THE ROLE OF LAMENTATION IN AFRICAN BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS: A POST-COLONIAL READING OF THE BIBLE AMONG GİKÜYŨ PEOPLE OF KENYA

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DECLARATION

This Dissertation is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University.

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**OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>African Biblical Hermeneutics</strong></td>
<td>An emerging biblical hermeneutical discourse clothed with African culture and philosophy that guard against colonialism and its set of strange cultural location, or thought patterns, that pay no attention to the social context of the text-readers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Biblical Hermeneutics</strong></td>
<td>This term refers to the application and reflection on scientific methods that are used to analyze and interpret biblical texts and the usefulness of the text-reader, here and now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Catharsis</strong></td>
<td>The term is coined from the Greek word <em>katharsis</em> which literally denotes purging or purification; The term is metaphorically used to refer to African dramatic art of inducing the vomit by a witch doctor in riding the body of impurities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contextual Hermeneutics</strong></td>
<td>This is a theoretical reflection on the rich and diverse cultural heritages that pays direct attention to the process of discerning all what the word of God is saying in a specific context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contextualization</strong></td>
<td>This is an integration of the word of God (text) and the local culture (context) to which the text is read. It can also be referred to in different dimensions, among them adaptation, acculturation, incarnation and inculturation of the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contrapuntal Reading</strong></td>
<td>This is a reading strategy that connects the narrative structures of a given text to the ideas, concepts and experiences from which that text draws its support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Critical Contextualization</strong></td>
<td>This is a skillful analysis of the context into which people read, interpret, and respond holistically (cultural, religious, social, political, and economic) to the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Euro-centric Hermeneutics</strong></td>
<td>This is a predominant imperial hermeneutical conspiracy monopoly, belief and process brought by European missionaries, scholars, and intellectuals in nineteenth and twentieth centuries; to place the colonized people’s culture under hermeneutical captivity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Empire</strong></td>
<td>This is an outgrowth of industrial capitalism, marked by distinct cultural domination and penetration of Europe, as the superior ‘other’. It is a realm of power that thrives through</td>
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mental and physical coercion; rule, conquest and subduing other people.

**Existential Readings** : These are central terms to biblical hermeneutics that represent a critical analysis, or a way of thinking that makes sense to human existence.

**Globalization** : Globalization is a spatial, temporal, and relational interconnectedness of people in social, economic, and political groupings with their environment: physically, ecologically, and technologically.

**Hermeneutic Action** : This is a concrete dynamic response to textual-meanings through enthusiastic correlations of text-readers’ prospective, attitude, and position of textual-meaning with the contemporary and practical interpretation of the underlying social reality.

**Hermeneutics** : The term is used to denote a general principle of interpretation or a phenomenology of understanding the text through a critical reflection on the basis, nature and goals of text-reading.

**Hermeneutics of Life** : This term refers to an interpretative theory of life through which humanity make a display of its quest for a life affirming and life giving liberative hermeneutics in a careful ontological and existential correlation of reality around them (specific experiences and perspectives of life) with the text.

**Hybridism** : This is a concept in post-colonial theory, referring to various integrations (mingling) of cultural signs and practices between the colonizing and the colonized cultures.

**Lamentation** : This term refers to the interaction of remembered text and present pain through a poetic appeal to old memories and affirmations in an imaginative articulation of a reality; different from the economic interests, moral limits, or epistemological convictions of the dominant culture.

**Meta-narratives** : These are biased descriptive and normative storylines, coined from the Bible and other texts, by European empire-builders; in illustrating the tension and conflict among the colonized.

**Native** : This is a technical usage not popular, meant to differentiate between Africans and settlers.

**Psychic Numbness** : A voiceless condition of the traumatized individuals, or societies; caused by overwhelming pain and sufferings.

**Ordinary Text-readers** : This is a class of biblical text-interpreters that has not received
any literary training in text-reading. Members of this class interpret the text, through the folklore embedded in their worldview that constitute traditions and customs; which are not in mode of learned, academic knowledge. They are everywhere in the society- churches, market place and villages etc. Generally, they read the text for survival and are on the periphery of an elitist guild of biblical interpreters in the church. Their artistic work is reflected in music, drama and in day-to-day conversations. The ordinary text-readers do not belong to a homogeneous group, but are united by their situation of marginalization in the face of foreign interpretation of the Bible, which denies them a choice to appropriate the scriptures.

**Post-colonialism** : This phrase refers to a theory and method of textual criticism that challenges Eurocentric perspectives; in a critical examination of literature, politics, history, theology, biblical studies and so forth. The post-colonial discourse is a vital intrusion and reversal of colonial discourse in a coexistence of competing and complementing modes.

**Suffering** : This is an experiential challenge, by intolerable state of human conditioned existence.

**Societal trauma** : This term is used to refer to exceptional situations of helplessness and distress, in a society, upon witnessing or hearing the physical and psychological hurt. Trauma can appear after a single event, a series of events, or a particularly upsetting period of life of catastrophic nature.

**Theological Reflection** : Theological reflection is a reflection of people’s problematic situation and negative experiences in life, in the light of their articulated faith tradition; this could be reflected through proverbs and idiomatic expressions (in African Religion), a parable in the Bible (in Christianity) or a verse in Qur’an (Islam) etc.

**Uncritical ideology** : This is a patterned human discourse that gives no attention to the evils of imperialism, and the shedding of blood and oppression that goes with gaining of a territory.
### GLOSSARY OF GİKŬYŬ TERMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Agĩkũyũ</td>
<td>A Bantu linguistic classified community found in five counties of central region of Kenya. The study contends that, the people under this study are not the Kikuyu as colonialists had labeled them but “Agĩkũyũ,” (plural) while single is a Mügĩkũyũ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gĩkũyũ</td>
<td>This is the name of the Agĩkũyũ patriarch. The term; Gĩkũyũ is also applicable to people, their language as well as their land: Hence the need, to always qualify the term.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gĩkũyũland</td>
<td>This is the God given ancestral land of the “Agĩkũyũ which comprises of five out of the 47 Counties of Kenya namely; Nyĩrĩ (Gaaki), Mũrang’a (Metumi), Kirĩnyaga (Ndia), Nyandarũa, and Kĩambuu (Kabete).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karĩng’a</td>
<td>This term denotes pure; it refers to those who championed for the preservation of core Gĩkũyũ cultural values in their Christian beliefs in a protest against the wishes of missionaries and colonial collaborators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kĩambuu</td>
<td>The correct Gĩkũyũ version and spelling of Kiambu County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kĩrĩnyaga</td>
<td>Mount Kenya which is the seat of the God of Gĩkũyũ (Ngai).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mau Mau</td>
<td>This is a term coined from the Gĩkũyũ anagram Uma Uma (go go). It was shouted to warn the freedom fighters to escape danger; and which, later, defined the movement for freedom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mügumo</td>
<td>This is a sacred tree under which the Agĩkũyũ worshipped and offered sacrifices to their God; it is commonly known as <em>Ficus hochstetteri</em> in botanical terms. It was a taboo to cut or even break its branches. Breaking of this taboo invited heavy fines and ritual purification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Müthirĩgū</td>
<td>A Gĩkũyũ lament-song cum dance that developed into a rhythmically structured lament of the Agĩkũyũ as a protest against colonial missionairies and regime’s interferences of African core values and belief system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngai</td>
<td>This is the name of Gĩkũyũ supreme Deity-God who divided and distributed things to all people in Gĩkũyũ land. The name Ngai belongs to neuter class of nouns, which sanction the belief that the God of Agĩkũyũ could not be imagined in terms of being male or female.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyandarũa</td>
<td>The correct Gĩkũyũ version and spelling of Nyandarua County</td>
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<td>ABBREVIATION AND ACRONYMS</td>
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<tr>
<td>AIDS : Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome</td>
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<td>CIA : Central Intelligence Agency</td>
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<td>CMS : Church Missionary Society</td>
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<td>CSM : Church of Scotland Mission</td>
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<tr>
<td>EATWOT : Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians</td>
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<tr>
<td>FGM : Female Genital Mutilation</td>
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<tr>
<td>FIDA : Federation of Women Lawyers in Kenya</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>HIV : Human Immunodeficiency Virus</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDPs : Internally Displaced Persons</td>
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<tr>
<td>IMF : International Monetary Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>TJRC : Truth Justice and Reconciliation Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>KADU : Kenya African Democratic Union</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KANU : Kenya African National Union</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KCA : Kikuyu Central Association</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KNHRC : Kenya National Human Rights Commission</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDGS : Millennium Development Goals</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>NCCK : National Council of Churches of Kenya</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCEA : Presbyterian Church of East Africa</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>PUEA : Presbyterian University of East Africa</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>WB : World Bank</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>WCC : World Council of Churches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WTO : World Trade Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>YHWH : The four Hebrew consonants (Tetragrammaton), usually written as Yahweh.</td>
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</table>
ABSTRACT

The main focus of this study is to investigate how the biblical and African motifs of lamentation function in the development of critical text-reading methods among the Agĩkũyũ. More specifically it interrogates why Bible reading methods and literacy materials exported to Gĩkũyũland by the dominant European cultures have perpetually placed the ordinary Africans and colonialists in a contact zone of inequalities and constant conflicts. For this reason, the study analyzes Rachel’s narrative of lamentation and weeping in Jeremiah 31: 15-17 as a colonial and post-colonial encounter in a reading context that values the core beliefs of text-readers in their daily struggle for survival. To achieve this task, the study probes the socio-economic and political aspects of lamentation for a new understanding of the Bible in its countenance of actual realities of life among the illiterate hearers, interpreters and retellers of the Bible story in Gĩkũyũ context. The methodology used has been informed by socio-economic conditions, indigenous worldview, encounter with missionaries’ hermeneutics and the ontological questions that confront ordinary text-readers today. In the endeavor to reflect on text-reading from Agĩkũyũ and biblical motifs of lamentation, the research reflects on text-reading from premeditated Gĩkũyũ perspective of lamentation. In doing this, the research employed Brueggemann’s (1995: 8-9) Orientation-Disorientation-New orientation theory; because of its multi-dimensional approach in interpreting the biblical text. The study is descriptive and employs qualitative method of research in Nyandarũa and Kiambu Counties of Central Kenya. The informants include ordinary text-readers (Bible study groups, theological education groups), pastors/evangelists, ex-Mau Mau war veterans, and the elders who witnessed Mũthĩrĩgũ dance; totaling 329 informants. The instruments used to collect the data include observation, oral interviews and field note-taking. The study utilizes a comparative analogical method; whereby biblical and Agĩkũyũ motifs of lamentation have been used to interpret and appropriate the biblical text, in response to readers’ needs, aspirations and thought patterns. The entire study consists of six chapters: Chapter one covers the background to the study, the review of related literature and the methodology. Chapter two explores the socio-economic and political situation of the Gĩkũyũ community, which has served as a contextual bridge between chapters one and two. Chapter three expounds on missionaries’ attitudes towards lamentation in relation to contemporary denial of lamentation in text-reading process. Chapter four makes a presentation of hermeneutical conclusion of Rachel’s narrative of lamentation in Jeremiah 31:15-17. Chapter five makes a theological reflection on Agĩkũyũ experience in order to initiate action plan of disengaging from oppression; while chapter six presents a general appraisal of research findings, their significance and limitations; it suggests a continuous action-reflection cycle.
CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This Chapter focuses on the background information. It covers the background to the study; statement of the problem; objectives of the study; research premises and questions; scope and limitations of the study. Other topics include research methodology; literature review and conceptual framework.

1.2 Background to the Study

In many parts of the world today the loss incurred through wars, foreign aggression, racial and ethnic conflict, civil disturbances, genocide, polticide, crime and natural disasters have left people numbed and traumatized. Grieving this loss in a way that brings healing helps the communities and individuals who avoid anything that brings back memories of traumatic events that they have already experienced to name the sting and wound. The history of colonial and imperial enterprise in Africa bequeaths the continent a very disturbed and traumatic bequest which is a contrived history that is ideological and wants to keep things closed (O’Conner, 1983). Educated Africans were initially conditioned for colonial services to be faithful servants of colonial regime and since they were not trained for giving orders and controlling things they have today lost their self-driven hope for future. This history legitimates exploitation and dehumanization through its ideological account of timeline and headline. As such, natural and man-made impacts of its influences are felt in every African country in the post-colonial era (Mugenda, 2008: 8) and the wounded hearts have made most of the African communities and individuals very angry, hateful, and violent. Historically the continent of Africa is inhibited by and deeply bleeding due to downsides
inform of complex yet memorable catastrophes namely; Slave trade, iniquities of racism, degradations of colonialism, mass shooting of freedom fighters, extra-judicial killings, genocides and subsequent epidemics. At the advent of colonialism African natives were exposed to the overwhelming might of foreign invaders and were overwhelmingly removed from their context, family, possessions, and land. They were deprived of almost everything held precious except the gift of speech and language embedded in African songs and rhythms. These songs and rhythms according to Pobee (1986: 79) were not the property of an individual but a way of expressing the communal experiences of joy, pain, desire etc.

On one hand the conquest of state and territory for European settlement and exploitation in Africa was achieved through violence in situations where local people were forced to submission through punitive military expeditions that undermined the organic view of the African society. On the other, the European missionaries were also in their pacifying missions and mandate asserting the authority of the Bible and by extension the authority of Western culture and civilization in heathen lands (Kinyua, 2011:77). So, the Bible and the gun were main weaponry of this incursion that forced Africans to adopt a new lifestyle and espouse new, albeit foreign, social values. Thus, Kenya, like the rest of Africa comprises of what Jean-Mare Ela (1996:132) calls “masses surrounded by several islands of wealth...people of states that are no longer needed on the geopolitical and economic map of humanity excluded from the great decisions around which the future of the world is planned and prepared.” Even though this alienation has caused a lot of suffering and grief to millions of people; one of our interviewees said that; “there was need to keep on hoping that the unknown future is not a substitution of the cherished memory of the past and this claim is what has sustained local people’s struggle for survival and freedom.” The text-reading
process is deprived its ability of recapturing and integrating the forgotten themes of survival or even how to relate these motif with continued existence of all creation.

The contemporary needs and their place in the history and experiences of the Gĩkũyũ people by the Euro-centric hermeneutical legacy. Thus, the identity and integrity of the Gĩkũyũ people’s situation and circumstances in absence of lamentation are not recognized, respected and engaged in a genuine dialogue with the word of God. Bewildered also by post-independence regimes’ gross violation of human rights, abuse of power and misuse of public offices coupled with systematic suppression of open space theatres by consequent regimes these atrocities are yet to be brought to the reality of their history. As the continent continues to lament its downsides from its margins and coming to terms with complex forms of catastrophes; it is divided over its methods of sorting out the consequences of devastating events and crimes that occurred in the past. This past have received very little attention if any from sound biblical scholarship and so the feelings of betrayal, loss, anger, fear, self-pity, guilt, distrust, blame game and even self-hate are consciously and subconsciously residing in text-readers’ psyche. The lack of legitimate and proper inbuilt mechanisms of ventilating among African churches and regimes in the wider society underscores the evolution of violent protest movements. As a result, almost every community of the marginalized lot in Kenya has been misused by politicians who, offer empty but populist promises to help the community ventilate its whimper. Initial reactions to marginalization, poverty and insecurity are confronted with counterattacks which are born out of suspicion and defensiveness made by established authorities. Instead of helping the communities to realize the potential in them as a prerequisite of transforming their lot in life, politicians make them to expect material handouts and deliveries from the center. As a result,
unemployed youths are organized into vigilantes cum political goons who extort illegal taxes, in the process their hermeneutical voices are hijacked and diverted by politicians to mean something else other than the yearning for their precious roots. For instance, the KANU youth wingers, Mûngîkî, the Taliban, Ngoroko, Inchikororo, Kaya Bobo, Kamjeshi, Jeshi la Mzee, Sabaot Land Defence Force (SDLF), the Maasai moranism, Sungu Sungu, and MRC (Mombasa Republican Council just to mention but a few. These vigilant groups are militant in nature and so they are either hijacked by politicians with vested interests or even outlawed by Kenyan laws at their early stage.

As stigmatized and marginalized groups very little is known about them by the academy especially in biblical studies; the efforts to study them or to understand their voices and motives in hermeneutical terms of what they stand for, what motivates them? Or even what they are all about. The need to study these groups as marginal reading in dialogue with biblical motif of lamentation calls for a multidisciplinary hermeneutical approach which makes the expression of lamentation a bona-fide post-colonial hermeneutical framework. To begin any discussion with organized gangs is a risky and complex undertaking which makes their operations, inspirations, hopes, anxieties, desperations, issues and solutions that posits unexploited hermeneutical space and voice. But are they competent enough to be listened to or incorporated in future processes of resolving, suggesting and relooking into poly-vocal direction taken by Kenyan local contexts. Given that this study is limited to a particular social location that is, the post-colonial reading of the Bible among the Gîkûyû people; a brief identification of hermeneutical challenges of Mûngîkî movement/sect is also an imperative (1.6.4.3.1).
The post-election (land, and ethnic) violence, Waggalla massacre, political assassinations and other related losses in Kenya that feature in TJRC (Truth Justice and Reconciliation Commission) report is not being adequately addressed because of political vested interests. But, unless the voices of lamentation are left to freely call on others to answer questions and make those in authority to listen to them healing process is yet to start. The victim’s need for swiftness in a healing process will only thrive in a society that yearns for answers from its oppressors who wounded them. Listening to testimonies of people who are emotionally and physically hurt makes the constitutionally mandated bodies in Kenya and South Africa such as TJRC preoccupy themselves not in witch-hunting. Instead of ventilating the wrongs done to victims of oppression by individuals, communities or past regimes through a culturally-specific codes, thought patterns or the social location of the reader they base on closed, abstract system of reading which is out of touch with concrete reality. The Bible reading of Jeremiah 31:15-17 is hoped to illuminate a self-acknowledgement of the painful sufferings and injustices before God among a community whose membership get to public telling and retelling of its hidden stories. So, far the recent formations of Truth Justice and Reconciliation Commissions in Africa and other arms of government that are entrusted in solving such earth-shattering events has become vulnerable to politicians with vested interests of advancing political ends out of anything that appeals to public. Lack of effective Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commissions (TJRCs) in Africa makes the continent remain retrogressively closed in its inborn expression of pain and so its people will continue to suffer unabated personality disorders, tensions and conflicts.

1.2.2 The Growth and Development of Text-reading Culture
The development of the printing press in Europe in the mid-15th century made the proliferation of the missionary work practicable, rapid and possible in Africa. The
availability of printed materials among the well-educated and wealthy class in Europe had marked a widespread laity encounter with texts (cf. Bosch, 2005). The access of the Bible and writings of the church fathers in vernacular pointed to a radical departure from old ways of Roman Empire which had forced the barbarians to learn Latin or Greek. In this milieu of printing press revolution; a generation of missionaries and Bible translators’ was born and it had to tirelessly work in order to make the word of God more approachable to the laity where the Bible was finally passed into the hands of all nations to be heard and read. In this case, the translation of the Bible and hermeneutical involvement of the church in Gĩkũyũland dates back to 19th century upon the advent of European missionaries in Kenya. The advent of Bible and other texts is partly explained by the fact that missionaries’ activities reached Kenya at the same time with colonization, which was a more brutal and dehumanizing venture. The real tragedy lay in the patronizing aspects of missionary enterprises through which the text-reading process was pegged. Regrettably, the missionaries’ text-reading process was not able to embrace the African social structure because they had already regarded as being as barbaric, uncivilized and unreliable. Eventually, African process of naming the hurt and pain which was to help the text-reader to adopt a practical theory and method of a text-reading was wished away. Removing all what was part and parcel of preserving the local people’s culture, meant that their way of life was now paralyzed for it would neither suit their situation nor satisfy their aspirations. The consequence of this cultural exclusion meant that the community was now subjected to the strenuous condition of the modern world (Kenyatta, 1938: 127-128). Europeanizing the text-readers as expertise lot meant that they were to remain perpetually bound to impress foreigners with high standards of the colonizers.
The denial of lamentation in African society is already producing awkward results in text-reading process. Missionaries’ and colonial regime’s interferences made the text-readers ashamed of being African and induced in them a psychiatric yearning to be Europeans (Thairu, 1974: 103). This yearning is too pathological that it has seduced the elite among the Gĩkũyũ community to disconnect itself from the community’s cherished art of remembering, it scuttled the past and gave the impression that it is only the present counted in any claim upon the community and things were just as the way the Gĩkũyũ proverb cautions; mūgathĩ wa kuona ũteaga wa mwene (The sighting of a new necklace marks the loss of the other one in discerner’s custody). The new dawn was more attractive and text-readers were excited to perpetually impress the foreigners and maintain the European standards showing that their own culture is on its way out. The community thus, ended up with alien hermeneutics of life which were manipulative and prone to control rather than serve the interest of the society, and often only to perceive others in individualistic and statistical terms. Nonetheless, the early generations of Athoomi (text-readers) had eventually drifted away from their cultural practices; they had to remain steeped in them as they maintained an organic link with them.

The 1928 Mūthĩrigũ lament/dance crisis in Gĩkũyũland invokes a context of multi-layered contradictions because it opened a hermeneutic site of incipient polyvocality where the texts can be interpreted in relation to a set of intertwined and overlapping histories. It attests how Gĩkũyũ community would read the text through their own interpretive lens and even use them to challenge colonial hegemony. The Gĩkũyũ community’s attempt to justify clitoridectomy crisis made Mūthĩrigũ songs a channel through which the interpretive and live interests would openly reflect on local conditions outside the colonial box. The impact of Mūthĩrigũ lament/dance and its songs had permanently struck a chord with the ideas of
the ordinary people who were ready to do away with missionaries’ text-reading structures that polarized ordinary text-readers and expertise text-readers. The expertise text-reading process was too academic, intellectual, and far-removed from the everyday tasks of the ordinary text-readers’ lives. As one of the informant Kanyeki Ndogo argues; “an event became the past only after it has lost its significant; the Mũthĩrĩgũ event has not lost its significance among the Agĩkũyũ text-readers; this past is part of indigenous text, it isn’t dead; it’s not even the past.” The Mũthĩrĩgũ dance and songs were perceived by colonialists as ephemeral protest only to become part and parcel of unanticipated eruption of indigenous voices among a people hitherto silenced in a hegemonic way who had now to begin shouting and crying out their needs, grief, and struggle.

As a hermeneutical response to the question of colonial structural injustices, Mũthĩrĩgũ paradigm was now to envisage an enormous hermeneutical elocution force which is yet to be utilized at personal and communal level of enhancing indigenous resources of reconstructing textual meanings in Africa. Since Mũthĩrĩgũ dance and songs are born out of a period of hermeneutical questioning, doubting and dissenting of colonial brainwashing and conditioning; the unexploited African world of text-reading enriched by religion-language complex makes the reading of Mũthĩrĩgũ text in the twenty-first century an imperative. The hermeneutical crisis triggered by early stages of anti-colonial hermeneutics which was met with a lot of resistance had forced the colonial church to insist on having athoomi (text-readers) take oath of loyalty. Such oaths ended up in dividing the community into Aregi (dissenters) and andũ a kĩrore (loyalists). The Aregi (dissenters) as a majority group were officially driven away from the center of text-reading process and had no choice but to express their pride and defiance through a daring clamor for the formation of autonomous
Churches in Kenya as basis of taking a total break from colonial structures. This occasions for a dialoguing with and integrating the hermeneutics of resistance may help text-readers in raising an alternative consciousness which would unveil the oppressive beliefs, values, attitudes, practices and structures that undermine African art of getting grip on reality.

The mass exodus from mission-controlled systems had spawned a text-reading process that would lead to the establishment of indigenous institution in a modern setting like the Kikuyu Independent Schools Association (K.I.S.A.). Besides, the birth of African Instituted Churches (AICs) out of defiance would through genuine decolonization make African hermeneutical voices sound and distinct in giving voice to the voiceless. The continued nurture of such defiance and dissent may today sound enough to clear the social space of official constraints rendered by previous silencing which would lead to acts of setting out a parallel society. The post-colonial nurture and concern for communal boldness in voicing texts previously hidden which has not been given pre-eminence today is to unveil all what has marked the exclusion of dissenters from socio-cultural milieu of critical theory-building. The mainstream of African biblical studies lacks well focused ingredients behind the defiance and dissent which has continued to spell out the uniqueness of indigenous materials among ordinary text-readers. But, the process of reading the Bible in solidarity with the experienced reality of societal margin is given little or no attention by the academy.

Indigenous reading has to play its distinctive role of delivering hermeneutical outcomes out of African experiences of oppression. Moreover, its projection of future possibilities makes lamentation a focal point of pluralist text-reading set-up which would bring African biblical scholars and exegetes into a hermeneutical melting pot. This would give the echoes of
lamentations a chance to amplify the biblical implication of post-colonial challenge by
relying on the Bible as a primary model for nourishing, revising, and renewing the African
understanding of marginal voices. Although these have already been denied their role in
modern academic pursuits they can translate to the respect of African identity. The legacy of
colonial and missionaries’ mentality of meddling and undermining African Instituted
Churches continues to hamper the hermeneutical metamorphosis of Karĩng’a, Arathi and
other movements, which are today entangled in endless leadership wrangles and incoherent
chronological evolutions (Barrett, 1968). Their text-reading is denied the moment of organic
integration of faith and reality as well as the living traditions with deep feelings of social
realities. So far, a pluralist text-reading set-up which is tightly linked to critical awareness is
yet to achieve its place among the expertise Gĩkũyũ text readers. The ordinary text-readers
who started reading the text long before the end of colonization do their textual-
interpretation outside the mainstream of the academy which is today still suspicious about
the indigenous hermeneutical outcomes in absence colonialists. The need to understand the
relevance of post-colonial text-reading process through the lenses of lamentation has to do
with the hermeneutical clarification of why the expertise text-readers give no attention to
ordinary text-readers’ ability, genius, achievements, inventiveness and language.

African aspirations and reconstructions of contextual text-reading have been denied its
primacy and universality of communal rights. And yet African community’s strong sense of
moral concern and the autonomy placed on post-colonial making of textual meaning is
misplaced. The African parameters of contextual relationships ought to be captured by
moral concerns of challenging the inherited colonial and missionaries’ hermeneutical
machineries of meddling, controlling and surveillance of African Instituted Churches. This
is because they deny African biblical hermeneutics its new sense of identity, meaning and integration. The academy seems to work with post-independence regimes and church hierarchies to undermine and halt the hermeneutical gains enjoined to the metamorphosis of the *Karĩng’a, Arathi* and other historical movements’ who’s hermeneutical thrust are marginalized. For any pluralist text-reading and its set-up to be materialized there is need to study the Gĩkũyũ text readers’ struggle and they have identified the Bible as a stable and fixed cultural text even before the end of colonization. Their hermeneutical disadvantages have led to a disengagement of their voices from the post-independence academic enterprises. Thus, the gap between the expert text-readers and the ordinary text-readers has grown wide and it has recurrently locked out enormous indigenous hermeneutical outcomes.

The revisit of initial art of marginal interpretation and application of texts is too radical and so it African hermeneutical voices sound distinct. But, the recurrent problems of excluding the colonized from textual interpretation has to be openly challenged the ordinary readers are caught out in friction of exclusiveness as envisaged by missionaries and colonial regimes bequeath of predatory hermeneutical approaches that provided the Bible as a chief hegemonic text. The reactionary character of those in power to marginal text-reading process was a counterattack, born out of suspicion and defensiveness on the part of established authority. By engaging in selective and extreme emphasis on some parts of the Bible within which the reality of religious-cultural and socio-political experiences were made in a total disregard of other texts introduced a reading that would tilt the power pendulum in favor of the ordinary text-readers who seem powerless. This process of text-reading was now being pushed to a disadvantaged position because it had no coherent chronological evolutions and so the dissenters were helplessly pushed to wrangles and
schisms (Barrett, 1968). The deep emotional ties attached to imported denominational ideologies have led to denial of lamentation and so, this hinders Africans from realizing the fact that they have more things in common than things which keep them a part. The biblical motif of lamentation is reduced to an object to be interpreted rather than a subject that interprets the whole person and total need of African people.

However, their radical hermeneutical rediscoveries which were limited and slowed down by early experiences of such schisms and consequent hermeneutical mutation of these Churches were a beginning of decline in personal and community growth. Schisms are today a heavy burden on Africa for they remain to nurture euro-centrism ideologies of divide and rule which has demeaned the text-reader -socially, economically and politically, thus doubly widening the social credibility, moral, economic and political gaps. For any serious and critical engagement with the Bible to take place in the twenty-first century these schisms ought to be avoided by bringing on board both the expertise and ordinary text readers to a melting pot suggestive of communitarian reading. The elemental fusion and reconstruction of text-reading is yet to exploit the enormous hermeneutical force behind the biblical and African motif of lamentation among the Gĩkũyũ text readers. The past hermeneutical response to missionaries’ suspicion and even hostility are enjoined to present day unheeding to voices of laments which has reduced the text-reading process into a mere tokenism. It treats African voices as static and inherently conservative incident bent on discouraging people from being civilized and any attempt to locate hermeneutics in its socio-historical context and its pioneering work in Africa is currently locked out. It is seen by missionaries and colonizers’ enlightenment bequeaths in Africa as a fruitless effort of a people who are trying to reach back to a depraved tribal past whose agenda is to halt the wheel of progress.
The legacy of pioneering indigenous groups which were thoroughly domesticated continues to give birth to text-readers who have all through been faithful to extend the ritual of indoctrination to others. Although, this indoctrination has gone too far, out of it we can construe two long-term text reading approaches; 1) a new and strange model of text-reading, which identifies with Euro-centrism and is mainly shaped to serve the center and neglect the margin; 2) an indigenous text-reading process that encourages Africans to continue practicing the new religion and also to return to African practices wherever the Euro-centric interpretation falls inadequate. These two categories are at the bottom-line of Euro-centric biblical hermeneutics’ hegemonic and diversionary tendencies, which today oscillate between the elite (those who could use it) and the masses (those who cannot use it). However, both categories of text-readers are trapped in a superstructure of massive cultural dislocation in which sound text-reading is suppressed and rendered innocuous, by misinterpretation and conformism.

Moreover, African text-readers who are perpetually brainwashed and damned to mental captivity has led to abstract, alien and carbon copy readings of the text. Today, Euro-centric interpretation has nothing to do with African culture all what it does is only to connect indigenous culture to heathendom and immorality. Due to oppression of indigenous context and other criteria of interpreting the Bible; Eurocentric hermeneutics continues to illuminate the text-reading processes in Africa. Subsequently, the study of the context and the interpretation of the text are no longer done in dialogue and solidarity with the marginalized people, who are as a result barred from becoming the principle protagonists in the interpretation of the text. The very foundation of teaching biblical hermeneutics in Africa is firmly built on a total break with the African way of life. Yet the outstanding hermeneutical
question that continues to linger and that which this study needs to share is: Why do the ordinary indigenous poor and marginalized text-readers, among the Agĩkũyũ, continue reading the text from their marginal status behind the back of mainstream biblical interpretation of their churches?

The role of lamentation in pinpointing hermeneutical inaccuracies, fallacies, and blunder is presupposed by critical investigations which begin with answering the above question. But, lamentation as a way of seeing, judging and describing the reality of the community has to do with questions: 1) Why lamentation? 2) How is lamentation done? 3) What is lamentation? In the process of listening to diverse answers to these hermeneutical questions, the text-reader will eventually discover the textual-meaning in their particular contexts. The denial of lamentation represents oppression for it offers no consolation and hope for change; it is inclined to defending the *status quo*. The denial underscores the initial colonial missionaries’ assumption that Africans were a sheet of paper, ready for Western educators to write; it has also justified past and present missionaries’ freedom to train Africans in a way that demand total subscription and submission to world economic and military superpowers. A complete obedience of the text in a total disregard of the rising marginal voices kills the indigenous attempts to find in the Bible motivations, justifications, and strategies for the appropriation of the textual-meaning in African context. This Eurocentric presumption on Africans is highlighted by Tempels (1945: 73) earlier warning that;

> We have had the idea that we stood before them like adults before the newly born. In our mission to educate and to civilize, we believed that we started with a “tabula rasa”, though we also believed that we had to clear the ground of some worthless notions, to lay foundations in a bare soil… On the contrary… in the faces falsely looked upon as bestial, we see the animal expressions which we lent to these savages fade away.

The entire body of European missionaries had asserted itself as an adjunct of the colonial
administration as well as representatives and advocates for the rights of Africans. This representation was a radical break from Gĩkũyũ traditional concept of democracy. Because, any persons purported to represent the Gĩkũyũ people were expected to undergo a long process of vetting in many and lengthy councils of elders (ndundu ya athuri) before any decision is summed up and embodied by the community. This representation and trusteeship was treated by Gĩkũyũ people with suspicion because, these missionaries had through prejudice disconnected themselves from African cultural interests. By September 5, 1886 Henry Parker in a written Memorandum sent to the Church Mission Society (G3 A5/03 London CMS Archives) had this to say;

We are in a particular sense the trustees of the native peoples and we must see that their interests are safeguarded and forwarded …It is further impossible for us-not would we wish to do so-to dissociate ourselves from members of the British empire and of the Kingdom of God from the political life of the country.

Such assertion would not go unchallenged because the key hall-mark of observation, investigation and questioning were confrontational and traumatizing the Eurocentric hermeneutics from the margins of Gĩkũyũ community. Immediately after the English Bible was translated into Gĩkũyũ vernacular the mission text-reading policy found its chief critics among Agĩkũyũ text-readers who were mission graduates. All what was prejudiced and dislocated by missionary presentation of the Bible as a negation of the African way of life was challenged and this marked a voicing of different hermeneutical strands in Gĩkũyũland. As a consequence, a substantial number of Agĩkũyũ text-readers had no choice but to break with missions in order to set up independent churches and schools all over the Gĩkũyũland. The literally skills were seriously needed by text-readers in Gĩkũyũland because these skills were expected to provide their future struggle for freedom with a modern political outlook. The early generation of opinion leaders had contemplated that this was the only way to counter the encroachment of the foreign powers. Indigenous churches and schools were now
to become the ideological centers for the coalescing and training of Gĩkũyũ elite that waged nationalists’ scuffles (Muoria, 1994; Temu, 1972). The colonial hermeneutics attempts of overturning the pre-existing social order in Africa were idealized through economic encroachment of consumerism and its advocacy of individual self-sufficiency policy as its ultimate goal of life.

The victim’s emotional reaction and questioning of human actions which are often the causes of disasters in Gĩkũyũland are today identified with and treated as heathenish and savagery voices of those who are unable to cope with modernity. In the process, the African and biblical motifs of lamentation are treated as a static and inherently conservative and retrogressive phenomenon, bent on discouraging people from trying to change their unjust conditions of life. Eventually, African reading of lamentation texts is not encouraged for it is purported to be anchorage of sentiments for those people who were unable not cope with modernity, and were left out to reach back to a depraved tribal past in order to stop the wheel of progress. This study agrees with Parkman and Karlten (1986:65-66) affirmation of the fact that most of African theology, whether written or oral, has tended to be lamentation of the captivity of word of God in Africa. Hence the need to have a full-scale exposition of lamentation and reaction integrated into major teachings of the Christian faith.

The recommendation for post-colonial integration of indigenous and relevant intercultural hermeneutic that takes both biblical and African worldviews will be of no use in absence of lamentation. The Eurocentric hermeneutics in Africa are limited by their intrusive nature and self-imposed boundaries which are set through issues of impersonal and testable characters to restrict certain types of inquiry. Ultimately, the prospects of incorporating the
colonized people’s memories in official text-reading processes are severed and lamentation is in this process ignored, denied or done away with altogether. The biblical and indigenous motif of lamentation stands as a social liberating praxis upon which African text-readers begins to name social malconditions which dehumanize and debilitate them. As a hermeneutic key the motif of lamentation focuses the light of scripture on the African experience of reality.

The Eurocentric prejudice continues to reinforce and thrive in denials of lamentation that emanate from systematic deprivations of home-grown academic power. It undermines the text-readers hope of articulating a counter-community out of contemporary skilled text-readers’ who yearn for alternative perceptions of reality in Africa. Seen in this light, the irony of addressing the complex issues through post-colonial text-reading process suggests an attempt to address the pragmatic questions on how various tragedies in Africa are used to justify the critical role played by text-readers who breakdown within a safe environment. Thus, disclosing, talking, telling is an important hermeneutical task of challenging the negative power of secret and shame which paralyzes the process of facing and confronting the reality of pain, as well as solid steps of reaching catharsis. Though lamentation is not everything and may not be enough in fixing all hermeneutical problems it is a starting point of catharsis which cannot be equivocated. However, if the process of catharsis is allowed to take place in post-colonial era the community is allowed to regain its roots by bringing its experiences and expressions of powerful emotions in a process which the community has to let them go. The ultimate purpose of African art and performances is to negotiate, modify and interpret the text through varied expressions which becomes the equivalent of therapy. If we define catharsis in a particular socio-cultural milieu the purpose of art, will in a way
explain why it is necessary to read the Bible from the experienced reality of societal margins; it will nourish the process of psychoanalysis.

The enterprise of text-reading in Africa is now under crisis because since the advent of colonialisms, the skilled text-readers continue being schooled by colonial canon of certitude. All issues surrounding the events that relate to communal suffering makes the hermeneutic of the conqueror whenever it is applied by the conquered to be the hermeneutic of a slave because it only considers and focuses on the benefits gained in the process of enslavement (cf. Thairu, 1975: 30). Unfortunately African biblical scholars want to be credible in the courts of former colonial powers and in the judgment of the academy. Any credibility of knowledge achieved through such a process undermines the role played by lamentation in naming of African’ bequeaths. Thus, the prejudiced and dislocated presentation of the Bible continues to undermine the African way of life remains a thorn in the flesh. In the process, the prospect of incorporating the text-reader’s injured memories in current text-reading process is severed. If all ideologies are to be subjected to constant critique in the light of biblical and African motif of lamentation the institutionalized violence of the established order is tackled by collective experience of indigenous hermeneutical action.

The usage of lamentation in text-reading remains to be ignored, denied or done away with altogether and wherever it is seen in this light, the irony of addressing the complex issues in absence of lamentation fails the text-readers’ attempts to address the pragmatic questions posed by vast tragedies in Africa. Lamentation as a post-colonial hermeneutic voice of protest will continue missing in officially designated ways of interpreting the Bible if the church is to remain insensitive to underlying social realities. Because, the general landscape
of fragmentations is coupled with socio-economic realities of the Gĩkũyũ community which are certainly not organically appreciated, carefully thought out, or even lived out by ordinary text-readers. The church will be tilting towards dominate heretical teachings fronted by freelance Euro-centric trained evangelists and sycophants who use their oratory genius to convince the society to accept the inevitable and suffer peacefully.

Text interpretation which ought to be done in a milieu of socio-economic and political decay is hoped to ground and vindicate lamentation as a voice against the silencing effects of marginal voices. But, the absence of the ordinary text-readers who can freely lament from indigenous hermeneutical radar amounts to alienation of the Gĩkũyũ community from the Bible. This alienation takes the form of how the Israelites were alienated from their own land through encroachments that lead to bitter experiences like those of the Babylonian captivity and exile. The lamentation as an act of generative imagination is intentionally linked to this study in its concrete reading of the historical consciousness of Gĩkũyũ text readers which boosts the indigenous art of hermeneutical growth and development in post-colonial in Africa biblical hermeneutics.

The task of exploring on how the text-readers can recover their fresh start will help the text-readers to achieve their full potential in linking socio-economic and political development to issues of justice where the cry made by victims of injustices and transgressions is heard and attended to. This hermeneutical milestone does not only propose a dimension of recovering, reoccupying and re-scripting the Gĩkũyũ culture but also a degradation and effacement process of colonial meta-narratives from the mainstream of African biblical scholarship. The urgent need of embracing the existing clandestine hermeneutical resources and responses
that embody contrapuntal themes woven into a cycle of life whose evolutions materialize in personal and communal hermeneutical reconstructions in Africa is unstoppable. African indigenous based textual meanings, judgments, fantasies and thoughts which settle on African motif of lamentation as a response and a by-product of a long period of questioning and doubting the Eurocentric hermeneutical art.

The Eurocentric abstracting and distancing of textual-meanings from socio-economic and political realities of the local people happen by; priestly control, political intimidation, theological orthodoxy, economic oppression and technical reason. The hermeneutically and sociologically subversive question which this study seeks to answer is: How does lamentation as a peripheral discourse of resistance speak and work behind the backs of dominant voices as a critical art of reflecting on Scriptures? Or: How is lamentation best situated in opening up biblical scholarship to ordinary, poor and marginalized text-readers?

The need to assess various possibilities for a post-colonial usage of lamentation as a collaborating ingredient of modern biblical scholarship in Africa without Eurocentric frames of reference is therefore an inevitable, problematic and complex hermeneutical task in the twenty-first century. The expression of lamentation and its profound impact on the roots of Gĩkũyũ hermeneutics of life illuminates a post-colonial prism of reading the biblical text. Whereas the colonial church takes credit for initiating text-reading process in Africa, mainly by introducing education to the natives, she has largely remained conservative in adopting new text-reading techniques and has, by and large, encouraged the hermeneutical dependency syndrome that perpetuates the Eurocentric need to be needed by African institutions of theological training.

Today, even the long-time members of the African church and students of the Bible and
theology find it hard to counter the denial of lamentation which continues giving old
hegemonic hermeneutical responses to new problems, in terms of social, economic and
pastoral constraints. The need to prioritize change of hermeneutical paradigms warrants a
revisit of indigenous art of breaking away with outdated life-forms spawned by European
and Western monolithic hermeneutical structures. The past record of applying lamentation
in African setting scores highly in its revolutionary step of generating new character traits,
institutions and human qualities. Its unmatched aptitude to overcome the hegemonic patterns
of Western religious and national traditions from the margins is expected to help the text
reader attention to development of Africa biblical hermeneutics approved. It constitutes an
ongoing dialogue, in which many human qualities are used in text-reading in a process of
complementing and correcting each other.

The indigenous reaction to missionaries’ hermeneutics was usually a power of sharp
criticism and systematic thought, even if from the margin. This indigenous hermeneutical
aspect is yet to be realized because biblical scholarship has never been at home in the
African continent; it remains a stranger in virtually all aspects –particularly in terms of her
hermeneutical process. The current proliferation of Euro-American denominational
ideologies, based on conflicting and antagonistic interpretations of the biblical text, are also
turning into weapon of verbal and actual killings in the Africa. The need for ordinary
African text readers to reflect their life struggles in the word of God is inevitable. A general
and specific discourse of integrating the biblical and African motif of lamentation as a
ventilator of text-readers’ sufferings is hoped to broaden the understanding and practice of
post-colonial text-reading context. In order to get out of Eurocentric hermeneutical captivity
the text-reading process must be determined, defined and shaped by indigenous quest for the
inclusion of lamentation in post-colonial understanding of the text.

As African communities continue to respond to the realities of their marginal contexts with specifics rather than generalities, they mold African based framework that lives and operates in interplay between normative and the imaginatively teasing voices that give the text its transformative energy. Narrating the aftermaths of such tragedies necessitates a reading that calls survivors to use the text and see suffering just the way it is without denying it or twisting it into a story of endurance or giving it a happy ending. It is a matter of text-readers digging into the depths of their tortured beings as well as transmuting such narratives into artistic creations. What happens to the role of lamentation at the embryonic stage of African biblical hermeneutics is extremely exceptional because the grasp of its critical implications leads to societal development in absence of colonizers. The lack of contextualizing the word of God which makes hermeneutics a peripheral voice to the exegetical process rather than its very foundation continues the makes text-reading outcomes immaterial.

With the institutionalization of the authority of biblical scholarship by mainstream churches, lamentation as an ingredient of text-reading became redundant as well as dysfunctional. In absence of lamentation, the ordinary text-readers were no longer the bona-fide articulators of the norms, values, and decision in text-reading process; they were perpetually robbed of their position by expertise text-readers who reduced the text-reading process to a privilege of the few. The text-reading process in Africa remains foreign and therefore not obliged to help African text-readers in their analysis of reality. The home-grown power to articulate a counter-community around an alternative reading of the Bible ought to capitalize and reflect on African status of hermeneutical subjugation through its nostalgic model of regaining the
lost ground and its indigenous self-asserting stamina. While the ongoing marginal textual interpretive discourses and understandings are essential ingredients of constituting holistic critical methods their voices are at the moment not organically integrated into academic readings. The need for readings that emanate from and speaks to the African situations of marginality, among the ordinary Agĩkũyũ text-readers is crucial.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The nineteenth-century marked the coming of missionaries and their text-reading process in Gĩkũyũland; it also marked the dawn of Eurocentric enlightenment and civilization in Africa. Eurocentric enlightenment and civilization paradigms has since then prejudiced African culture as inferior and African multiple religious backgrounds as deficient hermeneutical lenses to elucidate what the text means for the modern interpreter. Despite the fact that the very function of exegesis was to lead to hermeneutic, the dominant pre-understandings of biblical text produced by European culture is man-centered (view of man) continues to clash with African culture and its cosmo-centered (world view) hermeneutical tentacles. Hence, hermeneutical forms of resistance are kept separate and fragmented - perpetually baring the reader from seeing the recurrent problems in interpreting the Scripture and connecting these problems with it. The two modes of textual interpretation a) exegesis as an explanation of the text and b) hermeneutics as the interrogation of the relevance of that explanation to the readers’ context were worked out into a new discourse in the absence of text-readers input. By overlooking the African context, the ordinary text-readers were systematically barred from the use of culturally based hermeneutical resources.

Today the Eurocentric bequeaths of text-reading in Africa continues to undermine and
dislodge the ordinary text-readers’ hermeneutical resources by consigning them to the margins; paving way for a minority (expertise text-readers) to occupy the center stage. Though African biblical scholars have been struggling with this problem for decades, the rift between the elite world of academia and the ordinary untrained text-readers is so pronounced in Gĩkũyũland. Regrettably, the expertise text-readers (biblical scholars) are in their training background not expected to be; 1) critical of the Eurocentric methods and practices used to interpret the text, 2) assertive and inquisitive of their own diverse cultural backgrounds, and 3) determined to understand the textual-meaning and cause of text-reading in a different context. Instead they are expected to be grateful to European colonizers for; the word of God preached to them and also the unmatched progress conveyed to them through Eurocentric education and health programs. Any attempt to bridge this gap, suggests the exploration of lamentation as a case study and its list of suggested hermeneutical resources as a designed voice of inspiring modern biblical scholars to re-think European colonial powers and its impact on biblical hermeneutical enterprises in Africa.

As a consequence, one phantom remains to haunt biblical studies in Africa: the phantom of denial of pain and suffering which makes the Bible remains abstract and removed from people’s realities of socio-economic and political problems. The socio-economic realities are overshadowed by emphasis on heaven-oriented individual text-readings which are detached from formative aspects of people’s lives and the environment in which they live. Hence, the Bible is read in the milieu of colonial epithets of individuated prosperity gospels that give instant fixes to complex problems that call for complex answers. These epithets highlight on colonized text-readers as accepting the inevitability of painful suffering through poverty and deprivation as the will and punishment of God for sinful individuals.
Though, modern African text-readers seem to lack a proper and legitimate means to ventilate, lamentation is apparently with us. It is expressed and displayed by the way formerly colonized African communities study history, reflect theologically, and develop programs of harmonizing the understanding of Scripture. How lamentation can really serve as a formidable exilic voice that can help Africans use the ongoing post-colonial hermeneutics in its value-creating and value-saving work in Africa wholly depends on how text-readers will make: 1) Recover the meaning and use of lamentation for our time; 2) Scrutinize this recovery of lamentation in a process of enhancing the biblical hermeneutics in Africa; 3) Explore on the implications of this recovery of lamentation for African hermeneutical enterprises. Creating an awareness of the ongoing peripheral expressions of African pain and suffering will stimulate a hermeneutical process of regaining the lost culture and the creation of anew on the old basis through a post-colonial disregard of dominant Eurocentric hermeneutical opinion.

This can be a step way forward into general and specific integrations of biblical motif of lamentation into the ordinary Agĩkũyũ text-readers’ existential concern for holistic critical approaches to their text-reading process. Even though, the meaning, interpretation and perception of lamentation have constantly remained controversial among the skilled text-readers who attach different connotations to this concept, the people who struggle for survival implicitly and explicitly ends-up in a post-colonial hermeneutical discourse. The term “lamentation” denotes a complex phenomenon to Eurocentric African “perennial hermeneutics which builds on Eurocentric assumption of unity and order behind the manifold of hermeneutical processes and outcomes that stifles and suffocates the possibilities of anew hermeneutical consciousness. Nevertheless, the study endeavors to
understand; how lamentation works in its task of suggesting insightful and helpful expansion of ordinary text-readers’ horizon of textual meaning. What is yet to be achieved is how the mainstreaming of ordinary text-reading resources and processes can be allowed to evaluate the legitimacy of various exegetical methods.

The nature and nurture of how lamentations posits itself both as a genre and a populist expression of unbeaten embodiment of both the text and its interpretation process forms a hermeneutical circle of confronting interpreters through an existential self-understanding. Certainly, the process of understanding how hermeneutical trends are undoubtedly open to provisions of unusual analytical ability and critical judgment becomes a post-colonial hermeneutical concern. Certainly, lamentation becomes a resource and a process of reconstructing and weaving of a historical consciousness that over time lead to awareness and nurture of a specific hermeneutical culture. On this ground the study intends to show how an alternative understanding of hermeneutics in African cultural context makes lamentation a social location with a clear-cut point of departure from Eurocentric text-reading process. Emphasis on identities and social location for serious conversation and open engagement led us to the choice of Gikũyũ people’s post-colonial multi-vocal reading of Jeremiah 31: 15-17 in a pilgrim wandering through history to merge past and present.

In linking the Babylonian captivity with post-colonial theologies of reconstruction and renewal in Africa today this reading is made from a broken center where things have fallen apart and the center cannot hold any more. This text is a dramatic and polyphonic poem that organizes structure, fill content, and mold vision to create a new thing in the land (Trible, 1977:40) and so it can help the study to identify the dynamics of this text with various
factors that lead the ordinary indigenous poor and marginalized text-reader in Gĩkũyũland to continue lamenting despite conversion to Christianity. Indeed, this reading is anticipated to provide the marginalized text-readers with a language of naming their world of pain and hurt. It is done from a hermeneutical angle whose outcomes resonate with public processing of pain through attentive and responsive approaches to new hermeneutical questions.

The task of exploring lamentation as a text and a reading strategy which has transcended all cultures and civilizations through its content, scope and structure across time and space is yet to be thoroughly undertaken. But, as lamentation continue to open up to new and diverse interpretative strategies the overarching question which must be answered is: How will the evaluation of the validity and usefulness of lamentation in African biblical hermeneutics help us to breach the gap between the untrained, illiterate or semi-illiterate readers and the expertise text-readers? Answering the questions raised by marginalized text-readers means giving an audience to marginal voices; it makes the ordinary text-reader an important conversation partners in the development of biblical scholarship in Africa. The oppressed text-readers’ attempt to bear witness to horrors and pains of human suffering renders an interpretation that focuses on a recovery of neglected themes and counter literature in the Bible. An insightful departure from the older, long-established hegemonic work of Euro-centric interpretations to readiness for a new hermeneutical orientation calls for a broadening of textual-understanding in Africa. The new textual-understanding should not be pegged on intellectual exercises invented behind a desk, but a serious search for answers to vital concerns in a situation of hermeneutical struggle and search for meaning. In any task of examining the Euro-centric hermeneutic encounter with the Agĩkũyũ motif of lamentation a postcolonial recovery of neglected biblical and cultural themes as well as counter literature,
which often lie dormant within the text, is inevitable. It identifies and affirms the crucial role played by lamentation which is part and parcel of Agĩkũyũ bequeath that cannot be simply dismissed. Since it is historically given that wherever the Agĩkũyũ felt under siege lamentation is apparent as an enormous hermeneutical force we do not need to invent a new method of reading the Bible and inter-preaching reality because voices of lamentation are there to help us build on what is already going on. Cases of lamentations in point are the Mũthĩrĩgũ dances-songs which by extension fuelled the formation of Mau Mau struggle and the lament gospel and secular music sung during 2007/8 post-election chaos.

The benefits of lamentations in the problem of the land among the Agĩkũyũ are enormous because: 1) The phenomenon of urbanization continues to encroach the family land denying the community its right to keep the many memories and heritage enjoined to its homeland. 2) The prime land is being bought and owned by real estate developers who plan to sell it piecemeal. 3) The reality of land degradation displayed by loss of biodiversity, destruction of ecosystem, desertification, and global climate changes are chronic. Thus, the inevitable and untimely post-colonial relinquishment of communal claims to the land continues being sanctioned by forces akin to changing social and environmental landscape. Such claim makes, lamentation a process of inaugurating fresh dialogue between the text-readers and the reality of loss related to the wounds of trauma, clearing the ground for further hermeneutical conversations and future theological investigations in Gĩkũyũland.

Our examination of how ordinary text-readers responded to, interacted with and adapted to imperialism, and how they were ultimately opposed to European text-reading structures is crucial in this study. It opens the ordinary text-readers to a process of historical
consciousness that led to earlier engagement into diverse collective acts of resistance as displayed by earlier generation of text-readers which had ignored the patronizing orders by speaking insolently, and criticizing the hermeneutical claims of missionaries, doctors, and educators. But, how comes that, even, in the post-colonial era, the mainstream biblical scholarship remains plagued by Eurocentric myths and rhetorical driven stereotypes? The purpose and function of lamentation in text-reading process is thus, fundamental in defining the way African hermeneutical process approach contemporary contexts, problems, and possibilities. It is geared towards self-reflection and self-realization of text-readers’ capacity to recognize and evaluate different hermeneutical points of views. The interpretive skills which are fundamentals of text-readers’ ability to think creatively and critically are therefore used by the study to heighten the text-readers ability to recognize opportunities and seize them from a crucial hermeneutical angle. Essentially, this study aims at advancing a thesis that biblical motif of lamentation continues to appeal to ordinary Agĩkũyũ text-readers in a radical departure from the academia enterprise. Thus, it is crucial to listen again to the missing and suppressed voices of lamentation among the ordinary Agĩkũyũ text-readers who represent the other side of the missing part of the story which at least expresses incongruity with overriding narratives.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to:

i) Survey the hermeneutical role of appreciating, giving thought, living out and sustaining the lamentable state of ordinary text-readers’ socio-economic realities among the Gĩkũyũ community.

ii) Examine the Euro-centric hermeneutic encounter with the Gĩkũyũ motif of
lamentation in colonial and post-independence era.

iii) Identify the dynamics of Rachel’s narrative, in Jeremiah 31:15-17 with various factors that lead the ordinary indigenous poor and marginalized text-readers in Gĩkũyũland to continue lamenting despite their conversion to Christianity.

iv) Suggest general and specific integration of biblical motif of lamentation into a holistic critical method of text-reading, among the ordinary Agĩkũyũ text-readers.

1.4.2 Research Premise
The research premises are as follows:

i) The lamentable socio-economic realities of the Gĩkũyũ community are not fully appreciated, not thoroughly thought through, and not fully lived out by ordinary text-readers.

ii) The biblical motif of lamentation is deprived of its place in the history and experiences of the Gĩkũyũ people by the Euro-centric hermeneutical legacy.

iii) Introducing the ordinary text-readers to the dynamics of Rachel’s narrative, in Jeremiah 31:15-17, can help the Gĩkũyũ people understand the crucial role played by lamentations in ordering the society.

iv) A general and specific integration of biblical motif of lamentation constitutes a holistic critical method of text-reading, among the ordinary Agĩkũyũ text-readers.

1.4.3 Research Questions
The study was based on the following research questions:

i) What is the hermeneutical role of appreciating, giving thought, living out and sustaining the lamentable state of ordinary text-readers’ socio-economic realities
among the Agĩkũyũ before the advent of the missionaries?

ii) Does lamentation, as a literary genre, in the Eurocentric methods of text-reading effectively address the social-economic realities of the Gĩkũyũ community?

iii) Why do the ordinary indigenous poor and marginalized text-readers, among the Agĩkũyũ, continue reading lamentation texts from their marginal status behind the back of mainstream biblical interpretation of their churches?

iv) How can the Agĩkũyũ motif of lamentation attain an integral place in the development of biblical hermeneutics in Africa?

1.4.4 Significance of the Study

This study is useful to the African Church leaders, pastors and lay evangelists as well as the general laity in relating the root paradigms that underlie Gĩkũyũ and biblical motifs of lamentation, to contemporary exteriorization that could lead to an effective way of reading the text. Though, this study is limited to the case study of the Agĩkũyũ for it responds to Gĩkũyũ people’s needs and aspirations by capturing their world view and articulating it through their own thought forms and patterns; Its usefulness is applicable elsewhere in Africa; especially among those communities that have suffered colonial oppression and other related disasters. It contributes to theological knowledge in the area of enculturation and general biblical theology.

Thus, the study provides the Church in Africa and other places of the world with information on how to apply the textual-meaning on a here-and-now because: (1) It acts as a replica for use by pastors, African text-readers and theological educators who seek to understand why the ordinary text-readers continue reading the text from their marginal
status behind the mainstream biblical interpretation of their churches. (2) It guides the Christian educators who teach the ordinary text-readers in-reactivating their beliefs and symbols from their historical past without a loss of their faith. (3) It provides the rationale of redemptive honesty in a drive towards open interpretation and appropriation of the text by the poor and the oppressed who read the Bible from their social context. (4) It stands for communitarian expressions of pain in an on-going hermeneutical discourse at local and global arena, which values the locally available critical reading methods by taking into account the cry of humanity from its depths. (5) It directs the trends of National Land Commission of Kenya in revising, consolidating and rationalizing the existing land laws as well as the Truth Justice and Reconciliation Commission in addressing the issues of historical injustices. The study contributes towards a balanced development of African biblical hermeneutics, particularly in Kenya, and also towards biblical hermeneutics in general. Thus, its findings are in the process contextualized to offer counter information and also check the negative and stereotypical images, emanating from powerful authoritative sources, by adding two categories of previously ignored voices. Namely: (1) Remembrance, which connects people’s cultural heritage with contemporary suffering in a prophetic way; and (2) Creative actualization, which involves and empowers the text-readers and listeners of the word of God to become the subjects and masters of their own destiny.

1.2.6 Justification of the study

Attempts to identify the nerve center of African biblical hermeneutics out of the way ordinary text-readers develop, transmit and depend upon “hidden transcript” to survive the dominant transcripts of Euro-centrism culminated into a post-colonial probing on the locus of lamentation as a “hidden text.” Lamenting and listening to laments presents the African
text-reader with a strategy of re-reading historical realities differently and thereby maintaining the chance to survive (Scot, 1985; 1990). In Africa where humanity live lives of anxieties, tensions and desperations; lamentation is well captured by biblical and African motifs of responding to societal strains. As an indigenous art of questioning, knowing, living and experiencing reality outside the scope and rationality of dominant text-reading policies lamentation suggests to this study the possibility of enhancing a formidable strategic force of subverting the pretentious claims of colonial hermeneutics.

As a marginal voice, lamentation is a rampant and common practice among the ordinary text-readers who protest forced subscription to distorted interpretive categories of dominant institutions of Church or State. Thus, lamentation is all through identified by this study as a foundational formulation of elemental realities in a given art of interpreting and managing victims’ lives differently. Seen in this light marginal voices are harnessed to reinforce the role of lamentation in their hermeneutic of reordering the colonially disoriented societies. As hermeneutic outlet for emotional disturbances generated by socio-religious-economic and political disequilibrium of foreign aggression lamentation conjectures a naissance poetic narrative and motif. It provides text-readers with basics of self-understandings in a society whose raison d’être is defined against the backdrop of sufferings inflicted by consecutive African regimes and church hierarchies.

Thus, the societal uproar is raised against the official interpretation and application of the word of God where a hermeneutical dissonance between the ordinary text-readers and the academia is inevitable. When hermeneutical perspectives are not informed by day-to-day struggles in life, the people will end up being detached from reality. The importance of
bringing to speech all the inner pain and suffering caused by displacements and
disinherence of the Gĩkũyũ people starts with a confrontation of human suffering. Probing
God and God’s actions is an anticipation of a new humanity in the midst of God’s silence.
Thus, it gives Gĩkũyũ text readers a concrete portrait of its suffering which rings true to its
audience. It plays an important role in Bible interpretation within the African context: hence
the public outcry and processing of pain in Gĩkũyũland is sifted and then mirrored by
biblical texts for its effective acts of releasing new social imagination. But, Western
academia enterprises in Gĩkũyũland are up-to-date suspected of subverting the Gĩkũyũ text
readers from their social situation and being fond of ignoring the Gĩkũyũ people’s Sitz-im-
Leben, because they are produced in the West and transported like a commodity to Africa.

The Post-colonial reading of the Bible among the Gĩkũyũ people is informed by the fact that
colonialism is a phenomenon which has a direct bearing on present and earlier collective
indigenous hermeneutical concerns. Two things seem peculiarly important in post-colonial
understanding of how Gĩkũyũ people acts from the imperatives formed out of their cultural
encounters with the social, political, economic, and environmental wreckages and
opportunities generated by colonial encounters: 1) The hermeneutical frames that have been
placed around a shared past 2) The ideologies and dominations which have made certain
histories to be unspoken. Post-colonial criticism in its art of abhorring rigid orthodoxies and
legitimating suspicion of plans, schemes, and programs that lead to endless competition in
their evasion of text-readers’ common search for solution to life problems resonates with
lamentation. This study identified unique particulars of an African community that has
previously rendered inert the generalizing frameworks built around the colonial text-reading
policy as a hermeneutical response to a given social location; the study preferred its choice
of Gĩkũyũ people of Kenya. The study benefits the community through its willingness to engage in dialogue with the poor and the marginalized; it overcomes the hermeneutical tensions among the Agĩkũyũ who have through the love of education become a progressive and increasingly Christian community that uses the Bible in relation to salvation. The community’s vein of protest and non-conformity is so pronounced in its day-to-day life; which is explained by its history of strong support for the independent schools and independent churches. This vein is presently missing in the mainstream of post-colonial hermeneutical action in Gĩkũyũland (cf. Anderson, 2005: 124). The Agĩkũyũ shall find an inclusive approach and recover their capacity for self-critical reflection which if taken seriously by academia can be a powerful force for humanizing the entire spectrum of African biblical hermeneutics. The study in its broad social analysis offers a hermeneutic basis of recovering the intercommunication and interpretation of all social structures embedded to Gĩkũyũ land tenure system. Sensitivity to other forms of oppression among the Agĩkũyũ makes lamentation the primary locus of the power for text-reading and self-affirmation that leads to the healing of the wounds of trauma. However, this study is not limited to Gĩkũyũ people only; it could be replicated in various forms in other parts of Kenya and Africa.

1.4.5 Scope, Limitation and Constraints of the Study

This study is keen to reappraise the biblical motif of lamentation in the light of Gĩkũyũ worldview of expressing grief. It draws insights from the present-day memories of 1920s, which are known as the years when the text-readers (athoomi) started reflecting the textual message with their life experiences. The study is restricted to the investigation of how the biblical and African motifs of lamentation function in the development of critical text
reading methods among the Agĩkũyũ. This restriction means that other elements of African religion are not covered, except where they are related to Agĩkũyũ motif of lamentation. Similarly, the role of lamentation is very wide with anthropological, psychological sociological-economic-cultural and political aspects and, therefore, it is not studied in its entirety. The exploration and understanding to what extent ordinary text-readers can imagine a future out of their resistance against the denial of pain. The indigenous reading resources that base on views, values, conviction and practices are challenged and shaped by hermeneutical impact of Rachel’s lamentation. Thus, the text reader attempts to see their experiences being woven into biblical narrations of a genuine history of humanity with the reality of pain, suffering, amazement, death and life.

1.4.5.1 The Denial of Pain

The most dangerous legacy of colonialism is the continuous domination of a privileged few over the majority poor masses in Africa. This domination goes hand in hand with the denial of the human cry, which has so far, served the general legitimization of the European empires in Africa (Bankole, 1971:9-15). This denial was readily applied to calm the people when they inclined to see injustice and tyranny in the acts of the rulers. Beside this denial, is a series of downsides in the form of complex catastrophes like racism, drought, famine, tribalism, land clashes, military coups, genocides and subsequent epidemics; with traumatic socio-economic and psychological consequences? This reality continues to affect not only the way Africans address the internal issues, especially conflict and violence; but also how they interpret the Word of God (biblical text). Attempts made to mollify these wounded memories through a biblical text-reading approach based on Euro-centric enlightenment values, have proved fruitless. Denial of lamentation might seem like a simple thing, but it
can have serious repercussions in the life of a nation. A direct consequence of this is inhibited resentment, silent opposition (or outright rebellion) that has, in some cases, been avoided and suspected as a possible trigger of schisms (cf. Ndegwah, 2007: 4).

This state of affairs has led to a hermeneutical disconnect between biblical hermeneutics in Africa and people’s local situation and has become a stumbling block to people’s life, and their articulation of alternative perception of reality is at stake. This impediment is not good for hearers and doers of the word of God as it plays the role of widening the gap between theory and practice. Due to the proximity between religion and life, the sacred and the secular; this dichotomy is a potential threat to the development of biblical hermeneutics in Africa; and also to the formulations of socio-economic and political policies that are directly beneficial to the masses. It is this kind of scenario that the current study seeks to address; and if possible, to get rid of not by introducing a new method of reading the Bible but it will build on what is already going on at the margins. This study, therefore, contends that the aftermath of these invasions is a crisis of enormous proportions both to the social elites and to the general populace (usually described in Kiswahili as wananchi wa kawaida – ordinary citizens). Overcoming the colonial narrative and Euro-centric hermeneutics is one of the most serious challenges of our time, because it requires a new method of interpreting reality, and of reading the biblical text; in order to change the course of this disturbed and traumatic identity. Thus, the need to read the Bible against the concrete human situation, (i.e. through the socio-economic and political realities in Africa) makes lamentation through its variety of laments a focal point for African understanding of the biblical text and the entire world.

1.4.5.2 Indigenous Reading Resources
This study focuses on the use of lamentation as an indigenous text-reading resource and invests on it as a foundation or bedrock of critical post-colonial biblical scholarship. This suggests the need to poetically bring on board the narrative events of concrete interactions among persons, communities, and the state in order to start a process of opening up to the biblical text. Through a post-colonial theoretical re-examination of the palatability of lamentation practices, the historical critical consciousness to the African context of pain, confusion and danger is brought to the center of text-reading. The study identifies lament form, or genre, with one of the methods of analysis that groups lament poems in the scripture as follows, by its exhibition of a definite structure: Address to God; Complaint/protestation of innocence; Confession of Trust; Petition; Words of Assurance and Vows of praise (O’Connor, 2002: 9). Each section has a specific purpose and is made up of components that function in important and unique ways, which this study has discussed in a separate chapter. Re-visiting lamentations suggests a post-colonial text-reading mode that incorporates the reading of the unread texts of Africans’ wounded past, into a local framework of reading the Bible.

This study probes the role played by lamentations as a creative and critical art of incorporating ordinary text-readers into the process of biblical hermeneutics. Due to denial of the underlying reality lamentation texts were and are being read outside the authorized reading version during and long after the colonial rule in Africa. The ordinary text-readers’ stories attests to social life that has never been made visible in modern biblical scholarship and so it is important for post-colonial readers to notice the particular re-interpretive moves characteristically made in this alternative sense of lived memory and reality. The reason for this is that “where grief is denied and suffering is kept isolated, unexpressed, and
unprocessed in a community, we may be sure that hopelessness will follow” (Brueggemann, 1987: 88).

Re-visiting and re-reading the biblical motif of lamentation from a premeditated African perspective can provide ordinary text-readers tools of challenging the inadequacies of Euro-centric hermeneutical principles. It would also guarantee a common access to dignity, and basic human rights to the marginalized lot. The key hermeneutical question of this study is this: ‘How can we secure the indigenous quest as a vantage point for a critical reading method that resonates with Africans’ lifestyle in a hostile world?’ The question above will be answered and its ultimate goal hopefully achieved for a specific group of people in a particular region: The Agikũyũ of Central Kenya. Hence, the study traces the contours of successive expressions of lamentation paradigms, in Gikũyũland where ordinary text-readers among the poor, oppressed, marginalized lot, exploited classes, despised culture and so forth are allowed to express their hermeneutical perspectives. These hermeneutical perspectives are vital to the proper expression of pain and suffering through the interpretation and understanding of events and circumstances. Nevertheless, this perspective is captured outside Euro-centric concern on precise chronology of its development.

1.4.5.3 The Theme of Exile and its Hermeneutical Impact of Lamentation

This study explores the exile ordeals and the hermeneutical impact of Rachel’s lamentation, as it is used and organized in the poetic tradition of Jeremiah 31: 15-17. Though the Gikũyũ people are not homogeneous because they live in different spaces either in the city or the lands they have bought away from original home their imaginative enterprise have stayed very close to the present reality of suffering and displacement. The concepts of exile
(güthamio) and captivity (ithamĩrio) among the Agĩkũyũ needs not to take a big dramatic event caused by Western cultural invasions, but it may come unnoticed and unacknowledged. However, the term gütaňwo nĩ maundũ ma mũtũrĩre (taken captive by bad lifestyle) means exile and captivity may take a form of addiction, brutality, indifference, cynicism, and despair which is showing up all over Kenya in terms of addictions that are related to alcohol and drug abuse, child abuse, wife abuse and other endless abuses.

It is a sweeping destructive force that tends to annihilate the youthful and productive generation en-masse further threatening the life and future of this community. Such abuses coupled with HIV/Aids holocaust and rampant sexual impotence among men makes lamentation and exile ordeal a present day reality because children are no more. The study has not considered Agĩkũyũ laments in isolation, but in relation to those of other contemporary societies, making historical similarities with other societies in the world. Rachel was one of the wives of Jacob, and the mother of Joseph and Benjamin and, as such, the matriarch of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh (c.f. Genesis 30:22-24, 35: 16-18). These tribes represented the Northern Kingdom that existed as a province of the Assyrian empire until its collapse in 620 BCE. In the year 587 BCE, the Southern Kingdom also fell under the power of the Babylonians. Thus, the period was cataclysmic in the history of Israel since it marked the relinquishment of the known world to the Israelites and ushered in a new life in captivity (Brueggemann, 1984).

The plight of Israel under the Syrian, Assyrian, and later on, Babylonian captivities are the background of Rachel’s lamentation and weeping. The year 587 BCE is the focal point of lamentation because it focuses on the Assyro-Babylonian policies of conquest and the
insatiable desire for power, wealth and status. The Babylonians had systematically massacred the people of Israel who resisted the invasion. Many were enslaved and the elite ruling class was taken into exile. The city of Jerusalem was devastated and Solomon’s temple, royal places and homes were subjected to a massive wave of destruction (Jeremiah 2:31-37; 15:5-7). The lamentations of Rachel came in to give, an account of this catastrophic phenomenon of exile and its consequent destruction of the symbols and pillars (of monarchy, priesthood and prophesy) that held Israel together as a nation.

The theme of Babylonian exile and captivity as the locus of this new orientation to colonial reality becomes an overwhelming reference point for biblical hermeneutics in Gĩkũyũland. According to Brueggemann (1988: 6); “exile as a decisive event in the Old Testament stands for faith as for history because the notion of exile is initially geographical. It suggests physical dislocation. Exile, however, is not primarily geographical it is a cultural, spiritual condition;” The very awareness that Gĩkũyũ community is in a hostile, alien environment where the preponderance temptation is absorption, that is, to involuntarily accept and conform to the dominant Eurocentric values which are incongruent with African beliefs and destiny. The alternative to hermeneutical assimilation is despondency and craving for non-being because community’s situation is indeed hopeless and helpless. The Babylonian captivity makes exile a very useful organizing metaphor for Gĩkũyũ people’s experience because; Israel’s exile is largely paradigmatic and a model but not an extensive historical fact. Though, not everyone was deported in Gĩkũyũland, all Gĩkũyũ people then and subsequently participated in the sense of being exiles, because the whole community lived between assimilation and despair, where they were summoned to fresh faith. Like Israel’s ordeal of Babylonian invasion and occupation of Israel; the Gĩkũyũland experience under
European has revealed its own socio-economic and political effects that link Agĩkũyũ lamentation practices to Rachel’s lamentation. These effects feature on experiences of invasion, occupation, exile and captivity.

Upon invasion of Gĩkũyũland by oppressors, the ideological support and framework system of colonial regime were now able to forcefully recruit most of the Gĩkũyũ men to go and fight in foreign lands during the First and Second World Wars. Afterwards the Mau Mau freedom fighters were en-masse detained and forced out of Gĩkũyũland into prisons, concentration and labor camps. Others were forced to seek hideouts into forests. Eventually, the Gĩkũyũland was left under the hands of loyalists where weak men, women and children were forced and a massed to colonial regime manned villages which now easier targets for colonial missions of indoctrinating the heathens. In addition, families of detained members were subjected to colonial apparatus of intimidation, persecution, induced fear, and violence. When detainees returned home they had to suffer emotional trauma owing to cultural shocks and effects of prevalent seeds of discord sown among the Agĩkũyũ.

The Gĩkũyũ community in its response to its marginal status had taken a new text-reading approach with new dimensions and textual meanings. This community’s indigenous hermeneutical response and action forced it to retreat to the periphery only to evolve into a complexly weaved institution of distinctive beliefs, values, rites, symbols and relationships, that maintained a line of continuity with past and through which the word of God was easily communicated and lived. Through biblical text reading the detained members of the community had confidently and competently positioned themselves to adapt to their new reality of foreign occupation. This accommodation was heralded by ownership of Rachel’s
narrative of lamentation (Jeremiah 31:15-17). But, rather than cut links with their Gĩkũyũ customs, the text-readers in detention and concentration camps, had creatively expanded and even invented Rachel’s narrative into a new understanding of their community. This understanding was based on their colonial experience and their interaction with the Bible. Thus, these members of Gĩkũyũ community had no trouble in interpreting the new realities in light of Israelites’ captivity under the European Nebuchadnezzar.

The Agĩkũyũ matriarch Mũmbi was now perceived to take the place of the weeping Rachel under the mighty hand of Babylonian emperor. The European colonial invaders were also equated with Babylonians captors. Like Rachel whose cry for her children in captivity was answered by God, they firmly believed that Mũmbi’s cry for her children will never go unanswered. The God of Rachel was now acknowledged and affirmed as the same God whom the Gĩkũyũ community knew long before the coming of European. As Elkins (2005: 12) points out, although all indigenous groups were affected by the British colonial rule in Kenya, none experienced a transformation as intense as the Gĩkũyũ, because of land alienation.

The loss of Gĩkũyũland and its tenure system to foreign invaders meant the loss of community’s livelihood, sense of pride and self-respect as well as the sense of its destiny and obligations. The historical impact of this alienation created an exilic condition of divided personality, which Ndegwah (2007: 56) calls cultural schizophrenia, while others use different terms like dual religious systems (Schreiter, 1985: 148-155), dualism (Walligo, 1986: 22), double identity (Wachege, 2001: 31-34) and cultural depersonalization (Wiredu, 2005: 9). All these signify the suffering of a people, in the face of land alienation and
eventual total dispossession. This can be compared to the cultural trauma that the ancient Israelites went through, when they ceased to exist as a nation and taken to exile in Babylon.
1.5 Literature Review and Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

This section comprises a review of some literature related to this study under the following themes: Lamentation in the context of Agĩkũyũ historical experiences; the Euro-centric hermeneutical encounter and conflict with Agĩkũyũ; the post-colonial theory; lamentation as a distinctive hermeneutical voice among the poor and the marginalized and the incorporation of lamentations as indigenous resources for biblical hermeneutics. The literature review helps us to appreciate the research’s approach of using lamentation as a conduit of interpretation. Further, this chapter sets out to identify major gaps in the available literature in relation to outstanding issues related to the development of biblical hermeneutics in Africa.

1.5.1 Lamentations in Agĩkũyũ Historical Experiences

A number of key historical scholars, among them Anderson (2005), Lonsdale (2002), Githieya (1997), Sandgren (1989) and Macpherson (1970) concur on their claim that; of all the Agĩkũyũ memories, none are more poignant than those of the period between 1920 and 1930s, which was a deeply intense period of trial and testing. It was a period marked by far reaching social, economic and political changes; arising from the effects of European occupation; which was greatly stimulated by the First World War and the increased European settlement that followed it. According to Maina-wa-Kinyatti (1987), the Gĩkũyũ folksongs were a site of lamentation and conduits of radical dissonance and dislocations of the Agĩkũyũ in moments of crises. In general, such songs are keen to give fresh utterances of a community whose old worldview, old faith presumptions and old language were now radically challenged (c.f. Brueggemann, 1995: 19). It is through these challenges and utterances that the horizon of Agĩkũyũ worldview situates itself, in transmitting the entire
body of values in making the reader to see organic connections between human world and the natural world. Thus, the advent of Mūthūrūgū as a Gĩkũyũ cry of distress was the rise of an oppositional practice which, as Lonsdale (2002: 179-181) has observed elsewhere, had “evolved out of the overwhelming social inequalities and anxieties created by colonialism and missionaries.”

Mūthūrūgū polemical utterances were not a matter of opposing, simply for the sake of opposing. On the contrary, it was the raising of questions, in a process of stock-taking, which tried to restore and recuperate memories, events, and cultural texts that were suppressed or overlooked by missionaries and the colonialists. Mūthūrūgū dance was essentially performed by the ordinary people to provide standing ground outside the imperial system which had a long history of denying their existence. The pretentious claims of the system were evaluated, critiqued, and challenged through dancers’ reflections on their own experience of in life in contexts of marginalization. Ordinary text-readers and hearers (athoomi) with little or no formal education at all, were well placed to articulate their experiences, analyze their social situation, recognize structures behind this situation, make connections, see imperfections and propose alternatives.

As things stand today, the socio-economic realities, of the Agĩkũyũ, are locked up in one scenario; where grief and fear, resignation and hope reside in the same room, overlapping and struggling with each other. The expression of Mūthūrūgū dance and other spontaneous songs of protest pushed the colonialists understanding of the power of Gĩkũyũ songs in forming and retrieving cultural memories. It was a living symbol of how the Agĩkũyũ expressed their inner pain and suffering. This scenario was different from the prevalent
leaning, among the Christian missions, which was to interpret and judge other people’s religion and to see them as material things instead of the human person as the purpose of development (Magesa, 2004: 187).

The expression of Mũthũrũgũ is in this sense translated into a paradigmatic event which Njoya (1976: 385) identifies as a “declaration that the time for drastic change has dawned.” Another interesting account is that of Karanja (1999:148-149) in an anonymous poem entitled “Let us first cry to God to enable us,” and published in Mũiguithania (Unifier) Paper, by Kenyatta. The poem was drawn from Lamentation 5: 1-22; and compares the Agĩkũyũ’s colonial experience with that of the Israelites, during the exile. Karanja’s enthusiasm underscores the colonial reaction to the Agĩkũyũ laments as colonial administrators sought permission from London to have this paper banned. However, Karanja’s work lacks a framework of raising fundamental and searching questions through interpretation of biblical texts in the post-colonial Africa. This weakness notwithstanding, his work is helpful in defining lamentation in the Gĩkũyũ context of imagining a new socio-cultural experience that goes beyond the constraints of colonialism and neo-colonialism.

The Gĩkũyũ community had finally lamented and concluded that there was no difference between the colonizing European settler and his brother the white missionary leading to the infamous expression, Gũtirĩ Mũthũngũ na Mũbĩa (Baur, 1994: 479). This gave the Agĩkũyũ the muscle to generate a deep suspicion of missionaries’ corruption of the text by what seemed to add an extra commandment in order to suit their interpretation. This was, for the first time publicly articulated during the Mũthũrũgũ era and also through a declaration by the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) during the circumcision controversy, which was seen as
an affront against the Gĩkũyũ culture. KCA through a memorandum angrily retorted to the missionaries, and said, there is no eleventh commandment, which says ‘Thou shall not circumcise’ (c.f. Githieya, 1997; Sandgren, 1989 and Baur, 1994). In this case, the underlying assumption of missionaries and colonial politics on Mũthĩrĩgũ lament-dance was reflected in the *en-masse* branding of the voiced cry to be a militant response to a new faith. As a result one stanza protested this assumption by stating the following:

The church you are liars (X 2)
You cheated the governor that
“We were singing with spears”
Sorry! Sorry my dear which is meaningless

According to Kang’ethe-wa-Kamuyu (1981), the KCA declaration was to challenge the missionary control of biblical interpretation for it pegged itself on female circumcision. The Gĩkũyũ lamentation was an expression that the community had problems with blind patriotism of missionaries’ fundamentalism that consistently attacked the communal conscientiousness and its worldview. By 1926, the Gĩkũyũ community and its text-readers had, through the KCA, made a complete hermeneutical break with missionaries over the Gĩkũyũ Bible version’s revelation that, Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a Mũirĩtũ (an initiated girl) and not a Kĩrĩgũ (uninitiated girl). This firm indigenous reading is followed by a series of hermeneutical conflicts, waged against the missionaries’ stand on questions of polygamy, dances and female circumcision.

According to Kenyatta (1938), the Hebrew Bible had resonated very well with indigenous voices across the socio-economic-epistemic-cultural and political axis. For instance, the polygamous unions and ancestral veneration of Agĩkũyũ community concurred with Hebrew Bible teachings. Thus, the Agĩkũyũ readers were astonished to see missionaries’ religious
contradictions in what led to unreasonable condemnation of Africans for fulfilling that which was endorsed and condoned in the Bible. The European superiority shaped their biblical hermeneutics, which was used by the British Empire to bring “new and strange way of life, with its sometimes incomprehensive demands and ideas (Mũriũki, 1974:136).” The concern of providing the indigenous text-readers (athoomi) with apparatus of indoctrinating others was achieved through the introduction of Western Education in Gĩkũyũland. By 1930s, Euro-centrism had already threatened the communitarian approach to text-reading, which the early Gĩkũyũ elites had used in their reaction to colonialism. The missionaries’ mind-set towards Africa had, at this point, blocked the indigenous expressions of pain and suffering through its wholesale negation of Agĩkũyũ culture.

In this case, Mudimbe (1988), Ngũgĩ-wa-Thiong’o (1993) and Dube (1996) underscore the function of text-reading ascertained upon the dawn of colonization, civilization and Christianization. In this aspect, the works of Kenyatta (1938), Macpherson (1970), Temu (1971), Njoya (1976), Mbiti (1986) and Githieya (1997) have, on the one hand, portrayed Mũthĩrĩgũ as a Gĩkũyũ cry of distress with a stereotyped and metaphorical language of raising questions and images touching on Gĩkũyũ people’s experiences and feelings, at some primordial level. On the other hand, these scholarly works seem to mirror the African struggle to develop liberation praxis out of the natives’ social status of marginalization. The study by these scholars contributes to our investigations, on the impact of the missionaries’ attitude towards lamentation of the Agĩkũyũ because they resonate with this study at two levels. The first level is their data, on Gĩkũyũ community’s grassroots interaction with Christianity, as the center stage of these works.
The second level is the fronting for indigenous creativity and initiatives that endow the study with both form and content of the Gikũyũ worldview, in its reaction to the skewed use of the Bible. Although these two levels are clearly captured, they lack a reading process that challenges the scholars to envisage these realities of pain and, therefore, to think and design frameworks that nurture a scholarship that is socially engaged and also accountable to the people, in addressing the most burning issues of the day. However, these scholarly works are invaluable in ascertaining the cultural context, in which the Bible came to be a chief hegemonic text, in Gĩkũyũland and how the Gĩkũyũ community sensed the Euro-centric hermeneutic snare. Similarly, these scholarly works underscore the provisions of the symbolic language of challenging and exposing the alienation and disintegration, through which the community’s distress is seen.

