“THE POSITION OF WOMEN IN THE LUO SOCIETIES: CASE STUDY OF JOK’ONYANGO A.D. 1750–1920”

BY

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“This Thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University”

Theodora Olunga Ayot

“This Thesis has been submitted with my approval as University Supervisor”

Professor Bethwel Alan Ogot
DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my life time friend and beloved husband, Okelo Ayot.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .................................................................................................iii

ABSTRACT .....................................................................................................................vi

**PART ONE: THE FOUNDING OF THE SOCIETY**

Chapter 1: Introduction ...............................................................................................1

Chapter 2: Geographical Setting and Historical Background of Jok'Onyango .................48

**PART TWO: THE SOCIO-CULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND ECONOMIC SET UP OF JOK'ONYANGO**

Chapter 3: The Importance of Women and The Related Concepts in the Luo Societies ..........69

Chapter 4: Women and the Evolution of the Luo Communities ..................................97

Chapter 5: The Place of Women in Cultural History ..............................................135

Chapter 6: Women's Economic Activities and the Inheritance ................................166

**PART THREE: WOMEN IN THE WORLD OF POLITICS**

Chapter 7: The Nature of the Luo Political Institutions: Women and the Political Leadership ..........195

Chapter 8: Women Participation in Politics: Their Role in Military Warfare ..................212

Chapter 9: Imposition of Colonial Rule: Its Impact on Women ..................................227

BIBLIOGRAPHY ..........................................................................................................260

**APPENDIX**

(I) Sample Questions .................................................................................................274

(II) Geneological Chart ..............................................................................................276
(III) "South Nyanza Historical Texts Vol. II".
(This is a separate Volume which contains Field Texts on which this Thesis is partially based).

MAPS:
Fig. 1: ........................................................................................................49
Fig. 2 ............................................................................................................50

CHARTS
Tentative Chronological Chart .................................................................42

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This thesis is a detailed study of the position and role of women in the political, economic and social life as well as decision-making processes. The study is based on four communities which were established by the Luo as they expanded their settlements into South Nyanza in the period between A.D. 1750 and 1920.

The first Luo groups in the present-day South Nyanza District were Joka-Jok who arrived in the area from A.D. 1688 onwards, having crossed over the lake at the Uyoma peninsula. They established settlements in Kanyamwa, Kadem, Karungu and Karachuonyo. In the subsequent years these Luo groups have been referred to as Joka-Chwanya or Jok’Onyango. Chwanya is given in their tradition as one of the sons of Jok and that he was the son of Onyango Rabala. This is why these people are referred to as Joka-Chwanya or Jok’Onyango.

The study is divided into three parts, comprising ten chapters. Part One centres on the founding of the society. It is composed of two chapters. Chapter One deals with identification of the area under study, the period chosen for the study and why that period was chosen. It contains the statement of the problem, the objective of the study and justification of the study. Also examined in this Chapter are the various modes of analysis in historical development. Methods of historical research used during the field work are fully explained as well as secondary sources and archival materials consulted. Sample questions used during the field work are also included. (See appendix I).
Chapter Two gives a general geographical context of the study in terms of origin and expansion of Jok’Onyango.

Part Two concentrates on the socio-cultural activities and economic set up of Jok’Onyango. It is composed of four chapters. Chapter Three discusses the importance of women in the Luo society and the role of matrilineal dominance in a society that was basically patrilineal in nature. It distinguishes patrilineal from patriarchal system. Chapter Four examines the role of women in the evolution and emergence of some of the Jok’Onyango communities where both women and men are eponymous founders especially at the clan level. Chapter Five addresses itself to the role of women in cultural history especially in the dissemination of knowledge to the youth in the society. Chapter Six concerns the historical analysis of the contribution of Luo women in subsistence production, the right to land use and the question of inheritance.

Part Three deals with women and the world of politics. Chapter Seven surveys the nature of political institutions in the Luo society with a view to determine factors which contributed or hindered the participation of women in politics and decision-making processes. Chapter Eight deals specifically with the participation of women in political activities and military warfare, while Chapter Nine discusses the imposition of alien rule in Kenya and its impact on the women in the Luo societies and how the women responded to these outside forces.
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This study is about the role of women in pre-colonial Luo society of South Nyanza District, with particular reference to Jok’Onyango. The area referred to as South Nyanza District lies on the southern side of Winam Gulf. It is populated by people of diverse origins who came to settle in the area at different intervals. Accessibility and communication infrastructure varies from one area to the other. Language difference is another factor and the same is true of the level of literacy and communication between different groups of people. In delimiting the research areas, therefore, these limitations and factors were taken into consideration.

The inhabitants of South Nyanza include the Luo, the Abasuba, and Abakuria, the Maasai, the Maragoli and the Abagusii who now form their own two Districts. It is not known exactly when these people came to inhabit the area but it would appear that the settlement of these people took place sometime between A.D, 1570 and 1760, (Ogot, 1967: 200). According to Ogot these people settled in the area which is bounded on the west by Lake Victoria, on the south by Kuja River, on the east by Kisii Highlands, and on the north by the Winam Gulf. In this work the research was conducted to highlight the position of women in the Luo societies in the period between A.D. 1750 and 1920. The research concentrated on Jok’Onyango of South Nyanza.

Jok’Onyango are an amalgamation of different groups of people who established settlements in Kanyamwa, Kabwoch, Kadem, Karungu and colonial Luo societies and have been studied. This is one of the factors...
Karachuonyo. These people identify themselves with one mythical Onyango and Chwanya so that they are sometimes referred to as Jok’Chwanya. This is not necessarily because they all descended from one Chwanya or one Onyango but for the purposes of harmonious existence as one community. It is for this reason that they identified themselves with Chwanya and Onyango. Although Kabondo and Kasipul are part of Jok’Onyango and they constitute upper Karachuonyo, they are not included in our case study which comprises Kanyamwa, Kadem, Karungu and Karachuonyo.

The study covers the period between A.D. 1750 and 1920. This period was chosen because the Luo migration and settlement in Nyanza Province took place from the 15th century onwards. By the 17th century some of the Luo had begun to interact with the Bantu-speaking peoples who had preceded them to South Nyanza, so that by 1750 the Luo settlements began to emerge in the area. From 1900 onwards South Nyanza had already been in contact with the Germans and the British who were determined to impose their rule over the area. By 1920 the impact of colonial rule was being felt throughout South Nyanza. Thus the period between A.D 1750 and 1920 was chosen to illustrate development which took place in South Nyanza from the time the Luo settled there and how these developments might have affected the position of women among Jok’Onyango.

Statement of the Problem

The position of the women and their contribution in the political, economic and social life as well as in decision-making process in the pre-colonial Luo societies has not been studied. This is true of the Luo of
South Nyanza and our case study — Jok’Onyango is not an exception. Neither has there been any attempt to look at the impact of the imposition of colonial rule and the growth in the monetarization of social and economic relations upon the positions and the role of the women in the society as a whole. Did colonialism change the position and role of women among Jok’Onyango? What form, if any, did such a change take? In other words, did marginalization of women among the Luo of South Nyanza precede colonialism? The study seeks to answer these questions. It also hopes to reveal the status of women in the changing societies and how this change affected such status especially after the imposition of colonial rule. Finally, focussing on the interactions of women with other groups of people outside their communities, the study indicates the effects of such interactions through assimilation process. It is suggested that women held special status and played important roles in many aspects of traditional Luo life. The aim of this study is to describe these roles.

Objectives of the Study

In order to give a clear picture of the position of women in relation to men in the pre-colonial Luo societies, the study sets out:

1. To investigate, describe and analyse the position and roles of women in pre-colonial Luo societies in South Nyanza.

2. To determine the extent to which western influences might have affected the position and roles of these women between 1890 and 1920.

3. To concretize through research the degree of marginalization of pre-colonial Luo women.
Justification of the Study

Recent literatures on the role and position of African women have asserted that African women have always been subjugated. Others have gone to the extent of alleging that they have been sex objects. These allegations have been made without research into the socio-economic and cultural conditions of pre-colonial Luo women. At best these generalizations emanate from personalistic views about male-female relations among the Luo. They are neither supported nor negated by evidence derived from research data collected among Jok’Onyango in South Nyanza. The findings of this study will therefore bridge the gap in data about the position and role of Luo women in South Nyanza in the pre-colonial period. The study thus makes a contribution to knowledge and literature on the socio-economic, political and cultural roles of women.

Literature Review

Generally speaking research and writing on African history has undergone some transformation moving from the original assumption that the pre-colonial African period had no history to history based on archival data of European travellers and colonial administrators. This is what some historians have termed the European history of Africa. This type of history dominated the scene until B.A. Ogot challenged it by introducing a new methodology in one study of African history - oral tradition. Since then many African historians have used oral tradition to reconstruct pre-colonial African history with a greater degree of success.

On the other hand, modernization or developmental theory focused more attention on using history to explain the differences in levels of development - social, political and economic - between the industrialized
(modern) countries and traditional (unmodern) countries. It was used mainly by political scientists (Apter, 1965, Almond 1966) and economists (Rostow, 1968), sociologists (Marx Webber, 1947, Eisenstadt, 1966). Only one historian ever used the theory to explain the process of modernization (Black, 1966). The central thesis was that traditional societies had static cultures which were inconsistent with development. Hence, historical transformation of these societies to modern societies would only occur through the infusion of western values—cultural, economic, social, political and technological (Lerner, Apter, Powell). Within the context of Africa, historical movements would occur only as western culture infringed upon African culture. In fact modernization theory silently questioned historical developments in an Africa born out of oral tradition. Unfortunately not a single African historian took issues with the thesis.

Like traditional historians, the advocates of modernization theory paid little attention to gender issues or to the disruptive impacts of colonialism and imperialism upon colonial societies particularly women. In as much as they saw no exploitation in the colonial structure, they also saw no exploitation of women in the colonial Africa. Division of labour and wage labour that goes with it created social harmony and emancipated women from their subordinate statuses in traditional societies. Colonialism therefore, freed women from bondage (Afshah 1980: xi Zeleza 1987:3). We read from Haleh Afshah (1980: xi):

It has been argued, by Marxists and non-Marxists alike, that, in essence, capitalist expansion is not gender specific, and orthodox materialist logic would conclude that in the long run the process of capitalist development should destroy the socially accepted
ideologically reinforced subordination of women. That this has not occurred is abundantly clear, but why it is so remains open to discussion.

Haleh Afshah sees contradictions and wonders “why economic development and penetration of capital into the Third World should prove detrimental to women, even creating conditions that could be termed super-exploitative”.

Thus in classical Marxist conception, “capitalist development” will always destroy “the socially accepted ideologically reinforced subordination of women” (Afshah, 1987: xii). The imports of these views are:

(a) That pre-colonial African women were largely subordinated, almost enslaved, to men, and

(b) that modernization of pre-colonial societies as a result of the penetration of these societies by western values positively changed the statuses of African women, a conclusion which could be affirmed or negated only after a thorough historical study of the position and roles of African women in the pre-colonial period.

Marxist theory, which also attracted many Africanists, did not push the study of gender in Africa any further than the modernization theory. In fact, Marx class system based on the ownership of the means of production could not apply to pre-colonial Africa, especially the Luo of South Nyanza among whom property ownership, as will be shown in this study, was never so unilinear in the Marxist concept. Even if the concept of articulation of means of production is applied, the theory does not, in
anyway, lend itself well to the analysis of pre-colonial African socio-economic and political relationships. Marx was never concerned with non-peasantry societies such as existed in pre-colonial Luo society, because for him a peasant existed only when he produced within the context of capital 1st mode of production. As he put it:

The (capitalist farmer) sells his entire product and has therefore to place all his implements, even his seed, in the market, the (peasant) consumes the greater part of his product directly, buys and sells as little as possible, fashions, tools, makes clothing..., so far as possible himself... what characterizes capitalist production would then be... the extent to which the product is treated as an article of commerce, commodity.... For this reason capitalist (and hence also commodity production) does not reach its full scope until the direct agricultural producer becomes a wage-labourer (Marx, 1957: 115-117 quoted in Orwa, 1990 forthcoming).

Marx’s conception of peasantry would thus be more applicable to colonial and post-colonial Kenyan society and not pre-colonial one.

Because of this Marxist conception of peasantry, scholars who have applied it either to African history or to Kenyan in particular have concentrated on analyzing developments during the colonial and post-colonial periods (see Bernstein, 1981; McPhee, 1981, Mukaru-Ng’ang’a, 1981; Njonjo, 1975, 1981; Anyang'-Nyong'o, 1980, 1981; Cowen, 1981 and Atieno-Odhiambo, 1974). Of all these scholars only two are historians - Mukaru-Ng’ang’a and Atieno-Odhiambo.

In Kenya, the marxist debate has concentrated around the consequences of the articulation of capitalist mode of production with peasantry modes of production with some asserting that this articulation marginalized and pauperized the peasant producers (see Atieno-Odhiambo,
1974; Mukaru-Ng’ang’a, 1981, 1975). Like Marx himself these scholars have not been interested in how articulation of modes of production affect sexes division of labour and therefore changing the statuses of women in pre-capitalist and post-capitalist social systems. It is assumed that men owned land and that when the settler capitalist appropriated land the Kenyan peasantry became landless squatters and pauperized. But it is not indicated which sex was more pauperized nor are we told whether pauperization was similar across the sexes (see for example Zeleza, 1989).

From strictly historical perspective, the theory that can be said to have been used to explain African history is the dependency approach associated with Latin American sociologists and political economists such as Gunder Frank. It was first applied to African history by the late Caribbean historian, Walter Rodney. This theory is both a radical critique of modernization theory and a revisionist view of Marxist theory.

For purposes of analysis, the theory divides the world into two... the centre and the periphery. It suggests that in the course of capitalist expansion which began with mercantile capitalism in Europe, the periphery became incorporated in the world-wide capitalist system, especially through colonialism. The relationships that developed between the centre and periphery were unequal. The centre in this case metropolitan Europe, constituted the focal point of socio-economic development. This development was a function of the exploitation of the periphery which was organized to produce raw materials in the form of commodities and minerals for manufacturing industries at the centre. The exchange rate of centre produce and commodities produced in the periphery were such that all surplus value remained in the centre. Hence
lack of capital for investment in productive sectors in the periphery. Thus, while the centre was able to achieve self-sustaining economic growth, the periphery increasingly became dependent on the centre and became under-developed. It is concluded that dependency and under-development are the factors that explain poverty in the periphery (see Rodney, 1972; Zeleza 1987: 4 and Ogot, 1989).  

The principal advocates of dependency theory such as Gunder Frank, Colin Leys and Walter Rodney never thought of the effects of dependency and under-development syndrome in terms of the respective sexes in the society. However, later day proponents of the theory have suggested that the theory "generated more accurate and powerful analysis of past and present (African political, social and economic) conditions" (Stamp, 1989: 2). Zeleza has even gone further to assert that colonialism brought about "changes that adversely affected women and led to their increasing exploitation and oppression" (Zeleza, 1987:3, 37; Afshah, 1980: xii), hence their increasing dependency on their male folk. This dependency, exploitation and oppression of women is said to be explained by the ideology of the inferior position of women.

Dependency theory implies two things regarding the position and role of women in pre-colonial Africa. Either that they were not a marginalized lot or that the intensity of marginalization of women was low and became worse only in the colonial period. However, what has been said of modernization theory can be said of dependency approach and its conclusions with respect to women in the pre-colonial property relationships between the sexes. Hence the theory does not help us to
understand whether women played subordinate roles and occupied inferior socio-economic and political positions in pre-colonial African societies.

In most literature coming from the West, women’s studies and African studies have been grouped together, and they go side by side. According to Patricia Stamp, women studies and African studies in the United States of America came into existence during the 1960s and 1970s. The studies came about as a result of demonstrations against segregation or discrimination in the United States of America. Also the anti-war movements of the 1970s in the States contributed to the scholarly work on women and African studies. We read from Patricia Stamp that ideological impetus provided by the civil rights and anti-war movements in the United States fueled the inquiry into both women’s oppression and neo-colonialism in the Third World. African studies was generated by a desire for a non-racist understanding of African civilization” (p.11).

It is worth pointing out that the significant factors in the development of this new interest in women and African studies were forces which were operating outside the African continent. These forces were civil rights movement and anti-war movements in the United States. It was these that triggered off forces of the “inquiry into both women’s oppression and neo-colonialism in the Third World” not in the United States where these forces were operational. While these two forces were prevalent in the United States, it is worth noting that the western feminist writers did not come to aid their black sisters in the West but that they shifted their attention to tackle the oppression of women in the Third World countries. Thus various tools of analysis were applied to women and the Third World.
In the process there emerged four major classifications of feminist theories which render the feminist approach even more complex. The first of these is Liberal feminism which can be traced as far back as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The ideas of Liberal feminists are based on those theories concerning social contract, a philosophical belief that advocated "liberty and equality based on man's rationality and the premises of a sharp demarcation between public and private sphere" (Stamp, p.15). This is the basis of some of the western feminist theories that have been articulated on the public/private dichotomy.

Spender (1980: 191-197) associates the public world with the "written male-dominated work", and that, it is in contrast with the "private world and language of women" who are, as it were, subordinated to the dominant world of men" (Stamp, pp.113-116, Ifi Amadiume, p.4) explains that "furthermore, the domestic/public dichotomy which led them (the feminists) to the conclusion that material and domestic roles were responsible for the supposed universal subordination of women was a feature of their particular class and cultures.” Liberal feminists call for reforms that would enable women to have equal political participation. It is believed that the force behind United Nations Decade for women was the articulation of Liberal feminism.

Then there is Radical feminism that came into existence as a direct challenge to the radical sexist movement of the 1960s. Radical feminists see women as a group of oppressed class. Women are therefore a class separate from men who oppress them. Their literature and language is based on Marxist theory. In their articulation they maintain that patriarchy is a global network of male system of domination. This, they believe,
preceded, and superseded "all other forms of oppression". "The premises that patriarchy is universal, preceding and superseding all other forms of oppression, obscures the cultural diversity and historical specificity of human societies". They maintain that gender relations are biologically oriented. Therefore they "find significance in a relative universality of physical characteristics among humans and of gender division of labour that assigns men to 'public' and women to 'private' activities" *Restoring Women to History* (p.5).

The Radical feminist approach has had negative reaction and its advocates have been accused of ethnocentrism as was evidenced by the issue of clitoridectomy in Copenhagen conference in 1980. At this mid-(women's) decade conference African women staged a walk out as protest against western feminists interpretation of clitoridectomy as a practice of 'barbaric, patriarchal custom'. This is one example of the contradiction of various feminist analytical frameworks which view women in the Third World countries according to their own western notions.

Moreover, the work of Coward (1983) based on an examination of the nature of patriarchy seems to suggest that feminists' debate has tended to overlook, if not, overshadow some aspects of the family and that of gender relations in general. This means that a new theoretical framework is needed that would pay more attention to various societal forces at work.

Another classification is the Traditional Marxism whose conceptual framework is based on Engel's (1984) discourse on the family, private property and the state. Traditional Marxists challenge the belief of Radical feminists in biological division as the cause of gender
relationship. They maintain that “women’s oppression is a function of class oppression, which supercedes all other forms of oppression” Urdang (1979). Another group that challenges the theory of biological division are the environmentalists. They, on the other hand, “stress the equality apparent diversity of humans, physically and culturally and claim that biology alone cannot cause this diversity” (p.5). They maintain that various societies can, in actual fact, “devise a division of labour that enable women to be mobile” (Stamp, 1989: 5).

The traditional Marxists’ view gender relations in terms of relations of production stressing that one must examine the structures of oppression such as the family, class and the state. They draw from Engel’s notion that:

The determining factor in history, the production and reproduction of the essential of life, has a two-fold character. On the one side, production of means of existence,... on the other, the production of human beings themselves. The social organization under which the people of a particular historical epoch live is determined by both kinds of production, by the stage of development of labour, on the one hand, and of the family on the other” Lane, 1976: 19).

Engels himself was not concerned about the women question and therefore did not discuss the question of subordination of women in relation to class exploitation. For him the issue of exploitation was directly linked to the extraction of surplus labour “by one class of another”. He, however, considered monogamous marriage as the basis of “subjugation of one sex by the other; it announces a struggle between the sexes unknown throughout the whole previous prehistoric period. ...The first class opposition that appears in history coincides with the development of the antagonism between a man and woman in monogamous marriage, and the first class oppression coincides with that of the female sex by the male” (p.12).

By this time the marriage had gone through savagery, barbarism and it entered civilization with monogamous marriage. Ironically Engels
maintains that it is from here that the struggle begins since in the previous marriages women were more autonomous. It was the period before “an exploitative class structure and split humanity into antagonistic relationships” (p.13). The contribution of this conceptual framework is that while others such as liberal feminism and radical feminism are pre-occupied with individuals, the traditional Marxists place emphasis on the state, family and classes. It is true that societies “are in constant process of change” but this does not in anyway mean that all of them are “moving in and same direction” (p.12).

The last of these categorizations of feminist theoretical frameworks is that of the socialist feminism. Jugger (1983: 134) explains that the socialist feminists observe that one’s experiences in life depend on “her sex and gender assignment from birth to death”. They also recognize the fact that these experiences in life are ‘shaped by’ an individual’s “class, race and nationality”. They maintain that “politics cannot be separated from economics”, and because of this disbelief, their major task “is to construct a political economy of women’s subordination” (p. 134).

According to Stamp (1989... 17) what is particularly important about socialist feminism is the fact that it pays attention to “studies that explore the complex articulation of gender relations and relations of production in pre-capitalist societies”. In their argument the socialist feminists transcend the biological productionist - reductionist theory of radical feminism and they believe that “gender oppression cuts across class lines” (p.17).

Maureen McIntosh (1980), an acknowledged socialist feminist explains that in their analytical approach they “take subordination of
women" as their "central problem" and from here they proceed to "analyze
the relation of this gender subordination to other afflictions of women,
such as economic exploitation, without inflating the conceptual and
political issues (p. 4). She explains that socialist feminists take greater
interest in "sexual division of labour because it appears to express,
embody, and furthermore to perpetuate female subordination" (p. 4). Most
of these writers are concerned with economic aspect of life as socialist
feminists maintain that politics and economics go side by side and cannot
be separated from each other. We read from Pepe Roberts ROAPE (1984:
175) that "the main task of socialist feminism has been to conceptualize
gender divisions as a set of socialist relations which have historically and
in all known cultures been based on the domination of men and the
subordination of women".

In the area of women literature the four major categorizations have
tended to complicate the issues in that one is more pre-occupied with
trying to find out a more suitable theoretical framework instead of
presenting historical analysis of the topic to be covered. Even the feminist
writers themselves find it a problem when it comes to conceptualization.
This is especially true when one is dealing with plural and multi-cultural
backgrounds. We read from Maria Mies (1988: 36):

The terms "subordination" and "oppression" are widely used to
specify women’s position in a hierarchically structured system and
the methods of keeping them down. These concepts are used by
women who would call themselves radical feminists as well as by
those who come from a Marxist’s background or call themselves
Marxist or socialist feminists. The latter usually do not talk of
exploitation when discussing the problems of women, because they
are reserved for economic exploitation of the wage-worker under
capitalism.
The categorization of feminist writing or movement into these divisions shows the complexity of the whole issue of feminist approach to the woman question. Maria Mies (1986: 12) concludes:

As regards the divisions on the ideological and political planes, there have been attempts to categorize and label the various tendencies in the new feminist movement. Thus some tendencies are called "radical feminism", others "socialist feminism" or "Marxist feminism", others "liberal feminism", sometimes... "bourgeois feminism"... this labelling has not contributed to a better understanding of what feminism really is, what it stands for, what its basic principles are... the label "radical feminism", mostly used to characterize one main trend of feminism in the USA, does not explain to an outsider what it stands for. Only those who know the movement know that radical feminists are those who advocate a strategy of radical separatism of women from men, particularly in the realm of sexual relations as the centre of patriarchal power. In polemics, "radical feminists" are often accused of being anti-men, of all being lesbians.

It must be pointed out, however, that not all women writers fall into the category of feminist writers. Chapter Two will discuss some of the non-feminist writers in relation to women studies.

Commenting on feminist approach, Ifi Amadiume observed, with concern that the Third World became the centre of attraction to the western feminist writers. The Third World thus supplied the western writers with "raw data for random sampling, citation, and illustration of points" (p.4). The most important point here is that instead of using the West as a starting ground, the feminist writers chose to write about women from the Third World countries but not the Third World women writing about themselves. Ifi Amadiume further pointed out that, by using the data from the Third World Western academics were busy uncovering the "depth and pervasiveness of" their own "inequalitarian sexual ideology" (p.4). They were quick to declare that they were actually looking "for
ways to think about" themselves. That the major issues concerning these feminist writers were actually prevalent in the West is abundantly clear but what was used for illustrative purposes "came from elsewhere". Rosaldo and Lamphere (1974) in their introductory remarks stated that they (Western feminists) had "become increasingly aware of sexual inequality in economic, social and political institutions" and that they were "seeking ways to fight them", so they turned to the Third World as a source of their articulation.

Thus the feminists literature that came out in the 1980s tried to cope with the complex nature of gender relations. The debate centred on universality of patriarchal ideology as a step towards the understanding of women as members of an oppressed class. The debate also touched on other gender issues such as production and reproduction both biologically and socially. Gradually in their quest for a more plausible theoretical framework, there emerged several schools of thought among the feminist writers with regard to gender issues. There are those who have recognized equalitarianism in relation to African women's economic and political roles within the pre-capitalist setup. Among them Achola Pala Okeyo (1980), Patricia Stamp (1986 and 1989) and Ifi Amadiume (1987). Other scholars maintained that African women have always been oppressed. While viewing "colonialism and class structure as oppressive of women", they, nevertheless, "promoted the prospect of women being released from their traditional bondage once neo-colonialism and class oppression were overthrown (Urdan, 1979; Cutrufelli, 1983)." Cutrufelli, for instance believes that for all practical purposes African women are an oppressed, powerless class of human beings yet at the same time she realizes the
complexity of the various African cultures within the context of geographical set up of the African continent.

**Historical Review: The Case of South Nyanza Women**

The main objective of this section is to review the available literature in relation to South Nyanza. It would appear that the literature on the position of the women in the Luo societies is very scanty. Indeed, no major work has been done in that direction. The literature that touch on South Nyanza in general has come to us through the use of oral traditions, mostly from historians who have conducted researches among the Luo, the Abagusii, the Abakuria and the Abasuba. Apart from these, there are those colonial administrators who compiled reports about South Nyanza such as those of different commissioners’ reports which are available at the National Archives.

What is known about different sections of South Nyanza comes from oral traditions of the people of the area. These works include Ogot (1967) which is a general survey of the patterns of the Luo migration and settlement from their cradle homeland in the southern Sudan to the southern end of South Nyanza. Ogot’s book is important in that it laid the foundation for the study of the Luo history but it does not in anyway tackle the question of women and their contribution or decision-making processes in Luo societies. Ochieng’ (1974) deals with the migration and settlement of the Abagusii and their relationship with the people with whom they came into contact. However, even though Ochieng’ traces the evolution of the Gusii societies, he does not address himself to the question of the women. Abuso (1980) traced the patterns of migration and settlement in Bukuria country and left out the issue of the women and their role in the society.
H.O. Ayot (1979) ventured into the study of the patterns of migration and settlement of the Abasuba on the islands of Lake Victoria and the lakeshore regions of the mainland South Nyanza. He traced their movements from Uganda until they established settlements in South Nyanza. He also tackles the issue of the Luo influence on the Abasuba-speaking people and how this influence led to the latter's adoption of Dholuo as a medium of communication by the twentieth century while at the same time they retained their original Basuba language. He, however, does not explain why the Abasuba found it appropriate to adopt the Luo cultural elements neither does he explain why it was the Abasuba who were influenced and not the Luo being influenced by the Abasuba. Like the other works which have already been cited, Ayot's work does not address itself to the question of the women and their position in the Luo societies.

T.O. Ayot (1987a) in an attempt to provide the history of the Luo of South Nyanza followed the former theme of migration and settlement. This work only dealt with the Luo settlement in South Nyanza, that is, different areas which were occupied by the Luo. However, T.O. Ayot, (1987b) went slightly beyond the theme of migration and settlement by looking at such themes as the development of political institutions, the commercial network of the lake region, the role of colonial chiefs and the reaction of the people of South Nyanza to the establishment of colonial rule. Although she discusses the role of women in one of the chapters, this work is incomplete in that it does not address itself to the position of women in the Luo society as a whole, their role in political leadership and in general their contribution in political economic and social life of the society.
Statements have been made about women which give support to the desire for more analytical and comprehensive research which would be more informative about the pre-colonial societies as well as the colonial period. Hay (1976) conducted research among the Luo people of Kowe in Seme Location, Kisumu District in Nyanza Province. Looking at the economic change in this area between 1890 and 1945, she states that a wealthy man in the Luo society not only owned cattle, sheep and goats, but that among his possessions one could count stores of food, many wives, servants, tenants and children. A close observation would seem to indicate that Hay combines animals, things and human beings as though they belong to the same class. She then refers to them collectively as man’s possession. Therefore Hay’s approach to the study of the Luo women is highly influenced by western concepts of patriarchy and subordination of women with emphasis on Third World countries. She does not recognize the Luo woman as an individual with inalienable right within her society.

However, Judy Butterman (1977: 8) who conducted her research among Jok-Kanyamkago and Jo’Karachuonyo dealing with the pre-colonial economic set-up in these two communities, has made generalized statements about the women in the Luo society. She starts from the premises that a Luo man could exploit the labour of his wife or wives to obtain enough surplus grains. Thereafter he could exchange the grains for cattle to marry more wives. She continues to explain the process of accumulation showing how this system disadvantaged the women folk. She states:
In the initial set-up in this accumulation pattern, relations between male and female participants are still characterized by equality and complementarily. However, within the patrilineal social organization, it is at the level of livestock where the allocation of social surplus indicates exploitation. The ultimate social accrued to the benefits of males (p.15).

It is within this framework that Judy Butterman explains that surplus products in the form of grains by women would be exchanged for cattle or rather livestock that man used to marry more wives. Therefore she concludes that “as a group, women paid their own bride wealth, therefore, participating in their own exploitation in the pre-colonial Luo society” (Ndege, 1987: 67). Butterman has ignored the unique role played by women in the economic aspect of the Luo society. Her basic assumption is that men controlled surplus grains and therefore could dispose of them at will. This was not true of the Luo society as will be evident in Chapter Seven. Moreover, A.R. Barlow (1912-1913) giving evidence before the Land Commission portrayed the African man as walking around the land, keeping watch over his womenfolk who were busy slaving for him. Thus, he gives a notion of exploitation of women by men within the Luo society.

On the other hand, the works of Peristiany (1939) on the Kipsigis, Kaberry (1952) on the Bamenda people of the Cameroons and Earthy (1968) on the Valenge of Mozambique confirms that a man did not have the right to use or dispose of the produce from the family farm land without first holding a consultation with his wife or wives. The wife would therefore, be the one to give consent to the husband if he wished to dispose of such produce. The wife, on the other hand, could dispose of the produce from the field at will and she did not need the consent of her husband nor even to hold consultation with him. This seems to suggest
that the women, and not the man, had control of the stores of food where the grains or crops from the field and other foodstuffs were kept. However, there are some scholars such as Balow who still maintain that a woman could not own land, or use the surplus food from the farm to give to the relatives, friends or to exchange for what she needed. It is such assertions which prompted the researcher to conduct investigation on the position of women in the Luo societies especially among the Jok’Onyango to find out which one of the views holds true for the Luo women.

Whisson (1961) says that for an individual to hold a political position of a chief among the Luo, one of the most important requirements and, indeed, a critical step towards this office, was “investment” in many wives. Hay (1976: 94) further states that “moreover the practice of polygyny ensured that a woman’s economic security rested with her sons and not with her husband, although she could inherit from her sons”. There is, of course, a degree of ambiguity and vagueness in this statement since it does not adequately explain the relationship between the son and the mother with regard to inheritance. When, for instance, would the mother inherit property from her son judging the age difference between the son and the mother? In any case, what could be the nature of property to be inherited? Hay, moreover, explains that in the pre-colonial period, labour supply was the factor which tended to limit production in the Luo society. Therefore, she concludes that this was the most important factor which contributed to the development of polygynous institutions. She maintains that, in actual fact, marriage was the “most significant form of investment for a man” in the Luo society.
The key words in the works of Barlow, Whisson, Hay and Butterman concerning the women are “investment”, “slaving women”, and “labour” in relation to production. Hay, for instance, fails to understand the nature of polygynous institution especially when she states that it was the need for labour that led to the development of the practice of polygamy. She does not address herself to the question of caring of the old whose security lay with the polygamous homes and not old peoples’ homes. Or, the question of childlessness, where children in a polygamous home usually looked at the childless women as their mothers and making them feel wanted, instead of being alienated. Such issues are not discussed instead, emphasis is placed on labour and economic issues in the works of Hay and Butterman.

Achola Pala Okeyo, probably the most outstanding scholar on the study of women in Kenya, has produced very stimulating work on issues pertaining to women. In her works (1974) and (1975) she looks at division of labour in agricultural production, women’s access to land, their decision-making in farms and non-farm work and the constraints on women in the development process in the country. However, her study covers various areas and specifically places emphasis on rural development. She used sociological and anthropological approach in her studies. In one of her works, Pala (1978) states that “data reviewed here were collected by means of questionnaires of a number of standardized questions as well as open-ended questions and probes. Ethnographic information was gathered by the normal anthropological field methods, namely participant and non-participant observation as well as field noted”. Although Pala has produced stimulating work, she nevertheless, does not
venture into the pre-colonial period and the colonial set-up to compare and contrast the changing roles of the women. Her work is based on a more recent development. For a clearer understanding of the position of women in Luo society, the researcher found out that there was a need for a study that would reveal the changes that have taken place in the society over a long period of time - several generations in time perspective; how they have interacted with each other over time and how these people have been changed or affected by the process of change itself. This approach should be able to help in highlighting the position of the women in the Luo societies and in particular among the Jo’Konyango group.

The works of Van Allen (1976) and Leith-Ross (1939) based on the Igbo women’s participation in the Aba Riots or Women’s War of 1926 as it is sometimes called negate some of the studies on African women. According to Van Allen (1976: 60) the Igbo women composed of a number from Calabar and others from Owerri, revolted against taxation system introduced by the colonial government. The result of this was that some women were killed and others wounded. But what is important here is that both Van Allen and Leith-Ross recognize the political and economic independence which was deeply rooted in the traditions of the Igbo women. This had nothing to do with the western influence. The response of these women to taxation and other programmes of the colonial government was purely a reflection of their desire to remain politically and economically independent as they had been before the Europeans intruded in their political and economic life. Van Allen maintains that as a matter of convention, the influence of western world has been viewed as a major...
factor in emancipation of African women through five major factors, namely:

1. The weakening of kinship bonds;
2. The provision of free choice in christian and monogamous marriage;
3. The suppression of 'barbarous' practices (female circumcision, ostracism of mothers of twins, slavery);
4. The opening of school; and
5. The introduction of modern medicine, hygiene and (sometimes) female suffrage.

However, Van Allen concludes that "what has not been seen by westerners is that some African women and the Igbo women are a striking example - actual or potential autonomy, economic independence and political power did not grow out of western influence but existed in traditional tribal life" (1976: 62). And Mullings (1976) who carried out research among the Labadi in Ga town in southern Ghana reveals that "deterioration of the position and role of women in relation to that of men, has in fact, been the result of acceleration of class stratification under colonialism" (1976: 250).

As can be seen from the above literature review, a great deal of work done on women has been by Western scholars, some whom have been influenced by their own cultural background and the available western literature. Some of these scholars, owing to the limitation placed upon them by language problems, tend to apply western interpretation rather than looking at the African society in the African perspectives.
Theoretical Framework

In this study inquiry is made into the pre-capitalist Luo society by studying the position and role of women among Jok’Onyango with a view to producing knowledge about that society. But to do this it is hoped that the inquiry and the knowledge produced are looked at within a problematic whose components, which according to Bernstein and Depelchin (1978): 14), “include both a set of concept and a set of procedure which govern both the construction of the concepts and their employment in analysis”. The concepts that have been employed in this study are division of labour whose major objective was the fulfilment of certain goals in the society. This division is looked at within the context of communal mode of productions. The division was free from class antagonism which characterizes capitalist mode of production. The other tool of analysis employed in this work is articulation which provides a base for examining the link between pre-capitalist societies and the capitalist state.

Mode of production embraces two aspects: forces and relations of production. Within the context of forces of production one may include climatic factors, soils, the available raw material, technological aspects which include tools used, the skill, and knowledge applied and inventiveness of labour. Man’s ability to appropriate nature can be defined or looked at within the framework of forces of production. On the other hand, the organization and reproduction of labour, how what is produced is used and the way surplus is extracted and distributed - all these are elements of relations of production. But there is a linkage
between forces and relations of production so that changes in one, do, in one way or the other, affect the other.

The activities of individuals led to appropriation of nature, extraction and distribution of surplus produce which is basically done in “a given political, ideological and religious institutional framework” (Ndege, 1987). All these form what has been termed as super-structure and our notion of communal mode of production would seem to be linked with it. Thus, there is a relation between them, each determining the other.

Meillassoux (1972: 130) argues that once forces of production had developed, such development eventually led to division of labour which brought in new responsibilities and relationships which were economic in nature. He further explains that “in a lineage-based system of co-operation in production, the appropriation and redistribution of the product by the elders puts the younger men in a relation of dependence, and at the same time ensures the reproduction of this dependence at social level.” He continues to explain that only the elders are therefore “in a position to acquire wives for themselves and their dependents, and a dependant must work for the elder in order to obtain the amount of dowry, and so the possibility in emancipating himself” (p. 130). Dupre and Rey (1973) have also argued that in the pre-capitalist African societies women and juniors were exploited by elders who seemed to have had monopoly over the products of their labour. They also “presided over the redistribution of surplus and also over juniors’ marriage” (Ndege, 1987: 11). Ndege (1987: 67-68) quoting Terray examines the argument put forward by the latter that “exploitation exists when the control of the means of production gives those non-producers who exercise it the means to determine the
amount of surplus alloted to themselves". It is this type of control that places the producer in a position of subordination in relation to the non-producers.

Although Marxist anthropologists like Meillassoux have argued that the "kin-based societies have a class structure based on the appropriation by elders of the labour of women and young men" the argument seems to have been based on a misunderstanding of the class system and its application to other societies. As Stamp has explained, "class is a category that is self-reproducing through relations of production (e.g.,..) a bourgeoisie maintaining itself through the production of capital from the value created by a working class" (p.78). And Nkrumah (1970: 13) explains that within such a structure "the ruling class possesses the major instruments of economic production and distribution, and the means of establishing its political dominance, while the subject class serves the interest of the ruling class, and is politically, economically and socially dominated by it."

A close examination of the Luo society demonstrated that in the context of communal mode of production and the flexibility of gender division "no group, was free to appropriate and accumulate the surplus produced by another group, for their own benefit", (p.78). Moreover, within the Luo society as will be demonstrated in this work, the ability to appropriate value produced could not have been in the hands of elders. Contrary to what is prevalent in the feminist literature, it was the women who had control over the surplus produce from the farm. This was as a result of their own personal initiative. Therefore, if anything, it is the
women who could have appropriated labour of other groups since it is they who held monopoly over the surplus grains produced. There was no time when elders hoarded such commodities as will be explained in Chapter Seven.

