and Gender

ELECTION YEAR	ELECTED MEMBERS%		NOMINATED MEMBERS %	
YEAR	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE
1969	99.4	0.6	91	8
1974	97	3	84	16
1979	98	2	92	8

Source: Republic of Kenya, *Women of Kenya*, Nairobi, 1985.

One of the measures of women's participation in politics is their share of parliamentary seats, ministerial level positions, local government representation and management positions in professional and technical jobs among many others.³⁰ Parliaments are bodies where decisions on allocations of resources, and strategies and decisions for development are made. Thus, women's integration into this body not only demonstrates the existence of equality and justice in the country, but also enriches the legislative process as they bring with them their perspectives and creativity.³¹ It is obvious that any policy aimed at improving the social, economic, political and cultural conditions of a country is likely to originate at and be sanctioned by parliament. Thus, participation in parliament or lack of it would have significant effects in the struggle to acquire legitimate claims. The years between 1963 and 1985 witnessed very low women's representation in parliament, this meant that their perspectives regarding development were not given due recognition. Male members of parliament made decisions on behalf of the women since they were perceived as weak and dependent on men as the heads of the households.³²

5.2 Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organisation

In spite of the general marginalisation of Kenyan women in general and Luo in particular in the political sphere, women used other vehicles to articulate their issues. Women's mobilization for collective action to address their issues is a political tool and therefore an empowering process. A positive trend observed in this regard is the

³⁰ UNDP, *Human Development Report*, New York, 1995a.

³¹ S.Waiyego. "Engendering Political Space".

³² Ibid.

proliferation of women's organisation which improved in quality and quantity during the period of study. Just as oppressed and discriminated workers organised various collective initiatives to fight their oppression by the capitalist owners, women the world over developed strategies to counter the gender based oppression and discrimination which they had been victims of since the colonial era.³³ Women groups evolved and grew as one of the instruments to fight against social, economic and political inequalities and marginalisation. However, at the same time, there were a few Luo women who broke the structural barriers to become members of parliament during this era. This group of outstanding women were studied in detail in chapter 6 to show how women struggled against male domination.

In the 1950s, the colonial state initiated Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organisation (MYWO) that co-existed with the traditional based women groups. The MYWO was a colonial reflection of the view that women should contribute to improving the welfare and well-being of the family. It was like a women's club, with primary emphasis on domestic crafts such as embroidery, and improving the family diet especially for the children.

Towards the end of the 1950s, MYWO's Jael Mbogo and other pioneer African members began agitating for the "liberation" of MYWO from the minority leadership of British women. During this time, African members of the LEGCO were pressuring the government to increase African representation in the LEGCO body. These women's efforts resulted in the organisation's first African President, Phoebe Asiyo (1960–1962) with Jael Mbogo as Secretary-General. The new leaders initiated an aggressive membership drive that involved the use of churches to create awareness about the organisation, and enabled it to establish branches in villages. It also broadened its agenda to include an approach that was essentially one of practical problem solving. These two women leaders later joined politics in order to articulate women's issues.

At independence, Maendeleo Ya Wanawake remained one of the major women organizations. MYWO at its inception did not concern itself with challenging the patriarchy, but it sought to find ways and means through which women would weave around the imbalance of power to improve the quality of their lives and that of their

³³ Ibid.

households.³⁴ However, it faced many challenges as the post-colonial state did not emphasise the development potential of women's self-help groups. Consequently, finances to these groups were cut down. Thus, most of the MYWO leaders joined the civil service as community development officers. They were involved in all sorts of community projects such as building of social halls and rural access roads.³⁵ These new responsibilities for the leaders of MYWO made the role of women's clubs in mobilising women in rural areas insignificant. MYWO was also faced with the problems of finance and lack of any forward looking strategy. Sometimes government interference in its activities caused the leaders and the few members to participate in ventures not in line with its objectives. The movement's activities were overseen by the Department of Social Services.³⁶

In 1965, the government formed the Kenya National Council of Women, to establish a body which individual national women's organisations could affiliate to provide for co-ordination and co-operation.³⁷ This was in recognition that women could and had played a very important role in the development and many other projects. Jointly, with their male counterparts, women had spearheaded the self-help movement and other endeavours. Indeed, experience had also shown that there were more women involved in the projects than men. At the same time, some of these projects had stemmed from MYWO, whereby the club besides its classes in home making and handcrafts, provided a forum for discussion of local problems.³⁸ The government was beginning to realise that it was not possible to separate the role of women from development. Those women's roles were vital to the nation as the welfare of the family depended on them. Therefore, to strengthen the family unit, the officers of the Department of Community Development worked with MYWO. This consequently led to the creation of enlightened development conscious groups who were able to contribute to the task of nation building.

Women clubs, under MYWO, operated mainly as branches of community development or self-help programmes. By 1967, there were about ten women's self-

³⁴ J. Kiragu, "Is there a Women's Movement?" in J. Muteshi (ed) *Mapping Best Practices. Promoting Gender Equality and the Advancement of Kenyan Women*, (Nairobi, 2006) p.18. See also Betty Wamalwa, "Limits of Women's Groups as a viable channel for the Development of Women in Kenya"

³⁵ M.J.Ndeda, "Women and Development Since Colonial Times" pp. 232-260.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

help groups in the whole of Nyanza province with a membership of about 200 people.³⁹ During the same year, the chairperson of MYWO did an extensive tour of Nyanza. These meetings were attended by local leaders, government officials and the local people. During the tour, donations were made to boost the movement's funds, to enable it to rent and open an office in Kisumu and to fund other programmes. MYWO also organised a two-week course on "Women Leadership and Domestic Science" in Maseno, which was attended by fifty women representatives from every district in Nyanza province.⁴⁰ Thus from the first decade of post-colonial Kenya, MYWO was engaged in moulding women leaders from the grassroot level. It was also sensitizing its members on the need to get involved in community leadership programmes.

MYWO was the spring board for many women leaders in the public domain, in Luoland. As one writer puts it, "few women have made it to parliament and the cabinet without passing through MYWO".⁴¹ These included the first President of MYWO Phoebe Asiyo, who was elected as MP for Karachunyo in 1974. MYWO's second President Jael Mbogo, stood as a candidate in 1969 but lost narrowly to Mwai Kibaki in Nairobi. Her narrow defeat made Kibaki to move to his native constituency, Othaya, in Central Province for the 1974 general elections. The first woman to be elected in Kenya in 1969 Grace Onyango had also worked closely with MYWO at the grassroot level before joining politics. The contribution of the MYWO in this respect was important since women needed to be at strategic places where national economic policies and budgets are made.⁴² The women groups under the umbrella of MYWO provided an important base for political support for women members of parliament. At the same time, the government regarded women groups as important links between community, people and the government. The women groups also presented the government with ready-made organisation framework. Women groups and their activities provided the government with an opportunity to acknowledge the important role and contribution made by women in development.

The government with time eradicated the belief that women's contribution to development was minimal or insignificant as compared to that of men. This seems to have given women more confidence and determination to participate fully in

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ G. Mathenge, "From Cookery and Knitting to Key Role in Big-League Politics" in the Sunday Nation, (Nairobi, 2004).

⁴² M. Nzomo "Engendering Governance Through the Constitutional Review Process" Constitution of Kenya Review Commission: KenyaConstitution.org/docs/09cd.c02.htm.

development, seen by the number of projects they were involved. The projects included income-generating activities such as, cash crop farming and poultry keeping. They also established revolving funds which were given to the members for their projects. The women groups also took up projects such as tree planting, construction of schools, roads and bridges and adult literacy programmes.⁴³ The initiative to form women groups with development oriented activities was taken up by the women themselves. This came as a result of the realisation by women that they had to rely on themselves to alter the level of their material life.⁴⁴ It demonstrated a consciousness on the part of women that they were capable of a self-reliant existence.⁴⁵ Most of the groups made a start without outside help such as government funds and demonstrated that they could initiate and successfully undertake development activities. However, that did not mean that they need not seek financial assistance from either government or non-governmental organisations in order to expand their capital base. Infact, the groups needed such assistance from the government and any other sources, to expand their projects.

It is also important to point out that funding was a big problem for MYWO and this led its leaders to try to encourage grassroot groups to raise their own funds for development projects. For instance, Jane Kiano, the MYWO president from 1971 was remembered for having mobilised village groups to raise funds by pooling resources to uplift themselves economically through small enterprises.⁴⁶ Kiano was also credited for having mobilised women to contribute a sum of Kenya shillings that was used to construct the nine-floor Maendeleo House in Nairobi. The building became the organization's headquarters and a source of rental income for the organisation.⁴⁷ Thus, the organisation tried in every way possible to raise funds for its everyday needs. Some of the organisations leadership also sought to foster ideological stands that did not alienate the organisation from whatever government support available. The membership base of the organisation attracted a lot of attention from mainstream politics and this attention also provided them with a bargaining chip.

Indeed, MYWO was important as the sole vehicle for mobilising Kenyan women nationally. The organisation encouraged and helped the members to organise

⁴³ P. Musandu, "Daughter of Odoro: Grace Onyango and African Women's History"

⁴⁴ M. Aboge, Oral Interview.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ G. Mathenge, "From Cookery and knitting to Key Role in Big-League Politics" in *The Daily Nation*, (Nairobi, 2004).

⁴⁷ P. Musandu "Daughter of Odoro: Grace Onyango and African Women's History".

development activities. It also provided women who aspired to leadership roles with a space to exercise those aspirations outside parliament. Apart from MYWO, other bodies that were involved in organising women included: Young Women Christian Association (YWCA), Anglican Mothers Union, Girl Guides and Seventh Day Adventist Women Ministry.

5.3 Women's Education

Education and professional training of women is important to build skills, confidence, and knowledge that women require for active involvement in politics. Education raises women's consciousness by making women aware of the benefits of their participation in politics. Indeed, education broadens and sharpens one's intellect about the world including an awareness of all the forces of one's existence. Thus during the colonial period, it was almost impossible for women to participate fully in national development and politics when their educational opportunities were restricted by cultural, social and economic attitudes of the society. Education was also believed by the masses to be the primary qualification for leadership at the end of the colonial era. Therefore, without education, women could not be leaders. Also, education was seen as a means of transition to power during the period of decolonization. Therefore the limitation of education for women meant also limitation to access to power.

However, the achievement of independence in Kenya in 1963 did not result in revolutionary changes in gender equality in the provision of education.⁴⁸ This was despite the fact that after independence, there was a dramatic increase in the number of girls and boys who received formal education and increased their chances of entering into formal employment sector.⁴⁹ At the time of independence, girls comprised 34 percent of the total number of pupils enrolled in primary schools in the country and 32 percent of the enrollment in secondary schools.⁵⁰

Since 1963, the Government of Kenya has been committed to expanding the education system to cater for all children and illiterate adults. This was part of the government plan to combat ignorance, disease and poverty amongst the citizenry. It

⁴⁸N. Chege and D.Sifuna, "Girls' and Women's Education in Kenya".

⁴⁹ Ibid

⁵⁰ G. Eshiwani *The Education of women in Kenya, 1975 – 1984*, Bureau of Educational Research, KUC, (1985) p. 5, see also the Weekly Review, January 24, (1986) p.5.

was believed by the new government that everyone had a right to education.⁵¹ The other belief at independence was that the government had an obligation to provide its citizens with the opportunity to participate fully in the socio-economic and political developments of the country and to attain a decent standard of living. Thus the governments' effort to expand educational opportunities for all has been reflected in its policy documents and development plans.⁵²

In the early years of independence, the central concern in education was to achieve equitable distribution of educational opportunities and to relate education to national needs and aspirations.⁵³ To realise this, there was need to revise the laws that had governed education before independence.

In 1964, the Minister for Education appointed an education commission. The Ominde Commission, under the chairmanship of S. Ominde, was to survey the existing educational resources in the country and to advise the government on the formulation and implementation of national policies for education.⁵⁴

The Commission made one hundred and six recommendations for tailoring, planning and relating education to Kenya's needs and aspirations.⁵⁵ These aspirations were in light the regard to high level manpower training, to initiate and realise economic development nationally, equal distribution of national income and the integration for fostering national unity. Thus the Commission set out the country's national educational goals emphasizing respect for the nation's culture, enhancing social equality, national development and minimizing the extent of a competitive spirit in Kenyan schools.⁵⁶

This Commission had a great impact on national educational policy since independence. Education for human resources development was considered a key priority.⁵⁷ Education was to produce a high level and middle level human resource so desperately needed by a developing country like Kenya.⁵⁸ The Commission also endorsed the provision of free primary education as an education policy objective, although it was not viable immediately. The government therefore chose to put

⁵¹ N.Chege and D. Sifuna "Girls and women's Education"

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ M.A. Mbeo, and O.O.Ombaka, *Women and Law in Kenya*, Public Law Institute,(Nairobi, 1989).

⁵⁴ N.Chege and D. Sifuna, 'Girls and women's Education..

⁵⁵ J.E. Otiende, "Education Since the Early Times" In W. R. Ochieng (ed) *Themes in Kenyan History*. (Nairobi, 1993).

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ N. Chege and D. Sifuna, "*Girls and Women's Education in Kenya*".

⁵⁸ Ibid

emphasise on the expansion of higher education, in order to gear it towards the human resource needs of the country. The government also provided facilities for a slow but steady increase in primary school enrolment. At the same time, enrolments slowly rose in primary schools. For example, the increase over the period 1964–1969 was only 20 percent from 1,010,899 in 1964 to 1,209,670 in 1969.⁵⁹ The next Development Plan 1970 – 1974 aimed at increasing enrolments to 1,833,000 tried to cover 75 percent of children of primary school age in 1975.⁶⁰

The number of girls enrolled in primary schools was still lower than that of boys. As noted earlier, in 1963 girls accounted for only 34% percent of primary enrolment. However, by 1975 they accounted for 45 percent.⁶¹ The major factors that caused the low educational attainment among girls at primary level included; the need for domestic assistance of daughters, and traditional views towards the proper role of women, that did not include education.⁶² When confronted with limited opportunities or resources for primary schooling, parents favoured the education of male children. This was related to the patrilineal descent systems in which inheritance passed through the male line where sons retained responsibility for their parents as they grew older while daughters were incorporated into their husbands' families.⁶³ The link between education and employment in an economic system in which males had better prospects for wage jobs in the formal sector may have provided additional economic considerations in educating sons and not daughters. Moreover, when there were family chores like looking after young children or cooking for the family, it was usually the girls that were taken out of school to perform these duties. The girls also had to fetch firewood and water, and this in a way interfered with schooling and depressed female performance at the primary level.⁶⁴

The number of girls in secondary school also improved between 1963 and 1985. However, historically, the proportion of girls in secondary schools in form one to four actually declined from 32 percent in 1963 to record low of 25 percent in 1967 and to 31% in 1970.⁶⁵ Since 1973, the proportion of girls in the secondary education

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ G. Eshiwani, *The Education of Women in Kenya* P. 5.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

cycle has improved from 33% to over 40% in 1984.⁶⁶ Similarly, the proportion of girls enrolled in form five to six increased steadily from 24% in 1973 to nearly 30% in 1984.⁶⁷

The disparity between boys and girls in secondary school education may be explained by several factors. One of the main factors was the provision of school places for girls. Secondary education unlike primary was not co-educational. Since the colonial times, the trend had been to have separate schools for boys and girls. This had always meant more schools for boys compared to girls.⁶⁸ But even in the secondary schools, a greater proportion of girls than boys dropped out of the educational system. For example, girls dropped out because of teen-pregnancies. Again, the parents when forced to choose preferred to educate boys compared to girls because of patriarchal reasons. Secondary education costs more a large number of girls were eliminated from schools compared to boys because of lack of fees.⁶⁹

During this period the girls were even fewer in the post high school institutions. For instance, in 1973, only 15 percent of the students at the University of Nairobi were women. They were mainly in the Faculties of Arts, Education (Arts) and Advanced Nursing, upon graduation, most of the women were employed in jobs considered 'feminine' and were less-paying.⁷⁰ By 1985, the percentage of women at the university had risen to 23 percent.⁷¹ There was changed parental attitudes regarding the value of education for women in the 1975–1985 decade leading to an increase to 23 percent. This change of attitude could have been because of economic development; education multiplied the possibilities for women to enter wage or self-employment.⁷² There was also the view that it was daughters rather than sons who helped their parents financially as they retired. This view too could have motivated parents to invest in their daughter's education.⁷³

Between 1974 and 1979 the government abolished school fees thus introducing free primary education in order to achieve more equitable distribution of educational opportunities throughout the country.⁷⁴ The abolishing of fees was a good incentive to

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² N. Chege and D. Sifuna, "*Girls and Women's Education*"

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ F. Karaini, "*Education Policies and Women's*"

gender equality in enrolment. Unfortunately, there were other levies that the parents had to pay which still kept the girls from poor homes out of school. These levies included, building fund, activity fund, and exercise books funds. The levies ended up costing more than the school fees, so that poor parents were not able to send girls to school.

Apart from the reasons given above on why the girls were out of school, there were other factors. It has been argued by Africans the Luo included that in indigenous society, the major role for a woman was to ensure the continuity of a lineage. Thus she was expected to marry soon after puberty and did not therefore need formal education to perform this function. Moreover, a woman was to be provided for by her husband and since education became a means of entering highly paid jobs in the formal sector, it was considered more important for boys to have education because they were to become the breadwinners.⁷⁵ Furthermore, it was argued that it was easy for a girl with no formal education to earn a living from the informal sector selling food to the workers in the urban centres. Thus in societies like the Luo where there are no social security benefits for old people, parents looked on to their children especially sons for a long time, as their insurance against poverty in old age. It did not seem profitable therefore to invest money in the education of a girl who was expected to get married and help her husband and his kin.

By the 1980s, the overall enrolment of girls in the country had improved and was about equal to that of boys in primary school. Unfortunately, in Nyanza, the girls continued to lag behind. At the secondary school level, girls formed 41 percent of the total enrolment by 1985.⁷⁶ However, there were still inequalities in the quality of education for the girls. For instance, in 1985, there were 200 fully maintained boys secondary schools in Kenya with an enrolment of 147,000 compared with only 107 for the girls, about half of the number for boys. The girls' enrolment was only 75,000.⁷⁷ According to these numbers, very few girls went to secondary school compared to boys. The figures also show that the majority of girls entering high school had to contend with assisted and unaided schools (harambee schools) whose quality was low compared to that of the government maintained schools. It is no wonder therefore, that fewer girls than boys went on to obtain admission to the university.

⁷⁵M.A. Mbeo and O.O. Ombaka (eds) "*Women and the law in Kenya*", Public Law Institute, (Nairobi, 1989).

⁷⁶The Weekly Review, January 24, (1986).

⁷⁷Ibid

At the same time, the curriculum was highly gender blind. For example, illustrations given in textbooks, portrayed boys as doctors treating patients, pilots, and political leaders. On the other hand, girls were portrayed as cooks, secretaries, mothers and as nurses, nursing patients in hospitals. Most girls therefore enrolled in careers that portrayed girls as nurses, caterers and secretaries.⁷⁸

It was therefore not, surprising that at the university level, the situation was even worse for women. For example, in 1984/85 year, there were only 2,566 women at both Nairobi and Kenyatta universities as compared with 6,488 men.⁷⁹ Nearly half of these women were at Kenyatta University which was the only institution of higher learning enrolling equal numbers of men and women.⁸⁰ Kenyatta University offered courses in education, home science and secretarial studies that were considered popular with female students.

The poor facilities in girls' schools also meant that there was poorer performance by girls in scientific and technical subjects. This was reflected in the poor enrolment of women in scientific and professional courses at the university. For example, in the 1984/85 academic year, there were 631 men studying medicine at the University of Nairobi at both undergraduate and postgraduate level compared with only 146 women, in veterinary medicine there were 303 men and 55 women, in engineering 555 men and 11 women; in agriculture, 475 men and 117 women; and in the faculty of science there were 888 men and only 110 women.⁸¹ The majority of the women at the university were concentrated in the liberal arts; mainly in the Faculties of Arts, Commerce and Education. The only technical department enrolling equal members of men and women was dental surgery. Even in the Faculty of Law, where the number of women had been increasing, the women were out numbered by men.⁸²

Consequently, the low enrolment of women in technical fields at educational and training institutions of all levels in the country had left the nursing and secretarial fields as the only ones where women were the majority. In the teaching profession where many women found jobs, they were outnumbered by men by five to one in

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

primary schools.⁸³ By 1985, primary teacher training colleges in the country had 7,420 male students and 5,200 women.⁸⁴

Generally, the period between 1963 to 1985, witnessed an increment in the number of children attending school. The increase specifically of girls attendance also meant a future increase in their economic earnings capacity. It also motivated and encouraged women to reach for higher goals in their lives and to utilise opportunities created through various initiatives like that of creating equal employment, equal pay for equal work and equal political rights.⁸⁵

Through education, there was increased awareness among women of the need to participate in various spheres of the political, economic and social sectors of the state. With education, a few Luo women rose to prominence in the government offices, parastatals and in the private sector. For example, there were the Luo women politicians, Grace Onyango, Phoebe Asiyo and Grace Ogot, other outstanding women, included; Asenath Odaga, Damaris Ayodo, Joyce Aluoch, Pamela Mboya, Pamela Kola, Francesca Mboya Otete and Achola Pala to mention just a few. There were also Luo women working with MYWO to improve the lot of their women by encouraging the women to join social and economic groups which would earn them money for the education of their children. The educated women also encouraged those who were illiterate to enroll in adult literacy classes so as to empower themselves. Education was seen as the tool women needed for their empowerment; through it, they would increase their awareness regarding the running of the government, their rights in politics and among others, their rights as women. Education would provide the confidence and skills needed for women to participate actively in politics and in decision making structures of the nation.

5.4 Education for Luo Girls

Focusing on education for Luo girls in Nyanza province in general, the fate of the girls was no different from the bigger picture of the rest of the country. The figures drawn from the Annual Report for 1963 for Central Nyanza District, indicates that there was generally an increase in the number of children, both boys and girls, going to school. The numbers for girls were relatively high even though they stood at half the

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ F. Karani "Education Policies and Women's Education"

number of boys at standard one. Unfortunately, these girls numbers dwindled throughout the primary level so that by standard eight or at the end of primary, the numbers of girls were barely a quarter of the number of boys.

Table 5.2: The Number of Children by Class 1963

PRIMARY	NO. OF CLASSES	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL
STD I	376	5,373	2,936	8,309
STD II	376	6,173	3,463	9,636
STD III	376	7,093	3,627	10,720
STD IV	380	7,922	3,633	11,555
TOTAL PRIMARY	508	26,561	13,659	40,220
INTERMEDIATE				
STD V	243	7151	2692	9843
STD VI	211	6655	1818	8473
STD VII	115	3776	1169	4945
STD VIII	69	2147	307	2454
TOTAL INTERMEDIATE	638	19,729	5,986	25,715

Source: Central Nyanza Annual Report, 1963⁸⁶

Looking at these figures, the girls who started off in standard one, the majority dropped out of school even before finishing the primary level. The reasons for the high drop-outs in Nyanza are the same ones for the girls in the rest of the country. These include, the lack of fees, the socialization of girls to believe that their roles are in the domestic sphere where education is not necessary, traditions and culture and early pregnancies. Those few girls who successfully went on to secondary schools further dropped out as shown by the low numbers of girls in the national colleges and universities.

⁸⁶ KNA/HT/17/3. Central Nyanza Annual Report, 1963.

By the end of 1969, Central District had fourteen girls primary schools, these included⁸⁷:

1. Nyabondo Girls
2. Rae Girls
3. Maseno Girls
4. Lwak Girls
5. Nyang'oma Girls
6. Ng'iya Girls
7. Sega Girls
8. Mbagala Girls
9. Aluor Girls
10. Nyamira Girls
11. Nyabola Girls
12. Nyakach Girls
13. Yala Girls
14. Rang'ala Girls

Most of these girls' schools had boarding facilities for standard five to seven. They received no boarding grant from the county council. Thus, the boarding part of each of these schools was financed entirely from fees charged to pupils. The demand for these schools was very great and they were always full.⁸⁸ The secondary schools included:

1. Maseno (National)
2. Yala
3. Maranda
4. Ambira
5. Sawagongo
6. Onjiko
7. Nyabondo
8. Lwak for Girls
9. Ng'iya for Girls
10. Rang'ala for Girls
11. Nyakach for Girls

⁸⁷ KNA/HT/17/4, Annual Report District Commissioner and other Districts, 1967. See also, KNA/HT/17/66 Kisumu County Council, Annual Report, 1967.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

These were also known as Government-Aided secondary schools. Thus we see that from about fourteen girls boarding primary, schools there were only four girls secondary schools in the District. This was because of the low numbers of girls who proceeded on to secondary. In the District, there were also Harambee Secondary Schools. These included⁸⁹:

1. Ngere
2. Miwani
3. Rabuor
4. Nyamira Girls
5. Chianda
6. Sigomere
7. Usenge
8. Thurdibuoro
9. Barkowino

Consequently, because of low numbers of girls joining secondary schools, there were even fewer harambee secondary schools for girls. This trend in Central Nyanza, where Kisumu and Gem constituencies were located was the same for Karachuonyo constituency. Many girls enrolled at the lowest level of the education ladder; standard one, but barely completed the primary level.

By the end of the 1960s, the Kisumu Constituency because of the Municipal Council had more primary schools compared to the other two constituencies. The list below shows some of the schools.

PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF KISUMU IN 1969⁹⁰

a) MAINTAINED SCHOOLS

1. Central Primary School
2. Kisumu Union Primary School
3. Lake Primary School
4. Kibuye Girls Primary School
5. Kibuye Boys Primary School
6. Highway Primary School.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ KNA, HT/17/152 Municipal Council of Kisumu. Twenty Ninth Annual Report, 1969.

- b) ASSISTED SCHOOLS
1. H.H. The Agakhan Primary School
 2. Arya Primary School
 3. Victoria Primary School
 4. Xaverian Primary School
 5. M.M. Shah Primary School

With these many primary schools, more children, both boys and girls were able to attend school compared to those in the rural areas such as, Karachuonyo where schools were few and far apart. The figures below show the number of classes that were available in the municipality by the end of 1967. The total enrolment in all schools was 4,696 pupils out of which 1,787 were girls.⁹¹ It is important to point out that the assisted schools were high cost and not many, Luo families could afford the fees. But a few of the elite enrolled their children in those schools.

Table 5.3: Primary Classes in the Municipality

STD	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
NOS	20	20	17	16	18	18	21

Source: Annual Report of District Commissioner, 1967.⁹²

Thus with independence, as noted, generally more children got an opportunity to get education, and more so the girls. This was also the case for the Luo girls. Unfortunately, not many got education beyond the primary level, which was essential for one's self-confidence and effective engagement in the economic and political sectors of the country.

5.5 Women's Labour, 1963 – 1985

Historically, during the colonial period, women were marginally incorporated into formal labour. Under the colonial migrant labour model, women stayed in the reserves, farmed the family land and to produced food for consumption. Women's subsistence production also supplemented the low wages paid to men in colonial wage

⁹¹ KNA/HT/17/4 Annual Report of District Commissioner, 1967.

⁹² Ibid.

labour. Economically, women's labour enabled the continuance and reproduction of the cheap migrant labour system, but officially its importance was not recognised.⁹³

Colonial ideologies viewed women's roles as marginal and their place was in the private domain of the home. Men on the other hand were situated in the public sphere that included wage employment in the colonial economy. These ideologies and the patriarchal colonial forms created unequal opportunity structures in the economy between women and men. Because the colonial government neglected girls' education, the women were handicapped to enter the labour market. This would impact negatively on the women seeking wage employment in the first two decades of independence.

During the colonial period, the employers also discriminated against women in hiring workers as a result of their experience with male employees. This was itself a product of their patriarchal, prejudices and preferences, and women's reputation of being less reliable and most costly due to frequent maternity leave.⁹⁴ At the same time, women were over burdened by household chores and were reluctant to add wage employment to their household responsibilities, considering that the wages were very low. Also, the colonial system had no services such as day care facilities for the children of the working mothers, this further complicated issues ,for the women who wanted to join wage employment.⁹⁵

Unfortunately, independence provided little immediate solution to the women wishing to join the labour sector. For example, in 1964, only 12.2 percent of the total formal sector labour force was female.⁹⁶ This rose to 14.3 percent in 1970 and to 19.7 percent in 1985. These low percentages were as a result of a number of factors. These included the colonial legacy on labour, economic, social, cultural structural and institutionalism. At the same time, the supply and demand of female labour was conditioned by the rate of employment generation in the economy and influenced by the levels of education.⁹⁷ Generally, the rate of employment generation was low in the first two decades after independence. This led to high rates of unemployment especially among the women folk who lacked educational qualifications.

As noted earlier, women's participation in education increased at all levels after independence. However, this greater equalization of educational opportunities

⁹³ T. Zeleza, *Labour Unionization and Women's participation in Kenya, 1963 – 1987*. (Nairobi, 1988).

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid

⁹⁷ Ibid.

for women and men was not enough to reduce the inequitable participation of women in the labour sector. However, there were other factors that pushed women to wage labour. These included the land consolidation and privatization, growing land scarcity and the patrilineal inheritance of land. These land related issues in certain cases led to female landlessness forcing more women to turn to wage employment as a means for survival. Thus, the need for independent non-farm sources of income for women grew in the face of rising numbers of female – headed households. Unfortunately, because most of these women were poorly educated, they could not be employed in the formal skilled jobs; they joined the unskilled and semi-skilled occupations and also the queues of unemployment.⁹⁸ Thus, the flow of female labour to the labour market after independence was driven and sustained by changes in the educational system, land tenure and the household structure.⁹⁹

Generally, the female labour supply far outstripped available employment especially in the urban areas. For example, of the 125,000 women who managed to get jobs in the formal sector between 1964 and 1983, two-thirds were absorbed by the public sector.¹⁰⁰ This sector was under pressure to create and provide employment and was more aware of the need to open up its doors to women compared to the private sector. Moreover, the public sector provided jobs that were popular with the women such as teaching and nursing. It also provided jobs in the agricultural and services sectors that were popular with women. In the private sector, women were also found working in the areas of secretarial work, personal services, and sales. However, in both the public and private sectors, women were highly underrepresented in highly technical and managerial positions. They lacked the skills and education required for these particular jobs. It is clear therefore that after independence the trend towards the feminisation of certain low-skilled, low-status, and low-paying jobs increased. For example, in 1968, 52 percent of all women were classified as unskilled labourers; this dropped to 31 percent in 1982, a higher proportion than for male workers.¹⁰¹

Women's employment also displayed greater regional concentration than male employment. For example, in 1968, 79 percent of employed women worked in Nairobi, Central and Rift Valley provinces as compared to 69 percent for men.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

Nyanza Province had one of the lowest percentages of women working for wages. This was mainly because most men were away from homes because of wage labour and the women were left in charge of homes. The other reasons included the low level of education in the province and the fact that land consolidation and registration had not dislocated many women from their matrimonial lands.

According to our informants, the Kisumu Municipal Town Council had very few African women workers on their payroll until Grace Onyango became the Mayor of the town in 1965.¹⁰³ They noted that it was Onyango who increased the number of women employees in the Council. Earlier on, most of them had worked in the informal sector, selling food stuffs and second hand clothing.¹⁰⁴ A few of the educated women were then employed as teachers and nurses by the government. But these too were few because the Luo women lacked education.¹⁰⁵

Focusing on wages and conditions of work, wages in general rose considerably, for example, in 1965, 78 percent of women workers earned less than 200 shillings per month, as compared to 62 percent for men. By 1984, only 2 percent of women workers earned less than 215 compared to 1 percent for men.¹⁰⁶

Women continued being concentrated at the lower levels of the income scale. This also impacted negatively on their participation in politics that required a lot of resources in terms of funds. Indeed, the independent Kenyan government helped institutionalise the differential earnings between men and women through its minimum wage policy. This policy was based on the conceptions inherited from the colonial era that women worked only to supplement their husbands' wages, because men were the "bread winners". The assumptions by the government labour officers were that women could be paid at a lower rate because the costs of reproducing labour power in the home were met by men.¹⁰⁷ The fact that there were many women heading households was not taken into consideration. There were also cases where not all married women depended on their husbands for their family's upkeep. This was because the low wages were spent on taxes, rent, and fare, ultimately very little was left for the

¹⁰³ M. Aboge ,Oral Interview, 19/5/06. C.Akumu .Oral Interview, 14/5/06.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ T.Zeleza, *Labour Unionization*.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

family's upkeep. For example, many Luo women took care of their families without any remittance from husbands who worked in the towns.¹⁰⁸

Apart from the wage policy that discriminated against women, there were workers social security schemes, which were against women. These schemes inherited structures from the colonial era which discriminated against women. For example, in 1963, the National Social Security Fund was introduced and implemented in 1965. According to the Fund, only employed men aged sixteen and above were legally allowed to be registered as contributors with the effect that women no matter how old were excluded from registration.¹⁰⁹ Women were also discriminated against by the National Insurance Fund. The Fund's qualifying salary of Kenya shillings 1,000 per month was way too high for the majority of working women.¹¹⁰ For working mothers who were either members or named beneficiaries and who were treated during maternity, the Fund offered little help because it could only be used in case of hospitalization and no claim could be made for treatment of a newly born baby except ten days after, and even then the claim was not more than 150.00 Kenyan shillings.¹¹¹

Kenyan women were also excluded from the pension scheme which was another colonial legacy. According to the scheme, Widows and Orphans Pensions Act, amended in 1971, a man whether married or not contributed to the fund that benefited widows and orphans. A woman contributed if she was married and only after passing through a selection procedure. However, the most discriminatory aspects of the scheme was that a benefiting widow ceased to enjoy the advantages from the fund as soon as she cohabited with a male person, regardless of whether he was working and maintaining her or not.¹¹²

By 1985, some of these discriminative policies were eventually amended. For example, in 1975, legal constraints against women in the National Social Security Fund Scheme were removed. But still, women's involvement and integration in the Fund remained slow. In a larger picture, the discrimination against women in the labour sector must be seen as part of the cultural and social processes that worked against women. These forces against women were found in every aspect of the society in the economic, social and political spheres.