1.5.2 Euro-centric Hermeneutic Encounter with the Agĩkũyũ

According to Githieya (1997), Kibicho (2006) Kang’ethe-wa-Kamuyu (1981) and Kirika (1988), the missionaries used the Bible in the disengagement of the Gĩkũyũ community from its social, spiritual and cultural practices. These include polygamy, ancestral veneration, divination, folksongs and female circumcision, without offering an alternative; thus, creating a permanent change in life circumstances, psyche and attitude of the people. Consequently, becoming a Christian meant disowning the Gĩkũyũ culture as retrogressive or outdated, recognizing authoritative foreign church fathers, swearing not to circumcise one’s daughters, or to consult the local medicine man, the departed spirits and so on (Baur, 1994). Also, according to Ngũgĩ-wa-Thiong’o (1993: 3), such missionary exercise was an enthusiastic announcement about the arrival of the gun and the Bible in a divine mission of
uprooting and suppressing the pagan and savage cultures of the world. Hence, the Bible was used to confuse and hoodwink the Africans.

The earlier accounts portray how the British settlers and the missionaries were schizoid about Christianity as their emblem of superiority over tribal superstition (Boer, 1984). In a rejoinder, Oosthuizen (1968) has also claimed that colonialism, in its pretense of executing the divine mission, had no choice but “to lead savage nations into light and liberty and to shape their future through God’s glory, their salvation, and England’s honour.” On the same breath Oosthuizen (1968: 9), Ngũgĩ-wa-Thiong’o (1986) and Dube (1996) also insist that the success of colonization is linked with paternalistic and racial discrimination which is inseparably the historical usage of Biblical narratives to judge other people’s cultures and texts.

This underscore the colonial exegetes projects of creating cultic dependency on West through identities and representations of colonial subjects through, the use of well circumscribed and established narratives. Such processes had ensured a smooth penetration of Euro-centric cultural voices and their socio-economic and political consequences in Gĩkũyũland (Mudimbe, 1988: 13). This colonial principle of legitimating functioned among the ordinary text-readers and interpreters just the way it had succeeded in shaping everything and everyone else in the empire; for it was the ideological intent of the empire to take the colonized (Agĩkũyũ) out of their (Gĩkũyũ) perceptions of reality, in order to think in terms of European values, hopes, and fears. Though these works are invaluable to this study in finding the roots of Euro-centrism in Gĩkũyũland; they lack an explicitly developed line of recognizing the difficulties and grief associated with the communal effects of loss.
1.5.3 The Post-colonial Theory

The post-colonial theory symbolizes an interdisciplinary approach and it employs a strategy of resisting the manner in which the Bible was used by missionaries in empire building (Dube 1996: 37-38). It is a difficult and highly complex means of reworking the colonized people’s way back into indigenous interpretive framework for understanding the text. Colonialism was an influential episode in African history whose impact has been profoundly felt in every African country (O’Conner, 1983). So, Post-colonialism as a concept has been controversial and difficult to define among researchers, biblical scholars and historians (Sugirtharajah, 1998: 93), since the term covers so many fields of study and particular ways of proceeding (Perdue 2005: 285); it connotes a hotly contested term because post-colonialism does not denote that colonialism has passed; it refers to an overall analysis of the methods and effects of imperialism as a continuing reality in global relations (cf. Dube 1998). However, hermeneutical insights of accomplished scholars, writers, historiographers and artists who are self-described as post-colonial theorists have taken seriously the reality of the empire, of colonialism and colonization, as an omnipresent, inescapable and overwhelming reality in the world (Sugirtharajah, 2006:56).

together into geographical or economic blocks. This approach was to ideologically serve the interests of reinforcing, validating and justifying the colonial regime’s unquestionable authority on cultural, moral and religious ideas which were imposed on Africans. But, stories of heroes and heroines, pathos and victory, sorrow and joy, sojourn and fulfillment embedded in biblical texts of lamentation were beyond the hermeneutical controls of the British Empire’s hermeneutical constraints.

The reading of these stories has progressively subjected the empire into a hermeneutical contest by placing the West against the rest of the world. This contest is apparent in an interpretive enterprise that thrives in a suffering context that nurture and nourish the questioning voices of lamentation. Rather than trying to place lamentation in the past or suggesting a continuous line from that past into our present, the study contends that colonial domination and exploitation of local values and attitudes did not cease upon the exit of colonial masters. The West embodies a vast amount of subjugator’s ideals; values and worldview which are invested in producing knowledge about the subjugated and so West is placed to legitimate its domination and exploitation of former colonies. As a result these hegemonic experiences have always enjoined the colonized to a process of repudiating their cultures, languages, values, and beliefs for the sake of survival.

According to these scholars, subjugation is reinforced by the interpretation of the biblical text from Euro-centric cultural orientations; and a limited input of African historical perspectives that tend to nurture the absurdity, underlying the hermeneutical conflict which subsists between academicians and ordinary text-readers. Post-colonial theorists like Surgirtharajah (2006, 1999), Dube (1996, 2000), Segovia (1999, 2000), Mosala (1986), and
Upkong (2001) offers a basic methodological approach to biblical studies where critical interpretation of lamentation text in Old Testament and New Testament canon is done through various strands of post-colonial theory. Their works nourishes and nurtures a hermeneutic of suspicion in their analysis of texts for they all attempt to unravel the colonial silencing of text-readers’ voices. The culture of denial which have in the past eliminated ordinary text-readers from the hermeneutical radar is subjected to text-readers’ biases, partisan politics, and self-interest in their promotion of their theories, their work, and their place in the world (Perdue 2005:112). Post-colonialism works thus best in studying and applying biblical texts in an endeavor of overturning a world that dominate, marginalize, control, manipulate, and dehumanize the ordinary African text-readers context.

By paying attention to the issues of imperialism and hegemony the text-readers is placed to subvert the master’s narrative by overturning the colonial worldview. Thus, the theory offers a reading strategy and a practice that envisage best a theoretical framework of scrutinizing, analyzing and interpreting the colonial domination through cultural and imperial texts. It directs and guides hermeneutical shift from cultural centers to cultural margins taking concrete shape around the struggle against the over representations of colonialism. The denial of this shift has failed to accord the text-reading process with familiar and powerful hermeneutical expectations through post-colonial preservations of memories which has figured various ways of a cultural encounter laced with colonial hermeneutical intent. Clarifying why Euro-centric hermeneutics are hindrance to the selfhood of colonized text-readers and why past oppression still cast their shadows over the present text-reading process. So, a post-colonial analysis of biblical and African motif of lamentation begins with the recognition that the colonized were spontaneously removed from the hermeneutical
radar. Lamentation as a component of post-colonial theory remains to be a difficult and highly complex means of working one’s way back into bringing the ordinary text-readers own critical consciousness to the text by offering counter information and checking the negative and stereotypical images emanating from the colonial script.

Nonetheless, the study does not overlook those text-readers from former colonies are in denial of colonial missteps because they see today’s indictment of the empire, of imperialism and colonialism by post-colonial theorists as gross ingratitude. They exonerate the colonial and missionary enterprises from any blame in regard to exclusive uncritical hermeneutical claim that these agencies were equaled to impeccable experts in understanding African minds and cultures. They wonder why formerly colonized text-readers have resorted to self-defense by apportioning blame to others instead of dealing with their hermeneutical problems. To them post-colonial criticism conjectures a brand of cheap, demagogic, and outmoded rhetoric (Achebe 1988:46) of a world of uncivilized text-readers who pose a threat to Western Christianity’s civility and moral standards. They view post-colonial discourse as a reflection of people’s inability to take responsibility of their problems. The creative and critical process of disturbing and dislodging the reigning imported theories by indigenes contradicts the modernist and rationalist values. Elevating the benevolent role of former colonizers and missionaries which allows and appreciates the inevitability of progress in Africa as represented in the numbers, achievements, and technology of colonialists does not rule out the need for a cross cultural breathing room.

These works are valuable to the study, in its survey of the socio-economic and political
realities, which are expected to bring the grief-stricken readers into the certainty of loss emanating from the imperializing texts. Yet, none of these works has emphasized the use of lamentation as a process of distinguishing the word of God from the culture in which it reached the colonized. Similarly, Mbiti (1986) premises the current problem of text-interpretation, in Africa, on the claim that the ordinary text-readers are marginalized by a theological education that has remained overly Euro-centric. In relation to this point, Brueggemann (1987: 72) claims that the intellectual tradition of the West is grounded on Hellenistic philosophy, out of which the reasonableness of science is seen to supersede the voice of hope. It is a tradition of order that seeks to discern, understand, decipher and if possible, master and control.

This intellectual tradition of the West was keen to outline the scathing attack on the Gĩkũyũ culture and its social structures, on a divine mission of saving the natives from the forthcoming hell fire (Ndegwah, 2007: 214). These scholarly works too will be invaluable in ascertaining the cultural context in which the Bible came to be a chief hegemonic text in Gĩkũyũland and how the Gĩkũyũ community sensed the Euro-centric hermeneutical snare. However, they all seem to offer very little insights by way of a process that could assist the Gĩkũyũ community in moving beyond its hermeneutic paralysis to emotional openness that could lead to therapeutic disclosure of pain and restore hope. As an umbrella hermeneutics for liberation theology, feminists’ theology and oppositional hermeneutics post-colonial theory underscores the roots of resistance amidst social realities. It assumes a commonly held assumption of generating meaning out of a common life-situation and so it associates with lamentation wherever the ordinary text-readers engage in hermeneutical cross-examinations of ideological acceptances of colonial misrepresentations of them.
Opposing the colonizer’s mode of interpretation by re-reading the master’s canon with intent of decolonizing the mind calls for inter-textual dynamics and a social location that value the use of African resources in biblical studies. The demands for post-colonial theory are based on expression of a kind of nostalgic self-actualizing of hermeneutic freedom through the decolonizing process. Decolonizing of the mind, inner life and society from colonial way of seeing reality and specific modes of understanding that reality begins with reflections on the interpretation of past colonial and present global encounters of unequal text-readers. Hence, Post-colonial study of the Bible as a primary model of shaping the African “analysis and response to their oppression outside the colonial representations” (Said, 1994:33) makes lamentation a clear and readily definable territory of post-colonial criticism, it reflects upon the basic condition of life in which ordinary text-readers live, meanings are discovered and recovered in action and encounter.

Actual works of people who share the peripheries of dominant cultures are displayed by polyphonic nature of lamentation. So, wherever the marginalized text-reader turn hesitant to question the exegetical and hermeneutical methods of interpretation which they have mastered through post-colonial reading processes their unique tradition of resistance is curtailed. The text-readers’ ability to disturb, and dislodge the imported theories is boosted by indigenous reading of the Bible which is framed by history and culture (cf. Mosala, 1989: 3) as basis of text-readers’ capacity to see larger picture of giving old texts new meaning. The Biblical and cultural motif of lamentation among the Agĩkũyũ is as a result, informed by colonialism as a phenomenon with direct bearing on present and earlier collective indigenous hermeneutical concerns. As an alternative intellectual inquiry and
interpretation on the past and present encounters with colonial and global forces through post-colonialism which comes in to abhor rigid orthodoxies (Spivak, 1999: 3). Its embrace of legitimate suspicion of plans, schemes, and programs cuts down the meaningless and endless competitions of Euro-centric world which are done at the expense of a common search for solution to life problems.

1.5.4 Lamentation as a Hermeneutic Voice in Modern Times

Ndegwah (2007) affirms that ordinary text-readers in Africa operate on two different forms of text-reading, namely the official one which is sanctioned by the church, and the unofficial one, which is conditioned by African religion. Dube (2002) and Haselbarth (1976) put much emphasis on how Africans can find their own distinctive and genuine expressions, in coming to terms with their heritage. Dube has particularly tried to make sense of the development of biblical hermeneutics in Africa; as a distinctive voice of an on-going contraption of resistance to both colonialism and imperialism. She traces its growth and development to the constant cultural struggle from the margins. On their part, Idowu (1973) and Waliggo (1996: 28) emphasize the development and identification of a distinctly African biblical hermeneutics, as having emerged from primo and inherent rudiments of African religious heritage, which were already excluded or slashed in the text by Euro-centric reading process. The African independent churches (karĩng’a), in Kenya and other religious movements played a great role in questioning and stock-taking; restoring and recuperating of memories, events and texts that were being suppressed or overlooked by the missionaries. Thus, the growth and development of the Karĩng’a Movement spelt out the materialization of anti-colonial readings from the margins, which has affected the present-day setting of text-reading.
According to Kenyatta (1938: 32), Mugambi (1989), Karanja (1999), Maina-wa-Kinyati (1987), and Lonsdale (2002), the rise of Karĩng’a Movement had its initial quests pegged on biblical justification, of the Gĩkũyũ cultural practices; which were being endangered by the Euro-centric text-reading. The athoomi (text-readers), under the auspicious of KCA, had emerged to preserve the endangered cultural elements; through the use of their newly acquired skills of reading and writing. From the account of Maina-wa-Kinyati (1987:123), the peripheral voices of lamentation, from the people who were not in power, reflected a strong revolutionary consciousness, which was not overlooked by the colonizers. Though the works of Maina-wa-Kinyati highlight the crucial role played by lamentation through strikes, street demonstrations, petitions, preaching, songs, and how it functioned as a hermeneutical proclamation of solidarity; it lacks a specific framework of reading the text ‘from below’ that can sustain life in a dream-shattered world.

Achille Mbembe (2001) works; on the post colony make postcolonial textual deconstructions and reconstructions a prerequisite of addressing African ordeals of domination. This domination thrives as the former colonial powers continue to deliberately misrepresent Africa through what has been simultaneously playing out at political, semiotic, and textual levels. His articulation of how past and present experiences has culminated to a brutal application of power explicates the power behind the ideological machinations that gained and maintained control over actual spaces of colonialism. Such experiences elucidates on how the academic and popular discourse in Africa remains clichéd to Western fantasies and fears. With the presence of colonialism, textual violence is enjoined to bureaucracy, spectacle of culture, and modalities of what has accomplished and maintained
Eurocentric control today. He further explains how the unconscious projections tied to guilt, disavowal, and compulsion which repeats itself absence of deliberate reinterpretation of the place of death and utopia. To him this reinterpretation is a major part of understanding new theoretical perspectives which would perfect the post-colonial constitution of textual power. Thus, Mbembe’s work has invaluably offered this study an imaginative outline and framework for nurturing a strong postcolonial thinking and writing which challenges all what tends to place Africa under fraught relation between itself and the rest of the world.

1.5.5 Lamentation and Feminist Hermeneutics

On the platform of feminist hermeneutics we have Elizabeth Shüßler Fiorenza (1983 and 1984), Phyllis Trible (1977 and 1984), Perdue (2005:102-180) and Mercy Amba Oduyoye (2002) who suggest a hermeneutics of suspicion in their robust criticism of patriarchal overtones in the text. Their works suggest a process of closing the gap between past and present, through a recovery of the neglected history of women. The memory and remembering of past symbols evoke the imagination and call forth the text-reader’s response to the prevailing cultural schizophrenia and alienation of women. Trible’s (1977:40-65) work on the rhetoric of the “weeping Rachel” in Jeremiah as it is set up in her book “God and Rhetoric of Sexuality” points to a drama of voices that organize structure, fill content, and mold vision to create a new thing.

She has outlined the movement of the desolate lamentations and weeping of Rachel to the redemptive compassion of God which defines the very nature of the Bible as hermeneutical, hence, the presentation of the Bible as a pilgrim wandering of thoughts among the poor and the marginalized that yearn for a post-colonial merging of the past and the present. Trible's
other literary work: *Texts of Terror* (1984), considers the creative retelling of stories of the four women of the Hebrew Scriptures (Hagar, Tamar, Jephthah’s unnamed daughter and Ruth) who were subjected to terror, rape, murder and dismemberment at the hands of men. Oduyoye (2002) points to the use of indigenous expertise and skills by women in managing the frenzied community life. This is necessary in order to envision a particular meaning of lamentation through genre-bound post-colonial feminist pursuits of the African woman.

The voices of women are applied by these writers’ to illuminate the present by envisaging the past in generating perspectives of a continued struggle against the powerful lot, which has brought the terror of distorted socio-economic structure into the society for their own interest and greed. Lamentation of women is seen to counter this terror, through a hermeneutics of suspicion, which propel African women to re-read male-dominated texts by unraveling the actions, which are oppressive to women. Oduyoye’s attempts to salvage Africa’s good cultural traditions and values of women will help this study to question the Euro-centric interpretations that denied anything good among Africans but proceeded to endorse patriarchy and hegemony as good for them. Phyllis Trible seeks to feed women text-readers’ imagination by bridging the gap between past and present where ordinary text-readers must struggle to regain their potential.

They do this by wrestling with the silence, absence, and opposition of God, as they struggle with their knowledge of the past. The stories of women in the Bible are used as the launching-pad against which the perspective of African women and their past are brought to post-colonial melting pot. This is done by emphasizing on their suffering and standing with them in their courage, in the face of patriarchy. The re-reading of these stories will boost the
painful descriptions of life situation among African women text-readers, who read the text amidst conflicting voices and broad questions of estrangement; brokenness and alienation inflicted on them by patriarchal epithets of colonial bequeath. In order to sustain, encourage and challenge the re-reading of the Euro-centric texts from below against the actions that are oppressive to women, the voices of women are applied by these writers to illuminate the present. They also envisage their past, generated by perspectives of continued struggle against the dominant ideology. This powerful lot is the custodian of the dominant ideology, which distorted socio-economic structure into the society through their interest and greed.

Nkrumah (1965), Kenyatta (1968:32) and Maina-wa-Kinyatti (1987:123) too, highlight the inspiration of poor women, who struggled for human dignity and liberation from oppressive powers. The depth and sensitivity of poor women in understanding their struggle through indigenous feminist movements as anti-colonial intervention through strikes, street demonstrations, singing and petitions brings lamentation as an African woman’s were a precursor to the voice of struggle. These authors affirm African women’s involvement and contribution to hermeneutics through their lamentation, but they have somewhat overlooked women’s contributions in post-colonial era for they are never regarded as equal partners with men. Women’s peripheral role is highlighted as that of helpers rather than full participants. The women’s voicing of colonial atrocities and tragedies is not a marginal event, because it demonstrates the long contribution of women in local and national revolutionary movements. It voices the community’s pain and suffering from the perspective of women’s attempt to reclaim their humanity from colonial oppression. These voices are hermeneutical, dialectical, methodological, and topical in the art of exploring and recovering neglected themes and counter literature, which often lie dormant within the

All these literary works are valuable to the study, in its survey of how grief-stricken readers and hearers of the word of God can envision a particular meaning of lamentation as a genre-bound post-colonial feminist pursuit of the loss emanating from the imperialistic texts. Yet, none of these works has appreciated a vivid use of lamentation to bolster the hermeneutics of suspicion, which will anticipate the homecoming for marginal voices. The purpose of this study, in exploring the feminist hermeneutical perspective is to help the text-reader to distinguish the word of God from the culture in which it reached the colonized people, particularly women. This purpose underscores lamentation as a public process capable of bringing to light new possibilities, expertise and skills of managing the frenzied community into penetrating and naming the hermeneutical ideology of colonial patriarchy over the subjugated people’s pain and sufferings. The threats that push women to the edge of self-destruction are articulated in a profound sense of anguish, pathos and incongruity in what touches the society. Thus, the feminist reading of the text will help the study to invite the text-readers to pay fresh attention to the recovery of biblical motifs of lamentation as a liberating feature. In the final analysis the reading and appropriation of the text in solidarity with Rachel’s lamentation and weeping makes survival and freedom from oppression a post-colonial text-reading priority. Lamentation, as a way of seeing and interpreting the text, brings the outside considerations to bear through the hermeneutics of suspicion as a vanguard of feminist’ liberation.

1.5.6 Lamentation as a Local Resource for Biblical Hermeneutics

According to Upkong (2001:25-26), the local hermeneutical resources, which symbolize a strategy of linking the biblical text to the African context of struggle are fashioned by
various premises that transcend the academic reading of the Bible. He has, therefore, suggested a chronological narrative of diverse paradigmatic events, revealing the nature and interconnectedness of events themselves, in a scriptural reflection, on a deepening perception and response of natives to historical problem of meaning through locally available critical resources. Equally important, to the study, are the scholarly works of Upkong (2001), LeMarquand (1997), and Holter (1995); which have emphasized the importance of a social location in the process of bible interpretation in Africa.

Convincingly, Bhabha (1994:171) has also made his provisions, of how subjugated text-readers can chronologically weave critical awareness and identity, into a framework of bearing witness against the unequal and universal forces of cultural representation. These works are invaluable to the background of this study; even though none of them seems to suggest to the Gĩkũyũ text-readers and hearers of the word, a reading model that they may use as a victimized people in obtaining the space, they need for their existence and dignity.

Other fascinating writers include Sugirtharajah (2001), Young (2001), Ndegwah (2007) and Segovia (1999), on the embodiment and use of indigenous critical tools to illuminate insights into the discourse on textual interpretation; which has been dominated by Eurocentric thinking. These works have directly or indirectly underscored the role of lamentation in addressing the past miseries and are, therefore, invaluable in suggesting the various insights of understanding the Bible and God, in the light of African experience and culture. They tend to encompass the study’s response to the question; ‘What is the understanding of the Bible in the face of Gĩkũyũ indigenous yearning for shared pain, anger, and strength through the exegetical and hermeneutical study of Jeremiah 31:15-17. This,
notwithstanding, none of them underscores the role of lamentations in the text-reading process, understanding and interpretation of the scriptures, as this study intends to do. Accordingly, this study attempts to reinforce the ownership of Rachel’s narrative by the Gĩkũyũ text readers.

In conclusion, all these literary works reviewed fail to present lamentation, as a key component in the interpretation of the Bible, in the present-day Agĩkũyũ reading of the text. Moreover, none of them has directly treated the post-colonial hermeneutical undertakings of lamentation. Nevertheless, the insights from this literature review present a general background to this study. Therefore, this study is of the view that very few if any, African biblical scholars have explored the indigenous hermeneutical function and influential force of lamentation, in the protest against oppression. It is an enormous force and an interpretive local tool in the hands of the marginalized, which cannot be ignored or denied. Orientation, Disorientation and New orientation theoretical framework provides clue for sharpening hermeneutical focus by increasing clarity to the problem area which the study have adapted.

1.5.7.0 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Though the works of African biblical scholars like Justin Upkong, Mugambi, Manus and Ademo could have equally informed the main working theory of this study the researcher has instead settled on Walter Brueggemann (1995: 8-9)’s model of Orientation, Disorientation and New orientation. This model is fundamentally hermeneutical and contextual in its function of illuminating the biblical motif of lamentation. The choice of Brueggemman theory is based on objectivity aspect of this study: Brueggemann is a renowned author and a biblical scholar who has criticized the dominant groups’ tendencies
of imposing generalities and universal truths on marginalized groups which have no option but to believe and unquestioningly accept. Orientation-Disorientation-New-orientation theory is preferred for its multi-dimensional approach to other principles of interpreting the voices within and outside the biblical text. It highlights on the breakdown and reconstitution of human interaction, creativity, and morality in the face of usual Euro-American view of a fixed, stable, safe and majestic world in its coherence functioning with such regularity and predictability (Brueggemann, 1993:84).

This theory in polemic sense takes the Western colonialists’ hermeneutical approaches that lead to denial and undermining of other perspectives.’ Its claim that the text and the process of interpretation are “plurivocal,” makes the text to display an endless quest for authenticity of humanness by filtering and interpreting the reality through the text-readers’ perspective make sense out of what has become the entry point of contextual, local and pluralistic aspects of this study. Specifically, his theoretical framework offers a space for critical thinking and reflection on how African text-readers had in the past interacted, responded and adapted to Eurocentric power structure through with the realities of imperialism were entrenched. It sharpens the hermeneutical focus by checking the negative and stereotypical images that occupy the center stage in hermeneutical discourse both in public and the academy. In this case, Brueggemann (1995:11) posits to join the exegesis of lamentation text with hermeneutics of its appropriation through individual or corporate linguistic entry to new distressful situation of accepting and embracing the dislocation.

This theoretical framework is spiral and it allows the deep pathos and painful uncertainty lose their forcefulness by encouraging multiple interpretations, which can be reviewed for
its relevance. It guided the manner in which the fieldwork data was collected, analyzed and interpreted without the submergence of the voices captured in course of the findings of this study. This model therefore takes context very seriously, as it opens itself, to uses of other criteria of biblical interpretation by its allowance of further textual interrogation and scrutiny. In addition, this spiral stands to articulate the movement of human life from one circumstance to another where interrelatedness of lamentation text to the human experience is apparent. By ensuring that the context and interpretation of biblical texts are all subjected to dialogue through their solidarity with the marginalized people as the principal protagonists in the interpretation process the text is opened to a reading strategy that inevitably troubles situations of colonial and postcolonial cultural contacts. The trio-spiral sequences reflected in this model are all linked and overlapped, they function concurrently.

The first sequence is what Brueggemann (1995: 10) calls the orientation it represents a pre-critical awareness of the experience of wellbeing. It embodies a form of discursive rhetoric which is conventional in its interpretation of the guaranteed order of creation which depicts a serene settlement of issues, continuity, and success. Its coherence centers discursive power in a poly-vocalist process embedded on societal avoidance and denial of pain, hurt, and loss. This mood of equilibrium is what the Agĩkũyũ struggle for in protecting community life, land and its boundaries, which ought to be untroubled, reliable and trustworthy. This sense of holistic orientation is a gift of joy, delight, goodness, coherence and reliability envisaged in God, ancestral spirits and a land endowed with prosperity. The unique way of Gĩkũyũ correlating the text with existence in moments of dislocations defines how this community behaves wherever it is vulnerably, regressed to situation in which the voice of desperate, fear-filled, hate-filled reality of text-readers is let loose. Under such a situation survival
concerns of the community are correlated with a *hermeneutics of life* that protests easy hermeneutic symbols and myths or psychology of growth through symbolization (Brueggemann, 1995: 21-22; Ricœur (1976: 458-493). It stems from Schleimacher and presently exemplified by writings of Heidegger, Gadamer, Tracy and Recoeur.

These concerns arise out of text-readers’ search for the underlying social reality and are clearly placed to help the post-colonial reader grasp what hermeneutics of life is and its sources is in Gĩkũyũland. Because, its process invests on critical analyses of the Gĩkũyũ time tested cultural values, customs and practices that give preeminence to existentialism as a hermeneutic of life. The Gĩkũyũ community’s outstanding ability to raise firm questions and images that touch on its experiences and feelings at some primordial level has brought the provisions of symbols and parables to rife. Such symbols and parables are successfully used to weave the community’s stories and struggle for survival with biblical narratives through the interpretation of community’s realities of life.

This happens wherever the Gĩkũyũ system of belief and values lands into devastating conflicts upon the reality of special and general events that profoundly and permanently capture the community’s imagination and its way of looking at the totality of things. Memories of such occurrences have with time evolved into illuminators and instruments of present day understanding of all other events (c.f. Nineham, 1976: 19-120). The hermeneutics of life thrives as a critical traditional technique of reading the signs of the time through a firm grip of common values: hard work, honesty, generosity, hospitality, justice, courage, respect for elders, good reputation as well as the fear of God and ancestors that hold the community together. Thus, lamentation as a process of interpretation is operational
within the core of daily survival than any other critical hermeneutical method. It brings to light all what this community has fought for, resisted against, sometimes lost and regularly denied. Hence, the articulation of stable socio-economic-cultural and political principles is directed towards the touch of reality through objective observations and subjective feelings. This stage is extended by colonial promises of a settled community with an economic base, different from the surrounding areas; and a bona-fide change agent, in relation to the life of its environs (Goldthrope, 1996: 55). Unaware of the inherent conflicts, the indigenous communities were open to romanticize the newly encountered culture through the relegation of their indigenous heritage to the unconscious. This romanticism has to do with deep reluctance of the Gĩkũyũ community to let loose of a world that has passed and this community’s competence, to embrace a new world being given. To maintain this equilibrium, the Gĩkũyũ people are forced to embrace their post-colonial situation of poverty and oppression as the perfect will of God. Thus, the settled state as is displayed by Gĩkũyũ network of social relations, values and expectations is spelt out as the most comprehensive ideas of order. It constitutes a worldview which, in our socio-economic-cultural and political analysis, is expected to present a picture of the ways things in actuality are the concept of nature, of self, of society in the exploration of symbolism, myths, dreams, and visions of the ordinary people (Geertz, 1973: 127).

This analysis has been made from the data gathered from stories and descriptions of what is going on at the margins; that is, what the people are undergoing, the stories they tell, what they feel and how they respond to external stimuli. The study takes its position in establishing the continuities and discontinuities from what has been the case. This is done in order to raise and legitimatize the hermeneutical question of justice in terms of socio-
economic goods, access, and power. By doing so, the text-readers will enter into the practical implications of their analysis and not remain academic spectators when it comes to understanding of the axis on which human experience of displacement and recapture move now and forth. This analysis is an evaluative or critical reflection which will help the Agĩkũyũ text-readers to understand the issue at hand, its root cause, and structural aspects of the matter. It recognizes the critical aspects of historical experiences as the focal point of responding to historical socio-economic, cultural, and political factors that influence their situation. This cycle makes the analysis on how lamentation among the Agĩkũyũ, has shaped and continue to engage the people in mutual dialogue from which a creative praxis emerges. Through laments, the Gĩkũyũ text readers will use their prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of their historical experience as a guide to future action. This creative praxis is an imperative, a liberating and transforming practice that makes the second and third stage.

The second sequence is what Brueggemann (1995:11; 2002) calls the disorientation, which represents a critical analysis of text-readers, personal and intimate, as well as massive and public experience of hurt, alienation, suffering and death. Brueggemann (2002) treats this stage as a constitutive part of human life, which punctuates the freedom and vitality to face the openness of lamentation language and its capacity to provide symbolization system. It evokes interpretive worlds through inevitable relinquishments that are still held by nostalgic feelings for old equilibrium. Hermeneutic of disorientation will be used in making a socio-analysis as well as a theological reflection on the Gĩkũyũ people’s experience. So, the displacement that emerges out of their realization that the progress promised by the empire (in terms of disaster mitigation, improved standard of living, and better-quality medical and
scientific progress) wages a protest that the dominant ideology of success and prosperity is not normative. An ideological suspicion of the status quo that leads to the awareness of inevitable displacements is best placed to seek for retrievals through a longing for direct intervention of God. It is a protest against the claim that the existing situation of poverty and oppression is not the will of God, and an assertion that it is a by-product of concrete human situation that fosters oppressive socio-economic-cultural and political systems.

Thus, the colonial experience of a mismatch between indigenous life experience of disorientation, and the indigenous life of orientation marks the incoherence and disequilibrium of the colonized, where the settled orientation begins to lose some initial vitality. Tension mounts anew, among those who are despised, alienated and hated in situations where the repressed past orientation becomes resurfaced, idealized and longed for. This creates a condition of divided personalities, which Ndegwah (2007: 56) calls ‘cultural schizophrenia’, while others use different terms, like dual religious systems (Schreiter, 1985: 148-155), dualism (Walligo, 1986:22), double identity (Wachege, 2001: 31-34) and cultural depersonalization (Wiredu, 2005: 9). It signifies the denial and cover-up of suffering among the African people (including the Agĩkũyũ) caused by a mismatch of life experiences of disorientation and orientation. This situation can be therefore; be compared to that of the Israelites exile to Babylon.

The third sequence is what Brueggemann (1986: 3-4; 1995:13) calls the new orientation which represents the double agenda of relinquishment and receiving, judgment and newness. It is a post-critical analysis that constitutes a move from disorientation marked by lamentation to a new season of human life. The move is transformational and not
developmental; it is born out of pain and surprises which come, says Ricœur (1974: 369-370) as a representation of reality which is genuinely new and has the mark of a gift. So, lamentation will be sharpened and channeled into a process of making sense out of peoples’ lives through exploration of meaning of situations and events that lead to self-discovery of text-readers’ mission in life and potential of moving from chaos to coherence in situations where everyone thought all was lost. It is a conscious attempt to integrate both new and old encounters where the text-reader will attempt to move from one circumstance to another, changing and being changed through a text-reading process, which informs and directs the text-reading community.

The move from the context of disorientation to a new gift from God, a new coherence made present to us, through liberating grace gives text-reader a chance to lament properly and recover. This is a fresh intrusion that makes all things new because it provides the Gĩkũyũ community a chance to talk about things, it may get very wrong especially, the strange ideas in its psyche by restoring its hopes and sense of security in a move into thanksgiving as it happened to Israelites upon their return from captivity. The new alternative reality is the fruit of criticism and energizing promise stemming from memories that embrace discontinuity and genuine breaks from the dominant worldview to usher in a world centered on the freedom of God. Here, we see how lived experiences, strong feelings, hope, and search of text-readers have eventually determined how the textual meanings are lived and re-interpreted. This is done in the light of a model of analysis of society as a complex system, and openness to a new insight (revelation) that breaks ranks with a system within which no alternative can emerge. Eventually, this study has been organized around the above mentioned themes that characteristically govern the actual experience of human life.
By keeping the three paradigms as the primary focus and allowing such sequences to have the priority in the hermeneutical discourse; the ordinary Agĩkũyũ text-readers will be included in the scholarly tradition of on-going interpretations of the text. These paradigms propose a correlation of the Gĩkũyũ text-reading process, with the realities of human life with a circular existential inquiry. This inquiry makes the African biblical hermeneutical process counter-cultural; and a never-ending task of questioning rather than a routine acceptance of oppressive socio-economic and political practices, as natural and God-ordained. This course of action begins with the capacity to grieve, which constitutes, the most primordial declaration that things are not right, as the system pretends. Then it requires disengaging from oppression, which is to say, relinquishing the emotional dependence from the “Empire”. It extends the general analysis of lamentation into new areas, to see whether, in the face of new challenges, the primordial practices governing the public processing of pain among the Agĩkũyũ have any illuminating power. It also deepens and corrects the ordinary post-colonial text-readers understanding of the underlying social-realities. In any case, to make the expression of grief available to text-readers is more fundamental, in addressing new problems arising in the international systems and confronting the policies of the African nations. By grieving, the poor can resist the counterfeit promises of help from the imperial powers by recognizing their pain, loss and trauma. Though they cannot expect much from these powers other than to be heard as they tell their side of the story; the victim point of view spells pain which must be heard if they are to engage in any fight against the forces that oppress and marginalize people. The consciousness of guilt is exposed through spoken language that culminates into exorcism of all the demons of evil in African society.
1.5.7.1 The Conceptual framework

This conceptual framework is shaped by this study’s reading strategies and practice that incorporates to text-reading the former colonizer’s trademark of undervaluing the text-readers’ ability to negotiate the inherited text-reading structures and appropriating them for their own purposes. It is informed by studies on a). Post-colonial readings: b). Biblical literature on lamentation and: c). The Gĩkũyũ literature and orature review on Mũthĩrĩgũ dance, Mau Mau is done in relation to colonial forms, images and imaginings embedded on socio-economic and political development in Africa. Figure 1, below, gives a conceptual framework of understanding the dynamic of life as a dialectic movement, as opposed to regular or patterned sequences (Ricoeur, 1974: 185-195).

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Researcher
1.6 Research Design and Research Methodology

This study has employed the cross-sectional and descriptive survey designs. This is because they are suitable in handling the different categories of text-readers. In specific are the theological education by extension (TEE) groups, Bible study groups, pastors, ex-freedom fighters, and the elderly people, who witnessed the mūthirīgū dance. A cross-section appraisal was made by involving and responding to informants’ experiences, through three critical social areas namely, field work, literature review and hermeneutical reflections. The fieldwork data sources were the ordinary text-readers and their pastors among the Agĩkũyũ, while for literature review and hermeneutical reflections, the study used the existing literature on the Gĩkũyũ people. The fieldwork data collection involved spending six months with the local community, in order to get an even firmer grip of the cultural dos and don’ts of the Gĩkũyũ people, and the organization of their cultural and social systems. As a result, the study has employed the qualitative approach to collect and analyze the needed information. Ethnography featured in the process of data collections and analysis of Gĩkũyũ and biblical motifs of lamentation, within the parameters of locally invented hermeneutics of life. The study started with entry into the local cultural scene through a review of social situation, the place (site of the study), actors (target population), and their activities. This was followed by examination of the research instruments, data collection technique, data analysis, procedures, data management and ethical considerations.

1.6.1 The Qualitative Research Method

As suggested above, the research has chosen to use qualitative method to carry out interviews among the Gĩkũyũ people of Kenya. The choice of qualitative method for this study is not based on a bias that it is better than other study methods, or that it is more desirable than the
rest. The main reason for applying this method is that it has distinct characteristics that fit the intention of the study. Particularly, the understanding of Gĩkũyũ people’s motif of lamentation and its framework of meaning system, which acts as a reliable tool of interpreting communal experience through the generation of behavior. Some aspects of Gĩkũyũ motif of lamentation are tacit and cannot therefore be observed directly. They are only inferred from what people do in their daily lives especially the practice of hospitality through industry and creativity, what they say within their cultural idiomatic expressions which give an optimistic view of life and from the things they make in order to organize, direct, and cater for the common goods of life.

Thus, the study explored cultural behavior and artifacts as key elements of lamentation in Gĩkũyũland. The cultural speech and artifacts were features of what steered the various elements of ethnographic study. Since lamentation falls under the category of voiced speech, the study of cultural discourse was of ultimate importance in determining whether, and the extent to which the Gĩkũyũ people appropriate and correlate the word of God with their lives. The behavior and artifacts were a consequence of their disposition to the situation of oppression, and expressed their lamentation. The purpose of the study was to observe their bearing on how the Gĩkũyũ people read the text and also to attest whether these are done in reference to culture or not. This was realized through participant observation and ethnographic interviews.

1.6.2 The Social Situation
The study reckoned with the difference held between the socio-economic and political status of the respondents and the general socio-economic and political realities, in which the text-
reader is located. These realities were successfully applied to boost the identification of the research population. In this case, the study had to deal with the way the Gĩkũyũ community interprets the Bible and nurtures its meaning system through historical involvement of its social context. The researcher made a probe of life within the context of a community that struggles with hermeneutical issues in concreteness of its social situation.

The study borrowed a leaf from Spradley (1980: 39)’s understanding of a social situation as any place (e.g. a street, corner, a village, a town and a city) where the researcher participated in people’s activities through observation. The social location of the Agĩkũyũ of Central Kenya is selected as an excellent location of representation for socio-cultural scene of ordinary text-readers. A social situation was identified through a triple-dimension of the place, actors and their activities. Equally, researcher’s acquaintance with the residents was factored in study’s dealings with various questions, particularly in locating and visiting the area of the study. Given that the researcher is a native speaker of Gĩkũyũ language, it was not very difficult for him to situate himself and the study among the respondents; to watch the actors and become involved with them. Given that the researcher belonged to community the issues of objectivity were tackled through careful, ethical and professional considerations. Moreover, the researcher was able to observe and participate in activities that go on in this situation and also to deal with the practical difficulties that are linked to language meaning, translation, and interpretation.

1.6.3 The Place

This study carried out the field research for a period of six months in Central Kenya, which is the ancestral land of the Gĩkũyũ community. Nevertheless, many members of this
community have moved and settled in the Rift Valley region, especially Laikipia and Nakuru Counties. The Central region is one of the most populated regions in Kenya, with a high birth rate, in comparison to other regions. The population estimates is about eight million people, who form approximately 22% of the total population of Kenya (See CIA World Fact Book February 21, 2013). Hence, the Gĩkũyũ community makes up the largest ethnic group in Kenya. The Central region of Kenya hosts five Counties namely Nyeri (Gaaki), Murang’a (Metumi), Kirĩnyaga (Ndia), Nyandarua, and Kĩambu (Kabete). The region is quite big, and as such, it was appropriate for the researcher to select two counties, Nyandarua (Nyandarũa) and Kĩambu (Kĩambuu), and concentrate on them.

The first reason for choosing Nyandarua County is the unresolved colonial trauma that has a lot of impact on the residents, as evidenced by the presence of marginal groups. Second, Nyandarua County is a settlement area for the landless, former squatters, and ex-freedom fighters, who migrated from other counties of Central Region, as well as the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs – from the Rift Valley). Similarly, Kĩambu County is a hub of former colonial mission schools, ecumenical institutions and home to the first African elites. It hosts two universities namely St. Paul (Limuru) and Presbyterian University (Kikuyu) with a long tradition of theological training, which are of great help to this study’s articulation of the indigenous account of lamentation through biblical hermeneutics. The two Counties have hosted two categories of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Rift Valley; both in the colonial and post-independent Kenya. They are also home to Mau Mau war veterans, who suffered torture and detention in the colonial era. While it was not possible to adequately cover all the districts and divisions of Nyandarua and Kĩambu Counties, in a single piece of research work; the study used the well-organized structures of
the Gĩkũyũ people and their land to reach out to as many people as possible. Below find a map of Kenya indicating the County boundaries adjacent to Gĩkũyũland.

The map 1: Kenya with County Boundaries Adjacent to Gĩkũyũland
Source: NCCK Central Region 2012.
The region is homogeneously regimented in terms of endowments of rich, well drained red soil, geology, climate, seasons, hydrography, mountains, flora and fauna that contribute to the propagation and preservation of life as well as social cultural features that are a hallmark of their daily lives. To a large extent the Gĩkũyũland is characterized with evergreen highlands that enjoy two rain seasons, *mbura ya Kimera* (the long rains of April to June) and *mbura ya Njahĩ* (short rains of November to December). However, there are exceptional places especially the lower region of Gĩkũyũland with boggy spots of badly aerated and drained areas. The Gĩkũyũ people practice mixed farming of both livestock keeping and agriculture. They keep dairy cattle, goats and sheep, but also grow cash crops such as coffee, tea and pyrethrum, in addition to traditional subsistence foodstuffs like arrow roots, groundnuts, cassava, sweet potatoes and sugar canes. Finally, the history of colonial invasion of Gĩkũyũland makes all the inhabitants and the land undeniably susceptible to influence from the outside world.

### 1.6.4 The Actors

The actors in this study are the Agĩkũyũ of Central Kenya who use the Bible in relation to salvation, where lamentation is so pronounced in their day-to-today lives; and yet missing in general preaching of the word of God. Various wars, ethnic conflicts and civil disturbances, Crime and natural disasters in Kenya have left the whole community, families and individuals in Gĩkũyũland traumatised.

#### 1.6.4.1 The Gĩkũyũ People’s Lifestyle

The Gĩkũyũ people belong to the Bantu linguistic classification and are largely found in Central region of Kenya. According to the Agĩkũyũ myth of origin, Gĩkũyũ and Mũmbi and their nine daughters were first given the land around Mount Kenya by Ngai (God). These daughters became the founders of the nine clans of the Agĩkũyũ whose names are traced to the post-modern times (Murage, 1995: 33). Gĩkũyũ people are fond of invoking
their matriarch, Mũmbi, in times of major crises. For this reason, they are better-placed to identify with the pivotal role played by Rachel’s narrative (Jeremiah 31: 15,) in its historical and cultural background. By re-situating Rachel’s narrative, the Agĩkũyũ can make sense of their own subjectivity and link it to the biblical motif of lamentation, in general interest of their own socio-economic realities.

The Agĩkũyũ understand a good life in a holistic way, as both the physical and the spiritual and as such consists of the wellbeing of the body and the soul as realized in the framework of balanced forces of the visible and invisible world. Their participation in the entire network of relationships, institutions and projects in a shared, common and organic communal life is usually subordinated to the motif of public processing of both pleasure and pain. Thus, lamentation practices in Gĩkũyũland also played the symbolic role of forming new identities, recalling old wisdom and transforming conflict through the imagining of new endings to familiar patterns. In a bold move of disengagement, lamentation served as an intentional communal act of expressing grievances within the context of wrenching transitions. It punctuated the rites of passage, acts of healing and protection, as well as the ritual prayers to God and ancestors, the concepts of the land, fertility and of the clan system. In general, the Agĩkũyũ conceive life as both secular and religious. Hence, religion did not only consist of a shrine service, but was a complete and sustained account of community life – in the home, at the market place and on the highways of trade and culture.

This tradition and its artistic works shaped the Agĩkũyũ sorrowful process into the anticipation for the emancipation, remembrance, homecoming and possibility of holistic
healing (Kibicho, 2006; Kirika, 1988; Kenyatta, 1938). Our inquiry into lamentation is located in a longstanding discourse of the relationship between social integument of the text and wounding potentialities that threaten the moral fiber of the society. The Gĩkũyũ people are known to be exceptionally industrious community; their enormous creativity and potentiality in private and public sectors contribute a lot to the Kenyan economy. The economic necessity of this community has forced its members to seek productive jobs outside the home and so the members of the community are widespread. Consequently, the whole role of traditional communal nurturing of its generations through human quality of life is neglected resulting to the breakdown of social fabric.

The increased cases of violence, apathy, drug, and alcohol abuse explain the results of this negligence, which are displayed all around in form of neglected street children (chokoras), teenagers (muumo) who have never had enough personal attention, broken families and lonely old people. Due to lack of mentorship and livelihood, the youths and adults are dying out of untamed consumptions of illicit brews like chang’aa, kumikumi, kairaci and so on. Preparations of these brews are associated with low hygienic standards as well as the use toxic materials which are the chief cause of blindness, low libido, liver failure and other body dysfunctions. The overdrinking of such brews have led to alcoholic addictions, marital breakdown, increased criminal activities and death. It continues to cause negative effects on reproductive and mental health, and ultimately, to the well-being of the whole community. In absence of past strong social structures, the attempts to empower this community through equitable distribution of wealth are at stake. Attempts to make sound improvement of living standards are frustrated by the existing gaps between the ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’ which defines the state of community’s economic endowment.
1.6.4.1.1 Catharsis as a Gĩkũyũ Site of Tension venting and release

The practice of communal catharsis among the Gĩkũyũ people was commonly done through lamentation; it was a stress relieving activity. Catharsis and lamentation are bedfellows in African traditional practices and setting of purging the stinging hurt as well as the purifying of the society. Such practices were dismissed by missionaries who to begin with ensured that Africans were sworn to denounce old habits and the singing of sinful songs (African tradition songs). However, the poetic induction of *ndahiikio* (vomiting ritual) was accompanied by *horohio* (cleansing ritual) where African poets and witchdoctors were in charge of getting rid of societal’ impurities. According to Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E) catharsis is an archetype of emotional release which is linked to societal need of releasing the unconscious conflicts. In the course of conducting catharsis, the communal feelings of frustration and tension are vented and released in a manner which raises sharp contextual questions and commitment as their point of entry to alternative hermeneutics. So, wherever the Gĩkũyũ cultural texts are read in a milieu of physical activities; complex but powerful cultural codes are invoked in a manner that leads to meaningful and liberating hermeneutics. The organic linking of catharsis and lamentation has served to illumine the tensions and conflicts in Gĩkũyũland which were released by a commonly held inspiring process. The Aristotle’s metaphorical usage of the term catharsis refers to a release of emotions where pity and fear which have built up in a given time are subjected to a dramatic performance of Gĩkũyũ people’s collective identity and history. This dramatic performances takes a dialogical imagination which does not happen in a vacuum; it’s an active participation in life which goes on hand in hand with a historical process of letting go all tensions that builds from a given particular social location.
The dramatic performance of poetic dances in Africa displays a long time application of a practice that has perfected the societal channels of releasing the tension which has built up over in course of life. As Agĩkũyũ engage in dances and songs of defiance and resistances they remain poetically set to let go of their hurt and pain. The Gĩkũyũ emotional concentration is deepened by unreleased emotions in life, which has often hardened and numbed the community. But, a more generous reading of the Bible has through the language of the African theatre and story-telling been subjected to performance arts which fits the Aristotle’s interpretation of catharsis as a symbol of a deeper capacity of releasing feelings through a hermeneutical concern by a deepening self-awareness of humanity.

In interpreting the memories of suffering which opens to the path of healing the traumatized communities, Gatwa (2005: 249) agrees with Paul Ricoeur’s emphasis on the need for establishing a therapeutic process of acting-out the wounded memories on the national level that come from humiliation, shame or far deeper embarrassments. This acting out of past memories is executed through the telling of stories of suffering and the violence from the victim’s points of view. It suggests a consistent way of bringing the healing of memories not only to the victim but also to the perpetrator of violence. The role of lamentation in hermeneutics is to define this aspect of naming the actual type of psychosomatic illness resulting from cultural and political frustrations as well as centuries and decades of violence that have affected African communities in general, and Agĩkũyũ in particular (cf. Gatwa 2005: 251).

The first obstacle to lamentation is denial because it nurtures a hasty search for textual meaning which works to the advantage of either the initiators of violence or naive outsiders
who have many wrong acts to cover up. Denial ignores the examination of the root causes of the suffering and wants to bring about textual meaning by suppressing the memories and the experiences of the suffering victims. So, lamentation stands as a kind of hermeneutical container that captures the sediments of the past made up of fears, prospects, projects and anticipations. As an expression of absurdity, suffering and anguish lamentation helps the victim to name, examine and eliminate the causes and sources of violence. It helps us to bring the text-readers together in a mode of analyzing the deep causes of their intense suffering by naming them as well as reflecting on the long-term process of healing. It envisages a liturgical framework of mourning and purification which becomes a solid act of hermeneutics that re-establishes dignity for human life. The reinstatement of creation to its primary divine role happens by understanding fully or interpreting accurately the reality of suffering; it shows how the word of God may find meaning among the poor and the oppressed. Considering denial as a force links bitterness, hatred and resentment to the opening of a cycle where alternative liberation that equate harmony and unity whose textual-meanings thrives by closing eyes and ears to cries and suffering of the people.

1.6.4.2 The Agĩkũyũ Prophetic Oral Tradition

The prophetic tradition among the Gĩkũyũ people, had a significant role to play in lamentations, as envisaged in its forewarning messages to the Gĩkũyũ community about imminent disasters or calamities. The prophetic declaration summoned people to embrace a new imaginative enterprise and enabled the community to stay close to the present reality of suffering and displacement. This oral tradition has kept the memory of Mũgo-wa-Kĩbirũ alive as one of the most esteemed pre-Christian prophets/seers (arathi) who prophesied the invasion and occupation of Gĩkũyũland, by the white people, and it came to pass. Mũgo-
wa-Kībirũ had spoken of accommodation and warned the community not to fight the Europeans, for this would be suicidal (Githieya, 1997: 197; Kenyatta, 1938). While historical accuracy of Agĩkũyũ prophetic narrative is not beyond question, it furnishes us with evidence for the connection between what the Gĩkũyũ people encountered in the colonial invasion and the inevitability of this fate.

Thus, the outcome of this prophecy helped the Gĩkũyũ community to play out its history of colonial domination in a deeper and systematic way of recalling their faithfulness to the God of their ancestors (*Ngai wa aagu na aagu*). This memory shaped the prophetic ground of the Gĩkũyũ community in suspecting and rejecting the European hegemony and its dominating power, at an early stage of colonization. Thus, the cry of pain and oppression in Gĩkũyũland sets the scene for the public act, of telling an alternative story as an act of recapturing the lost therapeutic space of lamentation in Africa.

Lamentation has served the purpose of public processing of communal pain, which has for generations, engendered to the Gĩkũyũ community the needed social power for ordering the chaotic world. It was a moment of going public to disclose, open and reveal their woes and, therefore, permit a dialectical discussion and argument with their enemies, God and ancestors. The desperate time of God's absence was a moment to express petition for peace and prosperity, security and protection in Gĩkũyũland and its borders, which were at the moment obscured by disharmony and the hostile ancestral spirits (*ngoma njũru*). Consequently, the pre-Christian Gĩkũyũland story-telling was one of the features of exteriorization that nurtured a communitarian expression of despair and yearnings. The widening gap between the rich and the poor is at the moment a major social, cultural,
economic and political driving force in Gĩkũyũland.

**1.6.4.3 Evangelization and Colonization**

The European missionaries introduced the Bible to the Gĩkũyũ people, whilst the colonialists introduced their enterprise in Gĩkũyũland, from a perspective that was basically Euro-centric (Kinyua, 2011: 33). In effect, the Gĩkũyũ community did not dichotomize the colonial enterprise from the missionary one; since both were fraught with certainty that the European culture was superior to the culture of the natives. Euro-centrism had its roots in the enlightenment package that marshaled the dawn of superior apparatus, in terms of socio-economic autonomy, technology and material prosperity in Gĩkũyũland; which was aimed at fixing all the problems that natives were facing. Instead of accomplishing these claims, these apparatus ended up short-changing the Gĩkũyũ people, by complicating their lives and contributing towards a myriad of problems facing the Kenya today.

These invasions were devastating and have continuously grounded the indigenous people into physical and psychological captivity born out of the created racial boundaries and colonial marginality (Mudimbe, 1988:4-5). This captivity and its state of colonial legacy are in post-colonial world being subjected to bitter yearnings for freedom, revenge and mistrust. In the religious realm, this legacy has shaped Agĩkũyũ into two categories of text-readers, (the Euro-centric biblical scholars and the contextualized ordinary African text-readers). The common thing in these two categories is that both are trapped in a predicament of hybridism and a super-structure of massive socio-economic dislocation, where lamentation text is suppressed through biblical misinterpretation and conformism. This suppression of voices has resulted to the emergency and challenge of Mũngĩkĩ movement/sect which has viewed
itself as the bona-fide engine or even the vehicle of Gĩkũyũ cultural and social change.

1.6.4.3.1 The Hermeneutical Challenge of Mũngĩkĩ Movement

The Mũngĩkĩ a politico-religious movement thriving in Gĩkũyũland. Rhetorically and theologically the movement at the edge of African biblical hermeneutics, which takes up older Gĩkũyũ genres and patterns of speech in most artistic and urbane expression of Gĩkũyũ culture that tends to clash with Eurocentric hermeneutical claims. The emotionally artistic work which attributes to theological extremity of this movement is captured in lamentation songs. In its discourses the movement rejects “Western” values and instead clenches itself into a deeper longing for its return to traditional Africans values, customs and beliefs. But, what does Mũngĩkĩ stand for in this study? Mũngĩkĩ is a Gĩkũyũ word coined and derived from two Gĩkũyũ words mũingĩ and kii. Mũingĩ meaning “multitude”, “united people”, masses of people, or a rallying community. Kii is a word used to emphasis or stress fullness of a point as well as the completeness of an organization.

The precise origin of Mũngĩkĩ remains contradictory and therefore problematic. However, Gĩkũyũ orature and scholarly records claim that it is a splitter group from Hema ya Ngai mũtũra muoyo (Tent of the Living God); a sect founded by Ngonya-wa-Gakonya. Others say that it is a post-independence re-enactment of Mau Mau movement by pauperized descendants of Mau Mau. Another theory indicate that this group was founded by politicians aligned to Moi regime whose intention was to put the Agĩkũyũ against themselves in order to tame their insatiate clamor for political leadership, land and wealth creation. Other theories too indicate that Mũngĩkĩ are children of landless victims of 1992 ethnic and land crashes in Rift Valley region and so it was founded as a horde to fight for and protect the
Gĩkũyũ people’s rights in Diasporas (Wamue, 1999). Nonetheless this study’s concern is to briefly mention on the movement’s hermeneutical trends; how has isolated and quarantined ideas, and concepts that undergird oppression both from the side of the oppressor and the oppressed. The fact the movement is dedicated to the restoration of traditional African beliefs and values through its strong opposition to western values, modernization, and Christianity are blamed for perpetuating neo-colonialism.

The Mũngĩkĩ ritual prayers are made while facing Kĩrĩnyaga (Mount Kenya) which is the home of Gĩkũyũ God (Ngai). Mungiki members are known to take snuff, wear dreadlocks; they undergo initiation through secret oaths and ceremonies. They also read the Bible and refer to it as Gĩkũnjo (the scroll), a practice that they use to justify themselves as the only people who follow the Law of Moses and the Decalogue (Ten Commandments). Their selective reading of the Old Testament for purpose of justifying their hermeneutics of violence which is in its concrete application of justice demand an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. This marks the entry of Mũngikĩ into African biblical hermeneutics and there is need which calls for a structured dialogue between the movement and the academy which is a first step towards the enhancement of the world-making, imaginative work of cultural interpretation, precisely because the unexciting, emaciated world of the dominant Euro-centric culture in Africa is by itself not an adequate venue of liberating the Agĩkũyũ.

Thus, the Mũngĩkĩ movement symbolizes marginal voices which are by extension a representative of alternative lifestyle; it appeals to Gĩkũyũ people’s return to old and traditional ways of life which are pure and unadulterated. The importance of such hermeneutical claims is to closely reflect the lived experience of Gĩkũyũ people’s history.
Indeed, the members of Můŋgũkũ are known to strive hermeneutically in acts of getting rid of neo-colonialist predispositions that nourish foreign styles of worship. The common and apparent text-reading among a people who are exiled by virtue of being physically isolated and socially alienated from the dominant culture explains the movement’s unwillingness to follow the dominant cultural patterns. It differentiates itself through its deviant behavior and lifestyle as proscribed by the wider society. Thus, Můŋgũkũ movements challenges and rejects the dominant culture by generating strains and social conflicts as it projects a framework of lamentation that add to indigenous voice which were previously rendered obscure. The lack of proper integrating mechanisms presents the state, the church and the Gĩkũyũ people with a serious problem shrouding the reverberating advocacies for structured hermeneutical dialogue as an imperative.

1.6.4.3.2 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

The informants were selected on multiple criteria such as age, gender, education level, and social status. These included ordinary text-readers (Bible study groups, theological education groups), pastors/evangelists, ex-Mau Mau war veterans, and the elders who were eyewitnesses of Můthũrũgũ dance.

Ordinary Text-Readers

In total, 301 ordinary text-readers were contacted (137 men and 164 women) as main actors, and since every respondent had an equal chance of selection, they were randomly selected; from Bible study groups, theological education groups and local church congregations. The criterion was that they be 18 years of age and above. The information from this group was significant in making a survey of the function of lamentation in the socio-economic realities
of the Gĩkũyũ community; because it was expected to serve as testimony that lamentation requires attention in the African context. These ordinary text-readers included mostly illiterate (or partially literate) ex-Mau Mau freedom fighters, detainees, IDPs, eyewitnesses of Mũthĩrĩgũ lament-dance, as representatives of ordinary hearers of the word of God in the Gĩkũyũ community. The Agĩkũyũ text-readers and their pastors were therefore the study’s key sources of the fieldwork.

**Ex-Mau Mau War Veterans/ Ex-detainees and IDPs**

To avoid overlapping identities, roles and nature of these groups; eight members from each group (ex-Mau Mau freedom fighters, ex-detainees and IDPs) were subjected to in-depth interviews, opening way for wider interactions and further discourses needed by this study. This category was keen to interview those ex-Mau Mau war veterans who had suffered detention in the colonial era and were also in the category of the internally displaced persons in independent Kenya. The criterion of the selection was that the respondents were people who have been marginalized by both the colonial and post-colonial regimes. The information from this group was significant in identifying what led the poor and marginalized text-readers, in Gĩkũyũland, to continue lamenting in post-colonial Kenya, despite being Christians.

**Eyewitnesses of Mũthĩrĩgũ Lament Dance**

The research interviewed a number of eyewitnesses of Mũthĩrĩgũ lament-dance in Gĩkũyũland. The aging factor and the consequential vanishing of eyewitnesses of Mũthĩrĩgũ made the researcher to entirely depend on the contacted eyewitnesses to identify others in the field. The information from this group was significant to this study in examining the
indigenous reaction to the Euro-centric hermeneutical encounter with the Gĩkũyũ people’s cultural heritage over circumcision practice.

**Students of the Bible**

The researcher interviewed inculturation theologians, biblical and theological students from St. Paul’s University and Presbyterian University. The data from the students were crucial in updating the study with the current approaches to biblical studies, used by these universities. These two universities are located in Kiambu County and have a long tradition; which helped this study to articulate and approach the indigenous account of lamentation in biblical hermeneutics.

**Pastors/Evangelists**

The clergy and lay preachers consisted of pastors/evangelists who have been serving for the last five years, in Nyandarua West District. This group was significant in finding out the underlying hermeneutical disposition behind the modern preaching of the word of God, and also suggesting the effective strategies, of integrating lamentation into post-colonial text-reading methods in Africa. The table 1 below gives a summary list of the number of interviewees contact during the study.

Table 1: **Summarized list of interviewees**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informants</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ordinary text-readers</td>
<td>Males 165 Females 184</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastors and Evangelists</td>
<td>Males 3 Females 2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theological Students/ Biblical Scholars/</td>
<td>St. Paul University 6</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inculturationist Theologian</td>
<td>Presbyterian university</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye Witnesses of Mũthĩrĩgũ Lament-Dance</td>
<td>Males 2 Females 2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Mau Mau/detainee and IDPs</td>
<td>Males 5 Females 3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>329</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.6.5 Activities

The daily activities depend very much on geographical location of the respondents. It is in this context that ordinary text-readers live and practice their faith, part of which is to attend church services on Sundays, TEE classes, and Elders’ District Prayers (*Mahoya ma mwaki*), which is the focal point of our field research. The elders’ prayers are conducted weekly in the homes of every Christian, and the coordinator is usually the person in whose home the prayer session is conducted. These meetings are arranged on a rational basis and organizers see to it that every participant’s home is visited before starting another round of visitation. It deals with methods of communal prayer approach to sacred scripture, which may help the text-readers to encounter God and one another rather than just chat about the Bible.

1.7 Data Collection

Phase one of our field work was data collection in which we had identified two sources – the Agĩkũyũ text-readers and their pastors (trained biblical interpreters) as informants, and a review of literature pertaining to Gĩkũyũ people’s culture in relation to the discipline of hermeneutics. This was followed by identification of key themes of interest. As participant observers, we watched what goes on in the Gĩkũyũ community life, in order to listen to their stream of tears and lamentation, as they shared the Bible passage (Jeremiah 31: 15-17). Our aim was to gain a hermeneutical entry into Gĩkũyũ culture, by setting a stage for cultural immersion, which was to reveal common cultural understandings of lamentation. Cultural immersion was a precursor to the discovery of cultural domains and other points of density, which serve as the frame of reference in understanding new situations, people, events and ideas (Ndegwah, 2007: 28) among the Agĩkũyũ.
Ethnographic interviews were done in the hope of discovering the deeper religious insights, themes and existential values that characterize the Gĩkũyũ culture, and how these components influence Gĩkũyũ people’s interpretation of the scriptures in post-colonial era. When we got the first informants, we used them to get other informants in a chain process and data gathering exercise that revolved around the axis of observational transcripts and interview recordings. Informants were interviewed several times, using information from previous informants to elicit clarification on different aspects of our topic. We did this through asking descriptive, structural or contrast questions as the need arose.

1.8 Research Instruments

The study triangulated the qualitative data collected through the following study instruments: observation method, and ethnographic interviews. The individual in-depth ethnographic interviews were conducted to all text-readers (both the elitist and the ordinary) in order to rake up any arising issue that might not be clearly covered in the interview guide questions or to clarify the vaguely addressed points. The researcher had to generally engage the individual in-depth interviews to pastors, seminarians, and evangelists, ex-Mau Mau freedom fighters / detainees / IDPs, eyewitnesses of Mũthĩrĩgũ dance and the illiterate as ordinary hearers of the word of God.

1.9 Data Analysis

After the data collection phase, the researcher started the second phase of data analysis. The analysis of the data collected from the field was done to bring forth the experience of the Gĩkũyũ people; in view of finding plausible interventions. This analysis was done in accordance with research objectives, research premises and research questions, which the
study had formulated at the onset of the research (1.3.1-1.3.3). In order to form the basis of the research chapters, the study divides the raw data into two categories (one of the ordinary text-readers and one of the biblical scholars). The methods used in analyzing the data emerged during the research process and so, the process had allowed the study to make simultaneous observation and interpretation of meanings in context. The analysis from the interviews and focus group discussions revolved around the axis of Bible sharing and interviews which were equally analyzed thematically in relation to the conceptual framework. The data was analyzed using the Kwalitan computer program which broke down the raw data into two files. This helped us to identify the key categories within the created codes; and a tree structure that gave a bird’s eye view of how these categories are related to the codes and segments.

The ordinary text-readers were given a chance to freely express their thoughts, feelings, and opinions. More importantly, their perspective propelled the process of identifying the cultural factors that hinder or accelerate the text-reading process in Gĩkũyũland. This study paid special attention to the use of personal singular pronouns like “I”, “my”, and “me” vis-à-vis “we”, “our” and “us” by the Gĩkũyũ text readers during Bible study sessions. The dominant usage of “we”, “our” and “us” was regarded as an indicator of communitarian reading of the text. Through participant observation we identified the Gĩkũyũ people’s artifacts, ornaments and cultural tools, in order to establish the extent to which cultural influence has impacted the interpretation of the scriptures. This was done by listening to how the Gĩkũyũ people perceive their world by drawing practical examples from their own culture to illustrate certain points in the Bible. The biblical phrase in our passage of study; ‘her sons are no more’ was used to contemplate the case of the colonized text-readers, and
how Gĩkũyũ men were driven to the forest and bombed by the colonizers at the demand of independence.

After spending six months living with the local people, participating in their events and learning their ways of life, the ethnographic analysis was a sure approach to the understanding of Agĩkũyũ behavior and thought. It opened the study to close field observation of socio-cultural phenomena of Agĩkũyũ. The study in its Ethnographic analysis had depicted the collected data under four categories as proposed by Spradley: (1) Domain analysis (a search for the larger units of cultural knowledge) (2) Taxonomical analysis (3) Componential analysis and (4) Theme analysis. Ethnographic method was used to observe socio-cultural phenomena of Agĩkũyũ through the discovery of cultural themes and analysis of cultural domains, taxonomies and identification of related components.

The hunt for the larger units of Gĩkũyũ cultural knowledge culminated in domain analysis while the search for the internal structure of the domain through the identification of disparity sets has resulted into a taxonomical analysis. A domain is any symbolic category that includes other categories in which all members share, at least one feature of meaning (Spradley, 1980: 88). In this case, it represents a collection of categories that share a certain kind of relationship. The study’s exploration for the Gĩkũyũ cultural attributes that signal differences among symbols in a domain ended up with components of meaning that fitted a componential analysis (Spradley, 1980: 131). Spradley (1980: 85) underscores the importance of identifying the relationship between cultural parts and the whole; and as such we depended on the conceptualization, which the informants had on the social structure of the Gĩkũyũ community. The examination of the manner in which Gĩkũyũ cultural themes
have found their way into the Bible sharing helped this study to identify the interplay between the Gĩkũyũ culture and biblical hermeneutics. So, the study’s goal of doing ethnography was to grasp the Gĩkũyũ worldview and how it impacts on their interpretation of the world surrounding them. This was in line with the insistence by Malinowski (1922: 25) that there is a direct relationship between people’s point of view and the way they interpreted the world. Thus, the study discovered how these elements affect the Agĩkũyũ’s interpretation of the scriptures, through appropriating the word of God into their lifestyle.

The search for meaning centered on participants’ lives as expressed through word or nonverbal symbols permits researcher to study the community, enter it and become immersed in it. By analyzing interviews, the study focused on spoken words of the participants. These words were treated as symbols that represent some kind of meaning to an individual, and each symbol had three parts: the symbol itself, what the symbol referred to, and the relationship between the symbol and the referent. Thus, the word mũndũ is a symbol for the researcher. It refers to many things, including the “researcher’s inner person,” which is “researcher’s personality.” Thus, “researcher’s personality” is a kind of person in “researcher’s psyche,” and this shows the relationship the researcher is making between the symbol (mũndũ) and the referent (the particular term mũndũ as the study is pointing to now). The term mũndũ in the world of Agĩkũyũ, is a domain that includes not only humanity but someone’s wife, hero, rich, wise, poor, woman, man, witchdoctor, a grown-up or youth. These words in Gĩkũyũ language share the same relationship because they all refer to kinds of human persons. Further, Spradley helped this study to explore three elements of a domain (a) Cover term (e.g. the word mũndũ). (b) Inclusion of terms (all the types of persons as listed above). (c) The single unifying semantic relationship (the idea that a woman, man and
youth are all kinds of persons). In its preliminary searches of domain analysis the study was keen to engage in a practice run by selecting and searching for names that participants gave to things from the collected data. Subsequently, the researcher identified and listed the cover terms that fitted the cited cultural domains in the collected data.

1.10 Data Management and Ethical Considerations

Prior to field activities, the researcher obtained permission and an introductory letter from the relevant authorities, in order to be involved in the research. The researcher trained two graduate assistants to assist in data collection. The research assistants were familiarized with the objectives of the study to make them well-versed with skills on how to collect data, by conducting in-depth individual interviews, as elaborated by Spradley (1980). The respondents’ consent was sought on the basis of anonymity and confidentiality, as well as assurance that the information was for the purpose of the study.

1.11 Conclusion

To sum up, this introductory chapter introduces the readers to the gaps that warrant this study, it has explored, articulated and evoked the context from which many of textual-meanings emerged. The benevolent intention of colonial hermeneutics whose disastrous results and its cruel actions out maneuver the redeeming effects of a text becomes a critical foundation for the inclusion of lamentation in hermeneutical discourse. It serves as a road map as well as a prism of critical reflection on text-readers’ experiences as they participate in text-reading process. These short strategies will in the next chapter bring lamentation and hermeneutics into interplay of a sorrowful history of colonialism and cultural genocide as text-readers probe the text for joy in the midst of tragedy. The next chapter focuses on the
Gĩkũyũ people’s multidimensional conversation in which text-readers become partners and facilitators of a cross-cultural reading of the text. Such hermeneutic undertakings will deliberately avoid insights, ideas and ideals that disconnect human values and interests from the local people. What follows is an evaluation of historical consciousness through which the African understanding of the Bible is viewed in the light of the lamentable state of Gĩkũyũ people’s cultural, economic, social, and political captivity.
2.1 Introduction

This chapter covers the historical, social and economic development, bred through the Euro-centric culture in Gĩkũyũland. It explores the aesthetic interaction of traumatic losses that traverses various genres, discourses, and rhetorical traditions that nurture the embryo of lamentation in contemporary Gĩkũyũland. This exploration leads to the next chapter, which ventures on how and the extent to which the missionaries’ attitude towards lamentation developed into the contemporary denial syndrome among the text-readers’ interpretation. These realities depict a pragmatic, dynamic and critical effort of digging up the atrocities that struck the Gĩkũyũ people upon the invasion of their land by both the colonialists and the missionaries. The crucial questions revolve around how the Gĩkũyũ people perceived the Euro-centric perspective of text-reading, the initiatives and responses they displayed in the face of this hermeneutical challenge. Of great importance is how they reacted to forcible imposition of colonial hermeneutical approach by European missionaries, which have not been systematically dealt with. Attempts to make a synthesis of hermeneutical resources in various learned journals, anthologies and books, underscores the recovery of a neglected history, through truth telling of hermeneutical disasters that struck the Gĩkũyũland. The subsequent chronic stress of this negligence is felt by successive generations, of Gĩkũyũ people, in the form of hermeneutical disquietudes; which have invited the richness, in-depth, and complexity of underlying indigenous thought to a process of illuminating the present.

Thus, this chapter explores the gap existing between the socio-economic-cultural and political context; it appeals to historical application of biblical teaching in Gĩkũyũland,
perpetuation of colonial trivializations of native dissent, against foreign subjugation. The search for hermeneutical links between historical experiences and the teaching of the Bible, as a crucial ingredient, of creating a community with an alternative memory and a social perception of the text is crucial. It helps to envisage how well to bridge the Bible reading to the Gĩkũyũ context of historical degradation. This has not only plunged the Agĩkũyũ into humiliation, debasement, and nameless suffering, but also into a zone of non-being. The socio-economic and political death envisaged by alienated land which will never be returned is still felt. The study brings the underside history into a prism of biblical hermeneutics, which was anticipated to generate a vibrant act of fresh text-reading, which is neither enslaved nor immobilized by memories of Euro-centric conditionings. In this case, an inquiry into how a peculiarly European violence has come to thrive in Gĩkũyũland was revisited, to create self-awareness among the ordinary text-readers. This was done through historical circumstances that have undermined their determination, through ideologically entrenched deficiencies, reflected in their inability to wrestle with an elusive world. This chapter is a transnational and interdisciplinary inquiry into hermeneutical abstractness and sterility spawned by colonial violation of crucial components of Gĩkũyũ thought and culture. It makes a critical evaluation on how African reserves and the European-settled areas developed into a center of perpetual discontentment and lamentations. It also calls for sensitive reading of the Gĩkũyũ people’s basic beliefs as well as providing a hermeneutical critique; through setting of post-colonial search for humanization among the marginalized.

2.2 Historical Conditioning of the Gĩkũyũ People

This section has identified the colonial perspective of text-reading, which had, by early 1920s, created a new generation of elites among the Gĩkũyũ people that had no roots and
connectedness in the African traditions. Paradoxically, the new generation was not accepted by the new European environment of white supremacy and suffered a lot in the name of civilized silence – where life and death occurred. Within this paradox of the socio-economic and political history of the Gĩkũyũ community, in the early twentieth-century, the text-readers were able to demonstrate that the perceived incongruities, of dominant ideology were confirmations of the underlying complex ontological and theological posturing. This was, however, dismissed as futile human shrewdness by the fanatic missionaries who had conditioned Africans to employ foreign hermeneutical ideologies in text-reading (Thairu, 1975: 81). This state of affairs notwithstanding, an invigorating atmosphere full of changes, possibilities, and expectations of a relevant and realistic theological-hermeneutical reflection has emerged in Gĩkũyũland, since mid-1920s.

The colonial weapon of brainwashing and conditioning culminated to a fight against the Mau Mau movement, by exposing the text-readers to severe physical degradation, torture, violence and humiliation. This exposure has perpetually opened the local text-readers to paralysis and psychic numbness. Critical religious subjugations suggested difficulties of interpretation that go beyond the uncertainties of unfolding future or the fear of facing the unknown. In this regard, Loewy (1993) has argued that the dominant ideology and its systems embody the accepted view of how things are or should be and lures many into traditional poverty and feelings of powerlessness. This happens when text-readers are educated in a way that inculcates in them the kind of information, values and aims the group in power wants them to adapt. Acquisition of such a state of affairs is ordinarily achieved through indoctrination and socialization process, where recipients are denied the opportunity to question either the validity or the relevance of the information they are being given by
those in authority. This approach is detrimental to the wellbeing of the subjects because, it denies them an opportunity to process the information they get into a form of knowledge that is applicable and productive to their social situation.

Consequently, a serious inquiry into the historical experience of land alienation and its societal trauma is crucial. What was passed on through philosophical texts, in their alien cultural contexts, was an ideal Euro-centric culture, which had fostered false hopes for a superior lifestyle within that culture. However, the Agĩkũyũ text-readers were denied the opportunity to fulfill this expectation, and so their frustration was mirrored in the struggle for independence. The strategic and deliberate weapon of displacing the distinct group-centered orientation of the Gĩkũyũ people was based on alienation from their ancestral land. Thus, the magnitude of grief over the Agĩkũyũ experience of loss and defilement of their land was aggravated by deep-seated memories of colonial history of dispossession as a perpetual separation from its rituals and symbols.

2.2.1 Land Alienation

Acknowledging the fact that land issue was emotive for every Kenyan from whom it was alienated means the need for a post-colonial search for emotional closure. A case in point is Rift Valley region where a totally different culture was developed, mostly by Gĩkũyũ squatters, who bought and occupied the white settlers’ farms upon the exit of colonialists from Kenya. As a result, the alienated land was not returned to the indigenous squatters who happen to be the rightful owners. The question whether kalenjins, Maasai and other communities whose land was alienated have the right to lament is a controversy that will have to be addressed: Because, lamentation applies for them too; it is victims’ admission of
loss and a starting point to dealing with it; as opposed to hiding it under the carpet. It presents an opportunity to deepen those injustices or to try to heal them.

The question of silence about Gĩkũyũ people’s past is raised through the dispute over the loss of Gĩkũyũ land tenure which, upon the advent of colonialism, is probably one case that has preeminently captured the imagination of the Gĩkũyũ people in contemporary times. Though the colonialists are long gone, this loss remains in the collective memory of the Gĩkũyũ people. At the time of Mũthirĩgũ dance and Mau Mau war of independence, the issue attracted full attention of poetry and songs. In addition, the issue of Gĩkũyũland alienation has generated a multitude of scholarly articles and analyses running across several disciplines. Land alienation was much deeper than the question of the loss of a terrain for culture. Spirituality and identity were strongly linked to the land question. This was a catastrophic loss of Agĩkũyũ’s numinous world, which generated an ideal world of harmony and balance of people with their creator. This concept therefore, revolved around the community’s history, culture, and law where the relationship of people with mountains and sceneries exhibited the splendor of their faith and identity of Gĩkũyũland.

So, the ordeal of the Gĩkũyũ people is reflected by alienation of their land, labor, minds, heroes and heroines, as well as their offspring. The Gĩkũyũ people did not comprehend how their land was easily seized; they only saw themselves being silently and progressively placed under colonial European landlords as tenants, farmhands and squatters. This mainly happened in colonial coffee plantation schemes, which were, by then, expanding in central Kenya where the white settlers were busy evicting the natives in order to create space for coffee plantations. The new status was not acceptable to the people, leading to the struggle
for independence, and (in some cases) breaking away from the colonial-backed churches.

By suffering the deprivation of access to land, the Gĩkũyũ people were left frightened and isolated from their sacred ideals, leading to the huge inequalities between men and women that contributed to the escalation of poverty and underdevelopment. This anguish can help scholars detect the troubled, unsettled range of voices that still speak out, with regard to present and historical land injustices. The pre-colonial Gĩkũyũ community had an institutionalized use of land and other natural resources. The community members could not function independently of each other, but as a unified whole. So to them, such issues like land were fundamental to the whole community. Land was communally owned by all members of the Gĩkũyũ community as a sacred trust and as such, any person could cultivate the land, wherever he chose, provided it was not already being used by someone else (Leakey, 1952: 68-69). However, the community’s power to protect, conserve, and provide access to land was violently taken away when portions of the most fertile and productive land, indigenous knowledge of biodiversity and the genetic resources of the community, were vulnerably exposed to colonial exploitation.

The Gĩkũyũland enjoyed a humane and ecologically sustainable development, whereby community’s use of natural resources was vested on a council of elders in trust for the people. The colonial settlement policy overlooked this social arrangement by inviting more white settlers to come and exploit the land like a piece of merchandise to be given to the highest bidder; a form of disposition towards land that was unheard of in Gĩkũyũland. By late nineteenth and early twentieth-century, the colonial authorities had, for the purpose of settling European settlers in Gĩkũyũland, created a catastrophic uncertainty over land tenure.
Many indigenous families were turning into landless squatters as a result of expulsion from their land into alien places where they faced an uncertain future. The Agĩkũyũ system of land tenure and its traditional dispute resolution mechanism had been based on humane ownership of estates. The land had its well-defined boundaries and as such, the white settlers and missionaries’ belief and claim of land ownership were based on alien and undomesticated policy towards family and clan land. Thus, the Gĩkũyũ community whose land value had become a symbol of unity was deprived of its coherence and sense of significance, which had been embodied on land, as an important part of its cultural heritage.

Hence, the controversy of marginalized segments of Gĩkũyũ people's expression of a desire not to be assimilated and to preserve some “otherness” is a major item on the agenda of orthodox Agĩkũyũ (Karing’a), in their memory of independence struggle. In other words, if the initial text-reading process was intended to dialogue with Gĩkũyũ people's experience, then it would have taken the question of land seriously. This is so important because, thousands of Gĩkũyũ people died on the claim to their land, which had been forcefully occupied by the colonialists. The land was a cultural heritage and so alienating this community from its land was more than taking away their land. It was taking the Gĩkũyũ people’s past, as well as their roots and identity.

The experience in land alienation was not only a matter of taking away the things they used to see and expected to see, but it was a question of taking away their eyes. The reason for this is that the Gĩkũyũ community had literally regarded land and livestock ownership as a trust from God for future generations (Wanjohi, 2001:187, Kirika, 2002:24-29). According to Elkins (2005: 1-12), the disregard of the touchy problems of Gĩkũyũ land ownership and
tenure by the colonial court ruling of 1925, which had directed that; all squatters were
tenants at will under the law; and could, therefore, be evicted on the order of the landlord
without the right of appeal was tragic to Gĩkũyũ squatters. Over and above, is the never-
ending aftermaths of this ruling as exposed by dynamics of various aspects of covering-up
process that governed the November 1949 mass eviction of Gĩkũyũ squatters from
Olenguruone: This had started by a ruthless demolition of Gĩkũyũ squatters’ property and
confiscation of their livestock (c.f. Anderson 2005: 139). In fact by 1950, the majority of
Gĩkũyũ squatters had been repatriated to their home district. In summing up this experience,
we refer to an argument by Elkins (2005: 12), which states as follows: “...though all
indigenous groups were affected by British colonial rule in Kenya, none experienced a
transformation as intense as the Agĩkũyũ because of land alienation.” However, this was not
the only atrocity against the Agĩkũyũ; that is why Carpenter (1959) and Temu (1972) agree
that, the land issue was compounded with other grievances and was built up by skillful
agitation until it culminated in the Mau Mau insurrection of 1952. Invasion and
dispossession of land had humiliated, pauperized and demoralized the Gĩkũyũ people,
reducing them to a people, deeply at risk, without home, without land and without security.
They were reduced to internally displaced persons (IDPs) and objects of pity who would
protest any form of Gnostic cast to the task of text interpretation that would assume that the
real meaning of the text were only available to those who understand the theological
categories. The diversity of interpretation that builds incrementally, gradually by
incorporating new uses of lamentation in subsequent offering of a particular text-reading
culture was earlier recorded in Gĩkũyũland. Below find an illustration made by a n earlier
written Gĩkũyũ text of lamentation entitled; Nîtwambe tũkaĩre Ngai atũhotithie (let us first
cry unto God to enable us) echoed by Mũiguithania newsletter in1928.
Let Us First Cry Unto God to Enable Us

Oh God remember all the things before us; Look and see the Insults with which we are insulted And see how our heritage is given to strangers Even our family units Are in the hands of other people

We have become orphans as though our fathers were dead. Our mothers are as though bereaved of their husbands We buy our water with money, and Our firewood is sold to us.

Those pursuing us are on our necks look See how those servants are greater than us, we obtain our food with difficulty The joy of our hearts has become barren, And our sports have turned to laments.

Our God, you who abide forever; your Glorious throne is forever and ever Why do you always forget us and abandon us for so long? Turn to us that we may walk with you, You be our walking staff.

Source: Mũiguithania wa Andũ na Bũrũri wa Gĩkũyũ 1: 4, August, 1928, 4.

To forestall any rebellion, the colonizers built alliances with a few Gĩkũyũ individuals, who had agreed to serve as loyalists. The dishing out of annexed land, in exchange of political support, was a way of rewarding colonial cronies. Anderson (2005:139) quotes Sir Charles Eliot to have uttered offensive words over the Gĩkũyũland in his claim that: "No doubt on platforms and in reports, we declare we have no intention of depriving natives of their lands but this never prevented us from taking whatever land we want.” As a result of this declaration, natives' shrines and water catchments were destroyed or condensed to private property, leading to destruction of population and ecology. The colonial land policy and its dehumanizing laws introduced private ownership of land and all that was affixed to it became an insult to natives.