It is lack of understanding of the various pre-capitalist African societies that has tended to lead western scholars into believing that all African societies were basically the same. Thus, some of them present distorted views of such societies as being exploitative in nature. The pre-capitalist Luo societies seem to indicate that the communal mode of production had the characteristics of classlessness as will be demonstrated in this study.

The other concept employed in this study is that of articulation. In an attempt to explain this concept, Berman (1985, 9-11) states that it is "the linkage between two societies whose modes of production are dominated by a different developmental dynamic or internal logic". This is exemplified by what "happened during the incorporation of pre-capitalist societies into the capitalist system" (Ndege, p.8). Ndege quoting Berman explains that "Berman has argued that the articulation of the capitalist mode of production within African modes during the colonial period was a process of struggle and uncertainty in which the latter were partially transformed and preserved in the interest of capitalism" (Ndege, p.8). The analysis of "the articulation of the colonial state with pre-capitalist political" and economic structures will be helpful in understanding the impact of the colonial state and how the indigenous peoples responded to it. For instance, the major objective of the colonial state in establishing colonial administrative structure was for the
maintenance of law and order. This was achieved through punitive expeditions. Once this was done, it created an atmosphere conducive for economic exploitation of the area. Therefore there was a direct linkage between the search for economic territory and quest for political territory, so that changes in one automatically affected the other. Thus the appointment of new chiefs, the establishment of native councils, the establishment of the court systems by the colonial state and the partnership between the colonial state and christian church - all created a conducive atmosphere for the success of colonial economy. The colonial state played a major role “in the articulation of pre-capitalist modes of production with world capitalism” and no doubt this created an impact on African social formation. That the colonial state “represented capitalist interest and co-opted indigenous rulers to suppress those whom it exploited” and rendered it a capitalist state, (Ndege, p.13).

Research Methods

Before embarking on field work, the researcher decided to divide the areas to be covered into four zones. Zone 1 consisted of Karachuonyo, which is composed of seven locations. The locations are East Karachuonyo, Central Karachuonyo, West Karachuonyo, South Karachuonyo, South-West Karachuonyo, North Karachuonyo and North-West Karachuonyo. All these areas constitute what is referred to as Lower Karachuonyo also known as Kaduong’. The major areas of operation during the field work were Kendu Bay and Homa Bay; occasionally Ranen/Awendo, Migori and Kisii were used.
Zone 2 was Kanyamwa, an area which lies between Homa Bay and Mbita Point with Kabwoch, Kanyikela and Kanyada as its immediate neighbours and Gwasi on the Southern border. The areas of operation were Homa Bay and Kendu Bay but at times Ranen/Awendo and Kisii were used.

Zone 3 consisted of Kadem and Karungu. Areas of operation included Homa Bay, with spell of Kendu Bay but the major ones were Ranen/Awendo, Migori and occasionally Kisii. Rusinga and Mfang’ano into the category of zone 4. The areas of operation were Homa Bay, Kendu Bay and Ranen/Awendo.

Having divided the places to be visited into four zonal areas, the researcher’s next problem was that of identifying the informants. The researcher spent several days in each of these areas where identification was done randomly. After this selection was done on the group of people to be interviewed. Although the older people seem to have been well informed, some younger persons proved equally informative. There were also those who were highly political especially in a place such as Karachuonyo. The political consciousness within Karachuonyo cuts across the younger as well as the older generation. This keen political awareness has one advantage and that is, it breeds development consciousness and a sense of competition between different areas each striving to be at the top. So the researcher found that some of those people who are highly political can get overcarried very easily into discussing issues which have no relevance to the research. When discussion lingered on political issues, the researcher gave those interviewed time to complete the discussion, and then would lead them back to the issue by asking
questions which would relate to the research in an attempt to return to the subject of discussion. This kind of situation occurred when there was a group discussion.

After selecting suitable people among those identified as possible informants, the next question was self-identity. There was the question of some people (even if there were only two or three persons) from the University moving round talking to people in the areas identified for the field work. This, of course, tended to arouse curiosity from individuals and even the crowd especially when one is driving around. At one particular incident, some people came in a lorry and when the owner of the home invited them into the house, they simply said that they were checking for something and so they left immediately. So, it was absolutely necessary for the researcher to try as much as possible to identify with the informants by establishing a sound rapport with them. This, the researcher did by explaining not only the purpose of the study but also its significance which would be beneficial to the Luo society.

There was mutual respect and understanding from both sides, and it was easier to work together. It means, therefore, that the researcher had to come to the levels of informants and identify with them so that the discussion or interview could be looked at as a fulfilment for both the researcher and the informants. Therefore while interviewing the informants, the researcher tried to be as honest and straightforward as possible in order to avoid the breakdown in communication.

At the initial stage of the field work, it was absolutely necessary to make contact with the people of different areas. Thus the first people
whom the researcher identified with were research assistants. It was these research assistants who were able to identify some of the knowledgeable informants. Sometimes it was very difficult to obtain information from informants even if one speaks the same language. Some elders, when approached, told the research assistants or the researcher, herself, that they wanted money before they could give any kind of information. They explained that when Europeans or Americans go to ask them for information, they are usually paid some money for their information. Some of them went to the extent of saying how much money one had to put down before they could talk. At the same time, some of the people became very suspicious when questions were being asked. However, some of these obstacles were overcome with the help of the research assistants who were members of the areas where research was being conducted. It became necessary to establish a meaningful rapport with the research assistants who could clearly explain the purpose of the research being carried out and its importance to the community as well as the country as a whole. Therefore, by staying in the areas where the research was being conducted, the people felt that the researcher had identified fully with them.

In the communities where the language of the people was not easily understood by the researcher, the researcher relied on the research assistants for the translation of the data. Such communities included the Abasuba and the Gusii, and the Luo neighbours. However, there was a problem with this approach to the fieldwork. Sometimes the research assistants did not give the correct information given by the informants through their interpretation. Thus at times it was necessary to crosscheck the information given with the other people, even the neighbouring people.
The collection of raw data was based on oral traditions of the people. This is why it was necessary to work out a strategy as to how different parts of South Nyanza which are occupied by Jok’Onyango would be visited. Other areas occupied by the other Luo groups and Bantu speakers such as Kamagambo, Gusii area and Abasubaland were visited in order to crosscheck some of the information given by Jok’Onyango.

In the areas visited the elders, both men and women, and even knowledgeable younger people were interviewed. The women from monogamous as well as those from polygamous homes were interviewed so as to understand the structure of these homes.

Interviews were conducted on individual bases and then in a seminar form in order to verify certain points which were not very clear. The researcher found that individual interviews were very important because there were some vital information which some informants did not feel free to give where there were other people. There was the fear of reaction of some domineering groups of people or informants who thought they were the only people with vital information, and they tended to under-rate certain individuals. It was at such a time that the researcher decided to adopt the system of interviewing individual people before having group discussion or a seminar to highlight some issues. The most sensitive information was best obtained through individual interviews.

Since the majority of those interviewed could not speak in English, all the recorded work was done in Dholuo. This meant that what had been recorded had to be transcribed from the tapes into the written form. The outcome of this transcription is what has been referred to as “South
Nyanza Historical Texts Vol. II" which contains the raw data as it was collected from the field.

The specific areas identified in the four zonal areas were visited at different intervals. The researcher started by spending several days in Karachuonyo and Kanyamwa. As has been indicated in general methodological approach, carrying out research, individual interviews were carried out first both in Karachuonyo and Kanyamwa. It was only after these individual interviews that some form of seminars were organized for group discussions, bringing together, where possible, some of the people who had been interviewed individually. The purpose of these discussions was to give informants a chance to talk openly about certain issues so that they could either come to some agreements or to discard some ideas which they considered irrelevant. Both Karachuonyo and Kanyamwa proved to be very rich in information. Kanyamwa being the nucleus or the original home of all Jok'Onyango had served as a dispersal area for all the Luo groups in South Nyanza as a whole. Jo-Karachuonyo were among the first Luo groups to have moved from Kanyamwa to their present area of occupation. Thus the researcher found it necessary to trace them from Kanyamwa.

There were moments when the researcher found it necessary to use the participatory and group processes methodology for the purpose of validity check. Participatory mode of doing research proved useful in the sense that while obtaining the information from the group being interviewed, the group proved helpful to the researcher by pointing out what they thought was wrong with the way the questions were being asked. For instance, some members of groups were quick to point out that
they did not wish to be interrupted when they were answering questions. This helped the researcher to restructure the questions which would give the informants ample time to answer questions. At the same time group participation not only helped in identifying some vocal informants but also to verify some of the notions.

During the time of interviewing the researcher used the tape recorder to record all the information given by the informants. The use of tape recorders enabled the informants to narrate what they could remember without interruption. It also allowed the flow of ideas. The tape recorders proved useful especially when the researcher visited houses which had no chairs or tables or writing facilities since people could just talk and whatever they said would be recorded. For the collection of data about the women among Jok’Onyango, some sample questions had been prepared as a guideline to be used during the time of interviewing. The researcher did not adhere strictly to the sample questions in the order in which they appeared because the questions asked were dictated by the response from the informants. The sample questions as originally formulated were presented in the following order. The first question dealt with the identification of the informants, their names and their genealogy as far back as they could remember. The second question dealt with the historical background of the group on whom the research was carried. Other questions were based on social, economic and political set-up of the people.

In terms of methodology the researcher also tried an empirical approach, that is, having a controlled situation where questionnaires composed of a number of standardized questions could be used in trying
to obtain the information sought. But the use of questionnaires proved almost impossible and the researcher was forced to abandon the whole idea. There were certain limitations with regard to standardized questions. First the majority of our informants were people of advanced age and they depended mainly on their memories of the past; many of them were unable to read or write. In any case even when some of these informants were being interviewed, the researcher found out that when they were asked questions and were trying to give an explanation, they would sometimes, be thrown off course. It was for this reason that the researcher decided to rely more on the tape recorder which tended to allow the flow of thought on the part of the informants. However, there were moments when the researcher had to ask questions and write down the answer but, his process was slow and sometimes the informants had to wait for the researcher to finish writing an answer down before they could proceed. This tended to make them lose the trend of their narratives. Owing to the above delimiting factors, the researcher had to rely more and more on tape recorders. Thus, the most important instrument used during the field work was the tape recorder which made possible for the informants to give information systematically. What amused the informants most was the fact that they were able to listen to their own conversations and narratives. Apart from this, the researcher found it appropriate to play the tapes to check with the informants if what had been recorded was what they intended to say. Often time they corrected themselves after listening to what they had said, as it often happened when there was a group discussion.

Secondly, the tapes were played back to make the informants understand that they were not being tricked in any way. Perhaps this was
the best part of the research as it helped in winning the confidence of the informants. Yet there were other informants who would have nothing to do with the tape recorders. They were willing to give information provided that the researcher did not insist on taping them. In such a case the researcher found it most appropriate to strike a compromise with the informants.

During the fieldwork, the researcher came across many obstacles. There are certain areas such as Kadem and Karungu on the southern end of Luoland, Rusinga island and Mfang'ano island which proved to be problematic especially when it came to transportation. Therefore one of the major problems which the researcher encountered during the fieldwork was that of transportation from one area to another. The road system in South Nyanza is not the most suitable which renders some of these areas almost inaccessible. A lot of damage is done to the vehicle by stones on the road as well as mud when it has been raining. During the rainy season the roads to many of these places are so bad that it is risky to try to go to Kanyamwa, Rusinga, Mfang’ano, Karungu and Kadem. Under such circumstances, the researcher was forced to walk. Even in an area which is as comparatively developed as Karachuonyo, it can become so muddy that one is forced to leave the car by the road or pay those passing nearby to help push the car out of the mud. Then there was the problem of petrol consumption. The researcher found out that the price of petrol was higher than funds allocated to it especially when one had to make so many trips to different areas; that is, around Karachuonyo, Kanyamwa, Kadem, Karungu and Rusinga island. The researcher was forced to cut down on the trips to Nairobi in order to stay longer in the field. This reduction
made it possible for the researcher to buy petrol and move around. In so doing, the researcher was able to carry out the research.

Rusinga and Mfang’ano islands presented unique and challenging cases. The islands are inhabited by people who speak the Abasuba language which is basically Bantu in origin, while at the same time they speak Dholuo. Owing to the fact that a causeway had been constructed at Mbita Point, it is now possible to drive vehicles right into Rusinga island. Thus, it is possible for an individual to drive around the island from one point to another. However, since there are many hilly places, the researcher was forced from time to time to leave the vehicle either along the road or in some home in order to walk to the places where the informants were.

In Rusinga island the chief’s camp is located near Mbita Point at a very convenient place. Because of the position of the chief’s camp, the researcher was able to attend some of the Barazas. In so doing the researcher was able to identify some knowledgeable informants or was able to get information about possible informants. What was striking about Rusinga and Mfang’ano islands is the fact that when the people speak, there is a mixture of Dholuo and some of the Abasuba words. This was more pronounced in stories. In telling the stories, the Abasuba narrated everything in Dholuo, but those stories with songs, took a different turn together. The songs are usually sung in the original Abasuba language which was spoken long before the Abasuba had been in contact with the Nilotic Luo groups on the mainland South Nyanza. This captured the interest of the researcher who wanted to determine when and
why the Luo and Abasuba came into contact with one another; and why it was the Luo who influenced the Abasuba instead of the latter influencing the Luo.

Mfangano island is bigger than Rusinga and there are more people who speak the Abasuba language than in Rusinga. In fact, there are some people who speak Dholuo with a lot of difficulties. Thus, sometimes the researcher had to rely on research assistants from the islands who could interpret what the informants were saying. The narratives were mostly done in Dholuo but the songs remained in the original language and this had to be interpreted by research assistants who were fluent in Dholuo as well as the Abasuba language. In most cases they were bilingual.

The greatest problem which the researcher was faced with in Mfangano island was that of transportation. Mfangano is a mountainous area. Added to this is the fact that the only means of transportation is a canoe or a boat fitted with an engine or walking on foot. So it takes a lot of determination and energy to move from one place to another. There were moments when the going was tough and the researcher resorted to walking from one place to another. In the end, the researcher was able to get important information from the informants as will be discussed later.

When all the data had been collected from the field, the next move was to transcribe them into written form. In this case the researcher used analytical technique which is a systematic reduction of material from the field into a written and usable form. Thus, the first move in our analytical technique was to transcribe what had been recorded in Dholuo since the informants were speaking in their mother tongue. The material was then
translated into English language. The final draft was then typed and this constituted what we have called “South Nyanza Historical Texts Vol. II”. The texts contain all the data from the field as was narrated by the informants. The historical texts is the basis of our analysis of the proposed hypotheses and the role of women in general. It is the major working document in conjunction with the secondary material from the libraries as well as the archival material.

The method used for dating events which took place in the areas covered by this work has been based on generations. In an attempt to find out approximate date between one generation and another, the researcher interviewed about thirty fathers who claimed to have been born around 1890s to find out the first surviving child born to such fathers. From this a rough estimate ranging between 20-24 years was reached. Therefore the average length of a generation among Jok’Onyango, according to this calculation, was placed at about 23 years.
## Tentative Chronological Chart

<table>
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<th>Numbers of Generation from 1941</th>
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<td>4</td>
<td>1849-1872</td>
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South Nyanza district lies on the South Western end of Kenya. It occupies the southern shore of the Nyanza Gulf of Lake Victoria between approximately 34°E and 35°E longitudes and 0°09'5 and 1° 25'5 North latitudes. (South Nyanza District Socio-Cultural Profile 1986)

The District comprises 5.8% of the total. The rest of the lake shore line portion is made up of fresh water reserves of the Victoria Nile. Nyanza is bordered by Kisii, Nyamira and Nandi districts to the east, Kitui and Siaya districts to the north and side and Winjil Gulf, the Republic of Tanzania to the South and the Republic of Uganda to the west.

It is estimated that South Nyanza forms the largest administrative unit compared to the other first administration units in Nyanza Province. The district is divided into nine administrative divisions, namely: Kendu Bay, Ogongi, Rangwe, Rongo, Nkata, Mbita, Nyamira, Migori and Bobo. The four areas of study are situated along the lake region, Nyamitwe is in Nyamira Division, Kendu Bay in Kendu Bay Division and Karachononyo in Kendu Bay Division.
CHAPTER TWO
GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF JOK'ONYANGO

Geographical Setting

The areas covered by this study are Kanyamwa, Kadem, Karungu and Karachuonyo. These were among the early Luo settlements which were established along the lakeshore regions in the mainland South Nyanza district from the seventeenth century onwards.

South Nyanza district lies on the South-Western end of Kenya, that is it “occupies the southern shores of the Nyanza Gulf of Lake Victoria between approximately 34°E and 35°E longitudes and 0.03°S and 1° 25°S latitudes”, (South Nyanza District Socio-Cultural Profile 1986, 1).

The District comprises 7,778 Sq.Km. of which dry area represents 73.5% of the total. The rest of the area covers 2,064 sq.km. and this portion is made up of fresh water reservoirs of the Victoria Nyanza. South Nyanza is bordered by Kisii, Nyamira and Narok districts to the east, Kisumu and Siaya districts to the northern side and Winam Gulf, the Republic of Tanzania to the South and the Republic of Uganda to the west.

It is estimated that South Nyanza forms the largest administration unit compared to the other four administration units in Nyanza Province. The district is divided into nine administrative divisions, namely: Kendu, Oyugis, Rangwe, Rongo, Ndhiwa, Mbita, Nyatike, Migori and Kehancha. The four areas of study are situated along the lake region. Kanyamwa is in Ndhiwa Division, Kadem and Karungu in Nyatike Division and Karachuonyo in Kendu Bay Division.
Fig. I: POSITION OF JOK'ONYANGO IN SOUTH NYANZA IN THE COLONIAL PERIOD

LEGEND
- International Boundaries
- Provincial Boundaries
- District Boundaries
- Location Boundaries
- Jok'onyango
Fig. 2: SOUTH NYANZA DISTRICT

ADMINISTRATIVE AND POLITICAL BOUNDARIES
According to 1989 population census provisional results, South Nyanza District has a total population of 1,095,000 people with a high population concentrated in the high potential areas of Rongo and Oyugis divisions. It had been projected that by 1989 the district would have 1,264,975 people (South Nyanza Development Plan 1989-1993).

Ecologically, the District can be divided into three zonal areas: the lakeshore lowland region which ranges from 1,163 to 1,219 metres above sea level. This is the driest belt of the district, and it receives between 750 and 1000mm of rain annually. All the four areas of study namely Kanyamwa, Karungu, Kadem and Karachuonyo are located within this zone. The only crop grown in this region as cash crop is cotton while maize, sorghum and groundnuts are grown as subsistence crops. Other major economic activities are animal husbandry and fish farming (South Nyanza District Development Plan 1989-93).

The lakeshore lowland region is “bounded by an extensive boomerang-shaped, shoreline, measuring approximately 260km in length, and by an escarpment-like terrain inland” (South Nyanza District Socio-Cultural Profile, 1986: 3). The northern side of the lakeshore lowland region “where the 1,291 metres contour approaches very close to the lake” is narrower compared to other sections. However, further south towards Karungu Bay, it “broadens out to form the extensive Kadem plains”. Thus the lakeshore lowlands are often “characterized by very dry conditions” but at the same time it has “rich alluvial deposits at the mouth of the major rivers, Kuja which supplies deposits through its frequent flooding, and Sondu and Awach in upper and lower Karachuonyo” respectively. (South Nyanza District Socio-Cultural Profile 1986: 4).
The middle zone falls below the 350 metres contour line with an annual rainfall between 1000 and 1300mm. This area is suitable for cultivation of a wide variety of crops as well as for livestock farming. Sugarcane is grown in small quantities as cash crop while maize, sorghum, cassava and beans are major subsistence crops. Finally, the third zone also referred to as high potential zone falls within 1,350 to 1,800 metres above sea level. This zone is hot and wet for most part of the year, with an annual rainfall of over 1,300mm. The zone is rich in variety of soils which combine with abundant rainfall to support two crop seasons a year. Crops grown include sugarcane, tobacco and arabica coffee as cash crops while maize, finger millet, potatoes and bananas are grown as farm subsistence crops. The historical developments among Jok’Onyango must be looked at against this background.

**Historical Background**

In the early seventeenth century some of the Luo-speakers crossed over the Uyoma peninsular and went to settle in the Mirunda area along the lakeshore region of South Nyanza District. From here they began to expand their settlements towards the hinterland so that they occupied the present day Kanyamwa, Kadem, Karungu and Karachuonyo. They stayed close to the lake so that they could practise farming as well as fishing and hunting activities. All these groups claim the Jok tradition.

The origin of Joka-Jok goes back to the area commonly known as the Agoro Section, an area which comprises the “beautiful Agoro-Imatong Mountain Complex”. This area embraces the modern southern Sudan which is referred to as the “Northern Agoro Section” and modern Uganda,
also referred to as the “Southern Agoro Section” (Herring, 1976: 26). The southward migration of Joka-Jok took them across Uganda and Mount Masaba, Padholaland on to Samia country until they eventually reached Yimbo Kadimo where they established a settlement at Got Ramogi on the northern side of Winam Gulf. The settlement took place sometime between A.D. 1460 and 1517. While they were staying at Got Ramogi, Joka-Jok began to expand their settlements eastwards and southwards into the present day Kisumu and Siaya Districts. This expansion took place between A.D. 1571 and 1598. The settlements included those of Jo-Kajulu, Jo-Nyakach, Jo-Kisumo, Jo-Seme, and Jo-Alego.

The Kanyamwa tradition asserts that from the line of Omia Ramul and Wango, there evolved the Uyoma and Asembo communities, while Seme as a community evolved around Rado and Nyikal. However, Ochieng’ (1974: 23-24) maintains that the evolution of Seme centred around Odongo, son of Nyikal but this is understandable since often the father and son were used interchangeably as the founder of new settlement as was the case of Chwanya and his supposed son, Onyango.

Jo-Karachuonyo talk of Jok as the son of Ramogi and that it was Jok, who having married Awandu had four sons, namely Chwanya, Rakwar, Nyasgenga, Omwa and Rachuonyo Odia (South Nyanza Historical Texts Vol. I: 2). Whereas Chwanya is given in the traditions of Jo-Karachuonyo and Jo-Kabwoch as the son of Ramogi. Such confusions are

\[1\] South Nyanza Historical Texts Vol. II, contains the material collected during the field work for this study. On the other hand, South Nyanza Historical Texts Vol. I contains the material which was collected during the 1976-77 fieldwork. The two documents will hereafter be referred to as SNHT Vols. I and II.
prevalent in the history of the Luo because there were many groups who came and lived together for sometime. When they separated many of them continued to uphold some aspects of the traditions of the people with whom they had interacted. When they established new settlements elsewhere they continued to claim the same origin as those people who had preceded them. Thus all these groups which claim to be Jok’Onyango or Joka-Chwanya, namely Jo-Kanyamwa, Jo-Kadem, Jo-Karungu and Jo-Karachuonyo may not necessarily be linked by blood but through association, assimilation and adoption.

The most important person in the history of Jok’Onyango is Chwanya. We read from Ochieng’ (1974: 24) that Odongo son of Nyikal had joined together with Julu and the two people led to a splinter party to Sakwa Waringa and here the two groups established a new settlement. Meanwhile the other groups which had remained at Got Ramogi also decided to leave the area. Among these group were Miyawa, Chwanya and Maje. According to Ochieng’, “the family of Miyawa later formed the Seje, Kadenge and Nyajuok clans. The family of Miyawa formed the Joka-Chwanya of south Nyanza, while the family of Maje later became the Joka-Maje of Alego,” Ochieng’ (1974: 24).

Chwanya was the first to migrate from the Alego settlement. Tradition has it that when he was on his way to Uyoma, he passed through Sakwa and here he met Odongo son of Nyikal, Chwanya asked Odongo to join his group and the two men led their group to Kayundi in Uyoma. As the population continued to increase with the influence of the Luo and Bantu speaking peoples, the Uyoma area became congested. Therefore, Joka-Nyikal led by Odongo, son of Nyikal, took the north-easter
which led them to Winam Kagombe in Asembo and here they built a new settlement.

Meanwhile Joka-Chwanya remained in Uyoma. Tradition has it that Onyango was either the son of Chwanya or that he was the son of a Kanyikela man. His mother had been married to Chwanya but she left him and was remarried by a man from Kanyikela. One version has it that Onyango’s mother left Chwanya while she was pregnant of Onyango and another source (SNHT Vol. I: 182) maintains that the Kanyikela man was the biological father of Onyango. Whatever the case, tradition has it that a great famine struck Kanyikela during this time and Onyango’s mother was forced to return to Chwanya, her first husband. By now Chwanya was an old man.

One day the Yimbo traders captured Chwanya while he was out tending his cattle. All his sons refused to go and rescue him arguing that their father was too advanced in age and was not worth risking one’s life for. On the other hand, Onyango, because of his love for his father, decided to go after him and he managed to bring the old man back. When they returned home Onyango went a step further and made a feast for his father’s homecoming by killing a ram for him. This act pleased Chwanya and he was greatly moved. As a result Chwanya showered Onyango with all his blessings. He gave him, among other things, a hoe with which to till the land and a spear for protection and defence. Chwanya told Onyango that his descendants would multiply and expand their areas of settlements. Apart from this the old man prophesied that once their numbers increase, Onyango’s descendants would fight among themselves. In the subsequent years the Kanyamwa, Kabwoch, Kadem, Karachuonyo
and Karungu who had lived together began to quarrel among themselves, and this eventually led to their separation as will be explained later.

Traditions collected among Jo-Kanyamwa seem to indicate that Chwanya had two sons: Ochieng” and Onyango Rabala. However, this tradition seems to suggest that Onyango Rabala was the son of Chwanya by adoption and that he was Kimirwa, meaning that Chwanya was not his biological father. However, because of his love for Chwanya, the old man called him Onyango Rabala because he was a warrior (SNHT Vol. I: 161).

Jo-Kanyamwa maintain that in their migrational journeys, they went through Yimbo-Kadimo under the leadership of Chwanya. And that having reached Uyoma, they established a new settlement there. While they were still staying in Uyoma, they dug a well which they called Achamo Akwaro. In the subsequent years this well was referred to as Yap Kanyamwa, the well belonging to the Kanyamwa people, even after they had left Uyoma. Once again this tradition points at Uyoma.

Chwanya and his supposed son Onyango are said to have died in Uyoma and that the two never crossed over the lake into South Nyanza. It is also maintained that Onyango Rabala married Anyango Dhiaga from Kakimba Mfang’ano island while he was staying in Uyoma (SNHT Vol. I: 162). If this is true then it might help explain several marriages of Anyango Dhiaga within the family of Chwanya. It is possible to infer here that Anyango was married to one of Chwanya’s sons, possibly Onyango Rabala while these Luo groups were staying in Uyoma. But when Onyango died, another one of the Chwanya people married Anyango and moved with her to South Nyanza. And if it is true that she had two sons in
Uyoma, Rabungu and Rateng’, she may have decided to go back to Uyoma if she felt that she was being mistreated by her new husband, the first one having died in Uyoma.

Traditions collected among Jo-Kadem state that Joka-Chwanya comprising the Kanyamwa, Kabwoch, Kadem, Karungu and Karachuonyo were the first Luo speaking people in South Nyanza (SNHT Vol. I: 202). Jo-Kanyamwa crossed over the lake at Naya and landed at Mirunda Bay where they settled for some time before moving to Gamba. The Karungu sources (SNHT Vol. I: 172) state that at this time it was not possible to identify the Luo groups, for example, Jo-Kadem and Jo-Karungu as they later became known. These people were simply referred to as Jok’Onyang or Joka-Chwanya. On the other hand, the other Luo groups which came in after Jok’Onyang such as Jo-Gern, Jo-Kochia, Jo-Kanyada, Jo-Kanyidoto and Jo-Sakwa were collectively referred to as Jo-Nyokal (SNHT Vol. I; 172).

Jo-Karachuonyo have also been linked with Jok’Onyang or Joka-Chwanya through Jok. According to their traditions Jok was the son of Ramogi and that Jok married Amadhu with whom he had the following four sons: Chwanya Rakwar, Nyasgenga, Omwa and Rachuonyo Odia (SNHT Vol, I: 2), (SNHT Vol. II: 65). While Jok lived with his sons at Got Ramogi, he, like the other Luo groups, was engaged in farming as well as cattle keeping.

During this time there were many wild animals which destroyed the crops, notably among them were elephants. Therefore, people were forced by these circumstance to watch over their lands to keep the elephants and
hippopotamus away. Under such an atmosphere, the owner of a homestead could not just leave his fields unattended without making prior arrangements as to who would watch over the fields.

According to tradition, Jok had been invited to a friend’s home for a beer party as was often practised among the Luo. Usually these parties took place in the evening. So before Jok went to the party, he asked his sons to take over the responsibility of the fields that evening. Each one of them refused their father’s request. Nevertheless, Jok went to the beer party. Since his sons had refused to watch over the fields he decided to pass through them on his way home because animals were most destructive at night. As he approached the fields, his sons who had decided to carry out their father’s request when he had left the home, mistook Jok for an animal and so they speared him, killing him instantly. As he groaned in agony, his sons realized that they had not killed an animal but their father. Subsequently each one of them, filled with fright and grief, ran to different directions. According to the traditions of Jo-Karachuonyo it was Nyasgenga who accidentally killed his father.

Chwanya Rakwar, one of the sons of Jok ran away and eventually he was found by a man from Waondo on the southern end of Winam Gulf. It is this Waondo man who took care of him until he became of age (SNHT Vol. II: 66). This tradition which links Chwanya with Jo-Waondo is rather interesting for the Waondo are among the earliest groups of people to have reached South Nyanza.

According to T. Ayot (1983: 172), among the earliest settlers in South Nyanza were a mixture of Bantu and Nilotic stock. These people
crossed over the lake and settled at Mirunda, having landed at Mirunda Bay. They included Jo-Waondo, Jo-Kamreri, Jo-Karowo and Komenya. Jo-Waondo claim to have been of Luo origin and that their eponymous founder was one Oywa who is also given in the Abasuba tradition to have been the founder of certain clans in “Kisumu, Karachuonyo, Kabwoch, Kanyamwa, Kadem and Karungu (H. O Ayot, 1979: 538).

The Abasuba reckon that there was one Okal who is given in the tradition as having been the son of Okuku who lived with Joka-Jok at Got Ramogi. Okuku’s father, Omel, died and left four sons: Omenya, Ondo, and Oringo. After the death of their father, these people went and built a settlement at Usengere in Yimbo. While they were staying at this place, Omenya and Arowo decided to go and live in Asembo. In the meantime Ondo, also decided to move to Uyoma Naya where he established a new settlement before finally crossing over the lake at the Uyoma peninsula to Mirunda Bay in South Nyanza. It was around this time that Chwanya may have possibly come into contact with Ondo. It is estimated that the evolution of the early Luo communities among the Waondo, Kanyanja, Kamreri, Karowo and Komenya may have taken place sometime between A.D. 1688 and 1711. Once again this whole episode of the Jok incident and subsequent flight of Chwanya Rakwar leads us to Uyoma peninsula.

Rachuonyo, the other supposed son of Jok, ran towards the lake and here he sought refuge in some papyrus. Tradition gives the name of the lake as Gangu or Nam Bonya (SNHT Vol. I: 4). Whatever the name of the lake, what is important here is that Rachuonyo went to the lakeshore and here he was found by three old men whose names were Chien, Nyakwar and Ogelo. Rachuonyo first lived in the home of Nyakwar, however, he
eventually went to live with Chien since there was constant disagreement between him and Nyakwar who found Rachuonyo to be nothing but a trouble-shooter. Rachuonyo stayed in Chien’s home until Chien died and soon afterwards Rachuonyo’s trek to South Nyanza began. On the other hand, Omwa is given in the Karachuonyo tradition as having been the eponymous founder of Jo-Kisumo while Nyasgenga who sought refuge among the Abagusii became the ancestor of Jo-Wanjare of Gusii country.

Nyasgenga is popularly known in the traditions as Wanjare, a name which was carried by the Wanjare people (SNHT Vol. II: 66). Traditions collected in Karachuonyo talk of the presence of the Abagusii in the areas settled by Jo-Karachuonyo and the Luo fought against these Bantu speakers. Although Ochieng’, (1974) does not bring out any connection between the Wanjare peoples with the Joka-Jok, nevertheless, he talks of the Wanjare as having been in contact with the Luo with whom they had constant warfare. Ochieng’ (1974: 166) continues:

Around six generations ago a number of Wanjare families decided to occupy the more open woodland to the north of the Forest (Nyagoe) particularly in the area of present day Oriang’. The majority, however, still preferred the safety afforded by the middle of the forest in which they continued to live, and where they were later joined by the runaways from Luoland.

Ochieng’ does not explain who these “runaways from Luoland” were, neither does he indicate the direction from which these “runaways” may have come. Furthermore he does not explain why these people from Luoland were running away or from whom they were running away. What is important here is the idea of people running from the direction of the Luoland. The traditions of Joka-Jok and therefore Jok’Onyango would
seem to indicate that Rachuonyo, Omwa, Chwanya and Wanjare ran away after they realized that they killed their father and they ran to different directions. Consequently, Wanjare found himself in Gusii country where he is given in the traditions as having been the eponymous founder of Jo-Wanjare. It is also quite possible that Wanjare may have moved to Gusiland with a few families as was characteristic of migrationary patterns of the early immigrants.

Moreover, Ochieng' (1974: 55) states that there is enough evidence to show that there has been some confusion as far as the origin of various clans among the Abagusii are concerned. That confusion which exists embraces “each division’s name, its totem, and the nickname of the founder. There is some internal evidence to support the view that such confusion exists”. Ochieng’ goes on to state:

We find, for example, that the names by which the founders of the various divisions are known are not repeated in the geneologies of the Gusii, nor are they used by the present numbers of various Gusii divisions. You hardly, for instance, bump into a fellow called Mobassi or Mugirango or Nyaribari or Omugsero or Omache.

This conclusion should not present a problem if one takes into consideration the importance of the contact between different groups of people, trade and intermarriage which eventually led to cultural borrowing and assimilation. Indeed, as many people infiltrated new areas and the population increased, traditions of the people with regard to actual founders not only underwent change and moderation with time but also became increasingly confused. Leaders were known by different names, for example, Ramogi Ajwang’ or Ramogi Oywa, Onyango Rabala, Omia
Ramul and Wanjare himself is given in all Jok’Onyang’o traditions as Wanjare except in the Karachuonyo tradition where the name Wanjare and Nyasgenga are used interchangeably.

Therefore, the fact that some of the Abagusii carry the nicknames or totemic names does not in anyway deny them the position of being the supposed founders of their respective communities. In any case what is important is the evolution of a particular community and the founder acts only as a symbol of identity and national unity as will be explained when dealing with Kanyamwa and Karachuonyo.

From the time of the death of Chien, Rachuonyo and his group embarked on their trek to South Nyanza and Uyoma seems to have been one of the areas used by Jok’Onyang’o to cross over the lake into South Nyanza as was the case with the other Luo groups which followed the footsteps of Joka-Chwanya. We learn from Ogot (1967: 207) that Joka-Jok moved into South Nyanza in two different groups. One group was composed of the “modern Karachuonyo, Kasipul, Kabondo and Kano and these settled first in the area around Kendu Bay”. The second group consisting of Jo-Kanyamwa, Jo-Kabwoch, Jo-Kadem and Jo-Karungu “travelled via Asego (Homa Bay) and occupied the present Kanyamwa”. While Ogot seems to indicate that the Kanyamwa, Kabwoch, Kadem and Karungu went to Kanyamwa via Asego, the oral traditions collected among these groups including Jo-Karachuonyo would seem to indicated that these groups stayed at Kanyamwa having crossed over the lake at the Uyoma peninsula. And it was from Kanyamwa area that these groups dispersed to their present areas of occupation (SNHT Vol. I, and II).
While Jo-Karachuonyo were still in Central Nyanza, a few of their people had been to South Nyanza long before Oyange led a larger number which eventually landed at Kanam near god Huma. Here they found the early Bantu speakers who had preceded them such as Waswa, the Ugu, the Kakseru and the Wagire.

Although this tradition seems to imply that Jo-Kano and Jo-Gem settled in Karachuonyo, the other sources maintain that Jo-Kano moved to Karachuonyo with Jo-Karachuonyo and that Jo-Gem being part of the Nyokal group moved to South Nyanza after Joka-Chwanya had already settled there. Be that as it may, Jo-Kano are part of the splinter parties which came from “Labour Lapono” confluence. Having taken the western route which led them to Lira-Ngeta in Lango, some of them trekked southwards until they came into contact with the early people who settled in Nyanza, T. Ayot (1983: 121).

According to Ogot (1967: 188), in Labuor country which lies in the mountainous area between Acholiland and Karamoja, there is a place called “Awach”. It would not be incorrect therefore, to infer here that Aora Awach, that is, the River Awach in Karachuonyo implies the presence of Jo-Kano in the area.

Jo-Kano had travelled from Acholiland on to Lango country and having gone through Tororo town, they went up to Yimbo-Kadimo. Opinya (1968: 5) places this migration to have taken place sometime between A.D. 1550 and 1670. Jo-Kano encountered Joka-Jok in Alego and Jo-Kano stayed at a place called Kaugagi, an area inhabited by the Kalkada people. After brief stay at Kaugagi, Jo-Kano dispersed to
Bunyala led by Ochieng'. Having passed through Yimbo-Kadimo and Sakwa, they eventually arrived in Uyoma.

From Uyoma peninsula Jo-Kano were led to South Nyanza by Odep. The settled in Mirunda at a place called Kimira. By the time Jo-Kano got to South Nyanza, the Karachuonyo were already engaged in a conflict with the Maasai of Uasin Gishu over the land. The Kano and Jo-Karachuonyo combined their efforts and the two defeated not only the Maasai but also some Bantu groups such as Wasweta Bogi.

According to Opinya (1969: 8), the arrival of Jo-Kano was between A.D. 1740 and 1780. However, by this time some of the Jo-Karachuonyo in the areas around Oriang', Ngeta and Nyakongo had already settled. This settlement took place between nine and ten generations ago and therefore between A.D. 1711 and 1734 Ochieng' (1974: 29), and T. Ayot (1983). The other groups of Jo-Karachuonyo seem to have crossed over the lake between nine and ten generations ago, therefore between A.D. 1734 and 1757.

Jo-Kanyamwa had lived in Uyoma before moving to South Nyanza and they were the first Luo wave to have migrated to South Nyanza in a greater number. They were followed by the other groups. We learn from Ogot (1967) that between 1700 and 1740 the Luo had not crossed over Winam Gulf to occupy the present day South Nyanza. However, with the arrival of the other Luo groups comprising Jo-Uyoma, Jo-Asembo, Jo-Sakwa and Jo-Kano, “the northern side of the gulf now looked congested to the pastoralists and this apparent over-crowding resulted in the exodus to South Nyanza”. Although the Luo continued to flock into the Uyoma
peninsula, the available sources and traditions collected among the Luo of South Nyanza seem to indicate that by A.D. 1740, the Luo settlement in South Nyanza was well underway. Thus the second group to leave Kanyamwa was Jo-Kabwoch followed later on by Jo-Kadem and Jo-Karungu. Of all Joka-Chwanya or Jok’Onyango only Jo-Kanyamwa remained at their original settlement. Let us now turn to the expansion of Jo-Kadem and Jo-Karungu.

The available source seems to indicate that the migration from Kanyamwa to Kadem, Karungu and Kabwoch was led by four brothers, and these were Adem, Rungu also referred to as Mbeo who led Jo-Karungu, Owiti Bwoch who led Jo-Kabwoch and Ler. According to this tradition (Ochieng’ 1974: 30) the four brother’s migrational route took them to the west until they reached a place where they established Karungu settlement. Karungu became their area of operation as these Luo groups waged war against the people who had preceded them into this area namely Jo-Ugu, a Bantu speaking people inhabiting the area known as North Kadem and East Karungu. They also fought against Jo-Suna and Jo-Wagire.