¹⁰⁸ R. Opiyo and N. Okello. Oral Interview, 15/5/06.

¹⁰⁹ T. Zeleza, *ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*

Another hurdle that working women faced was that of paid maternity leave. For the first decade of independence, there was no paid maternity leave for women.¹¹³ In the 1970s, the Civil Service led the way in changing the policy on maternity leave. It declared that the expectant mothers whether married or not were to be paid during maternity leave for their first pregnancy only. In 1974, the President passed a decree which required all employers to give paid maternity leave. In 1976, it became law that pregnant women were legally entitled to two-month paid maternity leave. This was a major achievement for the working women in Kenya. This victory was as a result of the fights put up by the women leaders, such as Grace Onyango (see her profile on debates in the parliament on maternity leave).

The Luo women joined the wage labour market whenever opportunities were available. In the Kisumu Constituency, they were employed by the municipality council, as teachers, messengers, sweepers, typists, social workers and nurses. Looking at the staff list of the Kisumu County, one observes that women were employed particularly in the Education and Community Development Departments.

Table 5.4: Community Development Department

NAMES	DESIGNATION
1. P. Onyango	CDD
2. Mrs. D. Oyowo	Social Worker
3. Mrs. F. Wasgany	CDD
4. R. Akendo	CDD
5. O. Opande	CDD
6. Mrs D. Ochong	CDD
7. Mrs P. Otieno	C.D.A.
8. Mrs A. Apiyo	C.D.A.
9. Mrs A. Handa	C.D.A.

Sources: Kisumu County Commission Annual Report, 1968.¹¹⁴

The above table indicate that this was a department that was dominated by women. The other departments¹¹⁵, such as Finance, Clerk, Education, Works, Roads ,

¹¹³ M. Aboge and C. Akumu, Oral Interview, 19/5/06

¹¹⁴ KNA/HT/17/69 Kisumu County Commission Annual Report, 1968.

Markets, Water, Medical, Veterinary, were all dominated by men. The women were employed to work in the Community Development Department that was deemed their area because it focused on the domestic issues. It could be also because the women lacked sufficient education and skills in the other departments. There were also women who went out to work out of the three constituencies, but their numbers were limited. This was mainly because the men had been engaged in wage labour since the colonial period while the women stayed in the rural areas to charge of the homes.¹¹⁶

We do conclude the section on labour by noting that with independence, more Luo women joined wage-labour compared to the colonial period. At the national level, changes were made in the areas such as maternity leave policies which favoured female workers. However, most Luo women remained working on their farms and in the informal sector because of lack of adequate education and skills needed in the formal sector. By 1985, women in Kenya formed only twenty one percent of the 1.2 million Kenyans employed in the modern sector. The numbers of women were concentrated mainly in the lower ranks with a few in the middle cadres. They were few at the top in both the public and the private sector. According to Statistical Abstract, only 16,000 women in Kenya earned kshs 3,000 and above per month in 1983, compared with 86,000 men.¹¹⁷ The lack of funds and resources was one of the reasons why women were marginalised in politics.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter we have discussed the various sectors of politics, education, labour and women's organization. In these sectors we have seen how with independence, women came out even in large numbers to engage in various sectors of the country. However according to the statistics for education, the Luo women barely went past the level of primary education. This also meant that in employment, they could only be employed in the low-ranked jobs with low salaries. The trend therefore saw the lack of Luo women in the well paying jobs in the public and private sectors that required higher levels of education and skills. This translated into lack of funds and resources an important requirement for politics. However, there a few women with

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ M. Aboge and C. Akumu, Oral Interview, 12/5/06.

¹¹⁷ The Weekly Review, January 24, 1986.

higher education, these women were employed in the public and private sector, a number of them later became leader and politicians.

CHAPTER SIX

PROFILES OF LUO WOMEN POLITICIANS AND A REJOINDER FROM B.A OGOT

6.0 Introduction

Looking at a number of African nations at independence, in Ghana for example, Kwameh Nkrumah gave women ten seats in the national Assembly, thus integrating them into the main decision-making organ of their country. In Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda created the Women's Brigade. However, the men directed its organisation, politics and activities. Thus the women were reduced to a subordinate role of singing and dancing for the party dignitaries. In Zimbabwe, there were a few women in parliament after independence. Indeed, in these nations, women were engaged at different levels in politics.

In Kenya, women were sure that they would be fully engaged in the governance organs of the country because of their role in the struggle for independence. Consequently, like men, they were sure to be involved in independent Kenya's decision-making organs. Unfortunately, this was not to be. Indeed, looking at Kenya's first parliament, there were neither elected nor nominated women. The men continued with the colonial legacy, where all positions of governance and decision-making were held by male gender.

However, women did not just accept the status quo. In this chapter, we examine the profiles of Luo women who went against the grain and penetrated the male-dominated public sphere. Consequently, by 1965, there was a woman Mayor for Kisumu Municipality and four years later there was a Luo woman elected Member of Parliament in the Second Parliament. This chapter also analyses the profiles of outstanding Luo women politicians. By studying their profiles we assess their sterling performances that earned them two or three terms in parliament and in the councils. At the end of the chapter is a rejoinder by B.A. Ogot as a spouse of one of the women politicians and his views on female leadership.

6.1 Grace Onyango in Politics

As a politician, I wanted to prove to the ‘just government of men’ that women can do as well if given the chance..Which I think I did.¹

Grace Onyango was born in 1927 at Gobei in Sakwa location in Nyanza province. The second of nine children, she attended local primary schools in Sakwa before joining Ng’iya Girls Secondary school and later training as a teacher at Vihiga Teachers Training College. Between 1951 and 1964, Onyango became the Principal of Ng’iya Women’s Teachers’ Training College, a Girl Guide Assistant Commission in Kisumu District, as well as the Chair of the Kisumu Branch of the Child Welfare Society. Grace Onyango was married to Onyango Baridi, a teacher who later joined the Kenya News Agency as a journalist, and they had six children.² Though successful as a teacher, Onyango was constantly drawn to community service and soon entered electoral politics. Onyango became the first East African woman to serve as a Councillor (1964), Mayor (1965), official of the Luo Union of East Africa (1969), Member of Parliament for Kisumu Town (1969) and Temporary Speaker of the House.³

Kisumu town in which Onyango started her political career is located on the shores of Lake Victoria, the world’s second largest freshwater lake in the western part of Kenya. According to the country’s 1962 population census, Kisumu had a population of 23,000.⁴ However, in the minutes of a 1965 Council meeting, members disputed this figure.⁵ Kisumu had between 15,000 – 20000 registered male tax payers and 6,500 children in school. Members calculated therefore, that the town’s actual population was between 40,000 – 45,000 people taking into consideration women, children below school-age, the old and the infirm.⁶

The Kisumu Municipal Council was charged with the management of the town’s public services that entailed the management and provision of public housing,

¹ Features, “Grace Onyango: A Woman of ‘Firsts’”. May 7, 1989, in the Sunday Standard, Nairobi: Nation Media Group archives. Onyango is referring to a plaque that hangs on one of the halls of the Kenyan Parliament. The plaque reads, ‘FOR THE WELFARE OF SOCIETY AND THE JUST GOVERNMENT OF MEN’ Men have at various times used the last four words out of context to chide women” quoted in Phoebe Musandu, Daughter of Odoro” p. 46.

² G. Onyango (Oral Interview, 4/5/06).

³ Ibid.

⁴ P.Musandu, “Daughter of Odoro” p. 46.

⁵ Municipal Council of Kisumu, Annual Report, 1965, Section 30 “Kisumu’s Population” Nairobi: Kenya National Archives, P.8.

⁶ Ibid.

municipal roads and drainage systems, healthcare facilities, remand prisons, day-care facilities, educational institutions, the municipal dairy, entertainment facilities, and town cleanliness and hygiene among other functions. These were the services Onyango was to manage as the Mayor of the town.

Long before her 1964 election to the Kisumu Municipal Council as a Councillor, Onyango was aware of the gender imbalance in her environment. As a result, she and a group of local women formed the Gill Women Group under the chair of Mrs Shabir.⁷ The group served as a meeting place and problem solving arena for its members. At this time, Onyango recalls that “there was no woman in the Municipal Council, not even a sweeper”.⁸ Women found the *status quo* untenable and organised a demonstration in the streets of Kisumu to agitate for representation in the Council.⁹ According to Onyango, “many men” opposed women’s nomination and argued that the Council was no place for women.¹⁰ Onyango explained that the opposition against their nomination was so intensive that one of the women, Marsella Osir opted to step down from the race leaving Onyango to battle with the other nominees.

By 1964, Kenya had changed a great deal in the years before and after independence. Ethnic political structures and ideologies, though still important, had not only undergone drastic British-dominated alteration but were by then subordinate to national structures of government.¹¹ This meant therefore, that both Kenyan men and women, who wished to enter politics and articulate important national issues for them and their communities had to work towards accessing post-independence structures of government. In addition, one year after independence, the Council was still undergoing the Africanization of its staff and there were three African staff: Otunge Moso, Onyango Radier and Peter Abwajo.¹² There was therefore a spirit of all-inclusive representation that women could exploit. Consequently, in 1964, Grace Onyango contested for a Council seat alongside three male candidates and emerged the victor in Kaloleni ward. This was a ward with a number of schools and Council members thought her background in education made her the most ideal person to serve

⁷ Mrs. Shabir, mother to Shakeel Ahmed Shabir, who was once the Mayor of Kisumu in 2000.

⁸ K. Baraka, “Grace Onyango: Reflections on Politics and Leadership” In the *East African Standard*. (Nairobi,2000) See also Phoebe Musundu, ”Daughter of Odoro”.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ P.Musandu, “*Daughters of Odoro*”

¹² Ibid.

the area.¹³ By 1965, Onyango was not only a Councillor, the first woman Councillor in East Africa, but also the chair of the Education Committee in the Municipal Council. In the same year, Onyango was among the four Councillors who were elected to serve as aldermen.¹⁴ Later, she became the deputy Mayor of the town.¹⁵

In 1965, the incumbent Mayor of Kisumu Town, Mathias P. Ondiek, died. Ondiek, elected in 1961, was the first African Mayor in Kenya.¹⁶ Grace Onyango was formally elected East African's first female Mayor on April 1, 1965. After the previous Mayor passed on, Onyango sent an application to the Council Committee to act as deputy Mayor for a period of 90 days.¹⁷ The request was approved. Perhaps due to her personal charisma, the Municipal Council recognised her potential and ability to assume greater leadership responsibilities. Before joining the Council, Onyango had also had a very successful stint as the Principal of Ng'iya Women's Teacher Training College. This also proved her leadership capabilities. At the young age of twenty seven years, and while acting as deputy Mayor, Onyango continued with her teaching profession. She taught at the Union School in Kisumu during the day and attended Council meetings in the evening.¹⁸ However, because Onyango was interested in the Mayoral seat, she had to face the electorate once again, not so long after her first electoral victory. Time was short and she remarks that "this was the only time that I could prove my capability".¹⁹ Therefore, she used the 90 days as acting Mayor to lay the foundation for her election campaigns by focusing on the provision of housing as her central campaign platform.²⁰

During this period, Kisumu Town like the rest of the Kenyan towns was facing the challenge of housing for the rapidly growing population. Onyango, a Mayoral candidate was quick to focus on this issue. Perhaps, the fact that she was the sole female in the Council pressured her into working even harder to prove her worth as a leader. Onyango's main concern was that there was only one main residential estate in

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid. See also John Mugo, "The Woman with a Mighty Capacity to stay in Power" Friday Magazine, Kenya Times, August 16, 1985, Nation Media Group Archives. Aldermen were a rank above Councillors.

¹⁵ DC/KSM/1/20/5 Municipal Council of Kisumu and Committees Minutes Agenda, 1963 – 1964.

¹⁶ Municipal Council of Kisumu. Annual Report, 1965. Nairobi: Kenya National Archives.

¹⁷ K.Baraka, "Grace Onyango: Reflection on Politics and Leadership".

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ P.Musandu, "Daughter of Odoro"

Kisumu,²¹ known as Anderson, and it was exclusively for the white population, a heritage of Kenya's colonial legacy. However, with the end of racial segregation after independence, such residential areas were opened to Africans who could afford the rent. Before independence, Africans lived in the low class residential areas such as Obunga, Manyatta, Nyalenda and Kaloleni areas. According to the Council's Annual Report for 1964, it (the Council) was optimistic that the Town's housing problems could be solved. Indeed, the Council's Social Services and Housing Department reported that "prospects of providing housing accommodation to alleviate the acute housing shortage in the town were bright".²² This optimism was pegged on a loan of £50,000 that the Kenya Central Housing Board had made to the Council.²³ Consequently, plans were underway to build 82 houses of various types, either for rental or tenant purchase according to demands.²⁴ The Council planned on completing construction by early 1965. In 1964, the Municipality was also engaged in negotiations with the Government and other financial institutions with the goal of raising about three quarters of a million pounds to build houses for Kisumu Cotton Mills (KICOMI) employees. Construction was to be spread over four years and part of the money was to be used for slum clearance.²⁵

The areas the Council targeted for slum clearance were those very areas that Africans occupied including Grace Onyango's Kaloleni ward. The slum clearance was of great concern to Onyango, in that the clearance without the alternative and affordable accommodation for the residents, in her electoral base would have angered her supporters and adversely affected her budding political career. According to the Council's Annual Report for 1965, Kaloleni was actually one of the main targets for slum clearance:

Following its policy to clear the town buildings unfit for human habitation and other slums the Council considered the condition of plot No.16 in Kaloleni Village and Plots No.32 and 33 Section XXIX Accra Street and agreed that these dwellings should be condemned for slum clearance under the Public Health Act (Cap. 242) and that the necessary nuisance and demolition notices be

²¹ Ibid.

²² Social Services and Housing Department, "3. Housing" Municipal Council of Kisumu, Annual Report for 1964" Nairobi, Kenya National Archives p.2.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

served upon them along with the 53 plots previously condemned in Kaloleni.²⁶

The Council had actually initiated slum demolition and clearance by 1965, but these efforts had stalled “due to difficulty of finding alternative accommodation.”²⁷ This admission was seen as the Council accepting its failure to respond to Africans’ housing problem in Kisumu. During the colonial period, the state paid minimal attention to African housing. The British had pegged urban African housing on urban labour demands, especially the single African male. Thus, with the attainment of independence, local governments had to expand their budgetary obligations to provide urban housing for African families. The financial means to meet these obligations were difficult to obtain. Onyango ascended to the office of Mayor in the year that the Council admitted that the acute housing shortage continued to be one of the Council’s greatest problems during the year and approximately 1,000 people were known to be genuinely in need of housing accommodation.²⁸ By 1964, the Council had a total of 442 houses in the African areas of Lumumba, Ondiek, Pembe Tatu, Kibuye and Mosque. A total of 122 houses were for tenant purchase and would soon be out of the Council’s management.²⁹ At the same time, of the 95 plots the Council had allocated to private developers for residential or commercial purposes, only 34 had been developed.³⁰ The Council was also eager to assist developers because the completed projects would generate revenue for the municipality through taxation. Thus, in the same year, the Council had sent a £10,000 loan application to the Government’s Central Housing Board with the hope of re-lending the money to private developers.³¹ Thus, getting Kisumu Municipality’s housing development plans with minimum dislocation to the residents was high on Onyango’s agenda both during her campaigns for Mayorship and later after winning.

One of Onyango’s main achievements as the Mayor of Kisumu was in solving the Municipality’s housing shortage.³² By 1966, the Council’s housing waiting list had grown to 1,500 and there was concern that 8,000 people living in the peri-urban areas

²⁶ Municipal Council of Kisumu, Annual Report, 1965, No. 28. Nairobi: Kenya National Archives.

²⁷ Ibid. P.8 See also Phoebe Musandu, “Daughter of Odoro”.

²⁸ Ibid, No. 27. p.7.

²⁹ Social services and Housing Department. “3 Housing, “Municipal Council of Kisumu, Annual Report for 1964, Nairobi, Kenya National Archives, P. 2

³⁰ P. Musandu, “Daughter of Odoro”

³¹ Ibid

³² M. Aboge, and C. Akumu, Oral Interview, 5/5/06. see also P. Musandu, “Daughter of Odoro”

of the Municipality and working in the city, would not get houses that they badly needed. In the 1967 Annual Report, the Municipality reported that the year showed a lot of good progress in the town and a fair deal of capital work was carried out throughout the town.³³ In the same year, the Council had succeeded in utilizing a total of £ 95,000 for both low and high cost housing, a sum that was above the amount in which the Municipality had placed so much confidence in 1964.³⁴The table below shows expenditure on building in the Town.

Table 6.1: Municipal Expenditure on Housing, 1967.

Building ³⁵	Costs
Low-cost houses	£ 35,000
High-cost houses	£ 60,000
Shops in housing	£ 10,000
Staff quarters and stadium Improvements	£ 8,000
Total amount spent on building works	£ 113,000

Source: KNA Municipal and County Matters, Chapter III Section 1a, Expenditure for 1967. P.10.

Another sector in which Mayor Onyango made major achievements, was the infrastructural sector. Other capital works carried out in that year (1967) included roads (constructed on contract or Council labour), the extension of water mains, the extension of the main sewerage drain, and street lighting. These works cost, respectively, £ 30,000, £ 5,000, £ 5,000 and £ 100.³⁶ The Council had approved the extension of the sewerage drain in 1965 following the recommendation of its Engineering Consultants. The extension of the sewerage drain’s disposal capacity was to be increased to one million gallons by 1969 and a further one and a half million gallons by 1971. The estimated total cost of the work was £168,500.³⁷ Its inclusion

³³ Municipal and County Council Matters, Chapter III Section 1a, expenditure for 1967, Nairobi, Kenya National Archives, p.10.

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ M. Aboje, Oral Interview, 10/05/06, C. Akumu, Oral Interview, 12/05/06 see also, P. Musandu, “Daughter of Odoor”

³⁷ Municipal and County Council Matters, Chapter III Section 1c), P. 12 and Municipal Council of Kisumu, Annual Report, 1965, Section 19, “Main Drainage Extensions,” P.6. Nairobi; Kenya National Archives.

under the 1967 capital works investments was an indication that work had commenced on schedule. In relation to housing, the Council had constructed a total of 502 low cost houses for rent and a further 124 houses for tenant purchase.³⁸ The provision of adequate and affordable housing was to remain a major struggle not only for Kisumu Municipality but for all other urban centers in independent Kenya. Thus, because funding from the Central Government was not forthcoming, the Municipality had to encourage private investment in real estate.

Mayor Onyango furthermore, had to deal with the politics that came with being at the helm of a Municipal Council, particularly in the second half of her term (1967 – 1968). During this era, Kenya's national political scene was focused in the heated Kenya African National Union (KANU) and Kenya Peoples Union (KPU) conflicts. The former had a socialist political orientation, and was highly critical of the manner in which the KANU government functioned following independence. KPU was the only opposition party in existence then and therefore the government's only check and balance. Consequently, it found itself on the receiving end of repressive tactics deployed by both KANU and the government.³⁹ These political conflicts at the national scene seeped into the local government structures. Therefore between 1967 and 1968, Onyango was embroiled in battles to maintain her seat at the Municipal Council. For example, according to the minutes of the Social Services and Housing committee of 17 May, 1967, the Mayor of Kisumu is listed as Alderman Farjallah.⁴⁰ Onyango left the Council in 1967 because two senior Luo leaders and elders, Oginga Odinga and Tom Mboya were pressuring her for political support. Thus, she decided to leave the Council because according to her, she "did not belong to any party"⁴¹ retreating to her home until 1969 when she joined national politics.

It is important to note that there were Council leadership conflicts in independent Kenya when two people claimed to be Mayors at the same time. By mid-1968 Kenya's Central Government still recognised Onyango as Mayor of Kisumu. The Government not only recognised her but also perceived her as a political threat due to her KPU leanings. Consequently, the government used one of its most

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ O. Odinga, *Not Yet Uhuru*; Oral Interviews Grace Onyango ,Oral Interview, 4/5/06).

⁴⁰ Social Services and Housing Committee. Minutes of 17 May, 1967, Municipal Council of Kisumu, quoted in Musandu, "Daughter of Odoro"

⁴¹ K. Baraka, "Grace Onyango 'Reflections on politics and leadership,'" In the *East African Standard*, Nov, 25, 2000, Nairobi; Nation Media Group Archives. See also Musandu, "Daughter of Odoro".

articulate and well-known cabinet ministers, Tom Mboya to get Onyango out of Kisumu Municipality's Council.

In her last years of service at the local government level, Onyango had to constantly mediate between KANU and KPU officials who brought their political battles into Kisumu's Municipal Council Hall. During this period, there was a severe reduction in the democratic space to the disadvantage of the opposition KPU party. The Mayor increasingly encountered opposition from Tom Mboya, the then influential Minister for Economic Planning and Development as well as KANU's Secretary General.⁴²

The Minister was convinced that Onyango had become a KPU member and accused her of having bought a KANU membership ticket and then refusing to admit that she had it. Mboya wondered "Is she KPU or is she KANU?"⁴³ He further demanded that Onyango, "Tell us where she stands and we will know where we (the government party) stand".⁴⁴ The Minister doubted her allegiance to KANU and his question was "How long can she go on bluffing".⁴⁵ However, one may ask why the Minister was so concerned about the Mayor's stand. It is important to note that Onyango was the powerful Mayor of Kisumu Municipality, a major town in Nyanza province, the home of the opposition party KPU. Therefore, the government was concerned about her party position.

Onyango in her political wisdom initially chose not to reveal which party she belonged to. Thus, she was able to manage successfully the frictions within the Municipality without sabotaging its functions. At the same time, she avoided alienating herself from those in her electoral base who would have been offended had she taken a partisan stand against Oginga Odinga who was one of the top leaders of KPU, a party that had by then gained considerable grassroots support in the municipality. At the same time, the Luo people also regarded Oginga Odinga as *Ker* and Onyango had to be careful not to offend her people's sensitivities.⁴⁶

Mayor Onyango was a leader in her own right and recognizable as such according to Luo customs and Kenyan politics. Onyango was at an ethnic and national political crossroads and her survival as a politician depended on the successful

⁴² Nation Report "Onyango attacked on Loyalty". *Daily Nation* July 13, 1968, Nation Media Group Archives, Nairobi. Quoted in Phoebe Musandu, "The Daughter of Odoro"

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ P. Musandu, "Daughter of Odoro"

balancing of the two important interests. When for instance KANU officials started attacking her in public political rallies, she rose to the challenge and retaliated in the same manner. The Mayor fell back on her local government career and presented herself as a hard worker and hands-on-official. Onyango was confident of her Council's record and by 1968, it was clear that she was a KPU civic nominee.⁴⁷ In July, 1968, Mboya took the battle to Onyango's own home ground. The Minister opened a campaign office at Kaloleni, the Mayor own Ward. Onyango's opponents accused her of having shown "her true colours,"⁴⁸ meaning that she was a member of the opposition party KPU. According to an article in the Daily Nation, one of Kenya's major newspaper, Tom Mboya "pointed out the KANU's campaign in Kaloleni ward would be conducted as strongly and as effectively as possible and he was convinced that Kisumu would at the end of August have a KANU Mayor".⁴⁹ Onyango was not intimidated. She went ahead and challenged Mboya, who was famous for his oratorical skills, to a debate that, would settle the question of his popularity as a leader of the Town.⁵⁰ Mboya surprisingly declined from taking part in the debate. Onyango retorted in jest, she remarked, it appeared that the Honourable Minister seemed to be over-excited about my political influence in Kisumu.⁵¹

The KANU government was determined to deal with the KPU members. For example, in 1968 it was engaged in a battle against the party which ended in 1969, with the banning and detention without trial of some of its leaders.⁵² Before the party was banned, its members were intimidated and constantly harassed in many different ways. As a result of these anti-KPU activities, the government disqualified Onyango and 21 other KPU candidates from Kisumu Civic election campaigns of 1968. The Mayor argued that she had filed her nomination documents correctly and in full compliance with the law. KANU led by Mboya however, continued its attacks on Mayor Onyango.

Mboya also played the gender card arguing that, "Onyango is reaping the fruits of what she herself had sown" He added "If she is asking for sympathy as a woman

⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸ Standard Correspondent, "Mayor of Kisumu defend Council" *East African Standard*, August 26, 1968 and Nation Reporter, "Mboya's 'No' to Debate in Kisumu".

⁴⁹ Ibid. Nation Reporter, "Mboya Again Raps K.P.U. and Mayor" *Daily Nation* July 22, 1968, Nation Media Group Archives, Nairobi.

⁵⁰ Ibid

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² Odinga, *Not yet Uhuru*

then she should leave politics alone”.⁵³ Therefore, in so saying, Tom Mboya seems to have been implying that the Mayor was going against Luo ethnic norms that frown on women using their sex as grounds for preferential treatment.⁵⁴ Tom Mboya was addressing potential Luo voters who he hoped would buy into his verbal portrayal of the Mayor. Indeed, the Mayor had kept the gender card out of the campaigns. At this point, it appears from the newspaper reports that Onyango played the KANU card-membership ticket – she had had on her sleeve all this time.

In spite of these conflicts, Onyango managed to stay on as Mayor to the end of her term in 1968 with a determination to further her political career. On 26 August, 1968, she addressed the last Municipal Council meeting of the year in a speech that both defended her record and left her with the ability to choose between either side of the political divide. The Mayor said “she was pleased with the co-operation shown by Councillors and Council officials.”⁵⁵ It is however, unlikely that all Councillors had been co-operative in light of political conflicts that had been the order of the day in the Council’s Hall. The Mayor also thought it important to defend the Council against accusations of corruption and herself against accusations of not having developed the Municipality since her ascension to the Mayoral seat because:

In any case mostly these remarks have been made by someone who does not live in the town and therefore, not in the best position to assess what has been going on. I shall, however, reply on your behalf to the allegations because although made during the heat of election campaign they may permanently smear the good name of the Kisumu Council.⁵⁶

On the same note, while addressing the Council’s relationship with government, she said amid cheers that “I would like to put it that these have been excellent.... Our objective has always been the same, that is, to deliver the goods of independence to the people”.⁵⁷

The Central Government, particularly in the mid-sixties had supported two large scale healthcare and industrial investments in Kisumu. For example, on 28 July, 1965, President Jomo Kenyatta laid the foundation stone for a 200 bed hospital that was to be constructed with Russian Aid. Oginga Odinga, the Vice-President then,

⁵³P. Musandu, “*The Daughter of Odoro*”

⁵⁴ P. Musandu, “*The Daughter of Odoro*”

⁵⁵ Standard Reporter, “Mayor of Kisumu defends Council” *East African Standard*, August 26, 1968. Nation Media Group Archives, Nairobi.

⁵⁶ Ibid

⁵⁷ Ibid

played a central role in cultivating the diplomatic relationship between Kenya and Russia.⁵⁸ The industrial development the Mayor was referring to was the Kisumu Cotton Mills (KICOMI). In spite of her praise for the government, Onyango had sensed that the repressive, anti-multiparty atmosphere created by the government would leave politicians like herself with no option but to battle for the national office as KANU member. The media at this time also reported her alleging that “attempts had been made to remove her and all Councillors before time expired”.⁵⁹ Onyango’s career in the Local Government came to an end in 1969, when parliament put in place an act that limited the number of terms and that whoever wanted to continue with their political careers had to face the electorate once again in December, 1969 on KANU tickets. As a result Kenya became a single-party state and remained so until 1992.

Therefore, Grace Onyango used her Council record to take her political career to the national level, a move that saw her easily win a seat as Member of Parliament. It is possible that the Mayor became popular not only because of her Council duties but also because of her exemplary political skills that had enabled her election as the Mayor for four terms. Onyango was also confident that she could have garnered more electoral victories at the Mayoral level because she had an excellent performance record. Her performance record included a number of development projects such as the construction of over 700 houses in Kisumu Municipality by 1968.⁶⁰ Onyango also argued that the council during her tenure encouraged real estate investment by private entrepreneurs. She argued that the Council under her leadership had kept the Town spruced up and had provided incentives to encourage private investors to construct several middle-income housing units to supplement municipal housing effort.⁶¹

Onyango was able to serve until the last year of her last term, in 1969, when she walked out of the Council undefeated, ready for her next challenge over which she triumphed – winning the Kisumu Town parliamentary elections.

In December, 1969, Grace Onyango, campaigned for and won the parliamentary seat for Kisumu town. Onyango was elected into parliament with a

⁵⁸ P. Musandu, “The Daughter of Odoro”

⁵⁹ Standard Reporter, “Mayor of Kisumu defends Council” *East African Standard*. August 26, 1968. Nation Media Group Archives, Nairobi.

⁶⁰ G. Onyango, Oral Interview, 4/5/06, See also, Municipal Council of Kisumu, Annual Report 1965. section 38 “Town Cleanliness and Beauty” Nairobi: Kenya National Archives, P. 10. During this year, the Council had mounted a town cleanliness and beautification drive which included tree planting. The drive was supported by the District Commissioner and the Prison Department.

⁶¹ Ibid

comfortable majority of 5,500 votes against 2,020 for her nearest rival Iganje Caleb Seveni. She was re-elected with an increased majority in 1974. Her career as the Mayor of the town was the springboard from which she sprung to the next level of politics. By the time Onyango was elected MP, in 1969, women in Uganda and Tanzania had been serving in their national legislatures and governments for a decade. In West Africa, they had been wielding immense political power long before the independence movements of the post war era. Consequently, it is difficult to escape the feeling that women in Kenya had been lagging behind politically. On December 21, 1969, Enid Da Silva, a newspaper journalist, interviewed the MP – elect as the first women Member of Parliament in the whole region.

- Q. Do you feel that you have something special to do for the people of Kisumu which another elected member would not be capable of doing?
- A. Well, it is the representative's duty to see that things are done according to the wishes of the people.
- Q. Do you have any plans of what you propose to do for the people of your constituency once you become an MP?
- A. I think it is for the people to tell me what they want done.
- Q. As one of the pioneer women in Kenyan politics, what are your views on the role of women both in the political life of a nation and in nation building?
- A. As an elected representative of both men and women, I will not represent women only in parliament. I don't think I could say anything directly to the women because it was not only women who elected me.⁶²

Onyango appears to have been comfortable in using society's structures to build her career. Onyango was firm that Kisumu Town Community had elected her and she was going to serve as an MP for everybody, both male and female. Also, she was very conscious of the need to accommodate the interest of all her constituents. Onyango was aware of the diverse nature of her power base and knew she represented an area that she understood very well. For instance, her constituency in Kisumu was in the heart of Luoland and she was not blind to the nature of her community's social structures.⁶³

The MP's political attitude towards gender issues was informed by the national and ethnic environment in which she served. While the nature of her ethnic traditions appeared to have left little room for women to actively be involved in politics, there were informal ways in which women influenced or made decisions and these ways

⁶² E. Da Silva, "Place for women in Kenya Politics" *Sunday Nation*, December 21, 1969 Nation Media Group Archives, Nairobi. Emphasis is mine. See also Phoebe Musandu "Daughter Odoro"

⁶³ G. Onyango, Oral Interview, 4/5/06. See also Musandu, "Daughter of Odoro"

contracted or expanded with time.⁶⁴ During the colonial era, differential provision of education had favoured Luo men and expanded their political space. However, the few women who could and did access various institutions of learning added education to their socio-political tool kits. These included women like Onyango. Though she had accumulated a considered amount of socio-political power over time, Onyango acknowledged the importance of those with whom she was working and these included political friends and foes whether male or female.⁶⁵

At the local government level, Onyango valued team work, and by 1969, her political sphere was expanding fast. Thus, in the early part of that year, the Executive Committee of the Luo Union (East Africa) “unanimously elected” Onyango Secretary – General of the Organization before the elections scheduled for later that year.⁶⁶ The election of a female by the Union’s Committee to serve in such a prestigious position of leadership was an expression of a non-gendered leadership ideologies which weaken political positions that a Luo political leader could take office purely on the grounds of gender as was perpetuated by the colonialists. More importantly, Onyango had to work closely with Luo Elders and leaders as the Secretary-General of the Union. These elders included Oginga Odinga (former Vice-President), Paul Mboya (teacher and author of *Luo Kitgi gi Timbegi*).⁶⁷

Onyango was aware of her society’s social set-up and the dynamics of its people’s varied social roles. Though she was a Member of Parliament during the 1970s when feminism was at its height in the West, she was part of the society in which women defined themselves as, first, an inextricable part of the community. As seen in the second chapter of this thesis, not only did Luo women have a distinguishable sense of self-worth and identity and the ability to influence decision-making but they also inhabited a wide variety of social spaces. Their interests as women were ultimately tied to the interests of the family and community. They had to utilise ingeniously their social structures to exercise initiatives for change and development.⁶⁸ Thus, once in Parliament, Grace Onyango raised and contributed to a wide range of issues, a number of which were related to women in particular. Indeed,

⁶⁴ For details see the discussion in chapter two of this thesis

⁶⁵ G. Onyango, Oral Interview, 4/5/06. See also, P. Musandu, “*Daughter of Odoor*”

⁶⁶ Standard Reporter, “Luo Union Post” January 30, 1969, *East African Standard*, East African Standard Archives, Nairobi.