The Agĩkũyũ had suspiciously noted and resisted the inclinations of the missionaries, who like their colonial counterparts, were keen on investing their mission work only in productive and economically viable land. The people composed songs of staunch resistance
and defiance to European meta-narratives. By 1927, the Christian missions and colonial administration’s attempts to secure land for the establishment of a school, Native Council Chambers and hospitals were met with immediate suspicion. Due to this awakening, the colonial government proposal to introduce births and deaths registration was suspiciously treated as a device of population control, in order to take more land away. And so, on the eve of Mũthĩrĩgũ dance and songs, the Missionaries’ attempt to plant trees in school compounds was defiantly resisted. According to the Gĩkũyũ land tenure system, any existences of such trees would translate to giving aliens a claim to the land. The Gĩkũyũland through land alienation was finally turned into a place where foreign interests and foreign hands were perpetually instrumental to the undermining of indigenous people’s destiny. This community was now deprived of its ancestral land, heritage, and power triggering deep feeling over the land question. This led to a deep sense of loss and betrayal that nurtured the embryo of religious and political rebellion.

2.2.2 Detention and Exile

The other form of alienation consisted of the historical experience of detention without trial in Somali land (Kismayu and Seychelles) and Kenya (Manyani, Hola, Kowop, and other remote) areas, which became one of the deepest anguishes of colonial fashion of exile. A majority of Agĩkũyũ detainees were held in these camps on the basis of witch-hunting or mere suspicion. Detention without trial was backed by colonial administration’s draconian anti-terrorist laws that worked by suspending the human rights of suspects, imposing communal and enormous punishments that permitted the seizure of detainees’ land and death penalty, to a wide range of offences (cf. Anderson, 2005: 5). Being uprooted from their home-land, immediate families, culture, customs, and people, detention experience
meant the victims being radically slashed from their Gĩkũyũ collective identity. In this process, the agitators for freedom who were taken captive outside the bounds of their homeland were irreparably alienated from their land and shrines, which were essential elements in their identity as a people.

The loss of land, the sacred mountain of Kĩrĩnyaga (Mt. Kenya) and the Mũgumo (ficus hochstetteri) shrine made a critical impact on the exiles' collective identity, experience and understanding of God. How could they worship Ngai (God) in a strange land? They had to distinctly wonder like those Jews, who were asked to sing one of Zion songs in the Babylonian captivity (Psalm 137). Even more so, who was Ngai (God) and where was Ngai (God) in a strange land? Was the God of Agĩkũyũ overpowered by British army? For a people whose spirituality was intertwined with their collective identity, the dislocation of the exile and deportations caused a fracture in their self-understanding. Thus, the land question is the backdrop of historical injustices and a contentious issue of this century, which takes a hermeneutical dimension in Kenya.

2.2.3 The Hermeneutical Question

A vast majority of literature, on missionaries and hermeneutics in colonial Kenya, reveals that missionary interpretation of the Bible has always served as a conduit through which foreign ways of thinking are channeled to unsuspecting African natives. Such conduits open the study to inquiries into a comprehensive understanding of ordinary text-readers’ psyche and mindset to identify the compatibility of the Agĩkũyũ lifestyle with the word of God. The Bible, especially the Old Testament, was subjected to theological reflections that led to construal of Africa and its people. This was done through Victorian homilies that became
the site for articulating the British national identity, in terms of God’s people waging war against God’s adversary (Sugirtharajah, 2005). Those who read the Gĩkũyũ vernacular Bible later equated this destruction to the deportations or the displacements of ancient Israel to Babylon, under King Nebuchadnezzar.

The meta-narrative of endorsing and legitimating these dramatic events developed into an imperialistic narrative of moving to a new land, on the grounds of executing a divine mission of humanizing the heathens and savages by all means, including force. Thus, the rhetoric that dominated the arrival of good news, in Gĩkũyũland, was rhetoric of superior guarantee to colonizers by God. They were reading the Bible through the lenses of a self-serving hermeneutical approach that launched a capitalistic ‘progress’ through a profit-making mania of a prosperity gospel that justified the exploitation and destruction of heathen lands. The tension between missionaries’ claims of serving God and their priority of profit was reflected on Agĩkũyũ suspicion of missionaries’ preaching and actions. The community felt short-changed, through a text-reading process, into surrendering their ancestral land, which was a birthright that supported its balance, suggested meaning, and nourished its beauty and worldview. The indigenous narrative of good life and good land which were God’s gift to the children of Gĩkũyũ and Mũmbi was wounded and the moral force lost. Through the greed and idolatry of capitalism, the Gĩkũyũland and its people were subjected to a sense of individualism, where survival of the community was placed below that of the individual. The universal emphasis on individual autonomy inverted the pyramid and decreed that individual interests were more important than community interests. Consequently, the voice of the community was eventually stifled and made impotent by publicized ethos of compassionate mission of the Empire. The sacred land of the Agĩkũyũ
was reduced to a tool of trade and exploitation cutting down the sacred mūgumo tree, collecting ancestors’ skulls and placing them around the villages of non-Christians which was the greatest abomination ever done in Gĩkũyũland and history (Wanjao, 2005).

The Mūthīrĩgũ and ex-Mau Mau detainees’ songs form the backbone of public expression of Agĩkũyũ anguish and hope, through the lamentation text, where the indigenous hermeneutical lenses of shaking the shackles of prejudice against their own land and culture have been put into their minds by colonizers. Such shaking enabled the text-readers to move into new depths of letting the text to have its full say on Gĩkũyũ text readers’ wounds. The cry of the depth grew increasingly louder, and gained more and more support from the wider society. Such historical expressions bring the Gĩkũyũland into its narrative of searching, struggling, questioning, doubting, wondering, walking away frustrated, returning, re-reading, and starting all over again. It opens the modern Mūgĩkũyũ into a rich and shameless witness of a historical tide that runs against the conventional assumptions, priorities, values and practices of what was denied and suppressed. The rank and file of Agĩkũyũ text-readers’ evolved a hermeneutic of suspicion and critique through their refusal not to be cowed by Western hermeneutics of inhabiting and interpreting. They continued to identify with a reading in which diversity is valued and all voices are heard in trust and suspicion.

This reading was taking shape as a development of a distinctively African hermeneutics of suspicion that addressed the ordinary text-readers’ hermeneutical needs. Such a development was realized by the art of bringing the text-readers’ ferment to criticality, evaluation and questioning to operation. The lament songs and dances witnessed to what was at risk by protesting the traits of commitment and trust obverted by Euro-centric
hermeneutics. These indigenous forms of protests had proved to be powerful weapons of hermeneutical expression and mobilization in their call for an immediate redress of the social, economic, and political grievances. The attack on colonial chiefs and missionaries was gravitated towards suspicion through which indigenous disciplines were forcefully used to critique the dominant ideologies and also to serve as a safety valve for ordinary African text-readers’ grievances (Temu, 1972: 134). So, the community fought, still fights and is still fighting through the questioning of Western hermeneutics through hermeneutical mistrust of texts launched and established through lamentations as bona-fide embodiments of the hermeneutics of suspicion. The mistrust of colonizer’s ideologies has prompted the need to read and interpret the text in the light of delegitimizing the Euro-centric imposition of selective and prejudicial text-readings. This indigenous process of healing the memories through the hermeneutical suspicion of colonial injustices and violence challenges self-interest, power, national, ethnic, class, and gender perspectives of Euro-centric reading.

2.2.3.1 Bible Interpretation and the Land Question
The skills of text-reading were invested on memorizing Bible verses for regurgitation, paving the way into which the Bible was positioned, as an inseparable object of power in the transactions between Agĩkũyũ, the explorers and the missionaries. The package of modernity was already subsumed under Euro-Christianity whose paternalistic and patronizing hermeneutics was to become an inevitable epistemological package in the Gĩkũyũland. The introduction of this package widened the gap between theory and practice in terms of disparities reflected between the socio-economic realities of Gĩkũyũ people and the teachings of the Bible, which have left behind an indelible landmark. The pre-colonial Gĩkũyũ community was made of many huddles of cultural, social, religious, economic and
political strata, with interlocking structures of control. Upon the encounter with the Eurocentric models of interpreting the Bible, the community was opened to a double-faceted worldview, where the rationalization of thought and changes in socio-economic and political beliefs and institutions was irreparably disengaged from their traditional values. This disengagement happened due to lack of a dialectic relationship between the two worldviews.

The Eurocentric secular worldview is a precursor of pre-colonial and colonial ordeals of Gĩkũyũ people while the World Bank (WB) and the International monetary fund (IMF) are key institution behind the neo-colonial socio-economic stifling of modern Gĩkũyũland. Euro-centrism offers its primacy to economic enterprises whose socio-political and religious systems are hinged on a capitalistic spirit that gave birth to it. These induced material preferences have gradually sidelined objective and subjective post-colonial interpretation and application of biblical and African values of honesty, efficiency, transparency and accountability in the wider society. When these values are implemented through amorphous colonial manufactured bodies called states, it is difficult for text-readers to feel, touch or even engage them in a face-to-face dialogue. This double faceted worldview has left many Agĩkũyũ text-readers with the belief that they have no home-grown options in life. Hence, they have become indifferent to serious initiatives that could improve their lives, always looking to Europe and America to give them exotic solutions to their local problems. This fatalistic belief in an uncontrollable future is well-captured by Whiteker’s (1962: 26) observation, of how people blame their mediocrity and numbness to external forces in the Swahili expression Ni shauri ya Mungu (It is for God’s will). It is an attitude that has eventually aggravated people’s suffering and has, from time to time been converted by natural calamities into profound disasters. This means that the post-colonial community of
text-readers lacks a distinctively African text-reading model that may be used by the victimized and marginalized people, in obtaining the space for their existence and dignity.

The missionaries’ paternalistic and patronizing hermeneutical mindset, which was born and bred out of their local situation (in their countries of origin) could not match with the Gĩkũyũ traditional expressions of grief and dealing with sorrow, but instead chose to shun this reality as though it never existed. To achieve this end and to inculcate European manners, the mission schools ensured that the boys were caned on the buttocks and girls on their open palms. This ruthless caning process was also extended to their sinful parents in public places, when on some occasions the colonial administrators and missionaries would beat and humiliate them in front of their children for. The belief that barbarism and heathenism of the African could be changed only through flogging and they were punishing the flesh so that the souls might be cured (Temu, 1972; 16-17). However, these humiliations merely perfected the co-optation of Africans into Euro-centric silence and gloom, by regarding indigenous expression of grief a subversive activity.

2.2.3.2 A Liberative Hermeneutics

The traditional or classical hermeneutics by the first missionaries made absolute claims that led to ultimate impositions of European neo-colonial rule and its hegemony in biblical hermeneutics today. But its veracity was challenged by the Agĩkũyũ historical context of dismantling the structures of weariness and the dethronement of the powers of fatigue, which constitute a promissory call to a new future. This is because it touched the hopeless Mũgĩkũyũ (singular for Agĩkũyũ) at many different points in time and place.

Borrowing a leaf from this historical occurrence, it would be important to dig out the
memories of the post-colonial Gĩkũyũ community and to educate them on how to use this indigenous tool of hope. This undertaking starts with the recognition of how singularly words, speech, language and phrases shape a people’s consciousness and define reality. It will be a process of proving that the closed world of managed reality is false. Thus, the post-colonial approach to this experience is not expected to provide rational answers but to express deep hurt and anger in a passionate grappling with pain in dire need for a hermeneutical connection with the destiny of the Gĩkũyũ people. Such an undertaking will make the Agĩkũyũ post-colonial biblical scholars more vigilant and help them refrain from making definitive and watertight statements in hermeneutics, which cannot protest easy answers drafted by former colonizers. The description of these stages is important in establishing how the shaking of the Agĩkũyũ social foundation was greeted by the community’s reaffirmation of its faith in Ngai (God).

By employing varied tactics of institutionalizing imperial ideological concepts among the Agĩkũyũ, the indigenous social structures were replaced with colonial religious structures of text-reading. This replacement was not keen to facilitate the embrace of the old value system, because it evaded the reinterpretations of societal outcry against the biased hermeneutics that alienated the Agĩkũyũ from other people. This reinterpretation is central in all anti-colonial and neo-colonial struggles, reflected in the post-colonial efforts of bringing to mainstream the African indigenous skills of interpretation, This will happen in the course of applying the lamentation text to the condition of ordinary Mũgĩkũyũ text-reader; in pursuit of contrast between the exhorted past glory with pervading misery of the present. The above mentioned stages raise this study’s concern to revisit the imperial projects and propaganda, through lamentation of historical injustices to draw symbols of
new life. These historical injustices spell out the fact that the colonial legacy is inseparable from the church mission, a scenario that inevitably generated a hermeneutical conflict. The development of Gĩkũyũ community’s life in its depth of despair comes into limelight through the bridging of Bible reading and the Agĩkũyũ context of historical degradation. The voicing of all that has turned the Gĩkũyũland into an oblivion zone, drenched by threats of socio-economic and political death, will in this process, help in tackling the present-day problems. It is a context of historical injustices, self-denial of dignity, heavy psychic damage and internal displacements rooted in Euro-centric hermeneutics. The history of the Bible in Africa underscores the unjust and oppressive social system as the Empire’s hermeneutical perspective exhibited a de-facto expression of full and complete emblem of textual interpretations for centuries.

African home-grown hermeneutics has two advantages: one, it informs the study on how to define the starting point for the post-colonial study of the Bible and other texts among the Agĩkũyũ. Thus, the shaking of the socio-economic and political foundations of the Gĩkũyũ community narrates how this community was forced to relinquish its mode of existence, in favor of modernity that translated into European way of life. The Agĩkũyũ were forced to yield to a severe onslaught of their humanity by meta-narratives of modernity, which had subjugated and dominated the indigenous mode of production but, had not totally destroyed it. The flow of lamentation among those members of Gĩkũyũ community that began to read the text even before the colonization and gave their interpretation explains the role of ordinary Mũgĩkũyũ text-reader in looking back and possibly salvaging the indigenous mode of production via hermeneutical struggle that led to indigenous modes of re-reading the Bible. The earlier protests against colonialism by indigenous’ community led to retentions
of old cultural and economic practices which were found invaluable. The emergency of AICS (African Instituted Churches) in Gĩkũyũland and total rejection of Christianity by some members of Gĩkũyũ community explains how they read the Bible and only to end up in schism, which can now be avoided. Thus, reading the text from ones’ own perspective of oppression and marginalization, means waging an assault against the dominant culture and its classical hermeneutical structures.

The Bible study as a journey to freedom, begins with the ordinary Agĩkũyũ text-readers’ understanding how and why the Euro-centric hermeneutics was imposed on their community. This has made the word of God both peripheral and ephemeral among the succeeding generations of Agĩkũyũ. By making the word of God marginal and short-lived, the missionaries and the colonizers successfully cemented their united front of interpreting, understanding and applying the text through a deliberate disregard of the Agĩkũyũ socio-economic context. The present hermeneutical destiny of the Agĩkũyũ is now seen to proceed, not from free and autonomous choices, but from the legacy of a hermeneutics that was historically imposed on them. Notwithstanding the fact, that, it burned into their flesh and pushed down their throats by all socio-economic and political conditionality. The assault of Agĩkũyũ core values by Christianity provides this study with an open historical situation and concrete interpretations of the text. As a result, the Agĩkũyũ text-readers are today inscribed within a distinct institutional order, a native order forced to operate within the fundamentally inequitable and hegemonic framework of colonialism. The radical replacement and discontinuity of the Gĩkũyũ traditional society was an important context, upon which the word of God was preached in Gĩkũyũland by the missionaries.
2.2.3.3 The Discrepancy between Word and Deed

The Agĩkũyũ attempt to find a God who listens to the cry of the poor and the oppressed was thwarted when they tried to have their say in giving names to things around them. In this case, the early efforts to define biblical laments in the Agĩkũyũ context of imagining a new socio-cultural experience that goes beyond the constraints of racism, slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism were repressed. Historically, these missionaries talked from the West while physically in Africa, and as such they failed to connect with the local flock. In other words, they were not ready to listen to the indigenous voices of lament, or even learn from their experience, because they were instructed to teach natives only simple biblical faith rather than biblical theology. Their interpretation of the bible was deficient in the analytical skills, needed for scientific and technological innovation. The absence of the African context and the local people’s voice in the text-reading process has, therefore, blocked the text-readers from many possibilities. This includes the possibility of seeing the connections, synthesizing information or generating hypothesis in a healthy hermeneutical exchange.

The process of domestication sucked the Agĩkũyũ traditional religion into the bureaucracy of text-reading which was often allied to the dominant ideology that ignored the underlying socio-economic and cultural realities. This process further wrecked the Gĩkũyũ community’s discursive as well as self-assertive process thereby creating a gap between the dominant cultural system and the underlying social reality. This led to the illusions of self-sufficiency which cuts across the plane of individual human being up to free market capitalist and religious chauvinism that hoodwinked the natives from exploring their historical conditions which were important for shaping their existence and for mapping out their future. So, the Agĩkũyũ were brought to a crossroad of pervasive cultural endorsements through the
idealization of self-sufficiency and its extent of asserting its supremacy in all matters – both mundane and ethereal. This translated into a steady abandonment of Agĩkũyũ culture through a broad spectrum of conditioning the natives’ lives wherever radical merging of local economic and political histories into a Western framework of imagination. This was done and reinforced through the catechetical classes, pedagogy and church discipline.

2.2.3.4 The Need to be Needed and Return to the Roots

This framework was highly indebted to internalized values of the text-readers in their conditioned state. The art of conditioning was to envisage the colonial legacy of ingrained myths; which were perpetually used as a buffer between the underlying social reality of the text-reader and the dominant ideology of the empire. These myths have continued to mutate into different forms even after colonialism was dismantled. They leave the colonized people vulnerable to former colonizers’ maneuvers that deprive them of their historical roots which are essential for a dynamic text-reading process. However, the ethos of consumerism and economic deprivation has distorted the Agĩkũyũ worldview and lifestyle, by exposing them to perpetual powerlessness of believing or acting independently thus, creating the need to be needed. Schwartz (1998:1) elaborates this point in detail:

Westerners often create projects, programs and institutions, which cannot be carried on or reproduced by those they are trying to help. Sometimes those who create this outside-induced dependency carve out a future for themselves from which they cannot seem to be extricated, if indeed they want to be extricated. If they don’t really want to be extricated, conspiracy develops which thrives on the need to be needed on the part of the outsiders. The need to be needed is a very powerful force.

Thus, the long and dark history of colonizing the Agĩkũyũ and subjecting them to the Euro-centric ethos of consumerism had by 1920, weakened their socio-economic institutions in general, creating the dependency syndrome among the natives. It purged the Gĩkũyũ community of its organic analogy characteristic of religious values, lifestyle and expectation
leading to a higher magnitude of incongruity that revolved around the cultural framework and the patterning of social interaction. From these two, the text-readers and their belief systems, were dismembered and treated as conceptual entities by the dominant ideology. So, the Gĩkũyũ religion was regarded as preliterate and therefore, pre-logical; unable to engage in operational thinking in terms of its core values, beliefs, structures and attitudes.

However, the advent of mũthĩrĩgũ and ex-Mau Mau detainees’ songs present Gĩkũyũ people’s ability to identify the troubled, unsettled range of voices that speak and converge to make a mesmerizing statement of sorrow and grief. When one listens to these songs carefully, the listener is astounded by the creative genius of whoever had composed the songs. They look into the Gĩkũyũ legends, past and future aspiration to provide important information about local conditions that could not be taken for granted, but rather, be built into a design of text-reading. Consequently what was previously accepted was now being broken down and a cry for a recovery of memory, roots and connectedness was echoed.

So, waging an assault on the imperial tenets brings the Agĩkũyũ back into their own moment and world of facing their own problems, challenges and opportunities. Through the subjection of Gĩkũyũ ethos and mythos into a melting pot, the text-reader’s eyes can be widely opened to see their own world in a fresh light. Such opening is crucial in bringing to headline the fundamental nature of text-readers who can fearlessly engage in questioning, skepticism, and disillusionment in a struggle of making the pieces of broken lives come together for their own good and many others. As Freire (1993: 69) has said, “to exist humanly, is to name the world, to change it. Once it has been named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new naming.” Naming the
world is about entering into one’s social reality with a tradition of speech, reflection, discernment and imagination. These will prevail over the de-humanizing colonial legacy and question the illusion of equality, prosperity and human rights, perpetuated by the post-colonial regimes. Through naming the world, the entire process of domestication which had always articulated faith from the angle of a safe and settled world, is subjected to scrutiny. Consequently, its link with the status quo, as executed by dominant ideological claims and pretensions that things are alright amidst uncertainties, which tend to outlaw the text-readers’ contemplation of real grief and offer serious criticism could not go unchallenged (Brueggemann, 1978: 20-21).

It was through the colonial domestication process, that the basics of Gĩkũyũ people’s life and faith are shaken. The advent of a colonial state was therefore, a key component in the majestic rationalization of Gĩkũyũ people’s reality of pain and suffering, that is, packaging it in manageable portions where life and death issues were reduced to private, personal, spiritual and eternal. Consequently, the Empire had to elaborate its bureaucracy through institutionalization and intimation of its technical reasons that were inherently conservative and practically immune to questions of justice and compassion. Any attempt to resist such a colonial Endeavour was anathema to the missionaries and their counterparts, the colonial administrators. It was, to them, a shameful return to the pagan and savage practices of the Gĩkũyũ cultural practices. Thus, the possibility of creating an alternative consciousness or community, which is radically removed from the conditions of the colonial situation, brings into tension the criticized present and its prospects of an energizing future. However, a symbol of hope enjoined in Gĩkũyũ history and its community dimension brings the memory to new inventions.
2.2.3.5 Missionaries’ Divide and Rule Tactics as a Hermeneutical Locus

This criticism on missionaries’ hermeneutical stances is not ingratitude or a wholesale condemnation of all European missionaries, but an appreciation of the politics between the center and the margin. Here the study is paying attention to the issues of imperialism, hegemony and so forth; these issues help the text-reader to identify how the incidences of missionaries siding with settlers in determining and shaping the way the colonized people are organized today has become a highly questionable venture. The missionaries’ narrative are now read from a post-colonial perspective; in fact the study appreciates the exceptional role played by individual missionaries like Archdeacon Owen of Western Kenya who formed a political party to defend the locals; Dr. Clawford who worked among the Embu people or even the philanthropic work of 1900 where missionaries had to use modern medicine among the Gikũyũ people who were being swept by leprosy. Nevertheless, this study’s focus on hidden texts (bad aspects) of missionaries is in a way strengthening Walligo (1986)’s cry for making a Church that is truly African and authentic Christian. Thus, the study stands to question the foundational interpretive process of colonial practices and mandate of translating, interpreting and disseminating the text.

The oversimplification of African identity through this process has left the European colonial missionaries’ range of interpretation with a dent of marginality and so the narrative surrounding its text-reading tools overshadows the several layers of textual-meanings which are pegged on its non-critical stance on past missionary work and ideological trends behind this history of philanthropic deeds. It helps the text-reader understand how colonial church and regime hermeneutics functioned in creating hermeneutical structures through binary opposition and racial boundaries. The official text-reading position of the colonial
Christianity in critical times of human rights abuse was embedded in European missionaries’ moral and spiritual heresy of binary fusion. This was apparent during the anti-colonial rebellion, when the binary fusion in hermeneutics of life was used by missionaries to neglect and renounce the plight of the wounded text-readers’ poverty and oppression in Gĩkũyũland. Although at this period of freedom struggle the quest for a different framework of text-reading propelled by text-readers’ reality had been heightened, the missionaries’ activities were blind to this indigenous quest. They sided with the settlers to argue the case of white supremacy by pawning the Agĩkũyũ interests in order to maintain the status quo. The vested interest of European Christianity was based on its ideals of seeking to ameliorate the intolerable conditions of text-readers who were being deprived of their livelihood by colonial settlements on their land. By extinguishing all the people’s claims to land occupied by mission stations and white settlers through the Christian demand for acts of love and kindness which were blind to pain and suffering, the text-readers claim to traditional institution was jeopardized. Certainly, the missionaries featured so prominently in violent confrontation to the extent that Christianity was tarred with one brush as colonizers.

In so doing, the Agĩkũyũ were sharply divided along denominational lines. According to Maina-wa-Kinyatti (2008:91), the Karĩng’a school and church movement had rejected the colonial interpretation of the Bible by denouncing the injection of “…white supremacy in Christianity and also condemning the racist paternalism of white missionaries and their complicity with the brutal colonial state.” On the one hand, the Karĩng’a movement was massively pro-liberation, it had throughout expressed its deep feelings of African religious conceptualization as the engine of shaping and deepening of anti-imperialist consciousness among the Agĩkũyũ. The other members of the mainstream mission churches who were
already domesticated to oppose their own liberation kept away from any form of intellectual commentary on the content and significance of indigenous hermeneutics that would address the issues at hand. Thus, the missionaries’ text-reading process had a lot of impact among the loyalists or home guards who were in derogatory terms called Ngaati or Kamatimũ. The Ngaati or Kamatimũ consisted of social outcasts who had sought the shelter of the empire in order to avoid the hardships of the struggle. They sold the Gĩkũyũ people to the Europeans and also weakened the unity of the struggling masses (Kariuki, 1963: 37).

In doing so, they had a good standing of being good Christians and the freedom fighters (Itungati) and their families were stigmatized and brutally treated as heathens and pagans who deserved no mercy. This was clearly reflected in the colonial villages where the loyalists or home guards (Hũmu Ngaati or Kamatimũ) would access any land, confiscate other properties and wives of the so called heathenish freedom-fighters by laying false evidence on any one at will. But the struggle continued as expressed by songs of defiance:

*Tūtūragia gũthamio* (We are not afraid of detention)
*Kana gũwarwo Njeera* (or being sent to prison)
*Kana gũwarwo iciģĩrĩra* (or being sent to remote islands)
*Toondũ tũtigatiga* (For we shall never give up)
*Gũtetera ithaka* (our struggle for land)
*Kenya in bũrũri wa andũ airũ* (Kenya is an African people’s land)
(Source: General Kamwamba alias Jason Kamotho Kamau)

The common statement uttered during the interviews among the songs and speeches of ex-Mau Mau and detainees was the following: *Kĩmathi agĩkua nĩatũtigĩiirĩ kĩrumi tiri ũyũ witũ tũtikanarekererie* (When Kĩmathi was dying he cautioned the community not to surrender our soil). This is well placed to explain contemporary economic realities as well as the crucial starting point for future hermeneutical work. The illocutionary force of this statement traces on the widespread poverty and injustices which were a basic concept of ex-Mau Mau
veterans and detainees’ hermeneutics of life. It boosted the revolutionary process of change as well as the exploration of how hermeneutical concepts function in their world of reality. A critique of both the alien concepts and their ideological ways of working out any reliable biblical-theological-ethical perspective rests in a revisit lamentation. The traitors through the institutional setup of the colonialists were in this case devoted in articulating a textual-understanding of the social forces operating most powerfully at that particular moment. They were heavily rewarded by the colonial system which had benefited from the land confiscated from freedom fighters while non-loyalists were left to take care of their children who were left behind to fend for themselves (including Kimathi’s daughter) because either their parents were out in the forest, detained or they were busy digging the channels to keep the freedom fighters at bay. In this case, the study revisits the story of a 16 year old Gĩkũyũ lady Agatha Njoki Geita and also Mama Elizabeth Waruiru who in solidarity with freedom fighters had to take this humanitarian task upon themselves and for its own assessment would use it to articulate its theological reflection in the light of post-colonial hermeneutical concerns (see “Daily Nation on Web”, 10th October, 2010).

The church official text-reading process was based on text-readers’ resignation which occupied the church members through blind acceptance of their condition exposing them to hermeneutical captivity and paralysis. Today, the real meaning of colonial socio-economic and political framework in Gĩkũyũland during the struggle for independence is shrouded with many disturbing questions, which remains unanswered in our post-colonial time. There have been no concrete public acknowledgements of crimes against humanity or any realistic actions of paving different ways of understanding the silent people as a marginal voice. The church has been accused of having deliberately ignored the inhumanity and brutality of
colonialism through the bestializing of the aims and objectives of the indigenous freedom fighters by ensuring that the ordinary text-readers are denied access to radical values of the rebels (agitators for freedom). They were made to reject violence and armed struggle as it was a primitive way to freedom. Thus, Agĩkũyũ text-readers attempt to change their conditions of marginalization was thwarted by Euro-centric way of making the text-reading too personal and keeping it in the private sphere. Today, the silence of Europe on the questions of reparation of maimed freedom fighters, detainees and the lost land has deepened the historical dilemma of how the ex-freedom fighters and detainees should relate their experiences with the word of God. Slow socio-economic and political suicides seem to linger in the minds of surviving ex-freedom fighters and detainees’ memories in their struggle against despair. As ordinary text-readers, the ex-freedom-fighters and detainees’ reuse of their past to speak to the present challenges remains thwarted by missionaries’ legacy of hermeneutical dictatorship. By ignoring the fusions of traditional and modern lamentation genres and dance forms within and without detention camps as it will be pointed in the next chapter, the missionaries had posed as both the instruments and executors of transformation in their attempt to liberate the Agĩkũyũ freedom-fighters and detainees through the instruments of domestication.

The essence of such instruments pointed to the lack of Agĩkũyũ text-readers’ ability to think, to want and to know. When politics threatened to become an alternate focus of loyalty over the land question among the ordinary text-readers, missionaries warned against text-readers involvement in public processing of pain of any kind by a affirming that Christians had nothing to do with such matters of the world for they belonged to the army of Jesus. Thus, the mark of being Christian was precisely based on text-readers’ ability to query the
moral basis of the ideals voiced by independent churches and freedom fighters’ quest for rights on land and access to property. Apart from studying the historical conditioning of the Agĩkũyũ, and the impact it had on them as a people, this study identified four key stages that are intensely reflective of how the Gĩkũyũ people and their whole environment were forced into a subordinated culture of colonial rule. The submission through economic emasculation had taken its form through land dispossession and displacement of indigenous persons from their ancestral homes.

2.2.3.6 The Emergence of Sycophancy

From the beginning, the Protestant missions reduced early generation of biblical scholars to Eurocentric sycophants and iconoclastic who assailed African forms, symbols, and analogies. African indigene hermeneutical icons were portrayed as animistic idols, devoid of any intellectual engagement, in terms of organized thought around the socio-economic issues of the indigenes. Nobody ever thought of asking the opinion of indigenous Gĩkũyũ people who were on the ground long before the coming of the European interpreters and their cronies. For the most part, the protestant missionaries were not interested in building indigenous collective conscience of active and vigilant text interpreters of all times. The indigenous community psyche was hijacked, trampled upon and quashed by racist prejudice that espoused the notion that African minds were a tabular rasa (a blank sheet of paper) on which one could write anything, including foreign biblical hermeneutical theories. This racist assumption was a crucial hermeneutical tool of justifying the alienation and deportation of the African mind by Christian mission from its inherent worldview to tenets of modernity. Modernity was introduced to train indigenous communities on how to determine certain directions and attitudes of life whose closing stages are manifest in
Thinking and behaving in a modern way had placed the text-reader to a class of elitists that unquestionably favored change and development initiated by colonialism and imperialism. The brain-washing education and its endeavors were ideologically anchored on serving the colonial function of molding the colonized people in accordance with the image and likeness of European culture. The gains of this colonial replica were ramifications of hermeneutical tools that reduced natives to perpetual beggars of alien hermeneutical theories. The colonially inculcated hermeneutics served the purpose of alienating individuals from their community through two interlinked forms: (1) Active distancing of oneself from the reality around; and (2) Active identification with that which is most external to one's environment. It started with a deliberate disassociation of the language of conceptualization, of thinking, of formal education, of mental development, from language of daily interaction in the home and in the community. As a result, it was difficult to talk to the most educated African biblical scholars about the things closest to them and which they knew most. Education offered by missionaries to African was one that separated the human psyche from the body hence the very being of the colonized text-reader was perpetually made to represent two unrelated entities in the same person (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1993: 28).

2.2.3.7 The Possibility of an African Biblical Hermeneutics

According to Mbiti (1969) and Mudimbe (1986), the domestication of the African’s mind is irreparably conditioned by the West to the extent that African biblical scholars are afraid of engaging their home-grown hermeneutical skills in text-reading. The alternative they can take (but are yet to do so) is to re-invent African hermeneutic art in its relationship to self
and the world, in the face of sudden and savagery forces of imperial reading models. There is an urgent need for a text-reading approach that helps the community to articulate its worldview and mental categories through poems, songs and stories, in order to bring an all-inclusive reading in the public theatre. The church that taught Africans to bow before the imperial ideology coined from conventional and self-acclaimed Euro-centric worldview lacks the link of co-joining the historical experience with modern hermeneutical theories. This missing link is crucial in establishing unfettered presence and intellectual agility required in the challenging of the underlying idolatry of Euro-centric technology, sociology, economy, polity, psychology and liturgy. To a certain extent, Walter Rodney (1981: 263) is helpful in defending, re-articulating and illustrating the lost glory of the indigenous means of passing knowledge. He expresses the concern that "Education is crucial in any type of society for the preservation of the lives of its members and the maintenance of the social structure. The most crucial aspect of pre-colonial African education was its relevance to Africans in sharp contrast with that which was later introduced by colonial administration."

The main purpose of colonial process of education was to train Africans to participate in their domination and exploitation. Colonial education was therefore, the education for subordination and exploitation through which the creation of mental confusion and the underdevelopment was accomplished (cf. Rodney, 1981: 263). What is more, the text-readers lacked an upper hand in education, which was a powerful hermeneutical-ideological weapon in the hands of the missions and the colonial administration. It had been used with success to domesticate Africans making them subservient to the colonial masters (Temu, 1972: 163). Africans’ power to think, innovate or decide was eventually subjected to a process of accepting the colonial thought patterns as representations of absolute truth.
Adherence to colonial criteria assured one’s success, in occupying the position of prestige and privileges, in relation to the colonizer. So, a segment of elites who were infused with cognates of colonialist ethos, as alternative cultural values, became part of the intelligentsia lot that perpetuated the neo-colonial ethos with great passion, hope and pride. In the religious field, the succession of the African literary scholar-theologians, who had occupied the less valued position of text interpreters during the missionary era, replaced the missionaries, who were initially occupying the top rung of hermeneutical hierarchy. Today, the only intellectual classes that have anything authoritative in textual interpretation belong to elite-politicians, priests, seminarians and their instructors. The vibrancy of hermeneutical theories and contestation of textual meaning, ideas, ideologies and discourses thrived among those who resisted assimilation and despair.

Once the earlier generation of African theologians was molded to become a special category of expert interpreters, they could not again imagine changing themselves from their newly acquired status for they had already yielded, obeyed and resigned to them-selves. This resignation marks the last part of indigenous memories; hence the urgent need to evoke lamentations as a sure way of awakening the buried memories as well as to counter-balance the challenge of Euro-centric hermeneutical’ oldness, barrenness, and helplessness. The lack of specific indigenous methods of interpretation meant the indigenous inability to penetrate the arena of hermeneutical process. So, different communities of interpreters were ensnared in a cycle of misappropriation, re-appropriation and at times, emasculation of their preferred biblical passage. The British Empire was keen to deliver the Bible in its own image and likeness which served the ideological interest of confronting the diverse local needs and expectations. This mentality was keen to encourage the reader to choose the text that
guarded the ideological interests of the colonizers. A reversal of these ideological interests and trends requires contemporary text-readers to creatively dig deep to collective conscience of their communities. The question to be addressed is how to re-capture lamentation which is a lost hermeneutical space of articulating the indigenous text-readers’ future.

In what follows, the study has been keen to analyze some stages of colonial domestication, which had ensured a smooth imposition of euro-cultural mode of discourse and its textual-meanings on Agĩkũyũ and the Gĩkũyũ-landscape: 1. Economic; 2. Anthropological; 3. Mental and 4 Liturgical. The analysis of these stages should specifically help the ordinary text-reader to understand and appreciate fundamentals of hermeneutics in the context of examining the Agĩkũyũ’s unrelenting cry of distress over land loss, and its consequential predicament, which ensured the smooth conditioning of the conquered people. This analysis helps text-reading community to identify pain and suffering as a watchful call to hermeneutical action that invests on strengths, constraints and opportunities that governs the interpreters in the formulation of strategies and in some cases strategic plans.

2.3 Economic Conditioning

By the end of nineteenth century, the Agĩkũyũ had a functional economy as illustrated by many changes. The Gĩkũyũ and Akamba traders were already traversing the entire region and bringing to central Kenya goods of exotic origin from Coast. But, following the invasion and colonization, the community was not only deprived of its hopes of ever farming their land. The new mode of economy was governed by industrial revolution in Europe where demand for export of fruits, vegetables, fibers and textiles triggered the necessitated for large scale commercial agriculture. The restructuring of the economy was
inevitable as it turned to revolve heavily, and often decisively, around settlers’ commercial interests. Economic conditions which were already subsumed in social ties which were now turning into individualistic ventures which in the final run impoverished the Gĩkũyũ communitarian based wealth and economy. Individuals had to adjust them-selves to this reality that is why a segment of Agĩkũyũ rank and file who seized opportunities in the new arena benefited at the expense of others. The travails of ushering in of colonial based economic order were felt through the loss of traditional food security was secured by Gĩkũyũ communitarian economic approaches. Adjusting to changing economic conditions meant a re-configuration of power relations within individual families as well as within the wider community.

In the already existing economic field was the indigenous barter economy which was now being replaced with money economy in Gĩkũyũland. This replacement of one mode of economy with another was to radically affect people’s way of life. It all began with European settlers who dislodged the indigenous center of economic power by killing all indigenous modes of production. The new mode of economy was driven by untamed mania for creating wealth through the export of raw materials, foreign investment and development aid, which gradually drove the Gĩkũyũ people into greed and corruption through the lust for money. The barter mode of economy was communitarian and ecological friendly as well as an inter-territorial and ethnic melting pot. The new mode of economy in Africa as spelt out by imperial chartered companies is ushered by colonial regime which had to arbitrarily divide the Gĩkũyũ community and the surrounding communities, mineral deposits, ecosystems, watersheds and other resources. The impact of these replacements was deep and certainly destined to affect the future course of events because the intermingling,
intermarriages and merging of cultural practices were now subjected to destructive frameworks of European philosophies and policies of racial categorizations. The radical change of the balance of power through ethnic divides helped the colonizer to take control which was a precursor of continued exploitation of Africa’s labor and resources. It gave way to a capitalistic mode of cash economy which was also an extractive hermeneutic tool that defined and determined the status of an individual Mũgĩkũyũ in terms of the amount of cash or accumulated personal property, not by birth, family unit or age-group or the number of wives and children (Boahen, 1987: 110). The widening gap between rich and poor has broken down many of the relationships of mutual dependency that once helped the poor. The new lifestyle was and has been incompatible with Gĩkũyũ lifestyle because it amounted to a dependency syndrome on donor funding, clamor for relief food and above all the culture of begging from the colonizer. In the process, the Agĩkũyũ were robbed of their capacity to remember their past and connect it to the future that already looked bleak. This abuse of Gĩkũyũ worldview made them incapable of solving their problems or to face future disasters and yet the aftermath for this mind boggling and brainwashing process was not in the priority list of the missionaries. These missionaries were keen to preach an imperial hermeneutical order that projected a stable, productive world that generated food and bestowed life for all its adherents (Genesis 47: 13-26). It appears that the Agĩkũyũ economic background was now being wrenched by British settlers’ network of technological instruments through the legitimating machinery of imperial Christianity and its ideology.
Carpenter (1959: 27) claims that “the introduction of money as a medium of exchange had to produce a long chain of consequences…it had to reduce an individual into a wage earner.”

Among the dispossessed community human labor was the only commodity that they could exchange with money and as such many people were reduced to resident laborers on European owned farms. The introduction of taxation by 1913 labor commission was a crude colonial ploy of compelling the indigenous community males to leave their community land for the purpose of providing the Europeans with cheap labor. Sir Percy Girouard, the then Governor of Kenya and the settlers unanimously, held the consideration that, placing a hut (poll) tax on Africans would be the only purpose of seeking work in the money sector to enable them pay these new taxes (Carpenter, 1959: 27 and Temu, 1972: 119). Eventually, the heads of the families were to be scattered on different settler farms and as such families remained in separation for long periods of time. The internal displacements through massive job seeking for wage earning, had attracted the emergence of urban centers, whereby churches, chief camps, open markets and schools were built next to major European farms. These urban centers were good in attracting the foreign traders, missionaries and colonial administrators who were to represent the axis upon which the colonial ideology of profit-making was to move back and forth.

2.3.1 The Separation of Church and State

As earlier stated the missionaries and administrators were birds of the same feather, they had openly acted in concert on every matter whether on land or economic actions and there was no separation at this level. But, we have another level which was complex that is; the missionaries’ paternalistic claim which qualified their role as self-appointed representatives of indigenous people’s interests: this role was now being challenged and undermined by the
local people’s self-awareness that led to African nationalism. Natives’ suspicion of colonialism resulted to missionaries’ emphasis on the principle of neutrality on public matters. As politics threatened to become an alternative focus of loyalty, the ambitious text-readers were now being warned against their involvement in politics of any kind. Such negative attitude toward politics made text-readers uncertain in taking any political stance and subsequently this uncertainty drove the potential African leaders from the church (Boer 1984: 141-143). For this reason, missionaries were unwilling to train the text-readers for political task and the presence of homelessness in the midst of text-readers has become their true condition as strangers and exiles; leading to communal cynicism and burnout.

The growth of industrialization and bureaucratization within the colony was followed by a disharmony of life and to tackle this disharmony, a separation of Church and state was a necessary ideological strategy. Religion was slowly privatized through commonly held personal ethics and individual relations that underscored the interweaving of religion with divine rights of the King. In this process Africans lost a great deal of consistence in their communal value systems and so the indigenous coherent system of values, from which the Gĩkũyũ community functioned, was irreparably destroyed. Kibicho (2006: 15) claims that “for the Kikuyu (Gĩkũyũ) people, as for most African peoples, there was no division between the religion and any other aspect of life. Rather, it was interwoven into the total fabric of life.” The separation of politics and religion made these commercial power centers a ruthless engine for economic exploitation that later turned out to be a colonial gimmick of oppressing the local people. The presence of western secular and neutral system which favors those who believe in no religion points obviously enmeshment into grave hermeneutical distortion. This secularized framework is competing in a market place of
ideas, experiences and feelings in which text-readers understand and measure their lives ruling out the crucial hermeneutical task of forming a community that seek to live under the word.

2.3.2 Shift from Subsistence to Cash Crop

The urban centers served the purpose of aggravating the seizure of the surrounding land, for the production of cash crops, which was done at the expense of food crops. This was done under the claim that Agĩkũyũ farming methods would introduce pests and animal diseases that would endanger their prosperity. The indigenous farming methods were categorized as primitive form of agricultural production that led to calamitous soil erosion and as such, the European farmers prohibited such practices. This prohibition attracted rural/urban migration for survival, marking the circumstances under which the urban centers were to finally expand into highly populated major business centers of foreign trade and profit-making. These centers became a competing site, and serious causes for the irreversible damage inflicted on the indigenous means of economic production. As a result, the community had to become totally dependent on what the foreigners mode of economy offered. Hence, the Gĩkũyũ indigenous mode of economy was systematically lured into a class struggle by its emerging class of elitists which had fully associate with the new mode of production.

Finally, the Gĩkũyũ community was irrevocably wrenched into agricultural economy instituted on capitalism, taxation and wage labor. Major decisions, purposes and nourishments were henceforth grounded on foreign capital, in real dynamics of economic activities, which were to systematically undermine the indigenous social, economic and political activities. The informal and invisible presence of the British Empire was now felt
through the mushrooming of capital cities, railway networks, Western schools and languages, as well as administrative structures in Gĩkũyũland. Consequently, economic destruction led to a destabilizing, devastating and plunging of the Gĩkũyũ community’s economic despair and hopelessness. The end result was introduction of abject poverty, in Gĩkũyũland, coupled with a livelihood constrained by poor access to basic necessities like food, schools and roads. Today, the economic activities of the land mainly focus on agriculture in small-scale basis whereby coffee, pyrethrum and tea are the main source of income in central Kenya. Building on this description, one of the pioneer missionaries adds: *Ngai nĩ aheete Gĩkũyũ bũrũri mwega ũtagaga irio kana maĩ ona kana gĩthaka* (God has given the Gĩkũyũ people a good country that never lacks food, water or forests). On the contrary majority of Gĩkũyũ population is today known to invest only on cash crops, which are intended for export at the expense of food crops, which are a crucial source for our food security. In this general mood, it came as no surprise that the mode of economy inherited from colonialists has not been successfully integrated into Gĩkũyũ culture, tradition and language. It is shrouded with woes of external debts and unfavorable terms of trade, militarization, and exploitation by the powerful, environmental degradation. As a result, population growth is catastrophically outdoing the community’s rate of food production. This kind of imbalance poses a hermeneutical challenge to the 21st century text-readers a majority whom are destitute with hardly any means for adequate livelihood.

### 2.4 Anthropological Domestication

Anthropological domestication was used as a rationalizing science and a handmaiden of colonialism and Christian mission. Rationalization was crucial, in studying the Agĩkũyũ way of life and also in advising the colonial system on how to take an effective control over
the natives. According to Said (1993: 152), this control gradually evolved into unquestionable scientific cannon of anthropological explanation that was based on racial differences that classified the black race as less evolved, in comparison to the white race. Jean-Marc-Éla (1989: 121) has approached this science as a force that came to replay among the invaders and natives; whose religious traditional beliefs were relegated to an anthropological realm that did not account for native worldviews. Thus, the Agĩkũyũ pre-Christian religious cosmologies and ritual classifications were purported to cherish pre-scientific magical or mythopoeia thought forms, which were incompetent in terms of engaging the modern African mind in sound hermeneutical discourses.

Jean-Marc-Éla (1989: 127) makes further claims that anthropology, in its monolithic dimension, could not listen to the voices of alien cultures; it never learned from them, making sense out of them – in fact, studying them, making a science about them has been the modern method of not listening, of avoiding listening to them. This relegation was a gimmick that culminated to a progressive removal of the colonized from their history by a subsequent foreclosure of any possibilities of a future, defined by their cultural heritage.

In the Kenyan situation, European historians, explorers, missionaries and the colonial settlers were keen to destroy the Gĩkũyũ reality and its historical facts of life. As Kariuki (1963: 21) observes, “old men were addressed as boys and monkeys; Agĩkũyũ were barred from hotels and clubs...there was a wholesale disregard for human dignity and little respect for anyone with a black skin.” This destruction was designed to pave way for a new world, a new ethos, and new institutions, based on a foreign perspective of Gĩkũyũ history that explored nature from a different point of view.
The human status of the natives was re-evaluated and the society was reordered through a dominant interpretation of biblical and historical texts. Further affirmation of the connection between the emerging Gĩkũyũ elites and the white colonial administrators in their ascensions to positions of power and privilege was facilitated by the colonial structures that were put in place. In this regard, Mcgrane (1989: x) maintains that “...we are contained within an anthropological concept of the other. Anthropology has become our modern way of seeing the other as fundamentally and merely culturally different.” The attempt to divide the native majority into tiny segments was a ploy to forestall any possibility to effectively organize them against the empire, for this would have threatened the interest of colonialists.

Louis Leakey, a Kenyan born to European missionaries, helped in this project by his discovery of a skull that dated the remains of the first humankind pedigree in the world and was used to reinforce Leakey's discovery and claims of the missing link between apes and humanity hence the subsequent claim that Kenya was the cradle of humanity. Leakey's research findings propelled the world of anthropological studies of his time to establish that Africans were the missing link between the white man and the ape. His findings were crucial tools of reinforcing a racist ideology through colonial stereotyping and representation of colonial subjects. The colonial churches as civilizing agents were mandated by colonial regime to legislate and arbitrate in all matters regarding cultural issues, marriage, family relationships, worship, customs and morals from heightening angles of binary opposites.

Such angles were stereotyping and representation of Africans which had revolved along the axis of colonial dialect of self and the other; that is, through the colonial paradigms
of rational vis-à-vis irrational, and civilized in relation to barbaric. In this connection, Sandgren (1989: 54) confirms the painful depth of racism, even among the missionaries who were out to preach the universal love of God and equality for all humankind. He explains that “when a missionary at Kijabe shot and killed a Gĩkũyũ man on a hunting trip, he excused himself by saying that he had mistaken the man for a baboon.” The people’s creativity and initiative were undermined by virtue of the Bible being treated just like other ancient documents interpreted in the light of anthropological discovery. The dominance of anthropological findings in the dawn of enlightenment was shaping both Christians and non-Christians in Europe, including European missionaries.

So, the enlightenment espoused various anthropological claims that were keen to reinforce various beliefs that saw individuals in Gĩkũyũ community being degraded to machines, manipulated, and exploited by those who sought to use them for their own purposes (Bosch, 2005: 263, 267). The private views and racist attitude that considered Africans as sub-human were by now being reinforced by popular archeological findings and reflections of the time. These findings worked to affirm the colonial hegemonic ideologies in their rhetoric that placed Africans in low order of nature. Dube (1996: 37) sums up this reality in the following words: "It is upon the advent of Europeans' imperial interest in Africa, that the society came to be permanently dispossessed by being captivated to designs of hegemonic control.” The nationalistic ambitions of missionaries too contributed towards the rhetoric of power constructions that supported the myths of colonial domination, oppression, and exploitation among the natives. The main reason for this inclination to colonialist mission was the deep connections and involvement of missionaries in the commercial, political and social interests of the colony and as such, they were keen to spiritualize the colonial
activities and oppression of the natives. They did this by exhorting the Christian converts to obey the colonial invaders, who had authority over them because “all authority comes from God (Romans 13).” In so doing, they were positioned to hinder Agĩkũyũ Christian converts from being fully involved in politics, because according to ideological setting of capitalism, religion was is forerunner and it was accommodated in order to support its endeavors. Any religious opposition that added no value to capitalistic premises of civilization was systematically pushed to personal and private realms. At that level it was not destined to mix with politics, for politics was a public matter hence it was dirty and worldly game with no eternal gains for Christian life (Boer, 1984: 143).

The colonial church ideology of spreading and sharing the blessing of Christ, through civilization, among a people who were suffering under the satanic forces of oppression ignorance and diseases had trivialized the natural and spontaneous expression of indigenous language, art, music and dance in text-reading (Boer, 1984: 56). The indiscriminate assault against natives’ religion, through anthropological studies, was one of the most powerful colonial strategies of "divide and conquer." Such strategies, propelled by a proliferation of post-Darwinian schools of thought, were also crucial in the translation and interpretation of colonial texts to the African languages. Most of the key Bible translators of the King James Version to Gĩkũyũ Version were missionaries with no scholarly background in the field of biblical or theological studies. They invested on their diverse professional backgrounds which were uncritically brought into the textual interpretation process. A few examples would suffice to prove this point: Arthur Ruffell Barlow, a project coordinator and Dr. John W. Arthur, a medical doctor and Louis Leakey, an anthropologist.
In spite of their lack of scholarly background in biblical studies these translators were certain that the English Bible was more than a religious text and were, therefore, keen to extend its influence to the social, political and economic spheres of the colonized. This extension allowed the advent of deep European stereotypes and metaphors to slip into the translated version of Gĩkũyũ text. Finally, the historical intersection of anthropology and biblical interpretation had failed to shape and critique the translation ventures from present to future by bringing out the social conversation into an ongoing, creative, constitutive task of biblical hermeneutics in Africa and its fundamental claims of invigorations. This intersection was to evolve into a reversal of colonial discourse of power, which has kept ordinary text-readers in Africa away from the ontological, metaphysical and epistemological landscape of post-colonial biblical scholarship. It is, however, important to note things are changing to correct this anomaly, as Mugambi (1997: 68) has observed: “...the involvement of Africans in translation is becoming appreciated as essential, because language is always a cultural medium which, at best, is understood by those who have internalized the culture that produced it.”

2.5 Mental Conditioning

This section points to what had ensued after the Gĩkũyũ community's religious and secular mode of knowing and passing on knowledge was eradicated to pave way to a one-dimensional mode of existence. The two institutions of missionaries and colonial government carried out the eradication with one task in mind: to civilize a great mass of human beings who were prejudiced as primitive in their moral and social state through “a strong emphasis on character building and religion (Boer, 1984: 79).” Since Knowledge is not neutral for it attempts to control thinking and action, leading men and women to
embrace the world through the inhibition of their creative power; it is the expression of historical moments, where some groups exercise dominant power over others, and so, it transforms the text-reader into receiving objects (c.f. Freire, 1993: 58). The Agĩkũyũ were epistemologically forced to experience life as “objects” being acted upon rather than “subjects” of their own lives. In this process, they were robbed of critical skills that were essential for influencing the colonial and missionaries’ institutions that had taken control over their lives. Text-readers not only have skills for influencing the hermeneutical outcome of the text, but also have the opportunity to exercise the hermeneutical skills. The text-readers are the subjects in the reading process and not the objects – as they have to be subjects of their destiny. This particular process was, however, eschewed because native text-readers and the missionaries were not equal participants. Consequently, native text-readers were unable to focus their attention on the reality, which mediated them and which was keen to identify the problems that confronted them. The lack of response to that challenge obscured the action of dialogical subjects upon reality in order to undermine the anticipated transformation.

In an attempt to sift facts from legends, the colonial commentators deliberately relegated Agĩkũyũ primal way of bringing together knowledge, attitude and teaching practices. Other aspects that were ignored included the pursuit of truth, and the development of a critical social consciousness in order to justify and pave the way for communicating Christianity. This relegation explains why Christian missions arrived at the conclusion to treat Agĩkũyũ as primitive savages, devoid of religious beliefs and intelligence. On this line, Sir Samuel Baker’s report (1867:23), asserts the following: “Without any exemption, they are without a belief in Supreme-being, neither have they any form of worship or idolatry; nor is the
darkness of their mind enlightened by events a ray of superstition. The mind is as stagnant as the morass, which forms their puny world.”

This bias was erected as the imperial vehicle of rooting out indigenous narratives, oral texts and approach to history, in nurturing the accepted bias and mind-set of European settlers’ claim, that an African was lower than a European dog in the moral scale. This conception meant the denial of Africans the right to participate, intellectually and pragmatically, in their conception of a pedagogical process. Apart from the negative attitude, by the missionaries and colonialists, the radical shift of categories, from indigenous culture to European culture was ill-timed and as such the indigenous people were not well-prepared for such a drastic change. The natives found themselves in quite a new interpretive situation and were unconsciously injected with amnesiac concoction of Western colonial thinking process. However, the newly imposed thinking process was limited to its cognitive, analytical, and casual thought patterns, and as such, it was not adequate to judge the text because of its inability to provide the reader with diverse avenues of resistance, emancipation and empowerment. This inability was advantageous to the rulers because it served the interest of re-enforcing, nurturing and perpetuating the colonial hegemonic discourse and its establishments. On its part, the indigenous enthusiasm of biblical hermeneutical debates and dialogue followed this radical shift of thinking, which systematically annihilated African past, present, and future. This amounted to the silence of indigene hermeneutics, which came about as a result of a well-designed concerted and resourced strategy that suppressed and reduced vocal indigenes to timidity, servility, detention or exile.
2.5.1 Education and Religion as Tools for Pacifying the Indigene

Before the advent of Europeans, education in Africa was exclusively controlled by the local communities and it was suited to the needs of the African people. Each community addressed the holistic nature of a person in terms of mind, soul and body without undermining the communal aspect of the human person. Mudimbe (1994: 105-153) and Ngũgĩ- wa-Thiong’o (1986: 17ff) has observed that African traditional values were acting as stumbling blocks to the colonial strategists, and as such, the setting up of cultural structures such as houses, gardens, the school and church had to become beacons of colonial cultures by virtue of being the venues of displacing local cultures and brainwashing rituals through the establishment of colonial systems and services. This observation is correct, because the indigene values were deeply rooted in all forms of discourse and discipline, which, in a unique way, held the center together so that anarchy would not sway the community.

The interests of the colonizers basically corresponded to the colonial church, which was entirely entrusted with developing a mode of learning that culturally and ideologically reinforced the colonial system and its claims. In a condescending way that radically contradicted the plurality of Agĩkũyũ modes of cognizance, the colonial education succeeded in excluding the indigene intellectual spirit and interpretive interests from interacting with inculcated components of colonialists’ culture. Both the Church and the Empire had ignored the established convolution and complexity of African traditional religious networks, social systems and ethical values. The imperial church mission was anchored on the puzzling claim of Emil Ludwig who is quoted by Idowu (1977:88) saying thus: “Africans did not have any concept of God and that they even did not have the mental capacity to grasp it... In re-enforcing this claim he raised the question: How can the
untutored African conceive God? He then went ahead and claimed that deity is a philosophical concept which savages are incapable of forming.”

In terms of being true to oneself and in one’s social dealings, the content of truth had been so sexualized that the real knowledge was accountable to the horizons of imperial powers. Whatever they did not know either did not exist or it was frowned upon as primitive. This radical discontinuity of indigenous epistemological process was executed through a destructive process of Euro-centric enlightenment that ensured a radical paradigm shift of Gĩkũyũ people’s epistemology from particular emphasis to another in order to appeal to objective reason. The advent of printing press and literally skills in Agĩkũyũ reflect briefly on a shift from indigenous irrationalism to rationalism as a structure upon which all reality is interpreted. It was a ruthless engine of human power which exploited and destroyed the humanity of others through its all-embracing interpretive framework. This was a radical shift from: I) Oral tradition to what is written; ii) Particular to the universal; iii) Local to general, so that real truth had to be the same from surroundings; iv) Timely to the timeless, so that the real is the unchanging; and v) Perspective to hegemony. This shift to objectivism has triggered conflict and struggle for fullness of discourse that provides both meaning and direction of Agĩkũyũ conception of truth (cf. Polanyi, 1958:286). For the majority of the Agĩkũyũ, gaining a Western-style of education was not possible yet new European farms needed manpower, and as such, the Gĩkũyũ people were obliged to work as forced laborers. By 1930s, a new consciousness had started cropping up, in reaction to racial barriers erected – in the civil service, in business and in day-to-day life. The British settlers and missionaries had a superficial and limited knowledge of Agĩkũyũ condition of life, but they were unbothered for they were better armed and economically all-powerful. Thus, they got stuck
to their grand narratives, of seeing themselves as divine agents of redemption through civilization of the natives. But in so doing, they reduced indigenous communities to a mere workforce, which should be grateful for the limited education and enlightenment (through Christianity) that was being passed their way. This attitude was to last throughout most of the colonial period, until matters finally came to a head, after many manifestations of what revealed that the Agĩkũyũ text-readers had reached their critical age waiting for their full development into the image and likeness of European masters.

The resultant epistemology of this destructive scheme of enlightenment produced a Bible interpretation that drew its information from historical criticism, which had directed and shaped the theological underpinning of the British Empire in Africa. The enlightenment belief and claim that real knowledge of a civilized society resided in documents and principally mediated through texts formed a common belief among missionaries who were out to silence the indigenous voices of protest. In other words, the silencing of indigenous voices that called to attention the things for which the colonial system could account for were now realized through priestly control, political intimidation, theological orthodoxy, economic oppression and technical reason. Thus, to missionaries the unwritten knowledge could not offer vital and fruitful means of engaging in modern ways and resources of text-reading. The authoritative text-reading resources were only those which were sifted and written with the hermeneutical frame of; universal, general and timeless.

Such reduction of text saw the Agĩkũyũ text-reading process pushed to edge of losing its humanness (Brueggemann, 1987:57). This universality meant that; dominant imperial perspectives of ultimate truth operated everywhere, to form a large coherent whole and to
build on a configuration of hegemonic forces. Its consequential dislocations and displacements of Gĩkũyũ people’s psyche was much hailed as an achievement by the civilizing missions. Central to colonial social constructs of knowledge was the elite’s function in undermining the pain and cries of people in the remotest corners of the colony. Education had been accepted as a way of shifting from the physical survival mode that was articulated in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs towards the higher self-actualization mode, constructively contributing to provisions of socio-political and economic agenda of the colonial setups. The colonial economic and political ladders were reserved to a small body of elite that became skillfully built in maintaining the status quo of exploiting the masses.

Ngugi-wa-Thiong’o (1981:59-61) illustrates on the manifestations of Euro-centralist residue and vestiges of repression envisaged by colonialists erasure of pre-colonial memories, cultures and history through the irony of Agĩkũyũ usage of their African culture to rationalize their betrayal. These sequenced erasures of indigenous knowledge systems have today embodied a post-colonial process of servicing the ideological interest of former colonizers, through their local cronies. The dominating character of these interests is to facilitate a smooth embrace of new and more insidious forms of colonialism that completely cuts down indigene hermeneutics; whose wisdom and knowledge could only be garnered through the complex indigenous knowledge system. At best, it compels Africans to blindly perceive their communal and self-initiated hermeneutical efforts as primitive, inferior trash as compared to the self-acclamations of superior conventional skills, based on Euro-centric systems and approaches.
2.6 Liturgical Conditioning

This section describes the process by which Eurocentric personal deities were liturgically manufactured, rehashed and edited for Agĩkũyũ consumption before they were subjected to political domination. The translation of colonial missionaries’ liturgies was a hegemonic process that facilitated domestication and control as it involved a translation from one culture to another, from one language to another that became a stumbling block to the relevance of indigenous people’s words (Prevett, 2012: 66). Nonetheless, it was expected to offer the linguistic bridge in order to serve the larger colonial missions of divide and rule where tensions in local congregations around style and content of worship were to illustrate these differences. They were created for and celebrated as an obvious imposition on individuals to commune with the word of God but not to share, bond and build a relationship around hermeneutical discourses as generated by local text-readers. The dominant class was keen not to let the liturgy spill over into political discourse and so the indigenous opportunity to engage, contest and even resist were not in their agenda.

To begin with, the colonial church was very apt, to create a sense of emotional and sublime patriotism among locals which suggested the place of ritual in the state machinery. The indigenous liturgical art of stylized assault through public processing of pain were curtailed because the language was not relevant enough to generate a discourse enough to form bond among text-readers, deepen interaction and build cohesion. The colonial liturgies were not seeking to help local people relate the word of God with the concern of their times and places because it resulted with muteness of local text-readers. These text-readers were left to experience their pain privately and in isolation because the power to evoke indigenous expression of praise and the feeling of joy within their trouble and sorrow was denied. Thus,
as was the case elsewhere (Brueggemman, 1987: 16-17) the survival of colonial church’s liturgy depended on its ethical and experiential dimension of fostering practical dimension of worship through ceremonial incorporations of moral teachings and colonial legal structures that ensured no passionate social power is generated.

It had to involve worship practices, feelings and experiences whose ritual dimension had no profound biblical textual teachings of helping the text-reader to go public in acts of civil disobedience, the text-readers were systematically denied meaningful liturgical progress. In order for local people to understand and embrace the fundamental role played by the Bible in the entire institutional structure of Christianity as a living element is reflected in thought and piety of its text readers. The inherently secular and unspiritual elements in liturgies were used in hermeneutical art of stifling the indigenous freedom of worship and expression which had to serve the purpose of inducing sympathy and mutual understanding between the colonized and the colonizers.

Basing on competing individualistic denominational truth claims that guided the translation of liturgies the text-readers were in the process used to service the process of antagonizing their own community. By creating schisms and heresies within its own fold, the colonial church had expected the text-readers’ thought and piety to be both critical and theological in approach to other liturgies. This legacy of liturgical subjugation was perfected and endorsed by the British Empire and its missionaries’ involvement, for example, in the translation of liturgical texts into Gĩkũyũ language which served as a colonial strategy (Kinyua, 2011: 133).
The process of translating liturgical materials into vernacular and teaching the local people to recite them was in the hands of missionary translators who all through remained the inventors and directors of what was good for the Africans and what to dismiss. The exclusion of Gĩkũyũ text readers in this process of translation was not taken kindly for they were treating worshipers as if they were creatures of liturgy, rather than its creators; as objects of pity, rather than subjects of their destiny (cf. Kaggia, 1975: 56). They were not allowed to take initiatives beyond liturgical translation into local languages and incorporate local symbols, actions, and prayers which would have added value to text-reading process. So the liturgical failure to adopt, understand and appreciate the gestures and symbols of Agĩkũyũ text-readers and rigidity, on the part of the missionaries who had to dismiss the embrace of non-Western cultural values, led to a loss of Agĩkũyũ system of worship.

As Prevette (2012: 66) puts it; “it is important to consider the temporal aspects of everyday life because context -which includes time as well as place –affects the ability of sermon to speak in a contemporary way.” In many ways those liturgies which translated from European languages into local dialect, ensured that the text-readers could neither consciously participate in worship with body and soul nor integrate that worship in all the activities of their life and work. It was also in this process of translation that various ideologies, idolatrous ceremonies, euphemisms and European metaphors were imported into the Agĩkũyũ context. The liturgical structure simply absorbed and distributed a given colonial hermeneutical theory, which appeared in successive generations of scholars, who were opposed to indigenous approaches of textual interpretation. The translated liturgical structures were based on ideas that were relative to the social location and interests of their production that gave no voice to any otherwise muted context. The major problem of the
translated language was its failure to capture the changing patterns of culture and religion and also its inability to enter into the pain of human suffering; triggered by political social and economic oppression. Thus, the over-all scheme of the colonizers liturgy was not to clarify the biblical thought forms that would ensure a fair transference of textual-meaning from the point of view of the exploited and the marginalized. Missionaries communicated, to the Africans a single package of European civilization that lacked the ability to faithfully communicate the total corpus of biblical truth to the text-reader in his or her own culture.

The liturgical diversity of mission-based churches finally became a colonial recipe of divide and rule in its art of empire building. This diversity had rigid boundaries entrenched in the colonial catechical, pedagogic and church context that failed to correctly capture the liturgical movement of the present to future among the Gĩkũyũ text-readers’ cultural-linguistic claims of a liturgical escape. This rigidity had to do with the refusal to acknowledge the manner in which reading and writing, scholarship and pedagogy, theory and practice were inextricably connected with mutual interpretation of biblical text. The hermeneutical-theological composition of this liturgy had fallen short of an open and expanding framework, of exploring God’s past activity and promised future, among the indigenous community of text-readers. Instead, it connected itself to a fundamentally conservative force that discouraged the text interpreter from attaining the location, capacity, and entitlement into which an inter-textual or extra-textual stance of rethinking, confronting and changing the textual claims. This denied the text-readers unique opportunities for the proclamation of the word in symbolic action (De-Gruchy, 1986: 167).
The status quo, of colonial powers, and its narrative of denominational hegemony were based on scriptural interpretation that had to function as underlying fixed liturgical structure of encountering different cultures. In this case, Africans were conditioned in damning all other liturgies, which did not bear their denominational label, and its set of absolute beliefs. This kind of ideological denominationalism failed to reconcile the natives' pain of oppression, with its claims of a God who is almighty and most loving. Such liturgical failures culminated to oppressive ideologies that were later brought into interplay with colonial hegemony and Christian faith. Thus, denominational breakups, in Europe, were in this way spilled to Africa as European missionaries contradicted each other's dogma at the expense of the colonized. These contradictions became an advantage to the colonizers as it replayed its role of cultural domestication in its shrill tone of absoluteness. The narrow exclusiveness of such absoluteness left the reading and interpretation of the Bible wholly dependent on individual missionary's background. African church leaders have ended up in this liturgical and hermeneutical confusion, because of inheriting and involuntarily approving these divisions; through multiplying divisions, and the perpetuation of divisions among the faith communities. They have, therefore, ignored people's cry in their pursuits of European organized societies and markets that promised wealth and security. The expansion of market and the consolidation of military power were achieved, through the use of colonial church liturgy, in establishing African Christian churches. This liturgy was also used to stimulate natives in their acceptance of European civilization, commerce, and Christianity (Sanneh, 2005: 15). It worked best to camouflage the prevailing pain of colonial reality and also to support the imperialist designs, selecting and redeeming the text instead of confronting the text. The text selection was more of an antagonistic than liberating endeavor to the first African Christian converts. This is because, it allowed a colonial based Bible
interpretation that rode on lenses and goodwill of the dominant group, upon which the reader/interpreter was expected to ascribe to or identify with.

The colonial church liturgy was keen to demolish the social and economic institutions within which the individual Agĩkũyũ biographies were spelt out. It reinforced itself, through visual arts that exposed natives to dominating symbols of crucifixes, European' drawing, and carvings that portrayed Jesus in terms of a white European male and Satan as a black African male. These became lenses upon which the interpretations of the biblical text rested.

The content of the colonial liturgy, and its textual claims, were thus used to shape biblical hermeneutics in Africa and were treated as final, complete and unchanging truth, even where natives were questioning their hermeneutical claims. The hermeneutical inquisition of missionary legacy and approach should be based on the narration of how the Bible came to be an inviolable hegemonic text.

This narrative is fundamental to the examination of natives’ role in the British royal army as Christian soldiers; applying biblical texts and hymns to justify military cruelty against pagan territories. What about the Agĩkũyũ soldiers who fought on the side of British during the two world wars and how were they rewarded? Did they hope to be rewarded in heaven, or just the way the high-ranking European military officers who were rewarded with large portions of Gĩkũyũland? Nevertheless, when time for Africans to liberate themselves came, the colonial church considered Africans' reaction to colonialism and imperialism as pagan and heathen. Their struggle to liberate themselves was intertwined with the problems of how to reconcile the seemingly incompatible and potentially hostile systems of thoughts, morals, and belief embodied in Euro-centric hermeneutic skills. Thus, colonial interpretations of
Bible stories had already created a community of fence sitters, among the natives, who could not objectively face the socio-economic realities on their own. The struggle against structural forms of oppression was, therefore, dependent on the colonial lenses, which were a prerequisite in examining the text. The natives' attempts to fathom these ideological traps were quashed by colonial missionaries’ catechism, which had already taken its significant inroads in defining the ethos and character of the wider society (Baur, 1994). It, for instance, made its prescription of monogamous marriage, amidst polygamous communities; which had shaken the organization of nuclear unit of the African families. By conditioning the text-readers through the four features of life, the community was torn between two different worlds: that of experience in their ways of life, and the new one, as summarized below.

**Figure 2 Experiences of a Conditioned Text-reader**

![Diagram showing the experiences of a conditioned text-reader.](source: Researcher)

**2.7 The Socio-Economic and Political Impact of Domestication**

After being integrated into dominant ideological manipulations of the Empire, a betrayal in the recount of natives’ narratives became evident, in the look and mannerism of local text readers. These text-readers were by now lured into deep conflict with conventional definitions of reality; which the local Eurocentric text-readers were trying to assert. Consequently, the community resorted to the following survival tactics: 1) Assimilation –
this is a melting-pot tactic that saw the Gĩkũyũ community merged into European culture, by shedding their ethnic and cultural identity; 2) Separation – the creation of distinct faith communities separate from the dominant European Christianity, through discrimination, as a means of cultural self-preservation; 3) Isolated integration – this pertains to selective elements of the European culture, which was integrated into the lives of Agĩkũyũ; 4) Hybridization – this has to do with the Agĩkũyũ lives being subjected to a bi-cultural course by taking on two cultural identities. Preservation of Gĩkũyũ religious, ethnic and cultural identity was to take a different shape with deep caution on the dynamics of relationship that this new community and culture is imposing. In short, the imperial royal definition of reality opened a leeway of dominating, restructuring, and exercising authority over the natives.

The resultant situation was the complete hegemony of the British imperial Power over the affairs of the Gĩkũyũ people weakening their chances of managing the future by organizing their places in the society. As a result, the clouding of consciousness brought forth the inability of indigenous communities to focus on right decisions. The natives developed a behavioral pattern that resembled traumatic psychosis; by showing disorientation, mental confusion, loss of attention and memory, or deliberate blockage of their ‘sinful’ past events, which the first missionaries frowned on as ‘pagan’. To keep their sanity and preserve their identity within the dominant Western culture, the Gĩkũyũ developed some survival strategies like the creation of collective enclaves, as a form of self-chosen isolation. An alternative society was recreated, like those in their primal-society, forming a type of subculture. This came in the form of Karĩng’a, Arathi, Mau Mau, and Kĩama kĩa Mũningĩ, which were extensions of the deepest springs of Gĩkũyũ nationalism to which ordinary expression had been denied
Thus, the imperial processes of demoralizing natives became tools and strategies of denying them their potentials. A deepened consciousness of Gĩkũyũ people’s situation leads them to apprehend their situation as a point of hermeneutical departure from a here and now naming of their world to primordial rights of action-reflection.

### 2.7.1 Post-independence Societal Stratification and Power Struggle

The mental and spiritual stability is defined by inherited theories of biblical hermeneutical patterns that advocate for regularity and predictability of textual reading and interpretation. Now that Gĩkũyũ political and church leaders had become part of the elite function, which was actively involved in rhetorical proliferation of alien oppressive powers, they had fallen prey to perpetuating those foreign theories. They did this in their crowd-pulling promises to instantly solve the problem of poverty and suffering. What is more, they were also struggling to capture the socio-economic powers and privileges of their colonizers, once they left the country. So, the struggle among the elite was a continuation and consolidation of a process that worked to accomplish the colonizers’ lifestyle of discouraging collectivism in Gĩkũyũland as an imperial maneuver that appealed to the perpetuation of former colonizers structures and programs.

References to European cultural contexts and meta-narratives became an absolute norm of the independence era. Thus, neo-colonialism nature of Agĩkũyũ elite manifested various machineries of ensuring that the stunning amount of data of the colonized side of liberation history remains hidden. The systematic domestication by colonial mythology which was
regarded as legitimate and beyond criticism was equally questioned through a communal objection of deprivations of right to free choice, free association and free movement, which the oppressors had taken for granted until the day they were obliged to live without them by Mau Mau freedom struggle that followed.

Due to the above mentioned conditioning, text-reading among the Gĩkũyũ peasants, was held captive by the ensuing political blunders that resulted in tribal wars, constitutional crises, post-election violence, murder, lawlessness, economic collapse, and natural disasters. Money squandering and excessive corruption coupled with impunity seem to explain the magnitude of post-colonial managements of resources. The realities of disastrous confusion, in the new nation-states can be measured in many social components like bad governance (poor policies and planning), diseases, dependency syndrome, unskilled labor, ethnic and tribal politics, insecurity, low production and lack of market. Other components include a seemingly ‘don’t care’ attitude, among the leaders, on the emotive land issues, lack of infrastructures, lack of attention to common good and to the debilitating condition of the poor. The end result of this is the creation of a social category of the poor that comprise a vast majority of the population who form the bulk of paupers in Kenya. These include the landless, refugees/internally displaced persons (IDPs), single parents, orphans, the jobless, the unemployed, the street children, the sick and the elderly to mention but a few.

2.7.2 Lamentation; is it a Panacea to the Underprivileged?
To the marginalized and the victimized, the voice of lamentation provides options, as a great reducer or ameliorator of suffering for it provides a sense of having at least some control
over one’s own destiny. It also, and more importantly, helps the people to start looking critically at their situation (which they had hitherto ignored, due to empty rhetoric from politicians and preachers) and start working on it, towards a better future!). A critical re-examination of the socio-economic and political realities, as well as their long-term hermeneutical ideological underpinnings, in Gĩkũyũland, would open the contemporary text-readers to a firm anchorage of communicating the word of God, by means of giving the ordinary text-readers a firm insight into the reading process. Drawing theoretical insight from lamentation, Gĩkũyũ context and the Bible are sustained, through contentious textual conversations held between the dominant ideology of missionaries and the underlying social realities of the Agĩkũyũ.

The Agĩkũyũ use of laments (mũthĩrĩgũ), especially during Kenya’s war of liberation from Britain by Mau Mau freedom fighters, demonstrated the accessibility to four crucial strategies of negotiating their continued existence and crisis. Laments joined them to their own faith tradition, which was hermeneutically brought into dialogue with the status quo, by envisaging specific ways of reading and interpreting, not only the text at hand but also reality in general. Thus, laments permitted and exhibited the community vigor, as well as profundity of its faith. Besides, they provided the Agĩkũyũ with a way of finding some measure of order amidst chaos; by organically placing the community life and crisis into a larger setting of wider concerns and issues. It is not just the missionaries who shaped the Agĩkũyũ way of life, as earlier scholarship contended, but they too were shaped by contemporary Agĩkũyũ hermeneutical response to debates over religion, power, and authority. If lamentation is not a panacea then is a concrete first step towards dealing with loss-psychologically, spiritually and pastorally.
2.8 Lamentation as a Way of Giving Vent to Sorrow

What then can we learn from the tuck and strained silence held between the ordinary text-readers and the academy in text-readers’ fight against the tears of sudden sorrow? And as the Gĩkũyũ proverbs states, *Ndikayaga ītarĩ nũme* (there is no complaint devoid of a biting reality) and “*Kwa mwaria gũkũra kwa mūkiri nĩkuo kuorire tene*” (He who wants to defeat sorrow does not fight in silence – the silence will surely kill us). Naming the problem through accepting and digesting the hurt reinforces the urgent need for a new reading and interpreting strategy. The structural analysis of socio-economic and political concerns can, through the echo of pain stand as an agent of transformation in its dominant interpretive perspectives and imagination that envisage the Gĩkũyũ community’s integrity of lamentation. For this reason, the traditional setting, and its harmonizing role of socialization agents, becomes a crucial tool of curbing the deteriorations of socio-economic and political ideals that make people more adept at imitation than innovation. Thus, the domestication process forms the memoirs of Gĩkũyũ text readers’ ordeal, and when informed by lamentation, can touch on all aspects of text-readers’ lives. They can do this by facilitating the readers to see things through the lens of collective experiences of their values, beliefs, attitudes and concrete mechanisms that govern the socio-economic and political realities.

Lamentation needs to be presented as a framework and social phenomenon of tackling the lingering doubts of truth as displayed by numbed sight of colonially accustomed state. This way, it becomes a fundamental tool of mitigating the past, present and future short-comings of text-readers. It arouses a realistic resistance to the feeling of terror and helplessness among text-readers, who are seemingly purposelessly at the sight of the desolate ruins of the land that once brought so much hopes, sunshine, warmth and laughter to the hearts of many.
The use of lamentation, among the Gĩkũyũ people, who have always found meaning and purpose of life in their land, can bring the universal knowledge of a grieving soul, readily available in human environment, but which people become aware of only in times of extreme crisis. This affirmation can help us to understand how, and to what extent, the societal transformation, in Gĩkũyũland, is in foreign hands and how the Agĩkũyũ are forced to cease the practices of their traditions. Lamentation needs to be integrated with language, taboos, indigenous knowledge, local resources and religion of the local people in the text-reading process. This will give lamentation its tautness of helping the text-readers gauge the world around them and how determined they are to get to their elusive destination.

2.9 Summary

The negative historical experience of the Gĩkũyũ community reached its peak with the declaration of the State of Emergency, by the colonial government in 1952. What followed can be equated to the Nazi holocaust against the Jewish people in concentration camps. This marked the generational turning point that embraces all spheres of life, as it goes beyond a generalized hopelessness. The end results are uncertainty, fear and despondency, in a whole generation searching for an assurance for the future in the cultural rubble of its past and present. Today, the situation is even graver for the poor and marginalized Agĩkũyũ text – readers with no resources or strength to turn their lives around. It is an experience of being withdrawn and alienated, beyond protest or tears, which bring the modern text-reader into a scandalous condition that spells a total system of death (Bonino, 1975). Indeed, Gutierrez (1988:164) compared such a situation in Latin America, to inhuman condition of marginality that is both disturbing and depressing especially in the church, when the cry and the plight of the oppressed have deliberately ceased to be a hermeneutical locus or the new
interlocutor of theological reflections. Going by the religious statistics, and religion being
the ultimate struggle for meaning in human life, theological reflections ought to be the very
first condition of healing; and to bring pain and suffering into view, through lamentation for
the past misdeeds. The voices of lamentation and weeping usher in a local and universal
knowledge, which is readily available within human setting, but which the community
becomes aware of only in times of extreme crisis.

Lamentation comes in as a discipline of inquiry into generation of new knowledge and
transformation for each Mũgĩkũyũ soul grieving and searching for an explanation, from
deep sorrow, and its shadows of past thoughts and actions. The truth-telling methods and
their muscle of reversing the amnesia can only be felt through the articulation of trauma,
loss, and grief which are beyond tears. The culture of denial is overcome wherever the
hidden bitterness and emotional openness is brought into the fore, acknowledged, named
and confronted head-on. But to the contrary, the prevailing dominant ideology has
consciously or unconsciously, provided for an illusory escape from suffering, weakness and
death to present times. By trivializing the pain and denying suffering, it is impossible to find
full human dignity in a God who is at least fair to all his creatures as opposed to the personal
deity of some foreign race reworked and edited for the consumption of outsiders (Thairu,
1975:81). However, the tenets of an exemplary, safe and secure understanding of modern
package enjoined to Euro-Christianity’s claim that Christ has already won the ultimate
victory prolongs the logic of a sincere search for a text-reading that connects with historical
circumstances that are, in many respects, unique and novel. Listening to the past and
speaking to the present and the future, opens the post-colonial Agĩkũyũ capacity to grieve
and the prospects of transforming their jarred and displaced social reality. This way, the
reality of poverty, exploitation and environmental destruction would intersperse the gap, between the socio-economic realities, of the Agĩkũyũ reading of the Bible. A call to heed to the voices of suffering provides this study with a heart-rending account of such frightful domestication; and also highlights such theological and hermeneutical reflections that need to be done. This prompts the community and its text-readers to make an in-depth look, and learn from different angles of the text; which will ensure that the colonial and post-colonial paradigms are radically challenged. To the Gĩkũyũ people, who are always in deep quest for meaning and purpose of life, lamentations will raise in them more questions than answers. The personal search for hope, through psychological and theological themes is discovered through the blazing clarity of fear, grief and despair of personal sufferings.

2.10 Conclusion

The African historical experiences of persistent suffering and pain coupled with neocolonial mutations of imperialisms stirs-up the reader to read the Bible in dialogue with the community’s struggle against colonial subjugation and hermeneutical domestications. Hence, a post-colonial reading paradigm is needed in the face of lamentation which cannot be done away with. The African academia and its biblical practice of interpretation will find a rich tapestry of stories blended with a solid synthesis of marginal voices. The validation of lamentation as a voice of protesting unjust forms of exploitation makes the text-reader to reflect on hermeneutical role of lamentation in sustaining the socio-economic realities of the Agĩkũyũ. This search provides the reader with beautiful and very intelligent designs, on the suffering and hopelessness of the human condition. However, the role of lamentation as the bona-fide voice of the voiceless that operate from margins is a crucial facet of hermeneutics. In this sense, lamentation as a hermeneutical tool is used to occupy the space between the
dominant ideology and the underlying ideology. It stands as an indigenous artistic jewel, a 
thological enigma, and a courageous act of survival, which make text-readers to 
olemically and ecstatically cry out of depths. It is a theological turning point, where the old 
colonial theology of a punishing God, who wields a big stick to strike the poor sinners, no 
longer holds. It is a text-reading that turns to the Bible, not to use it to colonize, subjugate, 
hurt and polarize, but to use it in the search for genuine transformation, understanding and 
comfort in personal and community lives. This is basically geared towards a re-examination 
of pain and suffering in the contemporary world, even in places where God seems to be 
silent or absent. This chapter, therefore, poses a pertinent challenge, on how to present a 
practical approach to collaborative negotiation of lamentation text by separating colonizers 
and missionaries, from the problem as well as separating interests from Euro-centric 
hermeneutical positions. As a way forward, it focused on the problem rather than the people, 
and on interest rather than the hermeneutical positions. The ordinary and Euro-centric text-
readers are brought to a working relationship, which helps them explore the new depths of 
human anguish and hope post-colonial era.