By this time Jo-Kadem, Jo-Karungu and Jo-Kabwoch were staying together and having dislodged these early Bantu peoples, Ler and Adem decided to migrate from Karungu. They went and built a new settlement which became known as Kadem. On the other hand, Rungu and his group extended their settlement to include Sori on the western side of Lake Victoria.
According to the Karungu tradition, Jo-Karungu were led by Wambogo and their genealogy places him somewhere between seven and eight generations ago, therefore between A.D. 1757 and 1803. This would suggest that Owuonda who together with Wambogo led Jo-Kadem and Jo-Karungu must have been the second Owuonda. Therefore this migration must have taken between A.D. 1780 and 1803, since Owuonda the first falls somewhere between ten and eleven generations ago, and therefore between A.D. 1688 and 1734.

When Jo-Kadem decided to leave Kanyamwa, Jo-Kanyamwa, thought they had gone hunting. Jo-Kadem trekked throughout the night making a brief stop-over at Nyakwere. From Nyakwere they went and established a settlement at Got Kachola which became the nucleus of the Kadem expansion. Their leader was Mifuong’o who was the most famous Jabilo among them. Got Kachola was thereafter regarded as a sacred place because this was the place where sacred pots known as Aguch bilo or Aguch Mifuong’o were kept. The legendary pots were sacred to all Jo-Kadem and all of them owed allegiance to the Holy Shrine where they were kept.

Jo-Kadem maintain that when they established their settlement at the foot of Got Kachola, they invited Arungu who was the immediate follower of Nyamwa and that Buoch, the youngest brother remained with Nyamwa since they were in good terms. On the other hand, Nyamwa did not like his brother Arungu and dictated terms for him most of the time. This

*Jabilo - was an individual who had divine talents and divine powers, capable of predicting the outcome of events such as wars. He was often consulted on matters affecting the community. In any way he was the custodian of the Community.
tradition goes on to say that Jo-Kadem who had been mistreated earlier by
Nyamwa became sympathetic so they asked Arungu to go and occupy a
country which lay adjacent to Kadem.

It was this place which formed the nucleus of the expansion of Jo-
Karungu towards Sori. This tradition implies that Nyamwa, Arungu and
Buoch were brothers and that it was Jo-Kadem who moved from
Kanyamwa before Jo-Karungu that the two groups moved westwards
together. Secondly it suggests that Nyamwa who is given in the
Kanyamwa and Abasuba traditions as being a woman, as will be explained
later, was indeed a man. The same goes for Arungu who is given in the
Karungu tradition as Obarungu Nyosire. Whatever the case Jokla-
Chwanya or Jok’Onyango at one time were all related and as a result they
avoided intermarriage among themselves. Within this group were Jo-
Kanyamwa, Jo-Kabwoch, Jo-Kadem, Jo-Karungu and Jo-Karachuonyo. It
was only during the 20th century that Jo-Karachuonyo began to intermarry
with Jo-Karungu but even then the idea was not popular. The remaining
groups have not yet yielded to the temptation. Jok’Onyango are the
largest single Luo group in South Nyanza as a whole. We should now turn
our attention to concepts that strengthened the position of women in the
Luo communities in South Nyanza.
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CHAPTER THREE

THE IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN AND THE RELATED CONCEPTS IN THE LUO SOCIETIES

The previous chapter traced the historical background of Jok’Onyango, and the people who identify themselves with the Joka-Jok tradition. It also gave the geographical description of the areas where Jok’Onyango settled. The interaction between these early Luo groups and the new environment opened up South Nyanza for occupation by other Luo and some of the non-Luo groups.

The founding of settlements and subsequent occupation of South Nyanza by the Luo in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries involved a people of diverse origins. At the centre of the evolution of the Jok’Onyango communities were women who formed part of the early pioneers to tame the future wilderness for occupation. This chapter deals with the changing roles of women, focusing its attention on issues of matrilineal dominance in a society that was basically patrilineal in nature. The major objective here is to show the importance of women with regard to their role, position and contribution among Jok’Onyango.

The earlier inhabitants of South Nyanza were Jo-Waondo, Jo-Kayanja, Jo-Kamreri, Jo-Karowo and Jo-Komenya who are estimated to have established their settlements in south Nyanza by the last decade of the seventeenth century, that is, A.D. 1688. Ecological factors influenced their settlement in that they stayed closer to the lakeshore region from which they fished and carried out trade with the groups that were on the northern side of Winam Gulf as well as the people of Abasuba land.
(T.O. Ayot, 1987: 97). Of these groups Jo-Waondo, Jo-Kayanja, Jo-Karowo, Jo-Komenya were of Luo origin. Only Jo-Kamreri were Bantu speakers. All these people inhabited the area that embraces the land that lies between the present day Asego Bay and Mbita Point, which was referred to as Mirunda.

Prior to the coming of the Luo, the area was not referred to as Mirunda. However, owing to the interaction between the Luo and non-Luo groups which included the Maasai, the Bantu speakers and traders from the northern side of Winam Gulf and the islands of Lake Victoria, the area became known as Mirunda. Mirunda is a Luo word derived from Rundo - meaning to sell and buy - therefore a place where various groups of people met to sell and buy their goods (H.O. Ayot, 1979). Among these traders were women who carried salt from Sindo market, and fish from the islands to Mirunda market.

The coming together of people from diverse origins had far-reaching consequences for Mirunda. The area became congested as the population increased. The interaction between the Luo and non-Luo group led to cultural assimilation and communities began to emerge. Thus, the inhabitants began to consolidate themselves with Yanja, the daughter of Ondo. Therefore the Waondo, Kayanja, Kamreri, Karowo and Komenya decided to perform blood brotherhood so that they would not intermarry. This consolidation was necessary in order to stand against the hostility from the Maasai, the Kanyamkago, Bantu peoples and the Luo groups from across the Uyoma peninsula on the northern side. As a result of this coming together, the Waumi, the Waregi and the Waga became known as Jo-
Kayanja in memory of Yanja. Thus, from the very beginning of the settlements women became “fundamental to the structure of segmentary lineage because of their reproductive and productive activities” which often “combine to produce and sustain the developmental cycles of the family within lineage system”. It is because of this development that lineages often spring “from women and even long after they are dead some women remain lineage eponyms” (Achola Pala Okeyo, 1980: 194).

As the Luo continued to interact with their new environment and their neighbours, changes began to occur and they evolved a pattern of settlement. Large settlements were established. And in the realm of political, economic and social activities people became specialized in undertaking various activities. Some activities such as cultivation and control of produce from the family farm were identified with women while others such as clearing of the fields were identified with men. This gender division was positive and not antagonistic. If we take, for example, the concept of dala, that is, the home and the concept of ot, that is, the house, the man was referred to as the owner of the home - wuon dala, and the woman, as the owner of the house - wuon ot (SNHT Vol., II). Such distinction implies division of labour by gender which is one of the most prevalent factors “in most, if not all societies. It plays a role in the production process”. Therefore, “gender is, together with age, a widely used means by which societies make some form of division of labour, a process of specialization which is an important tool of efficiency in any production system” Barbara Rogers (1980: 13). Thus, among Jok’Onyango, there was gender and age division.
The concept of house ownership by women among Jok’Onyango is a powerful tool in that through it women become more important and “effective in their families of procreation”. It implies economic control as will be explained in Chapter Seven. Therefore, “the house as a concept is broader and offers more analytical insight into women’s property rights and productive roles than does the notion of household”. (Achola Pala Okeyo, 1980: 195). On the other hand, the concept of home ownership also provides man with the necessary tools to become more important and effective in relation to the home.

It must be pointed out that what comes out within the Luo society is that “through manipulation of gender concepts and flexible gender construction in language”, as is the case of the Igbo of West Africa, “the dual-sex barrier is broken down or mediated” (Ifi Amadiume, 1987: 89). For instance, Jok’Onyango as is the case with other Luo communities, one does not make a distinction between male and female when referring to subject pronouns. Again the word *en* which is used in reference to the third person singular in actual fact, stand for male or female. Therefore, in Dholuo there is no word for “he” or “she” neither is there a word for third person possessive pronoun “his” or “hers” which is simply *mare* in Dholuo for both sexes. Thus, among the Luo as is the case with the Igbo, “there is no reminder in speech to distinguish between the sexes” and the spoken languages have not “built up rigid associations between certain adjectives or attributes and gender subjects, nor certain objects and gender possessive pronouns” (Ifi Amadiume, 1987: 89).

At this point it would, perhaps be appropriate to define a few terms which will appear in this work from time to time. First of all the concept
dala (sing.) mier (plural), also known as pacho implies an area that is enclosed by the fence of a homestead. Dala or Pacho is the “immediate physical environment consisting of several” houses (The South Nyanza District Socio-Cultural Profile, 1986: 131-132). It is further explained that “a collection of homesteads belonging to family members of a subclan constitute the territory called gweng’. Furthermore, several gwenge constitute the territorial unit called piny which embraces a wider area of a location or district... Today piny is commonly demarcated by locational boundaries which were introduced by the colonial administration”. In the early period the Luo first established settlements where several families lived together. In the subsequent years, individuals began to move out of these settlements in order to establish their own homesteads. Eventually clans evolved in different areas occupied by the Luo.

Atieno Odhiambo and A. Cohen (1989) have argued that settlements among the Luo in Siaya as well as in Uganda seem to have come before the development of clans. They also maintain that homesteads are a later development possibly a twentieth century phenomenon. Be that as it may, when Jok’Onyango went to occupy their present areas there was a definite pattern of settlement that was used. The establishment of a settlement started with the leader of a family or a group establishing Dala, that is, ne ogero dala. Thereafter other members of the family or the group built their own houses around the main dala or pacho.

The number of houses increased with the size of the family or the group. A wall fortification made of earth or stone was built around such a settlement. This type of settlement was referred to as dala maduong’ (sing.) and several of them as mier madongo. It was referred to as the
homestead of so and so, that is, *dala ng'ane* or *kang'ane*. In each case there was an entrance to the settlement which was referred to as *Rangach*. Usually there was an elder who was referred to as *wuon dala* even if it was a large one containing several homes.

In the early 1700s Mirunda became congested and different groups of people began to move towards the hinterland. Identification with a particular group or groups became necessary for the groups’ security and protection. The first to move out of the Mirunda area were Jo-Kanyamwa who established settlement in the present day Kanyamwa by about A.D. 1711 (T.O. Ayot, 1987: 2-11). The other Jok cluster also followed Jo-Kanyamwa and settled in this area in the period between A.D. 1711 and 1734. Included in this cluster were Jo-Kabwoch, Jo-Karachuonyo, Jo-Karungu and Jo-Kadem. All these people identified themselves as Joka-Chwanya or Jok’Onyango. However, this identification did not necessarily mean that they were all the descendants of one person and that, it was the children of this one individual who formed these communities in the subsequent areas, making them all kinsmen. Because of the interaction between the Luo and non-Luo speakers, the communities that emerged became heterogenous.

Joka-Chwanya as a group were cattle-keepers and agriculturalists as well as hunters, and fishermen. Therefore, they were able to sustain an increasing population. They also traded with their neighbours such as the Abasuba and the people across the lake on the northern side.

As the population continued to increase there was an intensification of agricultural production owing to specialization. This led to a stable
food base which in turn influenced sedentarization among the Luo groups. But, by the same token, this new phenomenon led to other contradictions. It led to a scramble for land for occupation, cultivation, grazing and hunting. The increase in population led to family feuds and intercommunity conflicts. This was aggravated by the arrival of the other Luo groups from the Uyoma peninsula which included Jo-Kano, Joka-Nyadhiang’, Jo-Wagwe, Jo-Makwala and Joka-Dumo. All these people had regrouped at Kanyamwa.

According to W.R. Ochieng’ (1974: 29-30) while these people were staying at Kanyamwa, the other groups such as Jo-Kanyikela, Jo-Agoro and Jo-Wakingu also arrived in South Nyanza. These factors led to the displacement and redistribution of people. Thus, the first people to secede from Kanyamwa included Jo-Karachuonyo, followed by Jo-Kabwoch, Jo-Karungu and Jo-Kadem. The evolution of these communities took place between A.D. 1700 and 1734. By this time Jo-Karachuonyo had settled at Oriang’, Ngeta and Nyakongo. However, before Jo-Kabondo and Kasipul decided to move to the upper zone to their present homeland, they lived with Jo-Karachuonyo, Jo-Kano, Jo-Agoro, Jo-Kagan and Jo-Kamire at Amuono Hole. The Amuono settlement was called Amuono Hole because deep trenches were dug all around it for the purposes of defence. Just as Jo-Karachuonyo had left their settlements in Kanyamwa, Jo-Kabondo and Jo-Kasipul also left Amuono Hole sometime between A.D. 1734 and 1757 so that by A.D. 1760 they had already established settlements in Kabondo/Kasipul area T.O. Ayot, (1987).

It has been pointed out that the Luo and non-Luo groups crossed over the Uyoma peninsula into South Nyanza and lived at Mirunda for some-
time. They then moved into the interior and regrouped at Kanyamwa. The consequence of their contact led to cultural assimilation, intermarriage, adoption and borrowing. Therefore as they expanded their settlements, the communities that evolved became heterogenous but with kinship ties which played a major role in lineage formation and establishment of settlements. Those who had been assimilated into the clan, that is, *jodak* or outsiders, had the same rights to land use as the original inhabitants of the area. Therefore there evolved certain concepts that tended to bind the people together, among these was kinship ties.

Kinship was the determining factor of one's place or residence as well as land ownership rights. There was distinct division here ranging from *Joka-Miyo* - those belonging to the same mother, *Joka-kwaro* those belonging to the same grandfather - each of this group had their own land. Here the concept of *ot*, that is house belonging to a woman played a major role because it determined what each person would inherit. We learn from Ndege(1987: 48–49) that although those outsiders who had been incorporated into the group had the rights to land use, “the maximal lineage was the most exclusively agnatic descent group based on an accepted and putatively continuous geneology which coincided with clans”. Most of these clans were named after women because of the house concept which gave the women autonomy over the economic activities in the home and in the farm. And because of the house concept, the children in each home were identified as belonging to the house of so and so or the house of the daughter of so and so, that is *od nyar ng'ane*, thus defining the procedure of inheritance law as will be explained in Chapter Seven. Thus “members of the maximal lineage had permanent and inheritable right to land within the area held by the clan” Ndege (1987: 49).
Within the structure of the Jok’Onyango communities, kinship played a multi-functional role which embraced economic infrastructure as well as other political and cultural functions (Godelier, 1975: 10). Godelier explains that:

Kinship relations that function simultaneously as infrastructure and superstructure, in effect control the access of groups and individuals to the conditions of production and to resources, they regulate marriages (when demographic conditions permit), they provide the social framework of politico-ritual activities but they also function as an ideology, as a symbolic code for expressing relations between men and women and nature.

Thus, kinship in our context covers a wider scope than the conventional meaning; it is broader and all embracing. As has been explained by Spradley and McCurdy (1974: 1989-90) kinship is a complex language of social relationships that include not only those who are related geneologically through blood and marriage, but also people who share no common blood connection but who somehow come to be identified as kinsmen, in a particular community. An example is the blood brotherhood performed by the Waondo, Komenya, Kayanja, Kamreri and Karowo which bound them together as kinsmen and they refrained from marrying one another.

Therefore, the use of common ancestors served as a unifying factor or mode of identification. That it why Jo-Kanyamwa, Jo-Kadem, Jo-Karungu, Jo-Kabwoch and Jo-Karachuonyo decided to refer to themselves as Joka-Chwanya and so they avoided inter-marriage. Thus, the extension of kinship as a system to those areas was possible because individuals who established these settlements determined the identity not only through the “geneological linkage but also by behaviour as well”, (Spradley and McCurdy, 1974: 70). Hence the notion of Joka-Jok, Jok’Onyango or Joka-
Chwanya should be understood within this context. For our purposes the role of “kinship relations in lineage formation, migrations and settlements” must not be ignored but at the same time kinship system was more accommodating and included even those who were related.

The evolution of the Luo societies in South Nyanza started with the migration and settlement of families. The family being the basic organic unit of the society is the smallest, autonomous unit of social organization within the society. The establishment of a homestead and its development was characterized by patrilineal and matrilineal control in so far as operational activities within the society were concerned. The patrilineal and matrilineal dominance complemented each other, thus emphasizing the importance of interdependence in running the affairs of the family as well as the community as a whole. The position of the male and that of the female, as far as the activities of the society were concerned, was well defined. The kind of structural operation within the Luo society which catered for both patrilineal and matrilineal dominance or control need to be distinguished from the anthropological definition of the terms patrilineal and matrilineal.

Anthropologically, the use of patrilineal and matrilineal dominance borders on the family structure where one may talk of patrilineal and matrilineal descent. Whereas patrilineal descent implies a situation where an individual is affiliated through the kinsmen of his father, the matrilineal descent seems to suggest that an individual, in this case, would be affiliated through the kinsmen of his mother only. The latter type of descent does not apply to the Luo society.
However, the classic examples of societies where individuals do, indeed, claim matrilineal descent are the Nyakyusa of Tanzania, the Nayar of Kerala, India, the Asante of Ghana, the Truk and the Trobriand Islanders of the Pacific and also certain communities in Malaya and Indonesia (Spradley and McCurdy, 1974: 118).

Therefore, in terms of descent, the patrilineal nature was strictly adhered to; however, in terms of identification with regard to the emergence of the Luo societies in South Nyanza the matrilineal dominance gained the upper hand (SNHT Vol. II, 65-91). Diop (1981; 1984: 100) and Jeffries (1986: 154; 1982: 122-136) discuss the difference between the clan system in Black Africa and that of the Indo-European societies. Diop states:

The study of the structures of the tribes of the Upper Nile Valley sheds new light on those of West African peoples. We speak of the clan while emphasizing the absence in Black Africa of the Indo-European clan, characterized by the absolute authority of the paterfamilias, who has the power of life and death over his wife and children and can sell them, bury his daughters alive or throw unwanted babies on the rubbish heap. The man receives a dowry from his wife, instead of bringing her one. in Africa the typical pattern has been the matriarchal clan (absolute matriarchy), which developed to give rise to bilateral filiation.

Diop explains that as the society evolved man found it necessary to create clans according to their different environment within the context of adaptation to the surrounding. Therefore he describes three stages namely absolute matriarchy where a man has to marry outside his clan because of the institutionalization of exogamy “as a result of the emergence of the taboo against incest” (p.101). In this case the man does not have any right over his children and they do not inherit anything from him even though
he resides in his own clan. Therefore, within the institution of absolute matriarchy, one’s son would inherit from his mother’s brother, the uncle, who is considered as the “social father” and therefore has ‘the power of life and death over his nephew” (p. 10). The second stage is the matrilocal marriage where the man moves to live in the clan of his wife. The third stage is bilateral filiation in certain cases. Within this system the husband takes dowry to the wife’s parents and she moves over to his clan. In this case filiation naturally becomes patrilineal in its operation.

Thus, it is this structure of patrilineal system that is usually misconstrued to mean “a patriarchal regime” as the one found in the Indo-European society but which is foreign to Black Africa.

In their attempt to understand the roots of women’s oppression, some feminist writers have argued that patriarchy is universal and that it can be applied to any society. This view has been articulated by radical feminists. To them patriarchy is an all embracing system of domination and therefore women are members of an oppressed class. In her definition Maria Mies (1986: 239) explains that patriarchy “means the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general”. The word is derived from Greek and Roman law which permitted “the male head of the household” to have “absolute legal and economic power over his dependent female and male family members” (p. 238-239). The above definition emanates from slave societies where women and slaves were denied citizenship and were regarded as being inferior. The gender division among Jok’Onyango seems to negate the concept of “male head of household” since it gives the women complete authority over the
The Swahili society was highly patriarchal, a society where some people owned others and where men held power in government and religious institutions. The ideology of patriarchy defined slaves and women as the patriarch’s inferiors. The patriarchs considered slaves to be inherently inferior, incapable of education and unable to achieve religious purity.

Therefore, the institution of patriarchy differs significantly from the patrilineal system that characterized the communities which were established by the Luo on the southern end of Winam Gulf. Here one witnesses the impact of patrilineal descent on the society, while at the same time recognizing the matrilineal dominance in the homestead and rituals affecting the home.

Within the structure of the Luo family, the most common family units are monogamous, extended joint-family and polygamous extended family. The nuclear family structure is a recent development. According to social anthropologists, the nuclear family is defined as a “group made up of a married couple and their unmarried children” and that, once an individual has been born, he automatically becomes a member of two nuclear families; that is, the family that takes care of him and this is regarded as the family of “orientation” while the one in which he “functions as a parent” is generally referred to as the “family of procreation” (Oke, 1984). On the other hand, the monogamous extended joint-family comprises two or more nuclear families who have been linked together through the relationship between the parent and the child; that is, a parent-child sibling relationship. The characteristic of this type of a family may be a
common residential place which is “accompanied by various, shared socio-economic obligations”, (Oke, 1984: 109). Then there is the patrilocal monogamous extended family where the male descendants of an individual continue to stay in the same family dwelling place when they marry. They, therefore, continue to live in the same area along with their wives and children. However, upon attaining the age of marriage, the girls usually leave their paternal places of residence in order to join their husbands and the members of the husbands’ extended families. On the other hand, the matrilocal set-up where the female offspring remains within the family residential area of the mother “after marriage, and the male offspring leaves to join the extended family of the wife” (Oke, 1984: 109) is an unknown phenomenon within the Luo society.

Finally, there is the polygamous extended family, a situation whereby there exists an adult male with his wives together with their children. The family usually have a common residential area with well set-out socio-economic obligations. For our purposes, therefore, reference will be made mostly to the monogamous and polygamous extended families. Patrilineal and matrilineal roles are used specifically to demonstrate the interdependence which existed within the Luo society in relation to the authority of the male and that of the female.

In both monogamous and polygamous institutions, the family household responsibility rested on the mothers. However, the head of the family within a homestead was the owner of the home, who had full patrilineal control or authority over his homestead (SNHT Vol. II, 16). Thus, the patrilineal authority was an accepted fact both in monogamous and polygamous homes, the man being referred to as *wuon dala* or *wuon pacho*;
that is, the owner of the homestead (SNHT Vol. II, 22). But in order to establish a homestead, a man must have a wife and, therefore, he can only move out of his father’s homestead to build his own when he has married a wife or wives with whom he can fulfil all the rituals required by the society for its proper function.

Thus, the patrilineal authority remained intact even in a polygamous situation, where the matrilineal dominance was uppermost, the osmotic forces being mainly economic and social matters. For instance, the matrilineal control over stores of food *dero* (sing.), *dere* (plu.), was mainly to guard against unfair distribution and it was necessary to give it sanctity (SNHT Vol. II, 14-16). To this extent, it was the woman who had complete authority over the production of food. Therefore, she was given full authority over the control of *dere*, that it, stores. Thus, *dero* was associated with the women who fed the household and, indeed, the whole population. A man was not allowed to enter into the granaries. If he did, the granary would be burned with all the grains contained therein.

Within this patrilineal system, which defined the authority of the male, the authority of the female was equally defined, highlighting the importance of the female through the ages, which lent itself to matrilineal dominance in certain aspects of political, economic and social spheres. In order to give the woman greater authority over the stores of food, and therefore giving it sanctity, it was taboo for a man to climb *dero*. In other words, *dichuo ok idh dero*. Therefore, according to the Luo customs, a man is forbidden to climb the granary, which gives the women complete autonomy over the stores of food (SNHT Vol. II, 16).
As the society allowed patrilineal control over the homestead, giving the man complete authority and responsibility for the running of the homestead, likewise the woman was regarded as the owner of the house; therefore, *wuon ot* (SNHT Vol. II, 15-20). By this act, the woman was given complete autonomy over the household and the activities therein. It was this that made it possible for the society to evolve around the women, for as the children identified with the mothers, they tended to carry the name of the mother so that as some of the clans or even communities evolved, they identified with the women and eventually were named after those women, as will be explained later. Naturally when people went to visit a certain home, they would say ‘we are going to so and so’s home’, that is, the man who was the owner of the homestead. Upon reaching there, they would ask “*ere wuon dalani kata wuon pacho?*”, meaning “who is or where is the owner of this home?” Having entered the homestead some might have to specify the house they wish to visit. They would, therefore, ask “*ere od Anyango*” meaning “where is the house of Anyango?”

In relation to the homestead, the man ceased to feature where houses were concerned, since it was the woman who had full control of the house and the activities therein, be they economic or social. We can, therefore, infer here that the rights, obligations, and privileges of any individual within the family structure were, indeed, determined by the position of the women in it. Again the positions occupied by the children in any given family were, indeed, determined by the positions which were occupied by the wives within that family. Therefore, the responsibilities carried out by each and every wife in a home depended very much on the order upon which they were married.
In monogamous and polygamous family structures, the first wife was referred to as *mikayi*. The first house to be built in a homestead was that of *mikayi*. Therefore, the position of the houses had to be proportional to the position of the women in a homestead. In a polygamous home, the arrangement of the houses were done according to the positions and ranks of wives. The first house would be that of *mikayi*; the second that of *Nyachira*, the second wife and the third one would be that of *reru*, the third wife down the line up to the last wife in any given polygamous homestead (SNHT Vol. II, 17-20).

The arrangement of the houses was done in an alternate succession on either side of the house of *mikayi*. Such an arrangement in a homestead presupposed the order in which all rights, obligations, privileges and responsibilities had to be carried out in a given homestead starting from the house of *mikayi* down the line.

Thus, the importance of the female in the Luo society was expressed within the realm of matrilineal dominance which cut across the political, economic and social world. For instance, within the realm of politics, an unmarried man was considered a boy and could not be given political responsibility as far as leadership was concerned. Socially, he was considered a child so long as he had not married and, therefore, upon his death, he would be buried in front of his mother’s house as would be the case of a dead child even if he was eighty years old. Marriage was, therefore, a rite of passage to manhood or womanhood; it was the most important determining factor (SNHT Vol. II, 11-13). Economically, a man needed a wife in order to acquire land and cattle. He also needed a wife in order to break the ground, *golo pur*, to weed, *doyo*, to eat greens from the field.
gwelruok and to harvest, keyo (SNHT Vol. II, 16). Each one of these economic activities could only be carried out after the fulfilment of certain rituals which were realized through the sexual act (SNHT Vol. II, 17). To this extent, there was an expression of interdependence between the man and his wife or wives.

Tranquility in the home depended very much on the relationship between a man and his wife or wives and children. The positions of the wives determined the positions of the children. It also influenced the relationship between the children and their father, mothers and among themselves. According to H.O. Ayot, (1979), if a man was a well organized person, the home tended to be organized; if he was quarrelsome, there was chaos in the home.

Olela (1971: 143) writing on the relationship between children in a homestead explains that the children born of the same mother refer to one another as wuod-minwa for male children and nyar-minwa for the female offspring. He further states that the children of mikayi, the first wife, usually refer to those of the second or third wife as wuod-wuorwa for the male and nyar-wuorwa for the female. But this identification is not true in strictly Luo terms. First and foremost for the Luo there was nothing like a step-father, step-mother, step or half brother or sister. All these do not make sense and the halves and steps do not exist in the Luo vocabulary (SNHT Vol. II, 20).

In the Luo society, children with a common biological father in monogamous as well as polygamous homes refer to each other as nyathiwa
for both male and female, or specifically, as _owadwa_, my brother or _nyaminwa_, my sister. But children whose fathers are brothers are the ones who refer to each other as _wuod wuorwa_, the son of my father or _nyar wuorwa_, the daughter of my father. At no time did the children with the same biological father refer to each other as _wuod-minwa_ (male) and _nyar-minwa_ (female).

On the other hand, the children of two sisters who were married in different places were the ones who referred to each other as _wuod-minwa_, the son of my mother or _nyar-minwa_, the daughter of my mother. It must be pointed out, therefore, that within the Luo context, all the brothers of one's father are regarded as one's fathers, not uncles. And all the male children of a man or those of his brothers refer to each other as brothers or sisters. The word cousin does not exist in the Luo vocabulary.

Within a family, one can only have an aunt; that is, the sister of one's father or females who regard one's father as their brother. These are the only aunties that one can have and one would say _waya_, my aunt. Likewise an uncle is the brother of one's mother, and one would refer to him as _nera_, my uncle. So the brother of one's mother or several of them are regarded as uncles. Therefore, the brother of one's father can never be one's uncle since he is not related to the mother (SNHT Vol. II, 1-2), and does not come from the mother's clan. Likewise, the sister of one's mother cannot be regarded as one's aunt since she can never be a sister to one's father and does not come from the father's clan. The Luo are very clear in their definition of who is related to who, both on the mother's side and on the father's. Unfortunately, the words uncle and aunty seem to be
losing their original meaning, since nowadays they are used to refer to any male or female who may not necessarily be a relative. It is not unusual nowadays to visit a family and to hear the mother or father telling their children to greet uncle or aunty because they think that it is impolite for children to refer to grown-ups using their names. This is rather absurd, for in so doing, the children do not know how to distinguish who is a relative and who is not.

The relationship between a man and his wife or wives and their children; that is, members of his homestead, was like that of the state and the individual, where upon the state provides protection for the individual and in turn the individual makes it possible for the state to function by recognizing its very existence. And just as the state remains stable only as a result of the co-operation between the leader and the people, each recognizing their rights, obligations, responsibility, authority and limitations and therefore, striking a compromise for the smooth running of the state, likewise the home remains stable only when the man and members of his homestead work co-operatively. Just as the solidarity of the state is determined by that of its people, so solidarity of the members of a particular homestead tended to be the determinant factor of the solidarity of that family.

At the initial stage, a man lived with his grown-up male children and their wives and children in his homestead, he being the owner of the home, *wuon dala* and the people referred to the home as *dala ng’ane*; that is, the home of so and so.
However, when his sons became older, they began to move out of their father’s homestead in order to build their own. This process was and still is called *goyo dala*. The moment an individual has established his own homestead, he automatically attains the status of *wuon dala* or *wuon pacho*, the owner of the home. When a man decided to establish a new home, it was his father who had to show him where to build, as the father would be the one to bless the ground. If he had more than one wife, then the first person to move with him out of his father’s homestead would be his first wife, followed by the rest.

The moment a man moved out of the old homestead, he could not go back there and spend the night or eat in the houses of his other wives before he moved them to the new home (SNHT Vol. II, 34-47). However, the wives could prepare food in the old home and take to the husband in the new one. If a man went back to the old homestead, ate and slept in any of his houses there, misfortunes would follow him and people would say *ng’ane okelo chira e dalane*, “meaning that so and so has brought *chira*, bad omen in his own home and many members of his family would suffer or die mysteriously” (SNHT Vol. II, 38).

As the man would have to move out of his father’s home with his first wife, *mikayi*, by the same token, it was the son of *mikayi* who moved out of his father’s homestead before the sons of the second wife, *nyachira* and those of the third wife, *reru* could do so. This is why it was stated earlier that the positions of the children, and for that matter their rights, obligations and responsibilities were determined by the position not of the father but of the wives in a homestead.
In establishing homesteads, the Luo looked for suitable places and, in most cases, these were areas which were suitable for cattle grazing with an easy access to water supply, fertile and cultivable areas. The homesteads, and sometimes a whole village often had fortifications for defence purposes which implied protection not only from the enemy but also from possible cattle raiders. This type of structural defence characterized the Luo homesteads and villages from the time they established settlements in South Nyanza from A.D. 1700 onwards. The practice of building defence fortifications extended as far south as Kanyamkago, Kadem and Karungu, where we can still see the evidence of the ruins of these early fortifications. The most classic examples of these fortifications are those found in Kadem, for example, Modi, Kanyuor and Minyere Hill located in Kanyamkago.

It has been pointed out that the home or dala concept was identified with the man who was regarded as the owner of the homestead. By the same token, the house or ot concept was identified with the woman, giving her complete authority over the house. Within this gender division, there developed the concept of duol, a place where fire was lit in the morning and evening hours. It was at this place where a man and his male visitors and children ate. There was duol in almost every homestead. Most of the owners of the homesteads, that is wegmier built abila (sing.), abilini (plu.), a small house at the centre of the homestead where fire was lit to keep the men warm as they sat around it. The abila within which duol was located was built near the cattle kraal. It was from here that the man kept vigilance over his cattle raiders.
More important was the fact that *duol* served as a guesthouse where men discussed issues affecting their society such as political, economic and social. Again, it was unbecoming for a man to sit in the house where his wife or wives were cooking. Therefore, men used *duol* as a neutral ground in their homesteads. A wise man had to have *duol* and his wives would usually bring food to him and his male children *e duol*.

One of the most significant aspects of *duol* is that it enabled a man to remain objective and totally neutral where issues pertaining to food were concerned. Every man, especially in a polygamous home, tried to avoid accusations by his wives that he favoured the dishes cooked by a particular wife at the expense of the other women. This would naturally sow seeds of discord within the home. Therefore *duol* worked as a buffer zone where a man could eat all the dishes from each house and by so doing, he was to show appreciation, fairness and justice to all his wives.

And since he was only one man and could not eat everything, his male children joined him at meal time. He also used his *duol* as a resting place; so that he could avoid the temptation of tasting what was being cooked. *Dichuo ok ling' lwete e agulu*, that is, “it is a taboo for a man to put his hands in the cooking pot”. If he had formed the habit of putting his hands in the pot, it was a serious matter that would even lead to termination of marriage between him and his wife. Therefore *duol* was a very important place for a man in his homestead.
According to Ocholla-Ayayo (1980: 53):

A village was divided into hamlets consisting of a number of homesteads centering around *duol* (club house) found in every village according to its size, and each group built their own *duol* where members sat to discuss various matters, or just, as Grove puts it, ‘gossiping and smoking.’ In large villages the clubs consisted of distinct patrilineal lineages belonging to the same clan, each clan, living in its own section of the village with its own social life and ritual procedure different from the others.

There seems to be some confusion here. If we take the notion that a “collection of homestead belonging to family members of a sub-clan constitutes the territory called *gweng*”, then Ocholla-Ayayo’s notion of a clan living in its own section of the village, does not seem to make sense at all.

In his attempt to explain the village, Ocholla-Ayayo (1980: 53) reckons that a village may comprise a group of agnatic and at times non-agnatic lineages. And that there were moments when “a whole sub-clan settled in one village”. He states further that “the fact that some tribes such as Kadem, Karungu, Kanyamwa and Kabwoch each lived in one village, but are now regarded as one large tribe, is a better illustration” (Ocholla-Ayayo, 1980: 53). There is some confusion here with regard to the use of the words “village” and “tribe”. It is true that Jo-Kadem, Jo-Karungu, Jo-Kanyamwa, Jo-Kabwoch and Jo-Karachuonyo at one time lived together in Kanyamwa, sometime between nine and ten generations ago and therefore, between A.D. 1700 and 1734, but the whole group did not live in one village. Rather, they occupied different parts of Kanyamwa. Again, Ocholla-Ayayo’s notion of “tribe” here is rather misleading, if the word “tribe” is used to refer to an ethnic group. For instance,
all the groups have been referred to as the Luo "tribe" and within this context then there are several Luo communities which are part of the wider Luo ethnic nation. Therefore, Kadem, Karungu, Kabwoch, Kanyamwa and Karachuonyo are not "Luo tribes", but that they evolved to become distinctly autonomous political entities which along the other areas such as Kanyada, Sakwa, Kamagambo, etc. formed the Luo societies in South Nyanza. In other words, we are looking at these areas as not as "Luo tribes" since they form part of the larger Luo society. In any case, the word "tribe" is a derogatory term which was applied by the colonialists and in this case we will dismiss it and not even refer to it in this study.

In their definition of the clan, (Evans-Pritchard, 1949; Wilson, 1955; and William, 1961) reckon that once the lineages are able to trace their origin from an eponymous founder, they naturally form a clan. According to Evans-Pritchard (1949: 30-31) "all Luo clans ultimately trace their descent from the same mythological name called Podho and Ramogi so that it would be possible to place them all in a single chart of descent". However, all these early works on the Luo were more concerned with lineage formation among the Luo rather than the complex nature of social formation or evolution of the Luo communities. When one is talking about lineage formation, this embraces a group of related people who can trace their family tree to one eponymous founder. But as will be explained in the next chapter, the evolution of the Luo societies was characterized by intermarriage between the Luo and non-Luo groups, absorption of the non-Luo groups, *jodak* and many other groups who were not in any way members of a particular Luo lineage. Whereas geneological factors are important, more important was the fusion of different groups of people to form a new community, thus deciding to identify with the supposed founder of the community.
This was true of Kanyamwa, Karachuonyo, Karungu and Kamagambo which evolved around the women. Thus, the theory of lineage formation and, indeed, segmentary principle as applied by Southall in his work on the Luo, seems to show the Luo society as being made up of segments of lineages. It was this that led to the theory of segmentary society; yet the Luo society was more complex than this as will be explained in the next chapter. We should now turn our attention to the role of women in the evolution of Kanyamwa, Karungu and Karachuonyo.
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CHAPTER FOUR
WOMEN AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE LUO COMMUNITIES

In Chapter Three two concepts emerged: that of wuon dala, the owner of the home, and that of wuon ot, the owner of the house. The analysis of the two concepts within the framework of division of labour provides an insight into the understanding of the contrasting roles of women and men in relation to the evolution and expansion of the Luo communities in South Nyanza. Whereas the establishment of new settlements embraced the two concepts, it will, however, be demonstrated in this chapter that some of the clans that emerged in the area were closely tied to the concept of house ownership. It is for this reason that some women became the eponymous founders of some communities and clans.

Also discussed in the second part of this Chapter is the belief system which explains the society's attitude towards women. It is this belief system that strengthened the position of women and therefore they emerged as founders of some clans in the society that was basically patrilineal in its organization. It is the belief system of a particular society that strengthens or weakens the position of women and therefore enhances or undermines their role and contribution.

With the establishment of more permanent settlements in places such as Kanyamwa, Kadem, Karungu and Karachuonyo, contradictions and tensions that developed between different lineages and lineage mode of production, led to the disintegration of large lineages. It also led to the expansion and establishments of new settlements and lineages. Thus, the interaction of these people with the new environment brought about
changes as they developed new technologies and means of existence.

As the Luo developed new technologies and means of material existence, this, in turn, affected their economic and social set-up. The idea of *mako piny*, land acquisition or claiming the land, became more and more apparent. And, as new settlements were being established, sedentarization led to intensification of farming, fishing, manufacturing, trade, hunting and gathering, as well as pastoral economy. The interaction with the environment led to consolidation of the people with new identity and a sense of belonging - hence the emergence of some of the female eponyms.

By the end of the nineteenth century farming had become a major economic activity. Thus, geographical setting coupled with its ecological characteristics and diversity, no doubt, influenced the patterns of settlements and economic activities and organization of the various Jok'Onyango. The economic activities and organization were thus influenced by ecological factors, level of technological development and the principle of kinship organization among Jok'Onyango.

The emergence of Kanyamwa was therefore a result of a people's desire for consolidation due to the conflicts from within and from without. For example, there were family feuds and intercommunity conflicts as well as constant influx of groups coming through the Uyoma peninsula into South Nyanza. On the other hand, the emergence of Karachuonyo, Karungu and Kamagambo was due to external and internal conflicts as well as the process of *mako piny*. In Karungu the process was initiated by the wives of Biu who had left their husband behind in Kanyamwa as they
moved to Sori. The last example of the involvement of women in the evolution of the early communities comes from Gusii land. Here insecurity felt by Nyagontuga led to the emergence of Kitutu community in Gusii country.