⁶⁷ Tom Mboya was assassinated soon after Onyango’s election to the position of Secretary-General of Luo Union on 5th July, 1969

⁶⁸ G. Onyango, Oral Interviews, Date 4/5/06

she integrated gender issues with community and national interests during her tenure in Parliament. This approach helped her gain considerable support from male MPs some of whom also raised matters of concern to women at times. Grace Onyango was making a statement with her integrated approach, that women were capable leaders just like men; that women could deal with family, community as well as national issues.

Throughout her terms as MP Onyango focussed on issues that affected the country such as education, labour, industrial developments, health, security and food security, corruption and nepotism.⁶⁹ At one time during her tenure, Onyango was the acting speaker incharge of parliament showing her capability as an able MP. What follows were some of the issues that Onyango raised as MPs in Parliament. On 6th November 1970, she raised question No. 815 on “Paid Maternity Leave”⁷⁰ It was addressed to the Minister for Labour:

Onyango asked the Minister for Labour if he would tell the House whether he would consider awarding employed married women leave when they proceeded on maternity leave since it was a period when financial aid was greatly needed.

The Assistant Minister, Mr. Peter Kibisu responded that since Kenyan women at the time were agitating for equal pay for equal work, “to grant full pay for maternity leave, therefore would render women more expensive to employ”.⁷¹ He added that some unions had made considerable progress in winning women partial payment during maternity leave and the industrial court had been supportive of women in this respect. According to the minister, the matter was best left to unions to negotiate with individual employers. This answer did not please Onyango who persisted, got the support of other MPs:

Onyango: Mr. speaker, Sir, will the Assistant Minister agree with me that in some occasions you can only be paid while you are on maternity leave and only if the doctor approves that you were sick as well as being on maternity leave?

Mr. Kibisu: Mr speaker, Sir, maternity leave is not structurally speaking illness. It is a natural hazard.

At this point other Mps also made their contributions to the debate

⁶⁹ Ibid, See also Republic of Kenya. “The National Assembly Official Reports, 1970 – 1972”, Kenya National Archives.

⁷⁰ Republic of Kenya, “The National Assembly, official Report”, First Session (continued) Tuesday, 22nd September 1970- Friday 6th November 1970 Kenya National Archives, Nairobi.

⁷¹ Ibid. See also Phoebe Musandu, “Daughter of Odoro”

Mr. Kanja: Mr. Speaker, Sir, would the Assistant Minister take into consideration that it is only that our ladies have to bear children otherwise if they do not, we shall have no nation? Would he consider that they should also be given privileges when they are delivering babies for this country?

Mr. Wanjigi: Mr. Speaker, Sir, is the Assistant Minister repudiating the fact that bringing forth children is a part of nation building and without children there is no nation?

Mr. Karungaru: Mr. Speaker, Sir, arising from one of the Assistant Minister's reply, is he denying the fact that when a woman gives birth to a child, that is better than when somebody is receiving full pay because he happens to be sick?. This is because this lady has brought a child into this world and it is high time that she were paid for maternity leave.

Onyango also asked a question on "Civil Service Terms of Employment for Married Women" (Question No. 783),⁷² also of interest in that it was an issue that was national but also specifically of concern to the women.

Onyango asked the Minister of State, President office, if he would tell the House in view of the fact that the Government had always advocated the policy of equal treatment for all its citizens and in view of the fact that women in the Civil Service as well as others working in offices were honest, genuine and hardworking:

- a) why married women were not eligible for appointments on pensionable terms
- b) Why a pensionable woman officer was required to resign on marriage.
- c) Since all Government jobs which were advertised in the press were on permanent appointment or agreement terms, why women officers were offered employment on agreement terms only and not on permanent terms.

The above questions also received support from members of parliament. Though only women were affected in the issues raised, Onyango had chosen to present the issues as those of concern to all, a shortcoming of the state that was a problem for everybody and not just a single gender. Nnaemeka, writing about Malicounda women and the practice of female circumcision, argues that African women seek to include men in issues of concern to them "because they are culturally attuned to such

⁷² Republic of Kenya, "The National Assembly, official Report", First Session (continued), Tuesday, 22nd September, 1970 – Friday, 6th November, 1970. Nairobi Kenya National Assembly Library.

thinking”.⁷³ Such an approach was a crucial component of female political agency among the Luo. This was because women in these societies were “coming from an environment in which women’s issues are village /community issues requiring the participation of villagers regardless of sex.”⁷⁴ She adds that “the women are politically astute in ensuring that participation of all branches of local authority, regardless of which gender holds the authority. They also believe, as many African women do, that if the men are part of the problem, they should be part of the solution.”⁷⁵

We can therefore, argue that Onyango’s contributions as well as the contributions of male members of parliament who supported her were given in this spirit, that the issue at hand affected the whole community and was to be addressed by both gender. It can also be argued that because women were very few in parliament during this period, Onyango needed to bring gender-sensitive men on board for her to succeed in solving the challenges that women faced. It has been argued that because of the small numbers of women in the political sphere, it is imperative that women solicit the support of gender sensitive men in pursuing women’s agenda. This was the strategy that Onyango adopted when she found herself the only women elected MP in Kenya. This response did not satisfy Onyango and again she asked more questions with the support of other members of the House.

Onyango further pursued the matter with the Assistant Minister pointing out that, arising from his reply, that the school fees differed because the development differs in various districts, would he agree that if the development differs while the syllabus and the examination set for these children is the same they should pay for the same quality of whatever they receive from the teachers, because the staffing also is the same.

Other members of the House also contributed to the question on payment for education. Mr Arap Chumo wanted to know why school fees was lower in urban centers such as Nairobi compared to schools in the district or rural areas and yet we know that people in Nairobi are capable of paying more school fees than people in rural districts.

⁷³ O. Nnaemeka, “What’s a Name?” In Susan Perry and Celeste Schenck, (Eds), *Eye to Eye; Women Practicing Development Across Cultures*, (London and New York, 2001), p. 187, quoted in Musandu, “*Daughters of Odoro*”

⁷⁴ Ibid

⁷⁵ Ibid

The question on fees was of great importance to women. Since the colonial time, girls had lagged behind in education as fees was paid for the boys. Therefore, by raising the matter on fees, Onyango hoped that with lower uniform fees, girls too would get an opportunity to go to school.⁷⁶ Onyango hoped that with education more girls would get gain full employment. Other issues that Onyango raised on the floor of the House, included Question No. 365; Uniformity of School Fees.”⁷⁷

Another major area of concern for Onyango was that of health, in her constituency. This led to her asking, “Question No. 366, A District Hospital in Kisumu”.⁷⁸

Onyango asked the Minister for Health, since Kisumu District does not have a district hospital, and in view of the fact that the old Nyanza General Hospital building is still in good condition –

- a) Whether he will tell the House his Ministry’s arrangements to start using this old hospital as a district hospital; and
- b) Whether he will tell the House when this old Nyanza General Hospital will start working 24 hours a day

The Assistant Minister for Health, Mr. Jahazi replied that it was not possible to use the old hospital as a district hospital since it did not have sufficient in-patient accommodation, adding that the hospital was only admitting tuberculosis patients and infectisus diseases cases and long-term orthopaedic cases. The rest of the hospital comprises the following departments: a school of nursing, out-patient department, stores, pharmacy, a sterile preparation unit, eye clinic, division of insect borne diseases and medical research Council unit. The out-patient department is open during office hours only. The Ministry does not have enough staff, both para-medical and auxiliary, to run a 24-hour outpatient service at the old hospital.

Onyango not satisfied with the answer further raised the issue; that was the Assistant Minister aware that the United Soviet Socialist Republics aided hospital was more or less a consultant hospital with only 200 beds and so Kisumu people were not allocated beds until all the patients who were referred there by doctors had been allocated beds; and for this reason the Kisumu people are entitled to get a district or

⁷⁶ G. Onyango, Oral Interview, 4/5/06.

⁷⁷ Republic of Kenya, “The National Assembly, Official Report”, third Session, Tuesday 13th June 1972
Nairobi; Kenya National Assembly Library.

⁷⁸ Republic of Kenya, “The National Assembly, Official Report”, Third Session Wednesday 21st

provincial hospital.⁷⁹ The Assistant Minister noted that the policy was that when it could afford it, both in personnel and everything else, then it would build another district hospital.

Apart from health issues, Onyango raised the fact that Kisumu residents, needed tarmacked roads. She also raised the issue of Africanization of business in the town and the security of the women who worked in the hospitality industry. Onyango pointed that the police officers should not make unnecessary arrest of girls who worked in night clubs as well as in bars because these places were closed very late in the night, around 11:00 pm. When these girls were on their way home, when they come across policemen, they were arrested, whereas the Asian and European girls were not arrested. Onyango pointed out that when she visited the places where the police kept the arrested people, there were only African girls. Therefore, her question was, whether there were no Asian or European girls moving around at late hours.⁸⁰

Another issue that Onyango raised during her tenure as MP and that directly affected the women was that of payment of maternity fees. During, the motion on the “Adoption of Development plan 1970 – 1974”.⁸¹ Onyango observed

Onyango; Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to ask the Minister for Health the following Question by Private Notice:

Is the Minister aware of the fact that most of the expectant mothers are so poor, that they cannot afford to pay the maternity fees currently in force before or after delivery and that, delivery outside hospitals without the necessary facilities is a severe punishment to such mothers who together with their babies eventually die under difficult conditions? If the answer is in the affirmative, what quick measures is the Government taking to abolish maternity fees? Will the Ministry provide places where abnormal deliveries and emergency cases would be dealt with promptly?

The Assistant Minister for Health, Mr. Jahazi, pointed out that the Ministry of Health was aware of the fact that some expectant mothers may not be in a position to pay maternity fees. The question of maternity fees was re-examined towards the end of 1969, and a number of districts in Kenya were exempted from the payment of maternity fees. In the case of other districts, fees range from shs 20 to shs 40 and in the case of Kenyatta National Hospital and the Coast Province General Hospital, the fee

⁷⁹ Ibid

⁸⁰ Republic of Kenya, “The National Assembly, Official Report”, Third Session, Wednesday, 26th July, 1972, Nairobi; Kenya National Assembly.

⁸¹ Republic of Kenya, “The National Assembly, Official Report, Adoption of Development Plan, 1970 – 1974,” 4th March 1970, Nairobi; Kenya National Assembly, Library.

charged was shs 60. In doing this, the Ministry had to consider several factors, mainly the economic circumstances of a particular district and the ability of the Government to provide free medical services. The Government was not in a position to provide free medical services and this also applied to maternity services. As the economy of the country improved, the minister pointed out that the intention of the Government would continually to re-examine the situation and the time would come when the Government would be in a position to provide these services for free.⁸²

While being a Member of Parliament, Onyango also raised questions on the issue of employment for women. “Question No. 638 on Women Employees in Ministry of Home Affairs”.⁸³ At one point she wanted to know if there were women employed, in the Department of Probation and Children. The Assistant Minister, Vice-Presidents Office and Ministry of Home Affairs, Mr. Shikuku, answered:

There are 64 women employees in the Department of Probation and Children, that is approved schools and juvenile remand homes of my Ministry who are engaged in the welfare of children, juveniles and young persons and their families. 41 of these employees are in the children’s Department and the rest in the Probation Department. These are distributed into the provinces accordingly. The Assistant Minister further pointed out that in the Probation Office there are 23 women who are probation officers. In the children Remand we have 41 women.⁸⁴

Onyango was concerned that the women of Kenya also needed employment in order to earn salaries and be able to take care of their families. At the same time, she argued that there was a Ministry that dealt with children and it needed to employ more women managers to supervise the other workers and to make sure that the children were well taken care of.⁸⁵

Throughout her tenure in parliament, Onyango actively debated on issues that concerned women, and men. In one of the questions she raised was “Question No. 1088A: Rise in prices of various commodities”.⁸⁶ Onyango asked the Minister for Finance and Economic Planning-:

⁸² Ibid

⁸³ Republic of Kenya, “The National Assembly, Official Report”, Second Session, Friday, 23rd July 1970, Nairobi: Kenya National Assembly, Library.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ G. Onyango, Oral Interview, 4/5/06.

⁸⁶ Republic of Kenya, “The National Assembly, Official Report,” Second Session, Tuesday 26th October, 1971, Nairobi: Kenya National Assembly, Library.

- a) if he is aware that traders have raised the prices of commodities whose prices were not raised on the Budget Day;
- b) if the answer is in the affirmative, whether he will tell the House his plans to stop traders from raising the prices at any time they feel like doing so, so that unemployed people can still buy food; and
- c) whether he will agree to establish a market for poor and low income people, where price control will be strictly observed.

The Minister for Finance and Economic Planning (Mr. Kibaki) replied to the question, noting that the answer to part (a) was yes, and the answer to part (b) was that there is already a legislation which requires prices to be displayed on various items that are being sold in shops. The answer to part (c) was that the establishment of markets was the responsibility of local authorities.⁸⁷ The answer given by the Minister did not satisfy many members of the House who further probed the issue on food prices being raised any time the traders felt like and yet many citizens suffered.

Mr. Matiko: Mr. Speaker, Sir, arising from the answer given by the Hon. Minister, he said that he was aware of what is asked in part (b) of the question. He seems to take this question very lightly. However, while he is aware that the price of food is very high, and considering the fact that food is necessary for life, is he aware also that the price of maize and maize meal is unnecessarily high and it is not standard? Can he announce in this House the standard price of maize meal and maize itself in the Republic.⁸⁸

The Minister did not state the price of maize but noted that traders who increased prices after the budget would be dealt with.

There were times in parliament that Onyango was faced with motions that clearly discriminated against women and she stood up to defend her women folk.

During the debate on the Miscellaneous Bills, the focus was on the Armed Forces, Section 7, Act (No 60 of 1968).⁸⁹ The Assistant Minister, Vice-Presidents' Office and Ministry of Home Affairs (Mr. Shikuku) pointed out that under Section 7(2) (b) it stated that:

“A female warrant officer or non-commissioned officer shall not exercise power of command over male members of the services of the armed forces”

The Attorney General (Mr. Njonjo): What is wrong with that?

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Republic of Kenya, “The National Assembly Official Report”, Second Parliament inaugurated 6th Feb, 1970. Second Session, 5th May 1971, Nairobi: Kenya National Assembly, Library.

The Assistant Minister, Vice-President's Office and Ministry of Home Affairs (Mr. Shikuku) I have not started my debate. Do not look for trouble, Mr. Attorney-General, because you will get it thick. Sir, it goes on provided that any such female warrant or non-commissioned officer may give instructions to such a male member who has been expressly ordered by his superior officer to obey such instructions.

Mr Speaker, I think there is something here which is very interesting. Personally, I have never felt once that a woman would withstand the strenuous army activities...Military exercises and all this discipline and so forth are slightly too much for women if they have to remain regularly as military women. In cases of emergency in the case of war, just for a short period then they would withstand that, but to stay there regularly..is too much for a woman in my opinion. But then, if we talk of having them in the army, I think they should only be for emergency cases or in case of war, which is only but for a given period. However, to think in terms of having them permanently employed as military women is too much.⁹⁰

Furthermore, if we think of having them in the armed forces, and then create this condition that she cannot give any orders to any male member, then there is no point in making her a commissioned officer or an officer in the army because her commands cannot be listened to unless that particular officer who is being commanded by her has been expressly told by the superior that he must obey the woman... Mr Speaker and it is not in keeping with African tradition. We do not take orders from women.⁹¹ This negative view about the role of women in the armed forces led to a long debate among many members who disagreed with the view of the Assistant Minister.

Onyango asked the member whether he had never been ordered by a woman in his house, and whether he has never accepted.

Mr. Mwanzandi Mr. Speaker, it is not, of course, a written custom that no woman will give orders to a man. To my understanding, in this African continent, there are some places where women are responsible or are authorised, according to their customs, to be higher than men. Is the Hon. Assistant Minister in order to commit the whole African continent with regard to only his small tribe?⁹²

What the assistant Minister was forgetting was that even during the struggle for independence Kenyan women had been actively engaged in the struggle. That some of

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

the women rose to senior levels such as Field Marshall and gave orders to the men (see chapter 4). In fact, the Assistant Minister went on to point out that there were no women employed in the armed forces, an unfortunate situation in a country that boasts of equal treatment of all citizens in the constitution.

During, the elections for 1979, Kisumu Town constituency attracted a number of aspirants to the seat. The candidates included a large field of male and female candidates. However, with the entry of Mr. William Odongo Omamo, former Minister for Natural Resources, into the race, the election would reduce itself to a duel between Mr Omamo and Onyango. Mr Omamo, who had been the MP for Bondo from 1969 to 1974, was defeated by Mr. Hezekiah Ougo, a supporter of Mr. Oginga Odinga. There was talk that Mr Oginga would stand in Bondo. It was because of this, that Mr Omamo announced that he would be entering the Kisumu Town parliamentary race instead of the race for Bondo.⁹³ However, the duel between the lady and gentleman was not to be. The government once again denied Oginga clearance to participate in the elections. Consequently, Omamo moved from Kisumu Town to stand in Bondo where he lost to Mr. Hezekiah Ougo once again. Onyango once again had a landslide victory in Kisumu Town, proving that she was unbeatable. She captured more than half of the votes.⁹⁴ Onyango defeated a large field of male and female candidates to come through almost unscathed. The verdict of the voters was a clear mandate in support of Onyango's politics. She obtained 7,793 votes while her closest rival, Mrs Esther Odundo Owuor obtained 1,732 votes. The only man to register a four digit figure was Nicholas Otieno who polled 1,534. The rest could not manage more than a few hundred votes.⁹⁵ The table below captures the results for the landslide victory for Onyango.

⁹³ *The Weekly Review*, June 15, 1979.

⁹⁴ *The Weekly Review*, November 9, 1979.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

Table 6.2 The Results for 1979 Elections: Kisumu Town

Names of Contestants	Votes
Onyango H. Akech Grace	7,793
Nicholas Otieno	1,534
Esther Odundo Owuor	942
Mark Makwata Saley	819
Slizaphan Onyancha Ongogi	243
Peter William Amukoa	214
Jackon B.L. Akumu	110

Source: 1979 General Elections Score Card. *The Weekly Review*, November 9, 1979.

Indeed, with this landslide victory following on two successful terms, Onyango had become one of the longest serving members of parliament in Luoland. Her victory also gave her a certain measure of seniority among Luo politicians and a vast amount of prestige.⁹⁶ Indeed, few politicians of her era could claim to have reached her record of electoral success. In the 1970s, of the sixteen Luo Mps only a handful could be said to be household names among Kenya political observers. Onyango had made a mark for herself as the first woman elected MP in Kenya. She had become a household name in Kenya.⁹⁷

Indeed, from the few extracts from her three terms in parliament, it is clear that Onyango was an extraordinary and active MP who championed national issues that were of concern to her women and male constituents in particular and all citizens in general. Most of her contributions were supported by other Mps in the House. Onyango's stature among her own colleagues was confirmed when she was chosen as a member of the select committee set up by parliament in 1975 to investigate the brutal murder of the late MP for Nyandarua North, Mr. J.M. Kariuki.⁹⁸ During her last term in parliament, Onyango also acted as the Deputy Speaker. She was one of the three members of the Speakers panel and ably carried out the business of the House.⁹⁹ After her sterling career as a Member of Parliament for Kisumu Town in 1983, Onyango was

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ *The Weekly Review*, October 11, 1976.

⁹⁸ G. Onyango, Oral Interview, 4/65/06 see also, *The Weekly Review*, January 24, 1986.

⁹⁹ G. Onyango, Oral Interview, Date, See also *The Weekly Review* May 15, 1981.

made a member of the KANU National Disciplinary Committee. She also, worked as a manager at Kisumu Cotton Mills (KICOMI).

In conclusion, from her sterling performance as a female, wife, teacher, principal of a teacher training college, a Councillor, a Mayor and a Member of Parliament, Onyango has proved that there is a great deal of scope for Luo women in particular and women in Kenya in general in the political life of this country. Throughout her political career, Onyango was able to overcome the tough challenges that she faced and to excel in her contributions in the council and Parliament. In parliament she contributed to national issues, such as health, security, education, the economy, employment and maternity leave. Onyango proved that given a chance, women could do just as well as men in the House. In the next section, we focus on Phoebe Asiyu.

6.2 Phoebe Asiyu: Most Influential Luo Woman

But we were sure to be in the parliament and cabinet in greater numbers. Some of us put it at 50-50 in those days because our country needed both men and women to make decisions, design policies and pass legislation that would shape the future and destiny of the young nation.¹⁰⁰

Phoebe Asiyu was born in 1935, at Gendia Adventist Hospital, Kendu Bay, in Karachuonyo constituency. She is the third child of Miriam Amolo and Pastor Joel Omer. She studied at Gendia Primary School from where she proceeded to Kamagambo Girls High School. She then trained as P2 teacher at the Embu Teachers Training College in 1953 and 1954. Asiyu began her career as a teacher and taught briefly, before she ventured into the male-dominated prisons service.¹⁰¹ She says, “I did my teaching practice at Kangaru School, Embu, where I taught the former State House Comptroller Matere Keriri and former Permanent Secretary Joseph Mathenge”.¹⁰² Later, Asiyu taught at Pumwani Secondary School, Nairobi, under the famous Carey Francis. Among the students she taught here were veteran journalist Joe

¹⁰⁰ P. Asiyu quoted in W. Kabira and M.B Gituto, *Affirmative Action: The Promise of a New Dawn*, Nairobi, 1982. p.2.

¹⁰¹ J. Ombuor, “Meet Phoebe Asiyu: One of Kenya’s most influential women” in *Election Platform*. October 31, 2007.

¹⁰² Ibid. p 7.

Kadhi and Simion Dessandjo.¹⁰³ After two years in the classroom, Asiyo left to study Community Development and Social Work on Human Development at the then, Jeans School, now the Kenya Institute of Administration (KIA). Before this, she had also been elected as the first African President of the Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organisation for three years. She used this position to sensitise the political leadership about the woes of women and children. Asiyo explains why she moved to Community Development:

There were better prospects for career advancement in this area than in teaching because Kenyans were preparing to take over from the British colonialists. Courses were short and fast. Scholarships were readily available and it was not long before I proceeded to Britain for further training in Social Work, returning at the dawn of independence to join the Prisons Service in 1963.¹⁰⁴

After two years working with a white officer in charge of the prisons as a deputy, Asiyo took over in 1964, as a Senior Superintendent in charge of women's prisons, a position she held until 1970, when she resigned to take up a job as Executive Officer of the Child Welfare Society. During her tenure in the Prison's Department, she remembers having saved the life of a woman who had been sentenced to death for killing her spouse. Asiyo sought audience with the then President, Jomo Kenyatta. He cancelled the death warrant and replaced it with a life sentence. After a few weeks, the prisoner was set free on a presidential amnesty to go and take care of her children. And she prospered as she and her son later became successful business people.

During her tenure at the prisons, she oversaw the decentralisation of prisons, leading to the creation of women's prisons. Asiyo noted that her job was fulfilling apart from minor challenges like her male juniors who found it hard to salute her. This type of reaction was not surprising considering male chauvinism in the African communities. At the same time, throughout the colonial era, Kenyan men worked only with the colonial male masters, while the women stayed at home. Therefore, the men were yet to adapt to saluting female bosses. Eight years later having been the United Nations Children Fund Co-ordinator of the "Year of the Child" in Kenya, Asiyo quit the job in 1979 to venture into politics. During her tenure at the Prisons Department, she also introduced and implemented separate prisons for women across the country.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

Asiyo points out that over time, it had dawned on the people of Karachuonyo that she was cut out for bigger challenges, especially in areas where only men ventured. My performance at the prisons left no doubts in their minds that I was the best candidate to contest the Karachuonyo constituency seat.¹⁰⁶ She further asserted that her desire to be a politician was ignited by her observation of sexism in the society. Consequently, she felt it was her responsibility to correct a few of these imbalances.¹⁰⁷

Asiyo also asserted that she grew up in a society where disparities between men and women were pronounced and that she set her sight on doing something about it someday.¹⁰⁸ Her political ambitions were further fanned by the injustices and disparities Africans endured during the colonial times. Asiyo further added that the late Tom Mboya and Indira Gandhi inspired her to take up the challenge. She admired their charisma and brilliance and liked the way they fought to improve the lot of their people. Thus, she wanted to be like them.¹⁰⁹

Asiyo joined politics as a renowned social worker with long experience in working with prisons, child welfare groups and women's organisations. She had also been involved extensively in Luo political and social activities and was one of the most well known women in Luoland.¹¹⁰ Asiyo said she joined politics because she had always wanted to help the people of Karachuonyo in the same way she had been helped Kenyans nationally. In addition, she was an eloquent public orator, whose patience and ability to explain complicated issue made her a favourite of her constituents. At the same time, her involvement with welfare organisations had given her an insight into the problems facing the least privileged members of society and the will to deal with them effectively and efficiently.¹¹¹ However, Asiyo, realised that she would need more than her experience as a social worker in a political contest against such an astute political figure such as David Okiki Amayo, the incumbent in Karachuonyo who had been in parliament since 1969. Indeed, she said that when she first went public with her intention to unseat Okiki Amayo, then seen as the political giant in Luoland, she was mocked, abused and dismissed as a political entity with no consequence.¹¹² It infact sounded like a joke that a woman would try to challenge

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ *The Weekly Review*, May 25, 1979.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² J. Ombuor, "Meet Phoebe Asiyo."

Okiki Amayo. However, that was to be history, as Asiyo used all her feminine charm and her organisational ability to mount an effective and well-organised campaign against the incumbent, Okiki Amayo who was also and an Assistant Minister for Commerce and Industry.

Asiyo faced a number of challenges when she declared her candidacy for the Karachuonyo parliamentary seat. First and foremost, Asiyo had difficulties obtaining a Kanu life membership certificate (a requirement for all those intending to stand for elections) from Okiki Amayo, the Kanu sub-branch chairman and assissant minister. Amayo was not only the incumbent since 1969, but also the Kanu Branch Chairman. He was one of the most prominent Luo political leaders. Amayo aligned himself with Isaac Omolo Okero, who was the Minister for Power and Communications and National Chairman of the ruling party. Kanu was the leading political force in Luoland. Thus, according to Asiyo, Amayo was using his power and influence to make it difficult for her to stand against him.¹¹³ If this was true, it worked for Asiyo when she was finally given the Kanu certificate permitting her to stand for elections.

Another challenge that Asiyo faced was the political climate in Luoland that was dominated by the anti-Odinga and pro-Odinga divide. Since the KPU and Kanu conflict in 1960s that was followed by the ban of KPU, politicians in Luoland were divided along these two party lines. Amayo was staunchly in the anti-Odinga divide, and this made him an easy target to the pro-Odinga elements in Karachuonyo. Asiyo by contrast was non-partisan and non-controversial and this worked in her favour.¹¹⁴

Asiyo also faced a challenge in that she was the first woman ever to seek a parliamentary seat in Karachuonyo. Apart from that was the fact that she lived in Nairobi and was not familiar with the issues that faced the constituents on a daily basis.¹¹⁵ Another challenge that she faced was the fact that the politics of Karachuonyo revolved around parochial clan issues as much as they were around broader issues of tribe. Both Asiyo and Amayo had differing strengths among the four administrative locations in the constituency: South, East, West and Central Karachuonyo. Asiyo came from South Karachuonyo, which is a smaller location compared to the other three locations. Amayo hailed from West Karachuonyo which was larger with more voters.

¹¹³ *The Weekly Review*, November 9, 1979.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ S. Osano and L. Akumu, Oral Interviews, 22/8/06.

Therefore, to win the elections, Asiyo had to work extra hard to get votes from all the four locations.

At the national level, Asiyo also faced a major challenge in that Okiki Amayo was a staunch supporter of President Daniel Arap Moi. Being a staunch Nyayo man the President was involved in his campaigns to ensure that Amayo was re-elected unopposed. This made the campaign more complicated and competitive for Asiyo. It would not be easy campaigning against the President's man. However, Asiyo was not cowed. She took up the challenge and put up a powerful campaign against the incumbent. The President was popular with the people of Karachuonyo, but their interpretation of his campaigns for Amayo was that, it was Amayo who had put the idea of being returned unopposed in the President's mind.¹¹⁶ Consequently, it was Amayo who was trying to deny the people of Karachuonyo a chance to exercise their democratic right to vote. This interpretation worked in favour of Asiyo and won her many supporters.

At the same time, the fact that the president was also openly against Odinga's candidacy in the elections (Odinga, had been denied clearance to participate in the elections by KANU the only political party) , Amayo's support by the President had the effect of casting Amayo in the eyes of many Karachuonyo voters as an enemy of Odinga who was a highly respected Luo elder¹¹⁷. Thus, in this political equation, Asiyo was the victim. This eventually won her sympathy votes. Asiyo was viewed as a courageous woman who could take on the President's man. This worked in her favour as voters supported her in order to express their determination to stay independent of outside pressures, even from the President.

In spite of all these challenges during the campaign period Asiyo capitalised on the glaring lack of development in Karachuonyo since the election of Okiki Amayo in 1969. She pointed out the poor state of roads, lack of schools, lack of water, and of health centres. According to the oral informants, Amayo had done nothing for the constituents.¹¹⁸ Therefore, the constituents were ready for new leadership. Asiyo was to be that new leader that would bring development to Karachuonyo.

At the same time, Asiyo focused and depended heavily on the women's vote in Karachuonyo. With more women voting than their male counterparts, especially in

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

rural constituencies, she would get enough votes to win the seat.¹¹⁹ This strategy eventually worked in her favour. During her campaigns, she used the symbols of a house and a cooking stick.¹²⁰ These were symbols that were vital for the women folk, in that all women needed a house of their own and a cooking stick to nurture her family.¹²¹ All women were sensitive to issues that were centred on improving their families.

Asiyo eventually won the hotly contested seat (see the table 6.3 below).

Table 6.3: Karachuonyo Constituency, 1979

NAMES	NO. OF VOTES
Phoebe Muga Asiyo	13,068
David Okiki Amayo	11,769
Haggai Abongo Koyier	904
Amos Onyango Midamba	426
Gordon Orinda Sibuur	92

Source: 1979 General Election Score Card. *The Weekly Review*, November, 9, 1979.

She defeated Amayo, the former assistant minister for Commerce and Industry and one of the most senior Luo politicians by over 2000 votes. Asiyo polled 13,068 votes against Amayo's 11,679 votes.¹²² The other candidates fared dismally in the elections. These results were proof to the fact the Asiyo had overcome what seemed to be insurmountable challenges.

Asiyo viewed her victory as an opportunity to address the promises that she had made to her constituents and other national issues that were close to her heart. Within just eight months in parliament, she made a mark for herself as an outspoken and articulate parliamentarian. She indeed impressed her fellow Luo Members of Parliament sufficiently to be elected Secretary to the Luo and Kuria Parliamentary Group. This office was later to assist her win the support of Luo-MPs during the by-elections called when Okiki Amayo challenged her victory by the end of 1980.

¹¹⁹ *The Weekly Review*, May 25, 1979.

¹²⁰ L. Akumu, Oral Interview, 17/8/06.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *The Weekly Review*, November, 9, 199.

In her constituency, Asiyo was engaged in efforts on *harambee* projects to address underdevelopment.¹²³ She organised fund raising meetings for schools and health centres in the constituency.¹²⁴ At the national level, Asiyo's first concern was that of women's reproductive health. In parliament she questioned the Minister for Health, Mr Arthur Magugu on the safety of the contraceptive, Depo Provera for the Kenyan women. She argued that this drug was dangerous to the health of Kenyan women as it had been declared dangerous in America. The Depo-Provera was a contraceptive which was given through injection. Its effective action could last up to six months, and for many population control officials it was an ideal contraceptive in that it did not require any effort in calendar counting memory on the part of the user. Because it was injectible, it was believed to have a special appeal in the third world where medicine through injection is considered more effective than oral pills.

Asiyo's argument was that research had shown that this contraceptive caused nodules in the breast, possibly cancer, irregular menstrual bleeding, possibly permanent sterility, weight gain, headaches, dizziness, susceptibility to other diseases, and that most of these effects were irreversible.¹²⁵ As a result, this drug had been banned in the United States of America. Unfortunately, the same drug was being used in government hospitals in Kenya, and Kenyan women continued to suffer from all these side effects. The MP wanted to know if Kenyan women were biologically different from American women and why the government continued to use this banned drug in its hospitals.

The following was part of the debate in parliament:

Mr. Magugu: Actually, Mr. Deputy Speaker Sir, I said that this medicine has not been licensed to be used in the United States of America as a contraceptive, not for public use. However, it was used in the United States as a contraceptive. I can quote about 11,000 citizens of the United who are using it. It was not licensed, as I said and the doctors who are using it as a contraceptive are using it on their own responsibility. Nevertheless, the Depo-Provera used in Kenya is not from the United States of America. It was manufactured in Belgium.

Asiyo: Thank you Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am very grateful to the Minister for Health for the very elaborate explanation which he has given to this House this afternoon. One of the revelations that he has made to the House is the fact that the American government banned this drug and it is not in use as a contraceptive on American Women unless a doctor specifically asks for it. Is

¹²³ S. Osano, Oral Interview, 22/8/06.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ *The Weekly Review*, November 14, 1980.

the minister therefore, telling us that what is not good enough for American women is good enough for the Kenyan women?¹²⁶.