The study’s reference to colonial events and their related hermeneutical tussles points out to 
chronological misallocations of historical events by colonial churches’ language and 
imagery behind the hermeneutics and theology of Christendom’s expansion and subjugation 
among the natives. The lack of recorded indigenous history of hermeneutics makes many 
text-readers in Africa unaware of a different voice which can be heard from the narrative of 
colonial violence suffered and injustice not remedied in post-colonial era. But, lamentation 
posits an idiosyncratic voice in the wilderness of biblical hermeneutics as a potential force 
of bringing the old memory of the colonized to dialogue with the biblical text. By taking a
retrospective look at the Gĩkũyũ community’s ordeals and its well-tried indigenous coping mechanisms in relation to their land and their land in relation to God makes the old memory to gain hermeneutical currency. So, counting on, and being aware of time, makes the post-colonial theory a vantage point and framework of text reading which the study will in regard to time and dynamisms of Agĩkũyũ age, situation and questions use to help the text-reader create a contemporary text-reading space. It will help the Agĩkũyũ text-readers to achieve their goals by creating a familiar, safe, communal, empowering and imaginative reading space out of the ashes of hopelessness and despair. The consequences of individualized and private relationship with the word of God will provide the study with myriads of opportunities in naming issues and coming to hermeneutical decisions and actions. Based on Gĩkũyũ’ people’s experiences and contexts the essential hermeneutical constitutes defining the communitarian hermeneutic and communitarian spirit as a process of creating and defining the Gĩkũyũ’ people’s narrative of pain and suffering which is central to expression of locations and specifics, in a world of generalization and globalization.

The lamentation of Agĩkũyũ text-readers confronts the historical problems associated with trained text-interpreters from Gĩkũyũland who are being uprooted and trained out of their own context in Western based institutions in and out of Africa without those contexts from which they come from being acknowledged or valued. The Euro-centric meta-narratives that govern the issues of power and dominance among the post-colonial elite and post-colonial subaltern alerts the text-readers to take action by raising questions out of practice and reflection. It is also used to reintegrate into text-readers’ lives the offer for broad hermeneutical enquiry that lead to a here and now appropriation of the text.
CHAPTER THREE
THE MISSIONARY ATTITUDE, LAMENTATION AND TEXT-READING

3.1 Introduction
This chapter examines the missionaries’ attitudes towards the voices of lamentation as raised through Agĩkũyũ’s inexplicable resistance to the so called “civilizing missions” in relation to contemporary denial of lamentation text in our text-reading process. Though, the biblical hermeneutics echoed in chapter two was based on sorting out the concoction brewed by high-minded Western policy-makers and their masterly of enlightening the pre-scientific communities through intelligence and taming of locals through unbeaten abilities: This chapter focuses on the manner in which the European world-view created images and narratives and then assigned and imposed them upon the Gĩkũyũ people leading to mutual incomprehension, envy, suspicion and ignorance. This study sheds some light on Gĩkũyũ people’s agony, torment and distress that assaulted their psyche through the experience of the catastrophic invasion of their land by colonialists.

Exposing the weakness of missionaries does not mean that this chapter prefers on dwelling on negatives, but because this study seeks to contribute to the well-being of Christians who use the Bible in relation to salvation in a continent where lamentation is so pronounced in day-to-today lives. At such a time when hermeneutic concerns preoccupy ordinary text-readers’ mind, the African church needs to have a clear view as to what is relevant to African context in her teaching of the Bible. By giving its particular portrait of the sorrowful, tender, and compassionate weeping and suffering among the Agĩkũyũ, this chapter helps the text-reader to come to terms with the persistent scars of radical suffering in this age. It brings out the concreteness required to ring true to and take grip of post-colonial
text-reading framework in its highlights on the Gĩkũyũ people’s origin, politics and culture, thought patterns, activities, development and metamorphosis. Answering questions of who they are, what they stand for, and essentially what makes them behave the way they do. It will also try to offer possible solutions and answers to their behavior and what can be done in addressing their issues for a peaceful co–existence with the academy. This chapter also raises the issue of hermeneutical mind-sets that persists in post-colonial text-reading process in Gĩkũyũland. These mind-sets are in relation to contemporary denial of lamentation, it attempts to investigate the whole spectrum of missionaries’ attitudes towards the lamentation text and its consequential traits in post-colonial Gĩkũyũland. The cultivation and sustenance of missionaries’ mindsets and methods is shrouded with a text-reading process that supports the denial of painful realities among the oppressed. Such denial is ideological and therefore, a necessary underpinning of indoctrinating the succeeding generations of Bible interpreters in Gĩkũyũland. The Agĩkũyũ had to prove that they were basically and potentially identical to European in worth and ability in the face missionaries’ paternalism and its secret contempt for African which was hard to get rid of.

Thus, this chapter is descriptive in nature for its main purpose is invested on a transforming venture that draws the text-reader’s thinking from academic hermeneutical debates to the espousal of a wider scope of text-reading that supports their own vantage point. So, this chapter equips the reader with the capacity to plan for the appraisal of Jeremiah 31: 15-17 in the next chapter (four) which suggests a review of the neo-colonial and post-colonial hermeneutical location of the Agĩkũyũ text-readers as a lamenting community. Despite the fact that the masses have shown no post-colonial plan or organization in their reaction to hermeneutic hegemony, the chapter argues that they have mediated and contested it through
voices of lamentation in their assertion of ordinary text-reading standpoint. It attests the claims of the previous chapter (two) that missionaries and colonial administration had all through collaborated in subjecting text-readers to an indoctrination process that would perpetually alienate the text-readers from themselves, their people and land. Basing on findings of this study the ordinary text-reader who use biblical text in ways that are incongruent to the official policy; this chapter raises a case that ordinary text-reading strategies are essentially a brain-child of lamentation in its interventional and contestation outline that creates a base of disapproving the prevalence of Euro-centric hermeneutic hegemony. The results of the pragmatic study conducted in rural villages in Nyandarua County and theological institutions in Kiambu County were thus, used to validate this argument on how Gĩkũyũland came to read and interpret the text through the lenses of this attitude.

3.2 Missionary Tragedy and Colonial Legacies

The missionaries from their initial stage had to be sensitive to the very anti-colonial attitude of the Agĩkũyũ, which had originated in the anti-European military, political and commercial threats toward the encroachment of Gĩkũyũland. Missionaries were human beings and so their activities were not void of imperfection and fallibility. Likewise, there were exceptional cases of missionaries who had publicized substantial enthusiasm and sincerity (cf. Bankole, 1971: 30). It is, thus, important for this study to briefly acknowledge and make a realistic portrayal of such achievements made by European missionaries in Africa before pointing out their mistakes. By prioritizing education in their agenda the missionaries scored notable achievements in which Africans are in agreement apparent in following areas;
1) Making a major contribution to nationalism in Africa

2) Translating sermons and books of the Bible into indigenous languages

3) Evolving African leadership not only in the church but also in politics, commerce, education and technology.

4) Challenging the indigenous people to think about their current circumstances and difficulties.

5) Frustrating the territorial ambitions of the colonizers

6) Protesting against; i) the economic exploitation in some parts of Africa and also ii) the inhuman treatment of local people.

Consolidating missionaries gain in Africa calls for a post-colonial hermeneutical audit of missionaries text-reading processes which were organized from a top-down model; this is in order to forge forward for a post-colonial model of bottom-up. Nonetheless, in fairness to missionaries who came to Africa when colonialism was operative; they had generally held at that time to the belief that Africans were an inferior people. Thus, it is a travesty of hermeneutical enterprise to maintain, for example that the exploitation of the African text-readers for European gain was the will of God; the time for African text-readers to uncritically praise European missionaries is far much gone. Revisionist tendencies to make up for whatever damage the missionaries’ attitude caused. Missionaries’ ethnocentrism was very much ignorant of integrity display as well as how African peoples’ historical and spiritual connection informed the indigenous hermeneutical-cultural landscape. Today the common question among text-readers is; what would it have meant to biblical scholarship if missionaries were to get it right or had succeeded in capturing an authentic African hermeneutics of life? Initially, several strands of missionary hermeneutical thought had derided ethnicity as false consciousness; they had exerted a strong influence over African
intellectuals who had desired to hold high position in colonial administration. By associating local hermeneutical struggles with images of African violence and savagery the colonialist were now keen to disempower local ideas and meanings. Unfortunately, the Eurocentric rituals and denominational divisions coupled with ecclesiastical habits were used to break the strong communal bonds of African society (cf. Wanyoike, 1974: 64-65; Crawford, 1913: 113).

Among the Agĩkũyũ today we can see a cultural context of stories surrounding each form of colonial text as a twizzling puzzle for ordinary text-readers to fix. The initial planting of biblical thoughts in Africa were getting mixed together in intricate overlaps with ethnographic data produced in the context of colonial lyrics. The earlier opponents of Eurocentrism in Africa were pushing for the creation of artistic textual expressions that were both national and indigenous; their idea of consolidating a body of themes was to make them easily accessible to ordinary text-readers who were the bona-fide hermeneutical agents. Unfortunately, the European missionary agencies could not hesitate to make decisions and to tell Africans what to do in the text-reading process, for example by imposing colonial based textual meaning. Alien impositions were progressively dashing the indigenous people’s hopes, desires, and priorities for the future because missionaries’ landscape of religious diversity had directed bitter critiques at leaders of independent movements and organizations.

By so doing, these missionaries were keen to lock doors and bar windows for indigenous communities’ ideals and meanings by mixing-up the African thought process with images and narratives that contradicted local imaginations. So, assigning textual meaning to the
reality of indigenous hermeneutical movement through lamentation was more appealing to pluralism and democracy as it inspired African scholarly hope of galvanizing the indigenous community across its religious diversity. Unfortunately, the converts having done away with crucial symbols of African culture and they parted ways with their community (Crawford, 1913:170-171). As a consequence, avenues for hermeneutical action were indeed closing down, the divide between the powerful and poor was growing; and Gĩkũyũland was becoming a dumping ground for colonial hermeneutical maneuvers. The missionaries’ ethnocentrism was at the moment prompting myriads of emotional responses to indigenous ways by disapproving them as primitive and backward cultural enterprises. Their attitude was driven towards the wholesale disapproval of indigenous motif of lamentation which called into question the infallibility of ‘the civilized culture’. The missionaries’ failure to understand the Agĩkũyũ and their thinking patterns led to their failure to communicate the word of God in Agĩkũyũ terms, and eventually it led to a text-reading which was so complex and multifaceted that it was difficult to generalize it.

The missionaries’ attitude was nurtured and cultured by a spirit that regarded an African as a being lower than a dog in the moral scale (Boer, 1984: 43). The superiority in the intellectual, moral, commercial and political aspects of Eurocentric culture were at this instant used to envisage a dominant ideology that was too hostile to expressions of social anger in fear that it would generate risky and passionate social power against the Bible and Christian faith. That is why missionaries were cautious not allow critical text-readers from engaging in controversial hermeneutical and political discourses in their constant references to a theme of redeeming a dark and desolate Africa from all of its satanic aspects. By seeing their condition through the lens of underlying social realities of the colonized from an angle
of critical reflection on texts the essence of indigenous thinking patterns would now implied to an act of criticism that would set forth the scene for public outcries. Consequently, the lack of bold inexplicable act of mobilizing public protests against the dominant ideologies pointed to serious inadequacies of indigenization. By bringing traumatic events into account through a two-way process of public affirmation and acknowledgement of the new status of the Agĩkũyũ text-readers’ lamentation was a strategic critique of ideologies that challenged the cover-ups. It is this process of rooting out among Agĩkũyũ all that was considered to be evil customs that we can understand the present status of text-reading in this land. It points to what the Agĩkũyũ text-readers are today.

Because of their colonial past, the Agĩkũyũ elite is perpetually shaken and shaped, informed and invigorated, enriched and endowed through an inculcation of Victorian moral values of righteousness imported to Gĩkũyũland by European missionaries. This importation tends to promote exclusion and fragmentation of the community. Its vision conjectures a realm of intelligibility and production on how to awaken the society through the embrace of European missionaries’ bequeath of waging a premeditated and enthusiastic fight for white supremacy. A diligent execution of vigorous enforcement of complex and multifaceted shackles of colonialism among the Agĩkũyũ undermined local initiatives of articulating alternative coherent visions of life through the reality of resolute self-determination. Further, this execution brought despondency in the land because both the missionaries and colonialists were allies in ensuring that those who did not yield to civilizing wishes of missionaries were condemned and thrown out of mission stations. To be thrown out of mission meant death because those who had been persuaded to stay away from home by missions were those who had already been disowned by indigenous community elders for
doing so. In this case, they were to suffer a double tragedy.

The missionaries’ attitude towards Agĩkũyũ public acts of voicing pains were a question of defending already worked-out complex theories which were used to impose artificial structures that obscured and obfuscated the textual meaning at hand. All what was systematized by the colonialists for natives’ consumption, domesticated by the mythology, and regarded as legitimate and beyond criticism meant that the marginalized cannot find their own voices when they are at loggerheads with the dominant readings. The native criticism of the colonialists was taken kindly by missionaries’ false forms of social reality which was premised and spectacularly mirrored in the colonial administrators’ ideologies which has strategically positioned themselves as superior emblems of their very being which were preserved under the strong arm of the imperial power as imposed in native lands. Such mirrored image of mind-sets is what infringes the fundamental rights and liberties of the text-readers. This mind-set is what forms a context through which the traumatized individuals or communities in the post-colonial era could view and judge their own responses in a struggle for the decolonization of their land and minds. By challenging the forced and artificial voices and their frameworks of text-reading which were sneaked in text-reading through civic and public affairs of the country and thus, prompting the present-day call for a reinterpretation of the role of Euro-centric hermeneutical encounter through the Agĩkũyũ motif of lamentation.

This re-interpretation stretches from the time of colonialism to contemporary period with a particular focus on the impact of missionaries’ idealism, cynicism and disbelief. The missionaries’ attitude towards the expression of lamentation among the Agĩkũyũ was,
therefore, defined by constant fear that the savagery expressions if given a chance would spill into primitive political discourse. In any case, this moment of out-cry takes the present and past time of ignorance over the whole range of issues which had to do with ideological basis of corruption, security, human rights, wealth, and social justice. The Gĩkũyũ people were now deprived of access to indigenous nobility by infusions of missionaries’ woefully fabricated ethnocentric attitudes and approaches that organized the lives of the colonized to deny the reality of lamentation. The lack of poignant hermeneutical approach to the questions of the stark realities of grief, emptiness, abandonment, defeat and despair had its own repercussion of tearing the post-colonial Gĩkũyũ text-readers apart silently and frequently. The far-reaching effect of this chapter is to stir up the memories and to prompt the tears in order to restore hope which will engender hermeneutical courage and strength to face, the post-colonial socio-economic and political realities of the Gĩkũyũ.

The Gĩkũyũ people had upon the arrival of European missionaries shown zealous interest on reading and writing but no Mũgĩkũyũ according to missionaries, could become a text-reader before giving up his/her old treasured customs. Other laid down conditions for any Mũgĩkũyũ to become sufficiently equipped with rudimentary knowledge of reading and writing were: All heathen practices connected with custom were to be entirely abandoned by text-readers for they were strictly prohibited from engaging into anything of public nature. They had to eventually land the Gĩkũyũ people in ideological gloom of Euro-centric attitude towards the natives and all its social, economic and theological frameworks. This attitude was strategically placed to persistently propel the colonized text-readers into internationalization of ideological presumptions and viewpoints of Euro-centrism as the basis of hermeneutics and survival (c.f. Magesa, 1997: 2). The indigenous institutions bred
by lamentation in Gĩkũyũland were important as the fermenting place of radical ideological movements like the Mau Mau, which waged an armed struggle against the colonialists. These African instituted churches in Gĩkũyũland had threatened the mission-based churches and so by 1952, the missionaries had freely joined hands with the colonial regime to ban the indigenous churches and institutions for they were inaccurately suspected to be the hub or the breeding sites for Mau Mau movement. Ironically, the members of Mau Mau were generally hostile against the Christian converts and to associate them that way was a witch-hunting expedition against indigenous churches. Unlike in the first and second world wars where British success in battle was hermeneutically colored to pose as war ordained by God, there remained a paradox of how the Agĩkũyũ who fought on the side of the colonizers were labeled as staunch Christian soldiers waging war against pagan nations, but in their battling for self-liberation were now being seen as heathens. A member of Mau Mau movement with deadlocks on his head would not be entertained in the mainline mission churches without a recanting of his ideals for freedom. Though the missionaries had ironically regarded themselves as being firm in their calling by helping the text-readers to remain faithful to Christ at all times, they were reluctant to help Africans in their opposition to colonial powers. They perceived Agĩkũyũ resistance to colonialism as opposition to God’s designs of bringing peace and harmony in Africa for they were ready to defend their cause for God by bringing peace to the colony. To them, colonialism was a real blessing from God to Africans.

From the early beginnings, the Christian mission had turned into a constructive power of a regime stabilizing force. They had detached their adherents from socio-political struggle by placing their obligations on God instead of humans to take action; this resulted in
subservient acquiescence where the Agĩkũyũ were to keep on waiting for Jesus return to bring transformations. This form of text-reading was susceptible to those who had interests to protect; it created a phenomenon that persisted on threatening the social fabric of independent African society. Ngugi-wa-Thiong’o (1993) and (1986) asserts that we cannot escape from the struggle that shapes our daily structure because all what we need to choose is one or another side in the battlefield, the side of the victims or the side of the oppressor. We cannot be neutral, for religion is ideological: the question is what and whose interest we are to serve. The missionaries as accomplices of colonial regime had disassociated themselves from the cause of Mau Mau movement, which had spearheaded African consciousness among the Agĩkũyũ whose rights had been trampled on for too long. The movement was a threat to socio-economic interests of the colonialists who had ideologically interpreted it as primitive, atavistic, irrational, barbaric, and one opposed to modernization. The Agĩkũyũ were communitarian not purist Marxists ideologies. In their outcries they were critical enough to bring context and situation of ideological form into text-reading process which had already exerted definite political and social effects that threatened their base and presumption of being, notoriously religious people. This made them not to respond imaginatively with various genres of ideology, which could have been fitted within a pattern of reading the text in their own hermeneutics.

Though suspicious of missionaries’ activities, the Gĩkũyũ people could not hesitate to use the mission church’s creeds, hymns and prayers, substituting the name of Christ with the names of Agĩkũyũ liberation movement leaders like Field Marshall Dedan Kimathi and Kenyatta in the Mau Mau movement. So the peoples’ responses to colonial legacy was religiously rooted and yet open to Pan African movements ideals which were heavily
borrowing from African communitarianism that leaned more to Marxism than to capitalism. The blending of religious and Pan Africanist’ doctrines was a very powerful tool of arousing suspicion in order to question the status quo. To decode the colonial ideological codes the Mau Mau had to enforce discipline and courage to its members through the oath of allegiance to the movement. Text-readers who did not take this oath were labeled as collaborators. They feared that if the primitive and savagery values would be attenuated with each succeeding generation, it would eventually elude Christian identity.

3.3 The Colonial Hegemony in Technical and Literacy Expertise
The technical and literacy expertise of the colonizer was geared towards the transformation of everything surrounding it into an object of its domination. Colonial education system was entrusted to missionaries who had to educate the natives through a mental straight jacket. These missionaries in their monopoly of developing the Agĩkũyũ regarded this community’s courage to take risk as unchristian and therefore a potential enemy who must be domesticated and watched. In this case, the missionaries had claimed to know all that the Gĩkũyũ people wanted and so the natives had no say as they had already resigned to missionaries’ claim. In the process, the missionaries who had completely denied their liberty of independent thinking by colonial system ensured that the Agĩkũyũ did not participate in their own development process. All matters according to missionaries had to be as they knew and expected them to be. Introducing any new concepts that the missionary had not heard of in school and college was introducing savagery and nativity to the word of God. The Mũgĩkũyũ who agitated for the return of community land was already condemned to a class that was decidedly a cut below humanity, had no option but only to learn and thank God for it. Such an individual was feared as a threat to missionaries’ prestige and control.
over the populace. The Agĩkũyũ were, therefore, perceived by missionaries as illiterate, remote and uncivilized community that only needed to be pushed in order to move on. This perception was aimed at reducing them into recipients, servants and spectators in unjust system. But the Agĩkũyũ resisted through their open struggle against the mounting despair that had to end up in bitter reflections.

This struggle was expressed through songs known to facilitate the capturing of the lyric modes of discourse, nourishing and pacifying the community life by keeping it away from falling to despair. These songs discussed their suffering and its various shades and aspects, drawing on their communal experiences, often arriving at clashing interpretations and conclusions. They later revealed that the text-reading process was basically designed to domesticate and use the local people in extracting their own wealth and raw materials for export for the purpose of enriching the colonial powers. The Agĩkũyũ were not ready to yield to unjust political, socio-economic and religious systems as cultural arrogance of services which were not people-centered. Thus, in the process the Agĩkũyũ hated and refused to collaborate with missionaries, on community issues especially on matters pertaining to clan and family set-ups. To missionaries, all knowledge, religion and experience were a private reserve for the civilized races which was ironically a direct assault against the inherent values which were manifested in the way the Gĩkũyũ community perceived reality in their world.

The Agĩkũyũ-missionaries’ hermeneutical encounter was essentially polemical and hegemonic in character, it created a legacy of technical and literacy expertise saturated with hermeneutical competitiveness and conflict rather than co-existence and cooperation. The
general hermeneutical appeal that embodied honest and critical self-examination of cultural
hermeneutical tenets and traditions was made through lamentations that led to the discovery
of resources in what was to enhance the realization and success of hermeneutical gains.
Though lamentation was not seriously treated as a major resistance against colonial
expansion and inculcation of literacy skills which were the seedbed of missionaries’ mind-
set in Gĩkũyũland, it exerted its position as a hermeneutical event on its own. In this case,
the missionary based-schools were faced with the challenge of relating the word of God and
culture in an appropriate and creative manner.

As a consequence of these historical and socio-cultural factors, a negative attitude of
mistrust has been inherited and in many places is operative to this day, undermining,
weakening and threatening hermeneutical efforts through the voices of lamentation. If
lamentation is to be developed, the Agĩkũyũ must make serious attempts to honestly and
openly disengage and remove hegemonic and moralistic legacy of guilt-inducing, Bible-
thumping homilies which were inspired by missionary mind-set in what had threatened the
regard of context in the development of textual meaning. The challenge of missionaries’
attitude towards lamentation through prejudices and misunderstanding remains the key
apparatus of looking down on Gĩkũyũ culture to this day. The process of inculcating a sense
of cultural inferiority among Agĩkũyũ text-readers was punctuated with a de-humanizing
structure for it paid no attention to the existing needs and resources. The mission education
facilities were embedded on racism and had taken a firm grip in its realization of imperial
hermeneutical maneuver and concoction of superiority complex. These paternalist and
colonialist mentalities of European missionaries had generated a ‘savior’ complex trend that
nurtured blindness on the side of natives and prejudice on the side of white settlers.
Such hermeneutical trends were based on European missionaries’ fanatical emphasis on particular style and understanding of certain biblical truths which had benefited the course of colonial enterprise through epistemological exclusiveness, superficiality and short-sightedness. It was under the pretext of protecting the word of God from distortions that the missionaries intentionally used the mission-based schools and churches to suppress and ridicule the Gĩkũyũ political consciousness (c.f. Boer, 1984:107). In this case, the earlier functions of schools and churches in Gĩkũyũland were geared towards this process of infusing a sense of cultural inferiority among the text-readers. Through the school system manned by European missionaries, the text-readers were modeled to qualify Gĩkũyũ religious beliefs as superstition and lacking rationality must be read as post-colonial sites of hermeneutical conflict. The negative attitude of missionaries was keen to perfect the global and local forms of exclusion and marginalization, where African cosmology and its traditional social fabric are assaulted through the colonial rule and industrialization. The underestimation of lamentation was synonymous to the exclusion of a social analysis that leads to authentic theological reflection. Lamentation underscores a public discourse over the restructuring of economic and political plight of those at the losing end of economic globalization.

Though a logical conclusion to the cries of the oppressed was needed in the articulation of the re-statements of Eurocentric hermeneutical equilibrium in African soil, the oppressed were not expected to come out of the disequilibrium transmitted by drowned voices of lamentation in the face of more powerful and terrifying voices of the oppressors. In absence of objectified hermeneutical conclusions which would have certainly embodied the matrix
within which life is given its meaning, value and purposes, lamentations of the Agĩkũyũ would begin to serve this purpose with more effect, relevance, intellectual profit and perhaps even with humility which were now being severed. The education provided by missionaries’ institutions was a conduit of colonial hegemony as it prevented Agĩkũyũ from engaging into a critical analysis of their situation. Thus, the entrenchment of education via missionaries’ constant negative attitude towards lamentation was a ploy to save the colonial settlers and mission workers from cultural shock through domination which had completely isolated the Gĩkũyũ people and impeded their inbuilt development of decisions and responsibilities that affected their own lives. Likewise, the missionary mind-set embedded in education had sharply and invariably penetrated the heart of pioneer Gĩkũyũ biblical scholars who were being overwhelmed by the achievement of new status of Athoomi (text-readers).

These scholars were forced to wear a strait jacket of Euro-centric hermeneutics and were now being commissioned to propagate the same among their community. In doing so, they had to deliberately overlook the need to raise any question to avoid hostility and resistance to modernity, for such questioning, was tantamount to a rebuttal fronted against development of the Agĩkũyũ expression of lamentation which was felt to foster cooperate expression beyond individuals. Such development was given no chance to express itself for it was misinterpreted and even seen as a threat to the system. This development was a dehumanizing apparatus that aimed at developing the text-reader instead of facilitating his/her inherent potential to question the issues at hand and reflect on his/her own life. The failure to present issues to the text-readers for reflection on their own lives, as well as the overwhelming forces of the current challenges of globalization and realities has systematically compromised the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The
missionaries claim to determine the true biblical hermeneutics universally for all people of all times without the arousal of suspicion limited and conditioned the growth among Gĩkũyũ community. That is how the biblical hermeneutics have continued to be used to justify injustices in every walk of life.

The text-reading process was presented by missionaries as a precursor of imperial control by an attitude that reinforced and legitimated the unjust social structures. Motivated by the need for and possibility of education as a basis of better living standard, the spread of technical and literacy expertise was expected to provide distinct and worthy skills of confronting the cry of the oppressed, the powerless and the dehumanized groups. The colonial hegemonic scheme caught the Agĩkũyũ text-readers off-guard and was so powerful that it abetted colonial power and domination in post-colonial Gĩkũyũland. The Agĩkũyũ had from the beginning suspected and identified the missionaries’ attitude as a potential threat to their religious lifestyle but also tolerated them as a resource for this unparalleled literary and technical expertise. The missionaries in discharging this expertise are said to have left themselves somewhat more freedom of maneuver in defining the word of God. Thus, the missionaries’ literary and technical instructions were essentially intertwined and identical with the word of God and therefore, infallible in reality but not in figurative sense, that is, not in the sense that they were making copies, citation, or communication from God.

The text-readers’ extreme appeal to the acquisition of literacy skills had attracted the increased presence of missionaries in Gĩkũyũland who were now creating an indirect essence and active location of European imperialism. The curiosity to acquire new expertise was mistaken by text-readers with indiscriminate embrace of European missionary culture.
whose abrasive mind-set was perfected by the immersion of the local text-readers into narrow and exclusive religious system that undermined the process of indigenous traditional religious institutions. The educated Agĩkũyũ were now being forced to espouse the life of inequalities, political repression and heightened popular insecurities through the slotting of certain bible verses which were now used to justify their cause, over and against those perceived to be uncivilized or illiterate. The irony of it all is that, the literacy skills offered by mission schools were to prepare the Agĩkũyũ to agitate for freedom from the colonialist and also take up the new responsibilities in the running of their land after Independence (cf. Macpherson, 1970: 59).

3.4 The Missionaries Disconnect from the Realities of Gĩkũyũ People

Asceticism was encouraged to undermine the provision of constructive and credible account of indigenous capacity of holding to various aspects of colonial dominance and control. The text-readers were for reasons connected to wider politics forced to embrace poverty by a world renouncing that obscured any showing up of organized mutual opposition at levels of public life. The issue of ‘new question’ arising in local situations was now the bone of contention against the old answers given by the official church whose hermeneutical policy was incompatible with the text-readers. The missionaries were not ready to dialogue with their imagined adversaries within confines of their own spheres of influence, or even to give them the opportunity to make their points. In the name of helping the Agĩkũyũ to making and holding to decisive, constructive and credible accounts of the word of God, the issues of punishment and threat of dismissal had followed the word of God. In so doing, a spiritual subtle for Gĩkũyũ converts to embrace the free exchange of ideas was inevitable. The Gĩkũyũ text readers were being denied their wish to understand the movements of
contemporary society and to offer perspectives upon them.

This denial aided the colonial church hierarchy to become one of the most privileged pillars of the mainstream and dominant culture and what really was at stake is the Gĩkũyũ text-readers’ power to decide. Many ideas were offered without Gĩkũyũ text readers’ perspective, leading to perpetual and calamitous imperialism of indigenous imagination which is the most grievous form of colonialism in this century. It is perhaps necessary to narrate here that the pioneer text-readers (Athoomi a Maambere) were subjected to a discipline equal only to, if not surpassing that found in military camps. The missionaries ideologically practiced this brutality so that they might save the souls of their converts (Temu, 1971:108-109). In this process of trying to restrain text-readers from sin, the missionaries had to exercise their power to punish them through a sparing use of kiboko (whip) for moral persuasion. Njoya (2003: 97) recalls that;

In the Protestant Church the environment was even more degrading. Any native pastor, catechist, carpenter, teacher or nurse found by missionary authority imitating the whites by dancing, listening music, kissing, wearing long trouser or tasting alcohol, had to be caned without due process of trial, do hard labour or quit employment: This aspect of punishing the wrong doers was alien and abusive to Africans whose remission of sin and evils was realized through Horohio and Thīnjo sacrifices.

Thus, Africans were caught up in the meshes of external peculiarities of missionaries’ hermeneutical theories and explanations of a world whose unseen dimension had eventually failed to connect with Agĩkũyũ text-readers’ ethical and religious framework. The African hermeneutics of life which was so clear could not support this strange approach because it was too intimidating. In this hermeneutical context, it was only too easy to assign text-readers a hermeneutical development spectrum that would seek to contextualize imperialism and colonialism through sycophant prayers that call for the long reign of oppressors without a single denunciation (c.f. Ibid p. 368).
The narrow nationalism and chauvinism enjoined in missionaries’ text-reading process were later conducted by the proceeding generations of African text-readers in acts that have led to a vicious state of one group of text-readers being set against the other causing tremendous suffering. This complex quagmire underlies chronic human insecurity and the question now is; what are the grounds of anachronistic text-reading? The present-day lack of voice in challenging the tides of an all-embracing uncertainty and insecurity would point to a predatory hermeneutical culture of the few privileged text-readers which is done at the expense of socio-economic and political marginalization of the majority. Subsequent post-colonial resistance to this sort of text-reading will help readers to understand that whoever planted the text-reading methods on Gĩkũyũ soil had a mental model of biblical hermeneutics and society that would deliberately sidetrack the local people from various decision-making and actions in life. Given its support to policies and systems that oppress others, this hermeneutics of sidetracking had perpetually denied the ordinary text-readers their power to articulate and access to an alternative life.

The present-day attitude, traditions, belief systems of text-readers seem to focus more on empire building than on catering for the needs of the people. In this case, the social and historical context of Gĩkũyũ culture which was unfamiliar to missionaries had been erratically condensed into one dimension of biblical hermeneutics that necessitated the enhancement of ordinary text-readers’ subordination. Hence, the perpetual frustration of ordinary text-readers’ quest to hear what the Bible has to say for their actual present, the truth about their community life and soul becomes the axis upon which our review of missionaries’ mindset revolved. This axis was needed to spell out the text-readers ability to reject hermeneutical captivity perpetuated by European missionaries’ culture and its mind-
set of domination. This concurs with Freire (1993) who claim that; the oppressed are predisposed to internalize the hermeneutical angle and mind-sets of their oppressor, which alienate them from others and lead them to treat others in the very same way they are treated. Thus, the missionaries’ activities could not be divorced from colonial ventures, for both enterprises had depleted the colonized into deep-seated chaos of hermeneutical abyss by denying them freedom to ask the right hermeneutical questions through objective-critical reflection of the text. The missionaries understanding of the Bible was unmistakable in its diehard facilitation of European colonial master plan of exploiting and plundering of the Gĩkũyũland. Basing on the fact that every post-colonial text-reader is inescapably dependent on Euro-centric conceptions which he or she has inherited from missionary’ traditions, consciously or unconsciously: We have to come to a conclusion that the modern hermeneutical traditions in post-colonial Kenya are highly dependent on predictable idealistic conceptions of the colonizers on its understanding of human existence. Here, it seemed to this study that due to vested interests of the missionaries and the colonial empire among the colonized, the approach to the Bible is until now not directly involved in making human existence its object of attention. The missionaries as civilizing agents posed to give the Agĩkũyũ answers to all questions and to clear all riddles of human existence among the colonized text-readers. However, our post-colonial question in the face of those who civilize and redeem others from savagery and heathenism through hasty labeling of any opposition as unprovoked savagery or worse is; in what manner did they root out what they considered to be evil customs among the Agĩkũyũ? Beside, which hermeneutics can provide the text-readers with definitive and ample perspective for understanding human existence? Other than the colonial interest of ransacking and plundering of the indigenous lamentation texts, tearing them apart and reassembling them, sometimes superimposing their interpretations
and at other times merely listening to them, the missionaries did not take into any account the concrete events of Gĩkũyũ people’s life, that is, the concrete encounters which constituted existence of this community.

3.5 Missionaries as Intelligence Gathering Agents

From the beginning, the Euro-centric text-readers were hurriedly walking on a tight rope of calming the rising disgust of the colonized. Their hermeneutics were premised on future rewards for obedient and responsible text-readers whose lines of artistic forms are drawn out of natural foundation for understanding the entire world. The over-dependence on colonial machinery was for the provision of security and easy communication of the word of God in different missionaries’ spheres of influence was reciprocated by their provision of intelligence surveillance report to colonial authorities. The missionaries through the arm of state had rejected the indigenous collective readiness to combat imperialism by referring to lamentation songs and poems which were used to steel and temper the people’s determination to stand firm against the colonialists’ ruthless interventions as atavistic, pagan and savagery (c.f. Wa-Kinyatti, 2008:301-302).

Besides, when it came to fight for independence, the missionaries had to deliberately ignore the inhumanity of colonialism by making text-readers remain too far removed from the comprehension of their artistic expression. Instead of being openly censured through despair, timidity and unprincipled compromises remain simultaneously reinforced and questioned by familiar and powerful expectations of a structured and constrained social, political and economic lives. The colonial schema of bestializing the Mau Mau aims and objectives was boosted by colonial church tendency of playing the role of fire extinguishers
in concentration camps. By quenching the conflagration of freedom fighters, the missionaries entertained the colonial discourse in process of production of knowledge about the colonized. The ex-Mau Mau detainees recall how the missionaries had worked hand in hand with colonizers in a schema that led to the flooding of evangelists and lay pastors who supplied the anti-Mau Mau pamphlets in all detention centers urging the detainees to confess their sins and to come to Christ and the Empire through their renouncement of their anti-imperialist oath for they had gone astray. Basing on the assumption that the missionaries were the social guardians of the colonized communities, they would in most cases portray themselves of being autonomous of society and yet pose as its representative. In this aspect, they had emphasized on a particular style and understanding of certain biblical truths that benefited them in gathering intelligence report and so for the sake of security. They were keen to disqualify the colonized attempts to explore the world in front of a particular text. This hermeneutical connection with colonialism was at the expense of the painful realities of Gĩkũyũ people who at independence were left confused and frustrated. The text-readers’ attitude was now sacrificed at the altar of a destined development of irrelevant and ineffective foundation of text-reading. In this case, the Gĩkũyũ people were being perpetually inducted into dominant ideological blindness and injustices by the colonial hegemonic system.

Then, the numbness greeting the modern Gĩkũyũ people’s response to modern-day glaring gap between the poor and the rich, the current struggles for survival, land clashes and ethnic conflicts, as well as the problem of refugees and IDPs sounds inconsequential. For that reason, the revisit of the biblical motif of lamentation through the Euro-centrism strategies might not startle an ordinary Mũgĩkũyũ text-reader who is on bleak and restraints of
oppression. Lamentation is not the last gasp of a dying text-reader but a conviction and motivation informed by an artistic intelligence that base on training to expressive ends through “fusion of horizons”. It is a multilayered process that has driven African history of linking sounds together with mental images and it is also made visible through its capture of future generations. The missionaries through their powerful reworking of familiar expectations were keen to teach the local people the foundational biblical narratives that would convey a new vision of human dignity, their hermeneutics and vision of social justice was captive to the predominant European mentality of conquering and subduing the land of savagery. A critique of failures of this colonial past through lamentation brings the reality of injustices among Gĩkũyũ people with great clarity, understanding and courage.

This reality brings the indigenous role of lamentation text into a process of probing the status quo and proposing alternative lifestyle through deeper perception and understanding of Gĩkũyũ people’s landscape as a hermeneutical site with a certain lingering cultural vitality. Lamentation is built on expectations and so it cannot be stopped from generating its views, opinions, and strong emotions that jeopardize the Euro-centric missionaries’ ideologies. The denial of lamentation and its deeper roots on Agĩkũyũ soil makes the dominant ideology to largely subjugate the text-reader and speak for itself. In absence of a hermeneutics of suspicion which helps the text-reading process to decipher dominant ideologies through lamentation as a site of echoing emotional and cultural contexts of its text. The missionaries’ fanaticisms of addressing the pragmatic interests of dominion through their restless complaints about the superstitious practices of the Agĩkũyũ were too optimistic in retrospective. The Euro-centric fanaticism had deliberately disregarded the painful realities of the Agĩkũyũ through its misperceptions and misconstrues which heralded
the preliminaries of their wholesale condemnations of Gĩkũyũ culture.

By labeling Gĩkũyũ approach to painful realities as sin, primitive, satanic and pagan, the Euro-centric ideological lens in its disregard of indigene voices have all through nurtured a hegemonic system of reducing the post-colonial Gĩkũyũ people’s future into a hermeneutical dearth, making corruption a survival necessity for Gĩkũyũ socio-economic and political systems where post-colonial regimes and churches have consistently evoked great enthusiasm and unrealistic expectations. Such expectations reduced the word of God to a miraculous charm of solving the socio-economic and political impulse overnight. This idea of approaching the word of God as a miraculous charm of solving problems was brought by missionaries to Gĩkũyũland and Kenyatta (1938) had attacked this idea at an earlier stage. It facilitated the text-reader to totally deny the pain and suffering even in a world where everyone is disadvantaged. Such erroneous validations were already clinched on what European conquerors and nationalists had professed in regard to the world of their ideological goals whose radical and aggressive art of shaping the text-readers’ thinking generated a bunch of conditioned hermeneutical neophytes. Such aggressions carried with them contradictions that served to fashion a generation of text-readers which had picked up the missionaries’ attitudes as truth par se by denying themselves a direct benefit from the text. The Europeanized Gĩkũyũ text-readers and missionaries were now wearing tinted hermeneutical lenses, and so the most accurate text would appear to be of the same shade as dictated by such hermeneutical lenses. The fact that missionaries had produced a generation of text-readers with tinted lenses that denied Africans their opportunity of finding their voices in the text had not undermined the Gĩkũyũ text-readers from breaking away from missionaries’ control by creating their own versions of Christianity which was an
indisputable form of text-reading. Also those who had embraced colonial Christendom values of embracing biblical text and were not ready to embrace Christianity were now turning out to be an indisputable site of text-reading.

Though all these text-readers were lamenting their interests were not anchored on lamentation as they too never incorporated it; either because of little religious training or simply because they shared or imitated the oppressors’ values. In addition, the missionaries operating out of fear were precautious not to awaken the unknown indigenous potential of promoting life or creating awareness of the emerging indigenous potential for practical realization of a transformed community. In doing so, they were strategically placed to follow the lead of traders, explorers, soldiers and scientists in their search for justifications of colonial domination. So, the Gĩkũyũ people were permanently denied their inherent potential of discovering a growing awareness of their social reality and of actualizing their dream through motivation to act and focus on a text-reading for action to transform their situation of marginalization. This denial of ordinary sense of encounter, of mutual understanding, of respect and a mutual search for the will of God was enchanted by a blanket relegation of Gĩkũyũ religious experience and expression to limbo of negation and skepticism. One of our informers who is skeptical and cautious of post-colonial call for the revisit of lamentation in text-reading has on the ground of anonymity claimed that; if text-readers’ emotions are to be aroused, there is so much in post-colonial era that we actually might feel compelled to think deeply and take some radical action that contradicts our Christian faith.” To find the truth behind suffering and pain through the elaboration of biblical and theological foundation of lamentation voices in Agĩkũyũ soil has become essential. This elaboration is a key component of formulating a hermeneutic capable of a
serious reflection on missionaries’ subjection of the Agĩkũyũ text-readers to stereotypical interpretations that numbed the indigenous culture. By basing on this sense of awareness of the dynamics of oppression and outgrowing the wounds that oppression has inflicted; engaging on hermeneutical assault against false or distorted image of oneself and world, makes lamentation a reconnection link between the text-readers’ self-esteem and the transformed uniqueness. Such reflections are also imperative in addressing Gĩkũyũ people’s tribulations of pain and suffering in their own context. Because, missionaries’ hermeneutic ramifications have irreparably failed in taking initiative to understand how the Agĩkũyũ conceive of reality and how that reality has been shaped by their environments and histories.

3.6 Missionaries’ Ambiguity and Insensibility to Pain and Suffering

The Euro-centric ambiguity and insensibility to indigenous people reduced Christianity into Karl Max’s description of religion as the opium of the masses. The word of God was neither experienced as an authoritative source of hope for the future nor expressed as salvation on here and now basis. Because, the missionaries’ hermeneutical approach which of course good and orthodox, emphasized on the end of this world and getting into a glorious life where tears will flow no more. Ideologically, they had over-emphasized and exaggerated the beauty of the life to come at the expense of indigenous cultural memory that continued to shaped day-to-day life in Africa. So, missionaries’ haste to mobilize Eurocentric cultural powers in a broad shared cultural sensibility was now to give the colonizers’ bias an upper hand over the colonized voices. Though missionaries’ text-reading mind-set was distinct in terms of authority, class, income, status, prestige and lifestyle as well as material possession; it worked its way into lives and actions of the colonized who were lured into damaging acts through cultural terms and forms of racism and oppression. Missionaries’
text-reading maneuver might not have been by design a racist schema; nonetheless, it had its racist roots that produced racist results. Because of this, the Euro-centric text-reading process had kept away from dialoguing with Gĩkũyũ traditional religious practices.

As a result, those text-readers who were nurtured on the scriptures by different missionary affiliations and groups on Euro-centric hermeneutics would find themselves united with others through their yearning for coming to terms with violence and suffering in the first place. Yet, deep theological, cultural and socio-political undercurrents apprehended on the basis of each ideology were exerting tremendous influence on the general attitude of text-readers. Hence, the hue of missionaries’ cultural heritage which had radically misperceived and misconstrued the Gĩkũyũ’ folklore embedded in public processing of pain was in support of a text-reading that would secure the Euro-centric socio-economic and political interests. These interests were long-established on individualistic existence and responsibility but not along the sense of communal circumstances and reality into a concrete moment of ‘here’ and ‘now.’ The situations and decisions that operated in the very encounters of life and the biblical text were now being feared and suspected of sparking strain on the social fabric of the colony. The breaking point of pain and suffering which was feared to cause devastation and the restraints of embryonic stage of Euro-centric hermeneutics was by colonial design done away with to tame and medicate the stark realities of pain and suffering among the colonized lot. To find the truth behind suffering and pain through the elaboration of biblical and theological foundation of lamentation voices in Agĩkũyũ soil has become essential. This elaboration is a key component of formulating a hermeneutic capable of a serious reflection on missionaries’ subjection of the Agĩkũyũ text-readers to stereotypical interpretations that numbed the indigenous culture. By
basing on this sense of awareness of the dynamics of oppression and outgrowing the wounds that oppression has inflicted; engaging on hermeneutical assault against false or distorted image of oneself and world, makes lamentation a reconnection link between the text-readers’ self-esteem and the transformed uniqueness. Such reflections are also imperative in addressing Gĩkũyũ people’s tribulations of pain and suffering in their own context. Because, missionaries’ hermeneutic ramifications have irreparably failed in taking initiative to understand how the Agĩkũyũ conceive of reality and how that reality has been shaped by their environments and histories.

The missionaries’ fanaticisms of addressing the pragmatic interests of dominion through their restless complaints about the superstitious practices of the Agĩkũyũ were too optimistic in retrospective. The Euro-centric fanaticism had deliberately disregarded the painful realities of the Agĩkũyũ through its misperceptions and misconstrues which heralded the preliminaries of their wholesale condemnations of Gĩkũyũ culture. By labeling Agĩkũyũ approach to painful realities as sin, primitive, satanic and pagan, the Euro-centric ideological lens in its disregard of indigene voices have all through nurtured a hegemonic system of reducing the post-colonial Gĩkũyũ people’s future into a hermeneutical dearth, making corruption a survival necessity of Agĩkũyũ socio-economic and political systems. So, the post-colonial regimes and churches in Gĩkũyũland have consistently evoked great enthusiasm and unrealistic expectations that reduce the word of God to a miraculous charm of solving the socio-economic and political impulse in Gĩkũyũland overnight. In addition, the missionaries operating out of fear were precautious not to awaken the unknown indigenous potential of promoting life or creating awareness of the emerging indigenous potential for practical realization of a transformed community. In doing so, they were
strategically placed to follow the lead of traders, explorers, soldiers and scientists in their search for justifications of colonial domination.

These validations were already clinched on what European conquerors and nationalists had professed of the world through their ideological goals of a radical and aggressive shaping of the colonized text-readers thinking into a conditioned hermeneutical neophyte. Such aggressions carried with them contradictions that served to fashion a generation of text-readers which had picked up the missionaries’ attitudes as truth par se by denying themselves a direct benefit from the text. The Europeanized Agĩkũyũ text-readers and missionaries were now wearing tinted hermeneutical lenses, and so the most accurate text would appear to be of the same shade as dictated by the hermeneutical lenses.

3.7 Missionaries’ Stereotypes and their Strong Mental Images on Text-Readers

The pathetic state of post-colonial Africa has comprehensively and profoundly described the essence of missionaries’ stereotypes that had assumed dominance and superiority in highlighting African otherness (Said, 1994: 34). In order to block other hermeneutical options from forming and emerging, the mindset of development from savagery to civilization was planted (c.f. Mudimbe, 1988:4) and so, it stands as unavoidable conveyor of strong mental images into contemporary text-reading process among the elite in Gĩkũyũland. The missionaries’ clichéd Enlightenment ideological view of Gĩkũyũland as bũrũri waiyũire nduuma ya gĩkuũ (a land once filled with darkness and gloom of death) had helped the colonialists to instill and perpetuate negative myths about the Agĩkũyũ customs as well as to maintain hermeneutical and colonial hegemony over them.

The darkness reflected on claims of perpetual depravity of Gĩkũyũ people was seen to hang
around the heathen and immoral darkness of cannibalism, ritual murder, incest, witchcraft, and incessant warfare (Temu, 1972:155). A significant minority of Agĩkũyũ who were caught up in this hopelessness had no option but to allow themselves to be saved from their depravity by racially superior Europeans who were God sent to vanquish the forces of darkness. The doctrine of racism which had insisted on its assumed biblical evidence that Africans were inferior by virtue of being the offspring of the accursed sons of Ham (cf. Genesis 9: 18-27) had already permeated in missionaries’ thinking. Though these claims were with time ethnologically and exegetically proven to be a colonial hogwash; the missionaries who were ideologically tuned to this way of thinking could not be stopped from conducting benevolent intercession prayers for the Agĩkũyũ; they had to beseech God to free this community from “the curse of Ham.” Such biblically weaved hegemonic-narratives were dangerous perpetuators of racial and cultural inferiority as major justifications for missionaries and colonialist control of the Gĩkũyũland.

With this kind of mentality coupled by dread for African subversion, the missionaries’ attitude towards the Agĩkũyũ was firmly wired to reflect a setting upon which the old men were demeaned as ihiĩ (uninitiated boys) and monkeys who act largely from feeling and habit. So this mind-set defines the color bar era when the Agĩkũyũ text-readers were barred from hotels and clubs; when those with land next to mission stations were not allowed to plant coffee; and when a total disregard for human dignity and little respect for anyone with a black skin practically subsisted. In addition, the titles accorded to white colonial masters were also being reflected in all mission stations and institutions: The male missionary was addressed as Bwana (Sir) while the female was Mensahib or Biibi (madam). The African social and cultural institutions and practices were finally wavered under stifling conditions
of missionaries’ surveillance. Consequently, devastating hermeneutical decision that had taken its concern on rampancy of political helplessness and grinding poverty among the Agĩkũyũ in terms of a primitive people who practiced the darkest of customs with no profound religious sense. To missionaries, the lack of a spiritual world, a sacred text, and belief in the existence of God the creator was enforced by “superstition, sorcery and cruel practices of dark abominations too hideous to be detailed” (Boer, 1984: 38). Their reality of sin in its individual and social forms was not present in their consciousness, as is also the need for rites of purification and expiation. That is why the European perspective on reality was always the correct one and so its interest of describing the Gĩkũyũ religious beliefs as pre-logical, mystical and insensible institution where the community is only endowed with rudimentary abilities to; speak a language, form primitive governments, create art and indeed think at a level which had never advanced beyond the stage achieved by European children. So, the childhood tag was to become the universal metaphor of describing the Agĩkũyũ condition of mental and cultural development and in this way, the intimidation of text-readers by missionaries was justified. Thus, such missionaries’ expectations, actions and anxieties were used to define the new social conditions presented in wholesale to Africans. They had combined their biases in order to open up a window of possibilities through biblical hermeneutics in Africa.

By denying this community its extra-ordinary portion of conceiving the reality and how that reality has been shaped by their environment and histories, it was difficult for the accustomed place of missionaries to be dropped because of its social task of molding the colonized into colonial hegemonic system. So, they refused to listen to the Agĩkũyũ culture or even to make any attempt to discover the Gĩkũyũ people in their own words and context.
of religious experience and expression. This denial was in a way squeezed to allow the Europeanized Agĩkũyũ to believe that the wider culture was solely based on European extraordinary life of progress. This progress was on one hand to shape the dominant ideology and on the other to protect the infant Gĩkũyũ text readers (Athoomi) from negative influences which would harden their way of embracing the word of God. Figure 3.1 below exemplify the civilized text-reader missionaries expected raise among the local people.

**Figure 3.1: Illumined/Domesticated Text-readers**

![Diagram](image)

**Source:** Researcher.

The European ideology of progress and its doctrine of going forward, moving on, getting over it, improving savages, growing up, and a whole collection of other images that were used to camouflage the past were rejected by Gĩkũyũ people who curved out a future from their past for themselves. The future of Gĩkũyũland is held in relation to a continued reflection on voices of lamentation whose hermeneutical efforts are attested by a particular historical moment where Agĩkũyũ text-readers can speak from past to the world of the twenty-first century. The social realities that sort to weld together a coherent Agĩkũyũ hermeneutical response to the issues that affected individual text-readers and Africans as a whole were clearly substantiated by indigenous beliefs and myths displayed by contexts of their daily lives. Indigenous beliefs and myths had proved to be both dangerous and explosive to dominant ideologies embedded on colonial reading which catered only for colonialist own interests and purposes where negative connotation were used to sever Gĩkũyũ people from their alleged fated status of primitivism and savagery. Such
predestinations were to determine the process into which the organization of Agĩkũyũ collective psyche was sealed.

The missionaries were now imposing the ideas provided by their culture in Gĩkũyũland instead of investigating things for themselves. The pre-made pictures of reality were now imposed to form the source of mental models, which were now being used to articulate the social reality of the Agĩkũyũ. The legacy of negativity vested on the exploitation of Gĩkũyũland was either directly or indirectly used to push for the classification of the Agĩkũyũ as inferior beings. The missionaries who had transplanted the Euro-centric academia brought a text-reading model in Gĩkũyũland with a total disregard of local text-reading resources and so this disregard defines one of the chains that have entrapped the Agĩkũyũ text-readers for generations. At some point, the sinking of colonial hegemony into the Gĩkũyũ people’s psyche meant the unfettered delivery of this community’s unique identity from ideological hermeneutics and mind-set of Euro-centrism. With such a process in mind, the Gĩkũyũ Christians were qualified to serve as true and faithful Euro-centric text-readers. In so doing they were introduced to a hermeneutical context that would delight on a clear and concise textual exposition as weaved by colonial church-state relationship through its ideological linage on Christendom and its divine rights of the King.

The proliferation of these rights in post-colonial era continues to hinder the breaking of fetters and shackles of bondage that curtails the text-readers walk on to hermeneutical freedom. Again the entrenched roots of such rights had hermeneutically established a clear dichotomy between the soul and the body among the oppressed text-readers. According to colonial binary fusions and myths; the soul of a native was designated to obey the will of
God while his/her body was destined to obey the will of earthly masters (missionaries and colonialists). These masters were now the bona-fide guardian angels who represented God and so obedience to the divine rights was also rendered to them on demand because of divine rights of the king. Such separation of human being has with time escalated into a formidable hermeneutical ideology of conflict-avoidance mechanism as text-readers are vulnerably incapable of returning to their roots.

Having destabilized the foundation of text-readers’ indigenous pride and their history of resistance against imperialist domination and exploitation of natives who were at this time being subjected to cognitive dissonance and defense mechanism of colonialists who reaped from exploitation and oppression which will take generations to cure. The rhetoric of dominant ideology presented the application of the text in the fog of unreality among the natives where religion was presented to indigenous as a spiritual cocktail to relief the pain of living. This was characteristic of the first African generation of text-readers who were taught to tolerate all forms of colonial oppression and exploitation. They had done this in anticipation of a good home in heaven, which was a place of happiness prepared for them when they die. Bankole (1971:9) reminds us of an incidence when an African with an inquiring mind who had carefully listened to a sermon being delivered by a missionary sarcastically responded to the homily with comments and questions as follows:

How wonderful must be this place: Heaven, which you have been telling us about it! But, there is one thing more I would like to know about it. Who are the masters there? Could it be the English? If the English are not in charge, then Heaven cannot be such a good place as you described; if it were a good place the English would have colonized it long ago.

Thus, colonial schooling confirms the propagation and imposition of culturally Europeanized biblical hermeneutics that allowed the interaction of a peculiar biblical hermeneutics that based on obedience of the oppressed to the oppressor. The missionaries’
ideology of peace and harmony among the exploited and the exploiter, the love for master by slave; and praying God to grant the colonial master long reign over the colonized as the ultimate artistic goal of colonial culture was part of this hermeneutics. This call for aesthetic submission and blind obedience to authority reflected in text-readers ended up refraining them from protest which made the practice of new religion ‘opium of masses’ among the colonized. Because, these masses were now Europeanized, brainwashed and conditioned to think and react like foreigners.

The rhetoric of conquest coupled with alien hermeneutics had ensured how the Africans could make their way up the Eurocentric hermeneutical evolutionary ladder while still assuming them to be inferior people. The Euro-centrism was the only way of rigidly welding together cultural, political and economic structures in Africa without the opportunity to work within traditional social structures that linked Agikũyũ together with their land, identity, legal rights, and organization visibility. The inevitability of Euro-centric pacification was the basis of hermeneutical innuendo which became the basis of hermeneutical conviction through a total disregard of the underlying social reality. Lamentation was welcomed to steer the process of unmasking the reality embedded on pain and suffering previously medicated by dominant ideology and its basis of Euro-centric biblical hermeneutics.

The deep colonial vested interests expressed by missionaries among the Agikũyũ were explicitly identified through the colonialist civilization which was in the interest of capitalist greed and imperialists’ exploitation. So, the draconian prejudicial attitude towards the early uprising of critical movements among the marginalized and colonized lot was one of the biggest witch-hunts in Gikũyũland for the acenji (sinful and disloyal) text-readers. The figure 3.2 below exemplifies the missionaries’ preconceived images of uncivilized, unreligious, and uncultured text-reader.
The expression of lamentation was part of the interpretation process of Gĩkũyũ people’s life which is informed by reader’s own identity which had offered enormous opportunities for the community to realize its potential in lamenting which surpasses any other dimension of its text-reading tradition. The agitated and defenseless Agĩkũyũ who had basically learnt how to express their painful experiences through lamentation were more attracted by texts and hymns that followed the community’s natural paths of telling a heartrending narrative. They were inviting the wider community to freely reflect on social reality which was distinct from the history being made by colonialists. The social reality is captured by the final moment of conquest, pacification and incorporation of text-reader into hermeneutical structure of Eurocentric colonialism. The Euro-centric text-reading process had presented the reading of the Bible as escapism of lives lived around the liberating travel and cosmopolitan sophistications; it had to strongly abhor the representational acts of primitivism displayed in African marketplace of culture and consumptions.

The temptations and tendencies to wish away the social reality of life through the biblical texts were firmly embedded on transformation and affirmation of alien economic structures and institutions. Lamentation was heard through confession and conversion where the Gĩkũyũ people were left out to suffer a major loss where communal struggling with horrific
images of terror, bitter memories and moments of despair was more than welcome. With all the mentally and emotionally adverse circumstances, the denial of pain was an inevitable source of relief to those who had only to follow the paths already trodden by the colonial masters. By distinguishing the traitorous role of Europeanized text-readers who sold out from the heroic indigenous text-readers; the underlying text-reading process was now suitable to reflect a true social condition of the Agĩkũyũ, especially in its depiction of the lifestyles of the privileged minority and the weighed down majority. The text-reading practices had to operate under subjugation where the oppressor ensured that all text-readers refrain from putting a strong protest against oppressions and exploitations. As we have seen, in the previous chapter that the early Gĩkũyũ Christian converts were trained and conditioned to accept that they were entirely dependent on the European missionaries and were not to dare do anything which is calculated to disturb the peace, good order and government of colonial system. It is upon being completely brain-washed and therefore, perpetually seasoned to understand that without the European masters, the text-readers are nothing that the text-readers were now acting out of their newly assigned role of giving no room to sentimentality.

The trained and conditioned text-readers were icons of broken souls which were ready to denounce in both words and deeds their indigenous stands and actions as primitive and atavistic. They were now being literally wedged out of physical touch with the living struggles of their people. The conditioned readers had to forego their indigenous ability to understand their own historical situation and the motivation to disturb and dislodge the reigning imported theories. Under such vulnerability and traumatic disruption, the text-readers were barred from engaging in active resistance through biblical reading in their own
terms. Thus, the Euro-centric text-reading process which was now the truth per-excellence, it was above discussion for it meant a barring of future generations of text-readers from bringing their own critical consciousness to the text. The embrace of dominant readings was the parameter to which the qualification of any Mūgikkūyũ text-reader who sought for an appointment to the position of a catechist and it was a precondition of being ordained as a priest.

The efficacy of local catechists and priests in pioneering the teaching of the Bible was demonstrated by their ability to defend Euro-centrism with various degrees of awareness, intent, and purpose. In some cases, catechists and priests with shared leadership and its guiding ideology were now forming intellectual, political and cultural communities of a sort. Eventually, they had turned hermeneutical debates into a mode of talking and arguing about the complex formulas of Euro-centrism with a remarkable spectrum of expectations. The local clergy and catechist were thus expected to perform a whole range of ecclesiastical duties which otherwise had been costly and inconvenient to mission organizations. The retention of the local priest as the mediator between the missionaries and local community, helped blunt the impact of colonial ecclesiastical over-rule. Wherever the local clergy and catechist were presented with unpopular ecclesiastical laws to enforce among the locals, it was the local clergy and catechist who received the full weight of local people’s wrath and hostility.

At the same time, Agĩkũyũ text-readers had begun to challenge the colonial government because of the oppression of the local people. Some of the text-readers lamented that what was described as civilization or progress was actually a method of depriving the Agĩkũyũ of
their rights. They also lamented that the methods used to promote progress were dictated by colonially-determined racial and cultural grounding of the native text-readers to be useful servants of colonizers. With time the Gĩkũyũ people through Mũthĩrĩgũ lamented the text-reading methods which had primarily molded the society to bear the image and likeness of European legal structures which were designed to keep them as inferior people for the rest of their lives, as long as they were to serve the rigid social and political interests of Euro-culture. The missionaries’ attitude towards lamentation is thus, evidently presented through proxy where the local text-reader is weakened not to stand the tough alternative hermeneutics. The essential ingredients of questioning many things that the missionaries had introduced, and some Euro-centric text-readers could not see why the colonial church was attacking the Agĩkũyũ customs of female initiation and polygamy. The lament, which helped Agĩkũyũ to face their future with determination and hope was the enormous force of a marginal voice without which, the community of text-readers could not be strong to live, suffer and die in dignity. By triggering the tension between the future and present of the Gĩkũyũ people, which was rooted in the past, the community’s expectations and experiences of the past brings their knowledge of stark reality of the present to test. Understanding and responding to their historical situation on their own terms means that biblical reading has had to square with the reality of pain in text-readers’ lives.

The traumatic disruptions in Gĩkũyũland and its long history of victimization had eventually laid down the foundation of short memory for misfortunes and the incapacity of combining against oppressors. One of our informants in affirming this had sarcastically stated in Gĩkũyũ that: Athũngũ amĩceeni matũrutũte wega ați mangĩthengia hinya wao tũtingũtĩnda ona gathaa kamwe (European missionaries had instructed us very well that if they were to
withdraw their power of support from us, our survival and future is doomed forever). This statement forms the backbone of initial missionaries’ attitude towards the Gĩkũyũland and its people who were now forced into a pipeline of text-reading by surrendering their souls into false positions of duo-personality of a white-minded black-skinned human being. The missionaries’ attitude towards lamentation was ideologically enjoined to adaptation of change through the invention of the abstract local hermeneutical responses whenever it suited their own ideological purposes. This was expected to happen without a challenge from the troubled text-readers who were in this context not allowed to overwhelmingly oppose any foreign domination in any sphere of their lives and thoughts. But, through laments of Gĩkũyũ people, the text-readers could rise to heights hitherto unknown and undreamt of in area of modern protests against the intrusion of European system of terror. This system had ensured that all its functionaries had first of all embraced the dominant ideology of seeing the non-Christian races as less than human.

This ideology had out-rightly relegated Gĩkũyũ people to their designed position as inferior beings: but, these defenseless men and women were determined not to submit to the outrageous tyranny of colonialists. Today, the Gĩkũyũ myths and ethos are converging into a melting pot of text-reading that provides a framework of operation ‘from below’ that is from the underside of Euro-centric hermeneutics. Such framework becomes the source of social sciences whose main interlocutor is the pauperized lot that interprets and relates to what it reads through extrinsic aids of experience, other texts, and life discussion. Such text-readers are to interact with the author and with one another for new creative ideas to be born (c.f. Foster, 1988: 68). The socio-economic, political and religious aspirations of the culturally marginalized lot seem to be exaggerated by crisis enshrouding the ideological differences
planted by European missionaries to look down upon the Agĩkũyũ as ‘primitive’ and ‘inferior’ people whose culture was inconsequential. The European missionaries’ thoughts and impressions had placed high priority upon the application of the Scripture in mission fields and so they had deliberately bypassed the interpretation stage which would have immersed them into Gĩkũyũ cultural experiences at an early stage of mission work. They could not imagine what would happen to the word of God if fitted in established categories of indigenous text-readers culture and where the local people would go to when subjected to syncretism. This Euro-centric fear was based on what they had seen through their ‘superior’ hermeneutical lenses; the indigenous voices of lamentation were perceived to create hollowness around the Agĩkũyũ for these voices had to echo a pre-colonial response from the text. These responses presupposed the bumping of savages into an ordered and cultured society through which the word of God was communicated to them. To a certain degree a text-centered civilization of mind and manners was needed if the text-reading was to make sense among the savage communities (Carpenter, 1959: 331). In order to make this a reality, an emphasis on the doctrinal differences was made through the redefining of different pillars of modern text-reading methods.

The hermeneutical competition and conflict was in due course raised among the denominations, and it was used either for political power or economic advantage but not because they were of different hermeneutical camps. Indeed, the phenomenon of European missionaries’ denominational rivalry was gaining momentum and institutional status of countering the Agĩkũyũ reactions. European-centered assertions and influence of materialism was defined by unparalleled strength of each denominational history.
In its area of tackling the emerging issues from biblical hermeneutical ideals as a privileged entry point of primitivism into modernity; the colonial regime and its missionary’s counterpart ensured that the Agĩkũyũ were rendered inattentive to social and economic injustices meted on them. The colonial society was in this context creating structures that would involuntarily involve the local people in their own exclusion from politics of their land and identity. The biblical hermeneutical development espoused in missionaries’ attitude towards Agĩkũyũ reaction to aristocratic domination was countered through indigenous text of lamentation. The way in which this component of Gĩkũyũ community life affected the initial text-reading process among the ordinary text-readers makes the Euro-centric legacy of hermeneutics among the Agĩkũyũ moments of ups and downs in their struggle to make the text reflect their reality of what goes on. Thus, it has fallen short of an in-depth vitality required in hermeneutical penetration of archetypal levels of Gĩkũyũ lifestyle.

The Agĩkũyũ bequeathing of indigenous training and thinking was therefore, under strenuous conditions of Euro-centric hermeneutical encounters which bring to light the underlying nostalgia and efficacy of Agĩkũyũ motif of lamentation. It was now established that a sense of superiority complex prevalent among the missionaries was ensnared in a long and hard struggle with the early Gĩkũyũ text readers’ attempts to resist the colonial efforts. Gĩkũyũ text readers who were being forced to succumb to Euro-centric package of inferiority complex realized that new grounds for struggle were being opened up to them. This struggle sprung out of the terrain of culture where Gĩkũyũ motifs of lamentation as an elemental text-reading approach appeared to inquire about- who controls it? Who defines it? Who transforms it? In this case, the principal purpose of missionaries’ teachings was to ensure that, the security and continuation of white domination in Gĩkũyũland was properly
maintained. It is through this use of Euro-centric hermeneutics that guaranteed successive
generations of Agikũyũ text-readers whose voices were marginalized and perfected by
denial of the place for lamentation as a voice of survivors in the anti-colonial struggle. The
hermeneutical role of marginal voices in the development, dissemination, and
implementation of indigenous text-reading process that sprung out of post-colonial
phenomena was jeopardized. Thus, the Gĩkũyũ people were denied their synergy of
embracing their daily life experiences at homes, place of work, public life and so on.

The need to capture the realities of life beyond their hermeneutical paralysis was a crucial
component in the growth and development of biblical hermeneutics in Gĩkũyũland which
was a facet of a constant cultural struggle at the margins. The struggle waged by ordinary
text-readers against the legacy of imperial interpretation was an effort of asserting the
indigenous voices in the mainstream of biblical scholarship. This denial translated to
indirect hermeneutical tussles that characterized Euro-centric hermeneutical failure to
articulate a world in terms and categories relevant to the lifestyle of Gĩkũyũ people. Besides,
the pioneer missionaries were intolerant to extreme, rigid and narrow formulas of bringing
reason and indigenous religion into harmony for their hermeneutics had no room for doubt
as the first impulse of knowledge. They were deliberately captivating the text-readers to the
amalgamation of narrow disпутations in order to maintain theological and hermeneutical
dogmatism. The schemes of Euro-centric text-reading process were by far, too ambitious
and often inappropriate for the needs and resources of text-readers. But, the upgrading of
synthetic hermeneutics tricks had based on rationalist formulas of spatial and temporal
doctrines of colonial state dogma through its ideological version that romanticized fraud,
deceit, dishonesty and cover-ups.
The Euro-centric text-readers were being taught to handle the text through a figurative approach that twisted restrained and exaggerated every possible hermeneutical statement that would score on the side of Gĩkũyũ extremists. By justifying their purported criminal folly through their text-reading, the Gĩkũyũ text readers were taking extremes of facing the stark realities of their oppression while Euro-centric text-readers were identifying themselves as royalists and committing their energies in filling up the assumed hermeneutical gaps to avoid the eruptions of self-generating overindulgences, which would develop into un-tamed hermeneutical rebellion. They had also started seeing in the Bible the doctrine of Justice and equality of humanity especially the their reading of the book of Exodus in the Old Testament (OT), which had introduced them to a liberation theme that occurs throughout the Bible. The main point of dispute among the ordinary text-readers was about what course to pursue in negotiating the biblical motive of lamentation under hermeneutic of textured gloom and silence within which the context of their subjugation was appropriated. Through this reading, the text-readers were able to identify Yahweh with God of their ancestors who heard the cry of the oppressed and alleviated their suffering and pain. In addition, these text-readers were brought to moments of questioning and struggle where they were now put into conflict with the culturally Europeanized text-readers. There was no option but only to trust and obey the Euro-centric text at the expense of a continued domination of the Gĩkũyũland.

3.8 A Brief Analysis of Hermeneutical Conflict

In its brief analysis of how the history of European missionaries’ attitude and approach to the African and biblical motif of lamentation this section has identified the early precursors
of missionaries’ concern. The deliberate efforts through which the concentrated plans to destroy, humiliate, harass, de-civilize, terminate and experiment upon the Gĩkũyũ people were systematically executed in an effort to subdue this community and force it to accept British rule. Disputes and differences of opinion about the lamentation arose because this concept was interpreted differently among the text-readers who felt torn between two radically different worlds of experience and ways of life, the old practices and the new.

Unfortunately, present discussions of lamentation reflect a text-reading process which is tightly trapped in two different approaches, that is, what is being talked about and the reality. These two hermeneutical approaches were taken by ordinary text-readers as acts of embracing lamentation. Lamentation all through remained the repository guide to hermeneutical coherence that built around the indigenous cultural production and its wider configuration of text-readers’ world by different ways from those institutions that did, in fact, constrain, dominate, and transform life through structured expectations. The need for authentic text-reading processes and other concerns of corroborating lamentation had culminated into a standard hermeneutical pace setter. They were simply related and merged into one another by different histories, memories and expectations. But, they had also tended to reflect different positions taken on basis of interest and concern for the same phenomenon. What was at stake here is the text-reader’s social location and its norms of determining the validity of dominant ideology’s quick-fix or instant answers to complex issues of life and death.

The history of resistance against Euro-centric hermeneutics in Gĩkũyũland dates back to time of Waiyaki-wa-Hinga who was one of the local leaders who led the Gĩkũyũ warriors
(Njamba cia ita) in a fight against the Europeans, in order to preserve their lands. But the seer (Mũrathi) advised the Gĩkũyũ warriors to defer the battle for the European forces were so overwhelming. The deferral was strategically placed to allow the fighters to find other ways of continuing with the struggle for their land. Thus, the Agĩkũyũ resistance to the missionaries and colonial administration had taken a form of hermeneutical tussle whose strength was shown in a continued resistance even long after the deportation and subsequent murder of Waiyaki-wa-Hinga by the colonialists. Although the missionary enterprises and military expeditions had successfully battered the Gĩkũyũ people into submission, the Euro-centric hermeneutics which had promised to offer the best available path to justice, equality and a better life was silent to sullen resentment of ordinary text-readers. The struggle against colonial hegemonies by natives had prompted missionaries’ negative attitude towards lamentation. Colonial culture was now being arbitrary imposed on the Agĩkũyũ and the community was gradually gasping with social, political and economic problems and it was being attracted by easy-fix answers that nurtured the colonial hegemony hidden in the modernity and its package. To prove the stereotype and easy-fix answers heaped on them wrong, the Gĩkũyũ community had to embody unique genius in its manifold ways of interpreting and appropriating the Bible for their own purpose, which was within the contexts of their own values and needs.

3.9 The Ethical, Artistic and Historical Values of Lament Songs and Dances
At all events of Gĩkũyũ cultural festivities, Christian and indigenous music offer more complex explanations that revealed the tension between aliens and locals. It had taken a complex mix of motivations, attitudes, and traditions of resisting the colonial categorization of humanity where the indigene was keen to question the colonial thoughts, representation,
knowledge, actions and expectations. Music in Gĩkũyũland draws its content from historical consciousness which is a crucial process of coming into terms with bitter memories of racism. It communicates original meaning and power through a wide range of interpretation where its imagination takes a wide field of text-reading that remains open to several layers of meaning. Hence, music connects the community with social dynamics of changes whose practice and circumstances are enjoined to outstanding evocative indicators of empowerment. As an essential component of worship music had progressively shifted the interpretation of text in Gĩkũyũland from its elitist Euro-centric scholarship hub to ordinary text-readers. The Gĩkũyũ songs had generally marked the anti-thesis of joy and sorrow, hope and fear, faith and doubt, but every shade and distinction of hermeneutical reaction are found there. The musical expression of the Gĩkũyũ people was also keen to capture the ethical, artistic and historical values of present feelings through the reflection on realities of text-readers’ situation. The radical disassociation of this community worldview and experiences from the Western meta-narratives opens indigenous lamentation texts envisaged by indigenous songs and dances to scenarios of post-colonial text-readers’ collaboration with marginalized and pauperized groups in giving old texts new and radical meaning.

Boyes (1968: 88-89) underscores the importance of singing in Gĩkũyũland:

…the Kikuyu (Agĩkũyũ) are a very musical people, singing wherever they go, and the warriors would come to the dances in a body, singing as they marched along, keeping as perfect time and step as a regiment of trained soldiers… the Kikuyu (Agĩkũyũ) seem to have more varieties of dances than any natives I know, and are, on the whole, a light-hearted race, singing all day long.

The strong sense of message which is always akin to Agĩkũyũ typical way of poetical narration of here and now comportments is unveiled by extra-ordinary resistance that underscore the interests of indigenous listeners in their struggle against colonial conditions to which they were subject. Here, the study cannot name all songs and dances but it is important to specify three of them in order to understand how they affected Gĩkũyũ people’s
lifestyle through their ethical and artistic power of shaping and reclaiming the cultural memories. These songs and dances are; Gĩchandĩ, Mũthũngũci and finally the Mũthĩrĩgũ dance-songs in relation to Itũika festival songs which the study explores in detail.

3.9.1 Gĩchandĩ
The Gĩchandĩ was a very ancient song, whose singers were extraordinary narrators and philosophers who would read and emblematically write their song on gourds (though it is argued by many scholars that Gĩkũyũ people had no system of writing and were inclined to only oral narrative; some of our informers claimed that Gĩchandĩ poets had a system of writing; an idea that was backed by Professor Kihumbu Thairu of the Presbyterian University of East Africa). They used to stop in the market places to recite different poems and each poem engendered their own type of hermeneutical reactions. The song included philosophical formulations of a total imaginative response disciplined by local allusions about general religious behavior, institutions, and symbols. It was a framework of duet songs, where one vocalist was known to raise different questions and the respondent would try to give answers. So, song was known to give answers to complex questions of life and to clear up all riddles of human existence in the Gĩkũyũland (Ng’ang’a 1996: 103).

3.9.2 Mũthũngũci
The Mũthũngũci dance was performed by old bards who were the bona-fide custodians of the Gĩkũyũ folklore especially on matters of family life. It was educational and it songs were always sung with might and hoarse voices. They were richly coded with expressions, metaphors, parables and proverbs of which no outsider would decipher. All its music was related to the history of Agĩkũyũ as a community striving for its own humanity in a society full of oppression. Reaching to the actual meaning of these songs needed the insider’s
perspective. However, its powerful expression of lamentations is exceptionally and silently traceable today among the old generation as it helps them conceptualize the present-day forces of oppression. It provided the Gĩkũyũ people with a model for survival that put in one short space most of misinterpretation and crudely drawn critiques in an interpretive framework for understanding the Gĩkũyũ culture. By 1930s, this song was banned by the colonial administration after it was branded as immoral and even prejudicial to family life through a colonial master plan of disengaging, misidentifying, and descanting the thinking of the indigenous people. Mũthũngĩci song though banned in 1930, it continued to feature in its insights and proposals of far-reaching re-imagining of Gĩkũyũ text through a common search for solutions to the big problems of life.

3.8.3 Mũthĩrĩgũ

Mũthĩrĩgũ dance was not a new phenomenon in pre-colonial times but not as a systematized tribal response to oppression but, it now emerges as one of the early twentieth century local people’s dance and songs that propelled a struggle against the colonial process of civilizing the heathens. This civilizing process was executed on natives by all means, including force. By 1929 Mũthĩrĩgũ had emerged as a major hermeneutical voice and protest in Gĩkũyũland. This protest had emanated from the colonial definition of clitoridectomy (irua rĩa irĩgũ moderately addressed by church as irua rĩa andũ-anja) as a heathenish practice which was forcefully banned by mission based Churches. The Gĩkũyũ community leaders had reasonably argued that clitoridectomy was not a matter of Christian faith at all, but merely a matter of conflicting morality. Touching on clitoridectomy meant a direct challenge to the reproduction of Gĩkũyũ people because it was the entry point to marriage. This crises divided the community into two Kĩrore (a thumbprint) and Karĩng’a (pure Kikuyu) and so as
the crisis deepened; Mũthĩrĩgũ dance was held near the mission stations and outside the homes of teachers and catechists making rude songs about them. The Mũthĩrĩgũ dance and songs appealed to early generation of Gĩkũyũ text readers who practiced the new social imagination. Mũthĩrĩgũ dance comes in as a response to colonial Church’s exclusive display of acute unwillingness to embrace open and broad insights of other hermeneutical approaches. The content and context of this song genre spelled out the reality of Gĩkũyũ people through a diehard revolt and non-cooperation in expression of deep seated hostility. This act of venting the collective feelings by the Gĩkũyũ people through this song genre brought the text-reading process to a public forum. It facilitated the community to make fun out of the colonizers schemes through complaints waged against colonial cultural subjugation schemes of the missionaries. This song genre voiced a deep artistic expression of communal pain of marginalization by the British Empire. Indeed, this dance was an act of criticism that sets the scene for consecutive public out-cries that eventually culminated into Mau Mau war of independence: Such a bold indigenous act of mobilizing public protests against the empire underscored and inspired the roots of resistance among the Gĩkũyũ people. Its description and criticism of colonial setting manifested typical indigenous revolutionary sentiments and desire to be free and the voice of protest mirrored by Mũthĩrĩgũ dance-songs was evidently heard in this reaction to aliens’ encroachment of Agĩkũyũ way of life.

Harry Thuku one of the pioneer Gĩkũyũ text-reader who had started questioning and doubting the authenticity of missionaries as well as to sarcastically dismiss the colonial chiefs as traitors (majudasi-Judases) was in following Mũthĩrĩgũ stanza referred to “chief of Nyacĩng’a” as the singers led the community in its expression of the underlying political
feelings: Thus, the “chief of Nyacĩng’a” was an indirect reference by a community to Harry Thuku which had in this time of crisis immortalized him as a symbol of defiance and independency.

*Filipu, Koinange, Kinyanjui, Josiah* (the four colonial chiefs each mentioned in turn)
*Aromaka ũguo* (let him be terrified)
*Nĩo matwarithirie mũnene wa Nyacĩng’a* (It is they who drove away the chief of Nyacĩng’a)
*(Tondũ) Nyacĩng’a atũire Kahũa-inĩ* (because Nyacĩng’a resides in the coffee estates).
*(Githieya 1997; Kinyua 2011: 182)*

On the same note, Ngũgĩ-wa-Thiong’o (1981:65) affirms the fact that these songs voiced community’s disgust with cultural imperialism and rejection of forced labour through uncompromised opposition to political oppression where strong condemnation of collaborators (Ngaati), and colonial occupation was strongly felt. These songs helped the Gĩkũyũ people to reclaim their pride in self and their land. They confronted the missionaries’ ideals of utopic happiness and submissive obedience. Thus; this lamentation/song genre was a protest against the colonial version of religion and negative attitude toward the Gĩkũyũ values and practices.

### 3.8.4 The *Mũthĩrĩgũ* vis-à-vis *Ituĩka* festival Songs

It was no coincidence that *Mũthĩrĩgũ* dances and songs emerged within a span of time when Gĩkũyũ people’s cycle and clamor for change was appropriately placed. *Ituũka* was a point of departure preceded by protest against the established order and a clamor for the reordering of the society. It was always visible in every spiral of twenty five years and so the presence of colonial regime may have affected the timing of this cycle but not done away with it. The colonial prohibition of *Ituũka* festivals which were expected to take place in mid-1920’s meant that the community was already seeking for rightful restoration of their land cultural heritage. After period of over twenty five years of missionary work and colonial rule in
Gĩkũyũland; Agĩkũyũ had no choice but to naturally break with paternal care of their European earthly and spiritual masters. *Ituĩka* as part of transition happened as a graduation of underdog generation as it asserted its muscle in doubting, questioning and grabbing the leadership.

So, the Gĩkũyũ community expressed sediments of a staunch resistance were echoed in the longing for the rightful restoration of their land; it meant that the community was not ready to be dictated on how to farm or what to do on the land. So, *Mũthĩrĩgũ* dances and songs seemed to capture the spirit of *Ituĩka* as an opening for a new life for the lost, oppressed and hopeless by breaking the mission monopoly on education. As the Gĩkũyũ people kept on creating new songs and new dances a new frontier of hermeneutics in which the silenced masses speak was opening in attempts of articulating the grand ousting of the imperialist foe. The *Ituĩka* festival songs were therefore the ceremonial songs sung every twenty-five to thirty years in a ceremony of transferring power from one generation to the other. According to Ngugi-wa-Thiong’o (1981:65), the *Ituĩka* was a process which was relished through music, poetry and theatre. It was a communal renewal event among the Gĩkũyũ people who had to demonstrate their commitment to their struggle against tyrants.

The term *Ituĩka* literally denotes ‘breakage’ or ‘disorientation’ of the known world. It involved a holistic communal movement from orientation-disorientation and new orientation. *Ituĩka* according to Kenyatta (1938) was a peaceful revolution in which one generation was to take over the government from preceding one. The bona-fide successful generations captured in these transactions of power were the Mwangi and Maina, which had exchanged the leadership mantle for centuries in relation to what their forefathers the *Iregi*
generation had set until the advent of colonialism. The Iregi (the word literally denotes protestors) was a legendary but revolutionary generation of rebels who had radically overthrown corrupt dictatorial regime in Gĩkũyũland. This generation has radically inspired the Gĩkũyũ people voices of lamentations among all generations in Gĩkũyũland, it is a pivotal site on which the Gĩkũyũ people grapple and interpret the changing social and cultural landscape. This reminds us of the revolutionary statement captured in Mũthĩrĩgũ and Mau Mau freedom struggle songs as well as in modern times which enchants members Gĩkũyũ community to risk life in defending their land and freedom: Gĩthaka gĩkũ Twatigũrũwo nĩ Iregi na gũtirĩ wa Iregi ũtũire (This land was handed over to us by Iregi and no member of Iregi generation is surviving today). It was through the Ituĩka event that the Gĩkũyũ people have continued being conditioned by their cultural and social institution for centuries and the European missionaries and colonial overloads realized its threat to colonial regime and so banned it in the name of public peace and order. The alien hermeneutical forces in Gĩkũyũland had little conception of its hermeneutical power, and so they never realized that it was not in Gĩkũyũ people’s nature to accept serfdom forever. So, Mũthĩrĩgũ was a transition (Ituĩka) event, it was itself written in the spirit of Gĩkũyũ custom of calling for revolutionary change and it became a hermeneutical response to the socio-economic and political upheavals in Gĩkũyũland.