The structure of the Luo societies among Jok’Onyango in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was such that from the community point of view as has been explained, the man was the owner of the home. However, within the home the woman, in the case of monogamous family, or the women, in the case of the polygamous family structure, controlled major activities therein. The law of succession of responsibility within the society was strictly adhered to. It stipulated that the full responsibility of the home and its functions rested on the first wife who had to perform the first ritual be it political, economic or social. For instance, it if was the time of breaking the ground, *ndalo golo pur*, the first wife had to start it first. If it happened that she was away then everything in the homestead stood at a standstill until such a time that she would return. The same went for weeding, eating of greens from the field and harvesting.

Most of the activities of the Luo evolved around sexual rituals, that is *tieko kwer* and as such the women played a major role in the everyday life of the home and the community. Thus there was greater respect placed on the woman so much that if one wanted a fight, he only had to use insulting words referring to private parts of one’s mother. Using abusive words relating to one’s mother’s private parts was the greatest provocation that would result into a fight. This chapter intends to show the importance of the women and the key roles they played in the
evolution of the Luo societies among Jok’Onyango. It will also draw examples from Kamagambo and Kitutu.

The evolution of Kanyamwa community centred around a woman and this woman is given in the tradition of the Kakimba people of Mfang’ano island as Maroka. The Kakimba people are original Bantu speakers who are regarded as the descendants of one Lware. According to Ayot (1979: 87) Lware was one of the early traders who went to Mfang’ano island by way of Central Nyanza. Lware was the father of Maroka. According to the tradition of Abasuba of Mfang’ano island, Lware had gone to this island with traders from Uganda. While they were travelling he was taken ill and as soon as they reached the island, other traders left him in Mfang’ano to recuperate because they could not wait for him. While he was still by the lakeshore, Lware was found by the Wasokolowa, Bantu speaking people who had preceded him to the island. This was the period between ten and eleven generations ago and therefore between A.D. 1688 and 1734 (1979:87). When Lware recovered, he continued to live in Mfang’ano island and eventually he married a wife from another Bantu splinter party known as the Waganda. With this woman, Lware had two sons namely Rintu and Kiimba. He also had a daughter called Maroka. Kiimba is given in the tradition as the eponymous founder of Jo-Kakimba of Mfang’ano island (Ayot, 1979: 98-99). By the time Lware was in Mfang’ano island, the first Luo groups known as Joka-Chwanya or Jok’Onyango had settled on the mainland South Nyanza, having come from the Central Nyanza by crossing over the lake at the Uyoma peninsula. The fact that Lware is given in the tradition as having gone to the island by way of Central Nyanza and that
Jok‘Onyango had also come from Central Nyanza, is of interest to us since Jo-Kakimba are thought to have been of Luo stock because of their connection with Joka-Chwanya and Jo-Kwabwawi, (Ayot, 1979: 88, 98). It is quite probable that the two groups had met or had parted company in Central Nyanza.

The point to stress here is that of the role of cultural assimilation between the Luo and non-Luo groups, as has been explained by Ayot (1979 and 1981) when he dealt with the Abasuba peoples of the islands and the lakeshore regions of Lake Victoria. The interaction between the Luo and the Abasuba through trade and intermarriage led to the adoption of some of the Luo practices by these people.

Therefore the connection between the Kakimba and the Luo of the hinterland South Nyanza was due to these two factors, trade and intermarriage. What emerges from such interactions and connections is that sometimes some of the names used may not necessarily be historical figures but only symbolic names which are connected with the emergence of the societies. For example, one witnesses three different marriages of Maroka, two in South Nyanza and the other one in the northern side of Winam Gulf. This would seem to confirm not only the interaction between different groups but also the movement back and forth of these people during the initial period of the migration and expansion of the Luo. Thus, the use of names such as Joka-Chwanya, Maroka, Anyango, Onyango Rabala, must be understood in the context of both historical figures and symbolic names. Moreover, among the Luo one name may be carried over several generations and this means that Maroka or Anyango
for that matter may not have been the same person in the succeeding years but the name remained symbolic of the emergence of these communities. That is why the name may appear among the Abasuba, the Chwanya of the mainland South Nyanza and also among the Luo groups on the northern side of Winam Gulf.

Be that as it may, Maroka, the daughter of Lware was married to a member of the Joka-Chwanya group. Being a non-Luo speaker Jok’Onyango referred to Maroka in different ways. In the Luo society a woman was never referred to as Mrs so and so for to them this was meaningless. Therefore to identify a woman she was referred to as Atieno, daughter of Omolo, the daughter of the people of distant land, or Atieno, the wife of so and so, or the mother of so and so. Thus, the woman was identified by her own name, her father’s name, the name of her home of origin and by her child. Therefore the identification would be in this order: some would call her Atieno, the in-laws would call her Ny’Omolo, others would refer to her as Nyar loka or Nyar Kano or as Min Okech.

Likewise when Maroka was married into the family of Joka-Chwanya, some called her Maroka, others called her Anyango Dhiaga, also Nyarmwa - meaning the daughter of non-Luo speaker as jamwa or jomwa (plu.) and yet some still called her min Biu, the mother of Biu (SNHT Vol. I: 193). The name Nyarmwa took the upper hand and it was around this woman that Kanyamwa as a single political entity evolved. The evolution of Kanyamwa coincided with that of Kakimba-Wiramba in Mfang’ano island. Thus Kanyamwa evolved between ten and eleven generations ago and therefore between 1688 and 1734.
Maroka was married into the family of Joka-Chwanya and with her first husband she had two sons whose names are given in the tradition as Tema and Alambo (SNHT Vol. II: 94 and Ayot, 1981:6). The marriage between Maroka and her first husband did not succeed. As a result she decided to leave him and she married another son of Chwanya with whom she went to settle in Uyoma on the northern side of the Gulf. While in Uyoma Maroka’s marriage was blessed with two sons namely Rateng’, the son of Maroka who became the eponymous founder of Kisumo Karateng’ in the present day Kisumu District, (Ayot, 1979: 193; Ayot, 1983: 194 and SNHT Vol. II: 194).

After a brief stay in Uyoma, Maroka was once again forced by circumstances to leave her second husband. She again made for South Nyanza back to her former home. Once again, Maroka married yet a third son of Chwanya. The couple decided to run away from Kanyamwa and eventually they settled in Maasailand (Ayot, 1983: 195 and SNHT Vol. II: 195). While they were living among the Maasai, Maroka and her third husband had a baby boy whom they named Biu Rateng’.

Once again the name Rateng’ surfaces as was the case with Maroka’s second marriage. The Abasuba tradition talks of Maroka’s three marriages but this tradition is silent about the names of Maroka’s husbands. On the other hand, the Kanyamwa tradition talks of the marriage between Anyango Dhiaga and Onyango Rabala. According to this tradition, Onyango Rabala had three wives and among them were Anyango Dhiaga min Biu, Akumu the daughter of Ong’ele, also known in the tradition as Akumu min Owiti Bwoch, who became the eponymous founder of Jo-Kabwoch and Nyasgone min Adem, the eponymous founder of Jo-Kadem
(SNHT Vol. I). This marriage between Anyango and Onyango Rabala (and one is not even sure that this Anyango Dhiaga is really the same as Maroka) seems to have taken place while Joka-Chwanya were still staying in Uyoma.

Tradition has it that Onyango Rabala did not make it to South Nyanza but that he and Chwanya died in Uyoma. However, the Abasuba tradition seems to indicate that the first marriage between Maroka and the son of Chwanya took place when Joka-Chwanya had moved to the mainland South Nyanza. And it was here where Temo and Alambo were born. But this tradition does not indicate that the man who married Maroka is Onyango Rabala, the son of Chwanya. Thus, while this tradition places greater emphasis on the woman Maroka, it is, nevertheless silent about the identity of the husband and his name is not given.

What emerges of importance is the role of Maroka in marriage. Again, the Kanyamwa tradition which states that, Anyango Dhiaga and therefore Maroka, was the wife of Onyango Rabala, does not indicate that Onyango Rabala was the father of Biu. On the other hand, the tradition simply states that one of the wives of Onyango Rabala was Anyango Dhiaga, the mother of Biu. However, the tradition becomes clearer when it states that one of the sons of Chwanya married Maroka and the two had a son they called Biu while they were staying in Maasailand (SNHT VOL. II: 95; T.O. Ayot, 1983: 195). Again, the tradition is clearer when it states that Maroka’s first marriage did not work and therefore she married another son of Chwanya with whom she had Rateng’ and Rabungu, and this tradition places emphasis on the role of Maroka and not on the husbands whose names are not even mentioned. This then was the second
marriage of Maroka. But when we come to the third marriage of Maroka, the tradition simply states that when her second marriage also failed, Maroka married yet a third son of Chwanya who took her with him to Maasai country. He was afraid that his brothers and relatives would not approve of the marriage.

When Biu was born to the couple, Maroka’s husband decided to announce the birth of his son to the rest of Joka-Chwanya who were living at Kanyamwa. Here again, the tradition is silent about the name of Biu’s father and it gives prominence to the woman Maroka or Anyango Dhiaga whom the Chwanya family referred to as Nyarmwa. It is from the time of Biu that one witnesses the emergence of Kanyamwa as an independent political entity. Prior to this period one witnessed the movements back and forth from Uyoma to South Nyanza and from South Nyanza to Uyoma. For instance, if Chwanya and his sons Onyango Rabala went to South Nyanza then they must have gone back to Central Nyanza where they are reported to have died in the second half of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries respectively. Nevertheless, it would appear that the evolution of Kanyamwa society in South Nyanza expanded during the time of Biu, the son of Nyarmwa (SNHT Vol. II: 95-97; and Ayot, 1977:174).

There are three aspects to the above tradition which emphasizes the role of Nyarmwa. First, it is possible to infer here that Maroka may have been married to Onyango Rabala while Joka-Chwanya were staying in Uyoma but thereafter Joka-Chwanya not necessarily the descendants of Chwanya but those who associated themselves with this tradition, moved to South Nyanza. Upon reaching South Nyanza part of this group decided to return to Uyoma from where they had come. Secondly if Onyango
Rabala was the husband of Maroka, it is possible that upon his death Maroka may have been remarried to another member of Joka-Chwanya. Under such circumstances if the marriage did not work out or if the man died, Maroka would have felt free to move to South Nyanza to live with the other members of the Chwanya family. It is possible that she could still get together with another man within the group which identified itself with Chwanya and Onyango Rabala. This would not appear strange for according to the Luo customs and practices, when a man died one of his brothers could take his wife in marriage in order to raise the house of the departed.

This practice has been diluted by the misuse of the English language which says that a woman in such a situation is inherited. Within the Luo context this is done to provide security for the woman as well as the children so that they may continue to have a sense of belonging and feel part of their community. A wife therefore is never inherited in the same way as property is inherited. Thirdly, according to Luo customs and practices a woman had the right and privilege to decide who among her in-laws she would like to live with, after the death of her husband. At the same time she could get rid of him in the simplest way and that is by placing his belongings by the door. If a man found his belongings by the door, it was not a matter to be discussed or argued, it simply meant the woman no longer needed his company. She was then free to take in a new husband. Thus, it is possible that Maroka may have been married to three different men within the Joka-Chwanya or Jok'Onyango group.

The period from A.D., 1688 was characterized by migrational movements which took some to South Nyanza while others returned to
their original homeland along the Uyoma peninsula. Fourth, and probably more important, is the fact that the establishment of settlements in different areas in South Nyanza occurred at different intervals covering phases. Because of this there were many other groups of people which came together to form a particular community. At that stage it was necessary to have a common factor with which to identify even if it was only symbolic.

There were two major reasons for this identification: First, for political reasons and second, for socio-economic factors. By A.D. 1734, Kanyamwa had been the gateway or passage for the various Luo and non-Luo groups to different parts of South Nyanza. The groups included Jo-Karachuonyo, Jo-Kabwoch, Jo-Kwabwawi, Jo-Kadem, Jo-Karungu and Jo-Kanyamkago. By this time also the full force of sedentarization was being felt in different parts of South Nyanza. Jo-Kanyamwa felt threatened by an ever growing number of the Luo across the Uyoma peninsula, some crossing into South Nyanza.

Jo-Kanyamwa felt the need to defend their area of occupation from the influx of the new arrivals. They, therefore, felt they had to consolidate their power for defence purposes. The issue of land aggravated the already insecure position of Jo-Kanyamwa who needed land for agricultural purposes as well as for pasture being cattle-keepers. A combination of these factors gave rise to the desire for the need to create a strong sense of belonging and identity. Therefore the various groups who had chosen to stay in Kanyamwa began to refer to themselves as Jo-Kanyamwa, the people belonging to Nyarmwa. Thus, the matrilineal dominance of Maroka emerged with the founding of Kanyamwa.
community. Such dominance characterized other Luo communities among them being Karachuonyo and Karungu.

To this extent the women played key roles in the emergence of some of the Jok'Onyango communities, and Maroka Nyarmwa served as a symbol of unity among the people of Kanyamwa who identified themselves with her. The settlement which evolved around Chwanya, Onyango Rabala along with Nyarmwa was probably the first phase of the Luo establishment in Kanyamwa. Chwanya is given in the tradition to have lived between twelve and thirteen generations ago and therefore between A.D. 1642 and 1688. This would place Onyango Rabala somewhere between ten and eleven generations ago and therefore between A.D. 1688 and 1711. Lware falls within this period and the expansion of Kanyamwa and Kakirnba-Wiramba took place between A.D. 1711 and 1734.

The second phase of the expansion of the Luo settlement in Kanyamwa centres around Nyarmwa and Biu who falls in the period between nine and ten generations ago and therefore between A.D. 1711 and 1734. The people who had gone to settle in Kanyamwa began to identify more with Nyarmwa and they expanded their settlements to include other parts of Kanyamwa. Therefore the area became known as Kanyamwa, meaning the land of Nyarmwa and the people were referred to as Jo-Kanyamwa.

To this extent it was Maroka who gave the new community a sense of belonging. Therefore their ancestry becomes matrilineal in the person of Nyarmwa while at the same time their eponymous founder remains
patrilineal Chwanya or Onyango hence Joka-Chwanya or Jok’Onyango. Again we learn from the Kanyamwa tradition that Maroka, a grandson of Biu who was probably named after Maroka Nyarmwa had a son called Obunga Osewe. Obunga Osewe is said to have led a group of people from Uyoma to Kanyamwa. They landed at Mirunda Bay where they found the Kanyamkago. If this is true then this group would constitute the third phase of migration of Jo-Kanyamwa since Jo-Kanyamkago found Jo-Kanyamwa already settled in South Nyanza.

At any rate since Obunga Osewe falls in the period between A.D. 1734 and 1757, this migration to South Nyanza definitely implies a later phase and it seems to have involved a much larger group (T.O. Ayot, 1987). This in itself implies the expansion of Jok’Onyango settlement since the Kanyamwa sources indicated that Jok’Onyango occupied different parts of Kanyamwa. This is in agreement with Ogot (1967: 156) when he maintains that “for about six generations the Chwanya cluster of clans...lived at different places”. At this juncture it should be pointed out that it was not only the descendants of Nyarmwa or those who claim direct descent from her and her unnamed husbands who formed the whole of Kanyamwa community. There were several other groups among Jok’Onyango who joined Jo-Kanyamwa and identified with Maroka even though they were not in any way connected to her geneologically or biologically. Therefore, the kinship system that brought the people together to identify with Nyarmwa was much broader than biological linkage.

Closely connected with the Kanyamwa tradition are another branch of Jok’Onyango known as Jo-Karungu. Tradition has it that Biu’s five
wives migrated from Kanyamwa where Biu was staying with his family. The five wives are given in the tradition as Obarungu Nyosire, Achieng' min Oswago, Achuku, Nyasa and Tuda. These women were led by Obarungu Nyosire (SNHT Vol. I: 163). The other wives of Biu who remained at Ramba Kanyamwa were Nyapany, Nwani and Tuda Nyagaya. They were the members of the original home of Biu. Obarungu led the four women along with other groups southwards to Sori where they established a new settlement called Karungu. The Karungu maintain that the evolution of their society centres around Obarungu Nyosire (SNHT Vol. II: 102). According to this tradition when Obarungu and her group reached Sori, they were given shelter by the Bantu speaking people who had preceded them to the area.

When Obarungu decided to move to Sori, Biu, her husband remained at Ramba Kanyamwa. Therefore the women were faced with the problem of establishing a homestead. Even though Obarungu was the first wife of Biu, the unwritten law of succession of responsibility does not permit a woman to build a house and therefore Obarungu and the other four women could not erect a new homestead for themselves. As the man was not permitted to establish a new homestead without his first wife, likewise it was unheard of for a woman to erect a new homestead without a husband, even if she was the seniormost. Therefore Obarungu and the four women continued to live in the homestead of the Bantu speakers until their husband, Biu, went to Sori to build houses for his wives (SNHT Vol. II: 102).

The Luo groups that accompanied Obarungu to Sori at first lived peacefully with their Bantu neighbours. Indeed, Obarungu and the other
four wives of Biu namely Achieng *min* Oswago, Achuku, Nyasa and Tuda are reported to have been given shelter by the Bantu people whom they found in Karungu (SNHT Vol. II: 102). However, as the population increased, the two groups, the Luo and the Bantu speakers, began to scramble for land. The land was needed for pasture, cultivation and occupation. Both the Luo and the Bantu speakers were involved in livestock farming as well as in agriculture.

Therefore, the Luo needed more land. At this point they also needed to consolidate their power in order to face the challenge and threat posed by the presence of the Bantu peoples. Because of the need for political and economic power the Luo began to refer to themselves as Jo-Karungu and having established this identity, they fought and subdued the Bantu people. The Luo therefore acquired Karungu land for their own occupation. Politically the new area was ruled by a Karungu chief while economically the people cultivated millet, cassava, potatoes; they also carried out fishing and livestock farming. Thus, Jo-Karungu began to expand their territory as the Luo groups joined them. The people therefore, became known as Jo-Karungu, meaning the people belonging to Obarungu, who became the symbol of the sense of belonging security and protection.

Although Biu is given in the tradition as the husband of the five women who moved to Sori, nevertheless, Biu does not feature in the emergence of Karungu society. On the other hand, it is the woman Obarungu who becomes the dominant figure in the evolution of Karungu. Therefore the matrilineal dominance took the upper hand in this society as was the case of Kanyamwa. Yet, when it came to the establishment of the
homestead for Obarungu and the four women, the patrilineal authority prevailed. In the subsequent years the Jo-Karungu identified themselves with Obarungu and the descendants of the five wives of Biu emerged to form the major clans in Karungu such as Jo-Kosire, Jok’Achieng’, Jok’Achuku and Joka-Nyasa (SNHT Vol. II: 102-104). All these clans put together form what is known as Karungu.

Tradition is silent about the descendants of Tuda and it is not clear whether Tuda Nyagaya who is supposed to have remained at Ramba Kanyamwa with her husband Biu was the same as Tuda who went to Sori with Obarungu. What is important here is the role of Obarungu with regard to the emergence of the Karungu society.

In the preceding chapter it was articulated that patrilineal authority was a fact both in monogamous and polygamous homes but that matrilineal dominance within the home and the activities therein was prevalent. In the case of Kanyamwa and Karungu the matrilineal dominance was more pronounced in relation to their emergence. In the case of Karachuonyo, however, there is some form of dualism in relation to the evolution of that community: dualism in so far as Karachuonyo as an independent political entity is associated with Rachuonyo, the eponymous founder of that society. On the other hand, one can talk dualism in so far as clan formation is concerned for at this level the female dominance becomes even more pronounced.

Karachuonyo is a classic example of patrilineal authority over a wide area, the largest single political entity in South Nyanza District as a whole. Yet this patrilineal authority contrasts interestingly with matrilineal
dominance. Within the structure of Kanyamwa and Karungu the men do not feature at all and the nucleus of the emergence of the two communities are women. On the other hand, Rachuonyo remains the most dominant force when it comes to the name of the area of occupation.

Tradition has it that Jo-Karachuonyo at one time lived at Amuono Hole together with Jo-Kano, Jo-Kabondo and Jo-Kasipul. That when the other three groups left for their various areas of occupation, the people who eventually occupied Lower Karachuonyo, also known as Kaduong’, remained at Amuono. From this place the expansion of Karachuonyo took place as the wives of Rachuonyo were settled in different areas for economic reasons. Amuono had become too small for the ever-growing population and it could not provide enough food to sustain this population. Therefore, Rachuonyo settled each of the six wives in different parts of Karachuonyo. Eventually these women became the eponymous founders of the many clans that form or constitute the present day Karachuonyo.

In his work on Karachuonyo, Southall (1952) concentrates more on lineage formation and is fascinated by what he calls segmentation within the society. Whereas Southall refers to the organization of the society as segmentary, he seems to ignore the fact that different areas were composed of smaller units starting from the home, the village and the clans. All these put together constituted the larger political unit which is Karachuonyo, as a state. Therefore what Southall calls segments are the most important political tributaries of Karachuonyo.

It has been mentioned that within the Luo societies, including those of Jok’Onyango, the owner of the homestead was referred to as *wuon dala*
and this was the man. On the other hand, the owner of the house was *wuon ot* and this was the woman. Rachuonyo was regarded at *wuon dala* hence the people are collectively referred to as Jo-Karachuonyo.

However, when it comes to the territorial expansion of Karachuonyo, the matrilineal dominance becomes evidence to the extent that the clans are named after the wives of Rachuonyo. For instance, those areas which have evolved as a result of the marriage between Rachuonyo and Owaga Nyaluo, Auma, Adwet and Nyipir Adero are today inhabited by Joka-Nyaluo, Jok’Adwet, Jok’Auma and Joka-Nyipir.

The first wife of Rachuonyo was Owaga Nyaluo. Owaga is reported to have insisted that Rachuonyo’s six lower teeth had to be extracted before he could marry her, according to the Luo tradition. She maintained that she could not marry Jamwa, Rachuonyo had married Omieri, the wife of Chien when Chien died, but according to the Luo customs when a man marries a widow, she cannot be considered his first wife and he cannot build his own homestead with the widowed woman. He would be required to marry his own wife because by marrying the widowed woman, he would be raising the house of the dead man. Rachuonyo therefore agreed to have his teeth extracted before he could marry Owaga. The man who carried out this duty is given in the tradition as Mango Ja-Agor (SNHT Vol. I: 11). Thereafter Rachuonyo married Owaga Nyaluo and they had four sons, among them Homo Opul, Obila Omuoyo and Nyilang’. Homo Opul married Ajwang’ and Adera. With Ajwang’, Homo Opul had two sons, Ngech and Rachuonyo whom he named after his father. And with Adera he had one son called Owuor who was brought up by Ajwang’ because Adera died soon after he was born. As the society evolved the people who claimed descent from Homo Opul, therefore Joka-Homo
became known as Kang’ech and Kowuor while the Kamenya descended from Rachuonyo.

Obila, the other son of Rachuonyo and Owaga married three wives: Gak, Odongo and Atieno. The descendants of the three women form Kobila sub-clan. The third son of Rachuonyo and Owaga, Omuoyo married Adongo and Akoko. With Odongo, Omuoyo had two sons Ojaa Rabiela and Ojaa Rathembi. The descendants of Owaga Nyaluo, that is Kang’ech, Kamenya, Kobila and Komuoyo together, with Jodak who do not have kinship ties with them but who live among them, form what became known as Joka-Nyaluo, therefore belonging to the house of Owaga Nyaluo (SNHT Vol. II: 76) and (SNHT Vol. I: 13). Although these people are descendants of Rachuonyo, when it comes to the area of their settlement, they identify with Owaga Nyaluo whose matrilineal dominance becomes a symbol of unity and cohesion within Kanyaluo.

The other wives of Rachuonyo with whom the people identify are Auma, Adwet and Nyipir Adero. Auma, the daughter of Nyibana Janyakach Agoro, was the fourth wife of Rachuonyo. Auma Ny’Agoro had only one son called Docho. Docho married Nyongo nyar Otianga Jawweya, Koko nyar Kasgunga. The descendants of Auma evolved to form Kanyongo, Kawadhgone, and Koyugi sub-clans and all of them form Joka-Auma. (SNHT Vol. II: 73-76).

The other wife of Rachuonyo was Adwet nyar Maragol. Adwet had been taking care of Auma’s children but when she attained the age of marriage, Auma wanted Rachuonyo to marry her. But Rachuonyo would not hear of it. Eventually Auma devised a plan whereby Adwet would
spend the night on Auma’s bed without Rachuonyo’s knowledge and he never discovered the trick played on him until Adwet became pregnant. Rachuonyo had no choice but to marry her (SNHT Vol. II: 76; SNHT Vol. I: 15; T.O. Ayot, 1987: 103-108). From the line of Adwet there emerged the following sub-clans: Kobuya, Kakwajuok, Konyango, Kotieno, Kogweno, Kamser, Kolonde, Karabondi, Kosano, Kajieyi and Kamunga. In the subsequent years the descendants of Adwet became known as Jok’Adwet. They are the largest single group in Karachuonyo as a whole. Jok’Adwet occupy the present-day Central and East Karachuonyo (SNHT Vol I: 14; SNHT Vol. II: 77; T.O. Ayot, 1987: 104-109).

Like Adwet nyar Maragol, Nyipir Adero, was not a Luo. She was often referred to as Nyipir Adero nyar Lang’o, because she was a Maasai. Tradition has it that Nyipir was found in the wilderness by three sons of Rachuonyo who had gone on a hunting expedition. Nyipir was in the company of two other persons, Odidi Nyadhiang’ and Mwangi. Upon returning from their hunting trip, two of Rachuonyo’s grandsons, Owidi and Omala informed their grandfather that there were three strangers in their father’s home. Their father was Sipul. Upon hearing this, Rachuonyo went to his son’s home and took Nyipir to his home. He eventually married her. With this woman Rachuonyo had two sons, namely Ner and Malingi.

Ner married a wife from Wagwe, a Bantu speaking people who had come to Karachuonyo by way of Asembo. With this woman he had a son called Mbata. Mbata married Owili and their descendants became known as Jok’Owili. Meanwhile Malingi married Adero nyar Jimo and they had three sons, namely, Obop, Morni and Okal. Obop married Nyasuke nyar
Ramogi. All these groups became known as Jo-Kanyipir, therefore belonging to the house of Nyipir Adero. The descendants of Auma, Nyipir Adero and Achieng' Nyajuok today occupy the area around Homa Hill West Karachuonyo location (SNHT Vol. I: 17). As can be seen from the examples given about the evolution of different clans in Karachuonyo, the whole structure symbolized different political units which when grouped together formed one independent territory, with its own political autonomy in the name of Karachuonyo. At every level of the political division be it the home, the village, the clan or the state, matters were discussed and decisions were made accordingly. Therefore it was not just a matter of lineage formation and segmentation as Southall would have us believe. Rather, it was a more complex way of political formation.

In all the areas discussed in the preceding pages, the matrilineal dominance took the upper hand and the people identified themselves as belonging to this or that woman. However, this identification must not be confused with descent which remained patrilineal in nature. Karachuonyo therefore, is one area which best explains the contrasting roles of women and men in the formation of a new community. It also explains the economic roles played by these women because these women were economically independent. It was this that made the people identify with the women. Indeed, the man controlled land and cattle only in name under the umbrella of *wuon dala*. But it was *wuon ot* who actually controlled the economy.

Traditions collected among Jok’Onyango indicate that as the communities emerged there were threats from the neighbouring groups. Therefore people tended to look for ways and means of consolidating their
power in order to defend themselves against external aggression. Therefore, the adoption of female names and identification with women was mainly as a means of uniting the people.

In this aspect the myth of a people’s origin and identification becomes almost an ideology. According to the Jok’Onyango sources (SNHT Vol. II: 207), in order to create an understanding of human society it is necessary to try to analyse the process of evolution of the society from the vantage point of woman and her children. The woman is regarded as a tree from the branches towards the stem! In this case the woman becomes the nucleus, the radiating point from which the rest of the clan and, indeed, the entire ethnic group expands. According to Imunde*, among the Dogon of Mali and also the Banyarwanda, the woman in principle is the source of disruption yet at the same time she is the agency of unification, and therefore the agency of restoration of broken relationships.

According to Jok’Onyango (SNHT Vol II: 207), in times of war or during a fight, when the enemy is being pursued, should he run and take refuge in a woman’s house, such a person cannot and must not be killed. In this situation one escapes death. On the other hand, should such a person run and get hold of a baby as a sign of protection, he cannot and must not be killed since holding out a baby becomes a sign of peaceful intention. This is the main reason why such a person could not be killed or murdered by his pursuant. Therefore the woman symbolized political, economic and social security for the people. Thus, the woman in the above context becomes a ‘buffer zone’ because she is the sacred source of life.
Again one cannot and must not spill 'blood' on the sacred 'zone' since taking refuge in a woman’s house is, in symbolic terms, an act of taking refuge in or going back to the very source of life. Therefore, the protection is guaranteed at the very source of life and there is an atmosphere of security because no one is allowed to kill life itself. It is possible to infer here that there is a connection between the sacredness of the woman as the carrier of life (Theotokos) and the harmless innocence of a baby.

In other words, the baby is at once the powerful symbol of life, and its sacredness. Therefore, its innocence is non-avenging. The woman, on the other hand, is a powerful symbol of the unity at the heart of dialectics between the sacred and violence. In relation to the society, therefore, she becomes the symbol of unity and she is the unifying factor. She also symbolizes protection and defence because she provides the security so that the perpetuation and continuity of the society depends on her. Thus, her destruction is symbolic of the destruction of the society itself. This is why a woman could not be killed even in an enemy territory (SNHT Vol. II: 207).

Matrilineal dominance in so far as the emergence of communities was concerned was not peculiar to Jok’Onyango only. There were, indeed, other areas outside the realm of Jok’Onyango that such female dominance existed. One such example was an adjacent area to Jok’Onyango known as Kamagambo. The emergence of Kamagambo centres around Magambo. She was from Kasgunga, an area inhabited by Bantu splinter party that had come to South Nyanza from the direction of Rieny in Tanzania. They were led to the area by Kigunga, their
eponymous founder. Magambo then was the sister of Kigunga. Magambo was married to one Kasimba Nyawanga and they were married in Kasgunga, (Ayot, 1979: 27-29).

Kasimba Nyawanga, who did not like the idea of staying with his in-laws, decided to move to a new country. The two migrated towards Gusii country and established a new settlement where they were bordered by the Luo of Kabwoch, the Abagusii and the Maasai. The new settlement was referred to as Kamagambo while the people became known as Jo-Kamagambo. Those who claim direct descent from Magambo and Kasimba Nyawanga are just a handful. Thus, within Kamagambo there was an amalgamation of people who had come from diverse origin and these regarded each other as kinsmen even though they were not biologically related. These included the Maasai, Abakuri, Abagusii, the Abasuba people of Kamreri, the Wategi and some other Luo groups from the northern side of the Gulf such as Kajimbo from Nyakach, Kadiang’a from Seme and Jo-Ugenya. Some of these people such as Jo-Kanyamamba, which included Jo-Kamtwe and Jo-Kanyawanga; Jo-Karowo comprising Jok’Odero and Kamwango decided not to intermarry with Jo-Kasgunga, Jo-Wategi and Gitero or Sewe who live in Maasailand. They claimed that they were related through Magambo, (Ayot, 1983: 188). But even those who were regarded as *jodak* and could freely intermarry with the other groups in Kamagambo, Kanyamwa, Karungu and Karachuonyo identified with their new societies. They regarded themselves as kinsmen of the founders of these communities even though they did not share common blood connection.
Thus, kinship in this context did not imply only those who are related geneologically through blood, “but also those who do not claim linkage through a common descent or eponymous connection”, Spradley and McCurdy (1974: 189-190). In this connection therefore, lineage formation becomes only one of the components of what went on in the formation of the new societies among the Luo in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. By 1750, all the major political divisions, among Jok’Onyango as well as other Luo groups in South Nyanza were well underway. And by 1850, it was a matter of territorial expansion rather than establishment of Luo societies.

In the neighbouring Gusii country the evolution of Kitutu is associated with a woman. Tradition has it that there was one Omosamo who was from Bogusero clan. Omosamo became the father of Nyakundi. Therefore, Nyakundi was the son of a woman who was married into the house of Nyagontuga. By the time Onyankore died, Nyagontuga had only girls. They did not have a son. Onyankore had other wives and according to custom when a man dies, his wives are remarried by his brothers who are his agemates or younger men who must have married. This process among the Abagusii is called Ogachia Nyomba, meaning to enter into somebody’s house and raise his house (SNHT Vol. II: 136). Among the Luo it is called Tero Dhako, that is nyang’ ane odhi dongo odowadgi, which, as has been stated, means to enter into the house of the dead man in order to raise his house. This does not in any way mean that the woman is inherited by a man but that the man has to take the responsibility of his brother’s wife in order to develop the dead man’s house. However, such a marriage was never permanent. In the case of Nyagontuga, she was old; so she could not have had any more children. It was because of this that
Nyagontuga decided to look for a young girl who could have male children to raise her house. She got a man called Omosamo from Bogusero clan to come and marry the young girl, an act which is known among the Abagusii as *okoreta omosusubati nyomba*, that is to bring the girl into the house on behalf of Nyagontuga. Nyagontuga made all the arrangements and in the process this act angered the other sons of Onyankore’s wives especially Matara (SNHT Vol. II: 136).

Matara and his brothers planned to ambush Omosamo and his new bride on the wedding day, on their way to Nyagontuga’s house. Unfortunately the plan leaked out and upon hearing what the sons of her husband had planned, Nyagontuga instructed Omosamo and his companions to leave the girl behind after finalizing the wedding arrangement. The wedding had to be conducted at her home. According to the Abagusii tradition, Omosamo would come together with the bride to Nyagontuga’s home on the same day of the wedding. However, because of what Matara and his brothers had planned to do, Omosamo had to come without the girl. One of the most important aspects of this episode among the Abagetutu is that it is different from the rest of the Abagusii. For the remaining areas of Gusiiland, the bride accompanies her husband to his home immediately after the wedding. But among the Abagetutu from the time Matara and his brothers threatened to ambush the two newly marrieds, custom changed so that immediately after the wedding, custom changed so that immediately after the wedding, the new bride remains in her father’s home while the men return to their own home. The following day, the bride’s sister-in-law or any other relative who is a woman would go to the bride’s home dressed like her new husband and bring her to her new home. In the case of marriage between
this woman and Omosamo, it was Nyagontuga who got dressed like a man and went to get the new bride (SNHT Vol. II: 137). Normally, whoever goes to get the new bride from her home must dress as though he is going to war.

Traditionally, he would have to carry a spear, a shield and wear a special type of horns. He also puts on skins of animals and all these are meant to protect the man and his new bride. Even if the person is a female she would have to dress like a male once she has been sent on this errand to bring the bride from her home to the new one (SNHT Vol. II: 137).

From the marriage of Omosamo and the young girl a baby boy was born. Nyagontuga kept the boy indoors for a long time so that nobody could see him. Wherever the neighbours inquired about the baby, Nyagontuga told them that the baby had been born pre-maturely and that he was very small so nobody could see him. The baby had been kept by the fire in the house to help him grow. Nyagontuga claimed that the baby was so small that he was only the size of a fist, enkundi, or the size of a small bird called Ritutu. Nyagontuga referred to the child as Agatutu. Months passed and finally Nyagontuga decided to bring the baby out in public. The neighbours were surprised to see such a big healthy baby. It was then that they understood that Nyagontuga needed a male child so badly that she prepared to do whatever she could to get one. Thereafter the elderly women went to initiate and bless the baby in their own special way. This act was called ogotwera amate or ogosesemia. As the child grew they gave him the names Nyakundi, Omogetutu and the descendants of this man were later referred to as the Abagetutu who later evolved to occupy the present day Kitutu West, Kitutu East and Kitutu North in Gusii
country. Thus, Nyagontuga was the force behind the evolution of Kitutu community (SNHT Vol.: 138).

The account given by Ochieng’ (1974) does not mention Nyagontuga in connection with the emergence of Kitutu community. According to Ochieng’ (1974: 113-114), Oisera, the son of Tabichi had a son whom he called Nyakundi and this Nyakundi was given a nickname of Ritutu. His father Oisera, according to this tradition, is the one who had been the leader of the Wasweta from Nyangararo in Trans Mara to Manga. Ochieng’ (1974: 114) relates:

When he (Nyakundi) was born, many people came to see the child, especially since the father, the recognized head of the Sweta group, had begat only girls and the people were anxious to get a male heir to succeed the ‘good old chief’. When Nyakundi’s mother was asked what child she had given birth to, she always answered that she had given birth to a ‘young ritutu’. Now ‘ritutu’ is the Gusii name for a black cuckoo bird, the ‘cuculus cafer’ which is very common in Gusii country-side and which has a three-note drawn-out call. This is the answer which Nyakundi’s mother gave to her well-wishers of child, and it was this nickname that Nyakundi’s followers later adopted as their group name.

Traditions agree on the name ‘Ritutu’ but the one recorded by Ochieng’ does not elaborate on enkundi both of which imply the smallness of the baby who later on became known as Nyakundi Omogetutu. Whatever the case the tradition collected among the Abagetutu seems to emphasize the role played by Nyagontuga. According to this tradition Nyakundi falls somewhere between six and seven generations ago and therefore between A.D. 1780 and 1826. And Ochieng’ states that Nyakundi’s rule falls somewhere between five and six generations and therefore between A.D. 1826 and 1849. According to the Abagetutu tradition, Oisera, who is
given in the tradition collected by Ochieng’ as the father of Nyakundi, falls somewhere between nine and ten generations ago and therefore between A.D. 1711 and 1734 (SNHT Vol. II: 134). We read from Ochieng’ (1974: 114) that Oisera, Nyakundi’s father, “witnessed the dislodgement of his people by the Maasai from West to East Kitutu, where they erected their homesteads close to Nyamwango Hill.”

According to Logan (1934: 2368) their move from Getembe to Nyamwango Hill must have taken place around A.D. 1820 and Ochieng’ (1974: 114) is in agreement with Logan’s account. This would imply that Ochieng’ relied more on Logan’s account rather than the tradition of the Abagetutu. Whatever the case, here is an example of the role of women in the emergence of the society as was the case of Kanyamwa, Karungu, Karachuonyo and Kamagambo.

But there were other factors which made it possible for the woman to be recognized in the society. There was much respect for the Luo woman in the society because of her role and responsibility in the society. One major factor which made people identify with the woman was the belief among the Luo that the woman was the carrier of god in so far as the philosophy of the creation was concerned. This is why virginity was so much emphasized within the Luo society because it was a sign of preservation of life within the woman. Therefore the woman was regarded as the carrier of life and the whole society evolved around her.

The Luo notion of the creation of life centres around the woman. The Luo refer to the uterus, as Nyasach Dhako, meaning the god of the woman; the woman. Therefore the god dwells within the woman. It is for
this reason that the body of the woman is so much respected and it is regarded almost as being sacred in so far as human life is concerned especially in relation to the creation of life, fulfilment of rituals and rites of the society; all of which are accomplished through the woman. *Nyasach Dhako* means the god of the woman and since God is the centre of creation, therefore the centre and the seat of human life is the woman and the uterus, therefore the god of the woman, is a very important organ within her (SNHT Vol. II: 41-42).