According to the Minister of Health the drug used in Kenya was not from the USA where the drug had been banned but from Belgium. Mr. Magugu did not tell the House that the drug being used in Kenya was the same one and its manufacturers in Belgium did not change its chemical composition and hence its side effects. The Minister also did not tell parliament that the Belgium manufacturer of the drug is a fully owned subsidiary of the American Company Upjohn, and the reason Upjohn was manufacturing the drug in Belgium was that the USA Laws prohibits any drug banned from being shipped across its borders.¹²⁷

When the Minister was further questioned by the members of parliament, he admitted that the World Health Organization (WHO) believed that experience had shown that a drug may cause complications which may not be detected until a drug has been used on a large scale for a prolonged period of time. Therefore, there was a need to monitor the safety of Depo-Provera on an ongoing basis.¹²⁸

Asiyo was not satisfied with the Ministers answer. She argued that most Kenyan women were using this harmful drug without any supervision from qualified doctors because of shortage of doctors. Consequently, many women suffered from the multiplicity of the side effects of Depo-provera.¹²⁹

Indeed, Asiyo was applauded by MPs and other medical personnel for tackling the issue of public health that was of great national concern. Doctor P. Achola noted that:

In a situation of little consumer politicisation such as exists in Kenya, the public health needs protection against harmful products from the leaders. It is in this context that Asiyo's effort in the Depo-provera case command applause. Those who are interested in the welfare of the public should, like the MP for Karachuonyo, stand up and be counted. Only by such exemplary behaviour will our leaders disprove the allegations that many Third World leaders do not desire to see drug and pesticide dumping in their countries by industrialised nations become an issue because many of these leaders are themselves involved in the drug and pesticide trade.¹³⁰

Therefore, the contributions that Asiyo made in the House were not only

¹²⁶ *The Weekly Review*, July 11, 1980 p. 23.

¹²⁷ *The Weekly Review*, July 11, 1980.

¹²⁸ *The Weekly Review*, October 10, 1980.

¹²⁹ *The Weekly Review*, October 10, 1980

¹³⁰ *The Weekly Review*, November 14, 1980 P. 43.

applauded in the parliament, but also in the public arena as shown in the above quotation from a medical doctor, calling on more leaders to champion the struggle against drugs being dumped in the country. As a result of Asiyo's protest against the drug, Depo-Provera was eventually withdrawn from the Kenyan market, but only temporarily.

Asiyo's first tenure in parliament was curtailed after only eight months. Okiki Amayo could not believe that a little-known woman had humiliated him in Karachuonyo. He had immediately, after the elections filed a petition against Asiyo's election citing bribery as one of the grounds for the petition.¹³¹ The three judges who heard the petition, however, ruled that the evidence of bribery could not hold in court, but they nullified the election on the grounds that one ballot box from Koyugi Polling Station had not been included in the final count at the counting hall.¹³² The box apparently got mixed up with boxes containing ballots for the local government elections and got lost in the confusion. The blame for the confusion was placed fully on the returning officer, Mr. Ezekiel Nyarangi, who was also the District Commissioner for South Nyanza District.¹³³

Asiyo was not found guilty of any offence during the election period. Consequently, she was cleared to contest the by-election. Asiyo was not worried about her chances of re-election. This was mainly because of the fact that during the eight months in parliament, she had initiated community development projects aimed at poverty alleviation in Karachuonyo. She had also shown signs of becoming a competent and strong back-bencher, not shy of taking on the front bench on critical national issues such as health. Asiyo had successfully confronted the Minister for Health, Mr. Arthur Magugu over the use of the contraceptive, Depo-Provera which she felt was dangerous to the health of women.¹³⁴ Thus, asked about her chances of winning back her seat, Asiyo said confidently, "I will go back to that House with a landslide".¹³⁵

Asiyo went back to the campaign field once again, seeking votes from her constituents. She based her campaign on the development projects that she had initiated. At the national level, her sterling performance had won her many supporters.

¹³¹ *The Weekly Review*, August 22, 1980.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ *Ibid* P. 12.

For example, the Luo Parliamentarians decided to support her, during a meeting in Maranda, Bondo that was termed the Maranda Declaration. During this meeting, it was decided that all Luo parliamentarians would address a meeting at Kendu Bay on September 21, 1980 a day before the elections on September 22, 1980 to drum up support for Asiyo. It was indicated that all the Luo Parliamentarians would speak in favour of Asiyo.¹³⁶ According to the Luo public opinion, according to the parliamentarians, the chances of Amayo defeating Asiyo in the by-election were non-existent and that Amayo would lose the seat with a shameful number of votes.¹³⁷ The whole argument by the parliamentarians was that Asiyo was the Secretary of the Luo – Kuria Parliamentary Group and therefore she deserved the support of all Luo and Kuria Members of Parliament.

At the same time, according to the Luo MPs the by-election in Karachuonyo was vital to the Luo politics and indirectly to national politics. To many of the Luo members of parliament, Okiki Amayo represented the politics of the past of the schools of thought of pro-Odinga and Anti-Odinga forces in Nyanza. Thus, the mood was that with his combative kind of politics; if he was re-elected, he would distrust the moves that were going on to bring Odinga back into parliament and national political life.¹³⁸ Many Luo leaders were of the opinion that for the sake of Luo unity it was time to bring to an end the old, pro-and anti-Odinga controversy in the community.

Another factor that would have impacted on the outcome of the by-election was the Moi-effect. In the previous election, the then president, Daniel Arap Moi had openly campaigned for Okiki Amayo whom he called one of the staunchest Nyayo men at the time¹³⁹. In fact the president had wanted Amayo returned to parliament unopposed. However, the people of Karachuonyo rejected this interference with their democratic rights and voted for Asiyo as their member of parliament. After the humiliating defeat of Okiki Amayo, the President decided to stay out of the by-election, thus leaving it to the people to elect their own member of parliament.

The by-election was held in Karachuonyo on 22nd September 1980, and as Asiyo had predicted, she won the elections by a landslide. She got back to parliament and continued with the development projects she had started in her constituency.

¹³⁶ *The Weekly Review*, September 12, 1980.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.* See also S. Osano, Oral Interview, 22/8/06.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

According to our informants¹⁴⁰ these projects included; Oriang Pottery Project, Kanyadhiang Handcrafts Centre, East Karachuonyo and Irrigation Projects. The others, were, West Karachuonyo Community water projects and a host of poultry and small enterprise projects. Apart from these projects she also started the horticultural produce projects on the shores of Lake Victoria. In these projects, the people of Karachuonyo grew vegetables, onions, tomatoes, green grams for home consumption and surplus for the market.¹⁴¹ Asiyo also paid fees for destitute children giving them a chance to get education. For the college going, she organised *harambee* to raise funds for college fees and sponsored some to colleges and universities abroad. She also constructed roads in her constituency; one of these roads is named after her, and is known as Asiyo Road that runs through the constituency.¹⁴² During her tenure in parliament, she continued to work closely with women groups with the aim of helping them improve their living standards. These included Soko Women's Group, Namdar Women's Group, Ahongo Women's Group and Otudna Women Group.¹⁴³ These women groups also played a major role during her campaign period. One of our informants, Julia Ogada noted that women have the numbers to support each other in elections.¹⁴⁴ She further noted that women support their candidate and they are not easily swayed from one candidate to another.¹⁴⁵ Consequently, they were able to vote Asiyo back to parliament.

In 1983, President Moi called the first and only snap General Election in Kenyan history. This was in the midst of the crisis caused by the attempted coup in August, 1982 and by Charles Mugane Njonjo's fall as the nation's powerbroker.

In the elections of 1983, the electorates handed Asiyo another term as their member of parliament on another hotly contested election. According to the results shown below, Asiyo won a tough fight for her constituency with a narrow margin. This shows that she too was a tough, competent politician popular with her people inspite of the stiff competition.

¹⁴⁰ J. Nyangweso, K. Nyambune Abaso, P. Owiti, Oral Interview, 14/8/06. See also Mumia G. Osaaji, *The Sunday Standard* May, 28, 2006.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² L. Akumu, Oral Interview, 14/8/06.

¹⁴³ T. Odiyo, D. Otieno and J. Ogada, Oral Interview, 16/8/06.

¹⁴⁴ J. Ogada, Oral Interview, 17/8/06.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

Table 6.4 Election Results for 1983 Karachuonyo Constituency

<u>NAMES</u>	<u>VOTES</u>
Phoebe Asiyo	12,831
Okiki Amayo	12,735
Orinda Sibuur	88

Sources: 1983 General Election Score card. *The Weekly Review*, November 1983.

According to our informants,¹⁴⁶ the people of Karachuonyo had their eyes fixed on the development projects that Asiyo had initiated and they wanted her to continue as their member of parliament. Indeed, during her second term, Asiyo continued with the projects she had started and also initiated new ones both at the constituency and national levels. During this second term, Asiyo was the only elected woman member of parliament, the others being nominated members included Grace Ogot and Rose Waruhiu. Indeed, Asiyo had realised a rare achievement for Luo women in Kenya's history, following in the legacy set by Grace Onyango.

During her second tenure, she campaigned for the welfare of Kenyan children. Asiyo was reported to have pointed out that, forty children died in South Nyanza yesterday, forty will die today; and the press is silent".¹⁴⁷ The MP was addressing journalists at a United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) press encounter following the launching of the state of the World's Children Report, 1986. The forty children, that Asiyo was talking about formed part of the 280,000 children worldwide, who died each week in what UNICEF referred to as the "Silent Emergency" of frequent infection and widespread under-nutrition.¹⁴⁸ According to the UNICEF Report "no loud emergency, no famine, no drought, no flood, has ever killed 280,000 children in a week. Yet this is what this silent emergency is now doing every week".¹⁴⁹

In Kenya, South Nyanza district, in which Karachuonyo Constituency is situated, had the highest infant mortality rate at the time. According to the figures in 1986, of every 1,000 live births in the district, 216 children died before the end of one year. The national average was at 125 deaths for every 1,000 births.¹⁵⁰ The other areas

¹⁴⁶ J. Ogada and T. Odiyo, Oral Interview, 16/8/06.

¹⁴⁷ *The Weekly Review*, December, 19, 1986. p.18.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 18.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

with high infant mortality rates included Baringo, Kwale, and Kitui Districts. According to the report, the children need not die, because of existing knowledge about low-cost ways of dramatically improving child health— methods such as oral rehydration therapy (ORT), immunisation, birth spacing, breast-feeding and improved weaning – meaning it was now possible to save the lives of at least 7 million children a year and to protect the normal growth of more children.¹⁵¹

Asiyo was very unhappy that the Kenyan government was not doing enough to address the plight of the children in her constituency in particular and in the rest of the country in general. She argued that if such a large number of children had died in a road accident, a natural disaster, or an epidemic, it would have made news and the press would have made a big issue out of it. “But as it is, the press is silent”.¹⁵² Asiyo was arguing that the time had come to tackle the “silent emergency” that the government and the people of Kenya had to decide that it was just as unacceptable for so many millions of children to die every year of needless malnutrition and infection. Asiyo wanted the government to deal with these issues and save the lives of Kenyan children.

It was a fact that the Kenyan government was one of the over 74 countries in the world, and one of the 22 in Africa, which had embarked on a programme to immunise all the children against the six vaccine – preventable diseases of childhood by 1990. These diseases included; tuberculosis, measles, tetanus, diphtheria, whooping cough and polio.¹⁵³ In fact the government had gone further and initiated the Kenya Expanded Programme on Immunisation (KEPI) which was already underway having started in 1980 as a long-term programme to improve, strengthen and expand immunisation of children. The objective of the programme included to immunise free of charge in government, private and voluntary organisations run health units, all children under the age of one year and those between age one and five who might have missed their immunisation during their first year of life.¹⁵⁴ Unfortunately, many children continued to die and this prompted Asiyo, to argue that the government could do more to save the lives of children not only in South Nyanza, but in the whole country.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid. p. 19.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

During the 1988 elections, the incumbent Karachuonyo MP, Pheobe Asiyo stood to defend her seat again. The elections were challenging for Asiyo because of a number of reasons. There was the preliminary nomination process in which the much publicised queue or *mlolongo* voting process was to be used. President Moi had abolished the secret ballot voting method and replaced it with the queue voting method model for the nomination of candidates. Under the new model, the voters were required to line up behind the candidate of their choice or the agent of their candidate. The winner was the candidate who was able to garner 70 percent of the total votes cast. This voting system was unpopular among the women folk who would be reprimanded by their husbands for not voting for their husband's preferred candidate. Thus, for the sake of peace in their homes, some women queued behind their husbands candidates of choice. This model lacked secrecy and privacy which were crucial for the women folk.¹⁵⁵ Consequently, the model partly did cost Asiyo her women supporters.

Through the queuing model, the elections were rigged through widespread intimidation of voters and rigging of the results. There were a number of constituencies where the winners with longest queues were declared losers because they were not supposed to win. While, on the other hand the losers were declared winners because they were supposed to win, according to the returning officers. Asiyo was to fall a victim of the rigging that characterised the elections.

Another challenge that caused Asiyo her seat was the negative propaganda in her constituency that she was unpopular with the Moi government. Consequently, she had not been considered for a ministerial appointment. Therefore, her adversaries were arguing that why would electorates support a candidate who was unpopular with the government of the day.¹⁵⁶ This negative propaganda was partly to blame for her loss during the elections. Asiyo lost her seat to Okiki Amayo in 1988. She gathered 10,668 votes in the elections, against Amayo's 16,425 votes. The elections temporarily brought a break in the political career until, 1992 when she bounced back. However, Asiyo continued to serve her people in various capacities inspite of the destruction of the projects that she had initiated in Karachuonyo by her competitor.

Since the particular systems are hardly known to encourage women leadership, the projects that Asiyo had started during her two previous terms were deliberately

¹⁵⁵C. Akumu, Oral Interview.

¹⁵⁶The *Weekly Review*, October 30, 1987. See also Oral Interview, Truphena odiyo.

targeted and sabotaged by her political rivals.¹⁵⁷ The extent of the political crudity meted against her can be attested to by the destruction of the Oriang Pottery project, which was burnt to ashes by arsonists, the uprooting of water pipes for water and irrigation projects and the carrying away of electricity poles and wires set aside for Karachuonyo's rural electrification project.¹⁵⁸ This only showed how people could be blinded by politics that they destroyed the very projects meant to up lift their living standards just because they had been initiated by a woman.

Asiyo was back campaigning to regain her seat in Karachuonyo, during the 1992 election. This also marked the first multi-party elections in Kenya. And because of her development records in the constituency, she won the seat that had eluded her in the previous elections. Asiyo was to be the first and only Luo woman to be elected in Nyanza in the era of multi-party politics. Once again in parliament, she exhibited rare acumen and art in parliamentary business that she had mastered over time. This time round, the gender platform became her main point of reference.

Asiyo had championed the welfare of women even before joining politics. Apart from working with women groups, she had been the first African President of the Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organization. Thus at independence, she had hoped to see women participate on an equal 50-50 basis with the men in building the new nation. Unfortunately, this would not be. The Kenyan women were marginalised in all the sectors of the new government. In her view, her greatest achievement in parliament was the foundation of the Kenya Women's Political Caucus. She moved the motion in the House culminating in the formation of the Caucus in 1997.¹⁵⁹ This Organization was to articulate the issues of women with an aim of increasing their participation in the political sphere. As chairperson of the Caucus, Asiyo moved the Affirmative Action Motion (also called the Asiyo Motion of 1997). This Bill was seeking that one-third of all parliamentary seats be reserved for women. Asiyo was no longer asking for an equal representation as she had envisioned at independence but only 30 percent. Unfortunately, even this too was not forthcoming as the motion was thrown out by the male-dominated parliament. However, all was not lost. Affirmative action was adopted in Kenya's New Constitution in 2010. While advocating affirmative action to correct a historical marginalization of women in politics, Asiyo

¹⁵⁷ M. G. Osaaji, *The Sunday Standard*, May 28, 2006

¹⁵⁸ Ibid

¹⁵⁹ J. Ombuor, "Meet Phoebe Asiyo"

urged women to engage vigorously at political party level. That, women must register as party members, and seek positions at grassroots level, that is where the real power is, she advised women.¹⁶⁰

In 1997, Asiyo left active politics but she continued to fight for social justice for all, especially for women and children. She heads the Kenya Women's Political Caucus (KWPC), where she encourages and trains younger women to join active politics. In her political life she also devoted her energies to the struggle for constitutional change in Kenya. Through the KWPC, Asiyo played a central role in convincing the former KANU government to negotiate minimum constitutional amendments. As part of the Inter Parliamentary Parties Group (IPPG) before the 1997 elections, she and others negotiated minimal gains that constituted a major milestone for Kenyan women, whose sole national political umbrella, the KWPC gained recognition as a force to reckon with. The amendments obliged political parties to nominate women to at least 1/3 of the seats in parliament. Unfortunately, the requirement was only on paper and was not implemented by the party leaders, hence the continued marginalization of women in politics. When the Constitution of Kenya Review Commission was constituted, Asiyo could not be overlooked and was in 2001 appointed a commissioner in the law review body. Again, the Review Commission failed to deliver the new constitution. It was not until August, 2010 that the New Constitution was promulgated. And indeed, Asiyo's idea of affirmative action to correct the injustices against women by giving them at least 1/3 of seats in the political and decision-making organs of the country was integrated.

In conclusion, Asiyo's political career is a living testimony to the fact that women can, in their own right, fully participate in politics. Asiyo like Grace Onyango held her own and also attracted a flock of both men and women supporters willing to be led by her. She combined both her political and domestic roles with admirable ease. Asiyo points out that her success in politics was the fact that she was able to identify fully with her electorate, that at times there were certain activities with the people which appeared trivial but which helped her very much in politics. There were times when she needed just to sit and listen to her electorates and then tried to assist them. Thus, it was to practise human relations and to be there for her electorates. Asiyo also felt that political awareness amongst Kenyan women had increased over the problems

¹⁶⁰ Ibid

of the people. For example, a mother was close to a sick child, she was the first to know that there was no food in the house and she always felt the pain. Thus, because women took matters seriously and suffered most, they took their voting right seriously.

Asiyo asserts that one of the main limitations to being a woman and an MP was the double roles of women in the public and domestic spheres. For instance, whereas a male MP has a wife at home to oversee the home, a female MP still had to take care of her home. She had to provide for her children and husband and this could be time-consuming.

At the national level, there are the stereotypes, where some men did not accept that a woman could be a leader. Thus, they made her feel like an intruder into their world. Asiyo made her colleagues know that she was their equal and that women had to be included in decision-making. Asiyo like Onyango saw herself as representing all her electorates; both men and women. But she was always at the forefront in contributing towards the legislations that protected the welfare of women and children. She asserted that women needed to be encouraged and recognised that they too have great potentials to offer for the running of our great nation, Kenya.

Asiyo drew her aspiration from spiritual strength from the Bible and prayer. She has also served as a Seventh Day Adventist Church Deaconess from 1954. She was also supported and inspired by her family; her husband, Mr. R. B. Asiyo and their five children and six grandchildren. Her family has encouraged her and helped her to cope with travails and hazards of public and political life.

6.3 Grace Emily Akinyi Ogot: The First Luo Woman Assistant Minister

“I look at womanhood in a wider context. What has always been on my lips is equal opportunities for all”.¹⁶¹

“More countries have understood that women’s equality is a prerequisite for development”.¹⁶²

Grace Emily Akinyi was born in 1930 in Asembo, Central Nyanza (present day Siaya County). She can be classified as one of the Luo women’s top achievers, having served as an assistant minister. Grace was the child of pioneering Christian parents in Asembo. Her father Joseph Nyandunga was an early convert to the

¹⁶¹ G. Ogot quoted in the *Sunday Standard* July 16, 2006. See also G. Ogot, *Days of My Life : An Autobiography*. (Kisumu, 2012).

¹⁶² K. Annan quoted in *Elections Platform* , October 31, 2007.

Anglican Church and one of the first few in Asembo to receive colonial education. He later taught at the Church Missionary Society's, Ng'iya School. Grace was educated at Maseno Junior School, then at Butere Girls High and Ng'iya Girls School. She then went to the Mengo Nursing Training Hospital in Uganda in 1949, where she studied until 1953. After Mengo, she went to St. Thomas Hospital in London and the British Hospital for Mothers and Babies, where she qualified as a state midwife, after which she returned to Kenya and worked as a midwifery tutor at Maseno Hospital. Grace Ogot was not only the first in her home area to study abroad but also among the very first girls in pre-independent Kenya to do so. By being denied education, our girls were being denied the opportunity to participate actively in nation-building. Ogot asserts that the scholarship to Britain made her realise how chained the Kenyan women were. Through it also, she became a writer and a female politician. Thus she was able to challenge the men in our male-dominated world. In 1959, she married, Bethwell Ogot, who later became one of Kenya's best known historians.¹⁶³

In 1959, Ogot left nursing temporarily and returned to England to work with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) African Division as a scriptwriter and broadcaster for about two years. While with the BBC, she developed and presented her own popular weekly radio programme in Luo.¹⁶⁴ She was back in Kenya in 1961 to take up a new appointment as District Community Development Officer and also to head Kisumu Homecraft Training Centre. While in Kisumu, she became the first woman to be nominated councillor in the Kisumu Municipality.

In 1963, Ogot took up nursing again, this time in Uganda, in a new appointment as Nursing Sister in charge of student health services at Makerere University College. Ogot was later to leave nursing for good and returned home to a fresh appointment as a public relations manager for Air India in East Africa.¹⁶⁵ As noted earlier with Phoebe Asiyo, there were many job opportunities for the educated women in the early decades of independence. Consequently, one could move from one job to another as she desired.

Apart from employment, Ogot also served in various other organizations, and also in official capacities as well. For instance, she was one of the founding members of the Kenya Writers' Association and was its chairperson at its inception. Ogot was a

¹⁶³ *The Weekly Review*, August, 9, 1985.

¹⁶⁴ N. Asego, "Grace Ogot: A woman of All Seasons", *The Sunday Standard*, July 16, 2006. See also, G.Ogot, *Days of My Life*.

¹⁶⁵ *The Weekly Review*, August, 9, 1985.

Member of the Kenya Delegation to the United Nations General Assembly in New York in 1995 and a Member of the Kenya Delegation to the 19th General Conference of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in 1976.¹⁶⁶

Grace Ogot is regarded as a leading story writer in East Africa. In Africa, she has been likened to Tanzanias Peninah Mlama and Ghana's Aina Aila Aidoo.¹⁶⁷ Ogot first came to national prominence as an author. She began her writing career while she was engaged to be married and her fiancé encouraged her to embark on fiction after reading her letters to him, which he thought had a poetic touch that could be developed.¹⁶⁸ Ogot also gives credit for her writing talent to her father, who was a great story – teller and who also encouraged her to go to school, at a time, when most girls did not go to school. Ogots' interest in writing probably developed when she was a script writer for the BBC. That is when she began her first novel and since then, she has been prolific all the way. She became the first Kenyan woman to publish and has written more than two novels since her first book and many short stories. Her first book, the *Year of Sacrifice*, was published in 1961, besides numerous short stories. Other titles include, *The Promised Land*, *Land Without Thunder*, *A Call at Midnight*, *The Other Woman*, *The Island of Tears*, *The Graduate*, *The Strange Bride* and two books in Dholuo, *Miaha* and *Simbi Nyaima*.¹⁶⁹ Ogot pointed out that all her writings have different messages, but she shows particular concern for the family, which she considers as the nucleus of the society, and the basis of a stable community. It was in the home that a child grew before going out into the world and as such the family unit must be protected.

It is on the theme of the family that she addresses a number of gender issues in her books; for example, she focuses on the struggles between women and men, focusing on male brutality towards women, rape, and domestic violence. In most of her works, she advocated for peaceful co-existence along the gender divide for the good of the family and the wider community at large. In her book, *The Graduate*, she offers a comment on Kenyan women's inequality in the political process and intimates how successful they can be given the opportunity to participate. Hence as she said, what were on her lips was equal opportunities for all. The other themes that she

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ N. Asego, "Grace Ogot: A Woman of All Seasons." G.Ogot, *Days of My Life*.

¹⁶⁸ *The Weekly Review*, August, 9, 1985.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. See also N. Asego; "Grace Ogot.: A Woman of All Seasons"

focused on included outdated cultural practices like wife-inheritance that hold back women from making their own choices on issues of relationships. She also focused on the roles and responsibilities of women in the society. This she covers in her book, *Miaha*. The other themes include missions, hospitals, and modern medicine often shown in conflict with African witchcraft which she presents as part of the African reality and world. Ogot also writes in Dholuo language and she says that “will stimulate adult education”.¹⁷⁰ Grace Ogot is one of the 570 women writers of the 20th century appearing in “Modern Women Writers,” a four volume set including criticism, biographical material and excerpts from published works.¹⁷¹ Ogot also asserts that her writing skills have helped unchain Kenyan women.

Ogot asserts that women in Kenya fought side by side with men to bring independence. This the women did by fighting in the forests physically and also morally by looking after the sick, risking their lives when delivering food to the soldiers and by cultivating the land. She further argues that since independence, Kenyan women have been on the move in the political, economic and social aspects of the country. However, women continue to lag behind on all these sectors. Hence the need to engage them at equal levels with the men if Kenya is to develop.

Because of her education and involvement in community service, Ogot found herself serving her people in the political realm. She asserts that it was only after joining politics that she came to realise how women were looked down upon by their counterparts. In 1961, she was a nominated Councillor in Kisumu Town. In 1983, Ogot was for the first time nominated as an MP by President Daniel Arap Moi, thus bringing the number to two Luo-women members of parliament. This was quite an achievement for the Luo women noting that the total number of women in parliament was a paltry three.

However, two years later, when Gem Member of Parliament, Horace Owiti died, Ogot resigned from her nominated seat to contest for Gem by-election. Infact Ogot made history in Kenya as the first nominated MP to resign from parliament to seek an electoral mandate.¹⁷² She tendered her resignation to the Speaker of the National Assembly Mr. Fred Mati on July 16, and presented her by-election nomination papers to the Siaya District Commissioner, Mr Cyrus Gituai three days

¹⁷⁰ *The Weekly Review*, August 9, 1985. Page 5.

¹⁷¹ N. Asego, “Grace Ogot: A Woman of All Seasons”

¹⁷² *The Weekly Review*, July 26, 1985.

later, to join ten other candidates who were vying for the Gem seat.¹⁷³ Ogot's decision to resign and get electoral mandate from the people of Gem may have been informed by the limitations that came with being a nominated member of parliament. For instance, a nominated member of parliament could not be appointed to a cabinet post. Ogot had set her eyes on bigger things. She was not contented just being an MP. Indeed, to some of her critics, Ogot was seen to have resigned because of personal ambition and the desire to be more than just an MP, rather than the better service to the people of Gem.

In fact, her critics from Gem, blamed her for denying the people of Gem the chance of having two serving MPs, one nominated and another elected. However, Ogot was greatly favoured and supported by the three other elected MPs from Siaya District specifically, Mr. Peter Oloo Aringo (Alego) and Archbishop Oluoch Ondiek (Ugenya) whose political influence in the district transcended their constituency boundaries. Ogot, together with her female strategists and supporters, aggressively campaigned day and night, from house to house for two weeks before the actual polls. When the polls were held, Ogot won the elections, polling 4,198 votes against her nearest rival, Mr. Wycliffe Rading Omolo who polled 3,403 votes.¹⁷⁴ Thus, as a result of her victory, Ogot was elevated to the level of an elected MP. There were then two elected women MPs both from Luoland. This was an outstanding achievement for Luo women in the era of single party politics in Kenya. This was also the era of KANU as the only political party and women were generally marginalised in party politics. So it was really a major achievement for both Grace Ogot and Phoebe Asiyio to win elections in Kenya. These two Luo women were able to fight and go against the male-dominated political tide in Kenyan politics. Their success was the success of all Kenyan women whom they represented in the August House.

Only a few months after winning the parliamentary seat for Gem, Ogot was appointed an Assistant Minister for Culture and Social Services.¹⁷⁵ This was another first for Ogot among Luo women. Julia Ojiambo, from Busia Central, had been an assistant Minister, for the same Ministry. Unfortunately, during the snap elections of 1983, she lost her seat. Ogot was therefore the first Luo woman to hold this highest level of decision-making in the country, representing the interests of all women. Grace

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. G.Ogot, *Days of My Life*.

was involved in women empowerment activities at the national and international levels for over three decades. As a minister she was involved with the formation and implementation of national policies, especially those aimed at enhancing the status of women in all sectors. Grace worked with national women organisations including, Maendeleo ya Wanawake and National Council of Women of Kenya. At the international level, Grace led the Kenyan women delegations to many conferences including the United Nations Beijing Conference on Women.

At the local level, Ogot formed a strong alliance with the other Siaya MPs who had supported her. This strong alliance came to wield considerable power in Siaya politics. Ogot was elected the Siaya Branch KANU Secretary. At the constituency level she transversed the length and width of the constituency organizing many fundraising rallies and contributing in paying school fees for needy students. Ogot initiated the Gem Constituency Bursary Fund for bright students from needy families. She also worked with women groups. For instance, she mobilised the women to form the Mabati Women Group. They became the symbol of her efforts to mobilise the women in the constituency to work for social and economic empowerment. This Group was formed with the purpose of providing better housing and living standards for the women. The concept was that the women were to help build *mabati* (iron sheets-roofed) houses for themselves and to move out of the grass-thatched house that leaked during the rainy season, thus, improving their living standards. The women also acquired a plot at Yala Township on which they constructed their headquarters, consisting of workshops, exhibition halls and a cafeteria. The women also ventured into brick-laying, making of roofing tiles and poultry farming. All these activities put the Mabati women group on the road to self-sufficiency.¹⁷⁶

Three years after the Gem-by election, Ogot was back to her electorates, seeking re-election in the 1988 General Elections. Because of the impressive development projects that Ogot had initiated and the alliances with the MPs in the larger Siaya District, she easily won the elections. In spite of the queue (*Mlolongo*) vote model which was unpopular in Kenya, Ogot comfortably retained her seat by a landslide win over her competitor at the KANU nomination stage. Despite the fact that this model of voting was unpopular among women, in that when they queued behind a

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. See also. G.Ogot. *Days of My Life*.

candidate, it exposed who they supported and consequently, if different from their husband's candidate they would be reprimanded.¹⁷⁷

However, for Ogot, this model seemed to have worked, mainly because of her development record. This record was appreciated by both men and women in her constituency. They wanted to give her a second full-term to complete her projects.

Table 6.5: Nomination Results for Gem Constituency 1988

<u>NAMES</u>	<u>VOTES</u>	
Grace Emily Ogot	14,118	(89.14%)
O. Achayo N.	917	(5.79%)
Richard O. Owiti	678	(4.28%)
J. B. Luke Akumu	128	(0.79%)

Source: *The Weekly Review*, February 26, 1988.

Consequently, as a result of the nominations, in which Ogot garnered over 70% of the votes, she was named the sole candidate for the Gem constituency seat. KANU's rule at the time stated that if a candidate obtained over 70% of the votes at the nomination level, then she or he would be nominated to parliament unopposed. Thus, Ogot made it to parliament unopposed. Ogot was to be joined in the Sixth parliament by Mrs. Agnes Mutindi Ndeti, MP for Kibwezi. Again there were only two elected women members of parliament, Asiyo having lost her Karachuonyo seat. Again the Luo women had won another landmark, at least having one of their own in the August House in spite of the competition and the hurdles which the women faced.

In conclusion, just like her fellow Luo women politicians, Ogot left a mark as a sterling performer during her terms as the Member of Parliament for her constituency and a major actor at the national level as a member of cabinet. As an Assistant Minister, Ogot was involved with the formulation and implementation of policies aimed at enhancing the status of women in all sectors. She too acknowledged the support and inspiration of her family, especially, her spouse, Professor Ogot in her political career.

¹⁷⁷ C. Akumu, Oral Interview, 5/5/2011.

6.4 Councillor Caroline Atieno Oguta

Oguta is the elected Councillor of East Kanyamwa, Ndhiwa Division, Ndhiwa Constituency. Her victory and success in politics sends a positive message to her fellow women and youth that with determination, patience, and courage, women can triumph in electoral politics. Oguta asserts:

Women are better leaders. They strive to develop their wards. They are available to their constituents and they are not corrupt. The local people are eager for more women leaders. I therefore urge my fellow women to come out and join politics.¹⁷⁸

Caroline Atieno Oguta is thirty-eight years old. She is a trained teacher by profession and runs her own nursery school at Mirogo in Ndhiwa District. She speaks three languages; Dholuo, Swahili and English, fluently. She has a compelling personality and moves so swiftly because of her youthfulness. Her husband is a graduate teacher and they have young children. After teaching for five years, Oguta decided to join the Orange Democratic Party and venture into local politics.

Oguta traced her political interests to her mentor and cousin, former member of parliament for Rongo constituency, Mr. Ochillo Ayacko. She noted that she was in the MP's Campaign team and learnt the campaign skills during that time. Oguta asserts that her former councillor also taught her a lot about politics and she used to work closely with him. She points out that these two politicians taught her the determination, hardwork, patience and courage needed for one to survive in politics. Oguta was also a member of the Orange Democratic Party and was actively involved in party activities before contesting for a seat. She adds that for women to be nominated and to win political seats, they must join popular political parties at the local level and be actively engaged in their activities.¹⁷⁹

Oguta's political interests were also nurtured in the various groups in which she engaged. She was a member of the local branch of the Maendeleo ya Wanawake from where she learnt skills in public speaking. Her involvement in the group gave her more confidence and raised her self-esteem even higher, as she became popular among women and youth groups who encouraged her to join politics. Oguta was a member of Aphia Nyanza, a health group that taught the community on facts about HIV/AIDs and general health issues. This group also worked with the orphans and widows in the

¹⁷⁸ C. Atieno Oguta, Councillor, Oral Interview, 5/5/2011.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

community. Her engagement with this group won her many supporters who encouraged her political interests. She was also actively involved in the District Nursery School Teachers professional organisation. Oguta interacted with men and women from her profession who promised to support and campaign for her. Thus, when she eventually declared her interest in the seat, the members of her various groups supported her and pledged to campaign for her.