The following Mũthĩrĩgũ stanza articulated the Gĩkũyũ people’s endeavor to bring the painful memories to light and also to provoke the unbidden bodily response through defiance. This protest was a typical expression of grief that mirrored and exposed the community’s wounds. The title of this stanza is: Ndingĩgarũrĩra ndini (I cannot change my Religion) and the poet has this to say:
Mūratwĩra tūgarārūke, mūrenda tūcenjie ndini
Ndini ya Mũbeberu ti ndini yakwĩhokwo
Haiya! Kĩrĩma, Kĩrĩma gĩkĩ
Mũreta Kenya gĩtagwo Kirĩnyaga
Ndini ya Mũgĩkũyũ nĩ theru, nĩ thakame ya mũri wa itimũ
Ihĩndĩ rĩa mũnyiginyi, nĩ mũtugo wa Agĩkũyũ

I can’t change my Religion
You are asking us to change; you want us to change our religion
The religion of the colonialist is not to be trusted
Haiya! The mountain, this mountain,
You now refer to as Mt. Kenya, we called Kĩrĩnyaga
The Kikuyu religion is holy; it is the blood of tap root:
The backbone of the Agĩkũyũ culture (Kirika 1988).

In overcoming the paralysis inflicted by trauma, oppression and abuse of Gĩkũyũland, 
Mũthĩrĩgũ was not only a public announcement of what is wrong by then, but an institution for individual and community’s expression of grief. Hence, seeing and naming of injustice, hurt and anger is well placed to overcome the overwhelming effects of loss. Sugirtharajah and Donaldson (1996:25), in their presentation of oppositional post-colonialism as a method of biblical criticism, touch on text-readers’ search for protesting voices. This can be helpful in understanding what the Gĩkũyũ people achieved through Mũthĩrĩgũ upon their acknowledgment that they were the only bona fide heirs of the land, allotted by God to Gĩkũyũ and Mũmbi, which has now been forcefully wrestled from them. Thus, the Agĩkũyũ singing of Mũthĩrĩgũ predestinates their admission that their land was now gone, and they have lost not only their income but are also in the hands of God and ancestors as they pursue for a new orientation but not the invader. The Mũthĩrĩgũ songs had a commonly featured chorus which is an insightful introduction to development of a post-colonial critique.

Gĩthaka, Gĩthaka gĩkĩ (land oh this our land)
Gĩthaka, Gĩthaka gĩkĩ (land oh this our land)
Twatigĩirwo nĩ Iregi (left to us by Iregi) (see Ng’ang’a 1996:93 and Ngũgĩ-wa-Thiong’o, 1981: 65)

The missionaries’ rationalist’ approaches to lamentation texts and their figurative explanation of those texts were contradicted by mid-1920s’ Gĩkũyũ text readers’ mimicry of the same texts back at missionaries audiences. Such mimicry had ensured that there was
both a shared sense of expectation and critical Gĩkũyũ intelligence at work in text-reading process. Their interpretation of the Decalogue was not informed by colonial paradigms of stable, coherent, and normative hermeneutics but literal acquiescence to the Gĩkũyũ translation of the Bible. This was well-captured by the following stanza of Mũthĩrĩgũ dance song that made a scathing attack on one of CMS missionaries for faking and adding another commandment to the Decalogue:

There are Ten Commandments
But when Dr. Arthur came
They multiplied like gourds (Githieya, 1997: 87)

Mũthĩrĩgũ dance had provided the Gĩkũyũ text-readers with a collective expression of grief which was greeted with hermeneutical acrimonies of European missionaries and their collaborators. Such collective expressions were objectified by its transformation of indigenous hermeneutical resources into public processing of pain which had yielded a very powerful social force in its final analysis. Indeed, Mũthĩrĩgũ songs emerged as a life-embracing text that displayed; the distinctiveness of the Gĩkũyũ people’s voice found in these songs and maintained to bear witness to the horror and pain of human suffering.

Though Mũthĩrĩgũ was so sophisticated in the eyes of the oppressors, it was accessible and elaborated to the oppressed because, beneath the words the Agĩkũyũ had the will and determination to live that emerged and confronted their suffering, probing God’s silence and God’s action. It also brought the pathos into dialogue with critical questions and problems of contemporary life and faith in its anticipation of a new human community, which arose from ashes and ruins. The very action of understanding was to carry the people’s aesthetic line in a vigorous culture of revolutionary courage and optimistic determination that terrified the colonialist. The cry for change of status quo reflected and displayed by indigenous
expression of human suffering which was perceived from missionary quarters as a savage attempt to erode the humanitarian benefits delivered by white-settlers and missionaries to a land of darkness. But, this perception was to divert and displace the dialogue between the historical, the actual and the representational that characterized of West’s imaginative presentations. But, the following stanza of Mũthĩrĩgũ dance-song was to protest that:

You say that it has been composed  
But it is not, for it is voicing things  
This had been disturbing us in our minds for a long time (C.f. Kirika 1988).

In this case, the Mũthĩrĩgũ dance-songs were an important inspiration to a later generation of ordinary text-readers who were thoroughly competent to assist in every way in finding out all what was needed for Kenyans to attain their independence in early 1960s. The promise of divine intervention captured in these songs was seen by many as indication of the anticipated return of the confiscated land and end to the colonial oppression in Gĩkũyũland. In this regard, the emergence of African instituted churches that followed the advent of Mũthĩrĩgũ era can be seen as an early expression of African biblical hermeneutical sentiment against Euro-centric hermeneutics. The Euro-centric impediment to resolving grief by facing the reality of loss, feeling and expression of pain, acceptance of changed circumstance and also adjusting to the changed circumstance soberly. The Mũthĩrĩgũ dance and its songs symbolized an act of defiance and protest as well as act of hope. It was fashioned against all colonial ideologies that functioned by covering-up, whitewashing, and denying the expression of patriotic and hermeneutical poetry of protest and commitment to freedom which was the cry of the Gĩkũyũ people.

In addition, the resilient power of this dance and its songs had enabled the Gĩkũyũ people to utmost use their turn to wage assaults on the empire which had denied them their right to
voice tangible acts of hope for a long time. Such capacity for discerning social analysis and criticism were purported by colonialists to be dangerous, subversive, and savage thinking which banned and put many Mũthĩrĩgũ artists to prison because the poetry genre exemplified that Gĩkũyũ people’s dreams were beyond present reality. It was now given that an African could not be a Christian while continuing to practice or condone a custom based upon long tribal tradition. Accordingly, the CMS had by 1931 laid down strict conditions on indigenous texts as follows: (1) All heathen practices connected with custom must be entirely abandoned by Christians (2) Anything of a public nature must be strictly prohibited (3) Any operation causing physical injury to individual must be forbidden. To defy these rules through dance and songs means that Mũthĩrĩgũ had sufficiently fuelled and nourished the Gĩkũyũ people's struggle through its provision of an overwhelming but triumphant critical hermeneutical engagement that extends to oppositional post-colonial biblical criticism. By their designation, the voices of the passionate style, and profound thought envisaged by Mũthĩrĩgũ songs and dance were recognized by prevalent cries for freedom.

Through Mũthĩrĩgũ crisis we may notice in particular three crucial developments arising out of Agĩkũyũ consciousness of themselves as captives in their own land that qualifies the reality of Ituĩka which were only at their beginning: 1) The entry of Gĩkũyũ participation in biblical interpretation outside colonial Christianity which is vigorous and accessible to all in a way that Eurocentric scholarship must take into account, 2) The emergency of a pure Mũgĩkũyũ (Karĩng’a) who stayed away from colonial missionaries’ structures in order to establish Independent churches and schools and were later to become the hub for radical ideologies that led to Mau Mau rebellion and 3) The loyalists who all through appreciated their assimilation to colonial prosperity and expansionism through its development of
unmatched tax system, defense system and welfare system as God sent.

3.9.5 What Did Missionaries’ Reaction to ṫũthĩrĩgũ Entail?

The reaction of missionaries to ṫũthĩrĩgũ was based on denial of pain and suffering. ṫũthĩrĩgũ dances and songs were suppressed because they carried the aesthetic line of struggling to change an oppressive status quo. The missionaries intensified efforts to propagate the colonial religious and cultural values through artistic lines of sugar coating oppression with Christianity. They had out of technical expertise reduced the text-reading process along with memory to a spiritual cocktail to relieve the pain of living. Emanating from these changing circumstances were hermeneutical forces that had keenly relegated the realities of pain to the realm of illusion thus, giving no vent to self-justifying feelings. Therefore, those Africans who sought to create artistic expressions that were both national and indigenous were demonized at the initial stage.

Such hermeneutical incursions provided the propagation of Western denominational ideologies with components of affirming the utopian impediment of pain and suffering among the Agĩkũyũ and other African communities. The colonial culture of silence and fear was an impediment to text-readers’ right and future to make right hermeneutical choices that would stop the text-readers from hermeneutical acts of withdrawal from pain and suffering where text-readers were seen publicly declaring that pains and sufferings were no more when really they were there. The denial of lamentation as an interpretive process and a framework of contradicting pain and suffering deprived the text-readers of the hermeneutical verification of the abstract statements that culminated into deliberate ploys of strategically placed interests of European mission churches. The Euro-missionaries are
theologically and hermeneutically advanced in their own context where the Euro-centric theological and hermeneutical edge was free to impose unfettered reading on Gĩkũyũ soil. The European context defines the missionaries’ world which is too prejudiced by scientific discoveries and ideas that saw in lamentation a spiritually barren voice which was an enemy of reason. Based on this bias the missionaries were convinced that the pre-scientific world of Agĩkũyũ text-readers was barbaric and so, this community’s reading of the Bible was alleged to mix together ideas and meanings in intricate overlaps of primitivism and modernism. These missionaries interpreted African imagination of daily struggle for survival as a reversal to visceral knowledge of parading idol gods and religious relics in streets.

No matter how authentic the Gĩkũyũ motif of lamentation seemed, the meanings alluded to them were, of course, largely seen by European missionaries as mere incantation of magic formulas and recitation of litanies, by a primitive who hoped they would drive away the evil spirits behind the occurrence of disasters and calamities. In this case, the missionaries had already cultivated their skeptical attitude towards Agĩkũyũ. Basing on pre-scientific assumptions of the Euro-centric world, about life and its meaning as espoused on lamentation text, the protests which had displayed the reality of Gĩkũyũ people’s world in relation to that of the Western indicated a myriad of hermeneutical differences generated out the interactions of the indigenous people and missionaries. Hence, the Euro-centric hermeneutical invasion of the Gĩkũyũ people through ready-made answers to tailor made hermeneutical questions from Europe was totally invalidated. The colonized text-readers were hereafter to read their text without the lenses of Western paternalistic hermeneutical shelter and protection. The grand masters’ meta-narrative without which the Gĩkũyũ people
could now fall into temptation of reversing to past darkness of sinful and uncivilized race was now at stake. The next major change occurred when the Agĩkũyũ motif of lamentation lacked and failed to demonstrate a scientific character in order to be included in the advent of a new intellectual world.

The Agĩkũyũ motif of lamentation was now overshadowed by the Eurocentric arguments and so the Agĩkũyũ hermeneutics of life was displaced and alienated from them, leaving little or no ingredients needed for the development of home-grown biblical hermeneutics model. The Agĩkũyũ community valued the public processing of pain where people were free to shout anything they wanted so as to release that which had built up in the psyche through social sanctions. Particularly, Gĩkũyũ women puffed with pain of patriarchy sanctioning systems would freely speak out whatever they felt about the hurt in public. A woman would categorically and publicly tell her husband “I am the one who got married to this beast? Who bewitched me!! Go and look for someone to pester; I am not bound to this place for ever” (ĩnoniĩ ndahikĩre thũna ũyũ!! Kaĩ ndarıirwo nĩ ciaũ!! Caria ũngĩ wakũgia; kaĩ nĩĩ ndikenjerwo mbuĩ gũkũ gwaku ũ!!). So, today, when the Christian text-readers in Gĩkũyũland attempt to venture in unrestricted usage of their artistic innovation exteriorization of pain they find themselves handicapped than the non-Christians who all through opted to utilize the indigenous expression of pain. As a result; Eurocentric based text-readers have little indigenous based hermeneutical horizon if any. For lamentation to maintain any intellectual respectability and influence today, it must pass through a broader analysis of European historical structures and their meaning. As a result, it is those who owned and monopolized the art of biblical hermeneutics that were to identify the pace and direction upon which the development of authentically Gĩkũyũ home-based hermeneutics
would take, and therefore, they were able to take full advantage of the hermeneutical process. The unaddressed complicated questions and situations of today have left the Agĩkũyũ text-readers alienated from themselves and from others. So the inability to ensure efficiency, effectiveness and quality of text-reading in a way that is harmonious with different understanding of lamentation text in different cultures was deliberately overlooked by missionaries’ hermeneutical principles. The complexities and confusions that confront the post-colonial Agĩkũyũ today is how the intellectualist explanations of global social, political and cultural whirlwinds and lifestyle can be opposed and be critically assessed through an act of interpretation that focuses not only on underlying factors but also the more obvious ones. Thus, the revisit by text-readers of the relevance of pre-colonial Gĩkũyũ people’s lamentation text which is not a separate institution but an interlaced vocal entity in all aspects and institutions of individual, social, political and economic life is imperative.

The lamentation text with all its symbols and language was very important in the conveying a holistic interpretation of the text; however, the large-scale and rapid religious changes made in the name of eradicating and subduing the primitive, passive, indigenous and social religious structures were not detached from scientific curiosity of those who financed the missionary enterprises. Consequently, the Euro-centric text-readers were enjoined to radical and traumatic replacements of their native religious systems by a dominant, dynamic, and intrusive colonial cocktail of a religious system that would ideologically help the colonizer to reap major benefits for European prospectus of trade and profit objects. The Europeanized Mũgĩkũyũ was now hermeneutically vulnerable, harassed, disappointed and betrayed. The daily struggle in modern life was now preoccupied by text-readers search for Euro-centric solutions and meaning.
Finally, they were forced to perpetually appeal for European missionaries’ intervention and help in changing their community and making it more amenable to Euro-American cultural enterprise. This Euro-centric legacy of hermeneutics posits a compelling narrative of loss, which lack in itself an in-depth vitality of enhancing community life and creating meaning out of it. So it has hardly ever penetrated the archetypal levels of Agĩkũyũ indigenous training and thinking in terms of confronting pain with courage and accepting it as part of lifetime pilgrimage.

This study observes that the meaning of painful debates based on romanticized past have been successfully used to trigger protest and catapult this community to the frontiers of fighting for cultural emancipation from grave threats fronted by ‘strange’ religious structures that are perceived to be dominant, dynamic, social, colonial, and missionary. The Euro-centric hermeneutical encounter with Agĩkũyũ motif of lamentation is examined through a deep inquiry into how the biblical motif of lamentation is deprived of its place among the contemporary Agĩkũyũ. Though this deprivation is not directly caused by Eurocentric reading: The very interaction of African with European culture which is ideologically endowed with intrusive Christendom driven principles of change, which aims at the present and the future more than at coming to terms with a past heritage has led to deep-seated changes. The residues of European sorrowful history of colonialism and cultural genocide continues asserting forceful head-on threats on African core cultural practices in Gĩkũyũland, which makes the local people to lament even in the absence of colonizers. As they struggle to respond to these forces with indigenous streak of dissent lamentation serves as a prism of critical reflection of the people who read and appropriate the textual-meaning.
Thus, Eurocentric reading remains as one of the many catalysts of change that conjectures a strategically placed global force that governs change in the global arena. The intrusive nature of European way of life is a formidable vehicle of conveying the wider strategic commercial interests of former colonizers in former colonies through the colonized communities’ espousal of sampler exegetical violence as they appeal for European intervention. What could have helped in changing the Gĩkũyũ people’s plight is tragically deprived of its socio-economic and political rights. So, what makes Agĩkũyũ more amenable to missionary enterprise is raised in opposition to the complexity of Euro-centric brutalizing agents and their vicissitudes of psychophysical environment. It pits them against the conventional claims that stir the denial of suffering and pain in post-colonial Kenya.

The role of forgetting means a loss of memory of Agĩkũyũ wounded past and present is nurtured by contemporary Euro-centric wired Agĩkũyũ minority elite who happen to own and control the national wealth and its instruments of generating the interpretive knowledge. This interest group basing on the grounds of greed for money and hunger for political leadership and power is fostering a shadowy zone that conceals a deep silence in the society.

The silence of guilt is concealed through a consolidation of power for their own upkeep means the pressurizing of the Agĩkũyũ to deny their own realities and inability to face the unresolved historical injustices. The failure of post independent regimes to recognize local culture has contributed immensely to modern day experiences because they are the authentic progenies and hatcheries of colonial domineering ideologies and mentalities which makes the inclusion of such regimes in this study a hermeneutical imperative. Since, the post-colonial reading of the text is based on the assumption of diverse and conflicting interests,
there is need to sensitize the Agĩkũyū on fraudulent attack and elimination of their heritage. These extreme circumstances can raise an enthusiastic question that addresses the fundamental conflict of interests in textual interpretations. The Agĩkũyū laments can raise questions and answers, which will in turn form the conversation that pay attention to a particular historical situation in confronting the text readers’ memory. Placing lamentation at the center of reordering the society will bring restoration but not fully as some lost aspects are gone forever, but it help the community to salvage all what is possible. By recuperating the memory of colonization our failure to grasp various complexities and responsibilities of communal laments is well enhanced to facilitate a post independent discovery of resourceful tools of work on concrete realization of socio-economic accomplishments.

The Darwinian principles of survival of the fittest are today short-lived privilege to those who claim that they work well; these claims falsely claim to occupy the center as far as the dominating forces are too sure, too established and too settled to challenge the marginal forces. Thus, the study supposes that the postcolonial debate, for most part is about colonialism and neo-colonialism, in its failure of reordering the social-political-economic and religious power. The wake of lamentation in its post-colonial launch of a fearful effort to overthrow the conventional forms of power that carry more conviction, and the awareness is to undermine all what center can hold in hermeneutical subjugation of the margins. It is no surprise that the Agĩkũyū are still even after independence talking about colonialism as the cause of the demise of their style of experiencing pain and suffering; because, After Independence instead of doing away with colonialism; colonialism was Africanized where the independent African elite were attracted to the rights and privileges enjoyed by the colonial masters. Being modern means belonging either to margins (pauperized majority) or
the center (rich minority). Modernity provides complex, problematic environment in which the lower cadre of Gĩkũyũ community life is understood. The desire to be modern is taken by Gĩkũyũ elite and rich as normative and pure for it works for the good of the center. But, the widening gap between the center and the margin leaves those at margins as orphans and their voices of lament are ignored, dismissed, silenced and crippled by the center on basis of suspicion. This weakness has led to a cry for hope which has led to evolution of vigilant cum religious groups like Mũngĩkĩ among the peasants who tend to identify with the memories of Mau Mau as they long for the restoration of the lost glory (ritis), lands (ithaka) and shrines (Kĩgongona) of the Gĩkũyũ people where equality and freedom would function in their proper place. Such vigilant groups have in the past emerged with good and great ideals but those in authority have always hijacked them only to reduce them to mercenaries and political goons as well as a means of earning money. The post-independence regimes were no longer the voice for the voicesless like colonial regime the tended to condemn freedom fighters en masse even before listening to them in a well structured and civilized dialogue. They were outlawed and later subjected to extra-judicial killings and as a result African regimes have portrayed themselves as predatory and major barriers to any form of dialogue in regard to African hermeneutics of life at local and grass root levels. They resonate with the elite who are also deliberately blind to a healthy interplay between the indigenous institutions and global institutions especially in the ways global culture shapes and are shaped by the context.

3.10 Ex-Mau Mau Detainees’ Loss and Trauma of Optimism

Physical removal from home is just one example of the way in which detention ordeal increase the marginalization of detainees in their struggle for independence. The
rehabilitation through brainwashing of Mau Mau detainees was brutal, methodical, sustained and purposeful. Detainees were physically and mentally brutalized. To begin with the broken ex-Mau Mau detainees who fought against oppression were identified by missionaries and the colonial administration as blood-thirsty savages who were ready to kill all white men (Gatheru, 1964:1). In same rejoinder Kariuki (1963: 113) laments that; it has been alleged in many quarters that the detainees used to pray the devil in an evil and primitive manner. He further asserts that; it is time that the truth was known and as one of his duties in detention camp was to lead the prayer every morning.

Due to these allegations the realities of ex-Mau Mau veterans (Mashujah) were not captured in text-readers’ voices of struggle for creative, flexible and attention vested on lamentation and its openness to contemporary challenges of a just society. As respondents, their narration of loss and ordeal paints a picture of how they had catastrophically suffered material, relational, intra-physical and functional wounds in the hands of colonialists. The untold life-threatening cruelties and abuses exposed to Mau Mau detainees by the great forces of colonial police who had collaborated with home guards (Ngaati) were amplified and escalated through detention without sufficient cause, brutal interrogations and torture in order to elicit confession or information. In most cases, people would die, just hours after being arrested by home-guards from severe and prolonged torture in police cells and upon arrival in detention camps. The police conducting interrogations would suspend the Mau Mau suspects naked by arm and then apply electric shocks to sensitive parts of the body. Once placed in detention camp and rehabilitation centers, these suspects had to undergo frequent mistreatments and abuses, including severe corporal punishments, torture, forced labour, denial of food, isolation, and restraints. Men were castrated while the women were
brutally incarcerated in colonial chief’s camps (*Ngati-ini* or *mabanda-ini ma cibũ*) which were torture chambers, enduring severe beatings, they were subjected sexual assaults and harassments, some were hanged upside-down, their legs were stretched apart and a soda or beer bottle would get inserted in their genitals. The live shows of hanging, castrations, rape and lynching of hardcore recalcitrant Mau Mau detainees served as practical lessons to those left behind. A well rehabilitated Mau Mau detainee was one who had been either converted or reconverted to Christianity, recanted the Mau Mau oath, understood, and accepted his/her assigned position under the colonial law.

The respondents’ desires for a just, peace, stable and secure Kenya were thwarted for their wounds were not healed upon independence. They were frustrated and deeply wounded by post-independent regimes’ inability, unwillingness and failure to investigate and punch the perpetrators of crimes against humanity. This failure has today developed into tribal hatred and suspicion as pauperized freedom veterans struggle for survival in the face of a small segment of the society and its progenies continue gaining a free access to prime land and jobs. The colonial missionaries’ mind-set as perfected by post-independence revisionists has continued to strain social-economic interests through denial of lamentation falling short of imaginative space. So, the text-reading processes are still under former colonizers influence and the ex-Mau Mau detainees’ efforts of consolidating its hermeneutical gains are beleaguered by its myriads of unmet needs.

The neo-colonial attempts to free Kenyans from colonial fetters and shackles of traumatized optimism are likewise shrouded by a slowed development of the indigenous biblical hermeneutics. It is expected that lamentation as a hermeneutics of openness among the
survivors of horrors of colonial draconian rule can be integrated in the process of confronting the grave problems of textual-meaning that rests upon the issue of illusory, deceptive and seductive denial of social realities. In short, it is the disappointment of purposeless violence on diverse motifs of lamentation through false appeal to a narrow doctrine of competition, cooperation, and mutual respect launched from hardened polarization of the euro-centric hermeneutical opinion and platform. The need to be understood from African perspective brings the ex-freedom fighters into a reading process that embraces lamentation as a hinge of hermeneutical ortho-praxis that calls for a considerate reader and listener of the word of God.

The Mau Mau songs in detention camps which were wide-spread in Central Kenya were keen to draw their persuasive voice of protest against the missionaries’ version of text-reading which had lost its touch with reality due to its orgy of autistic fantasy. These songs were being composed to accurately capture people’s vigorous culture of revolutionary courage and optimistic determination. They were ready to formulate and mobilize a public processing of pain and suffering rather than a set of disconnected, unrealized private emotions. It is upon the dawn of independence in Kenya that the ex-Mau Mau detainees and heroes were reduced to zombies prompting them into a text-reading process that reflected public complaint of them being neglected and totally reduced to perpetual dependence. The elite who served in both Kenyatta and Moi regimes failed to reckon the magnitude of crimes committed by colonialists during the Mau Mau liberation struggle.

The freedom fighters memoirs and diaries were ignored and denied their status as a documented, esteemed and optimized record of indigenous struggle against colonial
hegemony. The memory of freedom fighters in the forests and those who died in concentration camps and emergency villages were dismissed by Kenyatta in a simple statement that *sisi zote tulipigania uhuru* – all of us fought for independence (Atieno-Odhiambo (2003) and Wa-Kinyatti (2008). The presence of unattended memory for those who struggled for independence is a time bomb because, the denial of mourning and the lack of a place to visit to honour the dead heroes and heroines was part of the colonial regime’s package of conducting the war against the colonized, which the postcolonial regimes have deliberately refused to unpack. Failure to untie the complex knot of grief, despair, and violent anger embedded on post-independence society’s psyche and was Africans regimes failure to guarantee the wholeness of the life. As Ngũgĩ-wa-Thiong’o (1981) warns that a nation that loses its memory is in danger of losing its soul. Given that past, present and future are not isolable, but thoroughly interpenetrate and mutually condition each other the motif of living community’s memory is central to post-colonial text-reading process.

By seeking narrative retellings models, the marginal communities like the Agĩkũyũ could freely articulate their legitimate narrative that fondly and vividly speaks their condition of their marginalization. The authentication of the diaries and memories of these people is very important because opportunists and pretenders who see this as means making money have in most cases led to miscarriage of such noble tasks. Understanding historical background, hermeneutical results, and benefits will attest these memories are personal or communal. However, the politicians, the academy and other arms of government are from a pragmatic viewpoint and even from a psychological perspective expected to listen to marginal voices and be open to post-colonial reading of the same. It is expected that the Agĩkũyũ text-
readers will find in this understanding a practical reference tool and a door opener to many hitherto hermeneutical captives in Gĩkũyũland. Key to such retellings of colonial experiences, the narrative is by itself a hermeneutical tool to those who are enthusiastically approaching the text from the angle of lamentation. Such memories entail a new reading which will open new horizons of social engagements in the picturing of a different possibility for the entire nation to heal. When Kenya gained its independence, the illiterate masses had channeled all their hope and admiration into patriotic songs sung all over the Gĩkũyũland. They had seen in Kenyatta a hero, a freedom fighter, a blood brother, a slayer of white demons and a diehard advocate of the complete decolonization of Gĩkũyũland (c.f. Ngugi-Wa-Thiong’o, 1981). They believed that through the charismatic leadership of Kenyatta who was now being identified as their black Moses or the African Messiah, the young nation would finally attain its status of land of promise where justice, equity and respect for human rights would reign forever. In this case, the Gĩkũyũ people who had suffered for the freedom struggle were now the most optimistic people in the newly founded nation of Kenya but their optimism was short-lived because, Kenyatta failed them; he radically failed to rise to the occasion thus making the Agĩkũyũ the perpetual casualties of false start and victims of false hopes in their road to freedom. At independence, Kenyatta as the first president and the founding father of the Kenyan nation, promised to remain neutral by not taking sides with either the capitalist or the communist ideological divide, but this was self-deception. Kenyatta’s ideological awareness and stance could not work in Kenya because the colonial deep-rooted ideological structures and legacy, inherited from the British rule, were a force to reckon with. Thus, Kenyatta eventually identified himself with the capitalist ideological stances and its fallacies of progress that push humanity to relentless search for more affluence, convenience and comfort. The switching to these ideological
stances was now being fuelled by Kenyatta’s regime ignorance about the pejorative extremes of Euro-centrism. Upon the taking over of the leadership mantle from the colonial regime, the Kenyatta regime had to deliberately discard all the deep-seated principles that united the liberation movement; he had distanced himself from most of his comrades-in-arms in the freedom struggle. Kenyatta surrounded himself with a group of former colonialists and greedy African elites who engaged in misuse and abuse of position of power. The Kenyatta’s regime was continually associated with acquisitive wealth-gathering which is symbolized, exhibited and destined by a process of annihilating human rights rather than maintaining and fostering life in the post-colonial era.

A return to their own time and world with all its problems and challenges were thwarted by Kenyatta’s compromise with colonialist structures of oppression in his bid to consolidate his political and economic power through a national unity that privileged the elite. Together with colonial collaborators and their children, Kenyatta created formidable hegemonies that subjugated the masses into second-class citizenry in his bid to loot the coffers of the youthful Kenyan state’s resources. Thus, the seeds of disparity, discord and the wealth gap were eventually planted. Property was distributed to chosen few at the expense of massively dispossessed population that lived below the poverty line. Today Gĩkũyũland is haunted by insecurity menace where a continuing and never-ending war between the two States of the haves and the have-nots, the rich and the poor have spawned a peasant movement in the name of Mungiiki. It was therefore apparent that Kenyatta had invalidated his initial stance of listening to the voices of lamentations of freedom fighters and he had to betray the aspirations of Mau Mau liberationists single-handedly for survival of his imperial presidency. A part from the Western influences on Kenyatta, he was a nationalist by chance
and also an opportunist this caused disagreements with his former allies. His personal interests mandate him to take a firm trend that would sharpen his hunger for affluence and fed his ego.

In his offer to guarantee the colonial settlers a safe future, Kenyatta assured the settlers of respect and honour of their property rights in postcolonial Kenya: “If I have done wrong to you it is for you to forgive me. If you have done wrong to me it is for me to forgive you: We want you to stay and farm this country” (Ngugi-wa-Thiong’o, 1981: 88). By seeking pardon from the colonizers Kenyatta was now watering down the entire struggle made by freedom fighters. In short, the beneficiaries of independence struggle were Kenyatta’s emerging oligarchy, where the former loyalists and those settlers who remained in Kenya were now incongruously packaged among those who had tirelessly fought for the independence. The former home guards and senior politicians were now allowed to accumulate wealth through the acquisition of big chunks of land through fraudulent means; this contradicts the ideals of freedom fighters movement that fought for the return of this land to the poor and the landless. The Kenyatta day (presently known as mashujaa day) was purposely set a part to commemorate the sufferings and sacrifices made by Mau Mau freedom veterans; it was from the onset a memory-erasing day. But as noted by Ngugi-wa-Thiong’o (1981: 89), there was a deliberate and conscious effort by Kenyatta regime to remove the Mau Mau freedom veterans; and other patriotic elements from the central stage of post-colonial Kenyan politics. The speech made by Jomo Kenyatta, the first president of Kenya during the first Kenyatta Day ceremony on 20th October 1963 attest to this claim of erasing the memories of gallants of freedom from the Kenyans:

Let this be the day on which all of us commit ourselves to erase from our minds all the hatreds and the difficulties of those years which now belong to history. Let us agree that we shall never refer to the
The Kenyatta and Moi regimes were enthusiastic to perpetuate a common national consciousness based on colonial historical myth, which sacrificed the past memories. Eventually, these two long serving regimes failed to create neither a national consciousness nor a common historical memory, they de-emphasized the narration of the past mistakes, painful experiences and grieves harbored in Gĩkũyũ community thought in general.

### 3.10.1 The Advent of the Moi Regime

Upon the demise of Kenyatta, his successor was Daniel Toroitich Arap Moi, who happened to have been a brainchild and heir of missionaries’ attitude of treating the African adult like a tall child. He perfected Kenyatta’s elitism through Nyayoism whose tremendous shape was owed to what had happened before the exit of the colonial regime, where the colonial strategists had invented the post-colonial fear of Agĩkũyũ and Luo domination for such leaders as Daniel Toroitich Arap Moi (Kalejin), the future president of Kenya, and Musa Amalemba (Luhya) and Ronald Ngala (Agiriyama) who ended up in Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) in 1960. This fear had replayed itself in the 2007 pre- and post-election in Kenya. As an opposition party KADU was created to bar African independence, land reform, and reabsorbing of Agĩkũyũ into the mainstream of Kenyan state. This opposition party was in favor of preserving the white highlands for the settlers (Atieno-Odhiambo, 1998: 20). Though KADU attempted to rectify and ratify the colonial status quo, by justifying colonialism at the expense of freedom was thwarted by Jaramogi Oginga’s stance and slogan “No Kenyatta No Uhuru (independence).” The deceptive fear instilled by colonialis in the other communities by colonialis had remained a neo-colonial force raised to haunt, discourage, clash, traumatize and aggravate the Agĩkũyũ text-readers’ objective of
Incidentally, both Kenyatta and Moi had forbidden people to make communal or individual lament in times of political turmoil and anarchy. Because of these vicissitudes of history, the Gĩkũyũ community was expected to leave its lamentation practices behind. The public outcries were in this case regarded as a nuisance to the issues of justice for they were clamoring for the recovery of dangerous memories through a backward replay of communal suffering psyche. Though this replay is paramount in overcoming the ugly phase of community’s humiliation, it is equally important in addressing the existential anguish caused by the colonial historical debasements of the Gĩkũyũ people. At time of economic hardships, denial was embedded in slogans and ideology that were spreading the propaganda of Nyayo philosophy of peace, love and unity. Among the dispossessed and the marginalized Kenyans, the denial was imminent in the popular slogans such as; “hakuna matata” (There are no problems) which had dominated the popular music, media, writings on T-shirt, stickers on public transport vehicles and daily expressions of greetings. Such slogans expressed illusion in the face of trauma, disaster and loss continue to dominating Kenyans' psyche. Such sources of catastrophic numbness continue to play an active part in shaping the African history of servitude and misery. The Agĩkũyũ elite of text-readers have knowingly or unknowingly repressed or denied the marginalized lot nostalgic revisit of paradigmatic events in Agĩkũyũ history of lamentation as a hermeneutic. This is done at the expense of societal loss of memory and its enormous conservative force. It is through these vestiges of subjugating forces that the young economies in Africa are subjected to unquestioned muzzling forces of global system that manipulates the financial borrowing and use of foreign aid, through a large-scale invasion. The invasion of small economies by
foreign enterprises is done at the expense of overburdened taxpayers. Dominating individuals thrive in our contemporary world of socio-economic interests, and so, they lack moral authority to keep any promise. Their innuendo of eradicating sufferings, pain and grief among the oppressed and marginalized ex-freedom fighters in Kenya is more of rhetoric than reality. The military industry of Europe through its package of modernity is capable of identifying danger, tension, and misunderstanding among the marginalized communities through its witch-hunting expeditions alongside global ideological interests and security. Hence, in a world where socio-economic and political interests count first, lamentation is held with suspicion for it is confused with calls to engage in incrimination, a blame game, and judgment, categorizing the subjugator from the subjugated.

Nonetheless, Africans' immersion into Euro-centrism is an acceptance of dominant economy and society, whose basics was mainly to eradicate native populations and their primitive myths. A frightened, numb denial and deception of Western capitalism that rejected the reality of a ‘chaotic’ world; the utopist fantasies of the Western civilization and its secularism, became the hallmark for African development paradigms. Its wishful optimism of having conquered world's ignorance, poverty and ignorance falsely denied the presence of pain, grief and anguish in this conquered world. Indeed, such hermeneutics has no place for a God who weeps over and inseparably shares in the grief and sorrow of humanity and of creation. In his claim of Western negative mind-set on biblical heritage of lamentation, Balentine (1993) says that the lament tradition of the Hebrew Bible was severely neglected by biblical scholars and theologians, in their liturgies in Western Europe, Germany, and the US before and during the first and second world wars. By telling and retelling the memories of catastrophic events happening in Africa are just assumed as inconsequential by the
western world. But, the world have already witnessed how the bombing of US Embassy premises in East Africa (Nairobi and Dar-es-salaam) on August 7 1998, which killed many Kenyans and Tanzanians than Americans, exemplified how futile human struggle to reach and invest in modern standards is. The West too is devastatingly caught up in a traumatic saga which has incorporated its degenerating universe. The September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center has become the dynamite that blew the established order. Because, Western world and its dominant ideology had perfected the denial of lamentation were now subjected to mind boggling reflections, which has from then affected the way its missionaries in Africa read and interpret the Scriptures. United States of America (USA) as the only surviving superpower is pushed and even forced to reality of worldwide insecurity and its variation of cries. It took a small group of terrorists to attack the pinnacle of human civilization where the self-asserting invulnerability became a catastrophic vulnerability. These terrorist events were the needle that deflated the ballooned self-esteem of modernity and its dominant ideology of happiness and utopia. This was a turning point of world history because it confronted the myths of pain denial of the post-modern world. It brought to attention the unrelieved pain, anguish and grief of a chaotic world. At a global scale, lamentation was now to stand in a frontage that consigned it to neglect in a world suffering social injustices at the periphery, this neglect was causing a general failure to raise protests against heinous crimes against humanity all over the world (Bateline, 1993: 250). The Nazi, and Rwanda genocides and other related enormous holocausts in the world needed a lamenting community to intervene in preventing crimes committed against God and humanity. Though Ruanda genocide has been responded to in every way possible through memories, lamentation and also through indigenous courts these texts need to be hermeneutically formed, used, and transmitted in contexts of legitimating, authorizing and
ordering certain mode of African social relationships and powers. Fundamental to a modern attitude towards lamentation is the arrogance of imperial Christianity in its one-sided emphasis on the sovereignty of God and praises of a triumphant religion that relate with the empire and its false security. The lamentation genre had no place in colonial package because; it would have caused a lot of havoc if natives were empowered to respond to economic inequality, and so it was hard for missionary hermeneutics to replicate the virtues of justice by abhorring oppression of others and caring for the underprivileged. Euro-centered Christianity trained its converts to suppress and deny laments through ideologically tuned-reading that foster denial of pain and suffering. The fear that laments may evoke emotions, sorrow, hostility and despair or even create more pain is making us to treat the expression of lamentation with suspicion. So the common norm is that the social, political and economic reality we see must be denied, for sight of it is costing the conventional ideology a different kind of hermeneutic of life. The pretense and self-deception that exist in inequality is not there; it only makes the fundamental problem mutate with devastating consequences sooner rather than later. By treating lamentation as non-conventional and irrational method of causing unwarranted sorrow, hostility and despair to our undisturbed and ordered world makes our denial of our reality an inevitable endeavor. Terrien (1952: 131) concurs with findings of this study that; "...modern man in Western culture is sometimes made ill at ease by the cries of the night and the immodest, shrieks of suffering. In the same rejoinder, Dobbs-Allsopp (2002: 37) observes that; "...the western culture, in particular, oftentimes appears impatient with or embarrassed by acute, grief, and deep sorrow and thus rushes to medicate it a way." The African practice of lamentation though closely tied to biblical strands of naming hurt was countered by forces of denial advanced by Euro-centrism. This mode of colonial biose had successfully encroached African community
life, bringing its monolithic paradigms that designate the colonized to lament on behalf of
the empire in contradiction of their own predicaments. Thus, it is not simply that laments
were absent from Euro-centric religious texts and symbols. In fact, mysterious colonial
narratives brought denial and despair to prevent any serious engagement of mental and
spiritual exercise among the colonized. The laments which were social vehicles of protest
and change against oppression, exploitation, and injustice for Europeanized Africans were
made ill at ease by the cries out of the night and the immodest shrieks of suffering. The
civilizing mission’s exclusion of laments from community's response to dislocations,
turmoil, and devastations meant that the pain, grief, and anguish can be automatically
rubbed. As a result, this exclusion was positioned by African home-grown factors that
govern interpretation of experience to the level of a time bomb.

Lamentation, as alternative re-reading of the text and was well placed to protest against the
imperial assertions; it kept on raising socio-economic and political questions from the texts
and the site of text-reading was deeply and inherently subversive. The multiple voices of
lamentation impacts the world of post-modern and post-colonial criticisms; it points to a
protest against the narrative of civilizing missions and their claims. Unfortunately, the
Western world and its narrative of adventurous conquests that led to its subduing of the
world makes the whole world too insecure than before. The people of Israel in Jeremiah
31:15-17 though entangled in such a dilemma had to cry out of their depths to Yahweh over
the destruction of their city and God heard their cry. Through long-term collaborative
negotiation of lamentation text and relational preservation of both text-readers; so, as we
look at the pain and suffering in our contemporary world where God seems silent we can
reexamine Rachel’s weeping and lamentation in chapter four as food for thought. What
follows is an attempt to highlight the subject matter of grief expression that Africans may
cconsider central to their hermeneutical enterprises as they read Rachel's lament from their
experience and expression of grief.

3.10.2 Analysis of Behavioral Sources

The crying need in our biblical hermeneutical programmers is for integration of the various
elements of Gĩkũyũ culture into the whole life of the text-reader. The needs and challenges
of local situation are in this case taken into consideration. The temptation to preach
scriptural sermons which were blessed by God in European situation is very great and the
pastors seem to easily fall into the trap of thinking and living like Europeans. In the process,
they behave like a doctor who flukes and guesses in prescribing medicine to patients for an
illnesses of patients diagnosed elsewhere: (1) Tacit: nobody mentions lamentations but still
everyone is seen acting according to them. (2) Explicit- proverbs, sayings and idiomatic
expressed in daily conversations capture the terms suggestive of lamentations. (3)
Correlation- the focus falls on behavior as a touchstone of lamentations. Text reading and
appropriation is first and foremost a relation issue.

Lamentation has operated under duress, it was not official but a vibrant peripheral issue
sustained and done in secret for it kept the past memories intact. As a result, Africans have
developed a problematic art of clinching the authority of Scripture and that of their
traditions reading to cultural and religious schizophrenia. The Agĩkũyũ perceived their lives
as an expression of their relationship with one another, ancestral world and God. But with
foreign intrusion, these people are conditioned to behave in certain ways but do not have a
vital love relationship with one another, ancestral world and God. The denial of dignity,
security, and privacy to individual, the family and the community as a whole is rampant. The people are entangled by social unrests occasioned by depravity and frustrations of life in their deplorable state. This section analyses some behavioral indicators of individual and communal laments in the traditional Agĩkũyũ lifestyle, landing us into cognitive principles that determine our approach to the stark realities of poverty and injustice. It had something to do with people’s social behavior and it is expected to dictate what is acceptable to them and what is not with regard to life outside the community which kept on recurring in all cultural discourse. The analysis of behavioral sources of the post-colonial text-readers in Gĩkũyũland provided the study with a readable articulation of a map for navigating some of the more important hermeneutical twists and turns that have to denial of lamentation in Gĩkũyũland. The Gĩkũyũ women too, carry out many of the activities communally. Apart from the common grinding place spoken of earlier, there are other meeting places like watering points, rivers where women go for water, during which time they also share a word or two, to release tension and pleasure in their respective homes. Forests also served as a suitable meeting places for women to seek advice from their friends about issues that might be disturbing them, share frustrations and encourage one another, while fetching firewood.

Since farming is considered to be the work of women, they generally do it communally and even build their barns together close to their pieces of land. The woman who wants to ask other women for assistance simply prepares some food and home brew, then sends a child to the home of all her neighbors and gives them date which they do not dispute or reject. The analysis of contemporary currents of inquiry into the historical outcries for justice among the Agĩkũyũ is seen from the same deep and sacred meaning as the story of Rachel in the Bible. Our state of being uncomfortable in speaking our pains, our doubts and our anger
before God will deny us the objective-critical reflection needed in our discovery of adequate hermeneutical principle and the right way of asking the right questions. Thus, the outstanding implications of a deeply moved and sorely grieved community like the Agĩkũyũ will squarely lay on a combination of intellectual demands and religious expressions, which will enhance the text-readers’ emotional openness in the process of solving the present-day dilemmas.

3.10.3 The Payment of Fine and Penalty (Kũruta Thĩnjo or Horohio)

The heeding to the voices of lamentation among the Gĩkũyũ people was done in a unique way of achieving peace in Gĩkũyũland; it was done with full realization of what suffering, the unheeded expression of grief would bring to the land if the questions it exposes are deeply felt and responded to. The thĩnjo or horohio was a peaceful redeeming penalty or ritual that had gone hand in hand with concrete artistic and creative religious expressions of the acceptable alternative to intentions of violence raised in a given lament among the Gĩkũyũ people. It was a reconciliation rite that served the purpose of bridging the profane world of the community into the sacred world by ensuring a harmonious living among the Gĩkũyũ people. By reaching the ultimate transcendence the Gĩkũyũ people through this ritual would dig deep into life’s deepest meanings through the concern of creating peace and harmony in their land and all its borders. Kũruta thĩnjo kana horohio (Payment of fine or penalty) was a ritual act that ensured the reality of restorative justice.

The importance of this ritual was captured through the testing of the anti-thesis of daily expressions of flow of life in everyday living through proverbs, music, art or dance. The incorporation of participant-observer into a new understanding of holiness through virtues
of honor and shame provoked commendations to the upright and reproaches to the wicked. The wicked had to undergo a redeeming ritual through sacrifice and fine payment system where the afflictions of victims were clearly expressed from the perspective of great pain and distress. This ritual governed the behavior of the community which had to come into terms with its presence of chaos, brokenness, suffering and death inflicted by enemies from within and outside its borders. European missionaries’ reinforcement of mental powers and assumption under total disregard of Gĩkũyũ redeeming rituals predestined the sanctity of the Gĩkũyũ people to a hermeneutical tragedy.

Likewise, those adversaries from within, who schemed and plotted against their own people for instance when one’s daughter is impregnated and the man responsible is identified, the payment that is meted out on him is paid to the father of the girl, not the community, even though it is the community that has fixed the penalty. Moreover, the initiative to look for the impregnator rests purely on the father not the community. If he does not take the initiative to summon athuri a itũũra (council of village elders) and pay for their sitting allowances, then no one is going to do this on his behalf. However, in some cases the extended family could in exceptional cases raise lament; mwana witu ndangũũrũran ta mũũro ya ngĩa (Our child cannot get lost like the poor man’s sweet potato vines) by so doing they would pursue the case to avoid the shaming of their clan.

The feelings of negativity, injustice, hatred, and brokenness are indeed part of Agĩkũyũ lives and part of their world that takes broad, stereotyped ways in identifying societal sickness, loneliness and alienation triggered by dangers and mistreatment meted by others on us. The need to make sense out of what happened by facing and going through the loss of identity
and livelihood among Agĩkũyũ can anticipate new life. In this case, Lamentation comes in to correct the false, naïve and overly rationalistic view of text-reading. Its’ iconic privileges of guiding the community’s liturgical life and connecting the word of God to its rich folklore cannot be underrated. Its symbols and metaphors are instruments of cultural transmission commonly used to normalize, rectify and justify cultural contradictions. The community life is used to enrich various rituals and values embedded on lamentation and to provide connection of life episodes, which cannot be conceived as whole without lamentation as a voice that makes them complete and safe. Such folklore is still banked in proverbs, poems, stories, riddles and songs that express laments over the plight of community’s past and future. Since, we cannot fully erase the scars of radical suffering.

The community of text-readers who have given up their old values and had begun to practice the new ones which are not realistic had to hide themselves in denial in order to protect the conventional assumptions, priorities, values, and practices against the loss of face in contemporary discomforts. These protective ploys have ended up in the swamping of tangible issues at stake into a mire of hermeneutical conflict. The demeaning lamentation makes hermeneutical conflict to remain unresolved at a deeper level of the on-going dissatisfaction of how pain and suffering is treated by the dominant ideology. The oppressed people who are forced to avoid discussing their pain and suffering in public by defending their self-images against humiliation, embarrassment, and exclusion by claims of the dominant ideologies. Such trivialization of painful realities and suffering emanate from the oppressed and the marginalized lots approach to the text from the perspective of the oppressor.
The perpetual entanglement into avoidance of pain and suffering as a mechanism for survival has with time rigidified denial into a bitter, silent, passive, aggressive, and unsatisfactory entanglement. The Agĩkũyũ avoidance and withdrawal are inseparable characteristics of a voluntary yield to traditional poverty and feelings of powerlessness. It is in due process, that the textual interpretation has from such avoidance and withdrawal ignored the seeds of an underlying hurt which are un-proportionally explored and triggered by outside forces. The post-colonial culture of denial among the Agĩkũyũ is embedded and skewed in Euro-centric hermeneutics which has not only confirmed a smooth post-colonial conquest and ushering in of a foreign rule but also how a completely alien religion, culture and legal system that has unendingly pervaded the colonized text-readers. Today, many text-readers are forced into culture of denial as a way of deflecting the community from substantive and realistic issues through hermeneutical amusements as smokescreens. Nonetheless, this phenomenon of denial is a unique hermeneutical conflict especially when it has turned into a rationale for imperialistic domination hidden between rhetoric and reality. A post-colonial identification of denial makes the religious literature and people a hermeneutical frame of protest against the cover-ups of pain and hurt. In this context the cries of the victims are meaningfully and creatively heard above the din of their political, cultural, economic, social, and ecclesiastical wrangling. The struggle through denial is basically to protect the loss of its face, which becomes a central oppressive tool in the swamping of tangible issues at stake.

3.10.4 The Destabilization of Gĩkũyũ Culture and Religion

The pre-Gĩkũyũ community’s imaginative construal of its life in relation to God and ancestors was richly synchronized by community’s rich stocks of available images. Thus,
the destabilization of its culture and religion through abrupt invasions of indigenous culture and religion by foreigners meant the destruction of symbols that unremittingly mediated and communicated the horror and brutality inflicted on its own life. This colonial violence left the symbolic life of Gĩkũyũ so thin and lean only to take one dimension that perpetually allowed the subsequent acts of violence against the community to happen without notice. The voices of lamentations among the conquered, poor and desperate indigenous communities were now overtaken by forces of denial which were being perpetuated by psychic numbness that followed the colonial invasions. This inadequacy compounded by psychic numbness made the vanquished lot to yearn for the unachievable good life of the Kingdom of God which was soon-to-come; the lavish living of missionaries and the poverty of their devastated audiences could not provide answers to people who were experiencing unemployment, poverty and stress. The dominant ideology had a shared androcentric mindset that those who had wholeheartedly embraced the word of God were free from pain and suffering. To deny that people are in pain and in need of help was a process of subjugation that ushered in the post-colonial submissiveness to local rulers as a substitute to hermeneutical conflict resolution and reconciliation. In its extreme form, the denial that characterize the aftermath of massive public violence on the human psyche is captured by a reluctance to echo pain and suffering. There is that need text-readers to make a contrapuntal reading of dominant discourses as advanced by colonizers process of domesticating and sidelining the colonized. The colonial systematic violence was bearable only because the community had arrived at psychic numbness that is the capacity not to notice, know, feel, experience and care. This reluctance is shaped by three kinds of denial, which are presented as follows; (1) Direct denial; text-readers refute that the existing conflict is present through a compromise that their pathetic situation is not disturbing them and so they keep away from
the conflict (non-committal to personal suffering).

The text-readers’ inability to face the problem through a head-on collision because the world we see must be denied, for sight of it is costing us a different kind of vision." Does this mean that we should totally deny that there is pain and suffering in this world? (2) Implicit Denial –they tend to provide a rationale for a denial statement through non-admission of the situation under which the pain and suffering was inflicted to avoid unpleasant hermeneutical discourse and disagreements. Avoiding open discussion of pain and suffering to evade being rigidified into bitter, silent, passive, aggressive, and unsatisfactory entanglements. When verbalized in accordance with Euro-centric definitions of hermeneutical conflict, it may endanger the text-reader’s belief in God. (3) Non-committal remarks: the phenomenon of text-readers, failure to acknowledge the presence of a conflict following a statement or inquiry about the conflict by the partner. This happened structurally through the dominant ideology, where the victims maintain that they are not lamenting to the rest of the world yet the underlying social reality is pushing them to continue verbalizing their pains at the margins. Figure 3.3 below illustrates how the denial of pain and suffering has taken its roots and shape in post-colonial Africa.

**Figure 3.3: The Post-Colonial Denial of Pain and Suffering**

**Source:** Researcher
By denying our means of healing, pain and suffering in us and others we proclaim that the world is forever free from pain and suffering. The prevalent Eurocentric refusal to look at the painful realities is premised on a flawed thinking that exposing reality of the traumatized victim is a threat to public security in some way. But, it is a lie which the traumatized text-readers hold to in order to avoid the reality that what they think about would destroy them. The primary form of false denial is based on victim's denial of real identity and everything that goes with it. The denial of social reality becomes distinctive from the dominant ideological perspective while the victims join the denial camp on platform of survival. But the question whose ideology is promoted in this denial of pain and suffering, and against whose ideological position has colonial views delivered their barbed hermeneutical hook?

The dominant ideology stands to scatter that reality of the Agĩkũyũ text-readers who were already disconnected from their here and now circumstances. Those invulnerable to pain and suffering are rooted on external worlds of reality that make the denial of lamentation a package bequeath of Euro-centric hermeneutics that attempts to keep the Agĩkũyũ text-readers away from recognizing the painful effects of modernity as a colonial package. The Euro-centric text-reading process has brought to the Gĩkũyũ people the false effects of dominant ideology that entices the Gĩkũyũ people not to objectively look at their problems and this done in order to drive them away from their reality. It is the proverbial ostrich manner of burying the head in the sand, pretending that we don't have a problem and don't need any help, despite all evidence to the contrary. This form of denial is a misguided attempt to shield our awareness from the devastating effects of the dominant ideology even when it has traumatized our lives. It is a fabricated defense mechanism which is used not to fix the problem, but to cover up. The text-readers use denial to contradict the pain and suffering in their concrete world of oppression and subjugation. They turn away from
themselves and the suffering of people in their midst through trivial pursuits by bringing into play all sorts of rationalizations to convince themselves that things were not really as bad as they seem. Various text-reading groups affirmed they can even, casually dismiss the socio-economic and cultural hurt as an illusion and so it doesn't matter anyway. This denial brings the community into a catastrophic overlooking of pain and despair by pretending that the dominant ideology and its fantasy will straight away fix-it. Such denial have nothing to do with the fixing of the problem but only to conceal the reality of misery by ensuring of a smooth continuation of pain.

The text-readers failure to listen to the text is mainly due to the effects of a strategically placed refusal to acknowledge the realities of pain and suffering due to involuntary cover-ups of painful realities. Lament outline is perceived by physical senses. It brings pain and suffering to reality in a world of differences. To get text-readers out of their denial of painful realities means to speak to pain and suffering in us and others. By turning denial from illusions into hermeneutical conflict, we bring pain into affirmations that cannot be evaded, set aside, denied, disguised, seen somewhere else, called by another name, or hidden by deceit of any kind. Voiced laments cannot be escaped for; it must be seen exactly as it is; where it is thought to be, in the reality given to it and with the purpose accorded it. The denial of our suffering affirms that we are unaffected by that suffering. So, what is happening in our physical world has nothing do with our reality by a restoration of the awareness of pain and suffering. The acceptance of pain and suffering through a radical and complete acknowledgment of the ways text-readers turn away from our own reality of suffering. Since the reality cannot be staved off forever, the awareness of this reality cannot be denied at the hotbed of any struggle that shapes and restructures African collective
production of knowledge. However, the Gĩkũyũ people have in absence of indigenous text-reading process assumed another form and shape, that is, the Euro-centric textual violence which has deepened the psychology of domination. Any sensitive and predictable reading among the Agĩkũyũ is put on the edge and may, therefore, implode from within.

The reshaping of curriculum on African biblical hermeneutics, without decolonizing the minds of the text-readers, without owning up and admitting the historical role played by past voices of protest in the liberation struggle, the Agĩkũyũ text-readers never struggle to know who they are or where they are coming from. So to this far, the Euro-centric comments on the Agĩkũyũ referred to a mindset created under colonial bigotry that classifies the Agĩkũyũ text-readers with people who reside in a jungle, where people and beasts suffer hunger and hopelessness. Such mindset would identify the history of denial and deprivation of the post-colonial Agĩkũyũ text-readers from the semblances of a deprived and hopeless lot. In either case, the elite would see themselves far better than others as they tried to compare themselves with their European and American identity. Without a well-developed culture of biblical scholarship Africa we are yet to produce biblical scholars of high reputation who can think outside the box of euro-centrism. The survival of different aspects of African culture is not happening from the center but from the margins where theologians find themselves disconnected with geography of their hermeneutical responses to the lived experience of individuals and communities to which they serve. Thus, it is being realized today, however, that the most significant critics of the church are not the intellectual giants whom we call, scholars of high reputation but the poor and oppressed peoples (cf. De-Gruchy 1986: 77). The fact that curricula in the local universities has undergone immense transformation does not mean that the task of Africans opening up and realizing the
necessity to reread the Biblical text from their perspective is accomplished; this is received with a lot of opposition from the mainstream churches.

3.10.5 False Hopes Fuelled by a Culture of Amnesia

Another major means of colonization through the text-reading is the false start in text-reading which culminated in false hopes fuelled by an amnesiac culture that makes the readers helplessly yield to ignorance in relation to their past memories which would otherwise forewarn them not to yield to domination in the field of text-reading by Euro-centric scholars. The strangled African biblical scholars are forced to Euro-centrically read the Bible and are the ones responsible for most of the bible translations which are used in higher institutions of theological training. They are not only the advocates of Euro-centric approaches in text-reading and teaching but, they control what is read and consumed in local universities and seminaries. The untold scholastic prejudice that tenaciously hold to Euro-centric textual interpretation as the most superior and universal form of biblical interpretations. It leads to the contemporary use of Euro-centric criteria as a yardstick for judging all what reflects African perspectives in African universities and seminaries. There was realization that teaching of Bible was interfered with the goal of maintaining a subordinate class of text-readers, forcing it to review the text-reading strategy. Agĩkũyũ who had imbued a lot of biblical teaching were now regarded as potentially subversive forces and so, social distance between master and subject had to be maintained partly through hermeneutic distance. Certainly, another factor behind the status of text-reading was to ensure that the majority of natives had refused to learn Euro-centric text-reading strategies; this refusal had on the contrary provided a stimulus for Agĩkũyũ to study the Bible literary. The colonized people had a burning desire to read the Bible and to deny them a chance to
read was tantamount to condemning them to perpetual hell fire. That is why the Agĩkũyũ had started their independent schools in order to learn how to read the Bible without inhibition. It is therefore evident that the colonial text-reading methods remained eclectic depending on the colonizers interests at any particular time. There were times when the administrators would endorse the use of African lamentation in view of their interests at stake. Catechism classes and the Bible were to be taught simultaneously from lower to upper primary.

The colonial policy in Kenya was never compact with the teaching of Bible and African hermeneutics but it was mainly ambivalent. The missionaries also had mounted a campaign to create some Europeanized elite in the Gĩkũyũland on the ground that such an elite group would protect their interests after independence of the colony. This was a major step towards the reinforcement of Euro-centric hermeneutic hegemony. Hence, the elimination of Lamentation from the text-reading process was partly aimed at forestalling the growth and spread, of Agĩkũyũ freedom struggle. This forestalling explains why the voice of ordinary Gĩkũyũ text readers continue being absent from the mainstream interpretation of lamentation texts in the Bible. This process eventually alienates the common text readers from the Bible and their own land as it opens a new chapter in life of hermeneutical captivity and exile. Consequently, the major role played by lamentation in African biblical hermeneutics is its assertion and establishment of a departure from older and long-established chain of hegemonic strangle of Euro-centric interpretations in Africa.

Though, the soul of the Agĩkũyũ text-readers is historically stricken nigh to death by confiscation of its ancestral land, the obstruction of its free development in social economic
matters, and its subjugation to an imperialist system of slavery, tax-paying, pass-carrying, and forced labour this reality does not come into purview of the Eurocentric hermeneutical approaches. So, when European missionaries’ encouraged straight jacket virtues of patience as opposed to angry revolt and dialogue rather than violent reaction, they were co-opting the text-readers in total to colonial religious project, which was later to play a great role in legitimizing and secularizing the hermeneutical and theological structures implanted in Europe. These alien hermeneutical ideologies are known to cover up and justify the existing oppressive conditions in Gĩkũyũland; they have robbed the people of their livelihood as well as the material culture that binds the community together for it cuts along the axis of Gĩkũyũ people’s life, social world and economic revolved (cf. Kenyatta, 1938: 317). So, the Missionary uprooting of indigenous cultures was no prolegomenon to evangelism in Gĩkũyũland: It was a disaster; hence the wage of hermeneutical protest through the critical climate of the African Instituted Churches whose hermeneutical critique is not premised on rejection of Christianity or academic arguments but on results of oppressive and painful suffering. The missionaries’ agenda underscored the perpetual detachment of African indigenous text from the context shaped by colonialism as crisscrossing binary fusion.

The utter abandonment of Euro-centric hermeneutical pretense becomes a prerequisite to real joy of a text-reading that helps the Gĩkũyũ people understand and respond to their historical situation. Our attempt to work on the text as post-colonial text-readers begins with a reassurance of indigenous enterprising presentations of new depths of human anguish and human hope to hermeneutics. In retrospect Euro-centric text-reading process becomes to IDPs nothing short of a chronic source of instability, confusion and anarchy in terms as it denies text-readers the right to determine and control their destiny. Living without land or
home, food and clothing in IDPs camps bring missionaries’ legacy into question for refrains the colonized text-readers from managing their affairs, deriving their pride and pleasure from their hermeneutical outcome and even to derive lessons, frustrations and experiences from its malfunctions. The post-colonial search for hermeneutical leap out of ashes calls the text-reader to stand firm like “a skilled warrior who does not return empty-handed” (c.f. Jeremiah 50: 8-9). Any boost accorded to Euro-centrism, means doing hermeneutical studies at the expense of local hermeneutics occurred through realization of new theological curriculums, Bible teachers were to be trained in Euro-centric hermeneutics, as the text-reading was viewed as a premium in teaching the local churches. Certainly, this was another step in consolidating hermeneutic hegemony in Kenya.

3.11 Summary

In this chapter, we have discussed the role of the missionaries in the development of biblical hermeneutics and how they had habituated us to respond to suffering and pain with ready-made answers. African states and governments are attempting to come up with a rational explanation for the pain and suffering. Thus, the appropriation of lamentation to a people’s circumstances through the evolution of public processing of pain makes mediation and contestation frowned over hermeneutical fusions of Euro-centric reading. So, lamentation is ultimately bound to impact substantially on the post-colonial situation and national policy. Missionaries’ attitude cannot be addressed without taking into account this ideological underpinning with its fictions and predicaments that interlace the word of God. The colonial text-reading strategy in Kenya is therefore an important offer for counter information which will check the negative and stereotypical images emanating from dominant Eurocentric hermeneutical ideological leanings. By putting into consideration the post-colonial text-
reading process and its long held postulation that it is the missionaries who promoted amorphous and vacillating text-reading process put in place to promote or deter its scholarship. Such denial inadvertently provided a stimulus for ordinary text-readers to read the Bible by their cognizant of the fact that it was a launching pad for post-colonial African culture. This can be said to have been the genesis of colonial hegemonic and divisionary tendencies between the elite (those who could use the Bible) and the ignorant masses (those who could not use it). Today, only a small portion of Gĩkũyũ population can adequately use Euro-centric exegetical methods, which are the official text-reading tools and a medium of Euro-centric instruction in the text-reading process distinct from the ordinary text-reading process. But, the Church leadership appears comfortable in this hermeneutic captivity and would wish to have the status quo maintained; the situation demonstrates that not all is well on the ground. It is for this reason that marginal voices have started both mediation and contestation of hermeneutic hegemony. To achieve this, both colonial and post-colonial text-reading strategy requires evaluation. With respect to the post-colonial text-reading strategy, the Christian missionaries and the British settlers who feared the creative works in local text-reading and the indigenous communities were put under the watchful eye of the administrators who were out to silence any voice that suggested the dejection of the colonial rule. So, the colonial administration had grown apprehensive over the teaching of the Bible to Agĩkũyũ shortly before the 1920s. Going by the colonial text-reading strategy in Kenya will suffice the Bible to state that Euro-centric text-reading was supported at the expense of local text-reading. However, it has been observed that this support was not motivated by the interest to make Kenyans learn the language, but more in the interest of preventing Kenyan nationalism which was solidifying around African biblical hermeneutics especially lamentation reading of the text. The move also bequeathed Kenya an iniquitous linguistic
legacy after independence, taking into account that the Bible continued to play the divisive role of the haves (Euro-centric readers) and have-nots (ordinary text-readers). For the past fifty years after independence, text-reading is yet to be rid of elitist and exclusionist status.

3.12 Conclusion

For, a text-reader to honestly embrace helplessness, if the word of God is to be heard then, the images of dangerous realities of life must be brought from the depths of Gikũyũ people’s heart if we are to experience new life. The struggle to answer the question: how can we join the ordinary text-reader in the historical suffering of the poor both in Israel and in the Gikũyũ people’s world? Moreover, the consciousness promoted by Euro-centric missionaries’ text-reading process was not positive but a negative one, arising out of the sense of anger, frustration, and humiliation produced by oppressive, discriminatory, and exploitive activities of missionaries. Due to fear of negative repercussions of lamentation no missionary agency would ever have dared to set out a hermeneutics that promotes the text-readers’ cry for justice. The post-colonial spectrum of exploring on how lamentation as a marginal voice would recover its access to hermeneutical discourses and also offer its critical features to ordinary text-readers lives depends on self-acknowledgement and the acknowledgment of other hermeneutical features, signs, signals and values. Such orientations and standards are to a text-readers regarded as significant; and so the text-readers themselves and others are open to interpret them' (Barth, 1970: 96).

This exploration generates a sense of consciousness in post-colonial era that makes their cry for justice loud and clear. This process of unraveling the hidden insights from us through biases is unconsciously brought to our post-colonial reading of the text. Unfortunately the
awareness of missionaries’ negative sentiment of lamentation and anti-colonialism among the children of IDPs is inconsequential for they are conscious of how their great grandparents were disinherit by colonial fate and how that is related to their fate of being forced to live in harsh conditions of IDPs camps. Even though the Gĩkũyũ people in Diaspora had become IDPs by virtue of leaving their land in Rift Valley they need to be aware of their rights which are being violated and what they are suffering from. Thus, their cry for justice is one of the by-products of Euro-centric hermeneutics because the Gĩkũyũ people who settled in Rift Valley had gone there as workers for settlers, and got into willing buyer and willing seller agreement with government that deprived some of them of their land in central Kenya. This state of double alienation has caused deeper grief and high level of lamentation which requires those in authority need to listen to and so it is a point of concern. However, the indigenous people in Rift Valley who lost community land to both colonial and postcolonial regimes seem to be numerically and politically threatened by the Gĩkũyũ people in diaspora. As a result the land clashes, disruptions and displacements have often happened to scuttle votes as trend. How they grieve and lament without the vested interests of their political class is an area open to immediate scholarly study.

The exigency of unraveling the Gĩkũyũ people’s history of complaints and protest against idolatry practices of imperial powers was key pointers to waging hermeneutical assaults against the faked gospel of health and wellness spawned by ideologies of wealth making and consumerist greed. The expedience of Euro-centric hermeneutics led to reduction of an individual to a perpetual oppressor of others just the way the former colonial settlers had done. Because, in post-colonial context, missionaries’ legacy is perceived to display significant traits of hermeneutical commitment and trust toward denominational ideologies
of inhabiting and interpreting individual traditions rather than embrace of a hermeneutic of suspicion and critique. The hermeneutical question in this chapter is: How can this analysis of missionaries’ attitude towards Gĩkũyũ motif of lamentation effectively help in restating certain aspects of biblical understanding in the light of fundamental reconstruction and reorientation of both the oppressor and the oppressed’ worldviews and lifestyles? By seeking hermeneutical recognition and identity among the Agĩkũyũ, the study has through the interpretive lens of post-colonial world of cultural diversities heightened its critical awareness of text-readers’ power to make and remake life livable as well as their vocation to create and re-create their post-colonial world.

Their attitude and approach has perpetually abhorred the indigenous voices of lamentation through the Euro-centric imposition of theoretical, abstract, and context free biblical hermeneutics in Gĩkũyũland. The hermeneutical challenge of this study is how the story of the Agĩkũyũ can be told and remembered; so, that African heritage of naming their oppression and subjugation can be expanded and empowered in post-colonial hermeneutical struggle. The greatest challenge of the twenty-first century is to invest on the existence and evolution of ordinary text-readers’ hermeneutical resources outside the box of the Euro-centric and American missionaries’ teaching and definition of their identity. It is a question of making the traditional exegetical methods accountable to the indigenous hermeneutical process by leading the inhuman and dehumanized to the path of regaining their human status, as originally created in image and likeness of God (Moltman, 1985).

The next chapter reexamines the text in Jeremiah 31:15-17 as food for thought by looking at the pain and suffering of our contemporary world in situations where God seems to be
silent. A post-colonial reading of Jeremiah 31:15-17 in the next chapter is in its practical mode of discourse giving greater value and power to criticality, analysis, evaluation, and questioning of Gĩkũyũ people’s history vis-à-vis Euro-centric legacy. Subsequently the chapter will explore on Agĩkũyũ’s encounter with empty and sterile efforts of text-reading generated by bureaucratic and tedious acquisitions and experiences of the past missionaries’ attitude and approach of text-reading in Gĩkũyũland, which were divorced from practical, concrete and contextual setting of the colonized. The post-colonial reading of Jeremiah 31:15-17 will principally probe the text and context of ancient period, through cross-cultural dynamics of Jewish and Agĩkũyũ’ cultures such probing opens old memories as it brings on board a discourse that surrounds the world of competing voices and material conflicts.
CHAPTER FOUR
THE AGİKŨYŨ WARRANTED ADOPTION OF RACHEL’S LAMENTATION

4. 1 Introduction
This chapter and the next one consist of the data analysis gathered between June and December, 2010. The study looks at reality by thematically breaking down the qualitative data collected through open ended questions. In this regard, the breaking down and summing up of the raw data into two files, (one of trained text-readers and the other of ordinary text-readers of all ages, both sexes and different classifications in life) was successfully achieved. At the technical level, the qualitative data is analyzed through an integration of exegetical study and hermeneutical reflection into one readable thematically weaved text that provides insights into ordinary text-readers’ view of a new human face.

Table 2 Raw Data Distribution and Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informants</th>
<th>Research method</th>
<th>Venue /contact</th>
<th>Type of information collected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pastors and Evangelists</td>
<td>Participant observation and In-depth Interviews where the researcher deemed necessary</td>
<td>Church Gatherings and Parish offices</td>
<td>Observation and analysis of whether their daily lives, Sunday sermons and their interpretive methods appeal to Gĩkũyũ cultural imageries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordinary text-readers</td>
<td>Participant observation and interviews</td>
<td>Sunday service, TEE study groups/Bible study and Weekly prayer forums, different Church compounds, homesteads and Marketplace</td>
<td>Observation of whether cultural behavior, artifacts, and ordinary daily talks appeal to bible sharing Sessions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theological Students/ Biblical Scholars</td>
<td>In-depth-Interviews</td>
<td>St. Paul and Presbyterian University’s Main campuses</td>
<td>Theoretical explorations and critical observation of inculturation set-ups in which the current biblical hermeneutics is taught and applied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye Witnesses of Mũthĩrĩgũ Lament-Dance</td>
<td>In-depth-Interviews</td>
<td>Homestead</td>
<td>A broad-spectrum understanding of laments among the Agĩkũyũ and how they helped the community to relate echoes of laments to its text-reading methods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Mau Mau/detainee and IDPs</td>
<td>In-depth Interviews</td>
<td>Homestead, Church compound and Marketplace</td>
<td>The trauma and psychic-numbness reflected on ex-Mau Mau/detainee and how the IDPs live in a post-colonial set-up of text-reading</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The qualitative data was analyzed using the Kwalitan computer program, which helped in identifying the key categories within the created codes; and a tree structure that gave a bird’s eye view of how these categories are related to the codes and segments. During the field research, the researcher identified lamentation as something shared, although not evenly,
and argued that these shared elements constitute a whole range of cultural orientation and disorientation that are found in people’s social dealings, among themselves and with others. In this regard, we observed what the two categories of text-readers do (cultural behavior), the things they make and use (cultural artifacts) and we listened to what they said (speech message); all of which embody powerful survival memories, as elaborated by Spradley (1980: 10) and other scholars.

The researcher presented the text of Jeremiah 31:15-17 and listened to the text-readers’ spontaneous sharing, which was later followed by interviews, for the purpose of clarification or additional information. The goal was to understand and analyze the reality of painful experiences and memories of the Gĩkũyũ people in a matrix of newness of life engendered in the light of the Scriptures. The participants were asked to openly give their narratives which were drawn from the basic guiding reflection in the interview and quantitative data measured on the same groups of informants’ simultaneously. This was done through an interpretive character that aimed at discovering the meaning of lamentations among individual communities that echoed them. The interview guide questions had received different assumptions and categorization along which, the vested interest and power relations of text-readers were keenly reviewed. This was done to help the study reflect on the process of retrieving hermeneutical and cultural memories, which are rooted in both Euro-centric and indigenous discourses. The respondents pushed this, by contravening the domain of hermeneutical discipline within its set boundaries and paradigms of knowledge, towards the open world. The length and nature of the interviews differed from one respondent to another, depending on what was lacking in his or her earlier contribution. The researcher had, therefore, became a student of ordinary text-readers, in order to discover the
insiders’ view (Spradley, 1980:4) of lamentation in the Gĩkũyũ community. The aim of
doing this was first, to find out whether and to what extent the Agĩkũyũ lamentation practice, is a basis for opening up to the reality of biblical interpretation through the
insiders’ perspective. Second, to find out whether and to what extent the Agĩkũyũ use the
text of Jeremiah 31:15-17, to articulate the aftermaths of the historical catastrophes that
befell them.

4.2 The Gĩkũyũ Bible Version of Jeremiah 31:15-17

In understanding the way this passage was translated, transmitted, mutated, reshaped and
edited by the colonial Church before reaching its present form; we started by reproducing
the Gĩkũyũ bible version of Jeremiah 31:15-17 below, with an equivalent English
translation.

15 Ningĩ Jehova ekuga ĕũ: He mũgambo ũraiguwo Rama wa gũca-kaya na wa Kûrĩra na kĩgi, Rakeli akũrũria Ihĩ ciaka na akarega gũkirio nũndũ wacio, nũgũkorwo itiri ho. (Thus says the Lord, “A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her sons; and refusing to be comforted for her sons are no more”).
16 Jehova ekuga ĕũ: Wĩguirĩrie mũgambo waku ũtige kũiguwo ũkũrĩra, onamo maitho maku matige güta maithori, nũgũkorũo wĩra waku nũkuheanĩrwo ngathо: ũguo nũguo Jehova ekuga atĩ Ihĩ ciaka nũgacoka kauma bũrũri-inĩ wa thiũũ (Thus says the Lord, “Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears; for your work will be rewarded,” declares the Lord, “And they will return from the land of the enemy”).

The writing of this text dates back to either after the fall of the northern Kingdom (Israel) in
721 BCE to the then mighty Assyrians, or just before the fall of the southern Kingdom
(Judah) in 587 BCE); and the subsequent exile to Babylon. This passage is an oracle which
might have been uttered by Jeremiah in the early period of his ministry, either under the
reign of Josiah or during Gedaliah’s governorship when the capital was at Mizpah, where
the prophet may have dwelt. This text consists of a vivid poetic description of Rachel by
Jeremiah, in what represents the nation’s sorrow over the exiling of the Northern tribes. The
people of Israel were, at the time, entrenched deeply into the abyss of emptiness. In a proclamation of hope Jeremiah proclaims hope by poetically crafting the exiled Israelites’ cry of panic and terror of a long-drawn tragedy into a weeping mother.

Israelites’ matriarch is envisaged as an icon of weeping over her exiled children in the Northern Kingdom. Jeremiah 31:15-17 expresses the prophet’s special concern in regard to the restoration of the Northern Kingdom. Its series of fixed expectations, and imaginative interventions, spawns into a process of promoting communal, relational, structural and cultural domains of a scattered people in the face of exilic life (Brueggemann, 2004). Similarly, the scene of the Rachel’s weeping and lamentation, in Jeremiah 31:15-17, is governed by voices of critical dissent sounded from the margin. This text makes analysis of voices of hope out of a world turned upside-down in swirling chaos of dehumanization and brutality. The text refuses despair about what has not been achieved through an expression of brokenness and speechlessness. The bitter grief expresses the art of Rachel’s act of not holding to silence through her daring witness and risk as she communicates the incommunicable to the dominant voices of Babylon. Jeremiah creates a scenario where the embodiment of Rachel and God’s mourning are echoed in anticipation of new creation (Fretheim, 1984: 147). The folly, destruction, waste, struggle and suffering are captured by Israel’s matriarch, who brings the voice of great sorrow to the heart of God. It is Yahweh who announces the imminent liberation, by providing comfort and promise to Israelites, who are now held in exile. It projects a time when Israel’s mourning turns to joy and relief as the community yearns for restoration of faith in God in its native land which was a divine heritage (c.f. Terrien, 1952). In this case, the research in its review of this background of understanding considered the therapeutic ethos that generate resources of exegesis and
hermeneutics of this text to suit African perspective; through general observation of the way Gĩkũyũ People read and interpret this passage. The research tried to establish why this text was becoming more than just a Bible story for the Gĩkũyũ people; as its reading was being informed by community’s social context and lifestyle. The researcher and respondents started with inter-textual analysis and then applied the text to Gĩkũyũ people’s life situation; and finally moved on to locate the community within the Bible narrative. Though this story may be of foreign origin and this explanation may also seem to be of Eurocentric orientation wherever this text is read, and appropriated in indigenous terms, it is subjected to reorientation. Thus, when interpreting the passage of Rachel’s lamentation and weeping, the researcher and respondents were more preoccupied with the search for resonance rather than a quest for dissonance (Mugambi, 2003:118).

This search for resonance culminated into an imagination, which in the long stretch of the Bible makes exile a metaphor and symbol for all established power that seeks to organize the world in conjunction with virtues of freedom, justice and neighborliness. The expression of lamentation as a prerequisite for African biblical interpretation is in its wonder and optimism seen to characterize the communal voicing of pain and distress as a future-looking knowledge of suffering communities. This chapter, therefore, presents a hermeneutical conclusion of Rachel’s narrative of lamentation in Jeremiah 31:15-17 as a sufficiently critical narrative to correct mistakes and misunderstanding; to deepen affirmations and to point out hermeneutical aspects beyond individual spontaneity and honesty of expression. Building on a broad-spectrum of the agreement that the Bible is of fundamental importance for the Gĩkũyũ people’s life and faith, the study affirms that the Bible can and does play an important role in the empowerment of Gĩkũyũ people’s struggle for liberation.
4.3 Inter-textual Analysis

Inter-textual analysis is an act of reading that pushes the text-reader into a network of textual relations. The entire past and memory is kept available and present in concrete and detailed ways through a certain field of imagery as well as grammar, dialectic, and rhythm in which all of reality is uttered, construed and experienced. The contemporary Gĩkũyũ people’s space of believing and being is known to stretch over many generations; it includes the voices of the ancestors whom the European missionaries had ignorantly assumed to be long departed. In Gĩkũyũ people’s context, some of these texts are written, while others are oral; yet others are simply the realities of life surrounding the reader.

This reading, therefore, revolves along the axis of the text and all other texts creating a network of textual relations; through a complex linguistic systems that persists on cultural possibility and connectivity of indigenous world as ‘super-text’ or its later deconstruction. According to Allen (1989), the tracing of those relations are prerequisites of textual interpretation and its verdict. In this regard the researcher approached inter-textuality as a vital ingredient of ordinary text-readers’ search for textual meaning. Since textual meaning or meanings are not determined in isolation from other texts; inter-textual reading was aimed at providing the ordinary text-readers with a network of textual relations that open their spheres of textual meaning, or meanings. Through tracking down those relations, the text-reading becomes a process where textual-meaning is shared between a particular text and all other texts to which it refers and relates; thus transformation into an inter-text. Intertextuality was done through Gĩkũyũ and English language in order to identify the genre and the form within the life setting of the passage and where appropriate we looked for structural patterns and also isolated the unique features and evaluated their significance in our text-
reading process. The suggestion for a community-oriented popular hermeneutics was driven by our concern of ordering, interpreting and driving the word of God home within the Agĩkũyũ social context. The exegetical method did not only show how the ‘language paradigm’ suited the study at hand but it had also given its notion of understanding how the text-reader can interrelate various words in the text, to suit the captive situation of the ordinary Agĩkũyũ text-readers.

The interconnections of these texts were engaged through a post-colonial response to challenges posed by a world constructed by imperialism and its inter-textual obligation into a process of reading and reflecting on the lamentation and weeping of Rachel was essentially undertaken in order to see how Jeremiah 31:15-17 resonates with the lifestyle of Agĩkũyũ text-readers, in the light of their colonial history. This prompted the need to conduct a second reflection on interpretation and translation which helped the study to arrive at a list of alternative words to which this passage can be related in the Gĩkũyũ language. The different factors in this particular inter-textual analysis were the text and pretext, author and text-reader, context and the paradigm of the language expressed in figure 5 below:

*Figure 5 Illustration of an Inter-textual Analysis (Translated from Wim Weren 1993:18)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Pretext</th>
<th>Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Reader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Language Paradigm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The role played by those factors were considered to be distinct but inseparable and, their interplay produced the textual meaning; concomitant to the life situation of the readers. In
order to engage the text without reference to dominant ideology (protective universals), the researcher carried out a word study to help depict the text’s inter-textual relations, by analyzing the particular configuration of words and images that operate in the text. The repositioning of Jeremiah 31:15-17 in the larger scope of cannon and ongoing confessional tradition was used in describing the process of inter-textual analysis, whereby wording, phrasing, or imagery in one text alluded to another. This was done to generate an alternative sense of reality, and its profound complexities which reflect the underlying social realities.

4.4 Relationship between Exegesis and Hermeneutics

The close relationship between the two disciplines namely Exegesis and hermeneutics as acknowledged by Patte (1979: 3-6), Thiselton, (1980: 253-292), Frye (1982) and Chatelion-Counet (2000: 121-141), have persuasively linked a sound biblical hermeneutic with the primordial function of biblical exegesis. There is, for these authors, a momentous dialectic between exegesis (explanation) and hermeneutics (appropriation); because, the two approaches constitute a single phenomenon of interpreting the text. In this case, exegesis approaches the text distinctively as a closed system of signs in its nature and its semantic potentialities (Patte, 1979: 6) creating a firm foundation for hermeneutic to prolong the discourse of the text into a new discourse. The lack of a hermeneutical situation would translate to nonexistence of appropriate methods of biblical exegesis for both disciplines are known to complement each other.

By concentrating on biblical exegesis, the study gets to dig deep into the underlying meaning held within a hermeneutic situation and also actualized through the creative art of biblical hermeneutics. In this case, the hermeneutical process is not complete until the whole
process is accomplished through the text-readers’ acknowledgement of the centrality of biblical exegesis in arriving at a hermeneutical outcome. The study maintains that the art of biblical exegesis pervades all the areas of hermeneutic activities in convincing, and persuading the text-readers’ pre-understanding of the text. Thus, the basic function of biblical exegesis in this study was to apply the scientific methods in our interpretation of the bible, while our focus on hermeneutics was to make a deep reflection on the effectiveness of those methods to the Gĩkũyũ people’s condition on the ground.

At most every stage of our exegetical analysis, we ended up applying the hermeneutical principles, either implicitly or explicitly (c.f. Stuart, 2001: 160). So, exegesis was applied to serve as a thoroughly practical and analytical discipline in studying the text under review. Though the two approaches i.e. hermeneutics and exegesis are distinguished from each other in exegesis aims at outlining the preliminary dimensions of interpreting the text itself in order to make its meaning known, while hermeneutic attempts to clarify what that text means for the post-colonial interpreter and the people of his/her culture. Biblical hermeneutics in this study was precisely appropriated through the synchronic and diachronic focal points of biblical exegesis at its secondary dimension of interpretation. As a second dimension of interpreting the word of God, biblical hermeneutics was seen to operate within a theoretical framework of extending the text to a social context in a process of serving the interests of its audience. Given that exegesis was to lead to hermeneutics, the Euro-centric exegetical methods were obscurantist, hegemonic and ideological in the sense that they distorted the very truth they intended to deliver. Instead of relating the Bible to local cultural contexts there approach had finally resulted into a conflict of exegesis and hermeneutics. For this reason, their exegetical transactions and outcome was based on faulty way of
thinking and so it failed to lead to African biblical hermeneutics; for the reason that, the Gĩkũyũ cultural pre-understandings were always at odds with Euro-centric exegetical methods for biblical scholars had out rightly ignored the demands of ordinary text-readers’ culture. Indeed, the ubiquity of biblical exegesis in the development of biblical hermeneutics is indeed indefinite and so exegesis is a central realm of hermeneutics. In this study biblical exegesis takes its primary concern of aiding the text-reader to obtain the hidden meaning of the text. But, the methods of biblical hermeneutics and those of exegesis will complement one another: Hence, the text-readers reflection on exegetical outcome and processes is made apparent by interplay of the reader, context and the text.