When the uterus can no longer sustain the foetus, then it means that the god of the woman is not functioning, therefore the god within the woman is destroyed. This means that the god of the woman is dead within her and people would normally express this with much sorrow, almost in a whisper that *Nyasache okethore*, her god is destroyed; it is dead for it is not functioning. Thus, the death of a god within a woman is the greatest punishment for a woman within the Luo society for it means that life cannot spring through her; it is the end of the process of creation of life through the woman (SNHT Vol. II: 41-42).

The Luo therefore placed greater emphasis on the preservation of virginity and once a young woman was found to be a virgin it brought great joy and a sense of pride to all those who knew her both at her home and where she was married. It was an honour and a source of respect. Ominde (1977: 41) states that the Luo placed greater emphasis on the virginity of the girls but at the same time, there were no moral restrictions to restrain the girls from communicating with the opposite sex. He continues;
Cases of pre-marital pregnancies were very rare in the past. But this rarity was not due to the fact that sexual relationship was prohibited. Pregnancies among mature was apparently not frequent from any strict moral code, but from the conscious efforts of the girls themselves to guard against it. Because much importance was attached to virginity, it was a matter of personal pride and much social rejoicing to discover that a married woman had been found to be a virgin.

Virginity itself was a sign of preservation of life within the woman. According to the Greeks the woman is called the carrier of god that is “Theotokos” (OEO’TOKIS). This is especially the case when she is pregnant. There is especially a connection as implied in the term between blood-foetus and life and this is part of God, hence the expression. And among the Ameru peoples, there is the notion of life and blood and they all refer to the foetus as blood and therefore blood is the carrier of life. Even among the Luo when a woman is pregnant they often say nyang’ane nigi remo, meaning so and so is carrying blood. Narokobi (1980: 42) writing on the woman of Papua New Guinea states that “women in the Bukip and Sanasa languages are associated with creation, peace and civilization - in fact with most good things in life. Women are not inferior to men but are different from them”. He goes on to explain that the English language has a tendency of confusing issues pertaining to the cultures of other people which are often translated to suit their western notions and concepts. We read from Narokobi (1980: 43) the English language;

has debased the dignity of the womanhood in Melonesia. The English language and western fashion have forced the woman to believe she is inferior to the man and aided the man to believe he is superior. The English has made property and chattels out of woman.
For the Luo women among Jok'Onyango, it is not a question of superiority and inferiority but rather the law of succession of responsibility defined the position and the role of a man and woman in the society and each played his or her part as was required. The notion of the carrier of life was expressed even when stories were being told. As young people slept in their grandmother's houses, they were told stories. Later, they were expected to tell these stories to each other and this is how some of the stories passed from one generation to another. At the end of every story all of those listening to the story were required to say *thu tinda adong adong arom gi bao maka nera*, that is, may I grow to be as tall as the tree in my uncle's home.

Ayot (1979: 181-183) and Kokiri (1970) explain that at the end of every story, "everyone was to say *thu tinda adong adong arom gi bao maka nera*. This was done to keep the party awake.... The grandmothers told the children that if they fell asleep and did not say *thu tinda*... they would grow to be very short people".

However, there was more to *thu tinda* than the explanation given by Ayot. First of all the notion of *bao maka nera* needs an adequate explanation. For example, why the tree in "my uncle's home" and here the uncle is the brother of one's mother as had been explained in Chapter IV. So, why not the tree in one's own home or clan for that matter. The uncle's home is the original home of the mother and since she is the carrier of life, the trees in one's own uncle's home symbolize the green life and growth for the young person. This is only possible through the mother since she is the tree of life. Hence identification with the mother since she is the one who brings life and growth to her new home as she
leaves her father's home. According to the Luo tradition and customs a young woman leaves her father and mother to cleave unto her husband. This is the reverse of Christianity which says that a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife. Thus, *thu tinda* was a way of identifying with the mother and her place of origin.

Traditions collected among the Ameru give a vivid account of uncle-mother relationship. Relationship between uncle (mother's brother) and blood among the Ameru is expressed in a very interesting way. It is captured in one of their proverbs and that is “MDUTA KUGONGA NKAGONGA MUNYANYA WA MWARI-O-CIA WOTUMIRE NDIREETWA MUNTU-WETU”, meaning that, “when it comes to praising, I will praise my sister's husband for it is he who caused me to be called 'uncle'”. The uncle (mother's brother) in this context symbolizes or represents the bloodline. And in a deeper sense suggests that the mother is the carrier of, and the means by which life is transmitted (Personal communication with Rev. Imunde).

On the other hand, the Abuore of West Africa talk of two elements, spirit-father blood-mother. In this context, therefore, it implies the Luo concept of the tree in one's uncle's homestead. The tree symbolizes green life and the mother is the life carrier and therefore the giver of life. It is assumed that the man, whether sound or impotent, will always be productive so long as there is the god within the woman.

Writing on women, life and the land, Imunde (1977: 24) talks of the place of a woman in what he termed as “the triangle of life”. He explains:
somebody’s wife”. On the other hand, one would imagine that by the same token the man also grows up prepared to move to become somebody’s husband and the kind of training given to the two individuals before marriage prepares them to become responsible adults, well-adjusted individuals who would be productive members of the society.

Pala et al. continue to explain that “when she gets married, dowry may be paid, implying that she is being bought, and hence owned by the husband” (p203). They move one step further to state that “if her new owner, the husband, decides, he may ask her to move on so that he can get another wife” (p. 203). The above statement is an example of perpetuation of the pathetic position of women by women themselves for therein lies a gross misunderstanding of the African cultural value in the form of dowry. The interpretation of their own interpretations of the African culture seems to be misleading rather than explaining the importance of dowry in the African context.

Among Jok’Onyango as well as the other Luo societies the word “brideprice” in the western context is meaningless because to them the dowry is the bond between the girl’s family and that of the man. It is the covenant that binds two families together. It also ensures the stability of the woman in her new home. And it is because of the dowry that divorce in the strict terms does not exist in traditional Luo society. The determining factors are the dowry and the children. If for instance, there is a disagreement between a man and his wife so that they are separated, once the children become of age, they may decide to bring their mother back to the home. In this case there is nothing much the husband can do to stop it.
On the other hand, if someone takes another’s wife when dowry had been given to the parents, the offsprings of such a marriage are always regarded as the children of the first husband of the woman. The woman and such offsprings can be legally returned to the first husband. Therefore dowry played a major role in marital matters within the Luo societies.

Among the Ameru there are two terms which are used in relation to dowry. One is Uthoni, a term used to describe the act or the process of giving one’s daughter or one’s son being given a person’s daughter in marriage. Here there is no connotation of exchanging things but rather one of extending the family hence the idea as the one in the notion of covenant.

There are other terms, however, which when used in connection with marriage may be rendered “sell”/“buy”. Here there is a connotation of the idea of exchanging things, therefore, “Kwendia” (to sell) and “Kuguria” (to buy) meaning to possess something by giving something else in exchange. This is the notion that is put forward by Pala et al. when they state that when a woman gets married “the dowry is paid, implying that she is being bought, and hence owned by her husband”. If this is true then what explanation would one give in relation to the matrilineal societies such as those in Malawi, Ghana and among the Nyakyusa of Tanzania who becomes the owner, the man or the woman! What about the Asiatic communities where dowry is “paid” by the women?

Again the statement which opens with “if her owner, the husband, decides, he may ask her to move on so that he can get another wife” (p.293), seems to suggest that the woman was considered to be the
property of the man in the same way the slaves were considered as
property to be disposed of at will. Traditions collected among
Jok’Onyango negate such notions about women. Even in polygamous
marriages among Jok’Onyango the husband would never ask his wife “to
move on” so that “he could get another wife”. On the contrary, every
woman in the pre-colonial Jok’Onyango communities as will be explained
in the succeeding chapters, had a definite position in the homestead and
her status was recognized not only by her husband and members of the
extended family but also by the community as a whole.

The notion of a woman being regarded as a man’s property is a
twentieth century phenomenon in the taxation system where a man was
taxed for having married his wives through the hut tax. It is therefore
possible to infer here that women contributed greatly to the emergence and
development of the Luo communities in South Nyanza and to this extent
they became the ancestresses along with the ancestors of the Luo
communities as they emerged from the eighteenth century onwards. We
now turn our attention to the role of women in the cultural history of the
Luo communities South of Winam Gulf.
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CHAPTER FIVE
THE PLACE OF WOMEN IN CULTURAL HISTORY

In Chapter Four we examined the contribution of women in the emergence and evolution of Jok'Onyango communities with specific reference to Kanyamwa, Karungu and Karachuonyo. Other examples were drawn from the neighbouring areas such as Kamagambo and Gusii country. Chapter Five deals with the role of women in the dissemination of knowledge. It also discusses the way through which this knowledge was passed from one generation to the next.

Therefore the scope of this chapter covers what might be termed woman to child education, and woman to woman learning processes. Also discussed is the role of fathers and other men in the education of the boys especially when they move from the house of the grandmother to join the older boys in their own sleeping places.

As we have seen in the previous chapters, from A.D. 1750 onwards the expansion of the Luo led to their occupation of different areas in South Nyanza. We also noted that by A.D. 1850, Jok'Onyango had established settlements in five geographical areas, namely Kanyamwa, Kabwoch, Kadem, Karungu and Karachuonyo. This geographical separation of Jok'Onyango who had at one time lived in Kanyamwa, had the potential of disintegrating their long honoured culture such as prohibition of marriage among themselves. Thus, having had long association with each other, it became necessary for them, under these circumstances to organize themselves so as to perpetuate their common ancestral linkage. To this end
they had to call upon traditions, customs, norms and values. They had to evolve appropriate modes of behaviour to regulate their activities and their more complex interactions, all of which were consequences of their expansion. It is also necessary to say that the evolving customary practices also regulated the relationship between Jok’Onyango and and their neighbouring settlements, thus cutting across sub-clans, clans, and even greater communities.

Therefore the customs, norms and traditions which evolved, became the unifying factors, creating a common pattern of behaviour among Jok’Onyango and determining their relationship with non-Jok’Onyango. In the subsequent years the traditions, the norms and the values of Jok’Onyango cut across territorial loyalties and became uniform not only among the other Luo groups but also among neighbouring Bantu-speakers, for example, the Abasuba peoples of the Islands and lakeshore regions of South Nyanza.

The cultural evolution embraced the total civilization, customs, lifestyle, morals, stages of development, the art and, indeed, total way of life of the Jok’Onyango people. It encompassed education, religion, agriculture, technology and husbandry of the people. It was within this culture that individual members of the community acquired habits, beliefs, knowledge, acceptable attitudes and also skills which enabled individuals to participate effectively in and became acceptable members of the community. Then, as today, education was a major instrument in the transmission of cultural information as well as cultural modification and change.
In the pre-colonial periods, the transmission of knowledge to the youth was mainly through what has been called indigenous education. Learning took place through stories, songs, imitation and observation. There was also direct instruction which was used in transmitting skills. This non-formal education is referred to here as indigenous education.

Indigenous education has been recognized as having played a prominent role in African educational set-up. We have, for example, the works of Kenyatta (1968), Schapera (1971), Ocitti (1973) and Orwa (1983). Despite this prominence, some educationists have tended to play down the role of indigenous education in African way of life. Mutua (1974, 11) has gone as far as claiming that “traditional education declined because the ideals and values on which it was founded lost their values” (emphasis mine). However, she does not explain what she means when she states that “ideals and values” “... lost their values”. More importantly Mutua seems to believe on the omnipresence and omnipotence of western civilization when she triumphantly declares that:

Attempts to instil into the new form of education, indigenous non-economic values failed, first because everything pointed to eventual triumph of western culture over indigenous.

The arguments are rather unfortunate: unfortunate because they are asserted by African educationist. Second, she believes that indigenous education did not have economic values. In short these arguments imply that it was predetermined that African culture must be erased from the face of the earth and replaced by western culture. Unfortunately it is an open fact that, despite the concerted efforts to erase African culture from the human society, these attempts have not succeeded. If anything the African
personality remains shaped by his own cultural upbringing. One need not
go further than the conflict in the film *Heritage Africa*.

Furthermore, Orwa has demonstrated that indigenous education has
economic values. Quoting Abbot (1960:2), he asserts that "no man can
escape being involved in economics" particularly when "economics is
defined as management of income, expenditure of household...
consumption of wealth and management of satisfaction of material needs
of people". Traditional African economies had all these characteristics.
There was the element of acquisition and accumulation. One was
expected to accumulate livestock or have surplus grain. In addition, there
were non-consumable items which were acquired according to one's
economic standing in the community.

Therefore, the absence of monetary economy itself is not a basis for
declaring a production system as having no "economic value". It is
important to note that in traditional African societies, economic, cultural,
political and social values were transmitted through indigenous education.
It is this that distinguishes their mode of transmitting knowledge from that
of Mutua's western education.

Researches conducted among Jok'Onyango confirm that even here
economic, political, social and ethical values were all transmitted through
indigenous education. It is through this education that attitudes were
formed. Therefore Jok'Onyango depended on this type of education as it
played a significant role in dissemination and transmission of cultural
aspects of their society. Ocitti (1973: 27) has observed of the Acholi:
African indigenous education as practised by the Acholi did not really begin at the mother's knee or perhaps on her back: it began with the attitude people had towards pregnancy and having children. A newly married wife was expected to become pregnant a few months after marriage. It was generally hoped she was prolific, she was expected to bear and rear many children during her lifetime for the purpose of perpetuation and preservation of the society.

It is our contention that the woman played a major role in this education process. First, although male members of the society played a role in this educational process, it is our view that women played a leading role. Women were great exploiters of the idioms of songs as a form of education. Second, a woman was a preserver of culture through storytelling. Third, a woman spent more time with the children than her male counterpart in the society. Therefore in terms of education the transmission of culture and preservation of cultural aspects of the society were largely the responsibility of women.

It is for this reason that more emphasis is placed on the contribution of women in the transmission of knowledge not only to the youth, but also to other women in the society. For the purposes of this study women as agents of instruction and learning process among Jok’Onyango will be treated as falling into five main categories; the mother, the baby-sitter - japidi, the adolescent girls through imitational learning such as Kalongolongo, woman to woman and grandmother. It should be noted that all these agents are discussed simultaneously.

Researches conducted among Jok’Onyango indicate that education was conducted by women who had specialized in narrating stories and singing songs which they, in turn, transmitted to the youth. The pivotal
work of women in educating children derived from the fact that it was they who spent more time with the children. Therefore this remained the work of women and the grandmothers. Consequently, the education of the youth started in the grandmother’s house. Such a grandmother was usually an elderly woman whose husband was still alive but was no longer cohabiting with him. This type of a woman was referred to as pim, meaning one who had ceased to enter into any kind of activities which required sexual union. She was regarded as one who had ceased to perform rituals pertaining to the homestead hence one moa e pacho or moa e dala (SNHT Vol. II: 175). This would therefore suggest that all ritual fulfilments within the homestead would be officially taken over by the second wife of the owner of the homestead.

The youth spent their time learning in the house of pim. The houses were referred to as Siwindhe. It was from pim here in the siwindhe where the youth learned about the past events in their communities. According to Cohen (1985: 191-199), the youth drew upon “the wisdom of pim and it was from her that they learned about people, the groups, and the settlements around them” (p. 192). He continues to explain that the youth;
To become *pim* there was a specific ceremony performed to signify the retirement of the woman from ritual obligations. Upon this retirement she became *pim* or *dayo*. The process started when a woman felt that she had reached the status of senior elderhood so that her grandchildren could now move into her house to sleep there during the night. In order to consider the request of such a woman, a meeting of elders, both men and women, would be called.

The meeting usually took place when beer had already been brewed and the meeting was referred to as *Bura mar kong’o* (SNHT Vol. II: 172). A number of elderly women and some of the woman’s brothers in-law would also be invited.

Thus, it was at such a party where the woman would declare to her in-laws and *nyiekene*, the wives of her brothers in-law, that she felt that she was now of age and wished to house her grandchildren. In other words she would tell them *an tinde ang’ongo adwaro dhi nindo gi nyikwaya*, “I feel that I am now elderly and I would like to house my grandchildren so that they can spend the night in my house”. If this request was acceptable to the elders then a spokesman or spokeswoman of the group would announce publicly that “*Nyang’ane in kawuononi odiochieng’ kong’o ma wamadhoni wagoli e chik tinde kawuononi idhi nindo kod nyikwayi*” (SNHT Vol. II: 174), “the daughter of so and so on this day of festivity with beer drinking, we have allowed you to feel free to have your grandchildren sleep in your house”. She would, therefore, be officially allowed to offer accommodation to her grandchildren. It was such elderly women, already experts in imparting knowledge through stories, songs, proverbs and riddles, who educated the youth.
The first step in the education of the youth was admission as a boarder in the pim’s house. Next was the learning itself, which took the form of story-telling, songs, citation of proverbs and riddles. All these occurred at night. It is this aspects of traditional education that underscored the importance of children sleeping in Dani’s house, that is grandmother’s house, and explains the limited role of men in the early childhood education. The youth’s learning process aimed at acquiring the habits, beliefs, knowledge, attitudes and skills which were deemed necessary in an attempt to make the youth effective and acceptable members of their community. It has already been indicated that when an elderly woman was declared pim, her husband spent his nights in the house of his other wives, if it was a polygamous home. On the other hand, in a monogamous marriage the pimship status did not arise. In this case the children spent the night in their grandmother’s house.

During the night lessons pim told the youth stories, about their roots, major events both of developmental nature and disastrous character. The stories informed the youth about the correct things to do and those that should not be done by focussing on true or fictitious historical events that bore relevance to the life of the community.

Proverbs and riddles, which were often used simultaneously with story-telling, provided a challenging environment in the learning processes. They were designed and used for developing the youth’s reasoning power and skills which would be needed in making sound decision and judgement when called upon to do so at some future date. Thus, proverbs and riddles constituted formidable intellectual exercises within the youth.
Traditional education of this kind was as participatory as possible. *Pim’s* story-telling was re-inforced by children taking turns in story-telling. They were also encouraged to use proverbs and riddles not only to sharpen their minds, but also to prepare them for their future role as community educators. The children, both boys and girls, continued to sleep in grandmother’s house learning from her until they reached the age of about eight or so when they would be separated. Therefore, the period jointly spent in the *pim’s* house constituted the first step towards the youth’s learning process.

Cohen (1985: 214) states that:

part of the knowledge imparted to the young by *pim* or the *siwindhe* concerned locations at a distance where the young might seek marriage partners, establish new settlements, find work and marketing opportunity, and gain safety in terms of war and hunger. The knowledge imparted was a stimulus to migration in western Kenya, just as tales of the bright lights and economic opportunities of Lagos and Nairobi inspired heavy migration in the colonial era. The information *pim* and other tutors conveyed gave the migrants special intelligence. They were not simply following their wanderlust.

Such were the roles played by *pim* in their efforts to instruct and disseminate knowledge to the youth.

After leaving *pim’s* house, boys joined the young men in their own sleeping place called *simba* while girls continued to sleep in their grandmother’s house. Learning became a multi-dimensional exercise. It involved the grandmothers, mothers, the baby-sitters, the older girls and
even relatives such as aunts. The role of peer groups in the socialization process also became significant. It was through the educational activities of these groups that the youth, having been under the guidance of the mother, the baby-sitter, grandmother and relatives, learned the culture of his society. Linton (1954: 32) has rightly pointed out that culture is a "configuration of learned behaviour and results of behaviour whose component elements are shared and transmitted by the members of a particular society."

The women among Jok'Onyango transmitted knowledge about attitudes and value systems to the youth. On the other hand, men, by the nature of their duties and, of course, division of responsibilities between the sexes, also narrated stories about the cultural and historical aspects of their community especially to the boys. Men did not go through the ceremony of acquiring the elderly status by retiring from sexual rituals pertaining to the homestead. A man, however, old, took up the responsibility of his home until the time of his death and nobody could substitute for him so long as he lived. Therefore at no time did young people spend the night in their grandfather's house as they did in pim's house.

However, as women introduced the young to the total way in life in their communities, boys spent their time with the men from whom they learned what was expected of them in adult life. The education that was given to the youth was diverse. It encompassed vocational training, economic activities, social and ethical conducts as well as applied or what might be termed technical education. While the girls learned from women, boys, on the other hand, learned from their fathers and other men
in evenings when they gathered *e duol*, grandfather’s house where the males took their meals and *e simba*, where boys spent the night along with young men. Boys learned how to make toys such as earthen bulls used for bull fights. They learned how to tend to the cattle, sheep and goats. They also learned the techniques used in hunting, clearing the bush and fishing. They participated in the construction of granaries and buildings; all these they learned through imitation, observation and different instruction by participating in the actual work.

The youth made toys which were prototypes of some of the equipment, utensils and implements that were used by adults in their communities. Boys would accompany their fathers on certain occasions such as when they went to look for building poles and other materials. Both carried whatever was needed for constructing houses in the home. The boys watched very closely what their fathers did and they helped them throughout the period when the work was done. In so doing young people participated in building the houses. Boys also learned to play musical instruments from the older boys and men while girls learned how to sing and dance from older girls especially during musical entertainment called *Goyo Bodi*. We learn from Kenyatta (1961: 27) that in the education of the youth;

Care is taken to teach the boy how to be a good observer and to reckon things by observation without counting them, as counting especially of sheep, goats, cattle or people is considered as one of the Kikuyu taboos, ‘Migiro’ and one which would bring ill-luck to the people or animals counted. For example, a man with a hundred herds of cattle, sheep or goat trained his son to know them by their colour only or by their size and types of horns, while everyone of them has specific name. To test the boy’s power of observation and memory, two or more herds from different homesteads are mixed,
and the boys is asked to separate them by picking out all that belongs to his herd. Sometimes some of the sheep or goats are hidden and when the herd comes to rest at midday the boy is given a few minutes in which to inspect ‘Guthirima’ and report. His report is carefully noted by those in charge of the boy’s training. If he makes any mistakes no harsh remarks are made; but quietly he is asked to go through the inspection again and point out such and such a sheep or goat which has been purposely hidden. By going through inspection again he would at once notice his mistake. The elders in charge of the herd would ask the boy to trace back his memory and explain at what time and place he last saw the missing sheep or goat. In this way the weak points in the memory training is noticed and corrected.

In terms of technical education, that is, the kind of education that prepared an individual to be a useful member of the workforce in the community, the girls received their training from their mothers, grandmothers, older girls and aunts. These were the people with whom they spent most of their time. From them the girls acquired skills in fetching firewood, fetching water from the rivers or lake, domestic art, food preparation and cultivation. This type of education involved verbal communication, learning by limitation and practicals under the supervision of experienced older girls, women or grandmothers as well as aunts.

Social and ethical education revolved around “the responsibility of adulthood in relation to the preservation of the society” (Osibodu, 1972: 26). Therefore, it was from the older women that girls learned what was expected of them as future mothers, “everything concerning married life in the form of maxims, songs, and ritual manipulations” (Osibodu, p.27). From them and the other agents the girls obtained information about their environment, for instance, where to go in order to fetch water, firewood and cultivate; therefore, the uses of the environment and its limit in relation to the neighbouring settlements. They also acquired historical
knowledge about the events in their society, most of which were narrated through stories as well as songs. Songs could be in praise of certain events in their society.

While girls were sleeping in the house of *pim* or *dayo*, they were counselled on how well they could relate to men and on the need to preserve their virginity. This was a source of every woman’s pride as it ensured the perpetuation of life and continuity of the society. This was sex education (SNHT Vol. II: 175).

The grandmothers were also responsible for character-building. They observed the girls as they grew up and they knew the character of each girl in their houses. They evaluated the girls’ attitudes, character, behaviour and where necessary they gave guidance and counselling. Therefore, the grandmother could distinguish between industrious and lazy girls. The grandmother also knew those girls who were polite and of noble character and could distinguish them from those whose behaviour was unbecoming (SNHT Vol. II: 177). The grandmothers knew those girls who were basically concerned about their performance in economic activities as well as those who could perform domestic work more effectively. Because of their close contact with the children and the youth in general, grandmothers were more open in their interaction with the youth and the old alike.

The older people often consulted these elderly women on intriguing issues, some of which affected the homesteads or the community as a whole. The elderly women were also consulted about the conduct of a girl
especially when she was at the age of marriage. By this time the girls would have gone through rigorous process of character building as well as character training.

These concerted efforts of the mother, grandmother and relatives aimed at instilling in the young girls a sense of honesty, truthfulness and responsibility towards other people, especially those with special needs.

Such attitudes and values were often reinforced in grandmother’s house during the night when moral education was passed on through stories, some of which were about persons who had been fortunate or unfortunate; about heroes and heroines. Emphasis was laid on how an individual ought to treat the less fortunate members of the community. Stories were told about the misfortune that befell those who mistreated and despised people with special needs.

Among Jok’Onyango moral education was always based on true or make-believe stories. One such story, which illustrates the above, is that of Simbi Nyaima. This story took place in Karachuonyo.

According to traditions of Jo-Karachuonyo there was a very old woman who went into a village where people were holding a beer party. At this village there was much feasting and rejoicing. When the old woman sought their help, they threw her out in the cold. In her anger and grief, the old woman brought in the downpour. As it rained the whole village was subsequently engulfed turning it into a body of water. The whole village was submerged turning it into a lake which still exists to this day.*

Another story is about a poor man who became rich after his fishing net caught a woman in the lake. The story is as follows:
Once upon a time there was a poor man named Mbare who lived in Gwasi, South Nyanza, along the lakeshore area. He was a fisherman. On one occasion he had gone fishing and instead of catching a fish, he caught a woman in his fishing net called Gogo. He took the woman and she brought him riches in the forms of many herds of cattle. Since the man was no longer poor, he became arrogant, and quarrelsome. Mbare began to mistreat the woman who had brought him riches, abusing her publicly while referring to her as an old ugly woman. In her anger the woman left him and all the cattle in Mbare’s home followed her back to the lake from where she came. Mbare tried to run after her pleading with her to come back but it was too late. He stood by the lakeshore and watched her disappear into the lake with all the cattle following her. The man was chagrined and, in his sorrow, Mbare turned into a huge tree which is still visible near Nyandiwa market in Gwasi, (Ayot, 1979).

The youth were expected to learn a lesson from such stories so that they would know how to react to such situations. Stories were directed towards making an individual to understand what would happen. In this respect traditional education aimed at fitting children into their society and it taught them love and respect for their families, their clans, communities, their neighbours, their religion, traditions and values. Through such activities the transmission and preservation of culture was ensured. All this body of knowledge was also transmitted by women and men and was passed from one generation to the next. Schapera (1971: 233) confirms this in his work based in Botswana when he states that girls “were instructed by older women in matters concerning womanhood, domestic and agricultural activities, sex and behaviour towards men”.

During this period of training girls learned through imitation and observation under the guidance of their mothers and grandmothers. Orwa (1983: 44-45) writing on indigenous education has divided it into four categories. He states that the most outstanding feature of this education
was that it was "imitational, non-directive, non-instructional, based on observation and mainly on-the-job training (pp. 44-45)". He explains further that imitational education was the type that children, both boys and girls, acquired by trying to imitate their parents.

In this connection the girls would naturally imitate their mothers, older girls and grandmothers. The imitational education took place through games where, for example, girls would take care of babies and act as though they were the mothers, giving the babies their small breasts the way mothers do. This way the girls learned the art of breastfeeding. This knowledge became useful later in life when the girls themselves became mothers. The girls would also bathe babies, prepare their food and feed them. This was practical application of what they had learned from their mothers, grandmothers and older girls.

Boys, on the other hand, would engage in games which would lead them to perform male duties. Writing on the Agikuyu society, Kenyatta (1968: 101) reckons that the games that children played were indeed, "... rehearsal prior to the performance of activities which are serious business of all members" in the community. In other words, games were played as a way of practising and preparing one for the performance of the actual tasks. Therefore work-related games were taken very seriously by the youth and each participant did his or her part to the best of his or her ability.

Among Jok’Onyango, as was the case with other Luo communities, girls played games such as *Tedo kalongolongo*. In this game the young girls cooked imaginary and a variety of dishes in their toy pots. Later on
the older girls used real cooking pots to cook real food but this was done somewhere outside their home. It was more like a picnic except that the girls cooked dishes such as chicken, fish, vegetables and the like. By *Tedo kalongolongo*, the girls imitated not only the cooking process, but also the techniques of setting up a fire place, cooking and serving food, all things that they would have observed older women do.

Girls also made pots and other items usually produced by women while boys made shields, bows, arrows, spears and spearheads as toys imitating the other men, (Orwa, 1963: 44-45). In this education by game playing or non-directive learning a baby-sitter, known as *japidi*, always older than the children she took care of, played a leading role. She took it upon herself to teach the children under her care how to talk, walk and play games.

Traditional education among Jok’Onyango, as was the case with other communities, was a continuous learning process. It took place all the time and in all places throughout one’s life. Thus, Orwa concludes that traditional “educational measurement was considered in terms of observable learning and evaluation which ran simultaneously” and continuously.

There was also technical education that required some degree of specialization. The role of women and grandmothers in this aspect of socio-economic activity was vital. Training of women among Jok’Onyango incorporated what has been termed here technical education. For instance, the preparation of grinding stone required certain skills and
techniques. The grinding stone itself known as *Pong'* in Dholuo, while *Nyapong' rego* is smaller stone which is used for the actual grinding of the grains on the bigger grinding stone. The levelling of the grinding stone had to be worked in such a way that it was not left too rough on the surface. Another smaller stone was used in levelling the surface so that it would produce flour of fine quality. The stone used for levelling was a round one but smaller in size. It was called *Ratieng'*. *Ratieng'* was used in preparing the *Nyapong'* as well as *nyapong' rego*, and individual had to make sure that the stones were levelled down to a certain degree which would produce the required result.

The preparation of grinding stone and the one used for grinding the grain required the application of technical knowhow and it had to be levelled evenly. Here an individual had to be equipped with technical knowledge.

Another area in which technical education was required was in the field of herbal medicines. In most cases girls acquired this knowledge either from their mothers or their grandmothers. It meant therefore that a girl could even inherit this art through dreams. Sometimes a dead grandmother appeared to her grandchild in a dream telling her or him about herbs and how they should be prescribed. Usually grandmothers who were medicine women called upon their grandchildren to carry the containers for the herbs, also known as *yath* (sing.), *yedhe* (plu.). These were obtained from different types of plants, *yien mopogore opogore*.

In the process the girl was able to observe different types of roots that the grandmother used as medicines. She also observed the preparation
of medicine whether in a solid or liquid form. In the process she became conversant with containers used for each of the medicine, and the dose required for each. She also became conversant with the charges for the treatment offered whether it was for general sickness or manyasi mar chira, medicine for cleansing someone who may have not been upright in his morals, someone whose behaviour would require such cleansing, for example, the mother, or the man himself.

Later on in life, even before marriage, such a girl would be consulted in case of sickness or chira. This kind of education required some technical knowledge and the one who gave treatment used the technology acquired through her association with her grandmother. Such a knowledge did not depend on imitation and observation alone, because not all those who observed the grandmother preparing the medicine automatically became medicinemen or medicinewomen. This kind of knowledge required some talent because of its scientific requirement.

Another area that required technical education was with regard to pottery work. Pottery work featured prominently in the lives of Jok’Onyango. Over the years pots made by these Luo groups, especially Jo-Karachuonyo, were highly valued, and to this day pottery work in places such as Omboga, Kowuor and Oriang’ in Karachuonyo has attracted attention of many international communities.

Pots were made for various uses. There were bigger ones which were used for storage, while others were used for brewing beer - Dag kong’o. Some were used for fetching water - Dak mar umbo or Dapi and for keeping water that is Dapi or Dak mar Kano pi. Mothers and
grandmothers instructed girls to identify each one of these pots and the purpose for which each was used. For instance, in the preparation of food, different types of pots were used. These included Dakuon, which was used to prepare ugali; Dag nyoyo - was used for cooking a mixture of maize and beans; Aguch ring’o was used for cooking meat; oigla was used for cooking fish and Aguch alot was used for preparing vegetables. There were some other types of pottery which were used for dishing various dishes. These included Tap alot, the one for vegetables, Tap ring’o, the one for meat and oswaro which was used specifically for fish.

Although these items were used almost everyday by everybody, the art of making pottery was not something that was known to everyone. Pottery work required technical education and the outcome of any pottery work depended on how well an individual had learned the techniques. Girls learned these techniques from their mothers and grandmothers. The process of learning how to make pots started with toy pots which girls made as part of their game playing. Then the most gifted ones eventually became expert pot-makers. Pottery work, that is chweyo degi, for domestic use was basically a woman’s work in the pre-colonial and colonial period among Jok’Onyango.

Pottery was one of the most important industrial technology, dating back to pre-colonial days, that was dominated by women. The art was inherited from grandmothers and from mothers. But the techniques involved in making pots had to be mastered in order to have a durable finished pot. Once the clay had been shaped into a pot, it was usually placed in the shade where it would get enough warmth from the sun so as to get dry. Once the clay had dried, then it would have to be burned by
placing woods over it and lighting fire on it so that it could get hardened. This process was called *wang’o lowo*. This is the crucial aspect of pottery work for if it is not done properly, it would end up cracking when water is poured on it, rendering it useless. So the pots were to be made in such a way that the heat coming from the fire when cooking in such a pot, would not break it. Thus, the whole process required technical education especially when one had to determine and regulate the heat to the right temperature using nothing but one’s own sense of measurement.

The preparation of food was in itself an art as it still is, different women may prepare the same dish but the taste may not be the same. If one’s mother is hard working and can prepare tasty food, chances are that her daughter might end up being hardworking and a good cook, depending on how much time the two may have spent together. On the other hand, the art can be learned from any source.

However, food preparation must not be confused with food processing. Jok’Onyango live in an area which is close to the lake region, therefore they could easily obtain fish either from the lake or from the lake people. Some of them also used rivers as their fish catchment areas. The techniques of fish processing required an individual to smoke it, or to cut it open, *baro rech* and keep it in the sun for successive days so that it can dry. This was necessary especially when there was plenty of fish and some of them had to be stored awaiting consumption or sale. Smoking fish could be done in different ways.

There were certain types of fish that had to be cut open and after drying in the sun for a little while, they would be smoked through the use
of cowdung. This system was used on the bigger fish such as Kamongo¹, Seu²: Suma³, Ngege⁴ and one smaller one known as ningu⁵.

Another technique used in the fish processing was tholo rech, using dry leaves to burn over the smaller fish such as fulu⁶. All these activities required technological knowledge and a good sense of judgement. This was necessary, otherwise one would end up burning everything to ashes. All such activities were learned through the mothers and grandmothers. Osibodu (1972: 8) explains that in the acquisition of knowledge for such activities girls worked very closely with their mothers and grandmothers. She states “…the daughter of a potter would amuse herself at her mother’s side copying mother closely”.

The women provided training, with practical aspect of it, to their children in an attempt to prepare them for future or adult life. Osibodu (1972: 3) explains that the greater emphasis was placed on “social responsibility, job orientation, political participation and moral values.”

Young girls were taught what was expected of them when they eventually grew up to become wives. While girls learned activities that were performed by women, likewise boys also learned from older men such activities like basketry, some of which were used for storage. For instance, there was Atonga (sing.), Atonge (plu.) which were big enough

1. Kamongo (Protopterus - lung fish)
2. Seu (Bagrus - cat fish)
3. Suma (Mormyrus - elephant -snout)
4. Ngege (Tilapia)
5. Ningu (Labeo -barbeu-like fish)
6. Fulu (Haplochromis - rock fish)
and could be used to store certain foodstuff. Others were such as *atonga rego* and *ondweto*; these were used as grain containers especially when one was going for grinding.

Apart from transmitting knowledge about the way of life in the society to the youth, which has been referred to as woman-to-child education, there was also the kind of education that one might refer to as woman-to-woman education. This was the type of education which a woman gained through her interaction with the other women. Once a girl had been married she acquired a new status. Although she had learned many things from her mother, grandmother, aunties and the older girls, there were certain issues that she would deal with in her new home once she was married. In her new environment her source of knowledge shifted from her relatives in her paternal home. Therefore through woman-to-woman education she learned from her mother in-law, *wuon odgi*, her co-wives, *nyiekene* and her sisters-in-law, *weyene*. In most cases these were married women who had had experience in the way of life in this new environment.

A woman would talk freely to her mother in-law particularly on matters pertaining to their house or the homestead. The mother in-law gave guidance and counselling, telling her daughter in-law about what there was to be known in the home. She also instructed her how to relate to the people in her new home. For instance, when a husband proved impotent or partially impotent, the wife would first report the matter to her mother in-law stating that *an to anindo mana gi dhako wadwa*, that is, as far as our marriage is concerned, I am sharing a bed with a woman just like me (SNHT Vol. II: 192). On the other hand, it could be that the man
could perform perfectly alright but was unable to make babies. Once this was known, the mother in-law would usually advise the young woman to “talk” to one of her brothers in-law; *wuogi ka yuochi*. By the same token the brothers in-law would be asked by the elders, *yuoru ni en to ung’iye ang’iya nang’o?* meaning that, why are you just looking at this wife of your brother (SNHT Vol. II: 192). What this suggests is that the young wife was encouraged to have children with one of her brothers in-law. Likewise, a brother in-law was encouraged to have children with his sister in-law so that he would help “raise” the house of his brother, *mondo odong od owadgi* (SNHT Vol. II: 192). Another reason was the need to protect the woman as part of the family and to keep her in the home. Everything was done in secrecy and although the elders knew about it, the rest of the family were kept ignorant. If they knew anything about it, they just kept quiet because such an act was not subject to public debate. Children born out of such a union normally took the name of their social father not the biological one.

Jok’Onyango, like the other pre-colonial Luo communities, took it upon themselves to accommodate people with special needs without isolating them. But this was a special case which was done in order to avoid alienation of certain individuals in the community. It was not extended to everybody in the society. If, on the other hand, it was a woman who was barren, a man could marry another wife so that he would have children. We read from Ndeti (1972: 67) that “Taking a second wife is not restricted to men alone” that within the Akamba, society;
A wealthy woman whose husband has died and fails to find a new spouse, either because she is too old or has only married daughters and no one to inherit her property, can take another woman... sex is not necessarily the driving force. In some cases, the man can call the nearest relative and have him father children with the young wife. The children belong, not to real biological father but to the old couple. They also take their social parents’ name. In case of a wealthy woman, among the Akamba, marrying a woman, she would normally invite one of her ‘closest male relative from her husband’s line of descent and the children born out of such a union with ‘e’ ‘o’ ‘E’ + ‘O’ would be regarded as belonging to the woman and they would ‘take her name and regard her as their father’ (p.67).

However, in the Luo society when it was a woman who was unable to have children of her own, such a woman would ask her husband to marry one of her sisters or relatives and that way the couple would have children. On the other hand, if in a family a woman had all daughters, but no son, she could give one of the sons of her husband’s other wives some cattle to marry a wife. Such cattle were referred to as Dho Kiita and the newly married wife would be more inclined to help the mother in-law who gave the cattle to her husband more than she would help the biological mother of her husband.

According to the Abagusii tradition a woman who had no children would have problems when it comes to inheritance. Therefore if a woman “was barren or had no males in her house, it meant that her house had no apparent heir, as girls would get married and leave the house. The only way she could save her house was to have an heir, and to have one, she had to have a son” (Ngunjiri,1982: 17). It would appear that among the Abagusii as well as the Luo adoption was not an accepted practice and neither could a couple buy children since the practice of buying and selling human beings did not exist among them. One could live with relatives but not as an adopted child.
It is for this reason that the Abagusii encouraged the practice of marriage "between" women but the one who had been married did not take the name of the woman. The woman paid the dowry and the newly married woman went into her house as "the barren woman assumes that she has a son. Therefore the girl comes in as the wife of the assumed son" and the girl becomes her daughter-in-law (p.17). As was the case with the Akamba, the barren woman invites a man from her clan and the children who result from such a marriage are regarded as her grandchildren and the boys become the rightful heir to inherit whatever property therein.