Though a great supporter of her political career, Oguta's husband, did not initially support her because of the high cost involved in politics. He argued that the family had no money for politics. Oguta's own parents discouraged her from politics, pointing out that politics was too risky for young women like her. However, she was not discouraged by her family members. Oguta asserts that:

I turned to my God for divine intervention. I went to church prayed and fasted asking God to guide me. That night I had a dream in which I had won the councillor's seat. This gave me the inspiration, the strength, confidence and I knew that God had answered my prayers.¹⁸⁰

According to Councillor Oguta and a number of women whose voices we have heard in this work, women turn to God for inspiration when faced with difficult situations. Indeed, seeing her determination after praying, her family members gave her their support and blessings to go ahead and engage in politics. Her husband decided to take a loan to assist in funding her campaigns.

The campaigns, the art of moving around the ward addressing rallies, mobilising and persuading potential voters offers the greatest and most unpleasant part of the electoral process. Whether the race is between women or between women and men, femininity and gender identity assume centre stage on the campaign trail. For, Oguta she had to face nine men and one woman in her campaign trail.

During this period, Oguta like the other women politicians, was bombarded with questions, which mostly had nothing to do with her ability or capacity to lead. Thus, she could spend considerable campaign time convincing the electorate of her moral aptness, honesty, accountability and integrity to stand for political office instead of articulating political issues for the ward. In fact, the campaign trail for female candidates resembles a court martial wherein they have to defend their sexual morality. Whereas the hallmark of the electoral campaigns was mud slinging as usual, for most men it constituted issues concerning corruption, political affiliations, ability and

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

capacity to perform. But for women, concerns raised were different ranging from slurs regarding their marital status, sexuality, to the whereabouts of their children and husbands.¹⁸¹

Oguta answered many of these questions about her husband and young children. She accepts that she engaged a house help to assist with the children while away on the campaign trail. On that note, she encourages women interested in politics that it is possible to take care of their homes and to be a politician at the same time.¹⁸²

The campaign trail according to Oguta was tough and rough. It was a world of corruption, bribery, violence, and deceit, all characteristics not associated with femininity. She needed money to fund the campaign, to buy T-shirts, print posters, hire vehicles to move around the ward, and to feed the many visitors at home. Money was also needed for buying gifts for supporters in exchange for votes.¹⁸³

Oguta observed that when it came to the issue of financing campaigns, women are strikingly disadvantaged because of their marginalised position with respect to the ownership of family wealth. Oguta says that, she used around half a million shillings for her campaigns. Her husband took a loan to support her, in addition to funds she raised from relatives and friends. Oguta also raised funds from her private nursery school accounts. However, she lamented that shortage of funds for female politicians is one of the main challenges throughout the electioneering period. Oguta posits that women organisations in the country should assist in fund raising for the female politicians, both at the local and national levels.

Political violence during the campaign period was another major challenge. Oguta asserted that, women had to be tough to survive in politics. She set up her own security team of about twenty-five men. However, she observed that she appealed to her team and supporters not to fight their opponents. She stood for a non-violent campaign as much as men tried to intimidate and scare her out of the electoral process. The men, according to her applied every type of violence, ranging from physical to psychological warfare, and abuse to rumour mongering to scare women from politics. Therefore, women candidates were always under siege as the men worked overtime to make politics appear dirty and dangerous. Oguta advises women politicians to stay focused, not to be cowed by the men, until they win the seat.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

Oguta posits that one strategy that worked for her was that she started her campaign early. Oguta started campaigning in 2005, two years before the elections were called in 2007. She asserts that this strategy worked for her because it gave her time to know her constituents and to identify with them. Oguta attended *harambees* for fees, weddings, hospital and medical bills in the ward. She also attended burials, mourned and consoled with her people. Oguta's campaigns were also based on principles of social network, whereby positive information about her was spread by word of mouth throughout the ward. She also worked closely with the social, political and economic groups that she had joined such as the Aphia Nyanza, Maendeleo ya Wanawake and the Kenya Women Finance Trust Organisation.

Oguta won the seat for councillor for East Kanyamwa after a tough and rough campaign period. She is a liberal feminist who holds that the family remains very important in her career as a councillor. She works and walks side by side with her husband. This, she points out is important because the Luo society is a patriarchal society where male support is very important in politics. She respects her husband and keeps a balance between work and family. Oguta does not drink alcohol nor does she stay out late.¹⁸⁴ While at home she attends to household chores, cooking, cleaning and she works on the farm just as she had always done before becoming a councillor. Her message to the women leaders is: “be humble, be simple, keep your family, be a woman of the people, be available to all, but maintain your integrity”.¹⁸⁵

In her work place, the other councillors are all men. They respect her as a fellow councillor. Oguta observes that at first the men thought that she would be available for relationships with them, because of the assumption that women politicians are loose in morals. She posits that:

During the tea break, everyone serves his or her tea. She made it clear that no man sends her for tea because she is not a wife to any one of them, but a councillor just like them.¹⁸⁶

Oguta points out that she works well with her co-workers and that they have learnt to respect her as a fellow councillor. She has remained available to her people, just as she was before the election. Oguta has worked hard towards sinking boreholes for water in her ward. She attends fund raising meetings for school fees, and medical

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

bills, weddings and funerals in her community just like she had done before joining politics. Her home has remained open to her ward members.

As a councillor, Oguta has faced a number of challenges. In her ward there are high levels of unemployment and poverty among the youth. Consequently, many people want handouts, money and food from their councillor. The view of the local people at the grassroots was that councillors, like their members of parliament earned a lot of money. She points out that the allowance and not salary, paid to the councillors is very low and can not sustain their families leave alone taking care of the members issues. Oguta observes that the political parties such as the Orange Democratic Party of Kenya need to support councillors because they are at the grassroots and deal with more problems than the members of parliament. Oguta wants the councillors paid higher allowances and salary.

Finally, Oguta holds that women are better leaders than men, in that they are available, they are not corrupt, and they use all the resources available for the development of their wards. Therefore, inspite of the many challenges in politics, they should step out and be leaders. She adds that education is important and that girls and women must go to school. The educated women will sensitise and educate other women and men to vote for women politicians. Women must join and be active in party activities so that they can be nominated to contest in various posts. Oguta called out to women's organisation to come forward and assist women politicians during the campaign period. She plans to defend her seat in the 2013 elections.

6.5 Councillor Roselyne Aricho

Councillor Roselyne Aricho is forty-eight years old and a mother of four children. She is the Councillor for East Sakwa Ward, Awendo District and was a former Deputy Mayor for Awendo Town Council. She is a dress maker by profession but also engages in various businesses. Aricho belongs to a number of women groups in the District. These include Maendeleo ya Wanawake.

In the 2007 General Elections, she contested for the post of councillor in her ward and won. Aricho remembers how in 2005 the people of Ranen town in her ward, where she conducts her businesses started addressing her as councillor. They told her that they wanted her to contest for the seat of councillor and that marked her engagement in politics. A year before the General Elections in 2007, her family members, specifically her brothers-in-law (she is a widow) came to ask her to contest

for the seat.¹⁸⁷ They also promised to assist her with funds for the campaigns. Aricho believes that her popularity came from her business whereby she met and interacted with many people.

Aricho named her family, her in-laws and God as the sources for her inspiration and strength. Aricho is a prayer warrior who does not do anything before praying. Thus, she prayed and asked God if it was right for her to join politics. She is a feminist who feels that the Luo women are marginalised in society and specifically in politics. Aricho decided to join politics to fight for the rights of women and to empower women through education, and credit-generating projects. Her victory in politics sends a positive message to her fellow women and young girls that with determination, patience and courage women can triumph in electoral politics. She emphasised patience, persistence in the struggle and capacity to withstand abuse and ridicule from male candidates, who regard politics as a male preserve.

Women politicians observed that the campaign trail was tough and rough, and Aricho was no exception. She was bombarded with questions which mostly had nothing to do with her ability or capacity to lead. Consequently, like all the other women politicians, she spent time convincing the electorate of her moral aptness to stand for political office instead of articulating political issues. Aricho had to deal with concerns ranging from her marital status even though they knew that she was a widow; sexuality, and the whereabouts of her children. Councillor Aricho lamented that she was accused of being a prostitute and a “loose” woman. The fact that she was a widow did not make it any easier for her since widows are looked down upon by the public. The Luo are a patriarchal society that believes that every home must be headed by a man. Aricho was happy that her in-laws supported her and campaigned for her. They also fund raised for her campaign. This support proved to the public that she was not a prostitute.

Aricho observed that the campaign period introduced her to the world of deceit, abuses, corruption, violence, bribery and aggressiveness associated with men.¹⁸⁸ One of the main challenges for her during the campaign period was that electoral candidates were compelled to use money and gifts in exchange for votes. The demand for handouts was high due to the high level of poverty in the rural areas

¹⁸⁷ Councillor R. Aricho, Oral Interview, 6/5/2011.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

such as her ward.¹⁸⁹ Another challenge was fund raising for campaigns. Women politicians are disadvantaged because of their economic marginalisation with respect to the ownership of family wealth. Aricho used money from her businesses, funds raised by in-laws and friends. She points out that she used about a half-million Kenya shillings. Aricho observed that because of lack of funds, potential women leaders shy away from politics. She advocates for financial support for women politicians by women organisations, the non-governmental organisations and the government.¹⁹⁰

Another challenge during this period was political violence. Councillor Aricho places the blame on the male politicians who want to intimidate and scare women out of the electoral process. The men apply every type of violence, ranging from physical to psychological warfare. Aricho points that she faced violence and abuses on her personality. However, she says that she learnt to ignore the abuses and to seek solace in God.¹⁹¹ She puts it philosophically that;

It is God who makes one a leader. If God has chosen me to lead in East Sakwa Ward, no amount of violence and abuse can stop me from being a councillor.¹⁹²

Councillor Aricho won the seat defeating fifteen men inspite of the violence. She also gave credit to her women groups for campaigning for her. She particularly mentioned the Agape Support Group and the Maendeleo ya Wanawake.

Once the elections were won, the hard work of representing the people began. Aricho initiated a number of projects that were important for the community. These included water projects, roads, school fees for orphans education, and education in general.¹⁹³

In the first year of her term, Aricho was elected the Deputy Mayor for Awendo Town Council. This was another victory for the women in her ward. But the Office of the Deputy Mayor came with more work for her. During her term as the Deputy Mayor, the County completed a number of projects in Awendo town. These included the Bus Park, and the street lights projects.¹⁹⁴ The latter was particularly important for her in that it made the town more secure for the women hawkers and

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

vendors who sold their items late into the night. Therefore, the women improved their economic status and in turn improved revenue for their families and Town Council.¹⁹⁵

Councillor Aricho did not only concentrate on the town council, but also on the projects in her ward. Aricho with her ward members established two schools in the ward. These include, Mulo Centre for Excellence, School and Michelle Obama Girls' School. She has also been in the forefront in her ward sensitising and educating the parents on the need to take their girl child to school.

In the economic sphere, Aricho has focused on women groups not just for social and welfare support, but also for initiating money generating projects. She encouraged the women to obtain loans and engage in activities such as tailoring, selling fish, cereals, vegetables and fruits, so that they can be economically independent. The Councillor believes in women's leadership, which she says is not corrupt. It is for this reason that she is currently preoccupied with working with sponsors, and organising seminars and workshops for women with the objective of sensitising them on the need to participate and seek leadership positions in the government.¹⁹⁶

The Councillor accepts that one of the challenges facing women leaders like her is the high number of jobless youth in her ward. These young people are always asking for handouts since they believe that a councillor like the Member of Parliament earns a high salary. To eradicate the problem, she encourages the youth to get engaged in the Kazi kwa Vijana projects and the Economic Stimulus Projects such as the construction of fish ponds.

Councillor Aricho noted that the New Constitution is good for women in that more women will be involved in the governance of Kenya at all levels. However, she points out that the Luo women must come out in large numbers to lead. She also noted that there was need for unity among all women. For example, the women endowed with resources must support those who are good politicians but economically challenged. The Councillor concluded by reinforcing the need for women to go to school. It is with education that they will be able to access the new opportunities available in the New Constitution. Aricho says she will definitely defend her seat come the 2013 elections.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

6.6 A Rejoinder by Professor Bethwell Allan Ogot: Grace Ogot's spouse

Professor B.A. Ogot was born in 1929 in Alara village in Gem Siaya District. He was educated at Ambira, and Maseno School, and later to Makerere University College in Uganda from where he proceeded to the University of St. Andrews, in the United Kingdom. He did his post-graduate work at the School of Oriental and African Studies University of London (SOAS), after which he worked in Makerere, Nairobi and Kenyatta Universities among other parastatals. At present, he is the Chancellor of Moi University. In 1959 he married Grace Emily Akinyi, the first Luo woman assistant minister in Kenya.

Ogot was interviewed to provide a rejoinder as the spouse of Grace Ogot. He expressed his views on a number of issues that impacted on women politicians. He stated that any woman interested in a political office and public leadership must begin at the community or grassroot level. He observed that his spouse, Grace worked with the community as a nurse, a principal, a district community development officer traveling throughout the then Central Nyanza District. The district had no roads and no telephones, but this did not deter her from working. Thereafter, she also worked as a social worker in charge of the Homecraft Training Centre. In 1961, Grace was a nominated councillor in Kisumu Municipality. Therefore, from this humble beginnings Grace rose to be an Assistant Minister.

Ogot stated that in 1983, when Grace was nominated as a member of parliament, she was already a seasoned leader. Two years later, she became the first person in Kenya to resign from a nominated seat and to contest for a by-election. Ogot recalls how Grace had been busy with the United Nations Nairobi International Women Conference in 1985, when the Gem seat fell vacant. The people of Gem led by the women approached her to resign and to stand for the by-election.

B.A. Ogot recalled how Grace Ogot, contested for the Gem seat in the middle of insecurity and bloodshed in the constituency. He points out that:

When my Luo people have many problems and they have suffered a lot and experienced bloodshed in the land, they always turn to the women. Luo women are believed to be peace makers. They can also bring about reconciliation and stability in the community.¹⁹⁷

He asserted that all the three main women politicians won elections during times of crisis in their constituencies. For example, Grace Onyango won elections in

¹⁹⁷ B.A. Ogot, O.I., October, 2011.

1969 during the conflict between KANU and KPU which eventually led to bloodshed in Kisumu Town. When Phoebe Asiyo was first elected in Karachuonyo, there had been a leadership crisis in that constituency. Women are therefore brave and have never been intimidated with challenges facing their communities. In fact, he asserts that, “women always provide leadership when the community is in a crisis”.¹⁹⁸

During the campaign period in Gem in 1985, Ogot recalled how the period was marred with violence, bloodshed and verbal abuse towards his spouse’s team. He recalls how he always wanted to protect her. However, Grace was always able to defend herself and be in control of the situation. She was always in charge of the situation.¹⁹⁹ During the campaign period, Ogot was involved in raising funds for running the campaign. He stated that families need to work together on the issue of funds. They must develop a family campaign budget. The Ogot family opened a joint account from which they funded the campaigns. Ogot noted that “one must not take a bank loan to fund political campaigns. Instead, use family funds and call on willing friends and relatives to fund raise”.²⁰⁰

He recalled how some KANU politicians were looking for Grace to give her campaign money. Ogot turned down the offer. He asserts that there was no free money; one had to pay back in one way or another for all the money given. Ogot posed the question, what did one give or do for the politicians so that they can be given free money? He pointed out that the issues of honesty, integrity and transparency are paramount among leaders both men and women. On the issue of time to be spent on politics, they both sat down as a family and agreed that family time was to be observed during the campaign period. They agreed that Grace was not to stay out too late in the night and that she was not to campaign in the bars.²⁰¹

Ogot marvelled at how women strategised, planned and conducted the campaign for Grace. He declared that the grassroots women may not have degrees in political science but they have wisdom that both women and male politicians must tap. Ogot recalled how women organised the campaigns on their own not seeking any advice from him, despite the fact that he is a professor of history and had worked in the government for many years. The women campaigned for Grace moving from one home to another in the constituency. They campaigned on foot moving both day and

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

night. In the night, they used lamps and torches. The women also composed songs targeting the male folk who had brought suffering in Gem. They did not ask for any money from Grace, only food and a place to sleep when they needed rest. Ogot asserted that it was the women who campaigned and voted for Grace. Thus, he dismisses the myth that women do not vote for fellow women.

Grace won the elections defeating the nine men who had also contested the seat. After the victory, the family was to adjust to her new role as the elected MP for Gem, and later on as assistant Minister. Ogot asserted that there were many challenges for families of politicians. For example, he disliked the lack of privacy in the home. The constituents invaded their home at any time in the day. He recalled that the family sat down and set aside a room in the house that was to be Grace's political office. He points out that:

In a day, between forty and fifty people would come to our home to see Grace. They over crowded our home. The office restricted them to one room. This gave me peace and the freedom to continue with my professional work.²⁰²

Grace's victory would also bring another challenge that of masculinity. What roles would the spouses of the women politicians play in Luoland and in the country. Ogot stated that the husbands of the women leaders were "treated as drivers".²⁰³ According to Ogot, the Kenya Government has no policy on protocol issues with regard to the male spouses of ministers and MPs. He observed that the wives of ministers and MPs were respected and honoured during official functions and dinners, but not the male spouses of the women leaders.

Ogot recalled one particular incident, when he was invited and accompanied the Assistant Minister to a fund raising meeting for Bunyore Girls High School. The former President Daniel Arap Moi was presiding. After the event, Grace was invited to sit at the high table with the President and other Ministers. Ogot was not invited. He recalls,

I decided to go home like the rest of the crowd. However, one of the State House officials went to the President and told him that he had seen me at the gate going away. The President ordered that I be called back to join the guests for lunch. I came back, but was not happy at all.²⁰⁴

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

Therefore, from his experience it is clear that the government does not know what to do with the male spouses of the ministers. Ogot posits that the men must be treated with respect and honour just like the female spouses of the ministers. There must be gender equality for all. He observes that the situation was better off during the former Presidents' era. In the post-KANU era, the government does not bother with the male spouses of the ministers at all.²⁰⁵

Ogot also raised the issue of identity for the men. He recalled being addressed as the “husband of Grace” in the government functions and yet he was a well known academician. He asserts that he insisted on being addressed by his academic title – Professor, which had always been used in official functions. However, the couple solved this protocol crisis amicably at home. Grace agreed to attend the functions that accommodated her spouse.

Ogot had also to deal with the attitudes of his own community. The Luo community is a patriarchal society where the man is the head of the home. According to their customs, a man is not supposed to follow his wife everywhere. A man that followed his wife around was seen as weak. However, Ogot posits,

This attitude did not bother me. I accompanied Grace whenever I could. She did not have a problem with me being around her. Grace always invited me to greet the people before she addressed the gathering.²⁰⁶

Indeed, Ogot fully supported Grace even when his own community considered it unmanly. This support is important for the women politicians, if they are to serve the community as leaders. On the issue of women and leadership, Ogot asserted that Women make better leaders than men. Women carry children in their wombs and are therefore more caring. They think about family welfare in terms of food, health and shelter. Many Luo men migrated to the towns during the colonial era and continue to migrate in search for jobs leaving the women and children at home. Most homes in the rural areas are managed by women. Women make very good leaders.

The view expressed above is that women are good leaders and they must come out in large numbers to lead this country. Ogot concluded by urging the Luo women who were the pioneers in parliament to step out and seek back the political offices like that which Grace held in Gem.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

6.7 Conclusion

According to the profiles that we have studied, regardless of the woman's background, there is one common component; gender that relegates all of them to a secondary status in the realm of politics. They all had to execute their political agendas within a historically entrenched patriarchal paradigm; not only was power and privilege held by men but it was also men who defined that power and its distribution. At the same time, the profiles revealed that women's entry into the political arena dominated by men and influenced by a masculine culture did not erase their femininity. Nor did they stop carrying out their traditional domestic and child care responsibilities. Infact they adjusted very well to their double roles in the public and domestic spheres. Indeed, the female politicians curved a space for themselves within the dominant political institutions, thus introducing fresh perspectives to politics. Their experiences as women, mothers, wives and homemakers influenced the way they did politics in the public. For example, they put emphasis on issues of reproductive health, maternity, labour, education and water.

In general, the profiles exemplified certain commonalities among the women. For instance, these women were the first to receive western education among their people; they came from the homes of first Christian-converts who believed in educating girls. The education they obtained was vital in their political careers. They were supported by their various families as expressed in the rejoinder by Professor Ogot, and this was important too in their roles in the public sphere. They were also Christians who drew inspiration from their spirituality. The similarities among the women is also seen in their political careers whereby they articulated not only issues dealing with the general electorate men and women but also specific issues on women's health, education and labour needs. These women politicians put women's issues on Kenya's political agenda.

In their journeys to the August House, they faced a number of challenges, such as the need for campaign funds, violence against them and their supporters, abusive language aimed at derailing their ambitions, and the marginalisation of women in political parties' leadership structures. However, they were able to overcome these challenges and to represent Kenyan women in the August House and in the local authorities. These women were liberal feminists who were able to work within the societal structure and also worked closely with their spouses. They also advocated for

affirmative action in policy changes in the system. They did not want radical changes that would rock the system.

CHAPTER SEVEN

LUO WOMEN IN KENYA'S POLITICS OF TRANSITION AND DEMOCRATISATION, 1985 – 2002

“State power, is male power, this in turn implies that African women have been marginalised”

Ifi Amadiume¹

“The concept of democracy cannot take on its full dynamic meaning until political decisions and those relating to national legislation are taken jointly by *men and women*, fair consideration of these two components of society”

Satta Niang²

7.0 Introduction

In the first three decades of independence, Kenya had acquired the reputation of being one of the most open polities in Africa. However, the leadership of the government lay in the hands of a few male elites and the women were rarely involved. After dissolving the opposition parties, KADU, and KPU in the 1960s, KANU monopolised party politics and governance structures in Kenya. In 1982, the government declared Kenya, *de facto* one -party state leaving no room for any political parties. This was followed by the co-option of the national women organization, Maendeleo ya Wanawake and the national labour umbrella organization, the Central Organization of Trade Unions, (COTU) to the ruling party-KANU. Consequently, the representation of women in politics was minimal, because their own organisation which articulated their issues was merged with the male dominated ruling party, and men became the final decision-makers. Indeed, state power was male power implying that women were marginalised in decision making.

Towards the end of the 1980s and early 1990s, the world was going through a political transformation. For instance in 1989, the Soviet Union collapsed and fourteen separate republics emerged. In Africa, apartheid gave way to free elections, and independence in South Africa. It is within this scenario that Kenyans, led by the civil society groups tired of the repressive KANU government, started to demand for

¹I. Amadiume, *Daughters of the Goddess, Daughters of Imperialism: African Women struggle for Culture, Power and Democracy*. (London, 2000) p 1.

² S. Niang, “Women and Democracy in Africa”, *Courier*, No. 171, 1988, P. 66. Quoted in AWC”, “*A Journey of Courage: Kenyan Women’s Experiences of the 2002*”, General Elections AWC Features, (Nairobi, 2004)p. 42.

political reforms and the democratisation of political space. These groups were led by among others, the religious leaders and professional associations such as the Law Society of Kenya. These individuals and groups, continued to make demands for the restoration of political pluralism and space in Kenya, despite government threats and harassment.

In this chapter, we examine the place of Luo women in the politics of transition and democratisation in Kenya. We also discuss the role of the various women organizations, which women used as vehicles for attaining space in the new democratic dispensation in the country. We also examine the themes of education, and labour.

7.1 Women in the Era of Political Pluralism

In the 1990s, Kenyans started to demand for political reforms. The demand for multi-partism and reforms in the country was also influenced by the changing world and ideological landscape, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and its satellite states in Eastern Europe.³ The then United States of America, Ambassador to Kenya, Mr. Smith Hemsstone, provided moral support to the pro-democracy groups.⁴ This made him one of the enemies of the Moi Government. Indeed, there were both internal and external factors responsible for the 1990's Kenya's democratisation process. Over the years, there was a growing local opposition and political challenge to President Moi's rule. The opposition was led by Oginga Odinga, the doyen of Kenyan politics. In July 1991, a pressure group called the Forum for Restoration of Democracy (FORD) was formed. This forum brought together prominent political activists and KANU expellees. FORD therefore became the vehicle through which the fight for political pluralism in Kenya was organised. Its formation was followed by demonstrations and violence in Nairobi and other cities culminating in the death of more than thirty people.⁵ Kenya's development partners such as United States of America (USA), Britain and Germany, condemned government repression. Consequently, in November 1991, the partners suspended all economic aid to Kenya until the government undertook democratic reforms and re-introduced political pluralism in the country.⁶

³ J. O. Osamba, "Power Sharing and the Management of Ethnopolitical Conflicts in Post – Cold War Kenya: An Exploratory Study" Phd Thesis, Nova Southeastern University, USA, 2005.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

President Moi eventually gave in to the pressure and re-introduced multi-partism in the country. The government replaced Section 2A of the Kenyan Constitution thereby legalizing the formation of other political parties. This led to the transformation of FORD into a political party November, 1991. However, the government only enacted piecemeal reforms that did not provide a level playing ground for all political parties, leave alone women.

Kenyan women were also active participants in the struggles for pluralism, and the Second Liberation of their country. This is aptly articulated in Gumbozvanda's words:

The struggle for multi-party politics in Kenya came at the height of KANU's intolerance in the late 1980s and early 1990s. People with dissenting voices were simply detained without trial or charged and convicted of sedition. Many women watched helplessly as their sons and husbands were brought to court on trumped up charges and sent to jail. Their anger, frustration and agony found expression in 1991 when mothers, wives and daughters of political detainees stripped naked at Nairobi Uhuru Park to put a curse on the Government for refusing to release their kin. The women kept vigil at the park despite beatings and tear gas from the police and eventually their husbands, sons and fathers were released.⁷

In the above quote, women resorted to using a traditional institution which they had used during the colonial period to fight the government. This was the institution of cursing an offender by stripping naked and showing their nakedness. In most of the Kenyan communities, it was taboo for a mother to show her nakedness in public. This curse worked on the psyche of government officials and as a result the political prisoners were released.

In spite of this political turmoil, one of the few women who emerged as a strong activist for change was a Luo woman, Jael Mbogo. A perennial and determined parliamentary candidate, she not only witnessed, but also lived through the culture of violence. During the period, she also sought a parliamentary seat. Mbogo advocated for the reform of the electoral laws stating that in Kenya:

The electoral laws must be reviewed with a view to making election violence a crime.... Women do not organise thugs to fight for them (as male politicians do) so they always end up as victims. There is also the threat of being raped, which is dreadful if somebody is threatened with rape if you are a candidate, imagine where you will be. And what about your husband, your family? We need a level

⁷ N. Gumbozvanda, et al, "A. *Journey of Courage*" p.11.

ground for all... Economically they (women) are very weak... the culture of violence, the culture of money, corruption...only make things worse. During elections, and vote rigging all those should be stamped out. In the last general elections, altogether we had 47 women candidates of those who I was working with very closely, I remember there were three who had to drop out. One was rescued from death. One was kidnapped. For the whole nomination period, we did not know where she was. When she came back all her vehicles had been vandalised they poured salt in all her vehicles so that engines wouldn't work. She was completely traumatised. There was one whom they threatened and blocked from presenting her papers.⁸

This quote captures the barriers and challenges that women politicians faced. Throughout the 1990s, political violence and gender discrimination constituted women's greatest hindrance to political engagement. Male politicians worked to maintain the status quo, the malestream, which securely served their interests. The misleading concept of female inferiority and male superiority became an increasingly internalised ideology, historically perpetuated and reproduced by male politicians and society in general.⁹ On March 6, 2001, President Moi addressed a Conference of East African Women Parliamentarians in Nairobi and told the women;

You can achieve more, can get more, but because of your little minds, you cannot get what you are expecting to get.¹⁰

Indeed, the same gender ideology prevalent among the colonialists and enslavers of African people, whereby women were seen as inferior was inherited by the independent state leadership. The state controlled by the male elite had a misguided justification for the marginalisation of women in politics.

7.2 The Restoration of Multi-Party Politics

The restoration of the multi-party political system in Kenya in 1991 to an extent created some political space for civil society groups, including women's groups to participate actively in the democratic struggles for Kenya's Second Liberation. The women's movement in the 1990s sought to provide leadership in a country divided along ethnic, religious, racial, class and gender lines. This period also saw the

⁸ [Http.www.peacelink.it/wajibu/17 – issue / p2.html](http://www.peacelink.it/wajibu/17-issue/p2.html). Accessed on November 13, 2009.

⁹ C. O. Choti, "Gender and Electoral Politics in Kenya".

¹⁰ See Kenya's major daily newspapers, the East African Standard and the Daily Nation March 7, 2001.

formation of new gender based lobby groups. The new groups included: The National Commission on the Status of Women, League of Kenya Women Voters, Anti-Rape Organization, Kenya Medical Women's Association, Kenya Business and Professional Women's Club, Coalition on Violence Against Women, Kenya Women Finance Trust and Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD) that promotes research in gender issues. There was also, Kenya Women Political Caucus, and the Forum for African Women Education whose major concern has been the promotion of education of women and the girl child in particular.¹¹ These were just some of the many groups that were engaged in the democratisation process. Nzomo aptly observes that,

Since the onset of multi-partism, a few radical women's non-government organizations notably, The League of Kenya Women Voters (LKWV) and The National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW), The Education Centre for Women in Democracy (ECWD), The International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA – K) The National Council of Women of Kenya (NCWK) and the Collaborative Centre for Gender and Development (CCGD) among others, initiated civic education on gender sensitisation for men and women and training curriculum aimed at political empowerment and capacity building especially for women candidates and voters
.....¹²

All these women's organizations were a testimony of the active engagement of Kenyan women and their desire to bring about democratic space within their society. Jacqueline A Oduol, one of the Luo women actively engaged in the democratisation process observed that this period also witnessed the multi disciplinary analysis of gender across various areas such as "literature (including oral) linguistics, history, sociology and women in development as well as women and health."¹³ Moreover, the new lobby groups were much more political in their orientation and more assertive, innovative, and willing to take political risks in the pursuit of women's agenda. At the same time many of the existing groups and organizations such as FIDA – K, NCWK, and the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) which had never before

¹¹ C. Choti "Gender and Electoral Politics in Kenya"

¹²M. Nzomo, "Kenyan Women in Politics and Public Decision - making" in *African Feminist: The Politics of Survival in Sub-Saharan Africa*, (ed) Mikell Gwendolyn, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 1997a p. 97.

¹³ J. Adhiambo – Oduol, "Transforming Tradition as a vehicle for Women's Empowerment: a Critical Dimension for Poverty Eradication", Paper presented at the Expert Group meeting New Delhi, India: November 26 – 29, 2000 p. 3.

articulated a political agenda, also became vocal and critical of the undemocratic status quo.¹⁴

In other words, together with the new lobby groups, women put up all their efforts together in order to realise the democratization of their society. They vigorously lobbied the political parties to integrate gender issues in their democratic agenda and programmes. Therefore, this vigorous unity of purpose in the women's movement provided leadership that greatly facilitated gender activism in Kenya's first multi-party elections of December, 1992.

In the 1992 preparatory period for the multiparty elections in Kenya, a high premium was placed on political empowerment as a means of achieving the goals associated with the advancement of the status of women.¹⁵ This was in the hope that if women actively participated and attained key political decision-making positions in large enough numbers; at least 30 percent of the total numbers, they would for example ensure the removal or repeal of laws that discriminated against them. Consequently, they would participate in designing development policies that would mainstream rather than marginalise and disempower women.¹⁶ Thus, from January 1992, women's lobby groups and organizations embarked on a mobilizing and strategising campaign to ensure that in the December 1992 general elections, women candidates would win the maximum number of parliamentary and civic seats.

One basic strategy engaged by the women organisations were to sensitise and conscientise women who are the majority of voters on the power and merit of voting for women and other gender sensitive men. Another related strategy employed was to encourage and build confidence in those women with the political will and commitment to contest for political office during the elections. In order to achieve this objective, a National Women's Convention bringing together women from the grassroots to the National level was held in, February 1992 to chart out the women's agenda. All women, in Kenya were involved.¹⁷

In July 1992, the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) also organised a national training workshop for capacity building for women candidates

¹⁴ C. Choti, "Gender and Electoral Politics in Kenya".

¹⁵ M. Nzomo, "Empowerment of Women in the Process of Democratization: Experiences of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania" A document of an International Conference held in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, on 5th to 6th September 1994.

¹⁶ A. Gordon, *Transforming Capitalism and Patriarchy: Gender and Development in Africa*; (London, 1996).

¹⁷ J. Ochieng, Oral Interview, 18/6/06.

bringing together about sixty women candidates who had already declared their intention to contest for political office.¹⁸ However, this was only successful in towns, as local women were left out from the trainings and workshops. At the same time, some of the organizations such as, YWCA, AAWORD, carried out civic education programmes and gender awareness campaigns using the medium of training workshops, seminars, the media, posters and other printed materials. The NCSW also monitored the elections as an accredited observer body and gave moral material support to women candidates throughout the campaign process until the completion of the election process.¹⁹

However, Kenya's multi-party politics was characterised by one way or element in terms of party affiliation and tribalism. Most of the political parties were formed on tribal lines and many Kenyans approached voting as tribal solidarity groups, voting in blocks for the candidates of their party irrespective of their leadership abilities.²⁰ This meant that each tribe voted for its candidates. Most of the women candidates had hoped that gender block voting would beat tribal block voting. Most Kenyans including women were inclined to identify themselves with their tribes rather than by gender.²¹

While the first multi-party elections in December 1992 general elections did not result in a critical mass of 30 percent women elected to decision – making bodies, it did reflect the enormous efforts of the women's movement to empower female votes and candidates. For example, after the advocacy, lobbying, mobilizing and enhancing gender awareness, over 250 women candidates stood for civic parliamentary seats. This was over 100 percent increase from the previous elections.