The use of both disciplines is done in relation to culture and social situation of its audience; it forms the basis of achieving a particular hermeneutical outcome. In this case, exegesis is known as the primary interpretation of the text and also as a means through which text-readers establish and manage their basis of a sound hermeneutic endeavor. Indeed, biblical hermeneutics at a secondary level of interpretation was a useful tool of reflections on our exegetical outcomes; it empowered the text through a continued address of its audiences at different times and in different places. In affirming the fundamental role of biblical exegesis in a text-reading process in this study, biblical hermeneutics was applied to serve as a direct appraisal of how the Euro-centric exegetical methods have succeeded or failed in driving the word of God home to the people to whom it aims to reach (Ndegwah, 2007). In this regard, hermeneutics and exegesis approaches are bedfellows which are not opposed to one another within the ordinary Gĩkũyũ text-reading process. Accordingly, the neglect of exegesis in a hermeneutical situation does not count because hermeneutics is a critical reflection on exegetical methods. Exegesis is a reading platform of sacred texts that lays the foundation of
a hermeneutical ground. It is an implicit hermeneutical act which exists and functions within
the intrapersonal realm of text and interpreter.

The fact that the interpretive process is interpersonal makes biblical hermeneutics to come in
as a process of making the text real to the contemporary audience from the start. The text-
reader is guided by exegesis and not by the hermeneutical situation to make known the
exegetical out-come. Finally, the outcome of hermeneutics and exegesis will not only affect
the interpretation of the text but it will also embrace the predispositions and values of its
audience which are distant in time and place from the original text. Both hermeneutics and
exegesis enable the discourse to be extended to new and different situations and not
confined to one time and place. Any exegetical outcome, therefore, includes the purview of
its meaning wherever the methods of hermeneutics are welcome to present the audience's
predispositions as prerequisite of understanding the text through a legitimate framework for
the ascertaining of a here and now basis of the text's meaning. This is precisely the role of
the Scripture in the process of hermeneutics and its appropriation of meaning to its audience
and the values they hold. So, hermeneutics will always define the way in which a text-reader
constructs the interpretation of the text which audience conditioned. The process of
interpreting the biblical and Gĩkũyũ motifs of lamentation is not only to bring that which is
distant closer but to confront ancient texts that always lie dormant. These motifs lie deep in
the heart of the interpreter as the understanding of the text is placed to its proper role of
speaking to an exigency.

To this far, the study can conclude that hermeneutics can be to some extent an element of
exegetical invention, place and topic through which a text-reader can explore with a motif of
discovering the fitting response to a particular exigency. By taking lamentation as a repository of tradition the study will acknowledge lamentation as hermeneutical voice expressed by the condition of a text-reader and that condition is to a large extent a determinant of how the voice lamentation is received. Texts that have greater status in researcher’s eyes move the study to delve more deeply into lamentation, to trust it as a means of naming the world embedded in the text-readers’ thought. Once the expressions of grief achieve its sacred status through the text-reading process, it assumes the power to speak beyond itself. When an indigenous text achieves sacred status, its words assume a new dimension and a power that will enable them to continue to disclose knowledge. The interpreter looks into it to locate an appropriate response to the audience and in so doing carries on the function of direct revelation which it once was thought to do. Hermeneutical act is in its fullest form demonstrates the exegetical basis of the process which must be related to a contemporary audience. The wide-spreading tentacles of lamentation has to do with the application of the study, which is continually used to maintain, reclaim and develop through lamentation which help the exegesis to posit, flourish and expand as a species of hermeneutical inventions, which will warrant the extent of time and space in text-reading through broader meanings of a sacred text. Through hermeneutics, this study affirms the sacred texts in general and specifically to appropriate them through the lamentation and weeping of Rachel.

Characteristically, our focus on exegesis and Hermeneutics has been an endeavor to show how these methods can help us to describe different aspects of the biblical motif of lamentation. This Chapter does not enter into the ongoing intense discussions in regard to relationship held between these two disciplines for the reason that this study’s scope of
operation only deals with text sharing as a hermeneutical, rather than exegetical problem among the Gĩkũyũ people. That is, the extent to which the Gĩkũyũ people’s role in a public processing of pain and social location would always influence the ordinary text-readers to actively and creatively read the Bible from experienced realities of a day-to-day lifestyle held at societal margins. By reading communally with each other and critically seeking to explore and understand the role of the ordinary text-readers as a marginal voice. Articulating the role of lamentation in the development of African biblical hermeneutics in colonial and post-colonial Kenya engenders the indigenous artistic genius of sorting out the marginalized voices, through the engagement of ordinary text-readers as equally capable hermeneutists. We are, however, going to make a review of biblical hermeneutics through Brueggemman’s theory of orientation-disorientation-reorientation as a supplement to our post-colonial criticism that base on the voices of lamentation as a hermeneutical encounter which becomes the basis of Gĩkũyũ people's art of recovering and reconstructing their text-reading theory through lamentation reading of Jeremiah 31:15-22.

4.4.1 Exegetical Analysis of Jeremiah 31:15-17

The process envisaged a wider quest for inter-textual analysis, as one way of situating Jeremiah 31:15-17 in a network of other texts. This text fits within other shifts in other cycles of poetry appearing early in the book: the first cycle is covered with the span of Jeremiah 2:1-4: 4. It begins with indictment and judgment for apostasy (2: 4-9, 10 -13) and ends with a call for returning/repentance (3:1-5, 12-14, 19-20, 21-25; 4:1-2). The second cycle stretches from 4:5-9: 25; v.26-10:25. It begins with judgment at the hands of the foe North (4: 5-8, 13-17) and ends with confession and lamentation (8: 18-21; 8: 22-9:1-2, 9-11, 16-22; 10: 19-21, 23-24). The dialogue oracles, in which Jeremiah and Yahweh alternate as
speakers is presented in a chiasm, formed by whole lines as part of a much larger chiastic structure. It builds on repetitions of words, phrases, and clauses that outline a chain effect in weeping, as the unmatched member of the construction.

4.4.2 Language Paradigm

The language paradigm in Gĩkũyũland is not just a matter of words it carries many other societal aspects, which when put together make up the Gĩkũyũ people’s frame of reference. Upon going through the Gĩkũyũ version of Rachel’s lamentation and weeping, it became clear to us that it was not a direct translation of the original Hebrew Bible, which means it is a translation of another (English) translation. It left this study with no doubt that the reading, interpretation and translation of English texts into Gĩkũyũ texts was highly influenced by colonial presuppositions and assumptions, prejudices and biases, worldviews, ideology and interests; because, the colonizers bedrock of belief that any Euro-centric translation of the text is absolutely true renders all the indigenous texts as sadly distorted or radically false. This is important to note because, as we have already seen, the Gĩkũyũ culture is an oral one and therefore, Gĩkũyũ people’s transaction with the Bible is basically oral in its poetic existential touch that rolls on by itself in an unbroken wave of creative spontaneity. A lot of care and knowledge is required if we are to avoid the throwing of a devastating blow on Agĩkũyũ’s worldview. This means that Jeremiah 31:15-17 has to be translated in one way or another, in order for it to be understood in a wider context (c.f. Ndegwah, 2007: 242). But this is not to deprecate the enormous labour of those biblical scholars who continued tracing the development of biblical hermeneutics from strictly Euro-centric sources but a contention that Euro-centric sources may not possess such a language capability. Anyone embarking on this field of bible translation will soon realize that the translation of English Bible version
into Gĩkũyũ version leaves the Bible as an ideological tool of colonization, oppression and exploitation for it was used to dominate indigenous people’s culture, history and ideologies which are basics of hermeneutical stating points (Mosala, 1986: 196). The problem of translation in post-colonial Gĩkũyũ land rests on two factors; translatability of English language to Gĩkũyũ and the commensurability of European, Hebrew and Gĩkũyũ cultures (Majola, 2005: 5). English, Hebrew and Gĩkũyũ languages are usually not congruent in terms of words and idiomatic expressions. As a result, certain points cannot be transliterated and so the translator is forced to look for a word or words that only faintly or vaguely express the thought to be translated. In this case, the word to be translated has many equivalent concepts in the new language leaving the translator to decide which word to apply.

So, when Mũgĩkũyũ reads the Hebrew text of Jeremiah 31:15-17 he or she will not at once know exactly what the word něhî means, because it has three almost related Gĩkũyũ equivalent. So, is it mbuu (wailing) or kĩrĩro (lamentation) or macakaya (mourning song)? The same case applies to the Hebrew term ‘al-bāneyhā, is it ihĩĩ ciake (her sons) or ciana ciake (her children). A vast amount of translation data still needs to be gathered before a comprehensive and comparative study of these words can be achieved. The paradigmatic aspect of Gĩkũyũ language in this passage was therefore used to point out to various communal utterances of the words and concepts. These words had deeply and permanently affected the situation of Agĩkũyũ’s understanding of themselves and their world. Reading the text in Gĩkũyũ language was sufficiently critical to correct mistakes and misunderstandings, to deepen affirmations and to point out other hermeneutical aspects. Valuation of individual Gĩkũyũ concepts of lamentation was done by tracing the linguistic
context and pattern of words in the passage because the translation of the Bible into Gĩkũyũ language is an interpretive act (West, 2005: 6). These concepts were compared with English translation version to describe how weighty the Gĩkũyũ language envisaged in Rachel’s lamentation and weeping may appear to an ordinary text-reader. For this reason, the study was careful to assert the connecting linguistic force of Rachel’s narrative of weeping and lamentation cannot be noticed without attention being called to the Gĩkũyũ language paradigm. The concrete experience accumulated remains to be a paradigmatic venture among the ordinary text-readers because the local wording and phrasing in the text will always capture the imagination of the readers and hearers of the word of God. This community’s way of looking at the totality of its experience is embedded in its language paradigms. For this purpose the study was keen to identify various concepts that strike the text-reader as illuminators for understanding the passage especially the concepts connecting v. 15 with the prior and the companion oracles:

i) The concepts connecting v. 15 with prior oracle are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gĩkũyũ word</th>
<th>English translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ũraiguuo (it is heard)</td>
<td>v. 10 ta iguai (Hear)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gĩkirio (to be silenced)</td>
<td>v. 13 na ndĩmahorerie (and I will comfort them)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ii) The concepts connecting v. 15 with companion oracle are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gĩkũyũ word</th>
<th>English translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ũkĩrĩra (weeping)</td>
<td>v. 16 mũgambo waku (your voice)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gũcakaya (Weeping)</td>
<td>ükĩrĩra (weeping)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ihĩĩ ciake (her sons)</td>
<td>Ihĩĩ (sons)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response, the study is keen to turn to the task of developing a hermeneutical explication of the paradigmatic questions and images of the Gĩkũyũ language that seem to touch on both the Israelites and the Agĩkũyũ’s experience and feelings at some primordial level. The following Gĩkũyũ words and concepts were identified from Jeremiah 31: 15-17 in order to see how these words and concepts not only arise out of the specific pain but, also extend to what is general. The English and Hebrew versions were brought in an attempt to look for symbols and metaphors that exhibit the hermeneutical mold, assumptions and understanding
of an ordinary Mʊgɪkũyũ text-reader who is not afraid to confront, to listen, to see the world of pain and suffering disclosed:

_Gʊca-kaya/gʊcakaya_ (Weeping)... běkĩ
...akũrũrũra ihĩ ciake (weeping over her sons) měbakkã ‘al-bāneyhā
na akarega (and she refuses)... nĩũndũ wa ihĩ ciake (over her sons) mē’ā nā...‘al-bāneyhā
...nĩgũkorwo itirĩ ho (they are not there) ...’énennũ.

The above correspondence shows a balance and symmetry in thought and form which are both synonymous and antithetical. The Hebrew terms něhĩ denotes wailing, lamentation, (kũgirĩka), běkĩ weeping (gũca-kaya) and tamûrîm disfiguring (kũrũra na kĩgi coined from the word kũrĩro); they are words of expressing disharmony, and even social chaos, in the natural world of Israelites as well as that of the Agĩkũyũ. These terms and concepts were shared by this study as part of what has been illuminating and enriching the Gĩkũyũ people’s reflections and practices of lamentation. It was a world map towards future application of the text as well as a general guide to a reader-focused exegesis. The use of a poetic imagery of Rachel as representation of the nation’s sorrow over the exiling of the northern tribes gives the Gĩkũyũ community the serenity to confront the reality by accepting the things and situations as they are. Our general observation concerning the way the Gĩkũyũ people read and interpret this passage is that is more than just a biblical text for them for it is informed by their lifestyle in its spectrum of a socio-cultural context. They start the reading process with their condition and then move to try and locate themselves within Rachel’s narrative of weeping and lamentation.

4.4.3 Analyzing the Structure and Unity of Jeremiah 31: 15-17

Due to prevalent intellectual currents, the linguistic and morphological structures which have oriented the European and Agĩkũyũ thought patterns in different directions calls for the
conceptualizing of basic beliefs and the use of different language styles to explain them to the ordinary text-readers. The Israelite’s hope for future is an event to break into their world from somewhere beyond history, and to put to an end the pain and suffering of Rachel’s offspring. In actual fact, however the text embraces both the object of hoped for and also the hope inspired by it as the text-readers struggle with their pilgrimage in tragic and difficult encounters with the darkness. By analyzing the structure and unity of Jeremiah 31: 15-17 we can realize the fact that verses 15 and 16 constitute a movement from outside to inside of the given world and of the experiences to which the children of Israel will have of that world. In both cases, this world has been formulated antithetically to confront Israel with a promise of something startlingly new and with hope of a future given by God. In v. 15 a negative statement: “refusing to be comforted for her children are no more” is followed by a positive one: for your work will be rewarded,” declares the Lord, “And they will return from the land of the enemy.

In v. 17 a positive statement “There is hope for your future’ heralds a “thus says the Lord” formula, rendering the whole scenario into a chiastic order. The passage is structured around v. 16 (a) symmetrically to announce the future of that reality, its future possibilities and its power over the future of Rachel’s progeny. It can be read from the extremities of the construction inward to the center as well as progressively from the beginning to the end. This task resulted into the following chiastic structure of Jeremiah 31: 15-17 which answered the question as to whether verse 16a is about the future which is grounded in the person and history of the matriarch Rachel in its provisions of a touchstone by which Israel move beyond distress and pain to hope. They can stimulate an open ended dynamic and an on-going vitality that lead to a process of negotiating, adjudicating and correcting the text
that distinguish their future from despondency. Such reflection calls for a more honest engagement which is portrayed by chiastic structure as arranged and contoured below. Such a structure was drawn to help the study to identify the future of the Gĩkũyũ people’s post-traumatic disorder through Israel’s definite reality in history as an evaluation, appreciation and highlighting of exegetical outcome prior to a hermeneutical analysis. It is easy to show the artistic work of this text which can be arranged in a chiastic structure, an orderly ABCDXDCB pattern: a list of Lamentation and weeping followed by Yahweh’s response to Rachel. It underlies the point that divine response and blessing continues despite human sufferings.

Thus says the LORD,

A- "A voice is heard in Ramah,
B- Lamentation and bitter weeping.
C- Rachel is weeping for her children;
D- She refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more
X- Thus says the LORD “Keep your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears”
D- For your work will be rewarded,” declares the LORD,
C- “And they will return from the land of the enemy.
B- “There is hope for your future.
A-... your children will return to their own territory.

The articulation of the above chiastic structure was intended to trigger off a decolonizing reading process in absence of Euro-centric denials of pain and suffering. The verse 16a is marked with an X in order to identify the pivot or hinge around which the chiasm is built. It is a central unmatched member of the construction and therefore an explicit statement of the illocutionary force of Jeremiah 31: 15-17. So, the study pointed to Jeremiah 31:16a (RSV): “... Keep your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears...” as the central theme of this passage. By building around this chiasm, the statements reflected by verses 15 and 16a were finally placed at the outside, the positive ones are captured in v. 17 at the inside, while vv. 15 and 16 are doubled so as to keep the attention of the reader. It is through a non-violent mechanism of expressing protest and complaint that we arrive at historical and religious
process adopted by Israelites for ages.

The expression of pain, suffering and despair of the exiled community leads to hermeneutical assaults against the altered self-images of textual-meaning as presented by alien aggressors. Though, this study may fail to entirely isolate vv. 15-17 as a literary unit, because of the soundness of scholarly works and commentaries that articulate and take vv. 15-22 as a literary unit. We would take v. 15 as self-standing and, in the wider analysis pair it with hope oracles in vv.16-17 because in v.15 Rachel makes her lament but in vv 16-17 Yahweh answers the lament by giving her hope for the future. Nevertheless, the case at point is how at the end of poetic coring a noticeable shift, in theme and mood, which the text readers are capitalizing would lead to a reader-focused criticism. Vv. 15-17 culminated to a hope passage, it replaces judgment texts articulated in Jeremiah 30: 5-7, 12-15, weeping, sorrow and confession at the end of 31:15, 18-19.

In order to identify how the words, phrases, and clauses in Jeremiah 31: 15-17 corresponds with one another, the study had to embark on critical and analytical examinations of indigenous folklores and further bring them into Rachel’s lamentation on account of how the ordinary text-readers respond in the many contexts in which they find themselves. A deeper concern on the structural features of the phrase “Keep your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears” was effectively used to assess and exploit the secondary literature.

By hosting inter-textuality in a manner that provides revitalization and starkness of Rachel’s ordeals through exegetical claims of lamentation texts. Our understanding of the term ‘inter-textuality’ was useful in making the lamentation and weeping of Rachel to reflect a
spectrum of post-colonial cultural appraisals. The questioning and challenging of ideologies begins with the attribution and affirmation of the scholarly claim that the text of Jeremiah 31:15-17 was characteristically authored by Jeremiah the prophet.

His writing style is affectionate in bringing the image of a God who is moved to action by Rachel’s voice of sorrow. The tears and great sufferings of Israel are indeed captured, in Jeremiah’s writing genre, as a precursor to joy but not as hopeless despair. Thus, the prophetic and poetic imaginations were used in personifying, engaging and employing a dramatic display of Israel’s matriarch in a sorrowful mood that deepens and enriches local contexts and texts. In this aspect, Jeremiah has brilliantly brought the Israel’s exilic ordeals into a poetical personification of Rachael, who is weeping for Israelites, who are now scattered in an alien land and conditions.

This poetic reference is, in its wider context, brought into larger meanings and so this lamentation and weeping of Rachael are beyond its span of the Northern Kingdom, as it extends to the whole nation of Israel. It is profoundly expressing ever-searching recollections of community’s loss and sufferings, by opening the ambiguity of exile and return into a poetic beauty and religious depth. This process makes the voice of lamentation part and parcel of Israel’s subterranean crisis of identity; leading to designed actions of expressing the extreme grief of exiles. This passage fits very well within chapters 30-31, which constitute a small manuscript of comfort, giving glimpse to future restoration of Israel and Judah. It culminates into the announcement of the imminent and imperative advent of Yahweh in a homecoming climatic tone: “Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears; for your work will be rewarded” (v.16). The voice of Yahweh builds around the
poetic symbol of return, which is only comparable to Jeremiah 31: 2-6, it presupposes a radical artistic conception of facts and significant of intimate and familial symbolism of God’s love expressed through the symbolization and recapitulation of Israel’s anticipation for future and prosperity.

4.4.4 Israelites’ Situation of Captivity and that of Gĩkũyũ Text-readers

The study approached the situation of the Israelites (captivity) and that of Agĩkũyũ text readers (colonialism) as two comparable situations for the reason that the two communities belong to a category of all those people who are uprooted and victimized by forces beyond their control. The two communities are wrestling with catastrophic post-traumatic disorders emanating from external aggression, occupation, foreign domination, and other events which are seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of their territories. We are therefore compelled to read and reflect on Jeremiah 31: 15-17 in order to come into terms with aftermaths of foreign aggression and occupation through its related trauma that cause numbness, yearnings and searching for meaning and purpose of life; disorientation, anger and despair as the community seek for its reorientation. So, when it comes to literal understanding of the colonial practices of detention and deportation we have among the Gĩkũyũ people a phrase; gũtwarwo Ithamĩrio which denotes “being taken to captivity.”

Literally, Gĩkũyũ text readers equated their circumstances of colonial detention and displacements to captivity because they were being taken by force from the familiar to places so far removed from Gĩkũyũland and its people. These areas were remote and colonial friendly in terms of locally available manpower of conducting torture and all the atrocities against the detainees. The opinion movers of Gĩkũyũland had taken a frontline in
the Mau Mau war as freedom fighters as they inspired the struggle. However, their language of referring to reality of detention as; gūtwarwo Ithamĩrio had based on biblical narratives that helped them articulate their traumatic situation and so when the ex-detainees ravage in poverty lament: Ici nĩ indo ciitũ iria Ngaati ici cietahĩĩire thutha wa ithuĩ arũũri a wũyathi gūtwaro ithamirio (These are our properties which these home-guards had seized from us immediately after we were taken to the land of captivity). The families of ex-detainees who by virtue of internal displacement were irreparably uprooted from their community and also made to remain as squatters in Gĩkũyũland are today vulnerable to systematic economic deprivations and unwarranted persecutions. The children born to this generation are perpetually uprooted by predominant ideologies of colonizers and so their access to the enjoyment of the minimal standards of responses to their protection under the scriptural and natural law of justice is blocked. Such blockage has put their scope of imaginative latitude to jeopardy but the hermeneutical challenge that builds along this path of articulating what text-reader see and hear in the text suggests an attempt to embrace the African myth of origin, poetry and oral history.

The stories of pain and suffering of Israel and the ordeals of Agĩkũyũ text readers which were simultaneously used to identify, guide and confirm the possibility of a here and now reinforcement of divine intervention in the predicaments of Africa. The post-colonial analysis and reflection of this text through the processing, refining and adjusting human cry was used in the affirmation of ordinary text-readers' social reality as an ideal model and a true expression of a post-colonial world. The following lament entitled; Be aware of those that are close to you (Watene 1974: 81) warns against the enemies who betrayed the freedom fighters among the Gĩkũyũ people and also offers instructions to be followed: The
poem stimulates faith by way of contradicting the enemy, it leads to rigorous faith.

A - For they will lead you to the swollen river
B - And will not show you the stepping stone
C - Turn your back on those who claim to love you
X - Give a deaf ear to their sympathies
C - And wipe not their crocodile tears
B - Turn your heart away from your mother
A - Until I send you another word

The embracement of indigenous criterion of interpreting the text will make the explication and function of lamentation in Gĩkũyũland a hermeneutical force. And so, this embrace can relevantly function in modern times by outlining the mode of ordinary text-readers thinking through a public processing of pain and what will follow. By creating awareness on what lamentations is, the study recognizes the importance of hermeneutical thoughts prevalent in the Old Testament setting which are hitherto overlooked or undervalued by Euro-centric reading in Africa. In the course of suggesting on how the Agĩkũyũ lamentation text can be used, in the process of interpreting the Bible: The study authenticates its response to the claim that every interpreter consciously or unconsciously brings with himself or herself certain conceptions of the text, whether idealistic or psychological, as presumptions of his or her hermeneutics. Our attention to the passage of Jeremiah 31:15-17 facilitates the contemporary text readers to bring the local community and its successive generations of text readers into a process of searching for textual meanings.

In the process, the indigenous community is set free to replay the aftermath of traumatic events which emanates from past devastation and degradation of the Gĩkũyũ people. The colonial perspective of text-reading is known to ignore the people’s locations by creating otherness in hermeneutical discourse and so it is opposed to text-readers’ return to indigenous expressions of grief. It has no agenda of using lamentation in hermeneutical
aspects of opposing, eliminating and subverting the agents of blind patriotism, hierarchy, hegemony, and monolithic understanding of the text. Indeed, it is the complexity and diversity of the concrete contexts that propels the task of challenging the colonizers’ values, through communal and individual laments which are at the center of our text-reading process. The act of equating the Gĩkũyũ situation to that of captivity makes the reality of freedom fighters being taken to places far removed from their homeland and their people a metaphor of reading the text through exilic conditions.

Also factoring on the reality that almost all the colonial detention camps were remote and colonial friendly in terms of locally available manpower in terms of those Africans who were used to conduct torture and commit atrocities against the detained Gĩkũyũ leaders and the Mau Mau freedom fighters. Hence, the language of gũtwarvo Ithamĩrio (to be exiled) was drawn from the biblical narratives which had inspired the resilience of hardcore detainees to perceive themselves as being in the foot of Israelites’ exile situation. One of the recorded similarities identified in this, is a cry of a nation which has been traumatized, shaken, shattered and scattered. It reflects a sick land and a broken hearted people who are in dire need for healing and restoration. Emphasizing on post-colonial reading and retelling of Rachel’s narrative of lamentation and weeping among the Agĩkũyũ confirms the subversive response to the dominating forces of imperial ideology in a decolonization text-reading process. Such a process is acknowledged by this study as a source of nurturing of the ideal space for textual interconnections. It leads to a geographical appreciation of the adequacy of ordinary text-readers’ cultural values as ideal model for a truly post-colonial engagement of scriptures both historically and theologically in present discourse. The inclusive world of post-colonial criticism becomes a source of strength and abilities among
text-readers who overcome hermeneutical gaps and separations between past and present through disapproval of colonial explanation and understanding of human existence. As the text of Jeremiah 31:15-17 unfolds, its hermeneutical discourse and outcome are used to explain the experience of what has befallen the Agĩkũyũ. The voice of Rachel connects the contemporary sufferings and the voices of Agĩkũyũ into a creative actualization of the reality. It involves and empowers both the readers and the listeners of the word of God through its acts of resistance.

4.5 Textual Analysis

The research has analyzed the text, through artistic attentiveness, to a process that operates within the text itself in its generation of an imagined “world” within the text. This generative act of artistic imagination takes a careful reality that requires and evokes rooted, emancipated imagination in every subsequent reading of the text under review. It is through this reading process that the problem and the respondents were engaged, as the major realities, in the process of lamentation. This approach was not focused upon the cognitive outcomes of the text, as demanded by Euro-centric approaches (though at the end there were cognitive outcomes) but on the text itself (c.f. Brueggemann, 2002: 360). The process involved the background of the text under review, the immediate facts that brought the expression of Rachel’s lamentation in place. What is behind these individual facts and the changes that have occurred over time, privileges the Agĩkũyũ to revisit the text through lenses of their troubled journey during colonialism. This community’s indigenous culture is presented as an authentic site of fathoming the diverse ways of text-reading used by both the colonizer and the colonized in a more complex tradition than any of them would realizes. The second stage was to focus on the core usage of Rachel’s lamentation – its root causes,
and impacts in Gĩkũyũ people’s lives as well as how it has become a powerful symbol; and remained as one of the most treasured possessions of the traumatized lot. The reasons for this analysis are threefold. First of all the Bible is believed, by many Gĩkũyũ ordinary text-readers, to have authority. As revealed by our research, the Bible continues to be read for survival, not for leisure; that is, for guidance, inspiration, comfort, and for obtaining wisdom. Though it is not an indigenous text of the Agĩkũyũ, its contents are believed to have special significance, and to be a store of knowledge and teachings similar to those of the Gĩkũyũ people; which have reached down the community through several generations. Some of our informants claimed that the Gĩkũyũ community is one of the lost tribes of Israel; and so they have always read the Bible with zeal as though it was their own text. However, that was not the concern of this study, as its main concern was to exercise caution not to equate Rachel’s lamentation with that of the Gĩkũyũ people’s lamentations; because the Rachel’s lamentation communicates a narrative of how a people who had interacted with God has progressed into appropriate role model for humanity as God sought to have it.

The hermeneutical dialogue between the Bible and Agĩkũyũ life and thought is in this study, approached with answering questions that arise out of this community’s own times and circumstances of interpreting its condition, through the indigenous concept of lamentations. This discourse becomes an important premise of articulating the power of life through a poetic, imaginative proposal for a marginalized and disenfranchised people to envision a different way of life. It is used to determine the way, and the extent to which, the Gĩkũyũ people’s lamentations are reflected in bible sharing sessions. The continuing relevance of the Bible makes ordinary text-readers to nurture their self-conscious and desire to look for here-and-now answers to existential questions. Subsequently, the earnest search for answers
from the biblical text makes lamentation a post-colonial text which is perceived to reveal starkly the existing social evils and the stinging pain of the most terrible forms of suffering in Gĩkũyũland. Finally, the bitterness expressed by Gĩkũyũ people against the colonialists is evidenced by the fact that some of them still talk about what they went through, as if it happened yesterday; with a sense of betrayal by the subsequent post independent governments. Through Rachel’s narrative a distinct hermeneutics tradition begins to emerge, which makes visible the spectacular ways in which the word of God is brought home, and nearer to the roots of the Agĩkũyũ people.

The advent of colonialism had been a grave social problem to pioneer text-readers (athoomi) from this community, for they were required to throw away their beliefs, customs and traditions and accept, without question or qualification, a completely new way of life, social code and morals (Temu, 1971: 107). The effects that bound the Agĩkũyũ together into one organic whole were mercilessly dismantled by colonial master plan of executing indigenous communities through organized killings and evictions. The Gĩkũyũ people were evicted and driven out of their native land under the pretext of creating room for colonial settlers as role models of modernity in Gĩkũyũland. Eventually, this community was lured by settlers to multiform social seclusion through marginalization, deprivation, and depersonalization.

The perpetual sinking of people into a calamitous swamp of misery, underdevelopment and unequalled lamentation has ushered in a wholesale and smooth internalizations, preservations and transmissions of the colonial cultural text, without the interrogation of the histories in which these colonial texts have taken shape and solidified. The advent of post-colonial oppressors was disappointment zenith to sacrifices made by Gĩkũyũ freedom
veterans who in their struggle against colonialism remained a religiously threatened people. This showdown predicts that all what was robbed by colonial text-reading process from the Gĩkũyũ people is today translated into loss of African past as well as their roots and identity. Hence, the interpretation of horrendous crisis of life and identity of this community is hermeneutically entrapped in a world full of shifting economic, political, social and cultural goal-posts. So, their post-colonial expectations are firmly built on the wider issues of social location in hermeneutics that generate dialogue out of African motif of lamentation in its relation to biblical motif of lamentation. But the key question in this discourse is: does the post-colonial framework of text-reading help the Agĩkũyũ to achieve their hermeneutical goals, or how does it inadvertently counteract and subvert their good intentions? Besides, the study has in general brought Jeremiah’s vocation to limelight of the general motifs of lamentations that envisage him as an emblematic figure, a life coach and inspirational prophet not only to the Israelites but also other down-trodden people in other lands of the world who under such circumstances depict life as not worthy living. It brings forth the ingredients of deep faithfulness and bold imagination of venturing into scathing criticism against the culture of hermeneutical distortions which have plunged societies into chaos.

4.5.1 The Orientation-Disorientation-Reorientation in Jeremiah 31:15-17

Using Brueggemann’s theory of reading the Psalms of laments we were able to view our passage through the hermeneutical spiral of orientation, disorientation and reorientation, which helped us to articulate and shape the Agĩkũyũ text-readers’ experience: the following sequential structure was realized: 1) Orientation: “...Rachel is weeping for her children...” (Jer. 31:15); 2) Disorientation: “...Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears...” (Jer. 31:16); 3) Reorientation: “...There is hope for your future...” (Jer. 31:17). This
consideration of the study’s conceptual framework was helpful in summing up this poem into the following two major interpretive units: i) Rachel makes her lament (v 15), and ii) Yahweh answers the lament (vv 16-17).

i) Rachel makes her lament (v15)

In the first unit, the passage begins with a sudden, but significant expression of Jeremiah; that is, a voice/sound qôl which is heard that contradicts silence and denial of pain. God acknowledges Rachel’s voice, she is not afraid to confront and to see her children’s world unveiled. The Hebrew terms nēhî (wailing, lamentation, mourning song), bêkî (weeping) and tamûrîm (disfiguring, words of mourning) expresses disharmony, and even social chaos. The transgression of natural order makes the exiles to embark on reckoning with the reality of disaster trauma and post-traumatic disorders. The only known social world is caught up in conflict, leading to a new socio-economic, political and cultural status that contradicts the organic nature of Rachel’s children. Consequently, the existence of this community is engulfed and lured to a catastrophic loss of identity. The organic rhythm of life that boosted the Israelites’ expression of trust in God which had also functioned within the framework of covenant relationship was now placed at stake. Moreover, the condoning emanating from denial and silence ensured that the oppressed are blindfolded by colonial forms of rationality in their perception of reality. Therefore, Rachel’s lamentation and weeping expresses emotional utterances through variant moods and feelings that spill over into protest (Brueggemann, 2004). This part of narrative is endowed with poetic beauty and religious depth of Rachel’s voice, which is heard in Ramah, site is so crucial in the task of forming new Israel’s post-exile public, organized for textual discussion and action. The personification of Rachel, as a rhetoric figure, is reflected in lamentation and bitterest
weeping for her children. “She refuses to be comforted for her children are no more (v.15).” Rachel’s voices of complain and protest are not muted, they express her search for direction amid dreadful events that plays out the suffering and lost hope of her children. The absence of her offspring reflects a population decline that jeopardizes Yahweh’s promise, of countless posterity to the patriarchs of Israel who anticipated the growth of this community into a great nation. In empty abyss of tribulation, emptiness and trauma, Jeremiah is strategically placed to confront the issue at stake by helping the people to reflect on their own lives through new imagination of the text. This confrontation is keen to generate ideas and alternatives, among the people themselves. It raises the spirit of Rachel to a ghostly yet real presence in a way of organically binding together the tribes of Israel; so that they could effectively subordinate their separate interests to the common project of winning a collective freedom and security from Babylon.

Rachel represents a sequence of deeply emotional human responses to the devastating judgment; in order to illustrate how lamentation and weeping constitute Israel's counter testimony. As she confronts God with hurt and pain of this lived reality, Yahweh is moved by her pathos. God speaks to her, and does what no human can do. No one else could console griefed Rachel but God, she is told to hold her voice from weeping, for Yahweh has recognized her weeping and tears. She is a strong-willed woman stands well-grounded in her lament, and finally the grief and protest of Rachel permit God to move beyond sovereign anger and rage to comfort her with surprisingly good news of reorientation, rehabilitation and restoration (Brueggemann, 2005: 437).
4.5.2 Orientation-Disorientation-Reorientation in Agĩkũyũ Motif of Lamentation

The sequence of orientation-disorientation-reorientation forms a hermeneutical spiral; it conjectures the center of Gĩkũyũ society’s theory of change. Its application is designed to enlarge and enrich the Gĩkũyũ people’s arena of theological and hermeneutical reflection. The challenge of Agĩkũyũ despairing doubt is countered by the witness of faith that God of Agĩkũyũ is stronger than European gods, and therefore the Gĩkũyũ people’s competence in taking a self-liberation action supersedes the restraining forces of the British regime. The first rubric by which we will attempt to understand the hermeneutics of lamentation is to propose a dialectic process by holding in tension the shifting patterns of relationship between several poles of force and meaning configurations. This dialectic opens and enters the life of a text-reader from a social context in which the community is located.

The sequence of orientation-disorientation-reorientation is therefore traced within the Gĩkũyũ community’s three seasons of faith in God that reflect the geography of Agĩkũyũ’s search for meaning and purpose in life. The community had certain depth of understanding and response to life that involved a self-interpretive process framework that related to all aspects of life and its relationships. Such a framework guided the tribal secretiveness through community’s boldness and ability to suspect any form of alien ideologies and also to scheme on how to challenge them. The traditional Gĩkũyũ people’s life of worship and sacrifice had always suggested a movement in the use and function of lamentation which is not consciously intentional, but explicit in practical parse. Since, this sequence exists but always remains as unconsciously recognized or articulated, it can only be traced through the crucial role played by the ancestral God (Ngai) in shaping the community’s life which was sometimes faced with calmness, chaos and lack of equilibrium. This was followed by radical
surprises of a return to optimism and tranquility. The introduction of a high God, who was far removed, in time and space, from Gĩkũyũ people’s life by European missionaries contradicted the community’s practices and interests.

The community’s beliefs were perpetually centered on Ngai, the Gĩkũyũ deity who connected with immediate environment. The freedom fighters as text-readers had cultivated a dialogical imagination in their articulation of a true integration of their faith in God into their natural and cultural identity of being truly African and truly Christian. They were able to correlate their faith in God with African traditional values in what study terms as the Mau Mau movement’s expansion of the horizon of military struggle to enculturation process. The model of the creed of Gĩkũyũ and Mũmbi was hewn out of the Apostles’ Creed to produce a classic theological model of grounding their faith in God in the tenets of their struggle for land and freedom. The following is a Gĩkũyũ text popularly known as; Wĩtĩkio ūrĩa Agĩkũyũ Moimbũraga Hindi ya Mbaara ya Mau Mau (The Creed confessed by Gĩkũyũ people during the Mau Mau war) This was mainly to express the disconnections in community’s life incurred through the community’s experiences, which were envisaged on a cycle of natural ebbs and flows of orientations, disorientations and reorientations.

Wĩtĩkio wa Gĩkũyũ na Mũmbi
Nĩnjĩtĩkĩte Ngai ithe mwene hinya wothe mũmbi wa igũrũ na thĩ
Na ngetĩkia Gĩkũyũ na Mũmbi aciari aĩtũ arĩa agaĩre bũrũri ūyũ
Makũmbũrũria kũnyarirwo hindi ya Waiyaki-wa-Hinga na Wang’ombe-wa-Ihũra
Magũiahũwua na magũĩũnywo iĩhaka ciao na hinya ni nyakerũ
Makũũũũ wuo magũũũũwo tumbutũmbu
Narũ rũciaro rwo reku ao guoya nĩũruahrũkĩte
Rũkoigia icurũrũio ciandũ gũũrũ ri iego iũũũrũe
Thaai iĩthaihũwai Ngai Thaai (c.f. wa-Wanja 1971:187)

The Creed of Gĩkũyũ and Mũmbi
I believe in God the father almighty, creator of heaven and earth
And in Gĩkũyũ and Mũmbi our parents to whom God has given this land
Suffered during the reign of Waiyaki-wa-Hinga and Wang’ombe-wa-Ihũra
Brutally suppressed and deprived of their land by White people
Beaten up smelted, hammered and crashed to ashes and dust
And now fearless and no nonsense progenies have emerged:
Declaring to everyone to take arms for no member of *Iregi* age set survives today
Peace!! Oh!! Peace!! Oh God!! Peace)

The figure 4 below illustrates the sequence taken by the Creed of Gĩkũyũ and Mũmbi vis-à-vis the orientation-disorientation-new orientation theory.

**Figure 4 The Sequence of the Creed of Gĩkũyũ and Mũmbi**

**Orientation**

Ninjĩtikîte Ngai ithe mwene linya wothe mũmbi wa igūrũ na thi. Na ngẽfĩkĩ Gĩkũyũ na Mũmbi aiciari aifĩ ara aigaĩre biũrũ iũyũkĩ

**Disorientation**

Magĩathwo na magĩũũuywo ithaka ciao na linya ni nyakerti.
Makĩũũuywo magĩũũuywo umũmbũmbũ (Suffered during the reign of Waiyaki wa Hngũ and Wang ombe wa -lũhũra. Brutally suppressed and deprived of their land by White people Beaten up smelted, hammered and crashed to ashes and dust)

**Reorientation**

Naũũruĩkĩrũ raωo rũt̨ari na guo y aũũth̨ari kũkĩt̨e. Rũkuũgũ kũtuũĩ ria mũmbi wa irgeĩ tũtíũrũ. (And now fearless and no nonsense progenies have emerged declaring to everyone to take arms for no member of *Iregi* age set survives today Peace!! Oh!! Peace!! Oh God!! Peace)

**Source:** Researcher

After figuring out of the sequence of orientation-disorientation-reorientation model above, we had the opportunity to apply the Gĩkũyũ people’s context of illustrating and summing up this sequence:

**Orientation:**

This articulates a securely oriented and serenely settled life in Gĩkũyũland, which remains the Gĩkũyũ people’s center of life and its theory of change. The idiomatic expression *No*
It is only a plum crown and wind: expresses life in its coherence and reliability further denoting the absence of tension (exceptional serenity) in Gĩkũyũland, as well as a mindset or a worldview of undisturbed and uncritical equilibrium that brings orderliness, goodness and reliability. By asserting the reliability of God and ancestors, and how things are well grounded, the community anticipated that these would work forever; and so it continued to offer its imperatives and prohibitions in order to maintain the calmness of life.

Disorientation

By being painfully disoriented the community had its own way of removing certain blockages to its integration and also its provisions of an opening of the way toward great integration of wholeness. The season hindī ya wihũũge (the period of emergency), ituĩka (break or luminal period) or mūtĩro (absence from daily routines in order to reflect on and remember better times back in the old period of orientation with a wish to re-turn to that situation). These words express the abject dismay as the familiar is modified, changed, or discarded. It is characterized with expression of anger, resistant, resentment, frustration or even denial against disorientations. The create confusion, brought by God's seeming absence that takes serious hermeneutical responsibility, for the contemporary meaning and significance of the biblical text in Gĩkũyũland.

Reorientation

The divine surprises were known to evoke the reorientation. The community was fond of the expression: Ngai ni wa mathaa maingĩ tondũ riũa riĩthiiaga kwara akoiria mbura nyeni ikamera. This idiomatic expression literally denotes that “God is too merciful for the reason
that wherever the scorching sun begins to show its ugly side in Gĩkũyũland God would always intervene, through the bounty of rainfall to restore and replenish the land. It celebrated the timeliness of divine intervention and action in Gĩkũyũland and its people. The Gĩkũyũ people expressed and articulated reorientation under two sponsorship categories; the individual and the communal expressions of laments. Typically, it had no systematic order but it had implicitly appeared in a genre similar to the one previously suggested (see 1.2.3). This can further be simplified as follows: (1) Crying to God, (2) Naming the hurt, (3) Cursing those responsible for suffering, (4) Protestation of innocence or admission of guilt, (5) An appeal for divine help, (6) Faith in ancestral God's acceptance of prayer, (7) Expectation of marvelous response, and (8) A song of thanksgiving.

The lament genre stated above expresses the Gĩkũyũ people’s capacity to devise typical patterns of speech and expression through community’s day-to-day needs, hopes, and experiences. Occasionally, laments are used to articulate the impassioned, vivid, concrete, poetic, unforgettable images, simile, metaphor and word pictures through evaluative communications. Such evaluation had always accompanied the communal expression of joy, serenity, peace, as well as guilt. Other expressions included shame, positive self-regard, or angry defiance. Typically, such evaluations had comprised the public and individual act of remembering, assembling, and convergence that uncovered the assumptions upon which the Gĩkũyũ community’s life was built and governed. It was a process of exposing the text and context, as the axis upon which the Gĩkũyũ people’s life revolved. In this case, the Agĩkũyũ fusion of horizons (of understanding through the uncovering of the deep narrative issues and experience of life) pointed to what had to radically shape this community’s patterns of expressing laments. However, the Gĩkũyũ people’s folktales and songs describe the
relationship between this community and Ngai (the God of their ancestors). They recognized that God’s power and majesty would bring difficult circumstances to a halt as captured by communal themes of future restoration and judgment.

The advent of colonialism and the orientation to God of the Western world and as time went by the Gĩkũyũ people’s quest for meaning and purpose of life, were absurdly at variance with demands of modern world and its scientific methods. The community had no choice but to revert to its roots, culture’s symbols and rituals for internal sense of meaning because the existing cultural support system had begun to disintegrate, due to the marauding forces of the colonial holocaust. The Gĩkũyũ text readers had in their historical and experiential moments reached to new and different meaning of the text and so they were not ready to shy away in questioning the enlightenment scientific paradigms that restricted text and meanings to historical and literally context. Often, the first question was whether the text’s meaning was related to the reader’s present circumstance or whether it sheds light to the purpose or meaning of life. When life was inherently seen as meaningless, it was impossible to find answers or to reach a comforting realization. This questioning was enigmatic and it remained to be the greatest mystery of life. A number of rites of passage mark Gĩkũyũ people’s transitions from one life stage to another, such as at birth, puberty, marriage, and death, Initiation rites are the rituals that transform youths/adolescents into adults; during these rituals they are initiated by tribal elders into the lore of the tribe and into adult responsibilities. Most rites of passage have three stages: (1) rites of seclusion, where the person is detached from his family; (2) The luminal stage (rite of passage), which is the transitional stage and (3) Graduation to a new stage of life.
Lamentation, as a symbol of richness and detail, takes on a hermeneutical task, of judging and evaluating different situations, in order to determine what the occasion demands. As a human interpretive experience it is indeed inexhaustible for it is based on text-readers’ ability to adequately interpret their life experiences, and to respond appropriately to them through a process that creates a better world. Biblical scholarship is thus enriched by such a dynamic perspective, through the lumping together of a wide range of considerations, including the broad socio-cultural context that expresses the desire or intention concerning future life. Other perspectives include the disclosure of internally felt conflict, interpersonal conflict or conflict of values that are at stake in the societal choice of the accepted behavior. It carries the weight of text-reader’s enlarged pre-understanding, through a frustrated longing for change and positive self-evaluation, as well as the possible connection established between memories of Gĩkũyũ people’s past and present relation dilemmas. Viewed from this prism that directly questions the text-reader’s attention to the flow of conversation and hermeneutical inquiry, a spiral pattern is developed that moves from the immediate hermeneutical relationship to the arena of current life. This leads towards an ever enlarging, more elaborate arena through which greater clarity of interpretation on the part of both text and text-reader may take place by deliberately shaping a spiral that indeed could be virtually endless.

4.5.3 A Post-colonial Reflection on Jeremiah 31: 15 -17

The post-colonial theory referred to in chapter one (1.2.4) points to how the Bible came to be used by the oppressors and the marginalized; in a troubled mediation that contradicts the possibility of a smooth dialectic synthesis. A post-colonial reflection on Jeremiah 31: 15-17 enriches the efforts central to the multi-valence of the postcolonial discourse through
biblical hermeneutics. This is possible because of its proximity to the formerly colonized people and the central role it plays among the exiled people of Israel, in the uncovering of Babylonian imperial hermeneutical symbols. Rachel’s voice, in this text, evokes the breaking of silence as opposed to colonially packaged and alien symbols that evoke silence, and denial of the experiences of the marginalized text-readers, and hearers of the word of God. Hence, the need for an adequate hermeneutical approach, in Africa based on, but not limited to the African concept of lamentation. Making textual reflections from a postcolonial perspective translates this text into a framework, within which the myths and legends of Gĩkũyũ indigenous cultural traditions, are recovered in response to oppression. According to Sugirtharajah (1999 and 2001), it has become commonplace to think of how the colonized people read the text from a colonizer’s context; in which self-confidence and self-realization was deliberately undermined. Also Ndegwah (2007:2), points to post-colonial era as a period characterized by two simultaneous happenings: an end to forcible dictation and imposition of foreign values and institutions. This was a period of autonomous self-expression and reflection on values and goals of a hitherto subjugated people of Africa.

According to Gyekye (1997: 158), the later aspect helps accelerate the gradual weaning away from the self-flagellating aspects of the colonial mentality acquired through decades of colonial subjugation. This observation could not have been truer in explaining what people went through in Gĩkũyũland. From the beginning, the imperializing ideologies were invested in a colonial text-reading that was based on the ideology of civilizing the natives (Mudimbe, 1988: 133). The missionaries, who were part and parcel of colonial power group, had played their role of providing the textual-meaning within the framework set by the imperial Christendom. However, this framework of controlled textual meanings had
deflected the text-readers attention from substantive issues by raising prurient ones as well as by providing easy access to heavenly joy as a smokescreen. Thus, the post-colonial reflection on Rachel’s lamentation and weeping stands to help the colonized text-readers to illumine how hermeneutical tensions and conflict have been deployed by European colonizers in empire building right in the heart of Gĩkũyũland.

The post-colonial reflection of Jeremiah 31: 15-17 presents a metaphorical predicate of the role of death, suffering and cultural upheaval; which the Agĩkũyũ as a wounded people, have powerfully symbolized. The current state of the hermeneutical question, as it has already been raised elsewhere (c.f. 2.1.3), includes the complexity of de-colonization contexts, subjects, and discourses. Thus, the post-colonial confrontation of Rachel’s lamentation and weeping opens the indigenous text-reader to a review of colonial and anti-colonial hermeneutical experience in the light of British invasion of Gĩkũyũland. So, when the voiceless begin to speak, new challenges connect with the concern for the marginalized.

The post-colonial textual reflection in Gĩkũyũland is synonymous to Lamentation which epitomizes the anti-colonial reading of the text, thus, the Agĩkũyũ postcolonial reflection on Jeremiah 31: 15-17 comes in as a hermeneutical conduit of articulating, re-describing, exposing, mediating, embracing and reconstructing the Agĩkũyũ human experience of mental, physical and spiritual captivity, through their historical circumstances. Our appraisal of Jeremiah 31: 15-17 will, therefore, provide a hermeneutical sanctuary to the marginalized and maligned hermeneutical discourses.

As a hermeneutical strategy, our post-colonial reflection on Jeremiah 31:15-17 was informed by the conviction that all biblical interpretations, however scientific and objective
they purport to be, are perspective in nature, sociopolitical in effect and ideological in thrust. The Agıkũyũ text-readers, whose children are being destroyed today through all sorts of social strife (like post-election violence, extra-judicial killings, AIDS, and rape through the marginality of IDPs camps) extends to millions of the traumatized communities around the globe. However, this reality of lamentation and sorrow is countered by denial and persistence; waged by dominant ideologies. As a result, people tend to ignore and shut them out of their perception of the underlying reality. Rachel’s narrative is fixed for all races and generations, for it is punctuated with sorrow.

Rachel, the wife of Jacob (Israel), is the mother of Joseph; was sold under puzzling circumstance into slavery, leaving Jacob inconsolable as he helplessly yielded to the deceptions fronted by his sons that Joseph was already dead. Before Rachel met her through maternal mortality, she had already associated herself with sorrow through the naming of her son Benjamin in Genesis 35: 16-20 as Ben-‘ônî (a Hebrew term that denotes: a “son of my sorrow). And so Rachel was a mother full of sorrows and acquainted with grief, which invokes her name in the intergenerational shedding for tears for her threatened offspring. Her lamentations and weeping are not limited to the shedding of tears for her sons, but extends to the entire community of Israel and beyond. Rachel will always cry inconsolably, and her tears will not stop until the Lord announces to her: “There is hope for your future.”

4.6 The Setting of Rachel’s Narrative

This poetic narrative is written when the community of Israel was in Babylonian exile coupled with the collapse of the state, the temple, and the empire made the people of Israel hopeless, and so they needed hope. The lamentation and weeping of Rachel implores God to
be compassionate to the suffering of Rachel’s children. The function of this narrative is to appeal to God's compassion. This poetry, in articulating an alternative imagination, paints a picture of the return of Israel to their homeland and full participation of God’s people in observation of Torah. As Brueggemann (2002: 362) has pointed out, “Texts characteristically act as advocates within a contested field; that is, they reflect vested interests that are likely rooted economically and politically.” Following this line of thought, the study was keen to establish whether the setting of Rachel’s narrative could, in its contemporary use, help the Gĩkũyũ text readers in comforting the afflicted, and also upsetting the contented. By making a quick post-colonial critical orientation of the text under review, theological students/seminarians, pastors, evangelists and ordinary text-readers were willing to let lamentation text guide a re-description and re-imagination of their post-colonial public world, in which they practice their faith. Prophet Jeremiah’s contention is that the crises confronting Israel evoke political, cultural and theological discourse that is typically based on how different interpreters, in the world of the colonized and the colonizers, get into a process of wrestling with biblical texts; emasculating through their own resources, of ordinary text-readers, who struggle to fit the Bible in the world of their favorite texts.

In this process, the text-readers themselves are shaped and molded through a double task of faith and criticism that leads a redefinition of their identity, extending beyond historical horizons. To enable the exiled Israel to re-define and re-discern in full faithful response without diminishing the traditional faith to flat theological certitude; Jeremiah comes out, in a rare but daring move of contextualizing the matriarchal tradition, as a focal point of assessing and establishing a social process. This process sets a stage, through which the
traumatized community in exile would express its deepest values and aims, in a struggle against the colonial assailants surrounding it. The unrelenting focus on Rachel, who is one of the wives of Jacob and the mother of Joseph and Benjamin, provides the axis upon which the entire narrative complex of the successful generations of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh revolves (Genesis 30:22-24, 35: 16-18).

These tribes and their region represented the Northern Kingdom that existed as a territory of Assyrian empire until the collapse of that empire in 620 BC. This makes the narrative strategically and geographically placed in its setting that captures Ramah, a town situated in the territory of the tribe of Benjamin; and on the boundary between the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Jeremiah’s poetic work confers authority on certain emblematic elements, along with those of Judeans who were now being deported to Babylon, and were taken in chains to Ramah (Jeremiah 40:1) Ramah, which means height in Hebrew, becomes a key socio-location of Rachel’s lament and weeping. It is a locality, traditionally associated with Rachel (1 Samuel 10: 2); because, in giving birth to Benjamin, Rachel died and was buried at Zelzah, a site near the town of Ramah, North of Jerusalem (Bracke, 2001: 18). The voice of Rachel was lastly heard during her final motherly act where she died after undergoing fatal labour pains and giving birth to a son, naming her Ben-'ônî (Benjamin), “son of my sorrow (Genesis 35: 16-20).” Now Rachel is enjoined to a tradition that makes all mothers, who died in child birth, the weeping ghosts that stirred generations in time of disasters in Israel.

4.6.1 Application of Rachel’s Narrative to Agĩkũyũ Text-readers’ Conditions

Rachel’s narrative, and the hermeneutical debate surrounding it, invites the text-reader to listen attentively to the diverse and conflicting voices within the text; in order to allow a
healthy engagement of the post-colonial hermeneutical disputes. This listening leads to perfection of Gĩkũyũ imaginations of alternative ways of asserting the indigenous perspectives of how to be human amidst widespread culture of death and denial. As the prophet helps the exiled children of Israel understand and respond to their condition of marginality, provides, the community with self-esteem enhancement reading through coping skills that lead to a healthy decision making process for survival among the captives. Though they are in a foreign land, by virtue of exile, they are not ready to succumb, integrate or submit to the prevailing imperial social, religious and political structures. For Israel to cope with the traumatic disruptions and meet their survival needs in exile they had to project a communal strategy, which would determine and take care of their interests as a community; and also forge its way of life out of its post-traumatic stress disorder (c.f. Dayton, 2000: 22-23). Rachel’s lamentation and bitter weeping brings great grief to the heart of a comforting God, who invites her to wipe away her tears and to end the weeping (v. 16). Thus, the Gĩkũyũ narrative of sorrow and suffering is not in conflict with Rachel's metaphorical presence in captivity. The Agĩkũyũ who are still suffering from physical, mental and spiritual captivity as previously elaborated (in chapter two) can allow such historic texts to speak out of their own poetic periods. The Babylonian definition of reality makes tries to camouflage true meaning of the word of God and its context of redemption.

Lamentation of Rachel functions analogously to the sorrowful, tender, and compassionate weeping community, which so vividly and graphically realizes and wrestles with distress, agony and torment that assaulted its psyche, through the experience of the catastrophic crisis of deportation and loss characterized by colonial era (Brueggemann, 2003: 177). Thus, Jeremiah 31:15-17 is a brief poem, delimited at the top end by the "thus says the Lord"
formula, beginning from v. 15. This study defines and interprets verses 15 to 17 as one literary unit, which stands to express the motif of eternal nature of the divine love and its dramatic forcefulness to capture deep emotional human situations that transcend time for such unbearable loss requires engagement of Rachel as the mother of all grief to voice the unfathomable depth of loss (Fackenheim, 1980). It serves as an address to the offspring of Israel, for it provides all descendants with broader vision of divine presence in the Promised Land. The divine oracle in this passage becomes the object of the children who do not exist in the present generation and it also signals the ways upon which the marginalized can be led to realistic feelings, of being empowered, and in total control of their destiny through the absence of oppression, fear, and terror of Babylon (Brueggemann, 1997: 121). Thus, the rhetoric and composition of this poem is noticeable, due to its shift and mood that cite the poetic unit of Jeremiah 31:15-17, as an example of a literally coherent text that fits the conceptual framework of this study.

4.6.2 Rachel’s Disconsolate Lamentation and Weeping in Africa

The intersection of biblical and Gĩkũyũ traditions practice of lamentation and weeping, are brought into voices of truth and possibility quite different from what the Western inherited academies are promoting in Africa. By celebrating this difference, the practice of Rachel’s disconsolate lamentation and weeping in Africa will reflect a contested world of hermeneutical claims and reflection. It is recognition of various tensions and differences displayed by socio-economic-epistemic-political conditions in Africa. Thus, the God who is absolutely committed to the memory of Israel, as a lamenting community, comes down to console her as a God who is absolutely merciful. In this way Jeremiah portrays the intensity and nature of God's love (Brueggemann, 1991: 64-65). Yahweh's immediate intervention to
Rachel's weeping portrays her as an icon of faithful women who grieve over the generations for all the lost children who are so vulnerable and so brutalized by imperialists. Rachel stands as memory's beginning, not life's end. She emerges from the world of living dead to witness to the utterly harmful and irredeemable nature of human suffering in a devastating judgment. Reading Rachel's lament is a recovery of metaphors and symbols, which is an emblematic feature of Agĩkũyũ spirituality, which communicated the sequence of deeply emotional situations, facing the community.

Rachel’s narrative is a voice of reason and an inspiration to those who view life as meaningless and are not worthy to live, especially during the hard times. Jeremiah brings out Rachel's cry, and makes it public and so it attracts diverse voices of consolations. However, “She refuses to be consoled...” Her refusal to be silenced is an assault against those who shape the world by filtering cry of the poor through the dominant ideology that tends to sternly spread and package textual meaning, in a process typically shrouded by diverse gadgets of domination and control. This ideology governs its sources, agents and contents through false consolations, in order to realize its strategic and tactical ends of sustaining its supremacy. The Hebrew phrase word lēhinahēm is coined from the verb nahēm, which can be translated as being sorry, moved to pity, being remorseful; to suffer grief, a repenting of one's own doings, comfort oneself or 'to-be-comforted' (v.15b).

But she rejects the predictably acclaimed consolations in favor of divine consolation. The longing for divine intervention explicates the promise to replace the vicious cycle of despair by a virtuous cycle of hope and revival. Rachel’s uncomforted voice of lamentation and weeping stands to broaden and deepen the understanding of alternative hermeneutical
perspectives in its process of appealing to the divine intervention. The Gĩkũyũland, armed with rich experience of past debacles and crises shrouding its marginalized text-readers’ voice, can develop into hermeneutics of its own in a coherent and self-critical way. Thus, the dominance of one voice over another becomes a crucial outline of hermeneutical principles to those who read the Bible from a contemporary African perspective. A text-reading community, like Gĩkũyũ, held at crossroads of socio-economic and political turmoil compounded with internal conflicts; has to raise its voice against other voices that tend to dehumanize and deny them their God given rights to a full span of life.

So, there is need to coming up with multiple perspectives that facilitate the text-readers into serious embrace of historical consciousness; through the post-colonial voices of lamentation and weeping. This embrace is urgent because, the pursuit for truth and development of a critical social consciousness will expose the plight of Agĩkũyũ children; who are dying in a world full of challenges, mentioned earlier on (c.f. 4.5). A revisit of Rachel’s lamentation and weeping is, therefore, an embrace of the most painful memories of the subjugated lot, at a time when the forces governing biblical hermeneutics are in crumbled state. African practice of lamentation and weeping envisions a world which is in contrast with global patterns of dominations and subordinations it points to reciprocity, coalition and justice. Receiving consolation from the empire that reaps benefit out of the miseries of the subjugated lot may not work. It is tantamount to foregoing the imminent promises of divine liberties, consolation and crisis intervention. The liberal culture demonstrated in the colonizers biblical hermeneutics would only be a replication of a secular culture; which has in its worldwide hostilities, against the colonized world contributed towards the hard socio-economic times in Gĩkũyũland.
The cheap and fixed consolations from the former colonizers have continued to provide a false comfort that works only when Gĩkũyũ community listens and obeys their Western coded prescriptions. Rachel’s disconsolate mood abhors a hermeneutical comfort zone and any suggestion of the Babylonian imperial provision of immunity, to the vagaries of history and its normative set stage. Gĩkũyũ religious leaders have a duty to educate their fellow text-readers on the effect of yielding to the illusions, false consolations and security. By shying away from public processing of pain, the dominant ideological strings of the ex-colonial masters will continue to manipulate the prospects of the colonized ever coming to the realization of the full extent of the psychological wound from their past misdeeds. They do this by making the colonized forget and keep away from protesting against the shameful legacy of the colonial regime. In the religious ambience, the dissenting of this legacy rests in God's providential care; that alone has the power to help the colonized people dismantle the fundamental features of their colonial past, which persistently haunt Agĩkũyũ text-readers.

II Yahweh Answers Rachel’s Lament (vv 16-17)

In the second unit, God's response to this lament is based on God's absolute fidelity; which suggests a disruption, as well as cessation of the status quo. God sees the suffering of Rachel, the loss of her children, her shame and humiliation, the violence of her enemies, her grieving and storm-tossed soul. The Hebrew term ahārīt, which is coined from a compounded term lē’ahārītēk, denotes a happy close of life. It suggests the idea of posterity, promised to the righteous, thus a future full of hope rather than despair. God will definitely raise children for Rachel, who shall settle in their homeland. The Hebrew word wēšābû etymologically signifies pain, grief, distress over sin, rather than a change of thought and purpose. It is used two times in this passage and it is coined from the verb šūb
translated "to come or go back, to return, or turn (v.17b), it makes prominent the idea of a radical change of attitude toward sin and God, among the exiled children of Israel who lamented after the Lord (c.f. Jeremiah 9: 9; Micah 2: 1- 4). The same word is used to call people to repentance in Jeremiah 3: 11-14.

The anticipation of return or restoration, after disasters and calamities, shroud many Gĩkũyũ folktales and proverbs that dwelt on risk analysis. In this process, the potential risk areas are captured in leitmotif, for the elegiac core is focused on people’s return to the Gĩkũyũland and resettlement. Such effort embellishes the capturing of a lamentable and incongruous present; through community’s expression of optimism, in this process of overcoming risks. Indeed lamentation reading, as a key dimension of Gĩkũyũ system of risk analysis, ensures that the optimism captured in folktales and proverbs, will determine a continuous reminder and evaluation of alternative options that lead to the overcoming of future risks. The advent of divine consolation, and promise of healing, is captured in Yahweh's words, "your work shall be rewarded;" it signifies the breaking of the exile yoke, placed on Rachel's children. What will follow is enjoined to motifs of God self-disclosure and God's reign, over chaos; captured in comforting words; "there is hope for your future, says Yahweh and they shall come back from the land of the enemy (Jeremiah 31: 17)." The promise of a future goes with the return of Rachel's children to their land; which equally means a restoration to their relationship with Yahweh. In this case, Yahweh's profound grief over loss and steadfast faithfulness to the covenant and promise will heavily invest on a triumphant return to their homeland (c.f. Jeremiah 31: 31-34). The interplay of these two motifs is a vital component in addressing the conflict between the Western world view and Gĩkũyũ worldview; it is a conflict that can eventuate into development of a distinctively African biblical hermeneutics
in Gĩkũyũland. A symbiosis of these two motifs sheds more insight into the character and tension of contemporary life. It becomes a key hermeneutical underpinning and resource of reading the Old Testament, from the Gĩkũyũ perspective, in its post-colonial reality.

The Agĩkũyũ, in expression of their orchestrated voices; which are trapped by socio-political tension and conflict call for a different system; of viewing the world, from the perspective of contending ideological voices, which are resolved by dominance. In another motif the infanticide caused by a massacre in Bethlehem as mentioned in the Gospel of Matthew (2:18) makes the study to recognize the distinctiveness of Rachel’s unwavering commitment, competency and ability to bear witness to the horror and pain of human suffering. As a life-embracing voice, Rachel’s lamentation and weeping over terrifying and destructive forces that cause calamities and horrible destruction sheds light into understanding of lamentation as a voice of dialogue that spawns critical questioning of contemporary life and faith. It posits the will to live in a process that probes God and God’s actions amid confrontations of pain and sufferings by successive generations of Israel through the embrace of a historical movement that lead to concrete wrestling of weak communities’ with the vagaries of nature and the fury of global military and economic super-powers. Since a metaphorical intervention of matriarchs is acceptable and applicable in Africa, especially in Gĩkũyũland where the narrative of Mũmbi is used to invoke God’s intervention for her troubled children.

The protection and restoration of humanity in times of calamities and war makes Rachel’s lament and weeping identify with disaster mitigation programs as well as the socio-economic transformation. The fight against HIV and AIDS pandemic has in its catastrophic
proportions in Gĩkũyũland brought to mind a combination of emotional, intellectual and religious expression discarded by colonial religious legacy, but present in the discarded African traditional practices. The imagery of metaphorical presence of a disconsolate mother poses as a key resourceful tool of addressing these traumatic experiences. Thus, if life-threatening experience, of colonial invasion made on the Gĩkũyũ community, is replayed in a pathological language. It would eventually seek a response of pathos, comfort and assurance from God.

The crisscrossing of Rachel’s unrequited pathos vis-à-vis God’s power of positive resolve too, are crucial components of keeping African hermeneutics in its focus. Thus, God’s utterance of newness to this disconsolate mother is a refreshing hermeneutical component. The reading of the miserable state of Israelites, as embodied in Rachel’s narrative of lamentation and weeping, was interpreted to motivate the text-readers to reconstruct their broken past by giving a picture of their past miseries. This was in order for the respondents (as text-readers) to learn from the bitter memories and draw from them what the Agĩkũyũ text-readers need for their present life. This recognition, of the bitter memories, and how to deal with them constructively, owes to the fact that the memories are prone to go underground and surprise the community later, in destructive ways.

4.7 The Interpretive Dynamic of Rachel’s Lamentation

The interpretive dynamic of Rachel’s Lamentation is hinged on the fact that lament form is assumed in ordinary life as an eschatological hope in the entire post-colonial world. This study, however, focuses its attention on the reality of the ordinary Agĩkũyũ text-readers, as a pilgrim people of God, under threat of engulfing forces of Western civilization. These forces
seem to be neutral towards the biblical text and hermeneutical questions of value and more likely to remove the expression of lamentations from the public. The dynamic between despair and hope appears in Rachel’s voice of lamentation, as very strong element for the imperial comfort zone, which seems victorious, has clear and serious defects. So, the essential perspective of Rachel’s protest is that it enhances the contemporary events of throwing the dominant ideologies into question. It affirms the possibility of having the human despair of self as a synthesis of finitude or infinitude which unfolds amidst hermeneutical uncertainty of a highly subjective quest (c.f. Psalms 103; Kierkegaard 1983). Rachel capitalizes on the hope for transformation and fulfillment of life in Israel, upon the return of all her children to the land of promise, amidst the biting uncertainty. Thus, her voice of lamentation and weeping challenges the text-readers to live this paradigm, of resistance, as their way of life; in confronting the present circumstances of loss. This text creates conditions that are more favorable for reopening the post-colonial debate where new issues and problems demand fresh analyses for the development of critical consciousness (Dobbs-Allsops, 2002: 74). Such an approach parts way with the traditional approaches in many missionary founded churches, it keeps on repeating old answers to new questions (Schreiter, 1985: 2-3; Schillebeeckx, 1967: 95-96); leading to anachronism or irrelevance.

4.7.1 The Gĩkũyũ Understanding of Jeremiah 31:15-17

The respondents struggled, through the text to change the hermeneutical structures, which until now have served to oppress the ordinary text-readers in the post-colonial era. To the ordinary text-readers the text applied to a process of voicing all the multifarious forms of human affliction, oppression, anxiety, pain, and peril in Gĩkũyũland, and thus it becomes an appeal to the only court that can alter Gĩkũyũ community’s plight. The hegemonic
systems of Euro-centric hermeneutics neither encouraged nor equipped the Agĩkũyũ text-reader to know and respond to the concrete realities of their world. They were kept swamped in a quagmire upon which such critical hermeneutical awareness and response are up to now practically impossible.

To overcome this clench, the colonized Gĩkũyũ text readers need to take their text-reading process, through the contemporary voices of lamentation. By doing so, the study acknowledges the strange connections and parallels between biblical narrative of weeping and lamentations and the local narrative of pain and suffering coming to this time and place. Thus, this sub-section pays special attention to the circular dialogical encounter of Rachel’s narrative of lamentation and weeping with the richness, depth and complexity of Gĩkũyũ understanding of lamentation. Such text-reading is not a neutral hermeneutical process but, a means through which the ordinary Agĩkũyũ text-readers can read their pain and suffering together in the light of that older biblical story the study take as normative. The biblical account of lamentation critically and creatively deals with the underlying social reality, as the text-readers engage the textual-meaning in the process of transforming their world. This process then, fits well in a Gĩkũyũ people’s "re-reading" and reflection of Jeremiah 31:15-17 as a subversive force at the disposal of the disinherited masses of in their land. The Gĩkũyũ understanding of this text suggests dialectic of a crucial hermeneutical facet, through which a continued unfolding of the "diverse riches-of-meaning" of Gĩkũyũ people’s lamentation practices. Such a dialectic is analyzed through the accounting of Gĩkũyũ indigenous culture “which is affected by imperialism from the period of colonization to the present day (Ashcroft et al, 1989:2).” It is crucial analysis because post-colonialism is all about a changing world, a world arising from a people’s own experience of reality and struggle, in

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which its text-readers intend to transform.

In order for the ordinary text-reader to understand the crucial role of lamentation in the public arena; one has to reflect on a hermeneutical process that embraces a release of new social imaginations. The creative imagination of lamentation is needed in order to urgently challenge the pervading forces of hopelessness and despair. It presupposes a closer contact with the Bible and with African tradition that builds around this study’s meticulous analysis of Gĩkũyũ community’s traumatic experiences by extracting from its wealth of true and meaningful values. These may, in turn, be used as a starting point to public processing of pain through a text reading process. In doing so, we anticipate to walk Rachel’s outcry in this endeavor of dismantling, disrupting and dislodging the dominant readings which had made her a disconsolate mother.

4.7.2 Lamentations as Gĩkũyũ Artistic Power of Cleansing the Memories

It is through the recounting of the heart wrenching events that the Gĩkũyũ community is opened into the acted speeches of cleansing its memories. The expression lamentation as an acted speech is framed by the Gĩkũyũ people’s history and culture of questioning the interpreters through songs and poetry. Acted speeches are important tools of bringing drastic developments, changes, and circumstances in Gĩkũyũland, which led to the establishment of the Bible as a foundational component of Gĩkũyũ thought and religious consciousness. Thus, the connection of the eye witnesses of Mũthĩrĩgũ dance-lament, ex-Mau Mau freedom fighters and detainees’ pain with the great narrative of the Ağĩkũyũ survival of tragedies leads to corporate expressions of lamentations, as an artistic power. This power revolves around the axis of nostalgic appeal, to an ideal past and a promise of a bountiful future, as
intensified by daily life repetition of phrases that connect the community with its matriarch. Those phrases include the following: *Ithuĩ a Nyũmba ya Mũmbi twĩna thĩna na ti wa nguo* (we house/lineage of Mũmbi are in misfortunes beyond the lack of clothes); *Ruo na mĩnyamaro itũ ithuĩ Mbarĩ ya Mũmbi* (Our pain and suffering as Mũmbi’s offspring...); *Kũhinyĩrĩrio twahinyĩrĩirio ithuĩ Ciana cia Mũmbi* (The oppression which we the children of mũmbi experienced...); and *I used* (we members of Mũmbi’s nation...).

All these expressions were applied in an attempt to regain the right perspectives on horrific events as they truly happened. In this light then, the general situation should quarantine the denial of suffering and pain, as a hindrance to lamentation, and also as a post-colonial medium of European religious and cultural ideologies. Its impact on the Gĩkũyũ people’s socio-economic and cultural condition makes the text-readers struggle to cope with pain through integration acts of transformation realistic and achievable. It has equally identified denial as a propaganda embedded in meta-narratives, and their ploys of diffracting the text-readers, from seeing their painful realities.

The pre-colonial Gĩkũyũ community had customarily trained its past generations to confront pain with courage and to accept it as part of their pilgrimage and not to deny their ordeal and loss. However, the advent of Euro-centrism, through the text-reading process, had prompted radical and traumatic disruptions among the Agĩkũyũ; which have undermined the community beliefs and values. It is, therefore, important to retrieve and connecting Rachel’s narrative with that of the Gĩkũyũ ancestries, Mũmbi’s lamentation; which is a replica of text-reader’s projection in endowing the present hermeneutical debates with fresh insights. The need to express the confusion and suffering felt, after the destruction of Gĩkũyũland by
colonialists, has to do with the community’s ability to maintain a disconsolate stance; through which the enormous expression of lamentations and weeping, arising from the particularity of a situation experienced through Gĩkũyũ people’s collective closeness. As Rachel reappears to the community, many centuries after her death to unite Israel, the God of Israel and the ancestral world are properly brought into this conversation.

A post-colonial reading and interpretation of Rachel’s narrative, by the Gĩkũyũ community, is chiefly done to implicate and identify the community of text-readers’ anger and hatred of internal collaborators and warned them about the consequences of their acts. Thus, Rachel’s lamentation and weeping would be an appropriate expression of the disorientations, undergone by detainees who had left home as married people but returned home as singles, for their marriage partners had chosen to leave. So, when the ex-detainees lament; *ici nĩ indo ciitũ irta Ngaati ici cietaĩĩĩre thutha wa ithuĩ arũĩrĩri a wiyathi gũtwaro ithamirio* (These are our properties which these Home-guards had grabbed from us immediately after we were being taken to the land of captivity) they express this setting of brokenness. Others lost all their property; and even after independence never recovered their stolen wealth. What is more, they and their children were not educated to fill the places left behind by the departing colonialists, who would have compensated their loss, by giving them another source of income. In such circumstances, Rachel’s lamentation becomes an inspiration to Gĩkũyũ community’s lamenting venture, in its paradigmatic stance, as vibrant center of reconstructing and retaining the suppressed communal memories. Rachel is indeed coming in as a dialogue partner with Gĩkũyũ community, in its process of voicing laments through its text reading ventures. Her lamentation is complimentary to the Gĩkũyũ matriarch Mũmbi, as the community’s exemplar icon and coping mechanism, in its complex negotiation of its sense of self. This negotiation is paramount to the community’s response to the diversities
of uncertain situations, facing those who die out of poverty, AIDS, drug addictions and other life threatening forces.

4.8 Analysis of the Expressive Sources

The Gĩkũyũ language provided ways for people to play about with words and pass a completely different meaning either in expressing the sorrow of the partings and death, or the creative exhibitions of tribal artists or philosophy, or awe and fear of ancestral spirits. Cagnolo (2006: 278) claims that; “with them (Agĩkũyũ), always conjured up slogans that had words that meant so much to their kinsmen yet meant nothing to strangers.” The feelings of joy and excitement through entertainments brought to fore certain words and catch phrases that defined and gave meaning to objects, events and activities of day-to-day laments by people as they struggled in life through phrases repeated over and over again. Such words are crucial connectors of the Gĩkũyũ motif of lamentations with its appropriate exclamations of sorrow and firmness that construct victims’ response to oppression. These words embody the rich symbols and metaphors captured in daily expressions that deliberately waged assaults against negativity, injustice, hatred, and brokenness among the Gĩkũyũ people’s lives and world. During the dry season, for instance, it is a common practice after greetings for a person to hear the expression of forces that affect their views. Such words are keen to making a religious sense in the aftermath of any sort of disaster as well as in the celebration of all life.

4.8.1 Word-count

This section embarked on a search, and analysis of different ways in which Gĩkũyũ words are commonly used in organic expression of the changing and living character of Gĩkũyũ
people’s self-awareness. These words were used to articulate the communal as opposed to individualistic approach to things Gĩkũyũ people do and make in expressing their feelings of joy and despair. The Kwalitan computer programmer was used to code them through a category structure that helped the researcher to see exactly how many times a particular folk term had been used to determine its scope and by how many respondents, in order to determine its extension. The researcher then carried out a word search among all those interviewed (insiders, quasi-insiders and outsiders) for the recurrent categories linked to the given word. The word “Our(s)” was used 480 times against the word “mine” which was used 355 times (a difference of 25 times), The word “ yours” was used 179 times against the word “your” which was used 57 times (a difference of 122 times). The word “their (s)” was used 115 times against the word “his/her” which was used 87 times (a difference of 28 times). The word “ourselves” was used 250 times against the word “Yourself” which was used 21 times (a difference of 239 times). The word “them” was used 243 times against the word “him/her” which was used 130 times (a difference of 133 times). The word “Us” was used 414 times against the word “me/I” which was used 257 times (a difference of 157 times). The word “Those” was used 244 times against the word “this” which was used 174 times (a difference of 70 times). Table 3 below sets forth the relationship between individualism and communitarianism linked to the above given pronouns.

Table: 3. Pronoun Articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plural</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ciitũ (Our(s))</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>Giakwa (Mine)</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cianyu (Yours)</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>Yaku (Your)</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ciao (Their(s))</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>Ciake (His/her)</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ithuĩ (Ourselves)</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>Wee (Yourself)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acio (Them)</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>Ucio (Him/her)</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ithuĩ (Us)</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>Nil (Me/I)</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ici (These)</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>Ino (This)</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Researcher
4.8.2 Linguistic Analysis

Language reflects and reinforces our cultural way of thinking. Our general overview of how the Gĩkũyũ language implicitly influences the text-readers in a way they are not aware of it. This language is mainly based on phrases which are typical ingredients of lament that has risen from our observations, oral interviews and subsequent verbal analysis of text-readers responses to the presented questions. A brief analysis of Gĩkũyũ language will carefully ensure that one text-reader’s immediate perception is concurring with the social world by keeping a bird’s eye on the local concerns within a wide context. When the Gĩkũyũ words are critically analyzed, they reveal not only the individual speaker’s intentions but also a collectively determined chronological consciousness. Table 4 below highlights on how individualism and communitarianism are linked to linguistic analysis.

**Table 4 Linguistic Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communal lament</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Individual lament</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Macakaya maitũ (our sighs)</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Macakaya makwa (my sigh)</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kĩrĩro giitũ (our laments)</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>Kĩrĩro giakwa (my lament)</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruo rwitũ (our pain)</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>Ruo rwakwa (my pain)</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mĩnyamaro iitũ (our suffering)</td>
<td>533</td>
<td>Mĩnyamaro yakwa (my suffering)</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ithuĩ tũrĩragio (we are made to cry)</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>Niĩ ndĩragio (I am made to cry)</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngai witũ (Our God)</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>Ngai wakwa (my God)</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The inability of the Agĩkũyũ text-readers to free themselves from the Euro-centric hermeneutics is a concern for this section of chapter four. The rationale of doing linguistic analysis in this context was based on its relatedness to the practicalities of life as it also expresses the role of language in the struggle to overcome communal catastrophe. The text-readers commitment to the society in which they find themselves is done by a re-examining of the appropriation of text through the re-constituting of a mythical space outside of modernization and progress championed by imperial binary mission of resistance. This mission is based on: (1) A revisionist’s tendency to minimize the impact of a colonial past.
on contemporary text-reading process and, (2) catastrophically cutting of the reverberation and influence of lamentation in cultural recovery and historical reorganization.

Thus, this analysis was found to be a crucial element in our highlighting of text reading issues contained therein because the linguistic study has to do with community’s disposition, perceptions and insights about life. In this process the Gĩkũyũ language proved to be a discourse of liberating power, in that it provides the terms and the structures through which the Gĩkũyũ people embraces its world of reality. The following observation epitomizes the high premium upon which the Agĩkũyũ places on their language as a resource of enriching their appropriation of textual meaning through experience with other textual experiences. The response and reinterpretation of catastrophic cultural dislodgments placed by imperial crossroads makes lamentation a formidable conduit for text-readers who are struggling to produce different strategies for the decolonizing of the national psyche.

More common to the Gĩkũyũ people’s language is the communitarian aspect of their laments as expressed in text-readers response to the text in terms that tends to touch on lost prestige, economy and wealth of every generation: Lamentation motif of the Agĩkũyũ has a character of wholeness and inclusiveness and not compartments for in the case, the mundane or secular socio-economic activities of marginalized are at least that defined through the lamentation of their lost wealth and prestige. However, the fuller understanding of other peoples’ motif of lamentation must be of interest to text-reading in general; it can indeed be a step that may gradually lead to communitarian terminologies that appeal for solidarity: The expression of Gĩkũyũ proverbs with a wide extension of living encounters that encourages the ordinary text-readers to speak to God through the rich metaphors of their
native language in which hermeneutical feeling is embodied by an all-inclusive encounter with the totality of God and humanity. The survey revealed that the Gĩkũyũ worldview has strong affinity with a lamentation genre oriented to communitarian lifestyle. This orientation has opened this community into possible hermeneutical links with Israel’s community of old whose future was invested on public processing of pain as a liberating strategy set against the dominant ideologies. There are many indicators showing how the Gĩkũyũ people evoked social-cultural domains of lamentations through family lineage, age-set-grading and marriage (Kanoga, 1992). Thus, a typical linguistic encounter is premised in the Gĩkũyũ proverbs which guarantee the community’s collective vision of a united front through the social cementation which heals any division among the Agĩkũyũ.

4.8.3 The family Unit

The Gĩkũyũ phrase *Nyũmba* literally denotes a house or home. It describes the entire members of a nuclear family who are by extension the core facets of Mbarĩ (sub-clan). The tranquility of this family is defined by its *bona-fide* members who are bound not to quit its membership in season and out of season; whatever may come they are life-members who address one another as *Andũ a Nyũmba* (members of a household). The proverb: *Nyũmba na rika itiumagwo* (The membership into a family or age set cannot be abandoned) holds a lot of significance in the area of perception and construction of meaning because it touches on communitarian ingredient that enhances the caring attitude towards the poor and desperate members of the family. The inevitable obligation of a *bona-fide* life member is to seek no option but to enter his/her family’s experience in order to encounter its feelings. When members of a given household pay attention to those feelings, images of family traits that characterize them will gradually arise and that is why the Agĩkũyũ make the claim that;
4.8.4 The Age-grade System

The Age-set (riika) was a privileged class with defined social responsibilities and a well-defined code of conduct that no one would dare to contravene (Cagnolo, 2006: 103). But each Gĩkũyũ age-grade has no meaning apart from its contribution to the social organization of community life and survival. The Agĩkũyũ had always counted people’s ages according to their initiation groups and so there are strong commonalities among age-sets (Mariika) since time immemorial. The Agu na Agu was the Gĩkũyũ age-grade of a very remote past used in Gĩkũyũ people’s reference to its time since immemorial. This custom of Gĩkũyũ preservation of age-grade system was part of a long tradition, which had kept the group members loyal to each other of the Agĩkũyũ that centers on an exclusively male world as evidenced in the saying: Atumia matirĩ riika (Women are not limited by their age-grade).