However, within the Luo society, the barren woman went out of her way to find a wife for her husband and the children resulting from such a union were regarded as their children, that is, the husband, his barren wife and the mother of the children. But in the traditions of the Abagusii the husband of the woman would not have any kind of sexual relations with such a wife because she was now regarded as his daughter-in-law, being the wife of his "assumed son". On the other hand, among the Akamba if it was the woman who had brought in a new wife after the death of her husband, the offspring would perpetuate her name not that of the husband. Again, within the Luo society whether a wife was barren or not the property to be inherited was according to what was in each house not necessarily according to the number of children in a house. What was important is what was attached to the woman before the death of her husband.

Under normal circumstances an individual in the Luo society was expected to desist from having an affair with his sister-in-law. There was what one might call moral by threat. Tradition has it that if one was
having an affair with his brother's wife, it could result in chira, something that causes sickness where a person begins to lose weight until he dies in an emaciated state. If the brother became sick the one having an affair with his wife was not allowed to visit him. It was believed that if the offending brother visited the sick, he would cast shadow of bad omen over him and the sick brother would certainly die, unless it is discovered and they were given manyasi, a cleansing herbal treatment. When the sick suffered as a result of chira, it was said nika ogoyo owadgi gi tipo to owadgi tho (SNHT Vol. II: 190-191). In the event of death, the offending brother would not wail for his brother inside the homestead but outside the fence. It was believed that if he saw the red soil where the grave was being dug, he would collapse and die, kane oneno lowo makwar to ogore piny otho. In this case everybody would know that he had been having an affair with the dead man's wife (SNHT Vol. II: 190-191). Mboya (1983) explains that richo ema kelo chira, meaning that misconduct can bring about misfortune and death.

Chira, therefore had to be avoided at all cost. Chira could even affect children if the mother or father had walked in a “crooked” way, kagi wuotho marach. Every time there was a case of chira one would have to be cleansed with manyasi, a herbal drink that was always administered by an elderly woman. It was also the fear of chira that warranted ng' ado imbo as soon as the baby was born. Ng' ado imbo was a practice where a man had to have sexual relations with his wife soon after the baby was born. The main reason being that if the man had extra marital affairs elsewhere, he would bring chira to the baby and it might die if manyasi was not administered. In this case it would be said that the baby died
because the man *ne ogoye gi tipo koro otho gi chira*. All these values the woman learned from other women that is, her peers, mother-in-law and elderly women in her new home just as she had learned from her peer groups, her mother, grandmother, older girls and relatives such as aunties.

The learning process involved imitation, observation, performing tasks, attending and participating in social ceremonies, some of which required adult life. One of the ceremonies in which the woman participated was that connected with the birth of the child. When a woman had a baby she would stay in the house for four (4) days if it was a boy and three days if it was a girl. During this period, the woman was referred to as *manyuru*. She stayed indoors most of the time except when nature called. When it was time for her to come out with the baby, certain activities had to be performed. The ceremony was referred to as *golo nyathi oko*, taking the baby outdoor. The person who presided over this ceremony was an elderly woman who may have been giving medication to the woman throughout the period of her pregnancy. Such a woman was called *Nyamrerwa*. *Nyamrerwa* was a very important individual in the community. In most cases she was the one called upon when someone was sick. She gave medication for general sickness but she also administered cleansing ceremonies which involved family members. She was the custodian of the family life.

In the ceremony of *golo nyathi oko*, *Nyamrerwa* would first of all take the baby from the mother. Then she would bathe the baby in water which was treated with herbs, *olwoko nyathi gi pi moketie yath*. Then *Nyamrerwa* would carry the baby out. She would be followed by the mother. The mother would normally sit by the door. Thereafter
Nyamrerwa would shave the baby’s hair and also that of the mother. It was only after this ceremony that the rest of the family and neighbours were free to handle the baby.

The bathing and shaving was done so as to cleanse the baby and provide it with protection and resistance so that when it entered into the family of mankind it would survive. It was therefore protected against those who might harm it by their touch or look. In this aspect of life it was Nyamrerwa, not the parents who guaranteed the survival of the child.

Another aspect of woman to woman education concerned death in a family. If the owner of a homestead died, ka jaduong’ wuon pacho notho the first thing to be done was to uproot the centre pole in the first wife’s house. Then this woman would carry the uprooted pole and go with it towards the gate. Having reached the gate she was shaved, followed by the other wives of the deceased. After the shaving ceremony by the gate, the first wife would normally lead the others back to the homestead.

During the period of mourning all of the deceased’s wives slept in the house of the first wife. On the fourth day, that is the day of tero buru, the deceased’s wives had to have their hair shaved in front of the first wife’s house. Then the married daughters of the deceased, starting from the eldest, would also go to their respective homes where they had been married. They were normally referred to a wagogni (SNHT Vol. II: 166).

All this time the men lit fire around the burial site. The fire, called Magenga, was kept going throughout the night. After tero buru, the men also moved into their own houses or homes starting with the eldest son.
According to the tradition if the eldest son had more than one wife, he would, however, have to go back to the house of his first wife before daybreak. He must not oversleep elsewhere (SNHT Vol. II: 166).

After all this, there was a ceremony called *tero mon*. This was the time when the wives of the deceased would be remarried. In this case the first wife had to go through it first followed by the others. If she refused then the other wives could not be remarried in that home.

According to this tradition once the owner of a homestead had died the first wife acted as the custodian of the home and therefore it would be unusual for her to refuse to be remarried. Once *ter* had taken place, the first wife would ask the other women the following morning if the marriage had been consummated. If not, then another man would be asked to take over. There was, however, a provision for an older woman. In such a case one of her brother’s in-law would hang an article of his clothing in her house or a grand child would spend the night in her house symbolizing *ter*. This way the ritual would be considered complete (SNHT Vol. II: 167).

Once a man had died his wives took over the responsibility of the homestead. His children, both male and female could not do anything without holding consultations with their mothers. Women remained the most powerful tool for the transmission of culture within the Luo society. Thus, in the pre-colonial Jok’Onyango communities indigenous education prepared the children for future life as responsible members of their society.
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In the pre-capitalist Luo communities in South Nyanza men undertook to perform certain tasks while women performed others. Economic activities were also undertaken within the concept of *wuon dala* and *wuon ot*. The concept determined who had control over the surplus of farm produce and also cattle. Economic activities must therefore be looked at in terms of communal mode of production. This chapter looks at the role of women in economic activities, the organization and reproduction of labour. It also discusses how what is produced is used and in a way negates the notion put forward by Dupree and Rey (1973) that in the pre-capitalist African societies women and juniors were exploited by elders who monopolized the products of their labour. The chapter reveals that the ability to appropriate value produced was in the hands of women who seem to have had more control over the surplus produce than men in relation to economic activity. Also discussed in this chapter is the system of inheritance among Jok'Onyango and the place of women in the law of inheritance.

Researches conducted among the Jok'Onyango seem to indicate that women in the Luo society were not passive. On the contrary, they were involved in the day to day activities of their societies. We learn from Imunde (1974, 24) that "if land nourishes man all through his earthly life, it is woman... who feeds him her milk during the first years of his existence. She is also the medium through which food coming from the earth passes to be cooked and offered to man".
Traditions collected among the Jok’Onyango state that immediately after getting married, the young wife cooked in the house of her mother in-law until she moved to her own house. During this period, she used everything that belonged to her mother in-law wuon odgi to whom she would refer as wuon odwa, the owner of our house (SNHT Vol. II: 10). Even when it comes to working in the field, she used her mother in-law's farms.

However, when she moved to her own house to cook there, it meant that she was now in full control and, therefore, she had complete autonomy over her own household and the activities therein. The move to take charge of her household is called keto kendo. At this time, the woman is given everything she needs to start a new life in her own house. Sometimes if the father in-law has cattle, he can give her nyaroya, a young calf which would be considered the woman’s first possession in terms of cattle.

Other times, the father in-law might give her dwasi gi nyaroya, a cow with a young calf so that the woman could have a source of milk. Then she would be given a piece or pieces of land to cultivate in order to feed the members of her household. She is also given baskets, knives, cooking stick, i.e oludh kuon, cooking utensils which include dishes and pots for cooking a variety of dishes (SNHT Vol. II: 13).

It has already been stated that in the Luo society, the man is considered the owner of the home - wuon dala or wuon pacho and the woman is, therefore, the owner of the house - wuon ot. Having moved to her own house and having been given what was necessary to start the family, land included, the woman then embarked on looking after the welfare of the members of her own household.
Those activities that were carried out by women started with what was done in the home. In the home, the woman was responsible for the preparation of food and processing staple foods by grinding, fetching water and firewood. The division of labour within the Luo home was done according to the sexes in that there were certain duties which could be performed by women while there were those which were carried out by men. Within the homesteads, therefore, the men built houses and granaries or stores of food, whose roofs they thatched. The men fenced the homesteads and, in most cases, they milked the cows or goats. On the other hand, when men had built houses, the women finished the walls and floors, which they smeared with a particular type of soil mixed with cowdung. The women, therefore, were the ones who did the plastering of walls, including those of granaries.

While in other pastoral communities such as the Maasai, the women milked the cows as well as caring for the goats and sheep, in the Luo societies, milking was by and large primarily done by men, although there were certain cases where women too performed these functions. Nevertheless, it was the women who processed the dairy products (SNHT Vol. II: 58). Outside the homesteads, men did other duties such as a hunting, herding and fishing; they were the ones who cleared the virgin fields in preparation for cultivating and fencing the land, while the women processed the fish, some of which they smoked. Both men and women participated in ploughing, sowing, weeding and harvesting, although food processing was primarily done by the women.

Although men made baskets, such as odheche, and ogute, atonge, aditini, atonga rego and ondweto, the women were actively involved in
pottery marking, which included pots for cooking and storage, waterpots, a variety of dishes such as those used for dishing meat, fish and vegetables. The women of Karachuonyo were particularly skilled pottery makers and they traded in pottery. Oriang' and Kosele were the greatest source of pottery work in Karachuonyo.

To this day the women groups in Karachuonyo still make beautiful pottery for local as well as export trade. Thus, the woman’s work was to a larger extent a major contributory factor in the maintenance and reproduction of the social formation within which such activities were carried out among the Jok’Onyango. Thus, the division of labour among the Jok’Onyango, as was the case with the other Luo societies, was according to sex and age.

When Oswald (1915, 34) a Briton, visited South Nyanza at the turn of the twentieth century, he noticed that there was at least equality in this division of labour. He further noted that certain activities, such as tiling the land, were carried out by both males and females.

Felix was a geologist who visited South Nyanza in 1912 and when he wrote the report about his journey, he decided to include a picture of a man and his wife seen in their field working together. A great deal has been said about the burdens of women carried in the traditional society, but the traditions collected among Jok’Onyango of South Nyanza suggest that the women performed specific duties while the men carried out other activities and that the gender division of labour was meant to achieve specific goals in the communities.
A lot of the literature, some based on the Marxist approach, has tended to emphasize the oppression of women, but one is never clear whether it is political, economic or social oppression. Researches conducted among the Jok’Onyango seem to reveal that women “had from time immemorial contributed immensely to the socio-economic, cultural and political development of their various communities” Osibodu (1980: 1).

Within the Jok’Onyango communities, land was communally owned and every individual could utilize it as much as possible, since it was believed to have been handed over to the people for their use by their ancestors. Nobody could dispose of land during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Even in the greater part of the twentieth century, most of the Luo societies in South Nyanza used their land communally. Peasantry as it existed in Europe under feudalism is not in any way comparable with the structure of the Luo societies before the coming of the Europeans for there was no question of landlessness. And as has been stated by Nielsen (1978: 9), in the communal system, “the distinction did not exist between a public world of men’s work and a private world of women’s household service. The large collective of the household was the community, and within it both sexes worked to produce goods necessary for livelihood.”

While women concentrated on their day to day activities, men would at times concentrate on “hunting and felling trees to clear the land for farming and occasionally engaged in warfare” but even here, when duty called, the women actively participated in the battlefield, as will be explained in Chapter Nine. Thus, the point to underscore here is that landlessness was an unknown phenomenon in the pre-colonial South Nyanza.
and that the emergence of the squatter system in the twentieth century came about as a result of land alienation during the colonial period.

Secondly, when Marx and Engels were writing about the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Europe, they were reacting to the destruction of feudalism through revolutionary wars that were prevalent in the nineteenth century Europe. They were also reacting to the impact of the industrial revolution and the rise of the capitalist systems in Europe, a society which was characterized by class distinction and class antagonism between exploiters and the exploited.

Butterman's work (1978) which attempts to explain the duties performed by women in Karachuonyo and Kanyamkago is based on what she terms Marxist anthropology. She states that "the concepts and definition used have been largely raided from discussion with Marxist anthropology" (p.1). But Meillassoux (1972: 96) explains that the "Marxist approach to pre-capitalist formation is a relatively superficial one". He reckons that Marx had endeavoured at length to construct or build up a "typology of various pre-capitalist formation through the notion of the landed property, i.e. not through a legal one, as was customary in the nineteenth century bourgeois society" (p.96).

In her work on the pre-colonial economy of Karachuonyo and Kanyamkago, Butterman assumes that she understood the two societies without realizing that she was using western concepts as a yardstick in her quest to understand the structure of these two societies. Meillassoux has rightly pointed out that the work of Marx "is entirely focussed on the
development of capitalist countries and he pays little (or none at all) attention on the colonized areas, or the role played by the exploitation of the colonized countries in the growth and prosperity of capitalism". It is true that Marx and Engels did not have any notion of the fate of the colonized peoples and that they did not at any time attempt to study pre-capitalist African societies. Neither did they attempt to study the philosophical beliefs, political, economic and social organizations of non-European societies.

In their attempt to understand the nature of the European society, Marx and Engels endeavoured to study the classical Greek and Roman societies, “classical German philosophy, English and French political economy and French and English socialism; and both devoted themselves to practical activities” (Bernstein, 1964: 129)”. It would, therefore, not be incorrect to infer here that basically Marx and Engels never really concerned themselves with colonized people nor did they bother much about what was going on outside the European continent for, by the time the two were writing, a great deal of the world had been colonized. Nationalism, liberalism, socialism and indeed, industrial revolution were a threat to Europe; these forces had a direct bearing on the colonized peoples.

From the above discussion, it is possible to infer here that Marx and Engels would not have bothered much about the oppression or exploitation of the Africans by the white man just as the question of the colonized areas and colonized peoples does not seem to have occupied their minds. And if they were addressing the “workers of the world”, to them the world was Europe. That was what was being affected by the industrial revolution and no other part of the world was included in it.
The Luo societies in South Nyanza moved directly from communalism and received the first dosage of a capitalist system in the twentieth century, having by-passed both the slave state and the feudalist structure. Barlow (1913) maintains that the African man "... lolled about watching his women slaving for him". And Hay (1976: 94) explains that "labour, not land, was the limiting factor of production well into the early colonial period, and this contributed to the high social value of polygamy." Butterman (1977: 9) concludes that, in the pre-colonial period, a Luo man could use the labour of his wives to obtain surplus grains which he would exchange for cattle which he would use to marry new wives. All these scholars of the Luo societies looked at the women through the western concepts and saw them simply as a source of labour supply for the man. This approach is based on the capitalist mode of production where one exploits the labour of the other in order to gain some profitable returns.

Whisson (1961: 7-8) implies that the first step towards becoming a chief in the Luo society was to do business (investment) in acquiring many wives. He states that "investment in wives was the critical first step for someone aspiring to become "ruoth" or "chief". Such approaches tend to degrade the status of women. Women within the Luo societies among the Jok’Onyango were recognized for their major contribution in the field of politics, economics and the social aspects of their respective communities.

Tradition collected among the Jok’Onyango shows that there were women chiefs and warriors in these societies. If investment in wives was the critical first step for someone aspiring to become “ruoth” or “chief”, then what type of “investment” did a woman need in order to become chief among the Luo? This issue will be tackled in chapters eight and nine.
The works of Ndege (1977) on the Abagusii, Pala (1974), Driberg (1952), Harris (1943) and Kabbery (1952) all seem to indicate that there was division of labour according to the sexes and therefore negates the idea of labour supply purely for man’s profit. Ndege (1977), having examined colonial factors and underdevelopment in Gusii country, concludes that “for purposes of effective production, the Gusii divided farm labour among themselves on the basis of sex, age and the nature of work” (p.5). Such a division was meant to achieve specific goals, but one fails to see exploitation in it.

Every time, researchers tend to take some aspects of the social practice of a people and use this to show the inferior position of the women compared to that of the men. For instance, Le Vine (1979: 9) explains that “the Gusii women were considered morally and emotionally immature, irresponsible and lacking in judgement...”. She further states “a man’s room was regarded as being on the right-hand side of the house, the woman’s on the left - a representation of female inferiority in Gusii belief.... The woman was buried outside her part of the house (i.e. its ‘left’), the man outside his part of the house (on its ‘right’)” (p.9) which to her emphasizes the inferiority of the woman to the man. She failed to understand the cultural implication of this burial practice which is similar to that of the Luo, the Gusii neighbours.

The right hand symbolizes the strength of a man - the hand that he uses to protect not only himself, his home but also his wife or wives and children. In these early days, when raiding was the order of the day, a man had to be vigilant about his homestead and the cattle therein. For this reason, even when he went to sleep, he would have to sleep on the side
where he could jump out without necessarily stampeding over his wife. As a result, over the years, men had to sleep on a specific side of the bed even long after the raiding activities had ceased. The point to be emphasized here is that, even in death, it was believed that the man would continue to protect himself and that, therefore, he needed his right hand and this had nothing to do with the superior or inferior position of either of the sexes.

Thus Driberg (1932) cautioned that the assumption that the African woman was accorded a low status in her society simply because of certain cultural practices would be discarded. He called for more open-minded research on the role of women, especially on the issue of the division of labour according to the sexes, age and the nature of the task to be performed.

Basing his work on the people of Eastern Sudan, he maintained that "the occupations and opportunities open to men and women depend on the general culture and there is no artificially imposed bar which keeps women in a state of subjection" (p. 420). He noted that while the men carried out activities such as felling trees, clearing the bush, herding, hunting and occasionally involving in warfare, the women, on the other hand, performed duties such as the preparation of food, tilling the land, sowing and weeding. This would seem to indicate that the division of labour complemented each sex's effort in order to achieve a satisfactory result. This was true among Jok'Onyango in the nineteenth century especially when they had established permanent settlements and became specialized in farming, cattle-keeping, fishing and hunting.
The Ozuitem Ibo, as reflected in the work of Harris (1984) seem to confirm that there was a division of labour according to sex among the Ibo people where men performed duties peculiar to them and the women did likewise. This included agricultural work and subsequent produce from the field. The fact that there was a division of labour between men and women should not be interpreted to mean a lower status for women.

Commenting on Wagner's work on the Abaluyia women, Pala (1974: 14) concludes that "both men and women joined in planting, weeding and harvesting. In this way, the family was a self-sufficient economic unit in which the work of women, men and children complimented each other" and this was the purpose of the division of labour.

Le Vine confuses the role of the Gusii women when she states that "despite their visible subordination and publicly inferior status, Gusii women were forces to be reckoned with". This seems to negate what she calls an "inferior status", because an inferior person cannot possibly be a force to reckon with. On the other hand, Le Vine negates herself when she says that "the Gusii diviners (Abaragori) who played the most extrado-

mestic role in rituals were virtually all women..." Such women wielded a lot of power in their communities and could not possibly be regarded as "morally and emotionally immature, irresponsible and lacking in judgement". Because she misinterprets the Gusii tradition, Le Vine paints a very gloomy picture of the Gusii women whom she says are always regarded as strangers and outsiders within the clans in which they are married.
Tradition collected amongst the Jok’Onyango place emphasis on the economic independence of the women within their societies, an aspect which was sanctioned and recognized by the Luo society. The Luo recognized the women as the owners of the house, in charge of their household activities. And when the woman was given land to utilize as a source of her agricultural produce, she was given a free hand in the control of the produce from the family land. Thus, within the various Jok’Onyango communities, as was the case with other Luo societies in South Nyanza, the woman had her own piece of land in which she worked, sometimes with her husband and sometimes with her children or she was assisted by the members of her extended families, both from the husband side and from her parental home. She also had a garden of vegetables and also another piece of land where she planted potatoes. But there was order pertaining to the economic activities among the Jok’Onyango and other Luo groups. When it was time for cultivating, which was referred to as golo pur, time for planting regarded as komo, for weeding, doyo, for harvesting, therefore keyo, there were certain rituals that had to be performed before all these activities could be undertaken.

The women featured here prominently for wuon dala, the owner of the home had to follow the laid down procedure if he wanted peace, harmony and prosperity in his homestead. Therefore, the husband had to perform sexual rituals with his wife or his wives for each occasion. If he had several wives, he would have to start with the first wife and go down the line (SNHT Vol. II: 13, 35-36). If the woman or women were away from a particular homestead, the economic activities in that homestead would come to a standstill. It was, therefore, the women who controlled such activities. Or if the first wife, mikayi, was away, no other wife could
be called upon to substitute for her; they would all have to wait until *mikayi* came to start cultivating, sowing, weeding, eating greens from the field and harvesting (SNHT Vol. II: 36, 13).

In the home, there were stores of food, among them the granaries. The produce from the field was kept in the granaries. In a polygamous home, each woman had her own house and it follows, therefore, that each woman had her own land which she cultivated, and therefore her own granaries. Whatever was kept in the granaries was regarded as the women’s property, for it was they alone who could climb the granaries to get the grains. Children could be sent there to get the grain but never a man. The laws of the society forbade a man from entering the granaries; it was a taboo (SNHT Vol. II: 10). By this action, the law held the woman solely responsible and in charge of agricultural produce and by sanctifying it, she was given complete economic autonomy.

The woman was, moreover given the right to dispose of the produce from the field as gifts to relatives, friends and other acquaintances without necessarily consulting her husband or asking for permission to do so. This would seem to suggest that the woman in the pre-colonial Luo society was economically independent and this meant that even if her husband had other wives, her economic security was not threatened so long as she had her land which was a source of her livelihood. Her husband’s other wives would be similarly endowed to maintain their own economic independence. Thirdly, it means that the women did not depend on the men for food production, and processing neither did they depend on them for their daily supply of food.
On the other hand, it was the men who depended on the women for their food supply as Imunde points out. He states that the "woman is the medium through which the food coming from the earth passes to be cooked and offered to man" (p.24). He goes further to explain that "by giving birth to children, the woman nourished the entire tribe with a nourishment which guarantees its visible perpetuation beyond the disappearance of the individual member through death. She accords to man and his ancestors the prolongation and maintenance of his vital force on this earth."

But to produce and reproduce in order to ensure the continuity of the society, the members of this society must be fed and it is the woman who must ensure that there is food to sustain them. Kaberry's work on the Bamenda of the Cameroons (1952) confirms the free hand which Bamenda women had over their produce from the fields. In her analysis of Kaberry's work, Pala (1974, 13) states that among the Bamenda people of the Cameroons, a woman could, when and if need be, "dispose of crops as gifts without necessarily consulting her husband; however, a man must obtain permission from his wife if he has to give gifts to his relatives or friends from the family crops."

Likewise among the Jok'Onyango, if a man wished to give some of the crops to his relatives or the wife of his friends in time of famine, he had to ask his wife to give the relative or the friend's wife some grain, since as already stated, it was taboo for him to enter her granaries. Therefore the man could neither take the crop without the consent of the woman nor by force (SNHT Vol. II: 15-16). However, to safeguard the man's interest in the agricultural field, the husband always had his own field.
In cultivation, sowing, weeding and harvesting, he was assisted by his wife or wives and children. The produce from the man’s field was kept in the specific granary or granaries, depending on the strength of the man and the yearly harvest. The granary was referred to as mondo. Like the woman, the man could dispose of his grains without consulting his wife or wives. They too did not have a say in his mondo. If a relative or friend’s wife went to ask for grains because of famine in her area, the wives of the man would naturally give her some of their grains; but if the husband felt that she had not been given enough, he always added from his own mondo and though this was man’s own, he could not enter into it. All he could do was either to send his children or one of his wives to get the grains for him. Or if one of his wives did not have enough crops to take her through the next harvesting season, the man could always supplement what the woman had by giving some of his grains (SNHT Vol. II: 12, 170-171).

Mondo was referred to as dero morito pacho, the granary that protects the homestead. It therefore served as a safety valve or as the man’s bank which was kept for a rainy day.

The other reason why a man kept mondo was that, if he had several wives, it was not possible to help all of them with agricultural work. If he assisted only one wife, that would create a misunderstanding and disharmony in the home as he would be accused of favouring one at the expense of the others. Therefore, as the women worked on their own pieces of land, the man also busied himself on his own field.
Peristiany (1939) carried out research on the Kipsigis speaking people which indicated that there was a division of labour between men and women within this society. There were three aspects to this division. The first was the *Kabungut*, the second, an *imbaret a mossop* and the third, an *imbaret a ab soi* or *kapande*. The women also participated in decision making processes as far as agricultural produce was concerned.

Pala (1974: 15) explains;

*A kabungut*, was a small vegetable garden planted and cultivated exclusively by a woman and her daughter. They grew vegetables which formed part of the food which was cooked with blood and meat. An *imbaret a mossop* (field of the house) was owned by each married woman. In other words, each household had its own field. Work on this plot was done mainly by women assisted by relatives and members of the *kokwet*, including husbands in erecting fences and sowing. *Grains from this field was stored in a separate granary over which the husband had no authority to take supplies for beer for his friends*... (Emphasis mine. *And imbaret ab soi* or *kapande* was the man's field.

As was the case among the Jok’Onyango, the produce from the man's field or *imbaret ab soi* or *kapande*, was stored separately from that which was controlled by the women. As the Luo man could dispose of the produce from his field, such as giving some to the relatives or exchanging some for cattle, among the Kalenjin speakers, the man used the produce from *kapande* as he pleased. Therefore, it would not be incorrect to infer here that among the Jok’Onyango and some of the communities already cited, the women monopolized “agricultural skills” and they had greater control over the economic activities of their respective societies.

Bonnie and David Kettel (1972: 133) who conducted research in Seretunin, North Baringo discovered that within this community “each
nuclear unit of husband, wife or minor or children shared their labour in the exploitation of certain plots of land. The Tugen were polygamous, but contact between the co-wives was kept to a minimum. Each wife had her own house, her own plot, and her own crops and stock which she looked after with her husband and children.” We will come back to the issue of land when dealing with the issue of inheritance.

Apart from their work in farming activities, the women also participated in trade as part of their economic undertaking. For instance, when there was surplus grain the women exchanged the grains for goats and even cattle especially when one area had been hit by severe drought. The cattle thus received were used by the sons of the particular household to marry wives. During a severe drought resulting in famine, people were engaged in what was referred to as *rundo, ji ne rundo*; that is, buying and selling and, therefore, exchanging what they had for what they needed. Such an exchange often led to the development of market centres such as the one used by the Kanyamwa and called Mirunda which derived its name, from *rundo*, (Ayot, 1979: 41).

Within the Karachuonyo, the woman traded in pottery, while the Kadem - Karungu women carried fish and salt from their lakeshore regions to the hinterland where the two items were exchanged for grain. The lakeshore region depended on one harvest season, while in the higher and wetter regions, there were two harvest seasons. So the lake people needed the grain from the interior of South Nyanza to keep them going until the next harvest season. Trade between the Jok’Onyango and the Abasuba had far-reaching consequences on the future of the Abasuba speakers. We read from Herring (*Joluo Before 1900*: 3) that;
When trade and intermarriage were combined as they often were, cultural interchange, bilingualism, and friendlier relations became more likely. This was true everywhere, but its effects are best exemplified by the history of the Abasuba of South Nyanza. There, ... relatively small groups of Luo speaking migrants spread across the area in roughly the same period that other Luo speakers were gaining a more important role in the trade along the eastern coast of Lake Victoria. When the Abagirango were pushed South by the expanding Chwanya, therefore, the Abasuba were increasingly isolated, not only from Uganda and Tanganyika. In this situation, Dholuo became a commercial lingua franca, intermarriage introduced Luo ideas and customs, and the Abasuba started their gradual, and still incompletely, assimilation into the Luo world. (see also Ayot 1979: 156-176).

One of the most striking influences of trade and intermarriage on the Abasuba was in relation to story-telling. In most cases the stories which were originally told in the Suba language, were over the years told in Dholuo, but those stories which had a chorus in the middle, the singing part has remained in the original language up to this day. Here is an example;


Koro kane ogwal oselokore nyathi ma nyako, migumba ni koro ne okano nyathine ni mana e widhi mondo kik ji nene. Ne en nyako ma jaber ahinya. Ewidhika migumbani ne oomo nyareni mana gi piende nyaka nyani ne odoko n’gama ng’ongo. Koro chieng’ moro ne migumbani ne omoyo bel oko kaaye to odhi nam. Bang’e to
nyareni ne ouwok oko mondo one bendgig. To bende chunye ne osevedo ka gombo ouwok oko mondo one gima timore kon. Kane ouwok oko nyiri wetene moko ne onene mane gi lawe ma gi donjo kode cot. Nyakoni nyinge ne Misirme. Nyiri wategi Misirme ne obudho kode eodgi ka gigoyo mbaka. Bang’e to nyirigo ne owacho ne ni mondo gidhiyo moto. Koro Misirme ne ouwok gi nyiri wetenegi mane gidhi e bungu moto. To Misirme ne en mana ng’ama ochwe gi lowo ma kapo koth oyude oko to do osienyre asienya. Misirme nowuok ka mingi ma migumba ne pod odhi nam.

Ka min Misirme ne oduogo dala to oyudo ka nyano onge. Koro eka ne ochako luonge ka omanye. To koth ne biro ma polo ne mor kendo tiarore ka naga. Koro min Misirme ne oyudo dhako moro to openje ni Misirme odhi kanye. To onyise ni ne odhi moto gi nyiri wetene. Kaaye to min Misirme okawo mana piende umore ka olawo Misirme kama ne gidhiye moto. Koro min Misirme ne ochako wer gi thum ka olawo nyathi no:

Mother: Misirme, Misirme ngouredo mero x 2
Redo me kama dimolukwita
Misirme ngouredo mero!!

Misirme’s response: Mkasima, mkasima kasunga mititi riange ria
Mkasima, mkasima kasunga mititi riange ria
Misirme nakore dumero.
Odhi adhiya, odhi adhiya to ower.

Mother: Misirme, Misirme ngouredo mero x2
redo me ka dimolu kwita
Misirme ngouredo mero!!

Misirme: Mkasima, mkasima kasunga mititi riange ria Misirme nga kore dumero.
Odhi adhiya, odhi adhiya. Koth to mil, koth mil to en umore.
Koro odhi koywak koneno ka koth to oo
Koro odhi to oywak aywaka.

Mother: Misirme, Misirme ngouredo mero x2
redo mekama dimolu kwita
Misirme ngouredo mero!!
Misirme: Mkasima, mkasima kasunga mititi rianbe ria Misirme nga kore dumero.
Odhi, adhiya, odhi, adhirya. Ka ne odhi ma ochiegni but Misirme to koth ochako chwe matek ahinya ka ogik ir Misirme to Misirme ong’inyore matindo tindo ma olokore chuondho.


What is being explained here is that the narrator used Dholuo to tell the story of the barren woman. But she was expert in pottery making. So one day, she decided to use clay to make the form of a girl and she kept this in a secret place by the entrance to a house commonly known in Dholuo as widhi. After four days, she went to check her claywork and found that it had turned into a frog. She then put it back for another four days. When she checked after the four days, she found that it had turned into a beautiful baby girl. She kept this baby indoors ewidhi until it grew up. She turned out to be very beautiful and so she called her Misirme. But even by this time, Misirme was not allowed to go out of the house.

One day, the mother left Misirme in the house, while she went to the lake to fetch water and when she returned, she found Misirme missing. Misirme had gone to fetch firewood with the other girls. The mother remembered that Misirme had been made out of clay and that, should it rain on her she would simply turn into soil. Immediately she took the skins to cover herself and cover Misirme if she should find her.

She went about looking for her, calling out loud and Misirme would respond to her voice from afar. Eventually it started raining just as the mother reached out for Misirme and the beautiful girl turned into soil right in front of her mother.
The story has its own message to pass on to the listener; but what is important here is the impact of the Luo on non-Luo groups which was promoted through trade links and contacts as well as through intermarriages (SNHT Vol. II: 48-53).

It has been explained that in relation to land, the woman had complete control over the crops which came from the family field. The woman also had complete autonomy over her household which was hers as she was referred to as *wuon ot*. It has also been stated that when she went to cook in her own house, among the items given to her were a young calf, *nyaroya*, *dwasi gi nyathine*, or a cow and its calf as a source of milk and land to cultivate. The apportionment of land to a woman was done by the father in-law and mother in-law. This is because it was these two who knew the pieces of land which were cultivated by the mother in-law. This process was the beginning of that economic independence of the women which has already been discussed since, from this time onwards, she would have to raise enough food to feed not just her household, but also the members of the extended family as well as relatives, friends and visitors. The land thus given was considered the property of the woman and no one could take it from her. Therefore, she was free to utilize it in whichever way was productive.

According to the traditions of the Jok’Onyango, a man could not be allocated land as his own property without a wife. Therefore, men got land only through their wives. In any case, an unmarried man was considered a child until such a time that as he got himself a wife; then he passed from boyhood to adulthood (SNHT Vol. II: 17). Just as the woman was regarded as *wuon ot* so once she had been given land - *puodho*, she was
regarded as *wuon puodho*, the owner of that field. The main crops that
the women grew were sorghum, the historical staple food of the Luo.
Others were finger millet, barley, sesame, sweet potatoes, cassava, yams,
pumpkins, beans, green gram and different types of vegetables.

According to Hay (1976: 99) "a man would assign specific fields to
each of his wives, according to her abilities and her needs (largely deter-
mined by the number of her children). Women never held permanent
rights in lands, since a husband would reassign garden plots if he saw it
fit". In a situation where a man has moved out of his father's home in
order to establish his own homestead, and he moves into a virgin land,
then, as he gets married, he apportions specific fields to each one of his
wives. But even then, once the land had been given to a particular woman
it could never be given to another wife. Such an act would provoke hatred
between the members of one's family. Therefore, Hay's suggestion that
"women never held permanent right in lands' is an incorrect statement, for
indeed the women held land which was allocated to them permanently and
these were often passed to their sons through their wives.

Secondly, it was an unwise man who took away land from one of his
wives to "reassign" to another when and if he saw it fit. Whatever the
case, the traditions of Jok'Onyango seem to negate this assertion by Hay
as the said act would lead to disharmony in the home.

Again, Hay states that "labour, not land, was the limiting factor of
production well into the early colonial period, and this contributed to the
high social value of polygamy and the desire to have numerous offsprings"
(p.99). Here, too is a gross misunderstanding of the importance of polyga-
mous institution among the Luo. The Luo did not marry several wives as source of labour supply. Exploitation of one’s labour by another is an alien phenomenon and is a western mode of production based, as it were, on capitalism and it is a pity that Hay uses this as a yardstick in devaluing the position of the woman in the Luo society when she reduces her to a mere source of labour. If this was the case, then why would any woman have her own fields since the man could just use their labour in his own field? In any case, if men married because of the demand for labour supply, how then does one explain a situation in independent Kenya where a man who has only two acres of land marries five wives? Does this man really need labour for his land?

Again, Butterman (1977: 8) states that in pre-colonial Karachuonyo - a man could exploit the labour of his wives in order to gain surplus grains which he would exchange for cattle in order to marry more wives. Traditions collected among the Jok’Onyango of which Karachuonyo is part reaffirms the unquestioned authority of the woman over the grains from her field. Therefore, one can infer here that women were not married just to fulfil the demand for labour supply.

Hay moves one step further and confirms her lack of understanding of polygamous institutions among the Joluo by saying “moreover, the practice of polygamy ensured that a woman’s economic security rested with her sons and not with her husband. A wife, in fact, could not inherit from her husband, although she could inherit from her sons” (p.95). First of all, it has been mentioned that, when the woman moved to cook in her own house, she was given a calf, or a cow and its calves - this was considered the woman’s property. As she began to have her own children, some
of whom would be married, more cattle came into the house, so that al-
though regarded as the man’s cattle this was only in name, the woman
owned the cattle and the man could not use it without bringing her into the
picture.

When Hay states that the women could inherit from their sons, the
question is at what age would the mother inherit land, cattle or whatever
property from her son considering, of course, the age difference between
the mother and the son? On the other hand, traditions collected among the
Jok’Onyango confirm that the sons inherited their mothers’ land as well as
cattle, goats and whatever else that the mother may have had. But at the
same time, the wives inherited the land, the cattle and other properties
from their husbands (SNHT Vol. II: 167). According to these traditions,
when the daughters were married, cattle given as dowry were usually
considered to belong to each house of the girls’ mothers; therefore each
house had its own cattle, although they belonged theoretically to the man
by virtue of being the husband to his wives and father to his children

Everybody in the family and even within the extended family knew
the number of cattle that belonged to each woman’s house and they knew
also the number of sheep and goats there were, so that in the event that the
husband died, the immediate members of the family, including the
brothers in-law, knew that in such and such a house there were so many
cattle, goats and sheep and the wives would continue to have their cattle.
The same was true of the land even at the time of the death of one’s hus-
Of course, there were occasions when the brothers in-law seized everything from their sisters in-law; but such an act would be condemned by the elders and the community as a whole and in the end some misfortune would befall those who behaved in this manner towards the widows (SNHT Vol. II: 169). This law of inheritance was so clear that there was no need for anyone to write the will. There were no disputes over this.

In his report, 1907-1908, Hemsted, the District Commissioner in South Nyanza stated that ‘although the right of ownership can hardly exist in women, the Joluo ‘Paterfamilias’ divides up all his stock among his wives; each wife has a house to herself and a share of the cattle is attached to that house, the wife occupant using the milk, ghee and other produce of her share of stock. On the death of the owner, the sons of each of the wives inherit the share of the stock allotted to their mother’. Hemsted should have completed this with the fact that even the land basically remained in the custody of the women until her sons were of age to take over after marrying their own wives. Therefore, Hay’s notion that the women’s “economic security rested with their sons ...” and that they could not inherit from their husbands but from their sons, is not correct.

Gachukia (1986: 9) explains the situation among the Agikuyu women in relation to land. She says that “on marriage, a woman had allocated to her a piece of land which she used according to her ability. It was left to her to cultivate sufficient food to feed family. There was emphasis, however, that as far as land and livestock were concerned, the woman was only a Muramati, i.e. caretaker - never owner.”
The literature emerging from South Nyanza among the Jok'Onyango emphasizes the economic independence of the women and that they were not regarded just as the caretakers but as the owners of their houses, their land, their cattle and any other property. This phenomenon went on throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The fate of the Luo woman changed only with the coming of the white man and the subsequent imposition of alien rule over the area as will be explained in Chapter Ten.

Within the Luo society among the Jok'Onyango the male children inherited property from their mothers after they had married their wives. The daughters were often married in other clans and therefore they were considered members of those clans from which they inherited the property. There was no question of writing a will. This is a European concept where only registered male were allowed to inherit property. It was one of the most destabilising factors brought about by the colonial state in that many women who could have inherited land were deregistered and they lost their property since only registered males were allowed to inherit their father's property.

Within the Luo society as evidenced among Jok’Onyango, even a childless woman had a right to land use and to inherit property since everything was inherited according to what was attached to each house. Indeed, even burial was well defined.