According to an assessment report of the condition and the status of women in Kenya, presented at the East African Regional Conference on women in Kampala, Uganda, the multiparty system has contributed to a larger representation by women at the local government level as well as the National Assembly. The assessment report notes that over 40 women were elected councillors in 1992 as compared to 20 in 1983 while 6 were elected to parliament compared to 2 in 1983.²²

¹⁸M. Nzomo, "Empowerment of Women in the processes of Democratization"

¹⁹ AAWORD, "Women's Political Leadership in Kenya: Involvement, Challenges and the Way forward" (Nairobi, 1998).

²⁰ C. Choti "Gender and Electoral Politics in Kenya"

²¹ G. Weru, "Special Report" *Daily Nation*, Nairobi Kenya, August 23, 1995 P. Viii – ix

²² Ibid.

The report further notes that despite the increased number of women in the 200 member parliament, “ they have not been effective in the male dominated house. And the ruling party KANU has not honoured its promise to include women in the 12 nominated members of parliament”.²³ This was indeed an unfortunate situation that after all the efforts that the women had put in the campaigns and elections and the fact that they are the majority in the country, the ruling party would not nominate one woman to parliament. However, three years later into the multi-party era, in May 1995, the first female full cabinet minister in independent Kenya Nyiva Mwendwa was appointed to head the stereotyped female Ministry for Culture and Social Services.

It has been argued that the reason for this scenario was partly because women performed poorly in the violent elections. For example, there were tribal clashes in Rift Valley and Western Kenya in which more than 1,000 people were killed and thousands displaced. The violence just before and during the elections was one of the key factors blamed for the low level of participation by women. Violence limited women’s capacity to gain contact with voters and sell their policies during campaign rallies, public meetings and meet- the-people-tours. It also undermined women’s participation in parliamentary, party and civic leadership.²⁴

Among the Luo women, only Phoebe Asiyo made it as the Member of Parliament for Karachuonyo, regaining the seat she had lost in 1988. Once in parliament, she exhibited rare acumen and art in parliamentary business, the gender platform become one of her main points of reference.²⁵ However, the win was not on a silver platter. Asiyo noted that she was called a prostitute in front of her in-laws and children, and her son brutally attacked just before the elections. These acts discouraged her from ever seeking an elective post again. Infact, she retired from politics after the 1992 elections. Among the many motions she brought to the House was the Affirmative Action Motion, which was also called the Asiyo Motion of 1997. This Motion called for affirmative action for women in politics. Even though the Motion was shot down by the male – dominated house, it left a major imprint on the Kenyan legislative landscape. The affirmative action was to be finally incorporated in Kenya’s New Constitution adopted on the 4th of August 2010. Grace Ogot unfortunately lost her seat during the 1992 elections.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ AWC, “A Journey of Courage”

²⁵ M, G. Osaaji, *The Sunday Standard*, May, 28, 2006. Pp. 32 – 33.

The second multi-party elections were held in 1997 and women were more prepared than they had been in 1992. A total of 150 women declared their interest in parliamentary seats, but only 47 were nominated by the political parties.²⁶ During these elections, two women, Charity Ngilu and Wangari Maathai, also joined the crowded field of 15 presidential candidates, something that had never been heard of in independent Kenya. Their candidacy challenged age old and deep-rooted myths and stereotypes against the female gender. It was also a sign that women were targeting the highest seat in the country.

Women also came together and formulated an election manifesto which they wanted all political parties to address. Again, for the first time in Kenya, women had articulated their issues in what they called, The Kenya Women's Election Manifesto: Critical Areas of Concern. The issues articulated included, among others, politics and decision – making. They argued that women were the majority of the voting population, yet their role in politics was hardly recognised or appreciated. They recommended that affirmative action be adopted to achieve equality for women and men in politics. The women stated that there was need for concrete action that would ensure equal representation of women in government.²⁷ In the sector of education, the women pointed out that education was critical to all aspects of development because it was key to effective participation in both public and private spheres of society. They pointed out further that statistics show inequalities between men and women in education. Therefore, there was the need to develop programmes to arrest the school drop-out rates for girls. There was also the need to make universal education accessible to all by 2000.²⁸

Apart from the manifesto, women were more visible during the 1997 elections. It was estimated that a total of 416 women expressed an interest to contest for political seats.²⁹ The women mostly belonged to KANU, the main and ruling party at the time. But they also joined the opposition parties; these included the National Democratic Party of Kenya (NDP), Ford Asili, Ford Kenya, Democratic Party and the Social Democratic Party, which was Charity Ngilu's spring board to the presidency. In Luo Nyanza the main parties were KANU and NDP. The women who vied for posts belonged to these and other smaller parties.

²⁶ AWC, "A Journey of Courage"

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

In the 1997 elections, only 4 women were elected to the 200 members House. However, 5 were nominated out of a total of 12 seats. This was only 4.0% representation a far cry from the projected target of 30%.³⁰ This was notwithstanding the intensive civic education campaigns that had been launched by the various civic society organizations. The majority of women voters at grassroots level were still susceptible to manipulation and this undermined their free choice in the electoral processes.

7.3 Luo Women and the Challenges of the Multi-party Era

Narrowing down to Luo women, the 1997 elections were the worst for the region. For the first time in a long time no woman was elected in the region. However, Ms Josephine Sinyo was nominated to Parliament, therefore representing women. The dismal performance of the women was blamed on party affiliation, culture, religion, education and resources in terms of time and money. Yet these factors are very closely interrelated and made the problem of women's political participation very complex.

The 2002 elections in Kenya were significant in the sense that they were the first transitional elections. The incumbent, President Moi was retiring as stipulated by the Constitution. Therefore, all political developments focused on his succession. The election year was also characterised by a lot of political activity as parties and politicians realigned themselves in preparation for the polls. KANU, having merged with the National Development Party (NDP) appeared set to clinch victory for the third successful term. However, this was not to be. A major fall-out at the eleventh hour when President Moi anointed Uhuru Kenyatta as his successor saw KANU rapidly disintegrate.

Women were not left out in the realignments. Behind the scenes, women organisations were negotiating with parties to gain entry in to the campaign arena. Their main goal was to secure more parliamentary and civic seats for women. Before the 2002 general elections, women's organisations developed, the Kenya Women's Political Manifesto, just like they had done in the previous elections. In their manifesto, they described their political agenda in areas they wanted the government to

³⁰ C. Choti, "Gender and Electoral Politics in Kenya".

set standards on policy, practice and action.³¹ In the manifesto, the women focused on areas that had always been close to their heart; these included the political sphere where they wanted affirmative action, at least one – third representation in parliament and local government. They wanted the government to encourage voter participation, discourage violence, fraud, corruption and intimidation during election. Finally, in this sector, they wanted the government to set a ceiling on campaign financing for political candidates to discourage commercialisation of politics.³² These were factors that had continued to hinder women’s participation in politics and perpetuated their marginalisation.

The women’s manifesto also focused on poverty and economic empowerment, and education for girls and women, whereby the government was to eliminate gender disparities in primary, secondary and post-secondary institutions. Finally, the manifesto targeted health and HIV/AIDS. Women pointed out that despite the measures to improve health, reduce the maternal mortality and infant mortality rate, available statistics were alarming. At the same time, prevalence rate on HIV/AIDS was high among the women in Kenya and since women were the caregivers, they were more likely to be affected and infected by the virus more than men.³³ Apart from the women’s manifesto, most of the manifestos of the political parties that took part in the 2002 General Elections showed that their policies did not fully target women as voters³⁴. Women’s issues were given lip service by most of the parties; they did not link the fact that women constituted the majority of voters and their own policies.

Unfortunately, even the so called progressive and gender sensitive parties like the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) which had committed itself to appointing one-third of women as aspirants did not have particularly comprehensive gender agenda.³⁵ However, women still voted overwhelmingly for NARC as a party because women believed in democracy and that it could make a difference in their lives especially in line with the NARC campaign promises of social change.

In 2002, although a total of 130 women had declared their interest in running for parliamentary seats, only 44 or 4 percent were nominated out of the 1,037

³¹ AWC, “A Journey of Courage”.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

parliamentary candidates. At the local authority level, out of the 7,008 candidates competing for a total of 2,093 seats, only 380 were women.³⁶

There was no single party that had an affirmative action policy on women candidates during the party nominations; even for parties such as NARC that had promised to give women a $\frac{1}{3}$ of the seats. Infact, in some cases, parties dropped women candidates who made it in the primaries in favour of male candidates because of culture and traditions that perceived leadership as a preserve for the male gender. Also, the violence that characterised the nominations made it difficult for women candidates to mobilise support. In certain cases, male candidates used violence as a strategy to scare away women.

In 2002, out of the eight provinces in the country, Nyanza emerged as an island of gender inequality in the elections. Even the highly marginalised North Eastern province had one nominated woman member of parliament while Nyanza had none. Among the Luo women a few did seek nomination such as, Ms Monica Amollo (Ndhiwa constituency) and Yambo – Migowa (Gwassi constituency). There were no women candidates in the three constituencies under study. Indeed, after the 2002 general elections and the previous multi-party elections, Nyanza emerged as an intimidating region, whereby there was a conspiracy to keep women out of parties nomination. There were no women elected in Nyanza in 2002 elections. Democratic space should include both male and female perspectives. However, Nyanza during this period was portrayed to be masculine and hostile to women's participation, according to Oduol.³⁷ Yet it was the Luo women who were the first to represent women in parliament in the 1960s and in the subsequently elections during the KANU reign.

Ida Odinga, the Chairperson of the League of Kenya Women Voters, pointed out that the reason women in general, and the Luo women in particular fail badly in elective politics was that they rarely penetrated political parties.³⁸ She asserts that, being in the party is very important; to fight and win elections you need to understand and be understood in the party. Most women put aside party matters and only turn up during the elections and this worked against women.³⁹ The same sentiments were

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ J. Godia, "Nyanza Women All Set to Tear Down Male Supremacy" In Focus, *The Sunday Standard*, April 29, 2007 pp. 22 – 23.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

echoed by the chairperson of Kenya Women's Political Caucus, and a former MP, Phoebe Asiyo. She urged women to engage vigorously at political party level noting that "register as members of political parties and seek positions at grassroots level. That is where the real power is".⁴⁰

Information on gender differences in the membership of political parties is scanty, but where it does exist, it shows that fewer women enrol as members and even fewer are party officials. Therefore, there is need for women to change the way they had engaged in politics. Indeed, for Luo women, the multi-party era was a period of failed ambitions and frustrations that had become characterised by the male dominated Kenyan political landscape where only men were deemed fit to contest parliamentary and civic seats. In the 2002 elections, the succession debate further complicated matters for Luo women. The big parties NARC and KANU did not want to jeopardise their chances of winning by appointing women whom they believed were politically weak and could not bring them the required votes. Consequently, women candidates were sacrificed in the name of succession. At the same time, political parties were dominated by men who selected their fellow men as candidates. Therefore, women had little or no influence over the nomination of candidates.⁴¹ Therefore, one reason why Luo women lost in 2002 was because their parties did not support them in terms of policy and how candidates were nominated. In Nyanza for example, being nominated in the party of choice in the region meant being in parliament. It also meant that one identified with the centre of power in the region.

However, women also faced other challenges apart from nomination. These included, for instance, resources such as time and money. These are crucial in political campaigns both at the nomination and election levels. A campaign team right from the preliminary levels needed transport, money for nomination fees, food, regalia and insignia that profile the candidate. They also needed T-shirts, pens, pencils and caps. Running a campaign in a rural constituency is very expensive since the constituencies were huge and not well served by roads, telephones, electricity and other infrastructure as in urban areas. In these constituencies such as Karachuonyo and Gem, travelling distances to meetings, rallies and other campaign – related activities therefore takes long and exhausts the candidates. Women candidates, running campaigns and shouldering domestic responsibility were particularly overworked and likely to burn

⁴⁰ J. Ombuor, "Meet Phoebe Asiyo" p. 7.

⁴¹ J. A. Opiyo. Oral Interview, 5/8/6

out in addition to spending large sums of money to fund their campaigns. Thus more women were locked out of politics because of lack of time and money.

Luo women lacked adequate financial resources that men tend to have access to, due to the patriarchal nature of the community. The social system gives men more opportunities and access to finances than women. Therefore, women's economic base is weak since they do not have control of vital resources such as land, capital, education and technology.⁴² Even those women who had access to such resources through their male relatives, did not have independence and control of the resources and could not afford the enormous amounts of money required to fund campaigns or any other activity. Therefore, most male candidates and voters are likely to have large sums of money to run an election while women experienced financial challenges. Consequently, a good number of potential women leaders were locked out of politics because of lack of resources. Focusing on time, politics being a nocturnal activity, the women who would wish to fit within cultural requirements found it difficult. Female modesty among the Luo resulting from the socialisation of women, becomes a key component and a barrier to women in the political process.⁴³

Women candidates faced a lot of hostility, harassment, bribery and both physical and psychological violence. They faced verbal abuse and derogatory words. This violence during the campaign period and Election Day made many potential women candidates to keep off politics.⁴⁴ There were cases where female candidates were attacked together with their supporters. In some cases, the supporters were even raped.⁴⁵ A case in point is when the late Phelgona Okundi lost a bid for the Rangwe seat to Dr. Shem Ochuodho in 1997 amid scenes of violence some of the worst actually meted out on her.⁴⁶

Women politicians also pointed out that the campaign period is one of the most challenging and most unpleasant parts of the electoral process. It was during this period when women's femininity and gender identity assumed centre stage during the campaign period. For example, women candidates were asked questions, which had nothing to do with their ability or capacity to lead. Consequently, women spent most

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid,

⁴⁴ See also J. Jabatiso, "Nominations were a tale of failed Ambitions and Frustrations".

⁴⁵ J. Oywa and B. Wangui, "How Sexism locked women out" *Gender AGENDA Election Platform*.

November 21, 2007. P. 6.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

of their campaign time convincing the electorate of their moral aptness to stand for political office instead of articulating political development issues.

Indeed, it is true that electoral campaigns focus on issues of honesty, integrity, competence, transparency, accountability to mention a few. For the male candidates, there would also be issues concerning corruption, political affiliations, ability and capacity to perform. However, for the women, apart from the above mentioned traits, the issues would range from their marital status, sexuality, to the whereabouts of their children and husbands. A married woman was accused of neglecting her husband and children even when her children were adults. Marital status was an issue commonly used for penalizing women in politics not only among the Luo but also worldwide. As one American Senator, Barbara Mikulski lamented, that women who run for office can never win on this issue

If you are married, you were neglecting him. If you were widowed, you killed him. If you were divorced, you did not keep him. And if you were single, you couldn't get a husband anyway.⁴⁷

Thus, most female candidates had to face the question of their femininity and sexuality in order to win elections. At the same time, their mode of dressing must be acceptable as decent. Some had to bring along their husbands and children to the campaign rallies to prove that they were properly married with supportive families.

In Kisumu Town Constituency, Jane Ochieng Atieno blamed male chauvinism and violence for her failure to capture the Manyatta Civic Seat. "They used violence and derogatory words against me, calling me a prostitute".⁴⁸ "The youth from my opponent beat up my supporters who were on their way to the polling station, and that is how I ended up losing the seat".⁴⁹ According to Jane, women politicians face many challenges. Apart from violence, she also lacked funds for campaigning, and the fact that culturally women were still controlled by their husbands who decided whom they vote for and whether they go to political meetings or not.⁵⁰ Indeed, the participation of women in Nyanza in politics and public affairs has been complicated by the long-standing cultural beliefs held by men and women alike, that these roles were men's preserve. The public and domestic sector divide that was preached by the colonialists,

⁴⁷ M. Branden, *Women Politicians and the Media*, (Lexington, 1996). P. 6. Quoted in C. Choti, "Gender and Electoral Process".

⁴⁸ J. Ochieng Atieno, Oral Interview, 28/8/06.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

argued that a women's place is in the home and women should not indulge in activities that remove them from the domestic sphere. It is this paradigm that has been used by male chauvinists to frustrate the efforts of women aspiring to make a mark in politics. These stereotypes have been used against women candidates to lock them out of parliament. Ironically, the situation has worsened during the multi-party era that was supposed to be more democratic and inclusive.

One's educational and awareness levels are a crucial determinant to one's engagement and participation in a democratic process. As shown in our analysis on women and education in Kenya, there is a high rate of illiteracy among Luo women. This in turn limits their understanding of issues during the campaign period. Some women may not understand the language used on the voting card. Many may not know who to vote for because of illiteracy. Indeed, women's inability to read and write has been one of their weakest points. Due to this various party agents normally target old women to obtain votes for their candidates.⁵¹ It was because of the cases of the illiterate women being taken advantage of that led to the call for the introduction of finger printing for the illiterate voters.⁵²

Thus, it was because of the challenges and barriers faced by the Luo women that led to their marginalisation in the multi-party politics. The overall performance for women in Kenya however, improved during the same period as shown in Table 7.1

⁵¹ AWC, *A Journey of Courage*

⁵² *Ibid.*

Table 7.1: Parliamentary Women’s Participation 1963 – 2002

Year	Party Nomination	Elected Members	Parliamentary Nomination
1963	0	0	0
1969	1	1	1
1974	11	5	2
1979	15	3	1
1992	19	6	0
1997	48	4	5
2002	44	10	8

Sources: M. Nzomo, ‘Taking Stock.’ August 2003. ⁵³

According to this Table, women’s performance in the area of parliamentary electoral politics in the first decade of independence was marginal. However, there has been a gradual increase in the number of women MPs up to 2002 as indicated in the Table. The only exception to this trend was in 1997 when women’s performance in electoral politics dropped despite the fielding of two women presidential candidates. ⁵⁴ Women candidates also increased to total of 150 from a total of 60 in 1992, and 48 secured party nominations, compared to 19 in 1992.⁵⁵ The number of elected women MPs moved from 0 in the first post – colonial government in 1963, to 6 in 1992 and then dropped to 4 in 1997 and then rose again to 9 in 2002.⁵⁶ The last two years saw no Luo women elected in parliamentary elections despite the fact that they were the first to be elected in 1969. The number of women nominated MPs increased from 0 in 1963 to 8 in 2002. ⁵⁷ While the multi-party era seems to have brought in other Kenyan women into the House, Luo women stand marginalised. Indeed, for reasons ranging from culture to outright gender biases, Nyanza’s 1.5 million voters locked out women in the elections, in 1997 and 2002, save for a handful that won the civic or local government elections.

The question of marginalisation of Luo women in the era of transition and multiparty politics is an issue that has disappointed many women leaders. Ida Odinga,

⁵³M.Nzomo, “Taking Stock – Women’s Performance in Kenya’s Parliamentary Politics in the 2002 General Elections”, in M. Nzomo (ed) *Perspectives on Gender Discourse: Women in Politics; Challenges of Democratic Transition in Kenya*. (Nairobi, 2003) p. 17.

⁵⁴ Ibid..

⁵⁵ Ibid. P. 25.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

the wife of the former Prime Minister, Raila Odinga and the Chairperson of the Kenya League of Women Voters, has on many occasions pleaded with male politicians in the province to create more chances for women. She asserts that there were many Luo women with very good leadership qualities.⁵⁸ Mrs Akumu, wife of one – time Nyakach MP and pioneer trade unionist Dennis Akumu pointed out that “this region produced the first woman MP in the country. We still have very talented women to help us sustain the legacy”.⁵⁹

The poor performance by Luo women political aspirants in Nyanza has put the Kenya League of Women Voters and other Women Organizations on the spot. “The League has to return to the drawing board to search for new strategies. We cannot continue like this”⁶⁰ says Martha Auma, a gender activist in Kisumu. Auma pointed out that women politicians face many challenges be addressed if Luo women are to regain their legacy in the House. Grace Onyango, the first woman MP in Luo Nyanza and in Kenya on the other hand asserts that Luo women have not worked hard enough in the era of multi-party politics.⁶¹ She pointed out that women need to plan well and be brave before going into politics.⁶² Infact Onyango critiqued the affirmative action option for women. According to her, the modern woman does not need special seats because they are learned and have money for campaigns. She further argued that she contested against men and defeated them thirty years ago; why can women not do it now. She asserted that free seats are not good, and that women must fight and win elections. Onyango holds that women must learn to work alongside the men and learn from them instead of working against them.

As much as I do agree with the sentiments of the former Luo MP, Grace Onyango, that women are educated, they have good jobs and therefore money for campaigns⁶³ the numbers of the educated are still too low compared to that of men as seen in our study. Indeed, affirmative action is a strategy which was being used to temporarily increase the numbers of women; thus, temporarily correcting a historical culture of injustice, marginalisation and discrimination, that would in other words take too long to correct. Looking at where Kenyan women were 40 years since independence without affirmative action, by 2002, there were only 10 elected women

⁵⁸ J. Oywa and Bancy Wangui, “How Sexism Locked women out” pp. 6 – 7.

⁵⁹ Ibid. pp. 6 – 7.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid

MPs. Again focusing on Luo women with the education and money none was elected to parliament in the 1997 and 2002 multi-party elections. The question that begs therefore is how long will it take to get a critical mass of at least 30 per cent women members of parliament in Kenya? The answer lies in affirmative action.

Indeed, the transition period and the democratisation of the political space brought new challenges to the women folk, more than ever before, women face issues of party politics, party nomination, since they rarely own parties. This is a major challenge and barrier during the nominations. As Asiyo pointed out, women need to engage vigorously at political party level, to register as members in political parties and seek positions as grassroots level.⁶⁴ That is where the real power is. She says therefore, that as much as Luo women do not want free things and having been competing with the men and winning elections before, the multi-party era has brought new challenges that require new strategies. The only temporal stop-gap measure for the marginalisation of women in politics is affirmative action. Indeed, this strategy has been used in other African Nations such as Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and South Africa. Kenya therefore is not unique. Fortunately in the new constitution, this strategy has been included as a way of increasing women's numbers in the country's organs for decision – making.

7.4 Strategies for Overcoming Challenges

Looking at how Luo women in particular and Kenyan women in general have been marginalised in the political and decision-making sphere in this country, it became imperative to come up with strategies and interventions to create space for women. The need to develop mechanisms that foster a gender-balanced representation in decision-making and public life is vital from the developmental point of view. If a society is to develop, then it must pay attention to the demographic weight of its men and women. The proponents of this view contend that the equal treatment of both women and men is a very crucial factor in the democratisation process. Consequently, we in Kenya cannot talk of transition and democracy when we continue to lock out women from political decisions and those that relate to national legislation. Both the women and men must be engaged in all these aspects of decision-making if the country is to be said to be democratic.

⁶⁴ J. Ombuor, "Meet Phoebe Asiyo, One of Kenya's Most Influential women".

As shown earlier, the women's movement in Kenya has since the re-introduction of the multi-parties in 1991 been in the fore front of making women visible in politics. Looking at the increased numbers of women in parliament, they have succeeded at the national level. Indeed many of the women elected during this period have the movement to thank for their support through various programmes. However, again as noted earlier, Luo women seemed to have failed to sustain their legacy of being elected into parliament during the multi-party era.

Therefore, for the Luo women to get back their legacy, they have to win the main political party's support. One way for them as mentioned earlier would be to register to be members and even officials of the major parties. However, there is also need for political parties to include affirmative action in their manifestos in order to elevate women into positions of decision- making.⁶⁵ There should be provisions for certain party positions to be held by women. This would come in handy during nominations. And as we mentioned earlier, there are areas where nominations by one's party, meant one had won elections.

There is also the need for capacity building workshops for women politicians. These workshops teach, train and give women the skills they need during the campaign period. During these workshops, women also share their skills through networking. This helps them "learn the ropes from one another to build their confidence".⁶⁶ During the workshops, women also learn about the gender dynamics of politics, how to conduct voter education, and the use of tools such as the media to further their cause. They also learn how to articulate issues, skilfully, raise funds from friends and other organisation. Also, they are taught how to portray an image of dignity and integrity.⁶⁷

Women politicians are often required to strike a balance between politics and family life. Husbands and male relatives in Kenya's patriarchal society, determine whether or not their wives or female relatives join politics. As women undergo various training programmes, they must also learn the importance of involving their husbands and male relatives in their political strategies right from the beginning. This is because they can make or destroy their chances of winning.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ AWC, "A Journey of Courage".

⁶⁶ W. Maathai Quoted in AWC, "A Journey of Courage" P. 43. M. Achieng, Oral Interview, Kisumu town.

⁶⁷ AWC, "A Journey of Courage"

⁶⁸ M. Achieng, Oral Interview, 20/8/06.

There is need for more gender sensitive voter education, especially in areas like Luo Nyanza. In these areas, people believe that men are better leaders because of culture and socialization, says Mary Achieng⁶⁹. She contested the civic seat for the Market Ward in Kisumu Town in 2002 elections and lost. According to her, there is need for continued voter education that will help rid society of the stereotype that women can never be leaders. This might eventually lead to more women being elected into decision-making positions.⁷⁰

Wanjiku Kabira, a gender activist, asserts that unless women lobby effectively for fair representation, men will behave as if nothing is wrong. She further points out that the idea of lobbying was to move to the centre of power, where decisions are made.⁷¹ According to Cecilia Kimemia of the League of Kenya Women Voters, which was also charged with lobbying for women's representation within the various political parties, it was imperative that women lobby from within the parties.⁷² Indeed, women lobbied from within the parties and as a result, a fair number of women were nominated in 2002. However, the results were not good enough. Consequently, more capacity building is needed for women. Unfortunately, in Luo Nyanza, most of the major parties did not nominate women. Consequently, there is need for more advocacy lobbying and civic education. Lobbying and advocacy are strategies that are time-consuming and require practice. However, these are some of the interventions that women in Nyanza may have to use with their male counterparts so that they are engaged in the parties and eventually become nominated and elected as members of parliament.

Finally, the New Constitution that makes a mandatory specification that women form a third of the total number of elected members of parliament will translate into new gains for women in politics. The new constitution makes a new beginning for Kenyan women. A beginning that defines a collection of fundamental rules, regulations laws, aspirations and principles that are deeply ingrained in our cultures and values upon which other laws of the land are upheld.⁷³ Thus the affirmative action engraved in the new constitution will help solve the gender disparity that has been in existence for many years. Consequently, women must therefore be

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid, See also, AWC, "A Journey of Courage".

⁷¹ W. Kabira, quoted in AWC, "A Journey of Courage" pp.46-47.

⁷² AWC, "A Journey of Courage"

⁷³ Ibid.

proactive in using the affirmative action policies to negotiate for greater space and visibility right from the party levels. Women's access to parliament is critical. They should grasp parliament as a tool for changing all the aspects of the society; political, social and economic, for the good of both men and women.

Luo women must also come out to claim the opportunities offered in the New Constitution at the county level of governance and at the parliamentary level. They must be actively involved at the local as well as the national levels of decision-making. This is because women make up the majority of the population and they must be engaged in making decisions that impact on them. For a long time, women have been marginalised in decision-making roles but this must end with the new Kenyan dispensation as provided for by the new constitution and the new era of democratisation. Luo women must be made conscious of the benefits of their participation in politics. This can be attained through education and professional training of women to build skills, confidence and knowledge.

Generally, there is need for aggressive public sensitisation towards women leadership. Women must be branded and marketed or popularised as good leaders. This can also be promoted by the government, the non-governmental organizations and churches. These groups can also promote women's participation, not only as leaders but also as voters. Revisiting the issue of parties, there is need to engage the help of cross-party groups to assist women come forward as candidates. At the same time, women can start their own parties that should network with other parties for support. Generally, women must be encouraged to participate in political parties, and in politics.

7.5 The 1995 Beijing Women's Conference

In 1995, the Beijing Conference was held ten years after the Nairobi Women's Conference. The Conference goals were Equality, Development and Peace for all. The Beijing Conference built on the foundation laid by the Nairobi meeting asserting that empowerment and autonomy of women, and the improvement of women's social, economic and political spheres were of paramount importance. For the achievement of transparent, accountable government and administration and sustainable development in all areas of life, women were to be empowered socially, economically and politically. The delegates also noted that the poor relations that prevented women from

leading fulfilling lives operate at many levels from the personal to the public. Consequently, achieving the goal of equal participation of men and women in decision – making would provide a balance that would accurately reflect the composition of society which is needed in order to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning.⁷⁴

During the Conference, it was agreed that equality in political decision-making is important in order to ensure that democracy is realised in all countries. It was also agreed that women's equal participation with men in political life plays a vital role in the general process of advancement of women. The equal participation in decision making is not only a demand for justice or democracy, but it can be seen as a necessary condition for women's interests to be integrated on to the social agenda. Consequently, without the active participation of women, and the incorporation of women's perspectives at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved.⁷⁵

The delegates at the Conference noted that women had made considerable gains in the areas of leadership in the community and informal organisations and in public offices worldwide. However, socialisation and negative stereotyping of women through the media reinforced the tendency for political decision-making to remain the domain of men. At the same time, the under representation of women in politics and education has prevented women from having a significant impact on many institutions in their countries. Thus, in order to address this inequality between men and women in politics and position in decision – making at all levels, it was suggested that the governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming gender perspectives in all policies and programmes, so that before decisions are made and taken, an analysis is made of their impacts on both men and women.⁷⁶

On the Kenyan scene, in 1996, one year after the Beijing Conference, Charity Ngilu an MP, moved a motion on the Platform for Action. In the motion, the government committed itself to among other things to translate, interpret, simplify, clarify and disseminate the resolutions of the Platform for Action (PFA), convene seminars, workshops and other fora in all sub-locations to explain the PFA. The

⁷⁴ M.Nzomo, "Women in East Africa" in Nelly P. (ed) *Women in the Third World An Encyclopaedia of Contemporary Issues*, (New York, 1999).

⁷⁵ Beijing Conference Handbook, *IFLANET*, Annual Conference, (Beijing, 1996).

⁷⁶ Beijing + 5, International Women's Day. (Beijing, 2000).

government was also to allocate adequate budgetary provisions for the advancement of the welfare of women, implement and continually monitor and access the PFA.⁷⁷ This was the first in the Seventh Parliament that a female MP had successfully moved a women friendly motion that was passed by the Parliament. Therefore, women had cause to remain optimistic that the government was beginning to become responsive to their needs.

Unfortunately, the hopes created by the motion were short-lived; the government did not create the necessary mechanisms promised for the implementation of the motion. The government had given lip-service to the needs of women with nothing being practically done on the ground. Women MPs also realised how quickly private motions can be shelved to gather dust since the government did not generally feel obliged to implement them. Charity Ngilu, however, continued with her struggle for women's rights and for the PFA. Indeed, in 1997 elections, she became the first female to run for the presidency in Kenya. She was ranked fourth overall in a field of seven men and two women; herself and Wangari Maathai.⁷⁸

The gender and women's issues in the Seventh Parliament were also spearheaded by Phoebe Asiyo, the only Luo woman elected to parliament during the multi-party era. After the Beijing Conference however, the government created a Ministry for Women and Youth Affairs, that was ironically headed by a male minister. The ministry was dismantled just after only two months, a clear sign that the Moi government was not committed to solving gender inequality within its governance structures. Indeed, not much changed for Luo women, in particular and Kenyan women in general in the immediate Post-Beijing era.

7.6 Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Movement

After the 1985 Nairobi Convention that marked the end of the UN Women's Decade also known as the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies (NFLS), women's movement became more vibrant. This Conference inspired Kenyan women to establish organizations that would challenge the power structural arrangements of society, by empowering women to know their rights and seek effective ways and means of protecting, promoting them and their realization for the women's constituency. Consequently, more women organizations were established including

⁷⁷ J. Mugo, *Broadening the Stakeholders' Base*, FIDA, (Nairobi 1990).

⁷⁸ W. Kabira and P. Wasamba, *Reclaiming Women's space in Politics*. (Nairobi, 1998).

the International Federation of Women Lawyers–Kenya Chapter and the League of Women Voters. The latter was instrumental in educating, sensitizing and mobilizing women in the political sphere.

MYWO was increasingly viewed suspiciously by male politicians on account of its potential to mobilise women for electoral politics. As a result, a policy of divide and rule was adopted and perfected by the Moi Government as KANU forged an alliance with the women’s national organisational that became known as KANU – MYWO. Consequently, by the turn of the 1990s MYWO became the female wing of KANU despite the fact that according to its objectives, the organisation is non-political. Therefore, only pro-KANU women were cleared to lead the organisation. During the multi-party era for instance, the organisation was under the leadership of Zipporah Kittony a cousin to president Moi, who viewed her role as mobilising women to support KANU and the president.⁷⁹ Consequently, the MYWO was not in the forefront campaigning for women who joined other parties apart from KANU. The co-opting of the organization by KANU also led to the drying up of grass-roots support and membership.⁸⁰

During the 1990s, Kenyan Women did not just mobilise as women simply because they were women. However, they framed themselves around a number of identities such as professional associations, workers, businessman, etc. Women also did not mobilise for a single reason since gender is everywhere for example, in economics, social and political spheres. Thus women’s movements in this last period of this study took different forms in different contexts, operating at some moments as a formalised structure and at others as a loose network. Thus, because of its alignment with one party during the multi-party era, MYWO created room for many other women’s organizations that did not want to miss on the new democratic space created by the transition. This in turn weakened the activities of the MYWO, especially among the urban based professional and working women. MYWO mainly remained active among the rural grassroots women.⁸¹ But even in the rural such as Nyanza areas, most of the handicraft projects and other projects started by MYWO had been doing poorly for a long time. The oldest and largest women’s movement in the country failed in making women visible in the political organs in the country.