The age-set base consisted of men who were circumcised or initiated to adulthood at the same time irrespective of one’s background, family, clan or socio status. Upon circumcision the initiated group took a particular name after most occurrence of the year, or from the peculiarities of some individual concerned for instance riika rĩa Ngirimiti (a corruption of English term agreement); this was an age-group that comprised of those who were circumcised when the Agĩkũyũ migrated from central Kenya to urban centers and settlers farms under “the agreement system”: Riika rĩa Kibandĩ or King’ori (the time when black males had to carry Kipande or a document listing their employment history and reference), Riika rĩa Mbaũni (upon the advent of sterling pound), Riika rĩa boote (the Forty age group; it comprised of those circumcised in 1940, most of whom did their military
service in 1939-1945 War) and so on. In time of crisis different age-groups (*andũ a riika*) were expected to shape the community’s solidarity through their voiced reaction to a traumatic experience. In this case, the age groups organized and assigned the time for dancing, discussed the punitive expeditions, the raids, protective measures that may be necessary, and also kept the council secrets.

A case in point is vested on people’s linguistic heritage that ensured societal-harmony in all spheres of life. Each age-set expressed its vested interests, desire, and commitment of defending the community from social disintegration and attack from outside powers. The loyalty to one’s own age-group and willingness to enter in the struggle and dress the wound of a colleague or a family member in times of crisis and participate, and natural groups was no option. Distinctive of the scholarly ethos of post-colonial biblical hermeneutics was the adventurous way in which Gĩkũyũ age-grades dwelt in the incorporation and presentation of their acts of public processing of pain, as the starting point of hermeneutical inquiry.

### 4.8.5 The Nuptial Elegy (Kĩrĩro)

This is one of the theatrical shows of Gĩkũyũ people’s motif of lamentation as a life coping mechanism. So, nuptial elegy (*kĩrĩro*) was a life transition liturgical act of embracing change where bride’s life is prompted by radical changes which are administered through orientation (single-hood) to disorientation (luminal) and then into a new orientation (marital-status). The Nuptial elegy (*kĩrĩro*) was expressed through songs which were mostly connected with the collective activities of the bride’s age group, and the part played by the bride (Kenyatta, 1938: 172). As soon as a Gĩkũyũ man built his hut he was allowed to look for a bride, after finding one and the prospective in-laws were approved by man’s parents as
suitable. Then, the Nyũmba (family unit) would convene and proceed to negotiate (njũranio) and if accepted they were to pay the initial rūracio (bride-price) to the prospective in-laws.

When all the preliminary arrangements are made, the bride would hide herself in different places a times either at her relatives or in the fields but, a group comprising of the bridegroom’s mother or other female relatives would secretly monitor her movement. After sporting her location the bridegroom is informed and he would send the same group to go and get her for him. In the long run she was ensnared but she would refuse to go protesting piercingly and seeming to shed tears in a scenario that appeared as if the bride was being forcefully seized. This cry was expected to affect an air of sadness for her last day of freedom. While on her way and when she has arrived at her marital home those who spoke to her would receive an answer through her singing of a sad cantilena which entailed that her virginity and carefree life of single-hood (ũirĩtu) was over. She would walk or be carried shoulder-high but the team was preceded by a girl, walking slowly and singing kirërọ, the destination was her mother-in-law’s hut. The following stanza is model of nuptial elegy commonly expressed by the bride:

I do not want to get married
I will kill myself if you take me away from parents
Oh how foolish I was to leave my home alone
Why put myself into the hands of merciless people?
Where are my relatives? Can they come and release me?
And prevent my being taken to a man whom I do not love (Kenyatta, 1938:170-174)?

Her age-mates would join her, to mourn the loss of services and companionship of one of their numbers who by marriage has now passed to another age-group. By giving speech to the pain of leaving her age mates and the close members of her family upon joining her marital home, the bride was allowed a life-time expression of what pain that comes to hassle her head. The nuptial elegy songs continued for eight days and the new family continued
receiving frequent guests who either joined the cries or in consoling her. The bride who felt torn between two radically different worlds of youthful experience and the new ways of marital life, the old practices of single-hood and the anticipated venture of marital status. According to Kenyatta (1938: 36), “they were free to shout anything they wanted so as to lease that which had built up in the psyche through social sanctions.” Since she was trained to confront the pain of loss with courage and acceptance then, whatever she felt about this loss was part of her pilgrimage.

4.8.6 Theological Significance of Lamentation

The presence of Yahweh as the vantage point of Rachel’s lamentation and weeping epitomize our attempt to analyze the situation of the theological significance of Agĩkũyũ, expressions of lamentation. The fact that Gĩkũyũ people’s homeland was bestowed to their ancestors by God never lacks food, water or forests should always make them appreciate God’s providence. Any public misery in Gĩkũyũland did not rise out of itself other than God’s plagues which are still grounded on common stains of our humanity. The source of Gĩkũyũ people’s predicament is absolutely perceived as an estrangement from God where the sorrow of their present is intensified by the memory of past synchronization of God of ancestors and the community. In this case, a post-colonial text-reader who ignores this theological significance of lamentation is prone to land into an abrupt crash with solid walls of colonial misconceptions, outright theological distortion of facts, and defensive attitudes.

The starting point of theological significance of lamentation is the ordinary text-readers’ experience of working in harmony with various themes of Agĩkũyũ’ culture and the community’s inbuilt capacity of visioning the possibility of keeping close to the facts on the
ground. In such cases, the text-readers’ experience of mental and physical suffering call for careful investigations of day-to-day censures of life, which are done through the analysis of the data cumulated by indigenes’ interpretation of daily expressions of life. These expressions are known to touch on the depth of how the Agĩkũyũ talk about God (Ngai) and to God in times of averting crisis. They help this community to evade being torn asunder by its noninterventionist process of allowing its members to tell their story and bear witness to society trauma. Thus, the linking of current social and political interests with theology of ordinary text-readers seems to control exegetical conclusions even though the readers are not theologically trained.

By separating the past exposure to traumatic events from which the present long after the immediate event is passed lamentation comes in as an ingredient of Gĩkũyũ’s reflection on faith and culture as it constitutes a component of life which cannot be disentangled from all other cultural events that pertain to mundane activities (Tanner, 1997: 64; Mbiti, 1995:1). However the cycle of trauma is broken through a careful usage of the name of the Gĩkũyũ God (Ngai) which is known to play the role of abhorring the forces that lead to extremes of sterile existence. The Agĩkũyũ God was carefully ingrained in the whole fabric of everyday conversations where the ingredients of lamentation were thoroughly entrenched in all the concluding rhetorical remarks as a channel of helping the traumatized reader to stay within the bounds of temperance and sobriety. In order to prevent societal trauma and its history from negatively impacting the community’s past and present, the theological significance of lamentation should underscore the community’s response to emotional, psychological and spiritual needs of its text-readers.
The Gĩkũyũ people insistence on what God is doing in their world is basically to make life more human for the ordinary text-reader who speaks of God’s future breaking into the past and present circumstances. Theology embedded in lamentation was explored and exploited to combine subjective experience of the past and present with what is objectively given; After all Gĩkũyũ people’s theology is rooted in historic revelations from the past expressions of proverbs as day-to-day expression of life. As hermeneutic theology embedded in lament attests and mediates into the present reality through probing and interpretive idiomatic expressions that give theology its consistence and its outlook of indigenous roots of exploring and bringing to light the indispensable foundation for future hopes.

The following theological terms were articulated through the communal interplay that ground on lamentation and people’s response to it. This was relaxingly done within the ambience of Gĩkũyũ culture’s reference to God in the immediate aftermath of calamities and devastations in placing the trauma story back to its remembered context of life in the past. The study reviewed the Gĩkũyũ hermeneutical situation through the lenses of developed out of theological expressions such as; ᕽoro mùtue nĩ Ngai ndũrĩ ũcuke (Whatever God has destined to happen is incontestable), Mûmena mùndũ tiwe Ngai (To be hated by man is not to be hated by God): Mûgambo wa kĩrĩndũ nota wa Ngai (When masses have spoken it is God who has spoken): Ngai ndabaranagia ithithi (God is not a respecter of persons): Ngai ateithagia wĩteithîtie (God upholds, guides and governs those who rise to the occasion). Ngai ndagiagwo (God is not pestered; that is, God’s goodness is not weakness or softness for people to take advantage of): Ngai arĩ thaa (God is merciful): No Ngai wooma (the matter is exclusively left to God): Ngaaa...ii ũ gûtikĩrĩ ũndũ (oh!!! God we withhold nothing): Ngai nĩ mûnene (God is great): Ngai nyene (God-self): Kaĩĩ noo Ngai (it is only
The Gĩkũyũ people’s folktales and songs too describe the relationship between the Gĩkũyũ people and Ngai (the God of their ancestors) and recognized that God’s power and majesty would bring difficult circumstances to a halt as captured by communal themes of future restoration and judgment. This description nurtures the Gĩkũyũ people’s reality of these theological statements, references and expressions, which are typically situated in Gĩkũyũ people’s day-to-day narrative; in all what will bring forth the needed courage to face fears that stems from the devastating forces of chaos and death that threaten the society. As a source of encouragement and inspiration to the community that subsist under God’s protection and care. Such theological references add to the association of lamentations with a tool of piecing together the painful fragments and ruins from the ashes of an overwhelming account of Gĩkũyũ generations that wrestle with forces of chaos and death.

Theological references are captured by lament songs sung in times of internal crisis and external threats to interpret and mediate the word of God in a relationship displayed by history, culture and religion of the Gĩkũyũ people. The observations made out of such analysis takes the informants’ view of lamentation as a voice characterized with an unending opening space for Gĩkũyũ people’s freedom of expression. So, wherever lamentation shifts from communitarian to enlightenment of individualism it is tamed by expanded horizons of its tremendous proportions in order to cover scores of interpretive themes. The strength to
endure the opposing forces in life is found in community voices that evokes God than self.

The day-to-day theological discourse among the Agĩkũyũ constitutes a voice of liberating the distressed lot. Subsequently, the Gĩkũyũ people’s lamentation practices are dominated by communitarian theological expressions, where the life of this community becomes a distinct voice of its day-to-day conversations that underscore theological correspondences by articulating the text-readers’ solidarity with the suffering lot. Communitarian response through lamentation stands to represent a personal reconstruction of hermeneutics that follows a period of questioning and doubt. It witnesses a relinquishing of colonial over sensitivities to hermeneutical dichotomies opening way for their replacements paving way for communal feelings in complex contexts that are governed by multi-layered and multifaceted character of African thinking and situation. This reconstruction is firmly based on text-readers sense of in-depth responsibility where individual concerns seem to suit the text-reader’s obligation to serve the interests for one-self, family and people in general.

4.8.7 Analysis of Material Sources

One element that seems to cut across the meaning system provided by Gĩkũyũ culture and religion is material sources. They are physically-and conceptually linked to the artists who produced them. The Gĩkũyũ people simultaneously incorporate and give material form to human thoughts and feelings through a spatial reciprocity between the subjective and objective angles of this process. Gĩkũyũ artifacts informed not only the particular shape of the Gĩkũyũ people's lived space and temporality but also the manner, in which the community approached its task of creating meaning and matter in the world. They formed and shaped Gĩkũyũ cultural points of density and are thus, the main components of this community’s uniqueness. Artifacts do not act on people but it is the people who interiorize
them. The Agĩkũyũ made artifacts so that they can in turn remake them, for usually help the community revise the interior of its embodied consciousness. The material sources were meant for common use and so the study tried to look at the Gĩkũyũ artifacts to see if they were of any use to communitarian response to tragedies voiced in the processing of pain.

The decorated gourd rattle accompanied in the performance of a very elaborate vocal riddle game called Gicaandî (the puzzle poem or a set-text of riddles which had as many stanzas as possible). It was sung in a duet by two competitors who were well versed with the poem verbally. The kĩrangi kĩa mbakĩ (snuff-pot) was traditionally considered as a reserve for the socialization of elderly folks in their information sharing forums. They would get together to socialize in an act of sharing the snuff (tobacco) which became an avenue of participating, chatting, and shaping the forces that affect their day to day life. In this session of get-together the Gĩkũyũ elderly men and women would demonstratively and emotionally share their joy and sorrows in the process of passing their greetings. They would name the many challenges in versatile and open circular structure that would reflect the difficult decisions through which the shared stories, sorrows and joys were carried.

In times of grief and sorrow, the sackcloth is worn to let people know how deep their grief is. Tears flow freely at such times and are considered to be a definite means of bringing comfort to sorrowing hearts. As it is apparently stated in the Hebrew Bible, women in the community of Israel were the bona-fide progenitors of the society and thus considered as icons of expressing lamentation and weeping (Jeremiah 19:17-18). In times of crisis they were traditionally invited to make haste, and take up the wailing for their land. Likewise, the Gĩkũyũ women are known to lament explicitly in a manner that invites the rhetoric of
autonomy, resistance, and emancipation. In Jeremiah (19:11) the prophet evokes the fragility of Gĩkũyũ pottery and so as the pot breaks they shall also be broken to shivers and so they cannot be made whole again. The use of ash (mũhu) and ochre (kĩng’aruĩ) to smear the body of the mourner was accompanied by the use of icere cia nyũngũ (broken fragments of pottery) to scratch oneself. This was a common characteristic of mourners who attracted attention for others to join.

The Gĩkũyũ religious and cultural values offers the text-readers’ with a reactionary rhetoric rather than sober and considerate ruminations of Euro-centric scholarship which is known to control the text-readers’ ways of expressing pain, tension, anger and revenge. The feminine artifacts, ndĩrĩ (mortar) and mũũthĩ (Pestle) were used by women for preparation of the daily food. They were used to pound sugar cane, maize, millet and sorghum to produce flour for ceremonial gruel or porridge (ũcũrũ wa gũkiyo) as well the production of sugar malt (ngogoyo) for local brew. The giant mortar and pressers with a series of holes dug into one side of the trunk, well-shaped like barrel were curved from big and hard trees. The giant mortar was used in occasions of brewing beer, where the crushing of sugar cane was seen to bring the community together. This event was crucial because it symbolized the preparation of local brews which were basically the melting point of community’s joys and pain. Hence the commonly expressed Agĩkũyũ adage: Kamũingĩ koyaga ndĩrĩ (unity is strength) this proverb captures the importance of this giant mortar as a way-bridge to unity of purpose where the communal efforts are valued as basis of strength (Kamũingĩ koyaga ndĩrĩ).

The grinding stones (mahiga ma thiũo) were designed in a way that the women would come to a meeting point where they gathered from the entire neighborhood, to do the grinding
together in order to lament and gossip as they try to catch up with the local news and also to know how their neighborhood is faring on. Coming together to work at public faucets brings women to a social and cultural location in a community where they are free to discuss their issues. These faucets offer a place of gender support, mutual communication, and communal planning where desperate cries of the defenseless captured in daily activities are so intertwined that it is impossible to separate them. In reality the Gĩkũyũ community would allow women to reconstruct their focus in terms of supplying missing information about the place they live by shifting their discourse away from hierarchically ordered principles. Their search for meaning out of their choice of artifacts were perfected by rhetoric, ideas, and language born out of acts of resistances generated in such public faucets where silence is ultimately broken. It was a matter of responding to dynamic hermeneutical quality of biblical texts where presence rather than a static record of the past is given a here and now preeminence. Since Agĩkũyũ had no written records of the past it is their display of artifacts through dances and songs that expressed their present feelings with a strong sense of message outside their own self-interest, with norms beyond vested interests.

Every event in life had its proper song and a poetic narration of a fact was constantly appreciated. Topical songs were always forthcoming to record contemporary adventures coupled with instinctive feelings for retaliation in a scenario of returning hatred with hatred where cursing litany like Gĩkũyũ songs of expressing pain, hurt and anger are captured. Music was used to mourn the dead and through them the mourners expressed their sorrow and that of the family. Vocal instruments like coro wa igongona: a ceremonial horn was used during such rituals to assemble people. The trumpet was usually the horn of a bull, a ram or any other ‘ceremonial’ animal and was primarily used to raise the alarm or to
summon people to special meetings or announce important propitiatory sacrifices which were offered for the purpose of worship. It was also employed on most occasions to announce the beginning of rituals of great joy after victories in battles and raids as well as the expression of sorrow for the parted raiders. Women came out of villages singing and dancing to meet returning warriors. The public road, the village square and other open fields were the everyday grounds of expressing laments. The man, however, could not leave his hut (thingira) for several days, and during this time he did not speak except in song. Friends popped along in groups to listen to the lamentation (kĩrĩro) and weeping (kĩgĩrĩko) which he sung. In case of epidemic all kinds of attempted remedies were sought and if all attempts failed they resorted to communal action which in its creativity culminated in a terrific verbalization of hurt and its sting.

At night thousands of people shouted at the top of their voices from the direction whence the epidemic came. One would have thought that the whole country was suffering from hostile invasion. This was the kũingata mũrimũ, the locals attempted to shout their misfortune through a sharp, shrill, ear-piercing shriek. This shriek is followed by a persistent and terrifying wail and when it is heard, everybody knows a death has occurred. This outcry was transmitted from hill to hill, as if they were pursuing some fantastic devil in its flight. When the noise ceased on one hill it was carried on with the same intensity and fury until it swept over the whole land. In this way the Agĩkũyũ believed that they could free themselves from the pestilence and expel the evil spirit that was vexing them. So, it has been difficult for the Western text-readers who are not acquainted with Gĩkũyũ customs to appreciate this community’s methods of expressing sorrow and its traditions of comforting the victims through the material sources. It therefore follows that there is need for a biblical faith that
speaks to the Agĩkũyũ soul and calls for effective contextual reading that further seeks to understand the life and perspectives of the ordinary text-readers.

4.8.8 Analysis of Ndũũnyũ-ĩnĩ (Marketplace)

The symbolic importance of Ndũũnyũ/Mũŋ’etho or Giāthĩ (the Market place or rendezvous) in hermeneutics is underscored by a well-planned site for interaction where freedom and self-expression existed through a holistic discourse of lifestyle. It is an open space where goods and people from different places mingle in a nurture structure that converge through the pre-colonial, colonial and neo-colonial socio-economic sites of innovative reconfigurations of past and interruption of biting realities in Gĩkũyũland. However, the rationale behind these centers is based more on people, their needs and their relationship which makes its activities a hermeneutical site of the Gĩkũyũ people who are by nature and nurture a community of interpretation. The rationale of a market place in Gĩkũyũland is firmly built on relational values that attach human events in the life of the Agĩkũyũ to a unique place where everybody irrespective of their status came to lament, proclaim and elaborate on theology and ethic of life.

This site provides a foundational framework for cultural and national identity for it attracts people of all calibers of life, even the mentally sick (Agũrũki) to articulate their self-consciousness and political imagination; hence, the common Gĩkũyũ saying: Gūtirĩ Ndũũnyũ ĩtarĩ mũgũrũki wayo (There is no marketplace without a mad-person). Their search for consolation, meaning and fulfillment of life preceded the commercial gains of these centers for the meaning and purpose of life was realized through this center of communal life. Thus, the eminence of relationships and values was transmitted through radical
expressions of what Gĩkũyũ people give and receive as a community as opposed to profit mania that drive us today. Today the underlying forces of social realities are implicitly making Ndũũnyũ-inĩ /Mũng’etho-inĩ /Gĩathĩ-inĩl (at the market place) symbolizes the extension of households in terms of a place of Agĩkũyũ memory and a space for contemporary reflections and action. Ndũũnyũ-inĩ is still a sanctuary of life in Gĩkũyũland where the quality of comparative cross-cultural data could be meaningfully applied in textual interpretation leading to a new wave of post-colonial oppositional hermeneutics of life. Its span of operation is largely on periphery of external ideological constructs.

As a channel through which the mythos and ethos are allowed to freely flow in a melting pot the impact of market place is felt through its strategic provisions of a site for dialogue with Gĩkũyũ people’s past and future. This flow will signify a post-colonial rebirth of ideas coupled with alternative vision of life and space which is a never-ending task because it was and it is a sacred place where Agĩkũyũ go to shop for new ideas. It guaranteed a social and cultural continuity of a retelling process that went beyond the space of ordinary practices of buying and selling of goods. Since time in memorial the Agĩkũyũ community has valued attending the Ndũũnyũ-inĩ /Mũng’etho-inĩ /Gĩathĩ-inĩ (market place) for it was a central site of confronting the present allocation of power and curbing atheistic and dehumanizing system of thought and action. This was a space of receiving and dispatching of information in the life of this community.

In order to integrate the biblical scholars and ordinary text-readers into a post-colonial socio-cultural milieu, a hermeneutical and theological friendly reading of the text is suggested through the metaphor ndũũnyũ-inĩ /gĩathĩ-inĩ lũung’etho-inĩ (at the Market place)
suggests. This is a space where Africa biblical hermeneutics arrive at its nurture and nature by attracting both the ordinary text-reader and biblical scholar into a process of engaging the Bible from a critical and reflective angle. The marginal voices of lamentation as echoed by people of all walks of life who convene at *ndũũnyũ-inĩ/mũŋ’etho-inĩ* /gĩathĩ-inĩ makes ordinary text-readers interpret the trained interpreters’ Sunday preaching to a radical hermeneutical process that operate under a framework of African cultural theatre and storytelling. Thus, the convergence and divergence of people at *ndũũnyũ-inĩ/mũŋ’etho-inĩ* /gĩathĩ-inĩ invites a text-reader into a socially engaged process of embracing the marginal voices. It opens a way for the ordinary text-readers to connect the Bible with their experienced reality of societal margins and so the metaphor *ndũũnyũ-inĩ/mũŋ’etho-inĩ* /gĩathĩ-inĩ becomes a starting point in which both the ordinary text-readers and the biblical scholars engage the Bible through the language of lamentation that permeates the African theatre and storytelling.

### 4.8.9 The Pastors and Evangelists

Through its extensive process of reflection, consultation, and discussion they have evolved into a process of making descriptions of the role and function of lamentation in African biblical hermeneutics. The changing contexts in which lamentation and hermeneutics takes place helped the study to identify the distinctiveness of marginal voices captured by post-colonial context of text-reading. This was followed by the study’s attestation of Pastors and Evangelists’ ability to make a brief overview and critique of the social realities, values, virtues, and assumptions that lie beneath the claims of dominant ideologies. The result drawn from in-depth interviews and participatory observation suggested a clear disconnect between the pastors’ individualistic approach to text and the communitarian approach.
expressed by ordinary text-readers.

Individualistic and communitarian approaches and encounters suggested the need for cross-cultural understanding of the text. Our observation of the general life style of pastors and evangelists/catechists displayed the low attitude of clergy towards the ordinary text-readers. The pastors had portrayed themselves as the imitators of colonial missionary pastors who were fond of being addressed by locals as *bwana* (sir) creating a clear dichotomy between the pastor (the shepherd) and ordinary text-readers (as goats and sheep). This dichotomy suggested that the pastor as an elite (“a know it all”) and the laity an illiterate (ignorant lot). Basing on qualitative research design and in-depth interviews for the study of the motif of lamentation in the context of the experiences of pastors and evangelists the study revealed different approaches born out of ordinary text-readers’ experience and responses. Thus, lamentation as an approach of biblical hermeneutics was suspected by some of the pastors and evangelists as a source of diverse hermeneutical outcomes that cause schisms. So, opening the doors to untamed interpretation of the Bible and Christian practices risks the status of conventionally trained scholars who claimed exclusive rights of making hermeneutical decisions on behalf of ordinary text-readers.

As duo-beings shaped in the image and likeness of a mono-hermeneutical culture of dominance, the pastors and evangelists invest on a process of abhorring other interpretations for the fear that things might get out of hand if the ordinary text-readers were involved in interpreting the Bible and applying its meaning to their everyday lives. These elites form a majority of interpreters who are trained through Western based institutions in and out of Africa. They are today aced with post-colonial proliferation of oppositional hermeneutics
that emanate from different angles of life, that is, historical and cultural settings that raise complex issues about the hermeneutics of life among the colonized text-readers.

Through informants’ responses the researcher was keen to classify the pastors and evangelists as a group of interpreters who are consciously or unconsciously saturated with Euro-centric fear and approaches to biblical studies. They seemed to dismiss the ordinary people, particularly, the poor and the marginalized as illiterate lot without sound assumptions and beliefs on the reality of life. They were also reluctant to accept the indigenous ways of text-reading in a way of refusing to relinquish their exclusive power of hermeneutical decision. In this case, the fear that inexperienced and ordinary text-reading would soon ruin the church in Africa, dominated the discourse. However, the ordinary text-readers were keen to challenge these old absolutes and also to openly question the infallibility of the previously held hermeneutical certainties of their pastors and evangelists. The reality that there are different ways of interpreting the text had not sunk in some Eurocentric trained pastors’ mind and so there articulation of alternative explanations is prone to make false displays of the word of God.

By explaining their western based interpretation as correct, authoritative, and infallible they fail to assist the ordinary text-readers to come into terms with the cries of this own age. In so doing, they were unconsciously dominating and gaining ecclesiastical control over their audience’s major commitments to the text. However, these pastors at primordial level agreed on having the thinking drawn out of the depths of human suffering enjoined to a faith that seeks transformation through its hermeneutical reference to text-readers’ cultural roots. The pursuit of lamentation as a psychoanalytic hermeneutic of suspicion made the study’s
search for the hidden reality a formidable component of formulating the local hermeneutics of life in the hands of the laity. Thus, the indigenous thought forms and familiar terminology of ordinary text-readers were no longer operational under the hermeneutical status quo of Euro-centric hermeneutics which symbolize a predatory hermeneutical weapon against ordinary text-reading process. In defiance, the African cultural practices and norms are currently used among other components of indigenous knowledge. Euro-centric hermeneutics as preference for many pastors has in the past subjected human behavior and local hermeneutical resources to strict statistical rules, measurement procedures and data which propagates modern-day denial of lamentation. So, the demand for the quantification of social phenomena like lamentation through collection, analysis and interpretation of numerical data developed out of links of a smaller number of attributes that intersect the many cases, which are contradicted by ordinary text-readers’ hermeneutical resources.

Thus, majority of pastors and evangelists were unconsciously threatened by lamentation as an approach of biblical hermeneutics, contending that such practices are not only a form of syncretism but an external identification of false religious claims. Lamentation is not seen to determine the hermeneutical application of the text but to open the door for wild interpretations of the Bible and Christian practices. They strongly advocated for a total break with pre-Christian Africa. They deem themselves as better and conventionally trained scholars who reserve the exclusive rights of making hermeneutical verdicts for their audience. Although our informants appreciated their pastors’ opportunity to study in many great Western based institutions, they were certain to lament on one thing, that the local and overseas training in biblical studies is one of the ways by which the text-readers are perpetually colonized among the Gĩkũyũ people. The pastors in Gĩkũyũland pose as biblical
scholars and therefore as expert Euro-centric interpreters of the Bible who are commissioned to spread the good news of Euro-centric biblical interpretation. One of the informants had on grounds of anonymity remarked that:

Today we can begin to identify our pastors as prominent secular businessmen and women who have succeeded in commercializing the word of God through faked miracles. It is under the pretext of true biblical teaching and preaching that their followers are ensnared by foreign and national forces of consumerism. By folding their arms and becoming spectators, they become part and parcel of those forces that have kept the Gĩkũyũland in perpetual dependence, slavery and need.

As scholars, the pastors were taught to maintain the old order and to spread the abstractness and sterility of Eurocentric approaches in hermeneutical circles. Their hermeneutics are vested on a rigid conformity and are therefore unable to react thoughtfully and positively to their parishioners’ condition. So, they remain colonized by Euro-centric methods of biblical interpretation which are individualistic and a submerging center of the oppressive culture of silence that denounces revolutionary text-reading processes. This individualism has contributed to a strange way of understanding and interpreting the Scripture among the Agĩkũyũ because the manner we read the Scripture does not reflect innocence but the influence of those who have trained us. In other words they read within a specific doctrinal framework (Speckman, 2001: 51), which keeps silent to the voices of lamentation. The silencing through priestly control makes the ordinary text-readers vulnerable to Euro-centric political, economic, theological and methodological claims.

Some of the pastors and evangelists regarded the Gĩkũyũ culture as both backward and atavistic. Their fear that some cultural practices stand to derail the text-reading process has to do with their rhetorical analysis of the text. This analysis coupled post-colonial reading process helps them notice where, how and what Gĩkũyũ words fit in their creation of a new world of meaning through lamentation. When these pastors and evangelists were challenged
and directed to stop looking for larger meanings from the text of Jeremiah 31:15-17 and instead attempt to make a reference to what the narrator is saying and doing in the process of generating a world through the concreteness of the words. By doing so, they were keen to confess that they were perpetual casualties of the colonial brainwashing machine and it was hard for them to recover from the sufferings rooted in colonial text-reading process because of its consequential traits which are based on a psychoneurotic past. Such a past is what prevents them from taking pride in their indigenous virtues and appreciating African values. One of the pastors lamented this Eurocentric tendency to attach western cultural values with the word of God as one of the greatest failures in text-reading processes in the past that obscured the word of God from the people they sought to touch. The detrimental lack of emotional or spiritual capacity to respond to every cry of distress cannot be compensated with victims’ inability and lethargic perspectives of a “don’t care” attitude.

Though a calloused feeling about disasters and deaths is not expected from a pastor, the Euro-centric trains the text-readers to read the text without a feeling of a twinge of sorrow for those who are suffering because of its references to protective universals. Text-readers who take sides in a conflict between people, ideologies, or countries may not respond to the cry of the oppressed text-readers who happen to be recipients of hermeneutically related threats and hatred. As human beings they seek accommodate and manage the hermeneutical impact in order to avoid the hampering of their fixed world views and the untamed biases that hinder the text-reader from making a critique of hermeneutical responses by resisting the proposals of dominant ideology. In this process, they can avoid being overwhelmed and depressed by the underlying social reality to the point of inaction.
By putting into practice some of the theoretical issues articulated in pulpits, by acting in response to what the researcher has studied from the text, the Euro-centric trained pastors and evangelists ought to approach their congregations through selective observation in order to confirm the practicability of their training in biblical hermeneutics which the study identified as being done through induced biases and stereotypes. So, those who have travelled overseas only to return home thinking that their people are backward or ugly are already ensnared by Eurocentric prejudice of thinking that their perspectives are correct. However, if we are going to grow through our experiences with other text-readers, we must be willing to identify our prejudicial ‘narrow-short-sightedness by being true to the original meaning of the text as well as being relevant to today’s questions. The integration of traditional practices in hermeneutics doesn’t deprive the Bible of its redeeming significance, and the cross of Christ. To display the word of God in whatever culture, ethnic environment, or soil is to have our stereotypes broken down and our worlds enlarged through firsthand experience of our own reality of the text in a process of keeping our perspectives straight.

4.8.10 Theological Students/Seminarians/ Biblical Scholars

The researcher discussed with a number of theological students/Seminarians about the training which they were undergoing in seminaries/university and asked them how much the training they were undergoing prepared or failed to prepare them to become responsive to people’s needs. Their failure to respond to the impact of massive public violence on human psyche had alienated seminarians from their community. What was captured in this discussion is that the seminaries were yet to change their brainwashing process and so making the task of biblical hermeneutics a pastoral care. This evangelistic issue leads to a revisit of biblical lamentation paradigms through the support and affirmation of
lamentations. The Gĩkũyũ myth of origin, poetry and oral history are eventually enjoined to African biblical hermeneutics. After in-depth interviews with theological students who were taking biblical studies our attempts to discuss the post-colonial plights of the ordinary Agĩkũyũ text-readers (such plights as enumerated in our in-depth interviews had included how pastors in conventional training can be free enough to lead the ordinary text-readers through a non-officially instituted hermeneutical avenue) were heightened. Our respondents were unanimous that lamentations do play a great role on how the Agĩkũyũ read the Bible through the reality of modern times that denies lamentation through a conserved and a closed system of training pastors. The post-colonial seminaries are no places for academically trained preachers of the word but denominational sycophants who merely administer Holy Communion, baptize, bury the dead and conduct church weddings. This being a universal issue of post-colonial world which is now being addressed by different disciplines; it should be taught in all institutions of learning regardless of religious affiliations. Doing so meant bringing ordinary text-readers who were removed from the hierarchical structure of social-economic development by dominant ideologies to a hermeneutical struggle by facilitating evangelization and community development.

Taking past and present opportunities through the presentation of challenges posed by ordinary text-readers’ in their act of integrating the post-colonial hermeneutical resources in order to prepare theological students to handle contemporary theological issues in their communities. The pastors in training agreed that they were being exposed to theoretical and foreign enterprises which may not prepare them to deal with concrete and current social and philosophical issues displayed in lamentations of African Church and her people. They suggested the need for the whole curriculum to undergo a radical surgery because their
academic training continued being irrelevant to the ordinary text-readers as the Gĩkũyũ motif of lamentation gain its currency by becoming relevant and invaluable among the ordinary text-readers who are clandestinely moving out to challenge the inadequacies of Euro-centric hermeneutical principles in the African churches. By having Euro-centrically trained and conservative pastors keep aloof in grave matters over these plights, the ordinary text-readers come out of this situation by making the choice either the African or Eurocentric hermeneutical probe of African psyche in order to bring to the local community of ordinary text-readers their collective search for new textual meanings. This opportunity to choose led to a preference for African hermeneutics of life but recorded the fear that it would be an irrelevant and corrupt hermeneutical aspect in its contradictions and watering-down the years of intensive training in seminaries. The elemental return to the expression of grief suggests to ordinary text-readers to oppose, eliminate and subvert the agents of sycophancy, blind patriotism, hierarchical, hegemonic, and monolithic understanding of the biblical text in their cultural settings. Such text-reading ignores the colonized people’s locations by creating otherness in its binaries of textual interpretations. It makes the grasping of indigenous text-reading in a replay of Gĩkũyũ community’s experiences deliberately evade its hermeneutic of suspicion as it exposes its low attitude of lamentation in the light of colonial conquests as a hermeneutic of life.

4.8.11 Ex-Mau Mau Freedom Fighters-Detainees and IDPs

The research sought to find out how the ex-Mau Mau freedom fighters, detainees and IDPs interpreted Jeremiah 31:15-17 from the perspective of their fragmented and broken lives. So, the study was enthusiastic to record their spontaneous contributions to the debate and also to carry out in-depth interviews as need a rose. This category of respondents was one
that rarely speaks of their past to strangers either because of psychic numbness triggered by post-traumatic disorders or deliberate avoidance of any pre-emption of their case which they have filed against the British government for its crime against humanity during its colonial regime in Kenya. These victims are still hoping for some form of compensation from the aggressors over their losses. They were suspicious of the researcher because of the past involvement, practice and use of Christian missionaries in clandestine intelligence gathering activities. Therefore, many shied away from the tape recorder while others refused to have their response to questions used in this research. However, after several explanation and identification they had agreed to make their response on condition of anonymity.

One of the areas that called for our great concern was the post-colonial biblical hermeneutics as a response to the lamentation of the uprooted peoples, especially, the internally displaced persons (IDPs) and ex-Mau Mau detainees. The IDPs and the ex-Mau Mau detainees are individuals themselves stripped to bare existence; every possession was lost, experiencing hunger, pain, brutality and extermination. They are an embodiment of a dramatic narrative as they are already uprooted from their community yet they remain within the borders of Gĩkũyũland. These individuals are among the most vulnerable and marginalized groups who do not enjoy even the minimal standards of treatment which refugees are accorded by international laws. The protest against the regimes’ meta-narratives captured through lamentation text brings us into an ongoing intellectual revisits to and critical analysis of the ex-Mau Mau detainees and IDPs articulation of a distinctive text-reading process from the margins a new. The artistic imagination channeled through the vested interests operative in the text were subjected to ex-detainees and IDPs perspective who considered the unraveling of various ways into which the ideological forces have been
at work in text-readers theological claims and in our most faithful interpretation.

The clash between the domineering process of degradations and the anticipated erasure of the painful memories facilitates the development of a distinct biblical hermeneutics in Gĩkũyũland as the text-readers attempt to understand and respond to their own historical situations. This is a scenario of questioning the inevitability of human suffering and the human actions embodied by colonial meta-narratives and the mainstream biblical scholarship. It poses a hermeneutical challenge through the sharpening of various contradictions recorded by the elongated data solicited through the reflection of ex-detainees memoirs. By contradicting the foreign exploiter, this text-reading wreaks havoc upon the realities of community development and organization through its anti-colonial stance and movement which generated lamentations as the most invaluable tool of explicating the textual meaning of the Agĩkũyũ past and present through reference to the future. The Assyrian and Babylonian aggressions in conquering other people and bring them under their control which can only be paralleled with European empires in our modern times.

These colonial aggressions are typically defined by dominant meta-narrative of technological and military consumerisms that continuously generate a culture of death and denial among the exiles. Thus, the Assyro-Babylonian policies of conquest driven by the insatiable desire for colonial power, wealth, and status were marked by distinct cultural domination and penetration. The re-reading of this narrative of conquest and its context prophetically evokes the fate of Agĩkũyũ who are perpetually subjected to a dehumanizing process that produces eternally loyal law-abiding subjects of the imperial schemes. Thus, the reading of lamentation in Jeremiah 31:15-17 locates a crucial site of social contestation in
the discursive realm, as the place where political and cultural discussion and consensus are
forged and re-forged. It suggests a detailed analysis of the social and political contexts of the
shifts that engulfed the Agĩkũyũ allegory and non-rational modes of interpretation.

The dominant political, cultural and theological discourse culminates in myths that evoke
post-colonial hermeneutics venturing in its disputes. Besides, it helps the post-colonial text-
reader to capture what the sending of Mau Mau freedom fighters to detention camps outside
the Gĩkũyũland and the consequential series of internal displacements has meant to
successful generations of the Gĩkũyũ people. The ordeals of Gĩkũyũ women and children
who were kicked out of European farms on the propagandist account that they were fully
connected to the atavistic freedom movements that disrupted social and economic
development still linger in the minds of ex-detainees who had lost everything including their
families. To break the solidarity of freedom fighters and detainees who were subjected to
confinements articulated by colonialists was a golden opportunity for the expansion of
Christianity whose text-reading process is sponsored by colonial regime. The rigorous
rehabilitation process of detainees geared towards the creation of a new Kenya, a new
society in which violence and support from freedom fighters would be completely absent.
The Babylonian conquerors who slaughtered all the people who had resisted imperialism
just the way the British invaders did to the Agĩkũyũ through the dominant ideology of
seeking the good of all races in Kenya.

The ex-detainees were being subjected by the colonialists to an inhuman process of
exorcising the demon of evil ideologies which had threatened to clip the members of the
Agĩkũyũ community. This ideology was alleged to be behind the anomalous cohesion and
morale that led to savage activities of freedom fighters and detainees. This cohesion was a threat to the dominant ideology and so immersion into hegemonic religious faith was a sure way of breaking down indigenous determinations. To achieve this end, the ex-detainee text-readers had to be submissive. Thus, the intersection of colonial religious practices makes the interrogation of human tragedy through the process of renouncing the legitimate aspirations of the colonized away of inflicting guilt on locals.

Many of the freedom fighters were subjected to tactics of terror and psychological warfare that had led them to slave-camps of despair. The group of early Africans were either compromised or taken into exile while the non-elite were sorted out and categorized at massive screening camps where detainees were being apprehended and set to perform heavy manual under strict conditions. They were thus, forced to colonizers scheme of soliciting and exploiting cheap labour in the clearing of numerous forests, land terracing and digging canals for irrigation. The unrelenting struggle for daily bread and for life itself, for one's own sake or for that of a good friend after detention ordeals remains a life conundrum to fix even after freedom. Many of them have died of a broken heart-hoping, believing, but, never knowing to what end their life time sacrifices in the jungle fighting for freedom would come down to. Though, Rachel's lamentation and weeping is a narrative of loss, which was to situate Israel's misfortunes in a singular hermeneutical framework that celebrate the local; the detentions, communal punishments and confessions geared towards the weakening of the Agĩkūyũ resolve to sustain the indigenous rebellion against the singing of the glories of imperial domination. By alluding to this tradition, Jeremiah conceptualizes the disaster through a personification where Rachel reappears in Ramah, centuries after her death, to mourn the defeat and expulsion of the Israelites at the hand of their enemies. Rachel weeps
bitterly and inconsolably for her children who are no more.

Rachel's reference to her children as "no more" indicates the prolonged period of their exile. While the disconsolate state of her laments illustrate profound disturbance, they also illustrate profound confidence. Likewise the memoirs of Field Marshal Mūthoni-wa-Kirima from Nyeri who fought the colonialists from Nyandarūa forest alongside Mwangi-wa-Bebeta, and General Mwariama is fond of using the phrase; *andū aitū mahinyërīrio nī mbarī ya nyakerū nginya makīaga kiene* “our people were oppressed by colonialist until they were no more” Anderson (1983:103) insists that it is in expression of trust in God that human outcries dare question and wrestle with God in situation of suffering. A community that truly believes and insists that their God can and will help them in times of disaster; is the one which can dare challenge the God of Israel so forthrightly. The prophet Jeremiah has brilliantly fronted a replica of Rachel's real presence in lament many years after her death. The exile and captivity scenario of Israelites in Babylon can parallel the experience of land alienation and taxation among the Agĩkũyũ ex-detainees and IDPs.

This experience had created a direct conflict between the Agĩkũyũ and the colonial state; further, generating a lot of pressure to this community as it tried to come into terms with its reality of a radically enforced reluctantly into its search for livelihood outside its parameters indigenous land. The disorientation of the Gĩkũyũ community has perpetually resulted into this community being torn into fragments of squatters and urban proletariat lots. Those settled in white settlers’ farms as laborers were subjected to exploitation under oppressive mentality of native labour ordinances that drastically led to critical outcries among the frustrated natives. The Agĩkũyũ squatters and urban proletariats got hooked into working
under difficult conditions and perpetually experienced discriminations based on color bar, tribalism and sectionalism which they had all along resisted. They were eventually to become one of the first African communities to mobilize a strong military force and political parties’ and labour movements through which their cries and lamentations were sustained.

Due to obstinacy, missionaries and the colonial government always underestimated the depth of Gĩkũyũ people’s frustrations and so, these frustrations were echoed and crystallized through lamentation. As a result, the disillusionment of lobby politics that led to the expansion of the Mau Mau movement led to out-cries of ex-Mau Mau detainees who maintained that the movement actually won the war of liberation but, its members were denied full measure independence fought for. Hence, the outstanding and wide-spread disconsolate out-cries among the Gĩkũyũ people who lament today of being marginalized by independent Kenya today through the generations of black governors who are the by-products of colonial regime and its successive schemes of marginalizing the Gĩkũyũ freedom fighters community.

This process of marginalization occurred before 1963 when the missionaries and colonial state agencies started the creation of a loyalist middle class of text-readers out of those detainees who had resigned to the status of collaborators and moderates. There were also text-readings revolving around the commercial agriculture and elective politics that eventually led to their co-option into administrative posts in the colonial state of loyalists in order to prepare them to manage independent Kenya. The hardcore ex-Mau Mau detainees and fighters were not allowed to take part in any of these schemas and so their children were left out to ravish in languish of poverty. As Andrew Kabĩra-wa-Gachini an ex-soldier in
During the World War-II (1939-1945) we had wholeheartedly fought to protect Britain as good Christian soldiers. But when we came home from the war and started agitating for freedom they regarded us as bunch of primitive, pagan and savagery lot; dismissing our quest for liberty, as a psychotic case haunting the people who are unable to cope with demands of modernity. We were eventually detained and tortured by the same people we had fought alongside in the war.

In the same rejoinder, an ex-freedom fighter and ex-detainees who had expressed his resonance with this text in his contemplation of his post-Mau Mau ordeals by lamenting that: “Ithuĩ twahootana Mbaara ya wiyathi ngerenwa ya ũhootani yaheirwo eroreri nacio njamba ciitũ na itungati ciigĩtaniri na imaramari onginyagia ũmũthĩ ũyũ – After we have won our contest for freedom the medal of commendation was given to the spectators instead of the heroes and heroines who are up-today treated as vagrants.” A statement like this shows the depth of disturbing insights within which the ex-Mau Mau freedom fighters and detainees regard the post-colonial injustice, meted on them by neo-colonial power by their fellow African rulers. The word injustice is descriptive enough of the depth of the suffering facing the Gĩkũyũ people in post-colonial times which are embroiled in a series of hermeneutical conflict. This inconsistency comprise the intensification of political violence, violation of human rights, lack of freedom, inequitable distribution of resources, the spread of abject poverty, large-scale destitution and famine, spread of deadly diseases, environmental disasters, widespread insecurity and generalized despair.

The orphaned children and widows of freedom fighters are today ravaging in poverty as they nurse the emotional wounds of betrayal are therefore no more. The text of Jeremiah as an arena of mediating diverse ideological interests brings to focus the hermeneutic that underlie the intertwined circles of socio-political and economic causes. The text-readers whose natural propensity of conflict and violence continue not only on its entire focus on horrendous hermeneutical crises but also lamentation of post-colonial Kenya’s condition
whose claims for freedom have fundamentally worked for the benefit of traitors. It has all through given an upper hand to the passive freedom fighters by ensuring that the unyielding freedom fighters did not enjoy eating the fruits of independence. The Kenyans who fought from sidelines and those who collaborated with colonizers to fight the Mau Mau are even today being used by post-colonial regimes to shortchange the aspiration of the gallant freedom fighters.

The ideological gesture of entrusting various generations of colonial collaborators into a single-hand management of post-colonial affairs and allowing them to step in and claim victory is a suicidal mission and decision. Because they have lived to underrate and convince the ex-freedom fighters of status quo and supporting the neo-colonial ideology and its mediocre claims that independence is fully achieved. Hence, the affirmation of the colonialists claim that the Mau Mau freedom fighters were just mere terrorists who had sacrificed nothing much to win the concrete independence for Kenya. But, this marginalization of freedom heroes reveals the amnesiac character of our leaders in our national psyche. The systematic downgrading of the ex-Mau Mau freedom fighters and detainees spelt out the fatal gloominess of actual killing of the glory of Kenya’s struggle for liberation. The Mau Mau never stopped at resisting the colonial powers that were vested on ideological form of text-reading and its self-serving interests of the colonizer at the expense of demeaning, reducing, de-humanizing, oppressing, exploiting, competing or destroying the natives. They had all through established anti-Christian ideology through songs that singled out the colonial order envisaged by missionaries’ role in the land alienation which is unpardonable. Thus, the unresolved pain and trauma of ex-freedom fighters brings the post-colonial Kenya into reality of early generations of text-readers (Athoomi) who played a
devastating role in resisting the Mau Mau struggle for self-determination. They had identified with oppression through the usurping and betraying of freedom struggle and all its heroes and heroines. Those IDPs are members of Gĩkũyũ community who settled in Rift Valley were former squatters in white settlers’ farms some of them were members of Mau Mau movement who have no connection with their homes of origin.

Among those interviewed in Mawingo IDPs camps in Nyandarua voiced a story of a people deeply at risk, without home, without land, and without security. They are no longer in Rift Valley where they call home and they are lamenting the loss of their land, and their loved ones, they were forced by circumstances to seek for a safe haven in central Kenya as strangers where they were uninvited. Thus, the cry of the IDPs is resolutely based on loss of their identity, livelihood and possessions and therefore, it will be heartless to categorize the IDPs differently and looking at them against the background of where they hailed from, how they acquired the land when they are already illegally and forcefully disinherited and kicked out of where they call home in their life time. If the people of Israel who had by the time of Babylonian exilic ordeals settled in the promised land which previously belonged to Canaanites which they were now calling home; it will be a denial of human right to lament even if they were dismissed as thieves who occupied the land belonging to others. Initially, they travelled from Central Kenya to Rift Valley for many reasons, to escape oppression, to acquire new land, to enter a fresh prosperity, to have a zone of freedom and power in their life. These IDPs from Rift Valley bought their own land on a willing buyer and willing seller basis and so, compelled by bitter inhospitable situation to refugee camps they protest against fellow Kenyans who irresponsibly address them as invaders and colonialists. Their intention and freedom to settle anywhere in Kenya as mandated by the constitution makes
these dispossessed Kenyans are also helplessly being pushed to non-existent homes of their origin only to suffer a double tragedy of land loss spawned by faulty colonial ideological legacies of divide and rule. According to IDPs cry those Kenyans who fought and evicted them were not lamenting but they were perpetuating a historical cycle of colonial master plan of 1950’s evictions which to loss of properties of over 11,000 squatters from Gĩkũyũ community who belonged to a group of squatters resettled by colonial regime at Olenguruone in Rift Valley by 1941 (Anderson, 2005: 27-28). The communities which were used by colonial regime to execute evictions and to loot properties from fellow Africans are still the one executing the post-independence evictions. During the colonial period they were defending the white settlers and so their place of lamentation over the land question today will need a lot of probing. However, the language and habit of putting a tag of stereotyping the Gĩkũyũ community in Diasporas is injuriously and prevalently ethnic force of animosity breed by politicians and bigotry scholars who push lamentation to another direction.

Consequently, these stereotypes should be identified, prioritized and firmly addressed by National Cohesion Commission. However, diaspora location and context opens a site for future scholarly replication of this study. To allow the people at the margins to access their destiny through self-esteem, self-respect and self-confidence makes the oppositional post-colonial hermeneutical lenses and sanctuary a spring of wellbeing. The oppositional post-colonialism challenges the neo-colonialist advocates and in particular those who rush in to make claims for economic victory and political autonomy in a setting that reverts to the evils of the ideological systems of colonialism. The colonial ideological scheme have failed to
provide the text-readers with adequate and scientific knowledge of socio-economic and political realities, rather it masks them. Such system of text-reading does not rise above the pragmatic and rational level but on a spontaneous realization of the preservation of the status quo and the dogmatization of all what have fallen under its influence and so political action, science and faith do not escape this danger (Gutierrez, 1993:34).

The reading of Jeremiah 31:15-17 in post-colonial era allows the ex-members of the Mau Mau and IDPs movement to authenticate the claim that Kenyans had evidently won the war of independence; only to be shoved off and disinherit by the allocation of a lion’s share of the won freedom to their traitors. The passive freedom fighters had deliberately and systematically emaciated the heroes and heroines of freedom; they support the denial of this reality in a proposal to absolve those who had taken over the leadership from the colonialists. This scheme of sidelining the real heroes of independence suggests a model of lament reading which will anticipate the advent of communicating the word of God in a changing world, a world which has been changed by struggle for survival. By capturing the pathos of a covenant community in the book of Jeremiah the study makes the expression of Rachel’s lamentation among the Agĩkũyũ a formidable nurture of marginal voices through the airing of anguish and pain.

As a resource and an alternative voice lamentations engenders a bargaining ground for the oppressed to demand self-respect, self-confidence, imagination, ambition, planning, determination, application, courage, self-discipline and sacrifice. It furnishes the unattended community’s trauma with a language of pain which can speak out even in contexts of immense sufferings, displacements and dislocations. Replaying such traumatic events
through the biblical motif of lamentation poses a challenge to the enduring evils of colonialism in Gĩkũyũland. The process of overthrowing the shackles and fetters of colonial trauma and numbness is completed through a bold exposure of societal wounds without losing sight of human purpose. The fundamental nature of silence in situations of oppression points to a withdrawal of the oppressed from their pressing experiences and their retrospective view (larger context).

Wherever the silence is allowed to reign, and operate through colonial conjectures, the immediate experience or its retrospective memories cannot help the text-reader make meaning out of what has been experienced. Silence means isolation, alienation and exterminations of intelligence, feelings, aspirations and achievements. Thus, the analysis of socio-economic factors underlying the upsurge of lamentations abhors silence and so it leads to deciphering of the realities in our present times. When silence is fronted as a self-defense among the oppressed it is there only to maintain alienation that is already in place, because history bears the evidence that wherever an oppressed text-reader tries to heal the breach, they either get co-opted and become a token pet in the system or they get assassinated as a threat to the status quo of the dominant ideology that mirrors as false pretense of academic excellence and national security. The silence becomes a trigger of stress which may force, influence, compel, persuade, command, teach, push, confront, intoxicate, sedate, deceive, delude, dupe, lead, torture, threaten or even aid its human victim to suffer and forfeit their self-integrity. The singing and composition of Gĩkũyũ songs in times of calamities ensured that the teaching material in them mirrored the redemptive acts of God and ancestors. These acts were set as the basis of Agĩkũyũ conduct and worship with the intention of obtaining the Agĩkũyũ folklore through; “the materials for the social construction of a reality
and for the socialization of every generation into an alternative world where God of Gĩkũyũ and Mũmbi (Ngai wa Gĩkũyũ na Mũmbi) lives and governs.” The Gĩkũyũ text readers’ survival and conduct in social life depends squarely on what an individual was trained earlier in life on how to bring the multiplicity of different cosmic visions conceived through their emergence from ruins left by modernity at the local level. A revisiting of the Gĩkũyũ oral traditional way of retelling their stories through songs of lamentations is not a fruitless pursuit of the prescriptions provided by the failed development designer (Kobia, 2003: 174) that draws their resources from myths, legends, and folklore. This is required in order to help text-readers to learn from their past, through lamentation text which becomes an imperative of any text-reading process among the Ağiƙũyũ.

4.8.12 The Eyewitnesses of Mũthĩrĩgũ Lament-dance

The re-reading of Jeremiah 31:15-17 finally resonated with the role played by Gĩkũyũ ancestress – Mũmbi – in communal laments. The passage was used to elevate Rachel’s laments over the nation of Israel which was wholly used to permeate the African soul and its imagery through imaginative sculpture, songs and dances. By considering what missionaries’ can do in censuring the indigenous expressions of lamentation through the Mũthĩrĩgũ dance era which was to become a process of protesting colonial tendency of nullifying and silencing the cries of the Ağiƙũyũ text-readers. The laments made over the lost land and violation of the Gĩkũyũ lifestyle by invaders who were making the Gĩkũyũ motif of lamentation help the indigenous groups, to respond to their marginalized status or even come into terms with how the Ağiƙũyũ, responded to skewed textual-meaning. The expression of lamentations through the Mũthĩrĩgũ dance was to help the Gĩkũyũ people challenge the foreign hermeneutical theories by affirming the role of their ancestors in their
struggle for survival. Thus, the *Mũthĩrĩgũ* dance-songs express the outcries that spring from the heart of Africa, which were criticized and dismissed by colonialists as primitive war cry.

The denial of pain through the weapon of selective amnesia led to domestication of text-readers; because, the acceptance of their subjugations as predestined hindered any discourse between their experience of sorrow and their quest for a biblical God who participates in human suffering. This denial is coupled with false cognates and pedagogical interactions that revealed text-meaning through the expression of salvation which had to do with their future but not the present. By positioning the missionary’s oppressive legacies through deprivation of Gĩkũyũ people’s re-examinations of historical experiences through the *Mũthĩrĩgũ* reveals that the Euro-centric hermeneutics has a lion’s share in guilt of dehumanizing and so it had nothing to do with the way the Gĩkũyũ text-readers addresses their context of faith and life.

Today, what needs to be pointed on urgent basis is how the experience of being subjugated, controlled and exploited can be used in creating, inventing and imagining new and more communal outcries for military action which are typical Gĩkũyũ motif of lamentation. Identifying through the post-colonial hermeneutical methods on how lamentation can be applied in looking for ways, which were mostly used and abused in biblical interpretation by the powerful colonial system and the missionaries to exploit the powerless text-readers.

**4.9 Summary**

The importance of biblical motif of lamentation to Euro-centric trained text-reader, especially the Pastors and Evangelists in particular was minimal to their congregation. They were accused of being personally non-committal in the spearheading of a text-reading process which is sensitive to the marginalized text-readers’ conditions. The text-readers’
attempt to fit the Rachel’s narrative was aimed at enabling the community to see meaning in its suffering and courage to live. Their context of lamentation not only depicts the most moving story of a community’s courage and endurance but also opens up new vistas of hope and leading of the Gĩkũyũ people’s nurture of hermeneutics of life. It was relevant to long-time detainees’-cum-text-readers who lost all their relatives except one sister or brother through the bestial cruelties of the colonial torturers and exterminators. The ex-detainees and their families who lament on how they are left with deep eating disorder of isolation, despair, and anxiety visualize symbolize all marginalized text-readers who are deprived of everything under many historical transitions. Any deprivation is in absence of lamentation incapable of thinking beyond the Eurocentric box or of imagining a homecoming time when things will be greatly different.

The memory of the pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial traumas passed from one generation to another offers Africans painful and meaningless existence which must be brought to creative imagination. But when ex-detainees were invited to reread Jeremiah 31:15-17 they started rousing an imaginative anticipation of their peculiar life as internalized through places and events that embody and endorse their displacement and homelessness. The imagination of Rachel evokes a deep yearning for homecoming which is a symbol of many grieving mothers in Gĩkũyũland. Through the findings of this study, it was established that most of the text-readers unofficially expressed their indigenous lamentation during social get-togethers and their involvement has tremendous affected their understanding of the Bible. Their expression of lamentation as an opinionated voice and icon of enacting the socio-economic realities in Gĩkũyũ community’s art of text-reading brings the indigenous lamentation into a text-reading that invests on fundamental shifts of
power from center to margins. Thus, the shift of power among the colonized in post-independence era marks a move from the margin to the center but in a pathetic state where colonizers’ hermeneutical apparatus seem to define the text-readers in terms of their dominant cultural outfits and relics. The art of domesticating, conditioning and silencing of African minds in modern times makes the interpretation of the Bible to spur the yearning for colonizers power. But, the post-colonial world of the marginalized Agĩkũyũ text-readers suggests a diverse usage of hermeneutical lenses different from what was inherited from the imperialist mode of text-readings. It proposes to another way of making the word of God to be fully received, thoroughly thought through, and fully lived in harsh socio-economic and political realities of post-colonial text-reading strategies in Gĩkũyũland?

As reflected on this study’s responses to the in-depth interviews, vast majorities of Pastors and Evangelists are not properly involved in a text-reading process, that claim attests the usages and expressions of African traditional beliefs and practices. The revisit of lamentation text and the identification of Pastors and Evangelists with the ordinary readers through the Bible study in their congregation were now being vague in their local Churches. Besides reading the Bible for spiritual nourishment the ordinary text-readers as main protagonist of hermeneutical clash with Euro-centric trained readers do read the Bible for survival not for leisure: Because, their daily cries for survival, their analysis of Biblical text helps them to read the narrative of Rachel in Jeremiah 31:15-17 through a process of developing basic frameworks of solving the hermeneutical crisis. The ordinary text-readers unconsciously embrace lamentation as an alternative reading in their day-to-day expression of faith which must be brought to mainstream of breaking the fetters and shackles of imperial individualism and its situation of amnesia.
As unsophisticated text analyst ordinary text-readers’ homilies seem to invest on exposing the problems and grievances that ignite, mobilize, and motivate the imagination of other text-readers through hermeneutical leaps gained by ordinary text-readers out of their combat with the Euro-centric world of trained readers. Table 5 below sets forth a post-colonial comparison of Euro-centric trained-readers and ordinary text-readers.

**Table: 5 Comparison of Euro-centric Trained-readers and Ordinary Text-readers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Euro-centric Trained-readers</th>
<th>Ordinary Text-readers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read the text for the discovery of new information for preaching purposes.</td>
<td>Reads the text through the lenses of information handed down from past for survival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reach textual meaning by reading, studying, examining, classifying, comparing and analyzing the text</td>
<td>Reaches textual meaning by observing, imitating, listening, re-reading and memorizing the text through proverbs, sayings, stories, songs and expressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think and talk about textual concepts and principles</td>
<td>Think and talk about textual meaning through events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manage textual meaning in abstract, complicated, scientific categories.</td>
<td>Use stories of human action to store, organize and communicate textual meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spend a lot of time defining words and concepts of the text.</td>
<td>Not interested with definitions of words and concepts for the context is enough to bring the meaning home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value the innovative text-reading</td>
<td>Values the literal significance of text-reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand the text abstractly like the pieces of a puzzle.</td>
<td>Understand the text in its context and according to the people involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use charts, diagrams and lists to explicate the textual meaning.</td>
<td>Use symbols, metaphors and stories to explicate the textual meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approach the text in parts.</td>
<td>Approach the text as a whole, in its totality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read and appropriate textual meaning as general principles.</td>
<td>Read and appropriate textual meaning in relation to real and imagined events of life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrive at textual meaning by logic.</td>
<td>Arrive at textual meaning through experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tend to appropriate the textual meaning on one-to-one basis.</td>
<td>Tend to appropriate the textual meaning in groups.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, scores of ordinary text-readers regretted that the professional preachers in their local churches have continued to marginalize the Gĩkũyũ themes of lamentation which resonates so powerfully for contemporary community of faith as unbiblical and thus treating them as anti-Christian. Instead, the official text-reading process seeks to criminalize, oppress and repress hermeneutical dissent rather than seek hermeneutical solutions or address the real problems.
In order to maintain that the expression of lamentation is morally bad due to its wordings it suggests a plan of action which is likely to spark reactions and resistance that translate to violence. The frustration of historical reality through which ordinary text-readers understand, shape, and create their lives by addressing the pressing problems suggest a deliberate marginalization, exclusion and discrimination of the stakeholders in a text-reading process. The fear of lamentation text has always translated into categorical rejection of a middle course chart that would incite the reader into making explicit, genuine and significant move against frustration, dissatisfaction and injustices that trigger the aggressions. The overemphasis of the prosperity gospel and its imposition of western problem-solving apparatus on African context allows the dominance of populist sermons currently aired by different TV stations in Kenya that undermine the formation of a genuinely indigenous hermeneutical community.

The biblical motif of lamentation plays should translate into a mechanism of controlling the society’s economic and cultural resources. It should both individually and collectively compel the corrupt and predatory ruling elite that symbolize the oppressor to demonstrate human accountability and responsibility for what transpires in history by tangible address of the pressing needs and problems. It is a needed framework of addressing the underlying socio-economic and political realities in Kenya. The ensuing marginalization of text-readers is worsened by poverty which have always determined and shaped the way the ordinary text-readers interpret the Bible as it takes a different way from the mainstream interpretation. Most of the ordinary text-readers claimed they were modern Gĩkũyũ text-readers. What propels the Gĩkũyũ Christians to express lamentation in their contemporary
world of self-sufficiency is the fact that this community has been duly compelled to choose between total collapse through insecurities or political survival with an uncertain future.

4.10 Conclusion

The study of the text of Jeremiah 31:15-17 will therefore trigger the speculation of biblical and Africa motif of lamentation as a remedial voice. The struggle to remove the sting of pain out of all aspects of life and at every stage becomes the meeting point of all streams of laments that narrate the day to day events through a deep reflection on the Agĩkũyũ character of uncensored search for meaning. Thus, the expression of lamentations among the post-colonial Gĩkũyũ society is manifested in the realm of chaos, and brokenness that invades and pulls the Gĩkũyũ community life a part. This manifestation is what makes lamentation the basis of a hermeneutical resentment that challenges the Church and state to deliver in context of a traumatized world of post-colonial Kenya where poverty and affluence live side by side.

The rich nations in the world have no place for the experiences and history of the poor nations; paradoxically, it has its ready-made answers to fix problems of everyone in the world. The old pattern of infinite cycle of sending/receiving, dominance/dependence, and oppressor/oppressed, and donor/recipient may continue in new forms if the African people fail to question the adequacy of traditional Western hermeneutical codes in Africa. This is not the era of singing hermeneutical songs with foreign melodies if we are a people who aspire for true African identity and liberation. Any manipulation of text-reading process through extreme embrace of a world manned by minority rich, and affluent brings a majority of text-readers into abject poverty and any protest against it should push the poor African
nations to make lamentation the unparalleled text that open the society into a text-reading process for liberation. Lamentation text is prophetically placed to voice the warning that; if the wealth of the African nations is not aggregated in accordance with the concern for the marginalized voices, the looming catastrophe is the inevitable episode that will see the living standard crash down absolutely. The structural dimension of protest and attack against systems which are captivated by legacies of Euro-centralism will hardly appreciate the richness of Agĩkũyũ history and culture, hence the need to have the mindset towards lamentation changed. The immediate step the text-readers took after decolonization was to reshape the curriculum and rewrite the post-colonial Kenya’s history, which ended with the involvement of experts from Europe who assisted in the social construction of text-readers identity. The vestige of Euro-centrism is what still resonates with minds of many text-readers. Unfortunately, the people who helped in achieving the transformation of theological education never got the kind of ecclesiastical political support or the structural dimension of liberation struggle. The ordinary text-readers are hardly mentioned by elite text-readers and so they are unwilling to reciprocate the gesture and good will of ordinary text-readers in the anti-colonial struggle. The historical and current hermeneutical attacks on the Gĩkũyũ people’s motif of lamentation are therefore unwarranted and unacceptable. By despising pain and suffering the Agĩkũyũ text-readers are bound to get into a quagmire of fixing their problems. The process of ignoring the domesticated status have molded the Agĩkũyũ sufferers into a lifestyle of despising their suffering and painful experiences.

The denial of pain captured through the Euro-centric claims that entailed the text-readers movement into the interstices held between the academy on one hand and the religiously twisted pride of socio-economic and political life of the larger world on the other. However, the modern Gĩkũyũ community is forced through denials to medicate the present day pain
and suffering through the Western based Christian faith that leads to the denial of lamentation by bringing the reality of pain and suffering into the realm of uncivilized grief which is beyond the parameters of Euro-centric hermeneutical control. The different levels of denials bring lamentation into a level of interrogating the text-reader’s identity; and its various definitions of the reality of pain bring this text to its distinct relation with the ordinary text-reader. So, the Euro-centric readers’ ability to revisit the issue of self-identity and masterly in the process of coping with the issues of misplaced identity brings the perspective of an ordinary text reader into focus. Without such focus the Euro-centric text-reading will definitely remain to provide its most ambiguous remedies to post-colonial text-readers, and so by deviating from the realities of ordinary text-readers’ experience it becomes a mere myth.

Due to conflict-ridden conditions of text-reading, the text readers have resulted to slow responses in identifying and tackling emergency situations. This is followed by climatic condition like dry and wet seasons for which one has to seek understanding of how these seasons contribute to various disasters and how natural calamities are activated by the lack of rains due to farmers’ lack of reserve asset and policies. Notwithstanding the stifled growth by brain drain that opens the text-readers to chronic susceptibility which is manifested in persecution, suffering and forced internal displacement. The divided memories of past oppression rankled by present injustice and marginalization continue to impoverish the text-readers as it shreds the fabric of Gĩkũyũ people causing perpetual suffering and pain. Having read Jeremiah 31:15-17 as an indispensable resource and launching pad of public processing of pain and suffering which shapes, continues to shape and also to underscore the Gĩkũyũ people’s exilic ordeals the study embarks on development
of local uses of biblical motif of lamentations on a here and now basis.

Thus, the next chapter takes the contextualization of lamentation which serves as a prism of critical reflection on appropriations of Scriptures to Gĩkũyũ text readers’ context -the economic, cultural, political, religious, and social condition where lamentation manifests itself. The study’s search for references of lamentation in the Bible brings vitality, motivations, justifications, and strategies of lamentation into an interchange between the biblical text and culture, politics, economics, and social issues of text-reading context. The reader is now invited to discover and reflect on his or her context in a world which is ignored as the place of text-reading activities. Contextualization is revisited in order to tame institutional prescriptions and directions that for ideological purposes tend to limit the use and interpretation of the Bible. The emphasis on contextualization means reading the text through readers’ own cultural resources and social experiences which illuminates the biblical narratives. The interpretation of issues is from Gĩkũyũ people’s existential and astute connection with the reality, in accordance with contextualized values and principles of each group of text-readers claim strong link with the text. Thus, Rachel’s lamentation prompts the text-reader to ask; are lamentation events in Gĩkũyũland in line with the word of God? The answer to this question shapes the Gĩkũyũ people’s hermeneutics of life through its facets of radical exteriorization. The breaching of hermeneutical gaps held between the biblical texts and the local context translates to a voice of lamentation as an ontological-hermeneutical bridge of correlating the biblical text and the African context.
CHAPTER FIVE
CONTEXTUALIZATION OF LAMENTATION AMONG THE AGĪKŬYŬ

5.1 Introduction
This chapter limits itself to a brief discussion of Gĩkũyũ practices as a concrete hermeneutical response to realities of post-colonial historical process which changes the textual interpretation model from the center to textual interpretation from the margins. The interpretation models from the center have forced text-readers to read indigenous texts in the context of Eurocentric Christian texts. As a result, the greater part of Gĩkũyũ textual traditions have become irrelevant, and the few parts that have become meaningful are due to the forced imposition of Eurocentric categories. This chapter grants context a prominent place; it is a response to text-reading which describes and analyzes the cultural, political, economic, religious, and social conditions of a place, giving priority, in the majority of the cases, to conditions of oppression, poverty and marginalization. The text-readers who from multiple identities and locations look into the biblical interpretation through Scriptural reflections and action of people who experience oppression and marginalization make contextualization an imperative task. Contextualization of lamentation as a hermeneutical reflection has many expressions – inculturation, adaptation and incarnation, post-modern, and post-colonial, to name a few categories. The fundamental principle of these terms is that “there is no universal hermeneutics which are ready-made and applicable to every nation or situation in the world. Instead every hermeneutics is concretely rooted in and influenced by the specific context out of which it arises and for which it is devised (Manus 2003: 32).”

Lamentation and capacity to lament are concretely rooted and influenced by the specific context out of which a hermeneutic arises and for which the text-reading process is devised.
The study relentless focus on the reality of pain and suffering makes Agĩkũyũ motif of lamentation a praxis-based hermeneutical approach that makes immediate connection between faith and life. Thus, the post-colonial context of the Gĩkũyũ people is desperately calling for a recovery of the Bible and the Gĩkũyũ language of lament which will help the text-reader to shed-off the old baggage of colonialism. Hermeneutics in a contextualized setting makes the expression of lamentation to dialogically serve as a voice of presenting and engaging certain points of cultural orientations and disorientations. It brings the Bible and the text-readers into a world of confrontation where the dominant ideology is subjected to refreshing presence of the word of God.

This confrontation aspect of lamentation means that indigenization motif of hermeneutics is not a mere hermeneutical response to uncontrollable forces of modernization: But, a protest against the restraints, oppression and discrimination that emanate from elitists’ enterprises. This protest ends-up with affirmations and openings of self-fulfillment and joyful development of a hermeneutics of life out of the underside history. The dormant natural potential and powers embraced by socio-economic pattern of contextualization take an evolutionary dimension. They foster faith in humanity on the ground that the language of lament among Gĩkũyũ people has a set of potentials bred by historical and subversive forces at work within it. The contextualization of healing that emanate from hope and purpose generated by every moment of text-reading, asserts that, all ordinary text-readers no matter how colonized, marginalized or ignorant may appear before the colonizer’s standard, are capable of looking critically at their world in a dialogical encounter with the colonial text. Unlike the claims of previous chapter, the Gĩkũyũ community’s motif of lamentation is revisited to accurately conjoin the text, the context of the text, the text-reading community
in unlocking the indigenous capacities. The biblical account of what is most characteristic of
God’s response to human outcries in the marginal world and the realities of Gĩkũyũ commu-
nity’s experiences suggests a development of African contextual frame of reference
(Zinkuratire, 2004a:61). The ordinary text-readers are in contextualized scene desperately in
need of recovering the biblical and indigenous language of lament as a pre-eminent resource
for reclaiming their humanity.

5.2 Contextualization in Relation to Globalization

The enormous hermeneutical challenges and responses of Agĩkũyũ text-readers to fastest
sweeping and most extensive global and cultural changes captured in socio-economic and
political contexts. This makes contextualization and globalization two critical hermeneu-
tical features. These two components of post-colonial hermeneutics will form our theological and
hermeneutical framework of reflection on the Gĩkũyũ community’s experience of
colonization and subsequent interaction with the worldwide communities in the twenty-first
century.

This interaction has led to irreparable loss of valuable traditional values that have sustained
this community throughout the ages leaving it to the mercy of consumer materialism, cut
throat competition, individualism, permissiveness and sexual freedom at the expense of faith
and morality (Mugenda, 2008). The researcher’s attempts to understand these forces in
relation to text-reading process among the Agĩkũyũ will base on how it works to shape and
direct human needs and conviction. As a consequence, Gĩkũyũ community’s hermeneutical
claims and concerns are reviewed and reflected in lamentation as bedrock of expressing the
Gĩkũyũ meaning system in a contested world order.
5.2.1 An Overview of Contextualization

According to Parshall (1986), contextualization is a process that maximizes the impact of the Gospel text on receptor community’s worldview as the context (the social patterns of the people, their economic policies, politics, and other integrative areas). It is a profound empirical analysis of the text which is contextually relevant to the felt needs of the text-readers (athoomi). It is bound to reject or sift the uncritically passed elements of Euro-centric culture on Gĩkũyũ people that make the word of God subservient in Gĩkũyũland, in the sense that a Mũgĩkũyũ text-reader is forced by their circumstances of poverty to accept them, no matter how foreign they may be, in order to become a legitimate text-reader (mũthoomi mwega) or a good Christian. It constitutes a single holistic movement through which the Āgĩkũyũ text-readers are made to hermeneutically discern the positive and negative aspects of world economies, societies, and cultures through a closely intertwined hermeneutical concern. The fear of syncretism made missionaries and the first lot of text-readers become overtly denunciatory of all what was local but the voices of protest had to come in as a harmonizing agent to shun duo pitfalls of uncritical adoption and its inappropriate formulations and applications from other cultures. The word of God is through the incarnation process allowed to lie deeply at the very heart of Gĩkũyũ people’s culture touching, influencing and interacting with all other aspects of life. So, contextualization works to abhor the syncretistic accommodation of indigenous culture by allowing the post-colonial reading to become a contextual interaction of texts that challenges all what has compounded the word of God in other cultural contexts. In shuning previous colonial biases among ordinary text-readers Hiebert (1987), suggests a critical contextualization paradigm that makes the text-reading process a practical concern through its faithful and cautious application of other worldviews in a local culture to which the scriptures are used to help the
reader abhor syncretism from a local cultural context. So, critical contextualization comes in our post-colonial hermeneutical scenarios to help the text-reader incorporate various aspects of cultural transformation into a hermeneutical movement as it culminates, into incarnation context of the word of God into ordinary text-readers’ culture. The term “contextual exegesis” is used dialectically to present the harsh realities of the present in attaining a bottom-up analysis of text-reading through the realities of overlapping and multiple contexts that spurs the process of incorporating hermeneutical sensitivities to local cultural contexts. In contextualizing the word of God is processed through the Gĩkũyũ motif of lamentation, this process translates into a hermeneutic provision of a truth-telling vehicle that conveys a voiced symbolic outlet for emotional disturbances generated by social disequilibrium. Heeding to Maluleke’s (2000: 16) call for Africans to begin looking at what Africa can do to the Bible rather than just look at what the Bible has, and can do for Africa.

The hermeneutical mission of a postcolonial Mũgĩkũyũ text-reader is to interrupt the social history; in which violence seems to be increasingly accepted as inevitable and part of the normal way of doing things. Thus, lamentation in its role of contextualizing hermeneutics through African hermeneutics of life makes the primo and inherent function of Gĩkũyũ motif lamentation to vest its focus on a recovery of fundamental elements of African religious heritage. So lamentation should not be excluded or slashed in a contextualized text reading process (c.f. Idowu 1973; Waliggo 1996: 28). In the same rejoinder the study in support of its claim factors on Masenya (2000: 21) lament:

Therefore return the Bible to me
I pray allow my context to interact with my Bible reading
I have less interest in ivory-tower theologies and hermeneutics:
Can I afford that luxury? Neither do I have interests in theories and concepts!
Isn’t my thirst for praxiological commitment to redress poverty?
…I couldn’t care more about the hidden meaning in the narrative.
According to Upkong (2001: 293); any booming encounter of biblical text with African context is fundamental to our listening to the missing voices in suppressed histories. The lamentations of Agikūyū stand to represent the other side of the missing part of their recorded history, which at least expresses disagreement with the dominant ideologies that continues to suppress the natives’ narrative in Africa. Spear (1999: 1-21), Kariuki (1963) and Brueggemann (1986, 1987, 2007), point to historical processes in forms of a marginal narrative, as well as narrated events that envisage a peculiar task of weaving together an honest, complex narrative account of the natives’ narrative. Since the colonized text-readers’ liberty is still underway, and their story remains to be constructed, lamentation remains a contextual launching pad of people’s sorrow, loss, and doubt: Thus contextualization process creates an identification framework of a larger world to which suffering individuals and communities would join in an open forum for hermeneutical struggles against silence, in acts of transforming the structures of the society. The denial of lamentation is instrumental to forceful submerging of both the text and the text-readers into a culture of silence, which is a ludicrous resistance to the public processing of pain.

As the ordinary text-readers confront by their hermeneutical setbacks through anger and estrangement in an existential way; the naming of hurt and pain is automatically engaged in a scenario of defining the colonial misdemeanors set against God and humanity in Africa (Lifton, 1985; 1986 and 1967). Denial inflict suffering and serious injury to text-readers whereas the expression of anger and outrage through lamentation conjecture people’s power of reflection in a historical context of pain and bewilderment to discover, to celebrate, to challenge, to teach, to call to change, to inspire and to determine their rich and diverse cultural heritages. By so doing, they can recover their indigenous aptitude of responding to
life-destroying powers embedded in the capitalistic mode of economy. This mode is known to build on post-colonial dependency, poverty and denial of lamentation which is in this century apparent through the avoidance of public processing of pain. By treating the indigenous hermeneutical resources as primitive and savage embodiments of indigenous folly; selfishness, ignorance and greed, we ironically embrace the globalized policies that subjects Agĩkũyũ to post-colonial dependency and poverty. The same policies which subjugated Gĩkũyũ people under the colonial administrations in the first place.

Contextualization represents a multifaceted, polyphonic conversation already going on within the Gĩkũyũ motif of lamentations and within the Biblical text. The Bible comes in as a conversation process to which the text-readers are invited from generation to generation. It offers a bottom-top framework of hermeneutical whose approach affirms the ordinary text-readers’ integrity; it involves a paradigm shift, a new way of looking at the text-reader, context, and the reader. So, contextualization helps to shape the social location of ordinary text-reader in our understanding of hermeneutics in its spatial, temporal, and relational interconnectedness (cf. Parshall, 1986:31). The Agĩkũyũ text-reader’s social, economic, and political interactions help the reader to define the term globalization from a world system with a common political system linked by cultural production (movies, television, the internet, mass advertising, and so on) and a common language. These cultural practices and institutions are known to stem out of a complex connectivity with mass culture that dominate the various spheres of Gĩkũyũ social existence.

5.2.2 The Challenges of Globalization and Intercultural Hermeneutics
The hermeneutical claims envisaged by emotional response to globalizing experiences of hurt, tears, perplexity, questioning and temptation is ushered by untamed proliferations of
interpretive methods in the global village. Globalization translates to an exposure of Agĩkũyũ text-readers to unequal competition for survival. This exposure seem to represent both the external opportunities and threats to local contexts as the text-readers attempt to connect globally and at the same time capture the text-meaning through local hermeneutical action. As a correlative insight under-girding the emerging context of contesting world of textual interpretation; globalization emerges as a hermeneutical process that best operates under general terms of post-colonial and post-modern epochs. Globalization here defines a cross-cultural process which has led to the creation of a single, international (global) financial or capital market and landed former colonies in huge debts through a setting worse than in colonial times (cf. Dube, 1996:40; Ngugi-wa-Thiong’o, 1993:12-13). Thus, the term globalization may be new in Africa; but the concept is not new among the ordinary African text-readers; it is a reality of new form of imperialism that largely excludes geographical occupation of the land to pave way for transnational corporations.

Though it is hard to imagine how the localized text-reading process can fit in a global context, the ability of Africans to survive and compete in the African environment is severely compromised by our global competitors for survival through the rampant denial of lamentation. The quest for intercultural hermeneutics that echo the emerging, competing and voracious hermeneutical trends would always point to the need for an integrated system that can challenge the entire text-reading through global engagements that factor on local action. It signifies a response to current disintegrations of the Euro-centric hegemonic mode of interpretation through the perspectives that exceeds the limits of one context or cultural circle (Ndewghah, 2007: 330). This IMF definition of globalization as recorded in May, 1997 World Economic Outlook, globalization refers to, a worldwide interdependencies of nation
states through the ever-increasing dimensions and multiplicities of cross-border transactions in goods and services, international capital flows and rapid dissemination of diverse technologies. The globalization process is driven by market ideologies, uncritically captivated by military power and governed by anxiety which calls for a conscious analysis of its’ context, which is in itself an integral part of intercultural hermeneutical process that culminate in identity reconstruction of communities (Okure, 2000; Ndegwah, 2007: 9).

The combination of economic, technological, socio-cultural, political, and biological factors that expedite the trade of goods and services, the flow of capital, and the migration of people across international borders becomes the best placed hermeneutical forum for various cultures to learn from each other in order to augment the different world-views. This context of technological and communication advancement reduces the world into a global village, calling people to an ever-greater dialogue and interdependency between the various parts of the world. Owing to this reality of rapid changes facing the African traditional structures, the panorama of globalization in African context that displays a chain of disrupted family units cannot be ignored. Access to wider markets, consumer goods and services has negative effects among the poor and the marginalized groups who always end up as perpetual losers and victims of such disruptions. The social injustices attributed to this spread of relations beyond territorial boundaries are punctuated by inequities that flow largely from the global policies that trample upon local values and economies. This interdependence is known to have inaugurated the intra-culture underlying the formation of a global community in its recognition of the diversity through marginalized voices of text-readers who interpret the text under the prevailing social, economic and political situations. The diversity captured and nurtured through interdependency of local and transnational operations is no longer tied,
to a particular nation as it takes an intercultural hermeneutical agency. Lamentation as an embodiment of Gĩkũyũ hermeneutics of life should operate across national barriers which are in terms of common values, common language, and common culture enhance the public processing of pain through hi-tech communication. But, the question is how well the Agĩkũyũ text-readers are placed to adjust their thinking to uniqueness of the global context through the disestablishment of the hegemonic modes of interpretation. This transnational circulation of ideas, languages, or popular culture forms a context of acculturation, intensification of consciousness and closer contact between different parts of the world. The reality of a global village in Gĩkũyũland brings the textual-meaning into a concrete function through which the transnational circulation and interactions of ideas, languages, and popular culture are channeled through economic, technological, socio-cultural, political, and biological factors which are known to expedite the trade of goods and services, the flow of capital, and the migration of people across international borders.

Globalization engenders supranational organization of a people from different cultural backgrounds who read the Bible from different backgrounds and yet retain their differences in order to get rid of the dragnets placed by those who operate and impose on the rest of the world their ideology of universally accepted laws and commonly accepted practices in their spreading of colonial legacy and arrogance. Thus, globalization means an open forum for closer and direct contact of Agĩkũyũ text-readers with different parts of the world. The encroaching forces of Western world are currently feared and resisted by local people as they trample on local values and local economies and so the waging of post-colonial hermeneutical assaults against the post-modern world of former colonizers will always lead to a hermeneutic. Globalization as a package of dominant ideology packaged by developed
nations will always disadvantage the developing nations if they fail to develop sensitivity for the blind spots in African people’s own interpretation process.

Though it fosters fear, insecurity and violence everywhere Western individualistic worldview and its technological edge is a reality which we will have to live with; it has firmly set its foot on Gĩkũyũland as an interlocution force that bars text-readers from articulating a decolonizing mission which could enable the text-reading community to take pride in its own rich and diverse cultural heritage. The Agĩkũyũ text-readers are not exceptional because globalization remains to be an affront to people with non-Western religious and cultural values. The irreparable dissolutions of extended families by emerging problems of alcoholism, drug abuse, youth pregnancy, abortion, Aids, child neglect among others raises the need for local hermeneutics. The text-readers should remain firmly rooted in their localities and worldviews without closing the door on the rest of the world (Byamungu, 2002: 149).