On the other hand, the only property that was determined was what belonged to the man. In this case, the youngest son would be the one to inherit what belonged to the father especially when the eldest sons had
already moved out of their father’s homestead to establish their own. The Luo society protected the property of the woman and in terms of distribution, the mother became the focal point of reference for those in a home and those to come. Mothers were made to be keepers of wealth for those to be born; they were trustees or banks for the present and future offsprings. For instance when a newly married woman was given a cow with her calf, *twyo ni nyar ng’ane dhiang’ monyiedho*, this was a form of providing milk for her children. Therefore women acted as a depository of inheritance rights.
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Chapter Six discussed the contribution of Luo women towards subsistence production. It highlighted the fact that women in the precolonial Luo societies were economically independent and that they had a right to both land use as well as to inherit property. The point that children inherited property through their mothers was also emphasized.

Chapter Seven looks at the nature of the Luo political institutions in an attempt to explain factors that contributed to their formation. It attempts to link these contributory factors to political leadership, while at the same time, arguing that the same factors made it possible even for some women to rise to the position of political leadership. But while the nature of these political institutions, no doubt, showed that "male domination and ideology did exist", and thus the existence of patrilineal dominance, nevertheless, the flexibility of their gender systems seems to have "mitigated sexual dualism," (Ifi Amadiume, 1987: 136). Therefore, the system recognized matrilineal dominance in certain areas of its ideological structure.

The case of Mang'ana's leadership in Kadem is used to illustrate the point that women could, actually get involved in decision-making processes (SNHT Vol.II).
One of the most important contributing factors to the formation of political institutions and leadership among Jok’Onyango was the use of bilo or supernatural power. Those who possessed this power were known as Jobilo. Jobilo and Ajuoge, those who identified and prescribed solutions to problems, both possessed prophetic talents. The activities of the two provided the answer to the quest for divine protection in the form of defence, identity, belonging, bravery and assurance.

Bilo was a unifying factor when it was administered, while religion served as a source of assurance for man to bravely face the unknown or difficult tasks abounding in doubts.

Jobilo were needed for the unknown and unexpected outcome; while Ajuoga gave the diagnosis and prescribed the measures to be taken. In the case of war, the prescription of the Ajuoga was normally in the form of a reference to Jobilo who would have to provide the necessary protective measures (SNHT Vol. II).

Therefore Jobilo and Ajuoga or Jathieth worked together in order to ensure good leadership in a conflict with the enemy; in the provision of land; management of security and provision of facilities for the welfare of the people.

In this connection political leadership depended to a large extent on religion. The case study of Jok’Onyango confirms that religious dignitaries or those with prophetic talents were both men and women, for example, Mang’ana nyar Ugu, the wife of Ogiro, who was the chief of Jo-Kadem. Such leaders used bilo as a symbol of unity, identity, means of
protection, a source of security, all of which called for supernatural powers and beliefs and, therefore, to deity (SNHT Vol. II).

Bilo was used for protection of the homestead, the village, the clan and the community. This was the role of religion in the society. Let us try to look at the origin of bilo and its role in leadership.

Two factors which were most important aspects of leadership formation in South Nyanza were the concept of chiefdom - Ruothdom and the use of bilo. As has been pointed out, among the Central Luo, the word Jok means Deities or chiefdom among the Shilluk; Ajwao in Anuak; Jatiet in Jieng’ and Tiet in Naath. Now among the earliest Kenya Luo were the Joka-Jok which would mean the people belonging to the chiefdoms - Ruothdoms or deities.

Again, the word for Ajwaka, Ajuoga, Ajwao, Jatiet, among the Kenya Luo is Ajuoga or Jathieth. Ajuoga is someone who had divine powers to tell what is wrong with somebody and who can prescribe a possible cure; he is like a doctor and that is why a medical doctor is sometimes referred to as Ajuoga. Notice also the term Ja-tiet among the Jieng’ and Tiet in the Naath community. Ajuoga is sometimes referred to as Jathieth among the Kenya Luo and even a medical doctor is referred to as Jathieth; adhi neno jathieth, meaning I am going to see the one who can give treatment or adhi neno Ajuoga, I am going to see he who can treat. Now in all these cases, divine power is involved for it is the deity that assists ajuoga to offer solutions to problems.
Jabilo in Central Luo would be referred to as a prophet, but what is important here is that Jabilo was also referred to as Jathieth and he had prophetic talents which he used to solve problems which were being experienced by members of the community.

Therefore a combination of the idea of Jok - chiefdom, Ajwaka, Ajuoga, Ajwao, Ja-tiet, Tiet, which meant ajuoga or jathieth and jabilo, is very important in the development of the political institutions which the Joka-Jok, and for our purposes Jok’Onyango, established in South Nyanza, since most of their leaders were jobilo.

The whole idea of leadership through divine guidance emerges from here. And although Cohen, Ogot and Herring (1979: 24) maintain that “the historical development” of the role of bilo is not easy to tackle, “for it is not found in other Luo-speaking societies and the evidence from Nyanza is not adequate to trace its evolution there”, it would appear therefore, that the historical development of bilo, if not ajuoge may very well be traced from the origin of the Kenya Luo groups. There were moments when jobilo and ajuoge were consulted simultaneously and, while jabilo gave bilo to his clients and treated them with bilo for specific purposes, the ajuoga identified the problem and prescribed what had to be done in order to ward off whatever threatened the person or persons or the community. And sometimes jabilo and ajuoga were used interchangeably. But more important is the fact that both had divine powers and prophetic talents. In this case, one can understand why Jok’Onyango established chiefdoms with divine leaders, that is chiefs who, in most cases, were jobilo, since they needed bilo for protection of the welfare of the people in their respective communities.
Being *jabilo* or *ajuoga* was itself a gift from the almighty Himself and, therefore, it was not supposed to be misused and those who misused it, such as *jonawi* who often caused harm, suffering and even death, were in the end punished. Even in homes, the owner of the homestead would often have *binde ma oritorego*, *bilo* for self protection and for protecting the homestead. Perhaps it is from here that one may begin the quest for the historical development of *bilo* with the idea of Jok - chiefdom, deities and *ajuoga*, the diviner or *jathieth*. But whatever its historical origin, *bilo* played a major role in different areas of South Nyanza which were occupied by other Luo and non-Luo groups. (For more details on Jok - chiefdom, deities, *Ajwaka*, *Ajuogo*, *Ajwao*, *Ja-Tiet* and *Tiet*, see P’Bitek’s *Religion of the Central Luo*). It is quite clear that the concept of *bilo* is linked with Joka-Jok.

Traditions collected among the Jo-Kadem tend to emphasize leadership by the use of *bilo* just as much as was the case of Kanyamwa. One of the most outstanding *jobilo* in Kadem was a woman called Mang’ana Ogonje *nyar Ugu*, the wife of Ogiro, son of Mifuong’o. She is given in the tradition as having been the daughter of Ugu people, a Bantu-speaker living in Kamgechi, Tanzania (SNHT Vol. II, 136: 188). Tradition has it that Mang’ana’s father was *jabilo* and therefore, *ne oa e dala mane nitiere bilo*, that is, she came from a home which possessed *bilo*. She was married into the family of Mifuong’o, that is Kadem Kanyuor and here too some members of that family were possessed with *bilo*.

The same traditions assert that the first leader of Jo-Kadem was Owuonda, the elder, who begat Mifuong’o, who begat Ogiro who married Mang’ana. Ogiro lived on the south western side of the lake at Got
Kachola. He and Mang’ana had a son whom they named after Owuonda the elder. This son later became the chief of Kadem. Upon her marriage to Ogiro, Mang’ana and her father in-law, Mifuong’o became very good friends because she was very kind to the old man. She was ready to serve him and run errands for him. Mang’ana always made porridge for the old man and, when he had visitors, she always prepared food for them (SNHT Vol. II: 126). Being jobilo, Mifuong’o sometimes sent her to get for him some of the herbs that he needed to mix with his bilo when people came to consult him on various problems. Therefore, before he died, Mifuong’o is reported to have blessed Mang’ana and passed some of his bilo to her. But Mang’ana had come from a family of Jobilo, a factor which strengthened the bilo which she possessed.

According to the Kadem sources, a woman who was considered jabilo was to be treated with other binde so as to make her even stronger, that is, dhako ma jabilo ne isaro gi yath ma miye buru onang’. She was not supposed to leave the community in which she was married. She could not leave it to marry someone else from another place even if her husband died, because she was considered the custodian of her community’s rituals. She was in charge of all the Agulini mag bilo and all other containers of bilo and even the holy shrines where sacrifices were performed (SNHT Vol. II: 128). If she left her husband, and went to another community, tradition has it that she would either die or a terrible curse or some misfortune would befall her, since her move would be regarded as a betrayal of the gods who had given the gift of bilo and the prophetic powers, thus entrusting the welfare of the community and its members into her hands.
Tradition has it that the demand on the woman *jabilo* was much greater because she was also regarded as the provider and protector of life. Being *jabilo* and the fact that she was treated with other equally powerful medicines to strengthen her possession, that was taken to mean that she had actually taken an oath of allegiance to the community, her people and ancestors on whom she would have to call when the sacrifices were being made to the gods. The ancestors protected the community through *bilo*. This was the kind of responsibility which Mifuong'o placed on Mang’ana’s shoulders (SNHT Vol. II: 129). The *jabilo* therefore could not afford to misuse this gift. It has already been pointed out that when Nyamseke gave all her *bilo* to Ogalo, the Chief of Kanyamwa, her punishment was eternal poverty which went down to her descendants or affected her descendants.

After the death of Mifuong'o” Mang’ana became chief of Kadem, sometimes between three and four generations ago, that is, between A.D. 1872 and 1895. During her period of leadership, Kadem is reported to have enjoyed a considerable measure of stability. Recalling the prophecy of Mifuong’o that Kadem would be a land of many cattle, milk, potatoes, fish and pumpkins, Mang’ana encouraged her subject people to participate actively in animal husbandry as well as in fishing and agriculture. She tried to avoid conflict with her neighbours and, being of Bantu origin, she was able to strengthen the relationship between Jo-Kadem and the Bantu Ugu with whom the Kadem had fought previously. She also encouraged trade in fish and grains with the neighbouring people such as Jo-Kanyamkago, Jo-Sakwa, Jo-Kabwoch and Jo-Abakuria.
Abuso (1980: 148) states that the Abakuria participated in trade which was going on along the lake region, selling items such as large bird feathers, large game skins, elephant tusks, lion claws, leopard skins and claws. These they sold to the Luo as well as to other Bantu groups such as those in Suna. He further states that, “some of this trade in fact connected Lake Victoria and Maasailand in items such as lion skins and claws and red ochre for facial painting and military campaign” (p.148).

From the lake region, the Abakuria obtained millet, bananas, fish and salt. The Jo-Kadem were involved in the complicated commercial network of the lake region, obtaining trade items from both Nyandiwa and Sindo markets as well as from the Rieny market in Tanzania, (Ayot, 1983: 267-299). As a market centre, Sori was located between Kadem and Karungu. Kadem women traded with the people of the interior and Herring states that “the traditions of South Nyanza stress that women were often the main traders, since it was recognized that women from lineages were one’s potential wives and therefore not to be attacked” (p. 29). (Butterman, 1977: 8).

Mang’ana encouraged women to get involved in trade, especially when there were incidences of drought which in many cases forced individuals or groups of people to go to other areas outside their communities to look for assistance.

During the time of Mang’ana’s rule in Kadem, that is between A.D. 1872 and 1895, the Europeans had begun to show their interests in East Africa. By 1890, the British and the Germans had divided up East Africa among themselves.
During this period, the Germans had shown great interest in Kadem and Karungu, the southern border areas between Kenya and Tanzania. Traditions collected among the Jo-Kadem state that while Mifuong’o and Mang’ana were the most famous *jobilo*, there was yet another *jabilo* among Jo-Kadem Kakoth. This man was called Nyapala. Mifuong’o was from the Kanyuor clan.

Another tradition collected among the Jo-Kadem relates that after Mang’ana had been married to the family of Mifuong’o, she decided to go back to her home in Ugu country in Tanzania. When she reached there, she found that the Europeans had already arrived and she was told that some of them were marching towards the Kenya border in an attempt to cross over. These Europeans were the Germans. Mang’ana’s relatives took her to the place where the Europeans had established their settlement and while introducing her, they told the whiteman that she was a ruler of Kadem on the Kenya side of the border. By this time, it is maintained in the tradition that some of these Europeans had actually crossed the border into Kenya and then returned to Tanzania. It is said that these white people gave Mang’ana their flag, *Kitamba mar Bandera* so that she could go and keep it inside a pot, *mondo odhi okane e pier dak* (SNHT Vol. II: 148). She was told that should the Europeans arrive in her territory, she was to carry the flag so that they could recognize her.

Another source states that Mang’ana was given the flag by one of her sisters whose name is given as Nyabange. Nyabange was also a chief in one of the areas in Tanzania. She is reported to have told her sister that “when you see strange people appearing in your country, then you must show them this piece of cloth” (SNHT Vol II: 135). It is also reported that
when Mang’ana was visiting her home, she talked to the Germans who, having given her flag, told her that “when we come to your country you will carry this flag, then we will know where you are” (SNHT Vol. II: 137).

According to this source, when the Germans went to Kadem, Mang’ana carried the flag she had earlier been given by the Europeans and she took them to her home where she entertained them for five days. After this warm reception, they made Mang’ana the chief of Kadem (SNHT Vol II: 138).

This tradition seems to conflict with other sources, however. It seems to indicate that having received the Germans, Mang’ana then accepted the German hegemony over Kadem and that Kadem became German sphere of interest. There is some confusion here, for even though the Germans had wanted to establish themselves in Kadem and Karungu, it seems that it was the British who managed to do so after some clashes with the Germans at the border. The latter wanted to recruit people from Kadem and Karungu to go and work for them on the other side of the border. At this time, there was a lot of movement across the border, some from the Tanzania side and some from the Kenya side. This was, in actual fact, a form of resistance as some people were running away from the British, while others ran from the Germans.

Be that as it may, one of the first British agents to reach the Karungu-Kadem area was Boughton-Knight. He stayed briefly on Rusinga island before proceeding to Karungu. As they came in the Jo-Karungu led by Ougo decided to fight against these European intruders. The Karungu
put up a stiff resistance, but eventually they gave in after some of them had been killed in the battlefield. After they had been subdued, the whiteman moved on to Kadem Kobo in Kakoth. The British needed people to go and work for them, while at the same time they were also looking for a suitable area where they could build their administrative post. So they moved into Kadem, through Kakseru, (Ayot, 1983: 332).

Oboo to whom Nyapala had given instructions not to fight with these strangers told Jo-Kadem of Kakoth clan not to declare war on them. Instead, he asked the people to give the whiteman cattle, *wimbi* and to prepare some food for them. Jo-Kakoth, therefore, did not fight against the Europeans (SNHT Vol. II: 140).

However, when the Europeans proceeded to other areas, they met with opposition from Kanyuor (the clan of Mang’ana, the chief) Kokal and Kanyarwanda. The three groups decided to oppose the intruders, some of whom were killed in action as also were some of the Kadem.

Mang’ana kept close contact with her soldiers as the battle raged. She was informed that some of her people had been killed, among them her own son. Upon receiving this news, Mang’ana, dressed in her chiefly attire, marched right into the battlefield where she met with the Europeans. She is reported to have asked them why they had entered her territory with an intention of killing her subjects. “Why did you decide to kill my people without first coming to me as the chief of this country?” The Europeans told her that when they asked to see the chief, the people would not let them, subsequently a fight erupted between the two groups.
The body of Mang’ana’s son was transported to her home for burial. Soon after that, the Europeans held talks with Mang’ana at her residence for a period of five days. The British recognized Mang’ana as the chief of Kadem and she became the first colonial chief of the area. From this time, Mang’ana ruled Kadem for a period of ten years and she was succeeded by Otieno and her own son, Owuonda who ruled until 1918 (SNHT Vol. II: 151).

Mang’ana’s rule over Kadem ended in about 1903. The British had built their headquarters at Karungu in 1903. Boughton-Knight was by this time the Acting District Commissioner of South Nyanza, which included the present day Nyamira, Kisii District and Bukuria country. He died a year later and was succeeded by H. H. Horne in 1904 (KNA DC/K51/3/4 1930-1940) also Ayot (1983: 334-335).

Mang’ana was a remarkable chief whose reign is remembered by many of Jo-Kadem with much admiration. After the Kadem-Karungu wars with the British, the Europeans fought against the Kanyamkago at the battle of Gogo, where they butchered many of the Kanyamkago and burned others to death. After this, the other areas did not put up any resistance against the British who proceeded to appoint new chiefs for different areas in South Nyanza, among them Mang’ana nyar Ugu, the wife of Ogiro. The Luo societies recognized individual contribution not so much according to the contributor’s sex but according to one’s ability. An independent female ruler such as Mang’ana was respected just as much as her male counterparts in places such as Kanyamkago, Sakwa, Kabwoch, Kanyamwa, Kamagambo, Karachuonyo, Kagan and Kochia.
Williams and Finch (1986: 5) maintain that Ethiopian queens were independent rulers unlike those of Egypt who in most cases gained authority because they were "great wives of pharaohs". They state that "such independent female rulers are found throughout Africa in time and space". And there may be many others that one does not know anything about.

Strobel (1975: 49) writing on the Muslim women in Mombasa describes the nature of the Muslim society at the turn of the twentieth century. She maintains that this society was "highly patriarchal, a society where some people owned others and where men held power in governmental and religious institutions". She adds that the "ideology of patriarchy defined slaves and women as the patriarchs' inferiors." On the other hand, we read from Clarke, (1986: 1239) that in the African soil "the woman's 'place' was not only with her family; she often ruled nations with unquestionable authority". And Van Allen (1976: 62) states that "what has not been seen by westeners is that some African women - Igbo women are a striking example, actual or potential autonomy, economic independence, and political power did not grow out of western influence but existed already in traditional tribal life". Thus, among the Jok'Onyango as was the case also with other Luo societies in South Nyanza, women's political participation went side by side with that of their male counterparts.

Another area that has been totally neglected is the role women played in war time in pre-colonial Luo societies in South Nyanza. As the Luo groups established settlements in different parts of South Nyanza, they fought with the Bantu peoples who had preceded them. They also fought against the Maasai as well as other Luo groups. Jo-Kadem fought
many such wars. During the war, Mang’ana’s bilo proved effective as she treated her soldiers with bilo. Women provided foodstuffs and also nursed the wounded and collected the dead bodies, during the war. Traditions collected among the Jok’Onyango indicate that before war was declared on another group, the chief and the elders often held consultations to decide how to go about it. It was at such meetings that they unanimously agreed to consult jabilo for advice. According to these traditions if there was a serious matter to be discussed, women would brew traditional beer called Kong’o mar aput mar dala. The elder women whose children had married would be allowed to sit with the men while the discussion was going on. The men did most of the talking, but the women could and were free to contribute to the discussion. If the discussion was held during the beer party, some women would be chosen to be present, nyang’ane ang’ nobedi e tago, nya ng’ane ang’ nobedi e tago. Every now and then such women would be asked for their opinion. Such categories of women were regarded as those whose wisdom would not allow them to betray the decisions of the elders (SNHT Vol. II: 173-174).

In matters affecting the community, the women could influence certain decisions of the elders. If their opinions were sought and they felt it would be premature to carry out certain decisions, then the elders would have to set another date to revisit the issue. For example, women could be consulted about an impending war between two groups. If they felt that it was not the right time for action, then the fight would not take place. On the other hand, if the elders went ahead and fought the result could be disastrous. Women advisors were mature and could be trusted to keep the secrets of the community. Such women had a lot of responsibility for the community - Gin ema ne ipimo kodgi weche piny and they were respected
for the role they played (SNHT Vol. II: 174). There were moments when women restrained the elders from carrying out a plan to avenge the killing of a kinsman, the elders would say Dhako osekwerowa, ok wanyal nego dhano (SNHT Vol II: 174-175). In this case, other ways of resolving the matter would have to be sought, such as, for example, marrying a wife from the clan of the man who killed their kinsman. This way it was taken that the woman thus married would bear children who would replace the dead man (SNHT Vol. II: 175).

Taken together, the concept of chiefdom and the use of biro had far reaching consequences for the Luo and the non-Luo communities such as the Abasuba with regard to the formation of their political institutions. The communities that emerged in South Nyanza were flexible and democratic in their outlook. In these communities individual talents, wisdom and a base for political leadership; it was a society where women's ability to perform political, economic and social duties was recognized and even sanctioned.

Here one would agree with Herring (Joluo Before 1900: 46) when he states that "There were both hereditary and non-hereditary leadership positions in most (if not all the Joluo Pinje) and, in time of need, all could mobilize their best men to lead their communities". But while Herring is only concerned with mobilization of "best men", it has been demonstrated here that in time of need, all could mobilize both their best women and men to lead their communities. What has not been determined previously is the extent of this mobilization. Since it had a profound impact on the Luo communities in South Nyanza, we must look at this in detail with regard to women's experience of and participation in warfare.
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CHAPTER EIGHT

WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS: THEIR ROLE IN MILITARY WARFARE

The previous chapter dealt with the nature of the Luo political institutions and linked certain factors such as the use of *bilo* to political leadership. It was pointed out that while the patrilineal dominance in the political system, characterized by the Council of Elders was recognized, the gender flexibility among the Luo made it possible for women to rise to positions of leadership and decision-making processes. This chapter takes on an issue of women's experience of and participation in warfare.

In her description of the nineteenth century American gender roles, Regina Morantz (1974:34) presents the image of the western world towards its women. She explains;

women's image was riddled with contradictions; guardians of race, but wholly subjected to male authority. Preserver of civilization, religion and culture, yet considered the intellectual inferior of men; the primary socializer of her children, but given no more real responsibility and dignity than a child herself.

It has already been pointed out in Chapter Five that the societal belief system among the Luo strengthened the position of women and recognized their important contribution in their various communities. It is, however, true as has been pointed out by Sharon McDonald (1987: 1) that “much of written history is the record of warfare - of conquest and revolution, of battles fought and treaties signed; of military and political tactics, of great leaders and of heroes and enemies”. But it is noted with great concern that “in this history, women rarely feature. All we have are a few exceptional
historical figures - mythological women leaders or warriors like Joan of Arc and Elizabeth I or like the Amazons and Boadicea...” (p.1). The Amazons are depicted in the ancient Greek mythology as female warriors who are believed to have lived “in an all-female state, somewhere, on the border of the known world” Kirk (1987: 28). On the other hand, Boadicea is remembered in British history as the queen “who led people to battle against the Roman invaders” Sharon McDonald (1987: 40).

However, it is our contention here that the fact that women “rarely figure in this history” does not mean that women have not played major roles in wartime. On the contrary, what it means is that men have always written about themselves and it is up to women to write about women-folks, highlighting their roles and contribution in their various societies.

Researches conducted among Jok’Onyango suggest that there were certain women who physically participated in warfare. Odete Ny’Olonde and Ayoo Owigo are reported to have led the female regiments into the battlefield and fought along side with men. Such women were referred to as Nyiri mathuondi or mon mathuondi or simply as Thuond mon. On the other hand, men who led the warriors were referred to as Thuondi. Ayoo Owigo nyar Kamser, Karachuonyo had her own female regiment that she led. She was the mother of Ongong’a Athera and her husband came from Waondo. Odete Ny’Olonde and Ayoo Owigo, the two famous Thuond mon led women regiments and carried spears and shields which were referred to as okumba Kiliti. They wore skins and feathers on their heads - kondé, their bodies were decorated with red ochre (SNHT Vol. II: 192-193).
Odete Ny’Olende was born in Kamsar in Karachuonyo. She is reported to have been very tall and energetic. She was born near Lake Victoria, and as a young girl, she developed an interest in fishing. She had her own fishing net called *osadhi*, which she used for the purpose. It is said that when the men went fishing, Odete would also go to the lake and fish, using her own *osadhi* and return home with her catch along with the others (SNHT Vol. II: 77). Most of the time, she was interested in undertaking tasks which were performed by men. Nobody dared to stop her, for she was also blessed with a great deal of strength.

In the pre-colonial period, the people of Karachuonyo fought with the early Bantu speakers such as the Waswa and Kakseru whom they eventually drove out of Karachuonyo. Jo-Karachuonyo also fought against Jo-Kochia and Jo-Kagan. When there was war between Jo-Karachuonyo and their neighbours, Ny’Olonde and Ayoo Owigo would dress up in full uniform and join the men in the battlefield. Sometimes the men could not distinguish the women from themselves.

Odete participated in the battles as a soldier, but as soon as the battle ended she would lead the women to the battlefield to collect the bodies of the warriors who had been killed in action. After the battles, the men usually ran for safety and they could not carry their own dead because they would be slaughtered by the enemy in the process. Thus, it was only women who could collect the bodies of the dead because they were never killed by the enemy. If the enemy killed a woman, he would forever be haunted and even his family would perish.
This is why even when women were fighting along with the men, the enemy always tried to avoid killing them for fear of being haunted by the victim (SNHT Vol. II: 193). On the other hand, if the soldiers were pursuing an enemy and the enemy ran into the house of a woman and was offered protection, he could not be killed. If he was killed, that too would bring a bad omen to the killers (SNHT Vol. II: 193). But when the battle raged, women too could be killed in action, but those who killed them, had to go through a cleansing ceremony.

Odete Ny’Olonde fought in many such wars while she was a young girl. Later, she got married to a man who is given in the tradition as Ouuko Ja-Nyakach, a very gentle, quiet man as opposed to the strong willed, tall and energetic woman who was his wife. Ouuko simply referred to her as nyar Kakoth or Nyar Jomatek, meaning the daughter of strong people. He loved her very dearly and respected her in every way. Odete and Ouuko lived in Kamser, among Odete’s people. Tradition has it that every now and then Odete would brew traditional beer and invite her brothers, since she lived among them. She would then tell them, “Beduru piny mondo wuon Jalang’o omiu kong’o umadhi”, that is, “come, sit and let my husband give you the beer to drink” (SNHT Vol. II: 78).

After her marriage, Odete continued to go to the battlefield with Jo-Karachuonyo leading as it were, her women regiment. She fought in wars between Jo-Karachuonyo and Jo-Kochia as well as those between Jo-Karachuonyo and Jo-Kagan. She also helped Jo-Karachuonyo to fight against the remnant Bantu splinter groups that had settled in Karachuonyo long before the Luo arrived there. According to Karachuonyo sources, one time when the warriors of Karachuonyo were returning home from a
fight with Jo-Kagan, Odete who had gone along, met a man from Kagan. She seized the man somewhere near Kanyaluo area and gave him a thorough beating. She left the man for half dead. In the subsequent years, the field in which Odete beat this man became known as paw dhako, meaning the field of the woman and to this day this field is still called paw dhako. The man Odete beat up is given in the tradition as Opala Ja-Kagan (SNHT Vol. II: 82).

Tradition has it that before she was married and even after her marriage, Odete Ny'Olonde used to sit with the men, especially when they were preparing for war and she would help them work out their strategies. Some of the outstanding warriors of Karachuonyo during the time of Odete were Opana Jowi, Ja-Kamser wuo nya-Agoro, Tindi Remo wuo nya-Agoro, Owenga Ja-Kabondo who killed more enemies than any other person in the battlefield, and Adel Karabidhi (SNHT Vol. II: 82-83).

During the pre-colonial period when Jo-Karachuonyo were fighting with other groups, some of Jo-Kabondo would go to help them. Likewise when Jo-Kabondo were engaged in warfare with the Abagusii, some of the Karachuonyo warriors would assist them. At such a time, Odete would not remain behind. Tradition states that during the First World War, colonial agents sent people to the villages to get foodstuff for the soldiers and sometimes they even raided the homes for what the needed. According to this tradition, Odete Ny'Olonde defended her home so that her cattle was not raided. She was not only feared but also respected and nobody could touch her property without her consent (SNHT Vol. II: 79-80).
After the First World War, Odete and Ouko decided to move from Kamser, the home of Odete, to Nyakach, because Ouko was from Nyakach. She is reported to have said, "Karachuonyo *tinde ajok adok dalawa. Asekedo ni pinyu ahinya. Adhi kedo ni yuocha*", meaning "my people of Karachuonyo, I feel it is time for me to move to my home with my husband. I have done my part in fighting for this land. I must go and fight for my in-laws and my land." (SNHT Vol. II: 79).

By the time Ouko and Odete moved to Nyakach Agoro, the Luo and the Kipsigis were still engaged in fighting over areas of settlement. The wars between the Luo of Nyakach and the Kipsigis dragged on. The Kipsigis would make surprise attacks on the Luo during the night since they knew that during the day the Luo would consolidate their forces and kill many of them. During such attacks, Odete Ny'Olonde would dress herself in her warrior uniform and join in the fight against the Kipsigis. She is reported to have fought until she was well advanced in age (SHNT Vol. II: 82).

Odete had nine children, five sons and four daughters. The sons were Odhiambo, Olwal, Ojoro, Omer and Opande. The daughters were Oloo, Lare, Nyamanga and Agumbi. All of the sons moved with their father and Odete to Nyakach except Omer who stayed behind and lived in Karachuonyo until the time of his death. Joel Omer was the father of the former member of parliament for Karachuonyo, Mrs Phoebe Asiyo. Another son of Ouko and Odete was Opande the father of Brigadier Daniel Opande. On Odete's side, some of the family members are Ben Obura and Dr. Mika Omieri Mitoko; these are the grandchildren of Odete's brother (SNHT Vol. II: 82). Odete Ny'Olonde was, indeed, one of the most re-
markable women warriors among the Jok’Onyango and she is remembered as *thuon mon* not only in Karachuonyo but also in Nyakach, the home of her husband Ouko.

Another war in which the women participated just before the turn of the twentieth century was one of the last wars between Jo-Karachuonyo and Jo-Kagan. There were two famous warriors among the Jo-Karachuonyo. These were Tindi Remo from Kogweno *modak* Simbi, that is who live at Simbi, and Tindi *nyang’ oluwo remo ma Ja-Wang’chieng’*, that is Tindi crocodile follows blood from Wang’Chieng’. Tindi Remo was also referred to as Tindi Abaga. He was greatly feared by the enemy because of his war tactics. He was a great strategist. One time, Tindi passed through Kanyalu, Wikondiek and went beyond Aoch Kagan right into Kagan, whereupon he went from one home to another destroying the newly harvested *wimbi* which was left in the sun to dry. Most of the men of Kagan had gathered in the home of one of their kinsmen for a celebration. As they waited for their meat called *Agoko* to get ready so that they could eat it, one of the women went to the place where the men were assembled. As soon as she got there, she emptied all the ashes onto the food which the men were eating plus the *Agoko* which was still cooking in the pot. She shouted in agitation and told them what Tindi had done (SNHT Vol. II: 185). Jo-Kagan were provoked beyond limit. By this time Tindi had returned to Karachuonyo. Upon hearing the details of the damage done by Tindi Remo, Jo-Kagan began to plan how to avenge themselves. Things worked out the way Jo-Kagan had wanted. This story explains that it was the act of this one woman that provoked the Kagan to avenge themselves on Jo-Karachuonyo.
At this time there was a man in Karachuonyo called Ochieng’ Owago, the grandfather of Paulo Mboya. Ochieng’ died suddenly and Jo-Kagan heard of his death as the news spread throughout Kagan. In those days when a prominent man of Ochieng’s status died, an elaborate ceremony called tero buru had to take place. During this ceremony the people dressed in leaves, some carrying shields and spears and they drove their cattle right into the enemy territory. This was part of an act of chasing death into foreign territory (SNHT Vol. II: 185-186).

It happened that the nearest neighbours of Jo-Karachuonyo were Jo-Kagan. Naturally, Jo-Karachuonyo would have to Tero buch Ochieng’ across their border into Kagan. The idea suited Jo-Kagan who had by this time prepared for a full offensive. Jo-Kagan moved swiftly, crossed over the territory at Wikondiek in Kanyalu and went right into Karachuonyo country.

As soon as they reached there, they hid themselves in the most strategic places taking different positions in places where they knew they could use very easily to ambush Jo-Karachuonyo (SNHT Vol. II: 186-187). The plan worked out well for Jo-Kagan for they knew that they had made a surprise entry into the area as none of the men would be there to stop them.

Jo-Karachuonyo, seeing that Jo-Kagan were nowhere, drove their cattle, singing war songs and chasing death deep into Kagan country. Jo-Kagan who had hidden in the wood and others who had climbed the trees to watch the movement of Jo-Karachuonyo, emerged from the rear and encircled them. Jo-Karachuonyo were caught unawares. Jo-Kagan, some
of whom had been stationed around Wikondiek in Kanyaluo, attacked Jo-
Karachuonyo and slaughtered them in hundreds. It was at this battle that
Joka-Okal Nyoyora, four sons among them Omolo Nyamoro and Owang'
perished, yawuot Okal Nyoyora ne otho yauwoyi ang'wen, only Odondi

Among the first thuondi to be killed was Ndiege, a friend of Tindi
whom he regarded as his own brother. Seeing his friend lying dead, Tindi
fought with all his strength. Unfortunately, one of the Kagan warriors
sported Tindi, speared him and killed him instantly, ne ochuowe ngoga
teu. With the death of Tindi Remo, Tindi Odiero Ja-Kogweno, Tindi
Abaga, the war came to an end. The remaining people fled to Karah-
chuonyo, chased by Jo-Kagan and leaving behind their dead (SNHT Vol.
II: 188).

It is not clear whether Odete Ny'Olonde and Ayoo Owigo partici-
pated in this war. However, when the the men returned, having left their
dead.in Kagan country, the women were mobilized, some of whom wore
their war costumes and marched into Kagan to bring back the bodies of
those who had been killed in action. Among those killed was Tindi who,
though unmarried was regarded as a hero who had died for his country.
Among the women who led the others to Kagan was Akano Nyokoth chi
Omolo, Ja-Kanyipir, who true to type, is reported to have played a vital
role in the war which took place before the whiteman set foot in Karah-
chuonyo.

Researches conducted in South Nyanza seem to confirm that women
participated actively in war and that female regiments did exist. We learn
from Kanyamkago tradition that;
On one occasion during the 1880s, most of the Kanyamkago men were away on a raid against the Maasai. The neighbouring Kadem thought to take advantage of this and advanced from the plains to the Kanyamkago hills. The women, who were left behind donned their husband’s official war regalia, the ostrich head-dress, .... The women then manned the ridge of the first hill, putting some of the stick figures between them to give them mass. From a distance, it looked like an impressive army, and in the event, Kadem retreated! (Buttermann 1978: 9).

Another tradition explains that when the Kadem were fighting with the Muhuru people it was the women regiment that attacked first. The Muhuru men would not take the war seriously and would retreat. Soon after that the Kadem would come in in full force defeating the Muhuru people as they were caught unaware (Personal communication with Ex-Senior chief Warioba of Muhuru).

Studies of black women in antiquity reveal that a lot of African women were involved in the political life of their societies in their capacity as leaders and soldiers defending their individual communities.

We meet Dido in the Aeneid as the ruler of Carthage but, like Cleopatra, she is portrayed in this epic as having committed suicide over her love for Aneas who was commanded by the gods to move on in order to found the city of Rome. In the book the point of emphasis is her love for Aneas but not her great qualities as state woman who ruled over Carthage. She is only looked at as a sex object.

As the Queen of Egypt, Cleopatra is also said to have fallen in love with Mark Anthony who, because of his love for her, was considered a traitor when he tried to liberate Egypt from Roman domination. After his death, Cleopatra committed suicide. But we read from Clarke (1986, 128)
that "contrary to popular belief, Cleopatra did not commit suicide over the loss of Mark Anthony. Her great love was Egypt. She was a shrewd politician and an Egyptian nationalist. She committed suicide when she lost control of Egypt." After the death of Cleopatra, Egypt was declared a colony of the Romans. In this literature about Cleopatra and Mark Anthony, her ability to love becomes central not her qualities as the leader of Egypt.

In his introductory remarks, Van Sertima (1986: 5) explains that "most of our writers have concentrated on the Queens and goddesses of Egypt and Ethiopia." This has been so, not only because of the fact that the documents in the Nile Valley are voluminous compared to the sketchier record in other parts of Africa, but because the imagination of the world, not just that of Africa, was haunted by these black women.

They feature just as prominently in European mythology as in African reality. Andromeda, the daughter of the Ethiopian King, Cepheus, is taken to wife by the legendary Greek hero, Perseus; Circle, the magician and enchantress of Homer's *Odyssey*, is painted on Grecian vases as a black woman; her niece, Medea, the daughter of the Colchian King, Acetes, uses her power to help young Jason in his quest for the golden fleece. Once again, these women are depicted only in terms of their "love" rather than their contribution in political, economic and cultural development.

Real or myth, there is enough evidence to show that there was a period of history when women of Africa (not just the queens of Ethiopia and Egypt) were independent leaders in matters affecting their land, which
according to Van Sertima “raises the question as to what extent the early African matriarchal patterns underwent changes as Africans moved down northwards into Egypt” (p.5).

History has shown that when the Arabs were spreading Islam to different parts of the world, they met with resistance in certain areas, although a number of people also embraced the new religion.

In Mauritania, we read of General Kuselia who resolutely resisted these Muslim Arabs. In A.D. 688, the Arabs once again attacked the forces of Kuselia and he was killed in action. Upon his death, Queen Dahia-al Kahina led Mauritanian opposition and she managed to send the Arabs fleeing northwards into Tripolitania. When in A.D. 698 the Arab General Hassan-ben-Numan captured the City of Carthage, Queen Kahina mobilized her troops and forced him to retreat. He was eventually driven out of the city of Carthage.

Queen Kahina continued to wage war against her enemies until she was defeated and killed in action by General Hassan in A.D. 705. Despite her death, her contribution as the queen of Mauritania and her struggle to save her country from foreign invaders made a mark in the history of her country.

Again one is reminded of the stories about Nzingha of Angola and Yaa Asantewa of the Asante, two women who staged wars of resistance against the Portuguese and the British respectively.
By A.D. 1623 Nzingha was the ruler of Ndongo now Angola. She was forty-one years old, but so powerful and commanding that she instructed her subjects to call her *Kind* instead of *Queen* and marched into the battlefield dressed like a man. She fought courageously against the Portuguese intruders and even though her own sister was killed and beheaded by the enemy, she never gave up until she was subdued. Clarke quoting Professor Glasgow explains that “Nzingha failed in her mission to expel the Portuguese (but) her historic importance transcends this failure, as she awakened and encouraged the first known stirring of nationalism in West Central Africa” (p.10).

Yaa Asantewa was the Queen’s mother of the Ejisu of Ghana. In 1896, the British decided to send King Prempeh of Ghana into a forced exile. They went further and demanded that the Asante Golden Stool be handed over to them. Seeing that the men were reluctant to fight against the British, Yaa Asantewa is reported to have sneered that “if you men of Ashanti will not go forward, then we will. We women will... we will fight the whiteman” (p.10). Nevertheless, she was eventually captured during the war with the British and subsequently deported. But the spirit of resistance which she helped to rekindle lingered on in the memory of her people.

Thus, African women participated effectively in the political life of their communities. We know that in Shaka’s army, there was a female regiment and that in Dahomey there was the Amazon, another female regiment. In the early period of the history of Pawir, one of the rulers was a black woman called Nyawir. But the most important point to be emphasized here is that the nature of African society made it possible for African
women to use their talents to enhance the political, economic and social advancement of their societies. Mang’ana *nyar* Ugu and Odete Ny'Olonde are remembered in the history of Jok’Onyango as pioneer women leaders whose qualities were unsurpassed by any of the men of their time; and who knows but that there are still many more such women who have not yet been discovered, and “when the herculean task of rediscovery is undertaken perhaps we will begin to understand the magnificence” of such women.