⁷⁹ T. Ayot and W.S. Nasongo, “Women in Kenya’s politics of Transition and Democratization” p. 183

⁸⁰ J. Opiyo, Oral Interview, 20/6/06.

⁸¹ M. Aboge, Oral Interview, 10/6/06

7.7 Women, Education and Labour

Education is one of the tools for women's empowerment, socially in the family and community and also in politics. It is known that basic literacy and other basic skills acquired at primary, secondary schools and college levels prepare women for better paid employment.⁸² By the 1990s although the number of boys and girls in school was roughly equal nationally at the primary level, in Luo Nyanza the girls still lagged behind in primary school. Boys substantially outnumbered the girls in higher education, in the colleges and universities.

In 1997, the estimated adult illiteracy rate for the total population was 13.1 percent for men and 27.9 percent for women. In 2000, the rate reduced to 11.1 percent for men and 24.0 percent for women.⁸³ UNESCO defines an illiterate person as someone who while understanding the situation, cannot read or write a short list or simple statement in his or her very life. So that over twenty – percent of women in Kenya cannot read or write, this means that they cannot read the political material and make informed decisions. This is the percentage that is usually target for manipulation during the elections. Thus, education is crucial if women are to be actively involved in politics.

⁸² UNIFEM Biennial Report <http://www.unifem.org>.

⁸³ UN Social Indicators <http://www.un.org/depts/unsd/social>.

Table 7.2 Percentage distribution of population by province and sex in Kenya of reading ability in any language. 1995

PROVINCE	MALES %	FEMALES %	TOTAL (%)
Coast	47	10	25
Eastern	68	32	48
Central	75	46	60
Rift Valley	58	28	42
Nyanza	66	25	44
Western	66	34	46

Source: K. Ong'ayo and Lwenya (1996).⁸⁴

The Table above indicates that the female gender continue to lag behind in education in the specific area of reading. This area is vital in that one needs to read political information in order to make informed choices. According to the table, only 25 percent of the female gender can read in Nyanza. Throughout the period of study Nyanza has continued to lag behind in terms of girls' education translating into the above percentage of reading ability among women.

The few girls who completed secondary school in Kenya did not qualify for university and technical institutions in the same proportion as men. This was partly because fewer girls' schools offered science and technical subjects. Consequently, women comprised only about 18 percent of those enrolled in post-secondary and technical courses. The low numbers of women was also as a result of substandard facilities, fewer well-qualified teachers, few mentors for the girls and gender stereotyping in the classroom and curriculum, as well as the high costs associated with university education. At the university and other tertiary level educational institutions, women were represented mainly in education faculties and colleges. The proportion of girls enrolled in 1991 in the Departments of Building, Mechanical Engineering and Electrical Engineering in Kenya Technical Teacher's College was negligible compared to that of boys. Indeed, the girls have continued to dominate secretarial, teaching and nursing courses in post-secondary institutions. The kind of profession that one

⁸⁴ K. Ongayo, and O. Lwenya, *Working paper on Gender Situation in Kenya*, (Nairobi, 1996).

engages in is directly reflective of the remuneration that one earns. Consequently, because women dominated the service sector and professions that had low remuneration, most of the women could not access enough resources through credit or loans, to enable them participate in politics.

Focusing on the Luo Girls and education, the situation was more serious because of the high poverty levels in Nyanza province. There was also the patriarchal culture that laid emphasis on the boy child. For many parents, the difficult economic times during the 1990s that worsened when the donors stopped giving aid to the Moi government, meant that they could only cater for the basic needs as shelter and food for their children rather than invest in education.⁸⁵ In places where preference was to be made regarding either educating the boy or girl child, the boys were preferred. Consequently, the women remained illiterate or semi-illiterate and could not access well paying jobs and engage in politics. Education does not only limit the resources or funds available to women, it also affects their decision-making levels during campaign and voting periods. Illiterate or semi-literate women have been known to be easily convinced by their husbands to vote for their husbands preferred candidate. This is because they are not empowered enough to make their own decisions. Illiterate women are also stuck in the belief that only men can lead. This is a stereotype that had been instilled in them for generations. For a number of women, choosing a man to lead is easily the natural thing to do. This kind of attitude emanates from the existing gender structure and is also symptomatic of the normative operations of patriarchy.

Education is necessary if Luo women are to be empowered to actively participate in the political, economic and social spheres of the country. In the political sphere, they will have knowledge, and confidence needed for one to engage in matters of politics. In the labour section, with education the women will acquire jobs that will economically empower them to fund their own political engagement, through their resources and credit from financial institutions.

7.8 Conclusion

This chapter examined the engagement of Luo women in the multi-party politics in Kenya. It has been argued that the women have not performed as well as they did during the single-party era. We also noted that a number of issues had held back Luo women. One of the main challenges noted was that of non-involvement in

⁸⁵ R. Apiyo, Oral Interview, 15/5/06.

party politics. Luo women had been invisible in the main party's leadership structures and this had cost them nominations and seats in the August House. Other challenges included funding, gender based violence against women, and culture. We also discussed education and labour that continued to be elusive for the majority of Luo women, partly contributing to their marginal performance in politics. Ironically, as the numbers of women in parliament increased during the multi-party era, for the rest of the country, Luo women's stars in parliament deemed with the multi party era. A few women were elected at the local government level. Therefore, there is need for the women to go back to the drawing board if they are to regain the legacy of the community.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

In this final chapter, we present the conclusions of the study. In this work, we set out to examine the engagement of Luo women in politics beginning 1895 to 2002. We began from the premise that despite the fact that women constitute more than half of Kenya's population and have the numerical strength to engage in politics, they remain invisible in the political sphere. We therefore examined the impediments to women's involvement in politics using the Luo women as a case study.

This study adopted liberal feminism and gender theory as tools of analysis. Feminists take as their starting point the patriarchal structure of society. Patriarchy refers to power relations in which women's interests are subordinated to the interests of men. The power relations take many forms, economic, social and political.

Feminism has a direct political dimension as it is not only aware of women's oppression but also seeks to confront male power in all its dimensions. In this broad formulation of women's interests, the task of feminism is to examine the particular ways in which power operates within and between the political, social and economic spheres of specific societies. Therefore, feminism is a political project of transformation. Liberal feminism aims to achieve full equality in all spheres of life without radically transforming the present social and political patriarchal system. Feminists advocate for strategies like affirmative action in negotiating for space in the male dominated spheres such as politics.

I agree with the liberal feminists that the Luo are a patriarchal society whereby all the institutions are dominated by the male gender. The study however showed that there was limited access to political power in the period of study as long as women worked with a patriarch. This was captured in the life histories of women politicians and in the rejoinder from Ogot. The patriarchal tendencies remain dominant in the Luo society.

However all is not lost for Luo women. Women in Kenya must celebrate the passage and promulgation of the New Constitution in 2010 as it contains many gains for them. One of these major gains is the two-thirds gender rule in any appointment of elective posts; no gender should exceed two-thirds. Women are therefore, guaranteed one-third of slots in elective and appointive bodies. The New Constitution provides, for the voice of women and their representation in the main political organs in Kenya, that is the National Assembly, the Senate and the County Assembly.

This work began with an overview of women in pre-colonial Luo society. We noted that women were involved in the political sphere together with the men. In the pre-colonial society, the political, economic and social spheres were closely merged unlike in the colonial and post-colonial eras. Thus, women's political responsibilities in the household and in the wider community may have been different but not inferior to those of men. In the Luo pre-colonial society, a woman's engagement in politics was determined by her position, and special gift. For instance, the role of the first wife in the homestead who could also be *pim* (elderly woman) was recognised and respected by all. *Pim* was charged with the responsibilities of educating the young girls on the values, morals of the society and punishing younger women who went against social norms. There were also medicine women and prophetess who played important roles in the society. However, we noted that Luo traditional culture was predominantly patrilineal and patriarchal. In this environment men were the predominant gender.

Historically, Kenyan women in general and Luo in particular have been relatively marginalised in the political sphere. As indicated in the study, effective and elaborate marginalisation of women in the political realm occurred during the colonial period. The British rule in Kenya between 1895-1963 laid the foundation for women's exclusion from the newly introduced Western political institutions and structures of the state. The colonial state drew clear cut boundaries between politics, economics and social spheres therefore locking out women from politics. Through colonial socializing agents such as mission churches and schools, Luo women's mental orientation and consciousness were engineered towards domesticity as opposed to public affairs. The newly created colonial structures of representational governance, local councils, municipalities and parliament were designed only for men.

Throughout the colonial era, politics was a male preserve. The colonial officials worked only with the African men giving them legislative training, thereby according them the necessary experience and aptitude in the conduct of public affairs. Consequently, as the men became increasingly identified with the so-called public sphere, women's home-centred base became the private sphere and the boundaries between the two spheres was clearly drawn, unlike in the pre-colonial era. As the end of colonialism, approached in the 1950s, the British government trained only Kenyan men in the art of governance, while totally marginalising women. Thus, at independence, it was business as usual as Kenyan men folk took over the reigns of political power from the colonial agents and sidelined women to the non-political sphere.

The post colonial period has witnessed the continuation of women's marginalisation in politics with a few women breaking the barrier, to limited access to the political structures and processes. These were the Luo women; Grace Onyango, Phoebe Asiyio and Grace Ogot Caroline Oguta and Roselyne Aricho whose profiles we presented in the study. The UN proposed minimum critical mass of 30–35 percent representation by women in parliament in order to ensure their significant presence in a political decision making remains elusive in Kenya. However, with the New Constitution that includes affirmative action in the political sphere, things are looking better for all Kenyan women.

The introduction of the multi-party politics and the democratization transition of the 1990s ushered in a new era of increased democratic freedom in Kenya. Kenyan women mobilised themselves in various sectors, especially in the political sphere in an effort to regain their political clout, which was lost during colonialism and at independence, when the men appropriated the national cake for themselves. Yet, this study has established that inspite of Luo women's effort to exploit the anticipated political opportunities offered by the democratic era the 1990s, they have not made significant gains. For Luo women, the multi-party brought with it new challenges, so that the few women who had been elected to parliament during the single-party era dwindled from the scene. Indeed, from 1969 to 1992, Luo women had been elected to parliament to represent their people. Unfortunately, the multi-party era, has led to the alienation of Luo women from national politics. Women's star at the national level seems to have partly deemed with multi-party politics. However, the women have participated in the local politics as shown by the two cases of the councillors.

In chapter two it's argued that the Luo women were actively involved in the economic, social and political spheres of their society in the pre-colonial era. Women's roles cut across all the spheres at the household and community levels. Although men and women performed separate tasks, the worth of these duties was given equal recognition. As the men engaged in politics at the community level, women concentrated in educating, disciplining, the children and controlling their resources at the household level. There were exceptions to this rule, however, when dealing with women spirit mediums, prophetess and medicine women. Because of the supernatural gifts and powers that they had, such women could be consulted when the need arose even by the elders of the community. Their decisions in such cases would impact on the larger community, on both men and women.

Both men and women equally participated in the day to day activities that sustained the community, such as farming, building of houses, trading, hunting and gathering. During farming, the men cleared the land, tilled it, and women followed them, planting seeds.

During the times of harvesting, men cut down the harvest (grains) while the women transported the harvest and stored it in the granaries. Both gender were engaged in trade. Women were active in the purchase and sale of cereals, chicken, eggs, vegetables, herbs, roots, pots, baskets, while men bought and sold livestock. Consequently, because of this division of labour, there was relatively very little discrimination against any of the sexes. However, because the men paid bride price to marry their wives, they acted superior within the patriarchal culture and they gave orders on who was to do what and when in the household. Indeed, the rich men in Luo land did not do farm work because they had many wives, children and even tenants living in the homestead. All these people worked on the rich men's farms and looked after their livestock.

In chapters three and four, we focused on the colonial era and how it impacted on Luo women. With the new era, from 1895, the independence of women was altered as their roles were confined to the domestic sphere. As discussed in the study, colonialism with its Victorian ideology, considered the place of the women to be in the kitchen while that of the men as in the public sphere, thus, relegating women to the periphery of the public sphere. Women were to rely on men for their needs and were therefore not to engage in public activities outside the homestead. The public and private domain divide meant that women were not to be involved in the political affairs of their society, leave alone working for wages.

Consequently, to entrench this new paradigm, the colonial officials introduced new education, taxation, labour policies that targeted the men. For example, men were the first to be enrolled in colonial and missionary schools that prepared them for their roles in the public domain. Women, on the other hand, were left out to perform domestic duties. Even in cases where women were given education, it was tailored towards their domestication. We have seen from the study that very few women got education during the colonial era. This limited their enrolment in wage labour and in politics.

The colonial policies on taxation and labour also negatively impacted on Luo women as shown in the study. Looking at taxation, women were forced to crowd together in huts as men could not afford to pay hut tax on each of their huts. In Kisumu, we pointed out the case of the poor widow, who was arrested for not raising taxes which she could not afford. Thus, her relatives had to come to her rescue. The wage labour policy also meant that many young men left the reserves to work in the towns and plantations. This policy worked against the Luo family start-up and also increased the women's labour time, as they did some of the work their men had been doing on the farm. Luo Women, like all the other Kenyan women did not accept the discriminative policies without protesting.

Women too joined their men in the struggle for independence as indicated in the case study of Magdalene Aboge. They too had realised that only total independence from their colonial masters would solve their economic, social and political problems. The women also had continued to organise themselves into welfare groups just like they had done during the pre-colonial period to assist them in terms of social and economic need. In the 1950s, the colonial administrators' wives started the MYWO to mobilise women and educate them in homecraft and handcraft skills. The traditional gender roles were transformed during the colonial period, bringing about the marginalization of women. In the struggle for independence, the women hoped to bring about changes in the system. This was not to be.

In chapters five and six we argued that the attainment of independence in Kenya did not translate into better political engagement for Luo women whose involvement in politics was better before the colonial era. Although women were granted voting rights and they could vie for any political posts, they lacked the requirements such as education and property. At the same time, the patriarchal culture and their roles could not allow them time to get engaged in politics. The majority of Luo women remained marginalised from politics that was separated from the economic and social spheres of their society.

However, a few Luo women went against the grain to represent their people in the political organs in the country. These were the women whose profiles and voices we have included in this study. These women indicated that despite the odds against Luo women, they came out to fight for their rights and to be counted in the country's political sphere. Their profiles also demonstrated that in whatever roles they served, they excelled just like the men thus, proving the fact that women too can be good in politics. The women listed the challenges they faced such as culture, lack of resources, gender based violence, party politics and socialisation. These women were liberal feminists who wanted change within the existing structures. They worked closely with the support of the families and the government systems. The feminists also fought for policies like equal opportunities for all and affirmative action.

The period of the Women's United Nations Decade 1975–1985 witnessed an improved awareness of women's rights. Consequently, most governments including Kenya recognised the importance of integrating women in their development agenda. The period also saw an increment in girls' education. The Declaration of Universal Free Education in 1979 also resulted in most girls enrolling in schools even though their numbers were still lower than that of the boys.

The last chapter focused on the multi-party politics era in the 1990s. As noted earlier, women seized the opportunity of increased democratic freedom. They actively mobilised

themselves and lobbied for the recognition of their rights. Women mobilised as scholars, professionals and businesswomen. Women scholars such as Maria Nzomo wrote extensively on the plights of women and what women wanted done by the government. In 1995, the Beijing Conference was held and emphasised on affirmative action. This too further stressed on the fact that no government would develop without integrating women in their agenda. Consequently, the government created a Ministry for Women and Youth Affairs. Unfortunately, the Government went ahead and appointed a man as the Minister. Shortly thereafter, the Ministry was abolished.

During the 1992 multi-party elections, Phoebe Asiyo was elected back to parliament to represent women in the August House. Unfortunately, this marked the first and so far last multi-party election in which Luo women were to be represented. What followed in 1997-2002 was the marginalisation of Luo women in parliament. It is true that towards the decline of the Moi era, most women through civic education, lobbying from the scholars, women associations had become aware of their political rights and were willing to vote and generally participate in politics, in large numbers. Unfortunately, because of the challenges of the multi-party politics, women could not find their way into parliament. One of the main challenges was that of party – politics. The parties determined the nomination of candidates. And since the women were missing in the leadership of the main-parties, they were not nominated to represent the parties. Thus Phoebe Asiyo emphasised that women must register as party members, and be actively involved in party politics if they are to be nominated by these main parties. The perspective of this section too was that of liberal feminists and gender that called for the engagement of women at all levels of the society in order to end marginalization.

During her term in the Seventh parliament, Asiyo introduced the Asiyo Bill on Affirmative Action. The Bill sought for at least 30 percent representation of women in parliament and other political organs. She argued that this percentage would give women a critical mass necessary for representing their agenda nationally. Unfortunately, this Bill was thrown out by the male-dominated House. The New Constitution embraced the affirmative action for women, therefore giving hope to the Luo women. In conclusion, the study has attained its objectives and sustained its premises.

Finally, based on the findings of this study, a number of major recommendations emerged. Women form more than half of Kenya's population. They must therefore be incorporated in the political organs of the state. To fully engage women in politics, several actors must be brought on board. These include Luo society in general, the government,

political parties, women movements and associations and non governmental organizations. As for the society, Luo people, the men and women, parents, and educators need to change their perceptions of the girl-child's socialization and education. Educators and policy makers need to prioritise education for the girl-child and to make the girls' education responsive to the societal needs which include empowerment, leadership and information access. The government must work towards mainstreaming gender in political organs and all other offices of decision-making as stated in the New Constitution. Also, public education is imperative for women, to assist them in developing leadership skills required to become effective social change agents within Kenya's political system, both at national and local levels. Education would also broaden the women's knowledge and understanding of political issues and also enhance their engagement in the electoral process.

Women's associations, non-government organizations and political parties, they too need to build and strengthen solidarity among Luo women through educational information and sensitization activities. Political parties could do more by incorporating gender sensitive policies in their agenda, and taking active measures to ensure that women participate in their leadership organs on an equal basis with men. Consequently, more women will be engaged in party and national politics. Indeed, more countries have understood that women's equality in the political, economic and social spheres is a prerequisite for development. If Kenya is to develop, she must treat all her citizens, both women and men as equals in her political, economic and social domains. Consequently, the affirmative action aspect in the New Constitution must be implemented for the benefit of all, in all sectors of the government.

Finally, this study focused mainly on women; a rare tenet in much of social science research where women's issues seem to be glossed over. Partly, the aim of this study was to make women visible in the research works that focus on Kenya in colonial political transformation that the Luo community had undergone. Therefore, the study may not have covered male politicians adequately and thus the recommendation for further research in order to have a full gender picture, where men's views and roles can be fully integrated.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Archival Sources

- East African Protectorate: Native Labour Commission, 1912-1913: Evidence and Report.
- KNA Municipal Council of Kisumu, Annual Report, 1965.
- KNA, Municipal and County Council Matters, Chapter III section 1a Expenditure for 1967.
- KNA, Municipal Council of Kisumu, Annual Report, Section 30, Kisumus' Population, 1965.
- KNA, Social Services and Housing Department, "3. Housing" Municipal Council of Kisumu, Annual Report for 1964".
- KNA. Municipal and County Council Matters, Chapter III section 1c, 1965.
- KNA. Municipal Council of Kisumu, Annual Report, 1965.
- KNA. Municipal Council of Kisumu, Annual Report, section 19, "Main Drainage Extensions", 1965.
- KNA. Municipal Council of Kisumu, Social Services and Housing Committee, 1965.
- KNA/AAL/13/22. Ministry of Labour Annual Report, 1965.
- KNA/AAL/13/25. Ministry of Labour Annual Report, 1965.
- KNA/ABK/14/212. Compulsory Communal Labour by Women, 1950.
- KNA/ABK/18/55. Labour Inspection Reports, Kisumu, 1964.
- KNA/ABK/18/63. Annual Report Central Nyanza District, 1955.
- KNA/AH/22/53. African Manpower Recruitment, 1942.
- KNA/AMP/5/57. Maendeleo ya Wanawake Policy General, 1976.
- KNA/AMP/5/59. Maendeleo ya Wanawake Policy General, 1985.
- KNA/ARC(M.A.A). 2/3/10 Vol. 111. Nyanza Provincial Annual Reports.
- KNA/ARC/MAA/2/3/10. Vol. I – Administration Nyanza Annual Reports, 1939-1940.
- KNA/AV/12/260. Seventh Day Adventist School Kamagambo South Kavirondo.
- KNA/BV/1/169. Native Labour, General, 1940s.
- KNA/DC/CN/1/10. Central Nyanza District Annual Report, 1957.
- KNA/DC/CNZ/1/10. Central Nyanza District Annual Report, 1955.
- KNA/DC/KSM/1/1/16. Provincial Intelligence Report July, 1940.
- KNA/DC/KSM/1/1/16. Provincial Intelligence Report, December, 1946.
- KNA/DC/KSM/1/1/255. Home Craft Training General, 1950.
- KNA/DC/KSM/1/1/256. Community Development Training of African Women, 1953-59.
- KNA/DC/KSM/1/16/48, 1949-1957. Monthly Report African Affairs.

KNA/DC/KSM/1/17/98. Female Labour (African).

KNA/DC/KSM/1/20/5, Municipal Council of Kisumu and Committees Minutes Agenda, 1963-1964.

KNA/DC/KSM/1/27/3 – Recruitment of Warders – Prisons General, 1930-1957.

KNA/DC/KSM/1/28/41. Annual Report Provincial Commissioner, 1936-37.

KNA/DC/KSM/1/28/48. Publications and Research Laobur Department Monthly Reports, 1952.

KNA/DC/KSU/13 Annual Reports, South Kavirondo, District 1924-34.

KNA/HT/17/3, Central Nyanza Annual Report, 1963.

KNA/HT/17/4, Annual Report District Commissioner and other Districts, 1967.

KNA/HT/17/4. Annual Report of District Commissioner, 1967.

KNA/HT/17/51, Municipal Council of Kisumu Twenty Fifth Annual Report, 1965.

KNA/HT/17/52. Municipal Council of Kisumu. Twenty Ninth Annual Report, 1969.

KNA/HT/17/53. Municipal Council of Kisumu Education Department Annual Report, 1971.

KNA/HT/17/66. Kisumu County Council, Annual Report, 1967.

KNA/HT/17/69, Kisumu County Commission Annual Report, 1968.

KNA/Kisumu District Annual and Quarterly Report (KNA), 1915-1919.

KNA/MSS/115/10/22. Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, Labour Department Annual Report, 1955.

KNA/MSS/57/27, A Speech by Mrs Gethi to National Council of Women Delegates, 1965.

KNA/MSS/57/27, A Speech by Mrs Gethi to National Council of Women Delegates, 1964.

KNA/MSS/61/122. Kavirondo Village Schools, 1931-1937.

KNA/MSS/61/461. African Labour, 1942-46.

KNA/Nyanza Province Annual Report, 1922.

KNA/NZA/3/6/60. Schools in Luoland, 1956-58.

KNA/OC/KSII3/1, South Nyanza Political Records.

KNA/PC/NZA/1/3/47/1, Native Hut sand Poll Tax Ordinance of 1934.

KNA/PC/NZA/1/3/48/1, Nyanza Province Hut and Poll Tax ordinance, 1935.

KNA/PC/NZA/2/1/12/53, File on Soil Erosion, 1930-1944.

KNA/PC/NZA/2/11/11. African Education, 1932-37.

KNA/PC/NZA/2/11/14. Schools, 1932-46

KNA/PC/NZA/2/11/15. Schools, 1932-1946.

KNA/PC/NZA/2/11/19. 1932-51.

KNA/PC/NZA/2/11/25. Missions, 1937-39.

KNA/PC/NZA/2/11/27. Natives 1939-40.

KNA/PC/NZA/2/11/3. African Educaiton, 1931-47.

KNA/PC/NZA/2/11/32. Mission Education, 1940-1943..

KNA/PC/NZA/2/11/33. Schools, 1940-50.

KNA/PC/NZA/2/11/41. District Education Board, General 1942-46.

KNA/PC/NZA/2/11/5. Education Committees, 1931-45.

KNA/PC/NZA/2/11/50. African Education, 1945-50.

KNA/PC/NZA/2/11/6. Natives, 1931-50.

KNA/PC/NZA/2/11/6. Natives, 1931-50.

KNA/PC/NZA/2/19/12, Exemption on Hut and Poll Tax 1931-42.

KNA/PC/NZA/3/1/3/16. Luo Union, PC Nyanza to Luo Union, 18 June, 1952.

KNA/PC/NZA/3/1/3/21, 1952-1955b. Institutions and Associations, RAWA to Luo Union,
15, December, 1954.

KNA/PC/NZA/3/1/3/21, 1952-1955C. Institutions and Associations, Luo Union to RAWA,
1st, December, 1955.

KNA/PC/NZA/3/1/3/6. Lo Union to PC Nyanza, 23, July, 1954.

KNA/PC/NZA/3/1/321, 1952-1955a. Institutions and Associations, “Complaints against
Ramogi, 31, May, 1952.

KNA/PC/NZA/3/1/6 Luo Union to PC Nyanza, Dec, 1955, 1951-1955C.

KNA/PC/NZA/3/20/17/1, Employment of Juveniles, 1925-28.

KNA/PC/NZA/3/20/4/2 Compulsory Labour Circular, 17th, March, 1925.

KNA/PC/NZA/3/6/04. CMS Maseno Girls School, 1946.

KNA/PC/NZA/3/6/121. African Teachers Organisation, 1936-41.

KNA/PC/NZA/3/6/123. Training of African Teachers, 1940-45.

KNA/PC/NZA/3/6/138. Education Committees, 1945-51.

KNA/PC/NZA/3/6/68. Education in African Society, 1944-45.

KNA/PC/NZA/3/6/74. General Correspondence, 1951-57.

KNA/PC/NZA/3/6/87. Mill Hill School Aluor, 1932-1939.

KNA/PC/NZA/3/6/89. Asumbi Mission School, 1933-37.

KNA/PC/NZA/3/6/99. Sega Mill Hill School, 1939.

KNA/PC/NZA/4/2/2/76, Correspondence on Taxation and guidance for Poll tax collectors,
1931-49.

KNA/PC/NZA/4/4/63 Central Nyanza Annual Report.

KNA/PC/NZA/5/5/1910: Annual Reports for Nyanza Province. 1910.

KNA: Social Services Annual Report, 1960.

Republic of Kenya. *The National Assembly Fourth Parliament Third Session*, 10 March 1981 – 5 May 1981.

Republic of Kenya. *The National Assembly Official Report, Fourth Parliament Third Session*, 9 June 1981 – 30 July 1981.

Republic of Kenya. *The National Assembly Official Report*, in augmented vol. Lviii 4th December, 1979 Fourth Session, Tuesday 8, June 1982 Thursday 29, July 1982.

Republic of Kenya. *The National Assembly Official Report, Third Parliament*, inaugurated Nov, 6, 1974, Vol xxx viii, April, 29, 1975 – June 1975.

Republic of Kenya. *The National Assembly Official Report, Adoption of Development Plan, 1970-1974*, 4th March, Nairobi: National Assembly Library, 1970.

Republic of Kenya. *The National Assembly Official Report, First Session*, Tuesday, 22nd September 1970- Friday 6th November 1970. Nairobi: KNA

Republic of Kenya. *The National Assembly Official Report, Second Session*, Tuesday 26th October, Nairobi: National Assembly Library, 1971.

Republic of Kenya. *The National Assembly Official Report, Second Parliament Inaugurated 6th Feb, 1970. Second Session*, 5th May, Nairobi: National Assembly Library, 1971.

Republic of Kenya. *The National Assembly Official Report, Third Session*, Tuesday, 13th June, 1972. Nairobi: National Assembly Library.

Republic of Kenya. *The National Assembly Official Reports, 1970 – 1972*, KNA

Newspapers and Magazine Articles

Asego, N. “Grace Ogot: A Woman of All Seasons”, *The Sunday Standard*, July 16, 2006.

Baraka, K. “Grace Onyango: Reflections on Politics and Leadership” in *The East African Standard*, Nairobi: Nation Media Group Archives 2000.

Godia, J. “Nyanza Women all Set to Tear Down Male Supremacy” in *Focus, The Sunday Standard*, April 2007.

Kenya News Agency. “Mboya again raps KPU and Mayor” *Daily Nation*, July 22, 1968.

Mathenge, G., “From Cookery and Knitting to key role in Big-league Politics” in *The Sunday Nation Newspaper*, Nairobi: Nation Media Group Archives, 18 April, 2004.

Mugo, J. “The Woman with a Mighty Capacity to Stay in Power” *Magazine, Kenya Times*, August 16. Nairobi: Nation media Group Archives, 1985.

Nation Reporter “Mrs Onyango Attacked on Loyalty”. *Daily Nation*, July 13, Nairobi: National Media Archives, 1968.

_____, “Mboya’s ‘No’ to Debate in Kisumu” *Daily Nation*, August 9th Nairobi: Nation Archives, 1968.

Ombuor, J. “Meet Phoebe Asiyu: One of Kenya’s Most Influential Women’ In *Election Platform*. October 31, 2007.

Osaaji, G.M. *The Sunday Standard* May, 28, 2006.

Oyua, J. “Still Searching for Elusive Uhuru” *Sunday Magazine, The Standard*, March 15, 2009.

Oywa, J. And Wangui, B. “How Sexism Locked Women Out” *Gender AGENDA Election Platform*, November, 21, 2007.

Silva, Da, E. “Place for Women in Kenya Politics” *Sunday Nation* Dec, 31 Nairobi: Nation Archives, 1969.

Sittoni, M.P. Special Report, *Daily Nation*, March 8, 2002.

Standard Correspondent, “Luo Union Post”. *East African Standard*, January 30, Nairobi: East African Standard Archives, 1969.

Standard Correspondent, “Mayor of Kisumu Defends Council” *East African Standard*, August 26, 1968.

Standard Reporter, “Grace Onyango: A Woman of Firsts”. *Sunday Standard*, May 7, 1989.

The Daily Nation. March, 7, 2001.

The East African Standard, March, 7, 2001.

The Sunday Standard, “Grace Onyango: A Woman of Firsts” May 7, 1989.

The Weekly Review 24, January 1986.

The Weekly Review, Aug, 2, 1980.

The Weekly Review, Aug, 9, 1985.

The Weekly Review, Dec, 19, 1986.

The Weekly Review, July 11, 1980.

The Weekly Review, July 26, 1985.

The Weekly Review, June 15, 1979.

The Weekly Review, June 15, 1979.

The Weekly Review, May, 25, 1979.

The Weekly Review, Nov 9, 1979.

The Weekly Review, Nov, 14, 1980.

The Weekly Review, Nov, 14, 1980.

The Weekly Review, Oct 10, 1980.

The Weekly Review, Oct 11, 1976.

The Weekly Review, Oct, 30, 1987.

The Weekly Review, Sept, 12, 1980.

Weru, G. "Special Report" *Daily Nation*, August, 23, Nairobi, 1995. Pp. Viii-ix.

Theses and Dissertations

Ayot, T.A. "The Position of Women in Luo Societies: Case Study of Jok Onyango, A.D. 1750-1920", Ph.D. Thesis, Kenyatta University, 1990.

Butterman, J.M. "Luo Social Formations in Change: Karachuono and Kanyamkago, 1800-1945". Ph.D Thesis, Syrause University, 1979.

Choti, C.O. "Gender and Electoral Politics in Kenya: The Case of Gusii Women, 1990-2002". Ph.D. Dissertation, Clark Atlanta University, Atlanta, Georgia, 2005.

Hay, M.J. "Economic Change in Luoland: Kowe, 1890-1945" Ph.D. Thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1972.

Miguda, E.A. "Mau Mau in Nairobi: 1946-1956: Case Study – The Luo Experience". M.A. Thesis, Nairobi, 1987.

Musandu, P. "Daughter of Oodoro: Grace Onyango and African Women's History" M.A. Thesis, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, 2006.

Ndeda, M.A.J., "The Impact of Male Labour Migration on Rural Women: A Case Study of Siaya District: C, 1894-1963. Ph.D. Thesis, KU, 1991.

Ndege, G.O. "The Transformation of Cattle Economy in Rongo Division, South Nyanza District, 1900-1960". M.A. Thesis, Nairobi, 1989.

Ndege, P.O. "Struggles for the Market: The Political Economy of Commodity Production and Trade in Western Kenya, 1929-1939", Ph.D. Dissertation, West Virginia University, 1993.

Nykwaka, D.A. "Agricultural Change in Rongo Division, Migori District, 1850-1963." MPhil. Thesis, Moi University, 1996.

Onduru, T.A. "Some Aspects of Economic Change in Kano, Kenya, 1850-1963". MA Thesis, University of Nairobi , 1992.

Osamba, J.A. "Power sharing and the Management of Ethnopolitical Conflicts in Post Cold War Kenya: An Exploratory Study". Ph.D, Thesis, Nova Southeastern University, USA, 2005.

Osamba, J.O. "Colonial African Labour in the Asian Owned Sugar Plantations in Kisumu District – Kenya 1901 – 1963: The Role of Colonial Capitalisation in Underdevelopment" M.Phil, Moi University, 1994.

Tarus, K.I. "A History of the Direct Taxation of the African People of Kenya, 1895 – 1973."
Ph.D. Thesis, Rhodes University, 2003.

Waiyego, S.M. "Engendering Political Space: Women's Participation in Kangema, Murang'a District, 1963-2002", M.A. Thesis, Kenyatta University, 2004.

Journal Articles and Book Chapters

Abwao, P. "Memorandum of Behalf of the African Women to the Kenya Constitutional Conference in London, February, 1962" In Kihoro, W. (Ed) *A Vision of the Future from the Past: Essential Public Documents in the Making of the New Kenya Constitution*, Nairobi: ABANTU for Development, 2002.

Achola, P.O. "Daughters of the Lakes and Rivers: Colonization and the Land Rights of Luo Women" in Mona, Eitenne and E. Leacock (eds) *Women and Colonisation: Anthropological Perspectives*. New York: Praeger, 1980.

Akech, A. "(Re) turn of Women: Post-Moi's Kenya and Electoral Politics in Kalenji Rift Valley" in Kanyinga, K. and Okello, D. *Tensions and Reversals in Democratic Transitions: The Kenya 2007 General Elections*. Nairobi: SID/IDS, 2010, pp.599-620.

Allen, Van, J. "Aba Riots' or Igbo Omen's War'? Ideology, Stratification and Invisibility of Women" in Hafkin, N.J. and Bay, E.G. (Eds) *Women in Africa: Studies in Socio-Economic Change*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005, pp. 59-86.

Amadiume, I. "Gender, Political Systems and Social Movements: A West African Experience" in Madani, M and E. Wamba-dia-Wamba (eds) *African Studies in Social Movements and Democracy*. Dakar: CODESRIA, 1994 pp. 15-135.

Atieno-Odhiambo, E.S. "Seek ye First the Economic Kingdom: A History of the Luo Thrift and Trading Corporation (LUTATCO) 1945-1956" in Ogot, B.A. (ed) *Hadith 5. Economic and Social History of East Africa*. Nairobi: KLB, 1979.

Aubrey, L.M. "Gender, Development and Democratization in Africa" in Ndegwa, Stephen (ed). *A Decade of Democracy in Africa*. Leiden: Brill, 2000. Pp. 89-130.

Ayot, T.O. "South Nyanza Historical Texts, Vol. 11" Kenyatta University, Dept. Of History, 1990.

Beijing Conference, *Handbook IFLANET*, Annual Conference, Beijing: 1996.

Berger, J. "Rebel or Status-Seekers? Women as Spirit Mediums in East Africa" in Hafkin and Bay, G. (eds). *Women in Africa: Studies in Social and Economic Change*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996. Pp. 157-182.

- Billow, Bon, Dorthé, “Bigger than men? Gender Relations and their changing meaning in Kipsigis Society, Kenya” in *Africa* Vol. 62 NO. 4, 1992 pp. 523-546.
- Bujra, J.M. “Class, Gender and Capitalist Transformation” in Robertson, C. and Berger I. (Eds) *Women and Class in Africa*. New York, 1986.
- Caroteruto, M. “Riwruok, E. Teko: Cultivating Identity in Colonial and Post Colonial Kenya” in *African Today*, 2006, pp.56-75.
- Chazan, N. “Gender Perspectives on African States” Parpart, J.L. and Staudt, K.A. (Eds) *Women and State in Africa*. London: Boulder, 1989. 120-158.
- Chesoni, Atsango, “Two Steps Forward, One Step Back. Women and Constitutional Reform 1997-2002” *FIDA Annual Report*, 2002. P.7.
- Chitere, P.O. “The Women’s Self-Help Movement in Kenya: A Historical Perspective, 1940-80” *TransAfrican Journal of History*, Vol 17, 1988. Pp. 50-68.
- Choge, C.S. “Matriarchy Rises to Leadership among Patriarchal Kalenjin: The Dynamics and Perspectives of the 2007 General Elections in Kenya: in Kanyinga, K. And Okelo, D. Tensions and Reversals in Democratic Transitions: The Kenya 2007 General Elections. Nairobi:SID/IDS, 2010, pp. 621-652.
- Denzer, L. “Women in Government Service in Colonial Nigeria, 1862-1945”. Boston University African Studies Centre, Working paper 136, 1989.
- Driberg, J.H. “The Status of Women Among the Nilotes and Nilo-hamites” *Africa*, London, 5. No. 4. Pp. 409-440.
- Ekeh, P. “The Public Realm and Public Finance in Africa” in Himmelstrand and K. Mburugu (eds) *African perspectives on Development: Controversies, Dilemmas and Openings*. Kampala, 1994.
- Eshiwani, G. “*The Education of Women in Kenya, 1975-1984*” Bureau of Educational Research, KU, 1985.
- Guidzanwa, R. “Gender Analysis in the field of Education: A Zimbabwean Example” in A. Imam, A. Mama and F. Sow (eds). *Engendering African Social Science*. Dakar:CODESRIA, 1997. Pp. 250-280.
- Hay, J.M. “Luo Women and Economic Change during the Colonial Period”. In Hafkin, N. and Bay, G.E. (Eds). *Women in Africa: Studies in Social and Economic Change*. California: Stanford University Press, 1976. Pp. 87-110.
- Kanogo, T. “Kenya and the Depression, 1929-1939” in Ochieng, W.R. (ed). *A Modern History of Kenya, 1895-1980*. Nairobi: Evans, 1989.

- Kanogo, T. "Kikuyu Women and Politics of Protest: Mau Mau" in P. Macdonald and Ardner (eds), *Images of Women in peace and war, Cross-cultural perspectives*. London: Macmillan, 1987. Pp. 60-90.
- Kiragu, J. "Is there a Woman's Movement?" in Muteshi, J. (ed) *Mapping Best Practices: Promoting Gender Equality and the Advancement of Kenyan Women*. Nairobi: Heinrich Boll Foundation, 2000.
- Lonsdale, J. "The Conquest State, 1894-1904" in Ochieng, W.R. (ed). *A Modern History of Kenya, 1895-1980*. Nairobi: Evans, 1980.
- Manuh, T. "The Status of Research on Women in Ghana" ASA Conference paper, 1991.
- Maxon, R.M. "The Establishment of the Colonial Economy" in Ochieng, W.R. and Maxon, R.M (eds). *An Economic History of Kenya*. Nairobi: EAPH, 1992.
- Maxon, R.M. "The Years of Revolutionary Advance, 1920-1929" in Ochieng, W.R. (eds). *A Modern History of Kenya, 1895-1980*. Nairobi: Evans, 1989.
- Mazrui, O.E. "The Impact of Cultural Perceptions on Gender Issues" in Creighton, C. And Yieke, F(eds) *Gender Inequalities in Kenya*. UNESCO: UNESCO, 2006, pp.145-165.
- Miguda, E. "Engendering Democracy in Kenya: Effects of Multiparty Electoral System on Women Participation in Politics" in L. Chweya (ed) *Electoral politics in Kenya*. Nairobi: Claripress, 2002.
- Mitullah, V.W. "Institutional Framework for Gender Equality: A Scoreless Affirmative Action in the Kenya 2007 Elections. In Kanyinga, K. And Okello, D. *Tensions and Reversals in Democratic Transitions: The Kenya 2007 General Elections*. Nairobi: SID/IDS, 2010, pp.565-599.
- Mugo, J. *Broadening the Stakeholders Base*. Nairobi:FIDA, 1990.
- Musisi, N. "Women, Elite polygyny' and Buganda State Formation" in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 16, No. 4, 1991. Pp.757-786.
- Nason'go, S.W. and Ayot, T.O. "Women in Kenya's Politics of Transition and Democratisation" in Murunga, G.R. and Nason'go W.S. (eds) *Kenya: The Struggle for Democracy*. Dakar: CODESRIA, 2007, pp. 164-196.
- Nasong'o, W.S. and Ayot, T.O. "Women in Kenya's Politics of Transition and Democratization" in Murunga, G.R. and Nasongo, S.W. (Eds) *Kenya: The Struggle for Democracy*. Dakar CODESRIA, 2007. Pp. 164-196.
- Ndeda, M.A.J. "The Women's Subordination in African Independent Churches: The Case of Nomiya Luo Church" *The Eastern African Journal of Historical and Social Sciences Research*, Vol 1 (2) 1997, pp. 10-13.

- Ndeda, M.A.J. "Women and Development Since Colonial Times" in Ochieng, W.R (ed) *Historical Studies and Social Change in Western Kenya: Essays in Memory of Professor G.S. Were*. Nairobi: 2002. pp. 232-261.
- Niang, S. "Women and Democracy in Africa" in *Courier*, No. 171, 1988, pp.66-88.
- Nnaemeka, O. "What's in a Name?" In Perry, S. and Schenck, C. (eds) *Eye to Eye: Women Practising Development Across Cultures*. London:Zed Books, 2001.
- Nykwaka, D.A. "Gender and Sexuality Among the Luo in Kenya: Continuity and Change" in Khamasi, J. and Chinkuyu, S.N.M. (eds) *Sexuality: An African Perspective: The Politics of Self and Cultural Beliefs*. Eldoret: Moi University Press, 2005. Pp. 77-94.
- Nykwaka, D.A. "Women, the State and Tax Protests: The Case of Colonial Kenya, 1895-1963" A Paper presented at CODESRIA Governance Institute, Dakar, 1999.
- Nykwaka, D.A. "Women's Political Participation in Kenya, 1963-2002" A Paper presented at the Historical Association of Kenya Conference, at Lake Baringo, 10th-13th June, 2004.
- Nzomo, M. "Empowerment of Women in the Process of Democratization: Experiences of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania" A Document of an International Conference held in Dar-Es-Salaam, Tanzania, on 5th-th September, 1994.
- Nzomo, M. "Engendering Democratization in Kenya. A Political Perspective" in Kabira, W. *et al Democratic Change in Africa: Women's Perspectives*. Nairobi: AAWORD, 1993. Pp.90-120.
- Nzomo, M. "Engendering Governance Through the Constitutional Review Process" Constitution of Kenya Review Commission: Official Website. <http://www.kenyaconstitution.org/docs/09cd002.htm>.
- Nzomo, M. "Kenyan Women in Politics and Public Decision-making" in Mikell Gwendolyn (ed) *African Feminist: The Politics of Survival in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Philadelphia:University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997. Pp 97-120.
- Nzomo, M. "Taking Stock Women's Performance in Kenya's Parliamentary Politics in the 2002 General Elections". In Nzomo, M. (ed) *Perspectives on Gender Discourse: Women in Politics: Challenges of Democratic Transition in Kenya*. Nairobi:2003. Pp.17-33.
- Nzomo, M. "The Gender Dimension of Democratization in Kenya: Some International Linkages' *Alternatives* Vol. 18, 1993, pp. 61-73.
- Nzomo, M. "Women in East Africa" in Nelly P. I (ed) *Women in the Third World: An Encyclopaedia of Contemporary Issues*. New York: Garland, 199.

- O'Barr, J. "African Women in Politics" in Hay M.J. and Stichter, S. (eds) *African Women South of the Sahara*, New York, Longman 1995. Pp. 141-171.
- Ochieng, W.R. "Colonial Famines in Luoland, Kenya, 1905-1945" in *TransAfrican Journal of History*, Vol. 17, 1988. Pp 21-34.
- Ochieng, W.R. "Thunder from the Islands: Mau Mau in Western Kenya' In Ochieng, W.R. (ed) *Historical Studies and Social Change in Western Kenya*. Nairobi: KLB, 2002, pp. 181-193.
- Ochwada, H. "Church Missionary Society and the Re-construction of Gender Roles in Western Kenya, 1919-1939" in Ochieng, W.R. (ed). *Historical Studies and Social Change in Western Kenya*. Nairobi: KLB, 2002. Pp. 158-180.
- Ochwada, H. "Gender Analysis: The Stunted Discourse in Kenya's Historiography" in *Africa Development* Vol. XX, No. 4 pp. 11-28.
- Oduol, J.A. "Transforming Tradition as a Vehicle for Women's Empowerment: A Critical Dimension for Poverty Eradication" Paper Presented at the Expert Group Meeting, New Delhi, India: November 26-29, 2001.
- Oduol, W. "Kenyan Women in Politics: An Analysis of Past and present Trends", *Transafrican Journal of History*, Vol. 22, pp. 50-65.
- Ogot, B.A. "British Administration in the Central Nyanza District of Kenya 1900-1960" *Journal of African History*, 4, 2, 1953 pp. 25-35.
- Ogot, B.A. "Kenya Under the British 1895 to 1963" in Ogot, B.A. (ed) *Zamani: A Survey of East African History*. Nairobi: Longman, 1974. Pp. 249-290.
- Ojwang, J.B. "Government and Constitutional Development in Kenya, 1895-1995" in Ogot, B.A. and Ochieng, W.R. (eds) *Kenya: The Making of a Nation*. Maseno:IRPS, 2000 pp.149-160.
- Okaro-Kojwang, K.M. "Origins and Establishment of the Kavirondo Tax-payers Welfare Association" *Ngano*, Nairobi: E.A.P.H, 1969. Pp.111-131.
- Okeyo, A. "Daughters of the Lakes and Rivers: Colonization and the Land Rights of Luo Women" in M. Etienne and E. Leacock (eds) *Women and Colonization: Anthropological perspectives*. New York: Praeger, 1980, pp. 122-140.
- Okonjo, K. "The Dual-Sex Political System in Operation: Igbo Women and Community Politics in Midwestern Nigeria". In Hafkin, N. and Bay, G.E. (Eds). *Women in Africa: Studies in Social and Economic Change*. California: Stanford University Press, 1976. Pp. 45-58.
- Ongayo, K. And Lwenya, O. Working Paper on Gender Situation in Kenya. Nairobi:1996.

- Ongayo, K. And Lwenya, O. Working Paper on Gender Situation in Kenya. Nairobi, 1996.
- Otiende, J.E. "Education Since the Early Times" in Ochieng, W.R. (ed) *Themes in Kenyan History*. Nairobi:KLB, 1993.
- Pala, A. "On Theory and Methods: Issues in the Study of Women in African" Paper presented at a National Seminar on Women, Law and Development, Mombasa, 23-27th, Nov, 1987.
- Pepe, R. "Feminism in Africa: Feminism and Africa" *Review of African Political Economy*. No. 27-28, 1984. Pp. 175-185.
- Potash, B. "Marriage Stability in a Rural Luo Community" *Africa*, 48, 4. 1978. Pp. 338-368.
- Ryan, G.W. and Benard, H.R. "Data Management and Analysis Methods" in Denzi, K.N., and Lincoln, Y.S. (eds). *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. 2nd (ed). CA:Thousand Oaks, 2002, pp. 72 -83.
- Savage, K. and Taylor, C. "Academic Freedom in Kenya" *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 25, No.2. 1999. Pp. 310-340.
- Schmidt, E. "Patriarchy, Capitalism and the Colonial State in Zimbabwe" *Signs:Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 16, No.4, 1991. Pp 732-756.
- Scott, J.W. "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis" in the *American Historical Review* Vol. 91, No.5 1986. Pp. 200-230.
- Staudt, K. "Gender Politics in Bureaucracy: Theoretical Issues in Comparative perspective in Staudt, K. (ed) *Women International Development and Politics*. Philadelphia: The Bureaucratic Mire, 1990. 100-130.
- Staudt, K. "The State and Gender in Colonial Africa" in Everret, S.C. and Staudt, K. (eds). *Women, The State and Development*. Albany:Albany, 1989.
- Tsikata, E. "Women's Political Organisations in Ghana, 1951-1987" in Hansen , E. and Ninsin, K. (eds) *The State, Development and Politics in Ghana*, Dakar: CODESRIA, 1989. Pp. 100-20.
- Von Bilow, D. "Bigger than men? Gender Relations and their Changing meaning in Kipsigis Society, Kenya. In *Africa* Vol. 62 No. 4. 1992. Pp. 523-546.
- Wamalwa, B. "Limits of Women's Groups a Viable Channel for the Development of Women in Kenya" in Wallace, T. and March, C. (eds) *Changing Perceptions:Writing on Gender and Development*. Oxford:Oxfam, 1991. Pp.245-253.
- White, L. "Domestic Labour in A Colonial City: Prostitution in Nairobi, 1900-1952" in Stichter, B.S., and Parpart, J.L. (eds) *Patriarchy and Class: African Women in the Home and Workforce*. USA, 1988.

- Wipper, A. "The Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organisation: The Co-optation of Leadership" *African Studies Review*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 1975, pp.99-120.
- Zezeza, P.T. "Gender Biases in Africa's Historiography" in Iman, A., Mama, A. and Sow, F. (eds). *Engendering African Social Science*. Dakar:CODESRIA, 1997. Pp 81-115.
- Zezeza, P.T. "Kenya and the Second World War, 1939-1950" in Ochieng, W.R. (eds) *A Modern History of Kenya 1895-1980*. Nairobi: Evans, 1989.
- Zezeza, P.T. "The Establishment of Colonial State, 1905-1920" in Ochieng, W.R. (eds) *A Modern History of Kenya, 1895-1980*. Nairobi:Evans, 1989.
- Zezeza, T. "The Establishment of Colonial State, 1905-1920" in Ochieng, W.R. (ed). *A Modern History of Kenya, 1895-1980*. Nairobi: Evans, 1989 pp. 60-90.
- Zezeza, T. "Women and the Labour Process in Kenya since Independence". *TransAfrican Journal of History* Vol. 17, 1988. Pp. 69-101.

Books

- AAWORD, *Women and Political Leadership in Kenya: Involvement, Challenges and the way Forward*. Nairobi: AAWORD, 1998.
- AAWORD, *Women's Political Leadership in Kenya: Involvement Challenges and the Way Forward*. Nairobi:AAWORD, 1998.
- Aduol, A. *The Kenyan Women in Politics: An Analysis of past and present Trends*. Nairobi: AAWORD, 1992.
- Allman, J., Geiger, S. and Musisi, N (eds). *Women in Africana Colonial Histories*. Bloomington:Indiana University Press, 2002.
- Amadiume, I. *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society*. London: Zed Press, 1987.
- Amadiume, I. *Daughters of The Goddess, Daughters of Imperialism. African's Women Struggle for Culture, Power and Democracy*. London:Zed, 2000.
- Atieno-Odhiambo, E.S. and Cohen, W.D. *Siaya:The Historical Anthropology of An African Landscape*. London:James Currey, 1989.
- Ayoo, S. *Women in Kenyan History: A Study of Kobilu Kwondoab Kimosop: A Tugen Medicine Woman in Baringo District*. Nairobi: Kaswanga, 1994.
- Ayot, T. *Women and Political Leadership in Pre-colonial Period: Case Study of Chief Mangana of Kadem in Western Kenya*. Nairobi: Kaswanga Press, 1994.
- Bauer, M.W. and Gaskel, G.(eds). *Qualitative Researching with Text, Image and Sound. A Practical handbook*. CA:Thousand Oaks, 2000.

- Bennet, G. *Kenya, A Political History: The Colonial period*. London: Oxford University Press, 1963.
- Berger, I. and Frances, White (eds). *Women in Sub-Saharan Africa: Restoring Women to History*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.
- Berman, B. *Control and Crisis in Colonial Kenya. The Dialectic of Domination*. London: Oxford, 1990.
- Bogdan, R.C. and Biklen, S.K. *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theory and Methods*. Needham: Heights, 1992.
- Bogonko, S.N. *Kenya 1945-1963: A Study of African National Movements*. Nairobi: EAPH, 1980.
- Boserup, E. *Women's Role in Economic Development*. New York: Allan and Urwin, 1970.
- Branden, M. *Women Politicians and the Media*, Lexington; University Press, 1996.
- Brantley, C. *The Giriama and Colonial Resistance in Kenya, 1800-1920*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981.
- Chege, N. and Sifuna, D.N. *Girls and Women's Education in Kenya: Gender perspectives and Trends*. Nairobi: UNESCO, 2006.
- Creighton, C. And Yieke, F. (eds). *Gender Inequalities in Kenya*. UNESCO: UNESCO, 2006.
- Dilley, R.M. *British Policy in Kenya Colony*. London, 1966.
- Elias, N. *The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners and State Formation and Civilization*. Oxford, 1996.
- Elkins, C. *Britains' Gulag: The Brutal End of Empire in Kenya*. London: Oxford, 2005.
- Everret, S.C. and Staudt, K. (eds). *Women, the State and Development*. Albany: Albany, 1989.
- Gordon, A. *Transforming Capitalism and Patriarchy: Gender and Development in Africa*. London; Oxford, 1996.
- Government of Kenya. *Siaya District Development Plan 2008-2012*. Nairobi: Government Printer, 2009.
- Government of Kenya. *Kisumu East District Development Plan, 2008-2012*. Nairobi: Government Printer, 2009.
- Government of Kenya. *Rachuonyo District Development Plan, 2008-2012*. Nairobi: Government Printer, 2009.
- Government of Kenya. *The 2009 Kenya Population and Housing Census Vol. 1B. Population Distribution by Political Units*. Nairobi: Government Printer, 2009.

- Gumboznsvanda, N. et al. *A Journey of Courage: Kenyan Women's Experiences of the 2002 General Elections*. Nairobi, 2003.
- Hafkin, N.J., and Bay, G.E. (eds). *Women in Africa: Studies in Social and Economic Change*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996.
- Harlow, V. and Chilver, E.M. (eds) *History of East Africa*, Vol 11. Oxford; Oxford Press, 1965.
- Hay, M.J. and Stichter, S. (eds). *African Women South of the Sahara*. London: Longman, 1991.
- Kabira, W. and Gituto, M.B. *Affirmative Action: The Promise of a New Dawn*. Nairobi: ICCGD, 1996.
- Kabira, W. and Nzioki, E.A. *Celebrating Women's Resistance: A Case Study of Group Movement in Kenya*. Nairobi: New Earth Publications, 1993.
- Kabira, W. and Wasamba, P. *Reclaiming Women's Space in Politics*. Nairobi: Centre for Gender and Development, 1998.
- Kabira, W. and Wasamba, P. *Reclaiming Women's Space in Politics*. Nairobi: Centre for Gender and Development, 1998.
- Kabira, W. et al. *Democratic Change in Africa: Women's perspective*. Nairobi: Acts, 1993.
- Kaggia, B. *Roots of Freedom, 1921-1963: The Autobiography of Bildad Kaggia*. Nairobi, 1975.
- Kanogo, T. *African Womanhood in Colonial Kenya, 1900-1950*. London: James Currey, 2005.
- Kanogo, T. *Squatters and the Roots of Mau Mau, 1905-1963*. London: James Currey, 1987.
- Khasiani, S.A. and Njiro, E.I. *The Women's Movement in Kenya*. Nairobi: AAWORD, 1993.
- Khasiani, S.A. and Njiro, E.I. *The Women's Movement in Kenya*. Nairobi, 1993.
- Kihoro, W. (ed). *A Vision of the Future from the Past: Essential Public Documents in the Making of the New Kenya Constitution*. Nairobi: ABANTU, 2002.
- Leys, N. *Kenya*. London, 1973.
- Mama, A. *Women's Studies and Studies of Women in Africa During the 1990s*. Dakar: CODESRIA, 1996.
- Mama, A., et al (eds). *Engendering African Social Sciences*. Dakar: CODESRIA, 1997.
- Mamdani, M. and Wamba-dia-Wamba (eds). *African Studies in Social Movements and Democracy*. Dakar: CODESRIA, 1994.
- Mbeo, M.A. and Ombaka, O.O. *Women and Law in Kenya*. Nairobi: Public Law Institute, 1989.

- Meena, R. *Gender in Southern Africa: Conceptual and Theoretical Issues*. Harare: SAPES, 1992.
- Mkandawire, T. (ed). *African Intellectuals: Rethinking Politics, Language, Gender and Development*. Dakar: CODESRIA, 2005.
- Mohanty, C., Russo, A. and Torres, L. *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991.
- Muteshi, J. (ed). *Mapping Best Practices: Promoting Gender Equality and the Advancement of Kenyan Women*. Nairobi: Heinrich Boll Foundation, 2006.
- Ndeda, M.A.J. *Women in Kenyan History: The Women's Campaign Mekatilili and the Giriama Resistance of 1913 and 1914*. Nairobi: Kaswanga, 1994.
- Ndege, O.B.P. *From Accumulation of Women and Children to "Landing Grabbing": Agrarian Kleptocracy and the Land Question in Kenya*. Eldoret: Moi University, 2012.
- Nyakwea, W. *Women in Kenya History: Wangu wa Makeri a pioneering Kenya Feminist*. Nairobi: Kaswanga, 1994.
- Nzomo, M. *Perspectives on Gender Discourse; Women in Politics; Challenges of Democratic Transition in Kenya*. Nairobi: Heinrich Boll Foundation, 2003.
- Nzomo, M. *The Gender Dimension of Electoral Politics in Kenya: Capacity Building of Women Candidates for 1997 and Beyond*. Nairobi: Friedrich Ebert Foundation, 1997.
- Nzomo, M. *Women in Politics*. Nairobi: AAWORD, 1991.
- Ochieng, W.R. *A History of Kenya*. London: Macmillan, 1985.
- Ochieng, W.R. *An Outline History of Nyanza up to 1914*. Nairobi: KLB, 1986.
- Ochieng, W.R. (Ed). *A Modern History of Kenya, 1895-1980*. Nairobi: Evans, 1989.
- Ochieng, W.R. (Ed). *Themes in Kenyan History*. Nairobi: Heinemann, 1990.
- Ochieng, W.R. *A Pre-colonial History of the Gusii of Western Kenya, CAD.100-1914*. Nairobi: KLB, 1974.
- Ocholla-Ayayo, A.B.C. *Traditional Ideology and Ethics among the Southern Luo*. Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1976.
- Odinga, O. *Not Yet Uhuru*. Nairobi: Heinemann, 1992.
- Ogola, M.A. *The River and the Source*, Nairobi: Focus, 2001.
- Ogot, B.A. (ed) *Hadith 5: Economic and Social History of East Africa*. Nairobi: KLB, 1979.
- Ogot, B.A. (ed). *Politics and Nationalism in Colonial Kenya*. Nairobi: KLB, 1972.
- Ogot, B.A. (ed). *Hadith 6. History and Social Change in East Africa*. Nairobi: EALB, 1976.
- Ogot, B.A. (ed). *Hadith 7. Ecology and History in East Africa*. Nairobi: KLB, 1979.

- Ogot, B.A. (ed). *Hadith 8. Kenya in the Nineteenth Century*. Nairobi: KLB, 1987.
- Ogot, B.A. (ed). *Politics and Nationalism in Colonial Kenya: Hadith 4*. Nairobi: KLB, 1972.
- Ogot, B.A. (ed). *Zamani: A Survey of East African History* Nairobi:Longman, 1974.
- Ogot, B.A. *A History of the Southern Luo*. Nairobi: KLB, 1967.
- Ogot, B.A. and Ochieng, W.R. (Eds) *Kenya: The Making of a Nation*. Maseno: IRPS, 2000.
- Ogot, G. *The Strange Bride*. Nairobi: EAEP, 1989.
- Ogot, G. *Days of My Life: An Autobiography*. Kisumu: Anyange, 2012.
- Ominde, S. *The Luo Girl: From Infancy to Marriage*. London: Macmillan, 1952.
- Oyando, A. *The Epic of Gor Mahia*. Nakuru: Pangolin, 2003.
- Pala, A. (ed). *The Participation of Women in Kenya Society*, Nairobi: KLB, 1978.
- Parpart, J.L. and Staudt, K.A. *Women and the State in Africa*. Boulder:Lynner Rienner, 1989.
- Patton, M. *How to Use Qualitative Methods in Evaluation*. CA:Newberg Park, 1987.
- Presley, C. *Kikuyu Women, the Mau Mau Rebellion and Social Change in Kenya*. Colorado:Westview Press, 1992.
- Republic of Kenya. *African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya*. Nairobi: Govement Printer, 1965.
- Republic of Kenya. *Millennium Development Goals, Progress Report for Kenya*. Nairobi: Government Printer, 2003.
- Republic of Kenya. *Ministry of Planning and National Development: Socio-Economic Profiles*. Nairobi: Government Printer, 1990.
- Roberton, C. And Berger, I. (eds). *Women and Class in Africa*. New York, 1974.
- Rodney, W. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. London: Villiers, 1983.
- Ross, W.M. *Kenya from within: A short Political History*. London: Oxford, 1968.
- Ryan, G.W. and Benard, H.R. "Data Management and Analysis Methods" in Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S (eds) *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials* (2nd ed.). CA: Thousands Oaks, 2002.
- Silberschmidt, M. *Women Forget that Men are the Masters: Gender Antagonism and Socio-Economic Change in Kisii District*. Sweden: 1999.
- Singleton, R.A. and Straits, B.C. *Approaches to Social Research*, (4th ed.). New York, 2005.
- Stamp, P. *Technology, Gender and Power in Africa*. Canada: IDRC, 1989.
- Stichter, B.S. and Parpart, J.L. (eds). *Patriarchy and Class:African Women in the Home and Workforce*. USA,1988.

- Stichter, S. *Migrant Labour in Kenya: Capitalism and African Responses, 1895-1975*. London, 1982.
- Tamale, S. *When Hens Begin to Crow: Gender and Parliamentary Politics in Uganda*, Boulder: West View, 1999.
- Tignor, R. I. *The Colonial Transformation of Kenya: The Kamba, Kikuyu and Maasai from 1900 to 1939*. Princeton: University Press, 1976.
- Tong, R. *Feminist Thought: A Comprehensive Introduction*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1989.
- UNDP, *Human Development Report*. New York: UNDP, 1995.
- Vidrovitch, C. *African Women: A Modern History*. Colorado: Westview press, 1997.
- Walker, C. (ed). *Women and Gender in Southern Africa*. London: James Currey, 1990.
- Wallace, T. And March, C. (eds). *Changing Perceptions: Writing on Gender and Development* Oxford: Oxfam, 1991, pp. 245-253.
- Wolf, R.D. *Britain and Kenya, 1870-1930: The Economic of Colonialism*. London, 1974.
- Zezeza, P.T. *Labour Unionization and Women's Participation in Kenya, 1963-1987*. Nairobi, 1988.
- Zezeza, P.T. *Manufacturing African Studies and Crises*. Dakar: CODESRIA, 1997.
- Zwanenberg, R.M.A. *Colonial Capitalism and Labour in Kenya, 1919-1939*. Nairobi: Longman, 1975.
- Zwanenberg, R.V. *The Agricultural History of Kenya to 1939*. Nairobi: EAPH, 1972.

LIST OF INFORMANTS

1. Prof. B.A. Ogot	Oral Interview	27/10/11
2. Grace Onyango	“ “	4/5/06
3. Caroline Atieno Oguta	“ “	5/5/11
4. Roselyne Aricho	“ “	6/6/11
5. Magdalence Aboge	“ “	10/5/11
6. Dorca Atieno	“ “	12/8/11
7. Zecharia Owino Adiema	“ “	12/8/06
8. Truphosa Sije	“ “	2/8/06
9. Joyce Nyangweso	“ “	6/09/06
10. Zecharia Onono Adiema	“ “	12/8/06
11. Margaret Okelo	“ “	10/8/06
12. Rose Opiyo	“ “	15/5/06
13. Markus Ouma	“ “	6/8/06
14. Lydia Njeje	“ “	5/8/06
15. Truphosa Owino	“ “	2/8/06
16. Catherine AKumu Kombudo	“ “	12/5/06
17. Naftali Apiyo	“ “	6/7/94
18. Clement Odindo	“ “	13/8/06
19. Mark Juma	“ “	14/8/06
20. John Osano	“ “	15/8/06
21. Lydia Otieno	“ “	15/7/06
22. Nereah Okello	“ “	15/7/06
23. Grace Akinyi	“ “	20/5/06
24. Leonida Akumu	“ “	17/8/06
25. Simeon Osano	“ “	22/8/06
26. Karan Nyambane Obaso	“ “	14/8/06
27. Pauline Owiti	“ “	14/9/06
28. Julia Ogada	“ “	17/8/06
29. Caroline Otieno	“ “	18/9/06
30. Roseline Adhiambo	“ “	19/9/06
31. Jane Ochieng	“ “	28/8/06

32. Jane A. Opiyo	Oral Interview	29/8/06
33. Mary Achieng	“ “	20/8/06
34. Andrew Owiti	“ “	28/8/06
35. Truphena Odiyo	“ “	13/9/06
36. Grace Kola Oyare	“ “	14/9/06
37. Roseline Apiyo	“ “	15/9/06
38. Jenifer Abonyo	“ “	15/9/06
39. Millicent Ochieng	“ “	16/9/06
40. Pamela Omiti	“ “	16/9/06
41. Herine Okello	“ “	17/9/06
42. Mary Obala	“ “	17/9/06
43. James Ochieng	“ “	18/9/06
44. Leah Oyigo	“ “	18/9/06
45. Nelly Auma	“ “	19/9/06
46. Philister Nyakwaka	“ “	19/9/06
47. James Abonyo	“ “	20/9/06
48. Mary Omollo	“ “	08/08/94
49. Teresa Ogara	“ “	9/8/94
50. Peter Nyakwaka	“ “	10/8/94
51. Helida Odeny	“ “	11/8/94
52. Sauline Akeyo	“ “	12/8/94
53. Alfred Mumbo	“ “	13/8/94
54. Jane Anyango	“ “	14/8/94
55. Silvanus A. Otieno	“ “	15/8/94
56. Peterlis Owawa	“ “	16/8/94
57. Alfred Mumo	“ “	17/8/94
58. Pascalliah Ong’oma	“ “	18/8/94
59. Roselida Ochieng	“ “	17/8/94
60. Bormas Adongo	“ “	18/8/94