Williams and Finch conclude their essay on the “Great Queens of Ethiopia” with the observation that “African history is a mansion with many unopened rooms and never will we understand it properly until this most vital aspect of it— the role of African women in political, economic and social history is fully studied and comprehended”.

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The colonial state operated in an atmosphere of uncertainty and instability, living at the same time caught up in the contradictions of supervising capital accumulation and providing ideological legitimacy. Nüge (1987, 83).

In an attempt to accomplish the above, the colonial state had to devise a system that demanded that at other times it became necessary to destroy some of the principalist local political, economic and even social...
CHAPTER NINE

IMPOSITION OF COLONIAL RULE: ITS IMPACT ON WOMEN

This Chapter discusses the imposition of colonial rule and its impact on the people of South Nyanza. In particular, issues affecting the women are highlighted.

The articulation of the colonial state with the pre-capitalist political and economic structures brought about changes that affected both the indigenous peoples as well as the colonialists themselves.

The major objective of the colonial state was domination and exploitation of the indigenous people and their resources. Therefore the moment that the colonial state asserted its dominant position, it operated on two levels. First, it operated "as the ultimate institutional apparatus ensuring the reproduction and accumulation of capital". Second, it operated as "agency for maintaining the patterns of class domination and subordination" Ndege (1987, 83).

The colonial state operated in an atmosphere "of uncertainty and instability, being at the same time caught up in the contradictory roles of supervising capital accumulation and providing ideological legacy", Ndege (1987: 83).

In its attempt to accomplish the above, the colonial state had to devise a system that demanded that at other times it became necessary to destroy some of the precapitalist local political, economic and even social
structures. For example, the creation of colonial chiefs, introduction of taxation system and individualization of land tenure were meant to bring about changes within the society.

The institution of individualized land tenure systems for instance, reinforced the idea of males as eligible successors to land. This was passed down from father to son. It deviated remarkably from the traditional land tenure system.

Previously the sons inherited land that was passed down from mother to son within the realm of the *wuon ot*, the owner of the house concept. The change was significant in that it affected many women especially widows who lost their land through the ideology of inheritance from father to son. Such women’s rights to land use were no longer protected by the colonial state.

We read from Barbara Rogers (1980: 139) that “the colonial authorities;" found it appropriate to equate the power held by certain traditional male leaders to allocate land with western concept of ownership, assuming that men owned all the land...” In such cases the women lost the guarantees of traditional systems.

Within the colonial state the world was divided into two: namely the periphery and the centre; therefore unequal world with greater concentration on men in the process of development. This left the women out of the process of development but ensured their positions as producers and reproducers of labour that was needed by the colonial state.
The introduction of monetarization and taxation system further reduced the position of women to "mere property" whose husbands were taxed for having built houses for them through the hut tax. We read from Barbara Rogers (1980: 18) that in the western world, "women are classified as 'dependents' of their husbands, particularly for financial purposes - as seen for example in tax laws - and are treated in some ways like their children".

Such measures and attitudes reduced the matrilineal authority that the society had bestowed upon women. Women's economic independence became eroded through the process of capitalist domination and exploitation.

Judith Mbula Bahemuka (1990: 6) explains;

Opinions differ as to what has created the situation and the key structures that have shaped the unequal outcome. In Kenya studies by Leonard (1973); Young (1988); Pala (1975); Lela (1969); Moock (1974); Mbiti (1978) put the following:
- colonial powers and new political forms where women were notably absent.
- Structuring of the economy centred on the male to create a basic social and economic unit.

She continues to explain that economic and other necessary inputs weretargeted largely to men in conformity with Western stereotypes, women's needs as producers being ignored, thereby exacerbating their dependence on men.

With this type of an attitude the colonial state reinforced the idea that women belong in the family, while men belong at 'work'; therefore
men work, while women do not work and therefore housework is not a form of work, (Ann Oakley, 1985: 25). The colonial chiefs were expected to providing labour by calling upon men to leave their families to work for the state.


The nineteenth century in Euro-American culture was one of the historical periods in which women have been most oppressed. Institutionally they were deprived of most individual freedoms, rights and responsibilities and ideologically they were little more than chattels, slaves or decorative ornaments (depending on their class).

Against such background then one must view the imposition of colonial rule in South Nyanza.

The European traders, explorers and missionaries had taken keen interest in East Africa long before the Berlin Conference decided on the balkanization of the African continent. The signing of the Anglo-German Agreement in 1890 did not only partition East Africa between the two powers but also confirmed the extent to which they had entrenched themselves in the affairs of the East African communities.

Herring (Joluo Before 1900: 67) states that, as was the case with the other East African societies, “the last decades of nineteenth century were troubled years for Joluo”. After the British had “established an ‘effective’ administration during the two decades or so after 1895,... the ‘heroic age’ of the Luo history came to an end” (See also Lonsdale 1977).
In the period between 1894 and 1914 the British declared a Protectorate over Uganda. Again, the area between the Kenya Coast and the Kingdom of Buganda was placed under the control of the Acting Commissioner in Uganda. Previously this area had been under the control of the imperial British East Africa Company.

When the British declared a Protectorate over Buganda in 1894, it included Kisumu and Naivasha Districts. In 1990, Naivasha was transferred to the Eastern Province of Uganda, while in 1903, the then South Kavirondo District, comprising the present-day South Nyanza and Kisii Districts (except Karachuonyo, Kabondo and Kasipul Districts), were brought in to form part of Eastern Province, (Ochieng’, 1974: 221). Earlier on, H.M. Stanley had visited South Nyanza in 1877 and called the area Ugaya, a name that he adopted from the Abakuria.

Soon after Stanley’s visit, Colonel George set out to explore South Nyanza, but his efforts were thwarted by the hostile attitude of the Luo with whom he came into contact. In 1903, Boughton-Knight, having visited Rusinga Island, proceeded to Karungu Bay from where the British decided to administer the entire South Nyanza District (KSI/3/21907 - 1924). He and his group did not receive a rousing welcome from the Luo speakers who had inhabited Karungu. As they approached Karungu, they found that Ougo had mobilized the Onyango people in readiness for the confrontation. The fight that followed claimed many lives from both sides (SNHT Vol. I: 187).

According to Lonsdale (1964: 132) the first administrative post in South Nyanza was opened in Karungu in 1903, “but not before a high-
handed headman at East African syndicate’s mining camp had been murdered while out buying sheep.” What Lonsdale does not mention is the confrontation between Jo-Karungu and the British; Jo-Karungu being the first Luo groups to take up arms against the British invasion of South Nyanza. Jo-Karungu and Jo-Kadem had felt the presence of Europeans when the Germans encroachment in Tanzania was in progress.

By the time the Anglo-German Agreement was signed, the two areas, Kadem and Karungu, which border Tanzania on the southern end of Kenya, had had occasional skirmishes with the Germans as they tried to penetrate into their land (SNHT Vol. II: 170). The Germans wanted to recruit labour from two localities.

On the other occasions, the skirmishes occurred when the Germans were pursuing some Tanzanian nationalists who were running away from their harsh treatment. The movement of people across the Tanzanian, Ugandan and Kenyan borders was one of the ways in which the people expressed their opposition to the Germans or the British.

When these East African peoples could not prevail against oppression with arms, they chose to flee to the other side of the border, (T.O. Ayot, 1983: 365). In such a situation, some women lost their husbands who were killed in the process, or they themselves were killed.

After they had subdued Jo-Karungu, the British faced the next Jok’Onyango group, i.e. Jo-Kadem. Before the whiteman set foot on the soil of Kadem, there had been some prophecies which we referred to in
Chapter Eight (SNHT Vol. II: 190). As a result Jo-Kadem Kakoth did not take arms against the Europeans and gave them cattle and food instead.

So none of Jo-Kakoth was killed as the Europeans passed Kakoth clan. Tradition emphasizes that it was this prophecy of Nyapala that restrained Jo-Kakoth from fighting.

However, it is also possible that the chiefs of Kadem who had come from the line of Owuonda, Mifuong’o and down to Mang’ana, his daughter in-law, caused discontent among the Jo-Kakoth who may have viewed collaboration with the Europeans as a possible means of being rewarded with chieftainship for having been “good boys”. Owuonda, Mifuong’o and Mang’ana were all from the Kanyuor clan with Got Kachola as the holy shrine for all Jo-Kadem.

Therefore Jo-Kakoth may have been vying for leadership, especially since Nyapala, the most famous Jabilo from Kakoth had passed on his staff for leadership to Oboo with specific instructions (SNHT Vol. II: 136).

Be that as it may, the other Kadem clans, that is Kanyuor, Kokal and Kanyarwanda did not pay heed to Nyapala’s warning. Instead, they combined their forces together and decided to challenge the European intruders. The three clans fought well but eventually gave up when a number of their people had been killed during the fight, among them being the son of their chief, Mang’ana.
After Jo-Kadem-British encounter, the next group that challenged the British were Jo-Kanyamkago who believed that they were stronger than Jo-Kadem. They could not understand why Jo-Kadem (whom they compared to women) should just give up the fight with the British just because a few people had died for the defence of their land. Thus, the Jo-Kanyamkago were determined to stop these strangers from entering their land. After a great deal of resistance, they were finally overwhelmed: many were killed and others burned. It was the bloodiest combat on the soil of South Nyanza - the battle of Gogo Fall (SNHT Vol. I: 124-156; KNA DC/KSI/3/3 1903-1911; KNA/KSI/3/4 1930-1940). With the defeat of Jo-Kanyamkago, no other groups in South Nyanza took arms against the British, except Jo-Kauma in Karachuonyo and the Abagusii, a Bantu-speaking people.

Having subdued the Luo people, the British administered South Nyanza from Karungu which had now become their base of operation. They kept watchful eyes from here, on the Germans across the border, to prevent them from raiding the Jo-Kadem and Jo-Karungu. Such activities had created an atmosphere of insecurity in the area. They also disrupted the trade between Jo-Karungu and Jo-Kadem with the hinterland and Tanzania. The people who had suffered most were the women who were involved in the trade between Sori market and Rieny Kowuoyo in Tanzania; between Sori market and Sindo; and between Nyandiwa market and Mirunda respectively (KNA DC/KSI/3/4 1930 - 1940, KNA DC/KSI/3/3 1903 -1911). These women found it difficult to cross the border in to Tanzania or to move into the hinterland for purposes of trade.
For a long time, the Germans had tried to declare Kadem and Karungu their sphere of influence and every now and then they sent punitive expeditions into the area. We learn from the South Nyanza District Commissioner that “it was not possible to mention a clan within a day’s march of the Anglo-German border which was not punished forcibly by the Government of Germany East Africa” (KNA DC/KSI/3/4/1930-1940). What he did not report was the kind of treatment that the Jo-Kadem and Jo-Karungu received, for the British were as brutal as the Germans in their handling of the Kadem people. During these punitive expeditions villages were attached and houses burned down. This caused untold suffering for both men and women as well as children.

The British used Karungu as their administrative centre until 1907 when the headquarters were transferred to Kisii “Boma” so that they could keep a close watch over the activities of the Abagusii and also to control the District more effectively.

By 1908, Karachuonyo, Kasipul and Kabondo which had been part of Kisumu District were transferred to South Nyanza District. From 1908, therefore, the British had firmly established colonial rule over the whole of South Nyanza. They began to introduce new changes which had far-reaching consequences on the people, the women included.

The British introduced a taxation system and “established institutional infrastructure in the form of chiefs and headmen who guaranteed the orderly transfer of tribute, whether in labour, agricultural commodities or money, and the creation of material infrastructure, such as roads, piers and bridges, through which colonial market could penetrate
the indigenous economies” (Butterman, 1978: 12). “The institution of taxation” did not only lead to a “devaluation of women’s work”, but also altered the women’s role in economic activities. The Native Hut Tax Ordinance of 1900 stated that a tax was to be imposed on a man for each house in his homestead. This meant that the man was being taxed for every wife he married; it implies, therefore, that the British viewed women as the property of the man and, consequently, as a source of his wealth since in every homestead the women controlled the household economy.

On the other hand, in Britain itself it was the man who was taxed for whatever the property owned even if that property belonged to his wife. Thus, it was, in actual fact, the British who viewed their women as the man’s property by taxing the man even if the wife was the source of livelihood. With this system the English and their “western fashion...” forced the English woman to believe that “she is inferior to the man” and indeed, “aided” the man himself to think and believe that he is superior to his woman. The English, thus, succeeded in making “property and chattles out of their women” explains Narokobi (1980: 43). This was the system that they introduced in their colonies with the institution of taxation. The argument put forward by Butterman (1987: 12) that the social formation among the Luo led to the exploitation of women “in the patrilineal order” is negated by the very political, social and economic system among these Nilotic speakers as has been explained in the previous chapters.
Butterman states further that:

The colonial state devalued the work women performed in maintaining the social system by altering the relationship of segmentary patrilineage to the framework of the larger colonial society. Simultaneously, however, women's agricultural work became for the colonial state, as it had been for the patrilineage, the *basis of colonial accumulation*.. (Emphasis mine). Since the patrilineal social formation with its mixed economy was the context in which agricultural commodities were produced, the colonial state consciously upheld 'traditional' institutions and patterns, most significantly those of land tenure and those of jural authority. At the same time, colonial emphasis on expanding the market and on increased agricultural production, resulted in women working harder, with fewer tangible rewards than before, and with great liabilities.

Buttermann's false notion of the position of Luo women in the economic world gives the impression that, in the pre-colonial period, women were a source of labour supply for men. She uses as her yardstick the application of her "concepts and definitions" which she had "largely raided from discussions within the Marxists anthropology" (p.1). She does not seem to have a clear perspective of the society on which she conducted her research. Her analysis of the social formation among the Luo is not true, for the traditions collected among the Jok'Onyang, (Karachuonyo, being one of the areas in which she conducted her research is part of the Onyang tradition) confirm that the women were not guaranteed only economic security but also political and cultural security. Indeed, if anything, the Luo had a system of checks and balances whereby men's activities were checked by those of women, whose own activities were checked by those of men for the necessary balance and harmony. We have seen, for instance, that the division of labour was done according to sex, age and the nature of work to be performed and "in this way the
family was a self-sufficient economic unit in which the work of women, men and children complemented each other” (Pala, 1974: 14).

Among the Jok’Onyango, therefore, traditional custom guaranteed the economic independence of women first by giving them the land and the right to utilize it; second by giving them complete authority over the produce from the family fields, and third by preventing men from entering the women’s granaries, cooking and dishing food, i.e. *dhand dichuo ok ling’ lwete e aguch dhako*.

What emerges from this, is not exploitation but the ability to become self-sufficient, self-reliant and independent on the part of the woman. The Luo woman in the pre-colonial period was able to achieve this. Ironically this is what the so-called “modern woman” is so desperately striving to achieve in vastly changed circumstances. Gachukia (p.9) relates that the “emergence of the monetary economy affects women negatively removing out of their control even those few small items that traditionally ‘belonged’ to “women”. Thus the introduction of the monetary economy and Hut Tax were among the alien factors which undermined the position of women. Since, as we have already seen, within the English society a man was taxed even when his wife had her own source of income, the British looked at the number of houses in a man’s homestead as his property on which he had to be taxed. The whiteman considered these as the man’s possession and therefore he had to pay taxes on the property which he owned, a system which continued even when women were now involved in wage earning jobs. The woman’s salary would be combined to that of the man and it was the man who was taxed for the money which he never earned. This system persisted throughout the colonial period well
into the post-independent period until the then Minister for Finance, put a
stop to it in 1980 and started taxing women separately.

Within the colonial state taxation served two specific purposes: it
was used as a source of getting the most needed labour supply. Since
taxes had to be paid in money, the men had to go and work for wages
outside their homes in order to get enough money to pay taxes. This was
the beginning of a long process of rural to urban migration or rural to
farming areas in search of jobs. Second, in the eyes of Christians, it was
one way of discouraging the practice of polygamy, which was judged evil
by the missionaries. The system was, therefore, exploited by both the
missionaries and the colonial administration for their own selfish ends.

The introduction of the monetary system marked the beginning of the
capitalist system, a peculiar institution hitherto unknown in South Nyanza
where one exploits while the other is exploited. Never before had the Luo
societies undergone such a period as the men were forced to leave their
homes in search of jobs elsewhere. This marked the beginning of the
breakdown of the closely knit family structure which had evolved over the
years. The man’s labour was exploited for the benefit of the employers
who, in many cases, were the settlers in places such as Kisumu, Kericho
and in the farming areas.

Exploitation led to frustration and man began to take out his
frustration on the woman, whom he now in turn exploited economically
and sexually. Prostitution soon followed as the man was now in strange
places away from home. The strict moral code that had restrained him in
his community, could not prevail any longer in the face of the need to get
sexual satisfaction from the strange female companions with whom he had come into contact in his world of work.

It has already been pointed out that within the colonial state the world was divided into two: mainly the periphery and the centre; the public world of work for men and the private world of household work for women; therefore unequal world. It required men to leave their homes to go to work elsewhere in order to earn money so as to meet the demands of taxation. The men became immigrant labourers.

This intensification of gender division articulated by the colonial state placed additional workload on women. They had to combine their daily work with some of the duties that were performed previously by men. At the same time, the colonial state ensured that their position and role as producers and reproducers of labour that was needed to sustain the colonial state and its capital accumulation and exploitation was maintained.

We read from Stitcher (1975: 4) that when men moved to towns or plantations to take up jobs, the “women were left for the preparation of the soil, the sowing of staple crops such as maize, beans and millet, hoeing, weeding and the main part of harvesting, storing and preparation of food, cooking, fetching water, and firewood, grinding grain... carrying all heavy loads and numerous other household tasks...”. This did not in anyway suggest a division of labour to achieve a particular goal: the society was gradually being transformed in response to the impact of colonial rule and the capitalist system that accompanied it. Moreover, other duties which
had previously been performed by men such as herding were now not
carried out or supervised by the women. On the other hand, the women
who were left behind had to supplement the men who were poorly paid
and poorly housed, by sending them flour, fish, maize, beans, chicken, etc.
In the Nyanza area alone within the first few years of colonial rule, “the
total African-grown produce” for “export rose from 3,080 tons in 1909 to
16,949 tons in 1914, dropping somewhat during the inter war period but
eventually picking up and hitting 21,067 tons by 1917” (Agricultural
Department Annual Report 1922-1929 in the Kenya National Archives).

Therefore, for the women, it was not just a matter of changing roles,
but intensification of their role as farm producers. Whereas in the pre-
capitalist society women had monopoly over surplus produce and the right
to land ownership, making them economically independent, the
introduction of money economy eroded women’s economic independence.
In the rural area, land which was the source of livelihood, was becoming
more and more under the control of the men. On the other hand, in towns
and plantations women had to wait for their husbands to give them money
for food and other household supplies as well as their daily needs. Thus,
women became dependants as they were deliberately left out of planning
and decision-making processes. The belief system within the colonial
state further emphasized the degradation of women in the political,
economic and social arena.

The capitalist system brought about the gradual destruction of
communalism and the natural economy - “those characteristics of pre-
capitalist modes of production which are essentially opposed to the capital
relations of production and which must be destroyed for the development of capitalism to be possible”, (Bradby, 1975: 128). Bradby explains further that capitalism’s methods of destruction are three folds: "force, the state and taxation, and the introduction of cheap commodities". "Force is used because of the speed with which capitalism needs large scale expansion of raw material production and increase in the labour force” (p.138). In this case, land would be alienated by force and the labour supply gotten by force, hence forced labour, which must be made possible through the combined efforts of “political and economic factors which are necessary to breakdown the processes of production which are affected through a mixture of the political and the economic” factors (p.138).

Most historians of the colonial period tend to associate forced labour with men working in plantation systems only. Yet forced labour was rampant even in the rural areas and it affected women as well. When the British established administrative centres which included the chief’s camps, the people who built these centres were forced to work, and they were not paid for it. After they had completed the construction, it was the women who finished up the walls and floors, who had to go to the river or the lake to fetch water which was used to mix soil for usage to this end. The headmen went from one home to another announcing that the women would be required to go out and work. The same was the case when mission stations and schools were being built. Sometimes each woman was given a proportion to work on and she could not leave until it was completed, otherwise she had to come back to finish it later. The women were forced to do all this work without any pay (SNHT Vol. II: 205-206).
Women, therefore, worked side by side with men. "It was our men who built the chief's camps, the missions, the schools, and all the time it was women who were called upon to work on the walls and the floors. Our men don't carry pots on their heads and they do not go to the river or the lake to fetch water. It was the women who were called upon to perform all these duties" (SNHT Vol. II: 205). The women also assisted with the transportation of the building materials to the site of construction. They carried grass for thatching, poles for building, sisal needed for tying the poles and reeds to be used for roofing, etc. (SNHT Vol. II: 205-206, 288-289). Women also formed part of the labour force when roads were being constructed.

The burden of taxation also fell upon some of the women as tax was levied on houses, which the colonial state came to realize were the property of women. Those women whose husbands had died but who had not been remarried by their brothers in-law had to pay taxes. Granting some exemptions to some of them, K.L Hunter stated that "the position of uninherited widows remains a great problem. These exemptions are all old and decrepit widows, the type of persons who are not affected by any production progress campaign, except perhaps that they get enough food to keep them alive when otherwise they would die of starvation. I assure you that even at this rate of exemption, we are being hardhearted. It is my opinion that an equitable and just tax collection would be based on an average exemption of nearly 30% in this district" (K.L. Hunter, District Commissioner, South Kavirondo, 1936).

Again R.T. Lambert, the District Officer, Kisii, wrote in "Safari Diary" of December 1-10, 1936 that as he toured the area, he discovered
that "a lot of so-called widows had been recently inherited and quite a number of fairly old wives were shown as widows. It seems to be the fashion to discard wives of a certain age, but I strongly suspect they are only discarded as a means of securing tax exemption".

For the collection of taxes and forced labour, the colonial state used the newly appointed chiefs and its agents. In 1907-1927 report, the District Commissioner in South Nyanza noted that, during 1913, a considerable number of the people on the British side of the southern border with Tanzania had crossed the border to the Tanzania side, as they were running away from forced labour as they were being sent out "to work for the P.W.D.", i.e. Public Works Department (KNA DC/KSI/3/2 1907-1927). And John Ainsworth noted with concern that so long as the British forced the Africans to work without pay, the indigenous people would always look at forced labour as a form of punishment meted upon them by the whiteman, Hodges (1971:94).

Odinga states further that during the colonial period, some of the elders were whipped openly on the "buttocks" for having failed to pay Hut and Poll Tax. This means that even those widowed women who were required to pay taxes were punished very severely for having failed to meet the tax demand. Therefore Odinga explains that one of the factors which made people of Nyanza very bitter and resentful towards the colonial government was "heavy taxes and compulsory labour of women and children as well as men....". (Odinga, 1967: 24). In 1903, Jo-Gem who had refused to pay taxes lost eight hundred herds of cattle and several hundred goats, taken as their punishment (KNA DC/KSI/3/2/1907-1924).
Besides taxation and forced labour, the missionary activities also had a diverse effect on the Luo women in South Nyanza.

In 1906, the first Christian Mission - the Seventh Day Adventist Church was established at Gendia Hill in Karachuonyo by A.A. Carscallen. The aim of this Church was to carry out evangelical work in South Nyanza. As the European colonialists were busy carving out areas of interest for their governments, there was a new form of scramble for spheres of interest which went side by side with the quest for political and economic spheres of interest.

This was the scramble and competition that different Christian missionaries carried out - it was a race to determine who should get there first. As the Seventh Day Adventists were acquiring pieces of land in South Nyanza from 1906, other denominations such as the Church Missionary Society and the Catholic Church were doing likewise. The main objective of the Seventh Day Adventist Church in South Nyanza was, apart from carrying out evangelical work, to teach basic reading and writing skills, some arithmetic and geography, all in Dholuo. The Church also aimed at teaching industrial education as well as agriculture. The new religion emphasized monogamous marriage, condemning polygamy as being an ungodly and evil practice.

By 1906, there were many men among the Jok’Onyango, as was the case elsewhere, who were polygamous. As the missionaries began their evangelical work, converting people to Christianity, they preached about Christian marriage with its emphasis on the one man one wife. As a result, some of the men in the areas where the Seventh Day Adventists had
their stronghold such as Karachuonyo, Karungu and Rusinga, decided to remain with one wife, sending away all the others. This move affected a number of women whose marriage came to an end very abruptly. The emphasis created chaos and conflict among the converts and the members of their families. To this day, the controversy surrounding polygamous marriage in relation to membership in the church is still a subject of discussion.

Traditions collected among the Jok’Onyangó state that the first girls to attend Gendia Mission school were mostly from Karachuonyo. When the women came into contact with the new religion, they had to change their diet. For instance, traditionally, they did not eat certain foods such as chicken, mutton, eggs, and they did not drink milk. The main reason why there were restrictions on such protein intake was that it was believed that if a woman took such foods when she was pregnant the foetus would grow to be too big and she would have a problem when giving birth, resulting sometimes in the death of both the mother and the baby. Therefore, when the church insisted that women must each chicken, mutton, eggs and drink milk, this created a conflict for the women.

One of the first women to have gone to Gendia Mission School, Miriam Amolo narrates how their mothers were opposed to the idea of going to a mission school, because of the type of food they would be given there. Because of this kind of opposition, Miriam explains that one time the missionaries deliberately planned to feed the girls on chicken on a day when their mothers were going to visit them at the mission school. The mothers had threatened that they would withdraw their children if they were given chicken to eat. When the girls were given chicken to eat in the
presence of their mothers, the latter burst into tears. They complained that their children would be affected with scabbies - *guonyo*. One of them even tried to commit suicide. The tree on which she tied the rope still stands (SNHT Vol. II: 204). But as fate would have it, soon after the event, there was an outbreak of scabbies and the girls suffered so much that their mothers kept saying that their fears had been justified.

As time went on, however, the female converts got used to the idea of eating not only chicken, mutton, eggs and drinking milk, but also to the new ways of life which had been introduced by the new religion. But the women who were not converted to Christianity stuck to their traditional ways of eating. As the new converts looked down upon them as the unclean, calling them *Jochilo*, they also looked down upon the women who had embraced the whiteman’s religion as social misfits who were going against their own tradition, imitating alien cultures without really understanding that it was undermining the people’s culture.

Some women pointed out that the new religion had broken up marriages, thus bringing chaos and sowing seeds of discord in homes which had been peaceful, especially the polygamous ones. The women, like the male counterparts, were thrown in a pool of confusion.

The new religion also brought about discrimination between the converts and the non-converts each sect thinking that it was better than the other. The Seventh Day Adventist Church, for example, emphasized that its members could neither drink alcohol nor eat certain foods, which also caused conflict between the women folk.
According to Karachuonyo source the first female converts were sent out to preach the gospel to other areas. "Ndalo machon mon ne yalo ayala ma wan kane watieko ne wan mana joyalo" says Miriam Amolo (SNHT Vol. II: 205). However, as the number of male converts increased, the males dominated the Church activities and they became pastors of various SDA Churches. Ifi Adamiume (1987: 134) has pointed out that;

As christianity introduced a male deity, religious beliefs and practices no longer focused on the female deity, but on a male God, his son, his bishops and priests. While women formed the great body of the church - a few men, the clergy, constituted the headship of the church. These new gender relations and realities were also being generated through the early patterns of western education.

Although some women became deaconnesses, leaders of Dorcas society, lesson teachers and choir members, none of them became pastors or priests in the SDA or Catholic churches. The alliance between the church and the colonial state worked hand in hand to degrade the position of women. As in the political and economic spheres, "Strong male domination was imposed...both indirectly, by new economic structures, and directly by the recruitment of only men into Native Administration. In addition, the new economic and political structures were supported by the inculcation of sexist ideology in the mission schools" Judith Van Allen (1976: 80).

Elsewhere in South Nyanza as well as among Jok’Onyango, the colonial state in partnership with the Church through christianity and education, and also through direct and indirect administration, brought about changes that diversely affected the Luo society. For instance, taxation had been introduced where both women and men paid; forced
labour where both women and men contributed, christianity and education; all these disrupted the way of life of these people.

Not all women embraced the whiteman’s religion. There were those who were violently opposed to the imposition of colonial rule and missionary activities. Their resistance found its expression in the Cult of Mumbo.

The Cult of Mumbo had started in Alego and spread to South Nyanza. By 1913, its opposition to the colonial government and European missionaries was felt throughout South Nyanza. It preached anti-European sentiments and stressed the need to preserve indigenous cultural values and practices.

Between 1914 and 1918 its followers were found in Gusii country, in Luoland, especially in places such as Karachuonyo, Kabondo, Kasipul, Kochia, Gem, Sakwa, Kadem and Karungu. They were also found in Bukuria and Basuba countries. As their number increased, the movement gained momentum with violent activities directed against the government and the missionaries.

A lot of literature has been produced about Mumboism as a religious and political movement in what used to be called South Kavirondo which included the present-day Kisii, Nyamira and South Nyanza District. The literature includes the works of Ogot (1963), Wipper (1966), Ogot and Ochieng’ (1969), Amayo (1980) and Ayot (1987); see also (KNA DC/KSI/3/4/1907-1924).
None of the above literature tried to find out if there were women leaders in this movement or the role played by women.

Some of the women in the Luo society had been known to be possessed by the spirits *Juogi*. At such a time, they had the power of prophecy and healing. So it was not surprising that some of them became possessed by the Mumbo spirit, *Juogi Nya-Mumbo*. However, because of the masculinization of religion and government, the whole structure of the colonial state, the articulation of the colonial state with the pre-colonial Luo societies eroded the position of women so that whatever role they played remained unrecognized even by the indigenous scholars.

Chief Orinda of Karachuonyo while giving evidence before the District Commissioner on the Cult of Mumbo recognized the fact that women had for a long time been possessed by spirits. He was therefore surprised to see men taking after the women. Therefore explaining why he objected the Cult of Mumbo Orinda stated "...my second objection is that I have seen women possessed by spirits before but never men", (KNA PC/NZA/3/32/2 1925-1927). Therefore what surprised Orinda was the fact that some of the male followers of the Cult of Mumbo were possessed by spirits.

One of the outstanding leaders of the Cult of Mumbo was a young woman from Kadem called Ochoondo nyar Obeto, that is Ochoondo the daughter of Obeto. She had received her calling by first being attacked by a strange illness. Her father, who was himself an adherent of the Cult of Mumbo, realized that his daughter had received the call to the movement. Therefore he decided to work hand in hand with her, a move that was
distorted by the colonial administrators as they accused Obeto of having an incest with his own daughter. This was to discredit the movement.

As she was beginning to recover from her illness, Ochoondo became possessed by the spirits and started speaking in a strange tongue while trembling like one seized by malarial fever. It was at this time that she received the call to lead the people of Kadem and Karungu against the colonial regime and European Missionaries.

Ochoondo appealed to the people to resist European encroachment into their land and return to the traditional way of life. Thus, although Mumboism, as a movement was based on religious sentiments, it, however, took on the form of resistance movement against Europeans and missionaries.

The followers of the Cult were particularly against the practice of sending away of wives by some husbands who were polygamous but had been converted to christianity. The new religion condemned the practice of polygamy and insisted that only those with monogamous marriages could partake the holy communion. Therefore a polygamous man could go to church, give offerings and tithe but would not be allowed to take holy communion or stand to preach or teach lessons. His wives would, on the other hand, be allowed to take the holy communion. As a result of such conflicts and contradictions some of the new converts were forced to

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1Personal communication with ex-Senior Chief Warioba, Muhuru, Minunu, Masli-ana Omolo and Nyawade nyar Nyawara of Kadem
choose between having one wife in which case they would send away the other wives or retain their wives and loose recognition in the church. The followers of the Cult of Mumbo were against such practices.

They were also against forced labour where women and children were forced to go out to work in places occupied by the colonial administrators and mission stations. Most of the plastering of the walls and floors of the houses were done by women and girls after the men had built them. Sometimes even the women and girls were forced to work on road sites under construction.

The group led by Ochoondo attacked a mission station at Karungu and administrative centres. They totally rejected the new christian ways of life. Therefore they wore skins and had their own medicines. It is because of this protest movement against the Seventh Day Adventist practices that Kanyamwa and Gem Asumbi became receptive to Catholic religion which tolerated polygamy, drinking and smoking. Kadem and Karungu do not reflect a strong SDA influence.

Several factors were at play in South Nyanza which tended to encourage the Mumboites. The intensification of the activities of the Mumboites coincided with the war period. Kadem and Karungu, being the border between the German Tanganyika and British Kenya on the southern side, witnessed the fight between the European groups. Men and young men in the area (as was the case elsewhere in South Nyanza) were recruited to fight in the whiteman’s war. The people were required to provide food for the soldiers. The Mumboites protested against these measures.
The District Commissioner reports the extent to which Mumboites had caused concern to the colonial state. Hodge reported after he had interrogated some groups of Mumboites at Kisii:

I came to the conclusion after hearing several witnesses including these nine natives and occupying many days in investigation of the affairs of these natives who are accused by the authorities, that they teach sedition and have derived power and influence as a result of dissatisfaction with economic difficulties which the district has experienced and fear of drought and locusts. I endorse the opinion of my predecessors that the teaching might do great harm in stirring disaffection, as it has done in the past, (KNA DC/KSI/3/2/1907-1927).

The colonial state was able to arrest some people in Kadem but Ochoondo managed to disappear before they could get hold of her. In an undated letter to the D.C., Kisii, sd./B.W. Bond Assistant D.C. stated:

I am bringing in the following persons as incorrigible Mumboites:
1. Obeto s/o Odero (the father of Ochoondo)
2. Ganda s/o Ndhala
3. Ater s/o Onyango
4. Nyakaka s/o Otayo
5. Ongalo s/o Achola
6. Oluero s/o Atuodi
7. Nyanduri s/o Olal

No. 1 is the leader of the Cult, No. 2 is his Principal Assistant, the other 5 are all active members...

A dangerous character at large is Ochoondo daughter of Obeto (No. 1) with whom he is believed to have incestuous relations. She is believed to be a future priestess and from her behaviour in handling some of the objects would appear an initiate now.

What the Assistant D.C. did not clarify are the objects mentioned. Ochoondo was an active member of the Mumbo cult who was a threat to the colonial state. Indeed through her efforts there were Mumboites even in the neighbouring Bukurialand.
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In 1931 SDSOV Hodge, the District Commissioner wrote a letter to the Provincial Commissioner dated 14th July, 1931. He stated that:

I enclose a report from Major Bond on the subject of an outbreak of Mumboism in Kadem.

I am however, of the opinion that it is a sect that we cannot allow to flourish both on account of its definite anti-European opinions and also on account of the immoral beliefs which it preaches such as incest and bhang smoking. I suggest that the ring leaders and the girl Ochoondo daughter of Obeto should be made to move their huts into Kisii township where closer watch can be kept on them.

This explains the fear with which the colonial state viewed the followers of the Cult of Mumbo.

There were other Mumboites in other parts of South Nyanza. The D.C. N.A Kenyon-Stanley reported that “it is significant that this Cult has not confined itself to the Luo who are particularly credulous in these matters but has obtained a hold among the Abakuria (Border tribes)”. Again he noted in his report of 16th April, 1920 that even Chief Oguta of Kanyamwa was himself a member of the Cult. He noticed that this chief of the Kanyamwa was himself a member of the Cult; that Oguta even “Wears a piece of goat skin (which appears to be their badge) under his clothes”.

The height of the Mumbo Cult movement coincided with the outbreak of the First World War. The British feared that the people of South Nyanza, might avail themselves of the prevailing conditions and take up arms against them. Thus, any opposition from the Luo of South Nyanza would complicate the situation. On the other hand, the Germans would, no doubt, encourage the rebels to rise against the British. This way
the British would be forced to fight two separate forces which could weaken their position and hold in South Nyanza.

However, the Germans themselves had invaded South Nyanza via Karungu, an act that provoked further anti-European attitude of the Mumboites.

The Germans, having used the lake route from Tanzania side, moved very swiftly and occupied Kisii town - the centre of British administration in South Nyanza. From here, they invaded the SDA Mission in Kisii and the Catholic Church at Asumbi.

The Mumboites took advantage of the resulting confusion and looted the two mission stations in September 1914, (KNA DC/KSI/3/2/1907-1924). Confusion gripped the area and the missionaries were forced to flee from the mission stations. They found refuge at Kaimosi Mission Station in Western Kenya.

The Mumboites continued with their anti-European and missionary activities. The D.C., W.G. Campbell was forced to detain some of the followers of the Cult of Mumbo at Kisii in 1915. (See list of the accused at back page).

As the war came to an end the missionaries returned to South Nyanza. Father Scheffer of Asumbi Mission in a letter dated 1st December, 1918 complained to the D.C. Mr. Campbell on his treatment of some of the Mumboites who had been sent to Kisumu for trial. Father Scheffer stated:
I have heard reports to the effect that Mumbo people taken by you, have been sent back from Kisumu. What a pity! Mumbo people were responsible for all the looting in September, 1914. They were responsible for a good amount of trouble to their respective chiefs at Government labour (carrier corps). (KNA DC/KSI/3/2/1907 - 1924).

The whiteman’s war of 1914-1918 had far-reaching consequences in South Nyanza just as it had affected the rest of the Kenyan communities. The fact that the war was fought there, brought about untold suffering. For example the Kadem-Karungu had had to fight the Europeans from the time they entered their land. The deaths of their people created ill-feelings towards the Europeans. The men who died in action left their widows to suffer without any form of compensation. Some of those women lost not only their husbands but also their sons who were recruited to fight in the war and serve as Carrier Corps.

By 1922 when the Governor visited South Nyanza some of the women who had gone to ask for compensation for the death of their husbands were put in jail, (Ayot T.O, 1983: 353-359). The Governor released fifteen of the women who were serving jail sentences and he promised to look into the issue of compensation. There is no evidence that payments were made. It is no wonder that Ochoondo the daughter of Obeto commanded a large number of followers of the Mumbo Cult.

However, with the imposition of colonial rule, the end of the war period and subsequent declaration of colony over Kenya in 1920, the political and religious protests; negative and positive responses, all proved fruitless in preventing alien rule.
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APPENDIX I

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. Where did you originally come from?

2. What routes did you take and which places did you pass through on your way to the area in which you finally settled?

3. Did you come individually or as a group? If you came as a group who was the leader or who were the leaders of the group?

4. Where was your first settlement area when you got to South Nyanza?

5. Did you find any other groups of people in the area and if so what happened to those groups?

6. Was the settlement to these places peaceful or did you have any conflict with the people whom you found in the area?

7. Was there intermarriage between you and the people you found in the area?

The Family Institution

8. What was the nature of the family structure and what constituted a family?

9. Was there a distinction between the home and the houses within a homestead? If so what characterized this distinction?

10. What were the differences which existed between a monogamous and polygamous home?

11. What was the nature of the organization of monogamous and polygamous institutions and what were the position of the women starting with the first to the last wife?

12. In cases of marriages, births and deaths, what rituals governed each and who performed these rituals?

13. What were the other social functions in the community? Did the women participate in any of these functions?
Economic Activities

14. What was the relationship between the family, the clan and the community as a whole when it came to issues of the land?

15. With regard to the family, who controlled the produce from the land?

16. Specifically were there any structural barriers with regard to division of labour and work force?

17. Did women participate in trade and if so, who controlled the profit from the trade?

18. What was the nature of the system of inheritance?

19. How did the women acquire property? Was it handed over to them by the head of the entire family or by the husband or someone else?