In a positive sense, globalization as a world-wide system has profound inter-communicative character that envisages an interrelationship of text-readers. It sets the ground of airing and also listening to marginal voices which are linked to public procession of pain through intercultural appreciation of other text-readers outside the continent (Wanene, 2003: 2). The stage for globalization is set and the opportunities are presented by profound expression of Gĩkũyũ people’s context of text-reading process to take local action as well as to operate across the national barriers through global organizations that transcend them through pluralism of vigorous and competing hermeneutical claims, which can be used to scan external contexts of text-reading. As a hermeneutical perspective, lamentation is inhibited
by internal and external marginal voices that are dynamically placed to speak as never before from the text-readers’ wide range of socio-ecclesial political-economic contexts. The Gĩkũyũ motif of lamentation helps the text-readers to claim their inner world and also call them outward to the sufferings of the world through a public awareness of these evils. The global contexts and local contexts of approaching the ordeals of Gĩkũyũ people are inseparable ingredients of contextualization which suggests a globalizing context. Thus, globalization will envisage a technological and communication advancement that brings the marginal voices of Gĩkũyũ world to limelight of an ever-greater hermeneutical dialogue and interdependency with various parts of the world.

5.2.3 The Task of Hermeneutics
According to Ricoeur (1982: 43), the task of hermeneutics rests on identifying the hermeneutical problem, as received and perceived by the people; as well as analyzing their contribution towards finding a lasting solution. At the literary level, this entails a serious reflection to the point “where it calls, by an internal aporia, for an important reorientation which will enable it to enter seriously into discussion with the sciences of the text, from semiology to exegesis.” The hermeneutical problem, as Ricoeur understands it, consists of the ‘disastrous’ opposition between explanation and understanding: which calls for the hermeneutical reorientation, demanded by the notion of the text. Hence, it is theoretical in nature. At the practical level then, it can be traced at the discrepancy between words of their pastors and what actually happens in their lives. This disconnect is what Ricoeur (1982: 43) calls dissociation, rendering that kind of hermeneutics ‘romantic’, and therefore, equally disastrous. This ‘disaster’ can be capped in one question: ‘how can the Gĩkũyũ people penetrate the textual-meaning and remain faithful to that meaning while seeking to translate it into the language of the cultural worldview of the twenty-first century? This sensitivity to
text’s newness is envisaged in Gĩkũyũ people’s motif of lamentation which has strategically captured this community’s expression of feelings through its utter dependence on God. Rather, it is a serious hermeneutical process of ensuring that the text-readers are not separated from people’s daily lives. Ideologically, the globalization of culture is a neo-colonial affront to people with non-Western religious and cultural dimensions of life and the shared values of all cultures. It is a process of text-reading in a context of technological and communication advancements which has reduced our world into a global village, calling for an ever-greater dialogue and interdependency between the various parts of the world. It is through the explanation not only of issues involving the written text, but everything in the interpretative process that helps the text-readers to embrace the interpretation of the signs or symbols in particular circumstances and contexts.

Gadamer (1975:267) attempts to highlight the uncovering of human nature of understanding as intended in his articulation, tabulation and description of historical consciousness that creates perennial tension on what the Gĩkũyũ people do when they interpret things (even if when they do not know it) and the predominance force of missionaries’ bequest: The Gĩkũyũ people as a marginal voice have a 'historically effected consciousness and they are embedded in their peculiar history and culture which has shaped them. The manifestation of *Imago Dei* in human kind in various contexts through the mystery of God's creative power as revealed by intended order and design of God’s creation, which includes human minds as a makeup of various art-forms. God transforms our culture and arts into dynamic mediums of effective communication and expression of the meanings of the Gospel to our people. It constitutes a single holistic movement through which the text-readers are acknowledged, a fact that the world’ economies, societies, and cultures are becoming ever more closely
intertwined” through concrete description of common values, common language, and common culture. The word of God is in the process of inculturation embraced through incarnation process. At a global scale, the power shifts towards emerging giants, like China and India should be at the heart of hermeneutical discourse on a fundamentally changed world. One of the most important factors of new reality is the shift of geo-religion, geopolitical and geo-economics power from North to South and from West to East. This does not only have political and hermeneutical consequences but the world ordinary text-readers will go through some shock waves of adaptation. This adaptation calls for an imagination that propels the word of God, into becoming an eye-opener for the text-readers, to venture into and adjust to alternatives of life with ease.

5.2.4 The Colonial Interlude and the Word of God
Colonialism and evangelization reached the African soil at the same time and actually paralleled each other, as coined in the dictum ‘commerce and mission’ (Baur, 2009: 46). Thus, the former is a force that has greatly compounded the way the word of God was perceived in other cultural contexts, and biased the form of Christianity towards adoption of the colonial power. Global mass culture is also dominated by the ways in which the visual and graphic arts have entered directly into the reconstitution of popular life, of entertainment, and of leisure with the image, imagery, and styles of mass advertising. This increased degree of the connection between various countries and their economies happens through trade, foreign direct investment, capital flows, migration, the spread of technology, and military presence.

This is dominated by Western cultural values and techniques that need the raising of public awareness of hazardous elements of market liberalization which has caused severe damage
to poor nations, Schleiermacher (1768-1834) emphasis and claims were centered on the existential process of becoming which has added up to a practical integration of the shared meaning system with the local church or social system to which the word is preached. Thus, a lament is not meant to be a programmatic statement about a new 'hermeneutic' method of interpreting texts but a working philosophy of not only what Gĩkũyũ people do or what they ought to do in an overwhelming manner but of what happens to the Gĩkũyũ community. Mass communication produces images that cross and re-cross linguistic frontiers more rapidly and easily than goods and services, and speaks across languages in an immediate way. So, contextualization is not a mere implantation of textual meaning into a juxtaposed hermeneutical reflection or a brand of syncretistic hermeneutical process but an excising process of anything that is sinful as well as the redemption and raising up all what is humanly good (c.f. Ndegwah, 2007: 39).

5.2.5 Hermeneutical Reorientation

The hermeneutical reorientation that Ricoeur (1982: 43) suggests has one key element of bringing together two disciplines of epistemology and ontology in which understanding “ceases to appear as a simple mode of knowing in order to become a way of being and a way of relating to beings and to being.” Following this line of thought, the Bible, tradition, culture, and social change become the four critical issues of revisiting contextualization and globalization as proposed by Hiebert (1985: 104-112) who introduces the reader to what he calls ‘critical contextualization’. This term is known to bind the process of contextualization and globalization together through a three-step sequence which Hiebert has cited as follows:

(1) The exegesis of the culture: a phenomenological study of the culture, where the ordinary text-readers (Athoomi) are instrumental in assisting the colonialists and missionaries to
uncritically gather and analyze the traditional beliefs and customs in line with biblical text. (2) The exegesis of scripture and the hermeneutical bridge: The colonialists and missionaries led the Gĩkũyũ community into a meta-cultural framework that makes the ordinary Agĩkũyũ text-readers to translate their text through Euro-centric cognitive, affective and evaluative dimensions of colonial culture. This posed the danger of distorting the word of God through non-contextual bias captured through the compromise of the text-reading process. (3) The indigenous text-readers’ corporate evaluation and critical revisit of their own past customs:

This sequence was advantaged by lamentation in bringing to light the Gĩkũyũ people’s understandings of how the people corporately evaluate, critically, their own past customs, in the light of their new biblical understandings, and eventually make their decisions in regard to their response to newly found truths. Taking root in the soil, relating the word of God to traditional culture, and therefore, becoming African-oriented. The need for a post-colonial meta-cultural framework enables us to translate the biblical message into cognitive, affective, and evaluative dimensions of other cultures and warns us about the danger of distorting the word of God through non-contextual bias, and compromise of this process. Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) fronts existentialism and ontology as a method of asking the question of the meaning through correlation of multiculturalism. On the other hand, there is a real sense in which contextualization and globalization are complementary, non-conflicting terms that are known to develop into an overall strategy for its various operations around the world, and also apply the lessons of each country to ensure its global success.

They dominate the market through perpetuation of colonial legacy and arrogance, which create suspicion in the developing world. It is overwhelmingly felt in a global scale in
marginalized regions where people are currently suffering from increased political instability, poverty, and environmental degradation, government corruption and the exploitation of workers. Globalization is therefore an imperial mechanism of domination that has no room for indigenous perspectives, which are perceived as inferior values to be subdued, if not eradicated. In this regard, the Gĩkũyũ community is permanently subjugated against its will and dignity. It is ceaselessly injured by the atrocious incisions of globalization. This atrocity calls for voice of lamentation, for contrasts among alternative hermeneutical perspectives to work together, in order to maintain the community balance. Globalization is thus, feared and resisted because it has perpetuated or even deepened warfare, environmental degradation, poverty, unemployment, exploitation of workers, and social disintegration in Gĩkũyũland. The social injustices attributed to the spread of relations beyond territorial boundaries are punctuated by inequities that flow largely from the policies applied due to globalization which undermine and they local values and local economies.

In this case, contextualization is a necessity as it presents a genuine platform for examining and evaluating the cultural setting of text-readers in meanings and places they shed to biblical interpretations. Making a critique of their cultures, through indigenous ability of discerning the biblical truth shapes the application of textual meaning through the connection of their daily lives with colonial and pre-colonial past. So, by getting to know the deeper hidden meanings of Gĩkũyũ beliefs, rituals, narratives, songs, customs, art and music embedded in the practices of lamentation the readers are drawn to their significance in addressing the needs of our time. Contextualization envisages the yearning for acquaintances with local hermeneutics of life that can stimulate a symbiosis of biblical values and Agĩkũyũ past, without compromising or watering down either of the two. Thus,
contextualization gives the text-reader a forum to expound on sound relations held between Gĩkũyũ people’s experience and folklore through authentic transformation of consciousness. In this process, we acknowledge the “foreignness” of the Christian word of God that undermines transformation in the life of the text-readers. This concern is a critical dimension that must be rethought, reformulated and lived anew, by each generation in its entire context – social, economic, political, religious, educational, and so on. Thus, contextualization points to hermeneutical investment of the most powerful thing in life and universe of the Gĩkũyũ people—the unique religio-cultural identity vested in lamentations, which have preserved the indigenous ideas to contemporary times. A premeditated engagement of this religio-cultural identity will expose the underlying social realities and confront dominant ideologies. This highlights cosmological inventions inhibited in Gĩkũyũ riddles and stories; which have effectively aided the text-readers’ perception of the universe, through its perspective of their world, heaven and God.

5.3 Contextualizing the Textual-Meaning in a Globalized Setting

Though, the Bible has been used by colonizers as an enlightening tool to the detriment of indigenous hermeneutics and also served as a companion and an enemy of African way of life: The Bible is a fundamental resource for lamentation in Africa for it is an important site for hermeneutics. The Bible has also served as an inspiration and motivation, as well as a prescription for establishing strategies and content, and most recently, as a resource for developing African biblical hermeneutics. The previous chapter’s emphasis on deliberate reading Jeremiah 31:15-17 through readers’ own cultural resources and social experiences that illuminate the biblical narratives. Making special effort to employ indigenous themes through lamentation can be used creatively to revise and envision an alternative to invading, disabling, and alienating forces and tendencies of Euro-centrism. A critical evaluation of
contextualization is not done in isolation from the ordinary text-readers who live in the context where cultural process and configuration of text-readers is being done. So, the alliance between colonial conquest and missionaries’ penetration in Africa makes biblical hermeneutics to remain either; open and congruent with the word of God or under cultural captivity, bound to Eurocentric values and interests rather than the word of God.

Contextualization requires an intentional conversation- a conversation between the expertise text-readers and the context, between the expertise text-readers and the ordinary text-readers in the context, between the ordinary text-readers and their own context, and between the three parties with the text. It is both multi-vocal and multi-dimensional conversation in which expertise text-readers become partners and facilitators and provide the academy with cross-cultural insights in the process of contextualization. The post-colonial incorporation of text-readers’ sensitivity to local cultural contexts squarely depends on how the ordinary text-readers appreciate the vast advancements of telecommunications and electronic revolutions. The term globalization is used to refer to many changes that have appeared and influenced humanity’s understanding of itself and its world. Contextualization as a cross cultural process is referred and held by ordinary text-reader as innate functioning of reality through improved and diverse scientific ways that help the ordinary Gĩkũyũ text readers to articulate a deepened awareness of and sensitivity to, the realities of cultural interdependence among the Gĩkũyũ people and the rest of the world. Globalization informs the cultural universe of the Gĩkũyũ people in shaping their reception of biblical message and it has tremendously impacted many lives in terms of its post-colonial consciousness of history and culture as displayed by powerful rejection of therapeutic ethos of global economic and social order. The technological advancement that shrinks the physical distances between vastly different
cultures and speed modes of international communications has reduced the world into an interconnected unit where text-readers become aware of realistic trends taken by events surrounding the process of addressing their needs and aspirations in a more genuine and realistic way (Arbuckle, 1991: 2-7). Such consciousness of the world culminates in globalization which is in this aspect seen to accommodate cultural sensitivities as a core value in text-reading process. It has, therefore, become a common knowledge that in the twenty-first century the Gĩkũyũ people’s worldview is radically altered by fastest, most sweeping, and most extensive cultural changes brought by hi-tech technology. These changes are unprecedented that the community has little or no guidance from history for understanding it. So, the post-colonial maintenance of cultural verity, integrity and identity against the prevailing forces of globalized contexts is paramount. Unfortunately, the community response to these changes is trapped in overwhelming fears which has frustrated the text-readers’ attempt to implement them.

Attempts to build a haven of security against these changes are now grounded on societal outcries for meaning and purpose of community life. This is currently threatened and frustrated by major terms used to describe the culture milieu in which this community lives. The contextualization of the word of God is an inevitable undertaking of welcoming it; making life a concrete act and lamentation a starting point for contextualization process. By making the word of God permeate human existence and transform it through philosophical reflection on its free creative action on humanity; lamentation appeals to revolutionary acts of transformations. It is the very base of liberating dehumanizing societies and their historical praxis of hermeneutics. Expressing text-meaning from a position of solidarity with the poor and the marginalized lamentation is welcomed to boost community’s art, poetry,
music, drama, literature and visual symbols as a provision and resource of insightful but corporate forms of indigenous approaches to biblical hermeneutics. In reciprocation, lamentation is contextualized through the questioning of and opposition of the prevailing social values and beliefs which reflect their contestation in the larger society. Contextualization and globalization comes to affect the textual-meaning in its dialectical reflection on contextual and global perspectives of meaning. The two concepts are dependent on each other in terms of definition and as such, they are complementary rather than opposed to each other.

Thus, contextualization is in this angle fit to pose a challenge by turning the mental categories and imageries of a text into a comprehensive synchronic and diachronic mode of post-colonial criticism. This criticism conjectures diverse hermeneutical contexts through which text-readers are open to learn from each other. As a cultural orientation center, contextualization comes into play with its inter-contextual setting of meaning system which is sensitive to local cultural contexts. Thus, contextualization and globalization are complementary concepts which involves an on-going process and dialogue which brings the word of God to different communities in their own language and reality of socio-cultural change. In this process, lamentation comes in as a hermeneutical examination of the practical application of the word on here and now basis; it appeals for the empowering process of text-readers who form a firmly rooted text-reading community.

The locality and worldview of the text-reader is endeavored to learn from the rest of the world and so, contextualization becomes post-colonial bedrock of a complex interplay of modern societal forces with the text. This complex relationship is held between European civilization in Africa and the current text reading processes as an inducement of new
lifestyle. The text-readers are made to question the relevancy and existential values of the mind-set steeped in European categories and thoughts, as well as texts and traditions. The single, privileged, ideal, and self-presentation of a dominant text-reading process where hermeneutical discourse and textual-meanings are derived cannot be innocent, of spreading hermeneutical ideologies of a particular nation. Globalization is brought to a sphere of life through which every aspect of textual-meaning is made to revolve around a context; it crosses the national barriers to embrace global organizations through paradigm shifts into new ways of looking at the text, context, and the reader from different angles. This defines the holistic response to how the text is related to physical, ecological, and technological acknowledgement of the diversity generated by text-readers’ laments. The interdependency on each aspect of text-reading processes helps the text-reader to further understand how the process of contextualization works in terms of spatial, temporal, and relational interconnectedness of the Agĩkũyũ text-reader’s social, economic, and political interactions with their environment.

5.4 Contextualization of the Gĩkũyũ Meaning System
In its insightful, honest and serious critical attempts of making the word of God felt at home among the Gĩkũyũ people, the study revisited the Gĩkũyũ meaning system as an organic embodiment of a holistic hermeneutical engagement of praxis. In so doing, the study established a post-colonial Gĩkũyũ community’s framework of insightful, honest and serious reflection through critical attempts of making the word of God relevant. The approach was keen to articulate a cycle of relating the socio-economic-cultural issues which are embodied in Gĩkũyũ community’s worldview for ages reflected this community’s structure of reality. The study were keen to engage in a post-colonial discourse with the ordinary Agĩkũyũ text-
readers in order to create a contemporary expression of grief as an identity in corporate search for meaning. This was precisely made to unearth the assumption of a particular interpretation and presentation in understanding the biblical text to unfold truth. The community positions itself in the interstitial space between cultural contexts by engaging in a contextual hermeneutic through its daily expression of proverbs, folktales and riddles that posits its patterned response to the notion that reality is rationally structured making the first principles clear, precise and unalterable, and so it needs to be discerned, memorized, and deductively applied to concrete cases (Greetz, 1973:129-130).

The linking of the word of God with modern culture leads to an indigenous systematization of reality. So, the study presumed a paradigm shift in its affirmation of Brueggemann (1997) claim that; “all text-readers bring pre-understandings to the Bible” and so our analysis of lamentation was to some extent an acknowledgement of this fact and a reflection on its implications. It is through the echoes of lamentation that the text-readers position themselves in a decision-making process that lead to a hermeneutical destiny which emerges out of deep search for new textual meanings. The Gĩkũyũ people’s context of text-reading makes voices of lamentation an embodiment of survival strategies, which are envisaged in all its definitions of Gĩkũyũ culture, locality and time. When the voices of lamentation become bona-fide quest or drive toward reintegration or reunion, the existential questions and quests for textual-meaning becomes the arena of ultimate concern.

The Bible is in this setting and quest engaged as a dialogue partner in facing the encroaching reality of narratives surrounding the Gĩkũyũ people and their culture. Gĩkũyũ motif of lamentation is contextualized to provide a language of image, metaphor, and myth. Such a language serves as hermeneutical lenses through which the textual-meaning is connected
with the complex ways of shaping the indigenous process of naming the residues and sediments from the life experiences of the Gĩkũyũ people which is entrenched in ordinary text-readers’ existential situations. The Gĩkũyũ people’s context of giving voice to pain and a demonstration of how lamentation has penetrated human reality mediating life through God’s self-disclosing activities described in the Bible and also expressed in Gĩkũyũ people’s survival strategies. The definitions of how Gĩkũyũ culture, locality and time act as a critique of the present are immersed in echoes of lamentation which are mediated through a fully fractured, utterly hope filled and deeply comforted hermeneutical struggle in life. The Bible is, therefore, engaged by Gĩkũyũ culture as a dialogue partner in facing the reality of surrounding voices, such engagement makes lamentation an interpretative framework through which the word of God is made to feel at home in Gĩkũyũland or anywhere else in Africa (Waliggo, 1986:12). Lamentation as a bona fide quest or drive toward reintegration and reunion with day-to-day life is grounded on existential questions and quests for textual-meaning. So, the gathering of the data on Gĩkũyũ practices of lamentation becomes a foundation for contextualization, in its provisions of insights to corporate indigenous approaches to African biblical hermeneutics. As a response to early missionaries’ disrespect for other cultures, contextualization recognizes the high premium placed on Gĩkũyũ people’s cultural heritage, of expressing sorrow and pain in text reading.

As a hermeneutical undertaking, the meaning-system embedded in lamentation conjectures an existential interpretation of historical and social contexts which stands to define the nerve center of Gĩkũyũ culture. It touches, interacts with, and influences every other aspect of this community’s life. It also builds on a self-expression of Gĩkũyũ community’s finitude as a display of tension held between transcendent discontinuity of Gĩkũyũ God (Ngai) with the
community and the principle of the uniqueness of His interactions with the community.

The meaning systems are in this sense intended or expressed and signified for the purpose of deciphering the underlying meaning as intended by word, sentence, symbol or action prompted by text-readers’ inner, symbolic, or true interpretation, value, or message. This is a process of expressing corporate sense, intention or criticism which counts on censuring the text-reader’s feelings of interdependence with others which are derived from text-reading community’s pilgrimage with God (Ngai) on whose power it depends for survival. The word of God is contextualized and therefore, incarnated into the lives of ordinary text-readers who attempt to make a grip of their textual meanings. Contextualization constitutes a single holistic movement through which the ordinary text-readers can hermeneutically discern the positive and negative aspects of world economies, societies, and cultures as a closely intertwined hermeneutical concern. Thus, contextualization stands as a hermeneutical process and its impacts are realized through a post-colonial conversation of three contexts, namely; the biblical context, the Gĩkũyũ context and the ordinary text-readers/listeners.

The meaning system is informed by world of text-readers which invites a lamenting community to share its narrative of struggle by opening up to new and novel vision of re-orientation and inter-subjective encounters of the text. The voices of lamentation are thus, part and parcel of the meaning world in which the ordinary Agĩkũyũ text-readers’ live and experience life. It forms the horizon of Gĩkũyũ people’s understanding of the text and so it will be referred to in this section to presume a hermeneutical perspective. Thus, the Gĩkũyũ motif of lamentation is not held within a subject-object framework for it stands within the Gĩkũyũ people’s flow of life in sequence of orientation-disorientation-reorientation that spread on its historical process. Lamentation as a communitarian indigenous meaning
producing force forms, a dialogical process that articulates a merger or fusion of horizon of meaning and understanding. It comes in as a protest and also as a harmonizing agent that shuns the duo pitfalls of uncritical adoption and inappropriate formulations and applications.

This means that when the community laments through a written text, an artistic production, or in a conversation, the community expresses its context of prejudices, pre-understanding and biases. The word of God takes its root of informing the core of Gĩkũyũ people’s culture by touching, influencing and interacting with all other aspects of life. The significant aspect of contextualization of the word of God abhors syncretistic accommodation of indigenous culture. The post-colonial reading in its contextualized senses becomes a contextual interaction framework of textual meaning that poses a challenge to all what has greatly compounded the word of God in other cultural contexts as it shuns the biases through which the ordinary text-reader’s adoption of flawed colonial text-reading power was articulated.

Although, the textual-meaning and Gĩkũyũ meaning system are grounded on the interplay between the contextual and global perspectives of hermeneutics; the two involve significantly different attitudes toward the biblical text. The context of Gĩkũyũ people and land is faced with challenges of the tremendous socio-economic realities and emerging tradition of globalization that call for a new religious imagination. When the context determinant of meaning contrasts with the reality, as presented by Euro-centric hermeneutics, it means that text-readers can track down through a careful discernment and criticism of ideological forces from their social location; which will eventually shape and outline their public opinion. Thus, an imperialism of the imagination of Gĩkũyũ people is the most grievous form of re-colonization that does not need military intervention.
The dominant ideology apparent in Gĩkũyũland is that of globalization, which has attempted to combine all people into one global unit of production, consumption, trade, investment, information flow and cultural expression; which must be confronted through in-depth exploration of African cultural roots. This kind of uniformity is dangerous, because it makes assumptions that are at best illusionary; as, for instance, explicated in the millennium development goals (MDGS), whereby multinational companies and world financial institutions make sweeping statement that seem to speak for, and on behalf of, all and sundry. The truth of the matter is that, globalization is only for the super-rich, while the rest of humanity; just hazily peep at the global village, from the periphery, in woods of their poverty and misery. Thus, the contextualization of lamentation as a masterful counter-invention against numerous Euro-centric inventions of Agĩkũyũ (and other colonized people), from colonial to the present times, would mean a continued introspection and self-correction. This is a crucial hermeneutical lens and a healthy indigenized response to radical suffering in the context of an immediate crisis, denial, or selective amnesia.

In a society where the growing gap between the rich and the poor, is openly manifest, and seems to be socially acceptable, the wound is exposed and subjected to scrutiny; in order to generate a hermeneutical explanation; through which the wound is left exposed to be seen, acknowledged, and dressed. Thus, contextualization becomes a post-colonial catch phrase of protests against the colonizers’ cultural domination, which has yielded life-threatening challenges in Gĩkũyũland (in particular, and Africa in general). Thus, the declared objective of contextualization, in the milieu of globalization, is to make a social analysis from a highly conflict ridden social location of post-colonialism, upon which the Agĩkũyũ text-readers are situated. This process of text-reading is presented to address the social, cultural,
political and historical injustices, within which the text-readers exist. Hence its character and style may change, not only from one generation to the next, but also from one social context to the next. The Agĩkũyũ have a wide network of contacts around the globe, through non-governmental organizations (NGOs) composed of, and in solidarity with the oppressed. But, this action of solidarity brings the text-reading process into hermeneutical scrutiny of reality, as to whether the reached contextual-meanings are geared towards the discernment of qualitative difference, held between doing things for, or on behalf of, the marginalized, and empowering them to do things for themselves.

5.5 Hermeneutical Action in Context

The impact of globalization is highly problematic and needs our theological hermeneutic action and attention on cultural and historical setting. A meaningful dialogue of the word of God with the real life is an issue that must inform our hermeneutics of life. Because of the increased movement of people, goods, money and services across the boarders as well as the separation of families and creation of job insecurities, fuelled by increased poverty, and weakened services, our hermeneutical lenses are leaning too much on globalization rendering the text-reading process an incredible to ordinary text-readers. The local and global context in which we read the text should not be divorced from the transformation of the real life. The context of violence and poverty is exceedingly coupled with complex process of confronting the readers and listeners of the word of God with the full scope of the hermeneutic task. Though our world is identical with violence and our use of violence as a solution extends to post-colonial endeavors of solving problems through violent demonstrations, terrorism, extra-judicial killing, ethnic and civil wars in Africa. The memories of the 1994 Rwandan genocide still haunt the Christians who participated in such
dreadful crimes against humanity and God. Without expression of lamentation, we are prone to suffer immense numbness which may lead us to the danger of accepting violence as a permanent part of our lives. Drawing our lesson from the post-election violence we can conclude that violence vents its fury on people and then leave them as a bad dream leaves a waking dreamer.

The apportioning of text-readers the opportunity to engage in a hermeneutical event means the voicing of communal protests against inequalities. This is attainable through collective connections of local and nationwide outcry where the eventual hermeneutic action is dependent on the energy and determination demonstrated by text-readers’ response to different contexts on grounds of a new hermeneutical order. The Gĩkũyũ text readers’ execution of hermeneutical action points to making the word of God reflect a livable and action-based meaning through the prism of different contexts. Thus the possibilities for hermeneutical action in their day-today life is affected by these contexts; in some situations the marginalized lots form the mainstream of text-readers in Africa, while in other situations they are a minority without much public influence. The disastrous consequences of Euro-centrism in Gĩkũyũland is envisaged in the people’s struggle with their own context of uncertainty and stress amidst abstract, detached, ideological, remote and unhelpful text-reading process. And so, the text-reading process among the Gĩkũyũ people should seek to achieve a contextualizing autonomy in identifying with people who are the subjects and objects of hermeneutics of life.

Occupying the text-reading with resistance, suspicion, and with constant questioning is what it means to be an African studying the Bible amid the forces of Euro-centric hermeneutics, it calls for an inquiry into contexts of search for the understanding of human suffering and
existence that finds expression in the Scriptures. Alien biblical hermeneutics operating in our African context are there to provide and prescribe answers which are already determined and so its substance fits a Euro-centric prejudgment. The ordinary text-readers who offer resistance to such prejudgment seem to be self-taught in the use of confrontational lenses to always see the text itself by means of under-scoring their inquiry into their context from the full scope of a hermeneutical task posed by the present situation of ideological violence. The denial of pain or silence above violence is another form of abridgement of the contemporary hermeneutical task that grows out of concentration on the application of the text itself. It is a deadly covenant cultivated and reinforced in attitudes, teachings, practices and rituals of the oppressed text-readers that tend to threaten to destroy humanity. The escalation of silence experienced through denial of pain especially among the assaulted women and children who are always trapped in a snare of complacency, hopelessness, despair and disillusionments.

5.6 Critical Contextualization as Hermeneutics

According to Hiebert (1985), critical contextualization suggests a text-reading process whose concern is to make a faithful and cautious application of the textual-meaning to the worldview of a local culture by cautious abhorring of syncretism. Critical contextualization is an analysis, a critique, a textual experience and a method of exposing the text to a comprehensive picture of what is inconsistent and incompatible with the word of God as the ordinary text-readers integrate text with their local culture. So, critical contextualization comes in our post-colonial hermeneutical scenarios to help the text-reader incorporate various aspects of cultural transformation into a hermeneutical movement as it culminates into incarnation context of the word of God into ordinary text-readers’ culture. Thus, the synchronic view of the nature of things and a diachronic view of what is happening in
Gĩkũyũland tend to tilt the power pendulum in favor of the marginalized. The voice of lamentation becomes a collective hermeneutical device that appeals to ordinary text-readers’ insights from below. It makes the text-readers de-center the syncretism envisaged by the perspectives of Euro-centric world and also rein-scribes the religious and philosophical beliefs embedded in cultural practices by addressing the deepest hermeneutic questions. It is a contextualization process that focuses on exclusiveness and inclusiveness of culture through its awareness of all dangers of syncretism that go with bringing the word of God into a cultural stance without watering down the core of biblical narrative.

The context of lamentation becomes the map of reality through which text-reader grasps and retains the critical and basic elements of the word of God in a text-reading process. It is a question of how to organize textual-meaning by making sense out of traumatic experiences by bringing on board all the ingredients that edify the next course of hermeneutical action. It is an honest answer to the question; how do we read the Bible in the face of the disinherited and the wretched of the land? Lamentation is needed in addressing various factors of text-reading that are broadly and deeply entrenched in conflict where optimizations on local initiatives and local resources of verbalized attacks and counterattacks are born out of suspicion. The oppressed, poor and powerless are provoked to probe, think and talk their context of pain and suffering. It is an entrance of God into our post-colonial shared mode of existence by listening to the marginal voices from the angle of concrete expressions of inbuilt contextual reality of colonialism and its exploitation of text-readers.

Hermeneutical responses to hunger, diseases and other issues in Africa (e.g. HIV and AIDS), remain open to our text-reading frameworks that take the African experiences of love, pain, fear, joy and sharing of indigenous hermeneutical ingredients into a background
upon which the Gĩkũyũ people weave a tapestry of hope. In situations of darkness or uncertainty hopefulness becomes impossible and consolations are out of place. The role of lamentation is captured by its art of materializing victims’ painful thoughts through echoing and affirmation of protests against Euro-centric text-reading process that hinder the Gĩkũyũ people’s full understanding of the word of God. A deliberate sidelining of lamentation therefore denies text-readers their foundation of understanding the entire world of victims by taking away the power to inform their inner life.

The text-readers are organically steeped into their expression of grief and are still known to maintain an organic link with ancestors but, the irony of this claim is that the text-readers’ voices are not organically applied as reader’s own hermeneutical to illuminate the biblical narratives of lamentation and their context of social experiences. For the most part, the Gĩkũyũ people’s voices of lamentation give us only hints, traces, fragments, and vignettes, with no suggestion of how all these elements might fit together, if indeed they do. It is the contextualization of text-reading in a society which has been raised out of modern industrial system which is opposed to the organic view of reality as a cure to miseries. What does emerge is awareness that the mysterious but dominating subject of lamentation cannot be comprehended in any hermeneutics that tend to impose its pre-conditioned categories. Lamentation as a concept of expression becomes a creative process which deepens and broadens to form the fundamental idea upon which everything in Gĩkũyũland depends and around which everything must be ordered.

It becomes a point of departure for overcoming the Euro-centric conception of the hermeneutical task. The task of tracing the origin and progressive development of biblical hermeneutics through lamentation has eventually spawned a series of reflections from
different points of view. In what follows, the study deliberated on biblical hermeneutics and other questions in a context shaped by neo-colonial intellectual currents and other counter-attacks on the aftermath of colonialism as captured through the voices of lamentations. Through our findings we have established that the interpretation of pain and suffering is open to future possibilities of its unmitigated particularity and diversity of hermeneutics. According to its deepest textual meaning, lamentation is kept in communal psyche through a continuing typological interpretation that builds on testimonies to God’s past actions. As both promissory and revelatory of the present, the goal of contextualization is to determine the inner connections that remain in the dark.

5.7 Hermeneutics as a Sphere of Power
Hermeneutics is always a realm of power through which power operates in many different ways. But, the haunting voices of lamentations are only captured in this realm through the text-readers endeavor to elucidate what the text means to post-colonial interpreters and the people of their culture. The issues raised in this realm of power leave the conflicting voices in unresolved tension, staying stubbornly in the space of pain, suffering, and collapse; lamentation offers a way to articulate a context of suffering and insist on the need to do so (O’Connor, 2002: 86). This realm of power extends to the text-reading in determining the way men treat women in the church, the attitudes of rich people to their poor neighbors and the policies of the richer nation’s use of institutions like IMF and the World Bank (WB). Again, it is evident that hermeneutic problems have to do with increasingly inescapable interdependence in the context of glaring inequalities of power.

Hegemonic power invested in hermeneutical resources depends, to a great deal, on how these are gathered and presented and how they are interpreted, both by biblical scholar and
the ordinary text-reader. Biblical scholars dispute each other’s premises and methods no less fiercely than politicians, as an attempt to draw the hermeneutical materials into a single global network of power, thereby limiting the scope for independent hermeneutical outcomes (Cochrane, 1999: 9). All this notwithstanding the power of interpretation should be left in the hands of those who bring lamentation to the discourse of hermeneutics. As a major site of post-colonial hermeneutics, lamentation is by no means a separate part of reality on its own. It is one way of interpreting large complexes of social and community realities, including the personal relationships and expectations, the loyalties and senses of priority that govern the process of appraisal and appropriation of the text. In what follows, the study takes on one hand lamentation as a hermeneutical and theological reflection engine into a contextualization process that invites the reader into a polemic struggle with the dominant and self-sufficient “powers that be” of the Agĩkũyũ world. They are cross-cutting in the whole societal fabric – whether in the visible socio-economic and political rulers or creeping around invisibly in structures like class, gender and the economic. And yet it takes on the role of power in hermeneutical enterprise in view, explicitly or beneath the surface.

5.8 Theological Reflection in Relation to Lamentation

Theological reflection was made to express a hermeneutical venturesome sensitivity, which was presented to help the ordinary text-readers’ respond to the word of God through people’s problematic situation and their negative experiences in life. This was done in the light of text-readers’ perspective, worldview and social setup articulated and applied through faith tradition. Text-readers’ hearts and minds are made to stay alive and alert in order to adequately address community’s needs and aspirations through indigenous thought forms and familiar terminology. Lamentation is expressed to help the community think out
the textual meaning in reference to its cultural environments. The use of proverbs and idiomatic expression (in African Religion), narration of a parable in the Bible (in Christianity) or recitation of verses in Qur'an (Islam) as integrated life way through which the text-reader is thrilled to see God’s plan unfolded in the text. Theological reflection lies at the heart of text-readers’ culture, touching, interacting with and strongly influencing basic make-up of our hermeneutics in order to strengthen the text-readers’ conceptualization of the reality of deep hurt or discouragement. From here, we can explain the deep connection centered on the parallel held between Rachel’s weeping and that of Gĩkũyũ Matriarch weeping for her suffering children, in the hands of greedy elite that works hand in hand with a naïve and gullible clergy.

5.8.1 Theological Reflections through Lamentation
The conversation of Rachel and God through lamentation over the lost cultural heritage of Israel is an example of theological reflection through lamentation as a theological encounter. This reflection begins in the most ordinary, familiar circumstances where the realization of theological significance in biblical hermeneutics unfolds through the associations of the text. The facts of the Rachel’s situation of lamentation and weeping suggest an alternative imagination of life and mission of entering into exiled text-readers’ situation.

5.8.2 Lamentation and Theological Reflection
As a methodology of the indigenous hermeneutics, lamentation unfolded this level of theological reflection of a text-reading community to interpret issues of life through the text, their root causes, and their structural aspects of the matter. This picture helps the lamenting community to identify its critical aspect or experience upon which they need to reflect in a realistic perspective which will eventually lead to action for transformation. As a process,
theological reflection does not always require the participants who are professionally trained in theology, because all the ordinary text-readers were qualified to theological reflection out of an experience which can reflect on in their search for what God may be saying. The struggle is how we talk about God and express trust to God in our disorientations. By acting on their understanding of God’s message or vision, they will experience the God who hears the cry of his people that is the God who is Emmanuel in their day-to-day events. They will be assured of God’s presence in what they experience through conversion and personal transformation. Thus, this awareness was used to inform the text-readers deliberate choices and decisions where theological reflection through lamentations formed the inspirational response to the modern configurations of the power structures. It helps us to connect faith with action and justice in our social ministry” (Kerber, 2005). By meeting resistances through a head-on hermeneutic process, our theological, hermeneutic reflection arrives at insights which cannot be predetermined by text-readers’ academic, professional, or even moral status.

As a process, it predicts the text-readers’ collaborative efforts which lead to a hermeneutical action where the text-readers in their community engage in an exercise that collaboratively lead to concrete textual meanings. Besides, as Kinast (2000: 68) puts it, “theological reflection occurs most fruitfully in a group or community where the shortcomings and limitations of individuals may be compensated by others.” In this section, the focus will be on lamentation as a reading method and its practical application in order to effect radical conversion of the mind of the oppressed. Now we come to the really difficult and controversial part of challenging, deconstructing, and opposing the colonial metaphors, metonyms, tropes and representations. Expressions of lamentation means an examination of
the post-colonial perspectives in its process of prioritizing, and privileging selective readings that basically use the preferred texts from the Bible in conjunction with specific readings to make an inquiry into: Who reads the lamentation text and under what circumstances? What happens when local community read these texts? Is there any hostilities geared towards the colonizer’s text as evident in the lamentation text. In trying to answer these questions, the anti-imperialist and post-colonial elements existing among the community stands, to provide prior reading contexts which will help us appreciate speaking out against oppressive regimes and privileges, overlords and the powerful. This will make the text-reading community to free itself from hermeneutical captivity and also appropriate their rich cultural heritage as reflected by lamentations.

Through such familiar reading contexts, the biblical text is suddenly illuminated for the local reader whose mind is progressively freed from the destructive and enslaving silence that stifle the realization of hermeneutical liberation among the suffering readers. In this method, reading is circular as opposed to colonial linear approach. The method also takes advantage of universal thinking that invests wholly on the local particular as it resists the temptation to make of itself the center of the universe or of the historical process. The colonial linear reading had transformed itself into the center of the universe and the historical process. It was ideological and advanced in abstract steps, focused on content and some skills, and has already caused hermeneutical dependence in Africa. Since the study holds to the view held by outstanding Old Testament scholars like Brueggemann (1997: 63), that: “…we now recognize that there is no interest-free interpretation, interpretation that is not in the service of some interest and in some sense advocacy. Cultural-text hegemony asserts that there is no biblical hermeneutics, which is fully free from ideological and other
vested interests. The subjugated lot approach Scriptures as members of a community recognizes the echoed voice of lament as the place where God normatively speaks to and confronts the realities of a wounded community. It is a starting point of knowing and hearing the voice of God amidst the historical and cultural distance recorded in the painful issues we face today. Making a hermeneutical response on lamentation literature triggers the post-colonial experiences to full-fledged hermeneutical reflection that focus, on the ambiguities and socio-economic complexities that seek to mirror a lamentation context.

Circular reading takes one principle and applies it to a diversity of real life situations. For example, in circular reading, grief as a reality of life is mainstreamed and then applied to the oppressed lot who read the text for survival; it focuses on processes, skills and some content and it explores, discovers and empowers the reader. The experience and framework of text-reading shapes the text-readers in the academia which are taken as a starting point of this process of understanding the existing resources through the dynamics of lamentation. The lamentation relayed in the biblical text provides a leveled ground of mobilizing and strengthening these resources, as well as a platform for developing new resources. In preparing the subjugated text-readers into mainstreaming practices of their laments, the post-colonial reading becomes a vehicle of discourse with the colonial legacies through a participatory method which is dialectical and best placed to make deep inquiries into dialectical relationships existing among the subjugated and the oppressors in what steers the wheels of the text-reader’s mind. Such dialectical relationship is evident among the oppressed and the oppressor as an internal ideological conflict of two opposites struggle call for mediation into longing for compromised textual meaning between them. The post-colonial reading of the text of lamentation opens the reader to more complex questions than
answers in this journey of grieving their long enduring societal trauma and losses. In this process of reading, the reader will encounter conversations and activist speeches, designed to arouse the heart of their listeners into action that espouse the justification of life. Thus, lamentation reading will turn out to be a strategic ground of questioning the moral values of colonial ideologies in colonized readers’ minds in the twenty-first century. In other words, lamentation reading is a comprehensive site of ideological struggle, and as with all true struggles sheer verbal hermeneutical constructions will not survive; because, lamentation reading can never be a mere text or a mere rhetorical gimmick. It ought to exhibit its activism to embrace a collaborative reading where the local community and the academia are seen as equals in text reading. The lore of lamentation texts will be a launching pad of mutual responsibility and accountability in re-establishing holistic justice, which stands as an obstacle to former colonizers and the colonized elites alike. The study prefers the post-colonial usage of biblical motif lamentation in dialogue with extra-biblical lamentation structures, which contends and affirms that there is a source of life; the creator God of Israel who can decide upon what is good for others and yet allow the creation to question his authority. These experiences focus on realities of colonial injustices that haunt the African development initiatives. An open recognition of these realities and their absurd memory will represent African appreciation of their identity and heritage in text reading.

By universalizing the loss and its experience in a common and enduring language helps the reader to embrace past, present and future in a language that is paradoxically common, and contemporary. All these three dimensions are conceived in terms of their relationship to the unity of human pathos and ethos. To break up this unity is to destroy one or more of these dimensions, and to destroy one is to destroy all. The social-epistemic modes of these three
dimensions will totally depend on God: In God the first (communal), second (common) and third (individual) dimensions merge. These mergers hold out the promise of the future, which is already anticipated in a dynamic present, which creates a new-orientation. In this context then, God is an active agent who is allied against the empire, willing to intervene for the lowly ones, and he is inviting the community to a new future shaped by principles of God’s kingdom. These principles are focused on speech, rhetoric and imagination, which define the social-epistemic process of lament, as symbolization of life in the community. Such symbolization appeals to concrete symbols emerging out of concrete understanding at its formative and evocative process of generating faith in God at a personal and communal level of discourse.

Its converging symbols serves to enrich the post-colonial text-reading process in its endless weaving of lamentation as an interpretation of Agĩkũyũ’s testimony, which can make the connection between old texts and contemporary temptations and opportunities in Africa. This paradigm will constitute a post-colonial African hermeneutical process, which will lead into a radical overthrow of what have persistently served to create Africans in the image of white colonial gods. If God were to abandon the humanity, which is made in God’s likeness, then we are equally bound to ignore the hermeneutical work of community members who read the Bible from rural area and the slums in Africa. Any attempt to brush aside the hermeneutical work of untrained non-Western hermeneutists in Gĩkũyũland is truly a colonial dimension of impoverishing the process of critically identifying, analyzing and subsequently addressing the problems that bedevil the Gĩkũyũ community. In the course of history the elite segment of this community has progressively detached from local based social and cultural contexts as individuals and society are at this instant held in opposition.
5.8.3 Role of Lamentation in the Development of Hermeneutics

The powerful and striking metaphors of Gĩkũyũ dramatists, poets and novelists represents a multifaceted, polyphonic conversation in their attempts to help the text-readers cope with concentrated historical suffering and evil inflicted on the Gĩkũyũ community which culminates into a hermeneutic of text-reader relating to pain. As a marginal voice of protest, lamentation plays a very crucial role in development of post-colonial biblical hermeneutics. Gĩkũyũ expression of lamentation and its role of exploring biblical hermeneutical themes out of the depths of text-readers’ cultural and historical experiences will in its subject-object schema present lamentation and hermeneutics as two sides of one coin (Brueggemann, 1997). The dominant ideology and its hermeneutical discourses will in most cases hide the concrete experiences of the people but lamentation will come in as a prolongation voice of hermeneutical discourse in a new discourse of reconciling human pain with the word of God (De-Gruchy, 1986: 105). The text-readers who suffer historical injustices are either concealed or somewhat exposed in their access to and use of hermeneutical resources. But, lamentation as a stance and voice of mutuality becomes a perspective through which the text-reader can make sense out of senseless realities by seeking for attentive and empathetic listening of others. Laments have no rational answers, they only express deep hurt and anger, yet the hermeneutics of grappling with pain is in itself a means whereby the text-reader can begin to relate to its text. Since the text-readers who do not learn from past mistakes are destined to repeat them, there is need to develop awareness on their oppression by finding an indigenous way of interpreting it in solidarity with the poor and dispossessed (Gutierrez, 1974). The text-readers’ experience of faith through cultural tradition of lamentation enables the reader to be particularly suspicious of the motives and intentions of the colonialist, and rightly so. Thus, thee denial of lamentation reflected by colonial text-
reading process is a white-dominated tool for the continued subjugation and exploitation of the Gikũyũ community. So, the contemporary Agikũyũ text-reader can revisit theological reflection as a concern of redressing their grievances through participation in traditional culture and its process of textual interpretation. This concern requires hermeneutical openness and assertiveness in affirming the traditional expressions, which were previously denied and maligned. Lamentation comes in as an explicit rejection of the assimilation nature of missionary hermeneutics that spoke of natives as morally inferior and somehow lower on the scale of human evolution. Assertive engagement challenges the community to discern what kind of common vision, hope, motivation and approach they need to take in responding to the issues of text-reading. The colonial hermeneutical linkages that stifle the grounds of one’s own needs through the reflections on convictions of others are confronted through lamentation will aid the colonized text-readers to address their inability to express personal convictions (non-assertiveness) by placing their primary importance on safety and survival (aggressiveness).

By forcing their convictions through lamentation as a metaphor of conversation, the communitarian-reading of the text will dominate the hermeneutical debate in what will challenge the insufficiently assertive textual-meanings which are not party to transformative action. In both instances, the communitarian-reading is enhanced through lamentation where the sharing of personal experiences with others through the text is subjected to concrete experience and open sharing of feelings and thoughts generated by what happens to text-readers and around them through external and internal events, facts, feelings, thoughts, attitudes, and hopes that we carry into and out of the text. Lamentation becomes an entry point of theological reflection on the assumption that reality of pain comes to us with
situations that raise fundamental questions that disrupt all what has been taken for granted but also measures to our existence. Lamentation confronts the question of meaning through the text-readers’ faith perspective, moreover, we assume that the experience of God in our lives is linked to our hermeneutical action.

The feelings generated by the experience of pain carry the questions, values, and wisdom embedded in our narratives and that we may not know how to articulate. Lamentation raises the questions and also the answers by re-entering the experience in openness and freedom, which entails taking the risk of entering into emotional and cognitive stress. It is through lamentation that the text-readers are confronted with interpretation of their reality, which boosts their search for meaning. It is through expression of those feelings that hermeneutical thoughts or images culminate through insights into re-entering their own lived experience. It is through strong emotions and painful memories that the text-readers resurface again through their interpretation of reality where the certainties are shaken by the events they are revisiting. Thus, lamentation becomes the part of theological reflection that opens the reader to pluralism of attitudes, beliefs and feelings toward the highlighting of the complexity of human experience. As a process of discernment, lamentation is prompted by community’s consensus through pluralism and diversity of views.

It helps the text-reader in approaching the truth of the matter, believing that different points of view carry within themselves some elements of that truth. Mutual dialogue between experience and the religious tradition is done using the Bible, which is esteemed by Gĩkũyũ community. This will hopefully promote socio-economic and political progress, and help improve the standard of life. Besides, exploring personal and corporate experience, this
theological reflection will seek to befriend and make Gĩkũyũ community’s tradition accessible to the text-readers’ reflection on what is to be integrated with new social, ethical and religious values, as reflected in the bigger picture of the post-colonial community. This hermeneutical dialogue is usually proposed through a respectful openness to different viewpoints and the recognition of hermeneutical facts. It is a valid and beneficial way of appropriating the faith tradition in response to rigid conformity to colonial formulation of the faith. It is through this forum of theological reflection that a correlation between experience and tradition is made leading to new insights, new perspectives and transformation of consciousness. This takes place and inspires the text-readers for action.

5.9 A Post-Colonial Trend of Theological Reflection

One lesson from the history of hermeneutical debate about lamentation is that we cannot and should not try to appropriate textual meaning into universally valid and applicable theological and hermeneutical models or blue prints for the text-reading community. Thus, theological and hermeneutical reflection models have to be contextual, taking account of the first differences in historical, social and cultural situations. Equally important are theologically and hermeneutically grounded themes which are brought alongside empirical inquiries into contemporary and contextual issues.

5.9.1 Theological Reflections in a Market Place

From the interviews carried out, it appeared that the task of freeing the sacred texts from the academy by placing them into the hands of ordinary people already exists but it is always overlooked. Theological reflection was done in the small text-reading groups in the context of a market place where biblical passage on Rachel’s lamentations and weeping was read, reflected upon and discussed. It is in a market place where we noted that though, unofficial
there are notable self-appointed theologians, church historians and archetypal text-readers among the laity with legal and medical knowledge embodied by African oral literature. This lot in its struggle for existence subjects different sermons preached on Sunday by trained pastors in their local churches to profound and concrete theological questions in struggle for peace and justices through public awareness.

The preached sermons by their pastors are brought before the bar of reason and common sense in what has helped the ordinary text-readers to relevantly apply the word of God informally from a here and now setting. Though the hermeneutical dress, setting and chemistry of the academically weaved homilies of their Euro-centrically trained pastors may seem different from the expectation of the ordinary text-readers, the classic sermons and the text-readers meet at a market place in a similar atmosphere of strain and tension, seeking a clarification and unity within diversity through the spirit of comprehensiveness. Perhaps it is good at this stage to maintain that the whole process began with the ordinary text-readers listening to Sunday sermons as delivered by their local church pastors; then ordinary text-readers or hearers were placed to subject these sermons to current social trends and inquiry in course of the week. They are then expected to embark on a theological-hermeneutic reflection with themselves, their congregations and the wider society. In this process, we underscored the role of marketplace in Gĩkũyũland as an ecumenical space and signpost marking out the central ground of guiding text-reading process. Its definite complexion takes center stage in a more indefinite approach it features towards the edges as it moves the text-reader from principles to praxis. As a mass phenomena, the nervous hermeneutical struggle and search for the true self and conclusions drawn from that search defines our intention of capturing ordinary text-readers’ day-to-day hermeneutical conversions with
other people at home, at the market place (Ndũũnyũ), and on the highways of trade and culture (Mũng’etho), was used by this study to sharpen the marginalized text-readers’ inbuilt affinity of choosing all that suits them to their own advantage. In so doing, the existence of a market place (Ndũũnyũ) becomes crucial in the Gĩkũyũland because it was established to be one of the sacred places upon where people find consolation, meaning and fulfillment of their existence outside the Euro-centric box. The study realized this place is not an ideological space or a mere market place but a converging ground and means upon which collective hermeneutical voices are expressed leading to reciprocated identity. Thus, it is an event of reclaiming and reconstructing authentic skills of social analysis through lamentation as an arena where the center and the periphery are redefined by the margins.

5.9.2 Theological Education by Extension
The text of Jeremiah 31: 15-17 was discussed by two groups of Theological Education by Extension (TEE) which consisted of 24 members who were more interested in steering the focus group discussions. In focus group discussions plenaries they had taken the task of bringing together various groups of people from different backgrounds and lifestyles who were working in marketplaces and other public places. This was conducted in order to learn and identify with God’s continuing story with humanity, and to take a break from colonial hermeneutical lenses which domesticate the Bible into a hegemonic culture and expectations. After a brainstorming session, they were commissioned to go and share the text with their colleagues in places of work and then come for review. In this connection they were expected to consider how lamenting and weeping over the alienation of communal land has impacted the immediate concerns of those held in hermeneutical captivity. These groups were invited to look for such incidents in the Bible, newspapers,
their own land and local regions. Finally they were to share their hermeneutical response and conclusion through a; 1) one to one ascertaining of whether the hermeneutical differences between ordinary and expertise text-readers lie in the nature of the knowledge of the text or in text-readers attitude toward the hermeneutical problem; 2) one to many correspondence through which their reliance on textual experiences can be used to help them identify similar problems and 3) verification of different steps taken by lamenting text-readers in rethinking the motive and purpose of public processing pain. In this case, the essence of market place (Ndũũnyũ) which is rooted in close connection of what is experienced between human experiences and structure were in the final analysis used in articulating the text-readers art of integrating their understanding of life. In this process the text-readers were keen to make various references to the case of Naboth in the Old Testament which is known to envisage the Gĩkũyũ people’s concept of land ownership.

**5.9.3 Reflection on Land Tenure in the Bible and Gĩkũyũ Tradition**

Land themes recur throughout the Bible. Torah in regulating and limiting the cultivation of land placed all land matters within God’s covenant relationships with Israel. These two groups ended up with a strong reference to the story of Naboth and King Ahab (1 Kings 21:1-15) as they discussed what a return of Rachel’s children to their land entails. In this case, what the land meant to Israel vis-à-vis the inalienable rights of the Agĩkũyũ’s access to their ancestral land. This comparison was brought into a dialogue as it ensured a mutual challenge and enrichment. The familiar narrative of Naboth’s vineyard is concerned with unjust royal land policies of Ahab the king of Samaria.

Naboth the Jezreelite is not ready to surrender his cultural heritage because losing this land or exchanging it for money was suicidal and an abomination to Naboth. Naboth’s
hermeneutics of land tenure has a resource different from that of King Ahab. It comes from a theological-hermeneutic experience of his ancestors: “The Lord forbids that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers (verse 3).” From this text, two kinds of hermeneutics are contrasted: 1) An aprioristic hermeneutics based on consumerist assumptions and commoditization (willing buyer and willing seller attitude), and; 2) a hermeneutic that springs from ancestral experience through a straightforward embrace of its consequences and God’s action. The commoditization (I will pay you whatever it is worth in money) of this cultural heritage by Ahab and Jezebel was not a great deal to the regime of the day which had presented a pessimistic character of a society which is divided between arrogant supreme-rulers and vulnerable-subjects.

This takes the form in which the text has come down to the conquered subjects; it envisages the consecutive images and scenes from a mosaic of violent contrasts that emphasize the injustice of absolute monarchs and the misfortunes of the subjects. The King and his family are free to inhumanly replace the higher values of truth and justice by trivializing or dismissing the theological importance of land as a practice. This happens through a denial of truth which is characterized with abstract hermeneutical resources devoid of content and context. King Ahab becomes a deity who can alienate the inalienable with disregard of all what it meant to Naboth when he stood his ground not to surrender the ancestral land. Naboth is different; he speaks in the content and context of where his life draws meaning and purpose. So this trivialization and stifling of inalienable land permits the crown to cogently appropriate the Torah secured land with a total disregard of Naboth’s audible and penetrating cry for justice which was definitely heard by God. Naboth’s experience is informed by content and context of the old tribal practice which had clearly stipulated that
this land was inalienable. The insult of this cultural heritage is intensified by the royal
sanction that will lead to murder of Naboth as well. The loss of community’s land meant the
loss of Naboth’s immediate concern, status and reputation.

In this context, sound theological-hermeneutic reflection commences through the echo of
lamentation, hence the practice of theology in Gĩkũyũland ought to have a lamentation
context as a deliberate orientation that aims at giving the ordinary text-reader among the
Agĩkũyũ, a sense of their identity and dignity. This theological-hermeneutic reflection
empowers the ordinary text-readers, to define for themselves, their dignity and world of
meaning and purpose.

At this juncture, the study concurred with Killen and De-Beer (1999:51) method of
theological reflection and explanation on how the individual and corporate experience is
brought into conversation with the text-readers’ wisdom of religious heritage. The images,
themes, or pieces of lamentation that recur frequently are important in bringing to balance
the search for meaning in new, inspiring or challenging situations of life. The new insights
about the meaning of reality and God’s presence are designed for contexts of the poor who
are equipped to challenge the Euro-centric framework of interpretation that makes cultural
facts, events, and so on not fit into Gĩkũyũ people’s experience of biblical text.

Though, the study is keen to make a polemic of Agĩkũyũ text-readers’ inaccuracies and
distortions of ideas which are driven by Euro-centric desires and agendas as they end up
with manipulative hermeneutical attitudes (Ibid 10-11). We were also keen to indicate that
such attitudes were needed to facilitate theological reflection through scientific reading of
the lamentation text. The underlying principles of theological reflection are in the first place,
oriented towards a hermeneutical reflection of our faith experience and transformation. The faith tradition offers theological reflection and perspectives on social issues into what guides the action according to ethical principles and a sense of social responsibility. By so doing the lamenting community is seen to take the word of God in the scriptures and the word in each culture very seriously. Lamentation builds on a critical cognizance of cultural and religious heritage of a given people and situation. It searches for aspirations, hopes, visions and joys of a people who long for existential meaning.

The hope and its consequent motivation which have immediate bearing upon the particular situation of reading the signs of the time appeal for action so as to influence the reality for the enhanced resistance against subjugations. Theological reflection’s role in a response to social issues is marked by a distinctive impact on established thorough dialogical connection of social reality and the present acts of God in text-reading. In a social transformation perspective, text-readers are convinced of the power of God that makes all things new, starting from the way of looking at and perceiving the reality of the text that inspires and energizes the courses of action which would eventually suggest new collective systems. This is what justifies the presence of theological reflection within the biblical hermeneutics: it is an aspect of knowledge and transformation that complements the roles of the other steps in biblical hermeneutics.

This hermeneutic of lamentation coupled with theological reflection provides a direct exposure and involvement of the text-reading community into the hermeneutical question, and analysis through which a critical awareness and understanding of the underlying social reality is done. By contributing towards hermeneutical insight, focus and motivation for
action the whole process and purpose of theological reflection becomes multifaceted in its contributions toward the interpretation of issues from an existential and intellectual perspective. This input is connected to an evaluation of the reality, which values the principles of each event in line with God who hears the cry of the oppressed. In addition, theological reflection helps the lamenting community of text-readers to encounter or evoke an alternative hermeneutical position which might be different from that of the dominant ideology in the society on the issue at stake.

A different aspect of the purpose of theological reflection is to develop a sense of textual meaning, that is, to raise groups and communities with a particular role to play. They move toward the solution of the problem, out of their identity, their condition, and the meaning their life is making in reference to the situation they are reflecting upon. Finally, the continued renewing presence of God who is the principal protagonist in history and in creation is enriched by the Agĩkũyũ text-readers’ struggles and achievements in their context. The Bible as a bedrock of lamentation will in this process stop being a Gĩkũyũ book of prescriptions (from the center) or examples that apply to a situation to become a fundamental resource in the discernment of the will of God in the history of Gĩkũyũ people. This understanding will help the Agĩkũyũ text-readers to be active participants in hermeneutical and theological reflections and put to limelight the action of text-readers who experience oppression and marginalization. The brainstorming sessions through powerful medium of stories has helped the text-reading groups in the uncovering of pertinent data which individual text-readers overlook. These groups were able to sense when the expertise of the academy is needed and can often contribute to academic readings by its keenness to have the retelling of the narrative, thereby clarifying what might have been missed or
misinterpreted originally. So its role of balancing the hermeneutical thought is evident in its provision of alternative explanations through group participation where the presenter has a privileged position because of their original experience.

5.9.4 Theological Reflection on Reconciliation

Throughout the process of theological reflection, reconciliation emerged as a vital component in Gĩkũyũ people’s lives. However, the process of lamentation, as a practice seems not to reflect reconciliation; because text-readers are subjected to hopeless denial of their marginal status. The current spirit of denial has taken away the social space for people to think and act differently, which is needed for any meaning of reconciliation. According to O’Connor (2002: 88), “lamentation can be a resource in breaking the silence in its invitation of personal and social truth-telling that can release passions and encourage moral agency.” In its provision of a fresh start, lamentation opens the wounds so that they can be cleansed and thereby stopped from decaying. Unfortunately, Kenyatta, the first president of Kenya is recorded to have simply proposed that the bygones in Gĩkũyũland be-bygones through his simple and cheap formula of “forgive and forget.” This was a turn from the past without truth telling which has not only ignored the past evils but it has also made excuses for them. It overlooks historical injustices by refusing to make a hermeneutical review of the pain and suffering of the past in the hope that they need never be repeated.

The theological reflection and action on the importance of repentance or the acknowledgement on what was done wrong and disclosure of truth is, therefore, an imperative. Thus, this study’s acknowledgment that violence is often shrouded in a culture of silence because the oppressor cannot let the oppressed people speak out the hard and
stinging things through self-reclamations. The trans-generational silencing of voices of the oppressed by oppressors’ contains anger and ignores sorrow in its culture of maintaining and perpetuating the structure of oppression. It blocks the passion for justice in the sense that loss and its trauma and loss which goes aggrieved and so the communal anger that prowls in Gĩkũyũland signify that these people are not helped to speak out their experiences of shuttered dreams. Given that these soul-crushing effects of emotional abuse and neglect are tolerated by post-colonial society in different ways and forms, this silence is capable of causing emotional, physical, psychological and economic catastrophe in Africa.

5.9.5 A Poetic Breaking of Silence

The poetic breaking of silence means a post-colonial re-examination of the perception and response of Gĩkũyũ people as a practice of freedom from Euro-centric perspective which has dominated the biblical studies in Africa. A re-interpretation of colonial past experiences from the perspective of the marginalized-as opposed to muteness and denial generated by Euro-centric perspective. Since lamentation has to do with generation of transformational acts of bringing the world of consciousness into existence, digging deep into their traumatized lives as well as the numbness caused by colonial horror. These acts have produced a generation of text-readers in Gĩkũyũland with no awareness of the social divisions and deep sensitivity caused by wretchedness. They overlook the plight of dis-inherited Mau-Mau veterans as well as the Gĩkũyũ people’s history of resistance. If the progressive anti-imperialist stand were entirely in use, they would contribute to transformation of our contemporary social order. Thus, lamentation as underlying expression of incoherence and chaos in life has no magic formula of solving the mystery of suffering and pain, but living this reality in its depth and strife leading to the emergence of
consciousness that embraces a critical hermeneutical-intervention in text-readers’ reality. This suggestion is a poetic process of breaking the culture of silence and the rekindling of memories as the way forward.

The following poem was composed by the researcher in liaison with focus group discussions out of the analysis of the data gathered from the witnesses of Mũthĩrĩgũ, ex-Mau-Mau and detainees among others through the interviews. The focus group discussions held by two groups of Gĩkũyũ youths emphasized on recitation of the script one in a poetry style and the other in a rap style. The poetic opening of group discussion sessions and workshops were followed by a reading of Jeremiah 31:15-17, different stanzas of a poem were composed and used to lead the congregation in oral Bible story-telling exercise through which ordinary text-readers encounter God through the truth telling, retelling and hearing. The crafted Bible stories were used among the less educated and minimally trained pastors to communicate the word of God orally in poetic form as a transferable tool for grasping the reality of a hurting and suffering people. The different stanzas of this poem were openly presented to stimulate insights into a link held between the Gĩkũyũ people and the Biblical text as spurred by universal scope of Rachel’s lamentation and weeping. Its imaginative intentions were to reveal how deep human feelings and their different functions are voiced to denounce the abusive powers in post-colonial era. It summed up the ordinary text-readers’ experience of reconciling the dominant ideologies and the underlying social realities during theological-hermeneutic reflection sessions on the wider scope of Rachel’s lamentation and weeping. The poem was as follows:

Lamentation is heard in Lari, Manyani and Hola
A thundering of Lamentation and bitter weeping
Deadly memories of blood bathed children linger
Reflect on the abandoned Mau-Mau descendants
Let us break the yoke of hegemonic calmness
Let us evoke the buried memories of captivity
Let the massacred, maimed and frustrated talk
Tell why we freedom fighters are disregarded.

Let all the Gĩkũyũ people cry today
Let Rachel’s voice speak to Agĩkũyũ
Why voice lamentation and weeping
Mũmbi’s descendants are no more

Mũmbi you are our miserable mother
Is it the Mũmbi’s voice of weeping?
Where is the posterity of Mau-Mau?
Why material poverty and miseries?

The mission-education taught us to obey
We have remained neutral to an iron fist
We are still closing our eyes for prayers
When strong and weak fight we are silent

Where are Agĩkũyũ’s artifacts they ask?
As often as I speak against pain of Mũmbi,
I still remember Mũmbi in the IDP camp
Progeny of Mũmbi consider the highway,

Return to hermeneutics of hope not a sword
Return O progeny of Mũmbi to your bequest
Why waver, O house of Gĩkũyũ and Mũmbi?
Anew thing has finally come in Gĩkũyũland

The gun and bible were tools of invaders
Civilizing the savages through terrorism
Who puzzled and fooled the text-readers
The yoke of slavery and captivity is here

Who was to reconcile the savages with God?
The gun and the Bible executed this scheme
Beside the iniquitous inquisition crowned it?
Why plead guilty of being a Mau-Mau rebel?
Let’s commemorate the wounded heroes?
Let us now prick the old elapsed wounds
But! Where are memories of our heroes?
Our wounding and bleeding hearts speak!
Where are the loyalist and radical text-readers?
Permit our understanding of disquieting bawls
Let horrible and dirty text-reading schemes end
Let Gĩkũyũ voices of lamentation speak today

Let innocent blood of freedom fighters yak
Let the voices of orphans and widows arise
The imperialists and propagandist shut up
Let the tools of oppressor fade forever more

Let ex-freedom fighters and detainees mourn
Let them claim their rightful space in the text
And let us allow the myths of oppressors’ die
Let the God of Mũmbi speak oracles of hope
Let the rewards of selfless and triumph come
But tell us who betrayed this dignified cause?
Terrorists and hooligans will not rule Kenya!
So no compensation no discussion they said

Land, jobs and property went to collaborators
Amnesia ushered in demise to our generations
Mau-Mau is a chronic disease they maintained
The medal went with spectators as we watched

Forgive and forget so is what they maintained
Who forgives and who forgets we question now
Let’s forgive and heal our bitter memories today
But let the blood of the slain people bawl shrilly

Allow our silence remain broken down in daylight
Let cruelty and dispossession fade forever and ever
Who treasures and nurtures our memory of struggle
Who will free and clean our memories and psyche

Why do we disregard our narrative of shed tears?
Our energy and determination is no longer there
Let us hope and ‘rake up’ the stinging pain in us
Not by political assassinations but by loud voice

Where do we place our hopes and aspirations?
Are we actually the legitimate children of Mau-Mau?
Who erased Mau-Mau memory from communal face?
Who screamed let these hooligans die forever and ever

Who is better among the colonialists or missionaries?
What is the difference amid the two civilizing agents?
Let the Kenyan Church assert its executive autonomy
Let the world listen to Mũmbi’s voice of lamentation
Let the lost shrine return to the dispossessed inhabitants
Let strangers make no hermeneutical captives in our land
Who will break these shackles of hermeneutical captivity?
Let the loyalists and collaborators convert and return home

(Source: Researcher)

5.10 Insights Drawn from Theological Reflection and Action in Hermeneutics
The discussion, in focus groups had drawn various lessons on theological reflection from the
following group of text-readers. The expression of biblical motif of lamentation as a basis of
theological reflection can keep the individuals away from rushing to theological
interpretations or settlings that come to mind for the first time thoughtlessly. It assured the
text-readers that all relevant points of view are included, especially the memories of the
original event which were not part of the reflection group. This motif of Lamentation stands
as the strength of the oppressed and the symbol of anti-imperialist struggle as it refrains the text-reader from imposing new ideas on biblical text in absence of a home-grown consensus of what is theologically and hermeneutically acceptable. It is on the basis of this rationale that theological reflection and action is needed to give a humane meaning to scientific facts; the human behavior allied with underlying principles makes theological reflection and action emanating from a hermeneutical act and experience of pain through which an ordinary text-reader is transformed. Thus, the ordinary text-readers are in this process of realistically reclaiming their position in society and their voices will not be captivated or concealed by the dominant reading culture anymore.

They will be enthusiastic not to make the mistake of protesting or rejecting their primordial expression of grief in times of darkness and disorientation. In other words, theological reflection is there to provide wisdom perspectives on social issues arising from lamentation and to give guide to action in accordance with ethical principles and sense of social responsibility. Second, this theological reflection and action was factored on a critical understanding of text-readers’ situation through its vision realizing the existential meaning and purpose through undoubted hope. The motivation to experience and articulate a profound sense of anguish, pathos, and incongruity corporately touches all the text-readers who are in a situation of marginality. It is from this perspective of God that the ordinary text-reader is immersed through the lamentation text into a peculiar voice of someone who lives close to and well-versed with the reality of life around him. The text-readers are in this process will get into what will influence them to explore their social realities through the poetic playfulness and imaginative inventiveness which are applied in text-reading for better hermeneutical results. Text-reader’s response to social issues serves to establish a dialogue
between the social reality through the presence and action of God in the past.

In a social transformation perspective, believers are convinced of the power of God to make all things new, starting from the way of looking at and perceiving the reality, to inspiring and energizing courses of action that eventually evoke new social systems. This is what will justify the presence of theological reflection and action as echoed spine of knowledge and transformation in evoking the concreteness of post-colonial text-criticism as a method enjoined in lamentation. The analysis of the underlying social realities through theological reflection and action opens the reader into wisdom, insight, focus and motivation for action, which is the pinnacle of the whole process of text-reading. Lamentation thus, presents a significant dimension of communal and individual’s contextual reality through critical presentation and analysis of stinging post-colonial realities of pain and suffering among the Gĩkũyũ people. Such presentation and analysis mirror the disapproval of the dehumanizing forces of aggression, devastations, exploitations and oppressions originating from the African experience of colonialism and neo-colonialism. Lamentation, as lens of theological reflection and action, prevents biblical hermeneutics from being institutionalized and stratified by paternalistic social action apparatus that dominate the marginalized text-reader.

It points to a rejection of the dominant Western theological paradigms and its dominating bureaucracy through its affirmation of text-reader’s need for critical interventions and its very nature of building bridges between the twofold foci of African theology of liberation and that of inculturation. The acceptance of the Agĩkũyũ realities suggests a structure of protesting muteness in the face of the overwhelming forces of denials and subjugations. It points to the fact that lamentations provides theology out of its concrete stimulations or
deepening of ordinary text-readers’ focus on suffering and pain as a launching pad of reflection and action in a real and peculiar world of the oppressed. In this case, lamentation is not simply an aspect of theology but it is the very location of text-readers’ engagement in theological reflection and action. It is a liberating perspective that constitutes the basic context and methodology of theologizing. Lamentation as a problem-posing hermeneutic becomes prophetic in its process of helping the ordinary text-reader to raise theological questions so as to open a hermeneutical discourse into a larger, more inclusive and revealing criterion of accomplishing the desired reflectors. The transformational action among the traumatized text-readers could also recognize the divine presence in their experiences with the help of others but not dependence on them.

A ceaseless reinterpretation that penetrates the sources of silence by fathoming the depths of theological confusion will ensure that theological voices are neither silent nor confused. Taking Agĩkũyũ motif of lamentation and the biblical motif of lamentation as our hermeneutical and theological reflection launching pad, we got into general picture of our sensitivity to the plight of the victimized text-readers. This was realized through the text-readers’ unyielding stance of taking their lives seriously as a primal source of energy, hope, and healing not only for themselves but also for the community and the world. For them to cultivate this heart for empathetic engagement with the world of text-readers and to avoid being cut from their deep rooted experience of God’s freedom and love, the hermeneutical and theological reflection becomes a prerequisite of arriving at concrete textual-meanings among those whose property is destroyed, bodies tortured, and also those whose spirits are depleted, colonized, and dehumanized.
As O’Connor (2002:139) posits, “lamentation is a theological watershed, an in between place where the old theology of a punishing God no longer holds but new understandings have not yet emerged.” It insists on empathetic understanding wherein the text-readers are no longer expected to interpret others’ world for them but, to accept their naming of their world from the extensiveness of their own beings. Lamentation is not a detached academic pursuit but to certain extent, this reflection will be grounded in, and will seek to connect with the actual struggles of the marginalized in their search for justice and liberation.

5.11 Summary

The engagement of ordinary text-readers with the Bible, church and community makes lamentation a component of the African context of pain and suffering. Theological-hermeneutical reflection simultaneously addresses and redresses the anomaly of indigenous text cited by the academy alongside the more familiar forms of theological reflection. This theological reflection is not based on theoretical or speculative notion of Euro-centric hermeneutical circles but on hermeneutical development which presents the ordinary text-readers as a community in a pilgrimage. This pilgrimage with God of the poor is defined by community’s task of unraveling the fundamental discernment of past and present realities. Text-reading groups and the wider community are brought into terms with the reality of their marginality in a crucial role played by becoming part and parcel of their hermeneutical solution to hermeneutical problems without denying their wounded hearts. This reflection is done out of their identity, their condition, and the meaning of their lives as reference to the situation they are reflecting upon. A theological reflection on Gĩkũyũ people who are at the edge of losing their humanness means a rediscovery of past and present in focusing and sharpening the ordinary text-readers’ quests for new signs of God’s grace and appearance.
Thus, by disclosing the process the prolonged period of colonial and neo-colonial oppression which has rocked down the Gikũyũland lamentation becomes a prism through which the manifold ways of Gikũyũ people’s process of doing theological reflections through the interpretation and application of the text in local terms and purposes. In a protest against the discredited social and institutional trajectories of African social categories, the fostering of transitional discourses through lamentation triggers the transforming process of remembering and hoping. Even though the post-colonial reading is constrained by poor framing of both theory and institutions, the progression of neo-oral culture is challenged by lamentation to attract diverse hermeneutical discourses through larger narrations of marginal conditions, which contradicts the Western conjectural reading of the text. Thus, the ebb tide and flood of great public events captured through the voices of marginality builds on referential power of text-reading as entrenched in the lamentation text, which has to gradually unfold the world in which the ordinary text-readers subsist in. This context of struggle for mastery’s invested in what helps this community to encounter or evoke an alternative position in a different way from that of the dominant Euro-centric culture in the Gikũyũ society-on the issues at stake.

So, from the perspective of post-colonial theory, the Agĩkũyũ text-readers are called to exploit the theme of indigenous resistance which has been implicit among Christians in Gikũyũland. Any revisit of lamentation should lead to the use of the Bible in Gikũyũland as a formidable weapon of inculturation in post-colonial struggle for hermeneutical freedom (Katongole, 2005: 89). The inculturation of the positive African culture into the liturgy and textual interpretation should bring the academy and the ordinary text-readers’ closer, through the appreciation of the indigenous text-reading practices. The African cultural
heritage is integrated and positively used in changing the mentality of Euro-centric cultural methods, which are already registered in contemporary text-reading processes.

5.12 Conclusion

How, then, are we finally able to answer the question: How can the Agĩkũyũ motif of lamentation attain an integral place in the development of biblical hermeneutics in Africa? First, the Euro-centric hermeneutics are detached from the socio-economic realities for they make the text-readers to end up in despair and denial because alien text-reading process has no lasting solution to indigenous text-readers. Though, Euro-centric hermeneutics has always presented itself as conventional, rational, practical and cautious in its own context, the study realizes that wherever it is applied it lost its ability to respond to the mystery of human life. The more the Agĩkũyũ text-readers apply Euro-centric hermeneutics in their aesthetic production the more they ended up being sterile and lifeless in terms of imagination. Upon the encounter with dead imaginations, the voice of lamentation ceases to be a component of developing African biblical hermeneutics. The great flow of creative possibilities is grounded on a theological-hermeneutic encounter at its deeper level of reality through the text, through what it means to be human. So, the voice of lamentation in African context does not only echo the possibility of dynamic praxis of liberation but also a living exchange with oppressors through a life changing self-discovery in the light of the oppressed. In absence of Euro-centric hermeneutics in Africa, the human voice of lamentation stands to operate either within or outside the traditional religious expressions by opening the text-readers into a multifaceted hermeneutical task.

The hermeneutical conversations leads to pro-active commitments of indigenous communities wherever the voices of marginality are brought to the center of interpretive
process and placed beyond restraints of colonial history, culture, law and land. As echoes of lamentation move the biblical and historical contexts back-and-forth to ongoing theological conversations the text is subjected to a context of many factors, inclusive of ideo-theological orientation, ecclesio-theological, and missionary legacy. Enhancing of communitarian Bible-reading process can be instrumental to arriving at hermeneutical resolutions. It would raise the voice of lamentation through cultural negotiation of the text which is now used to account for the community’s memory by its force of dismantling the moribund Western rigidly constituted schemata of colonial hegemonic patterns, perpetually imposed on African church and academia. The voice of lamentation is likened with a post-colonial "model" or “heuristic” apparatus for the re-description of the underlying social reality in Gĩkũyũland. It breaks up the inadequacy of dominant interpretations of the world as it makes the openings for new and more adequate ways of textual-interpretation. This model will permit the ordinary text-readers to decode the traces of God’s intervention and presence out of indigenous’ version of reflection (Ricoeur, 1983).

The art of theological reflection brings the text-readers to new surprises and also unexpected signs of God’s grace. Its appearance in history is in what would lead to a genuine deepening growth in faith through the basis of a historical truism that makes history to repeat itself; those text-readers who read the texts from their perspective of past mistakes are not destined to repeat them. Hence, the struggle against the shackles and fetters of colonial rule and subsequent retention of our continuity with immediate past will display our theological insights through lamentations.
CHAPTER SIX
SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Introduction
The study also made its recommendations in all its chapters, as it pointed to the fact that all post-colonial Gĩkũyũ text readers should apply home based practical and timely readings of the text which are accessible to them. Thus, this chapter offers a summary of its findings, recommendations and conclusions, by way of exploring on contemporary usage of lamentation. The conveying of the social reality of text-readers in the face of death, suffering and cultural upheavals would signify a broken community. Amidst these holocausts, the study advances the post-colonial biblical studies for the sake of church, academy, and society. It also makes its own suggestions for further research through newly emerging possibilities for framing hermeneutical inquiries, organizing and examining data. Finally, the study suggests the strengthening of text-readers, through hermeneutical conclusions and developments invested on strategies and responses that value the voices of lamentation.

6.2 The Synopsis of Research Findings
The data collected were used to design a post-colonial strategy and intervention as a hermeneutical space, through which the identification and gauging of Gĩkũyũ community’s expression of lamentations. It is done on the basis of post-colonial African comprehension, formulation and acquisition of critical hermeneutical skills that build on strength, interests, practices and motivations of ordinary text-readers’ self-directed learning experiences. On this basis, the African hermeneutical reflection and action on indigenous knowledge, local resources and positive cultural norms were also realized, through critical insights behind the processing of the in-depth interviews of this study. Such hermeneutical action and reflection
had to do with the formative search of what lamentations embody in the natural setting of two paradigmatic events, namely Mũthĩrĩgũ and Mau-Mau songs. These two events mark the Gĩkũyũ people’s reaction against the empire. They underscore the important role played by lamentation in the formation of an indigenous melting-pot, as bona-fide theoretical frameworks and work plans for decolonization of the text-reading process.

The legacy of initial education and training given to indigenous text-readers, by missionaries, keeps on drawing the text-readers away from appreciating their true history of pain and suffering under colonialists. It therefore points to true source of their ordeals, and the right to manage their conditions. As reflected on the research topic, the study makes the claims of differences held between the Gĩkũyũ motif of lamentation as echoed in 1960’s and that of 2000’s. However, the need for a community left by the colonialists for an emotionally spent force, to question its reasons of being (raison d’être), and its bewilderment about its future has to do with how to survive and thrive in an inhospitable text-reading environment. Such a process is driven by realistic appreciation of unrecorded African indigenous hermeneutical protests, whose memories are traced back to 1920s, 30s, 40s and 50s generations of the surviving Agĩkũyũ text-readers. This lot of ordinary text-readers laid a foundation of a post-colonial edge to cut them-selves loose from Euro-centric controlled process of text-reading, by establishing a distinctive way of reading the Bible.

The study major findings of the lamentation of 1960’s and that of 2000’s bring two factors of contemporary hermeneutics into play; the ordinary text-readers factor and the institutional factor. Lamentation emerges as an analytical lens through its deeper understanding and wider evaluation of: 1) The underlying inculturation process and traditions of the past, which are remembered and embraced as the basis for future hope and liberation in a
hermeneutical struggle against the obliteration effects of Euro-centrism in Gĩkũyũland; and
2) The emergence of elite bodies which have dealt with issues of human rights such as Unions, NGOs, Universities, Churches, Kenya National Human Rights Commission (KNHRC) and Federation of Women Lawyers in Kenya (FIDA). These have helped the contemporary Kenyans (Agĩkũyũ inclusive) to gradually and steadily know their rights. But, their hermeneutical approaches seem to execute political expediency of developed nations. Their goal notwithstanding they are strikingly pushing the ordinary text-readers to blind safeguarding of foreign interests and longings that value institutional and organizational survival over and above the basics of human rights. These elite bodies have helped the people to respond better to their broken lives, but, they have failed to deal with historical injustice namely, the bitter prolonged struggle for hermeneutical control, through the acknowledgement of the scope of structural poverty. They seem to blindly ignore the distinctive role played by the poor and the marginalized as historical agents capable of making their voices heard. So their response to human suffering and complex causes of misery cannot function effectively among ordinary text-readers’ text and context of pushing for change from the bottom up and across the base of the colonized communities. Thus, the post-colonial vantage of reading the Bible provides the Gĩkũyũ text readers with an indigenous hermeneutical space. They can opt for hermeneutical construct-ions through decolonization of marginal voices in a contemporary world of text-reading.

In regard to time frame and the dynamism, the post-colonial framework of Bible reading remains an open-ended dynamic, and an ongoing discourse that goes beyond colonialism and neocolonialism. The study emphasizes post-colonial reading of Bible elaborates a hermeneutical discourse already scored by the Gĩkũyũ motif of lamentation, which is neither
the data nor evidence, but sites of a perspective and persuasive will-to-speak. It is indeed a space of high profile involvement of text-readers in anti-colonial text-reading process with a limited access to education, international contact and political institutions. Their voices of lamentations have an entire political, economic, and social agenda, and their use of post-colonial hermeneutical models becomes a tactical hermeneutical maneuver, designed to gain comprehensive goals of African biblical hermeneutics. Lamentation provides an inborn self-drive, which can help the Agĩkũyũ text-readers grasp, interpret and retrieve the voices of their marginalized context from the text, which the outsiders fail to understand or miss altogether. Whatever leads text-readers to achieve hermeneutical goals is not what tells them how they should understand them-selves, their situations and the text, but it is what, invites them, to a process of reflection, through critical thinking. A post-colonial model of social analysis spearheaded by biblical and Gĩkũyũ motifs of lamentation will not only affect the text-readers’ sense of space but also the sense of time in opening up the old memory as a rent in biblical text. Through lamentation the post-colonial study of the Bible will generate a strategic text-reading process with a firm base to question, analyze and understand the situation of ordinary text-readers.

The passionate style and profound thought envisaged by Mũthũrĩgũ text awakens a definite self-consciousness in the text-readers and a social conscience in the society. Thus, the growing gap between the Church elite and the ordinary text-readers evokes Euro-centric hermeneutical rigidity and problems. This study appreciates the deep thought, given to realities of life by ordinary text-readers. The looming danger within the African-Euro-centric legacy of domestication is hidden and unconsciously passed on from one generation of text-readers to another. However, the imperial ideological predispositions in Gĩkũyũland
are overtly assaulted by this bequest of structural and systemic seizing of social institution. The proof of mutilated hermeneutical destiny expresses the need for fresh perspective on how to turn lamentation texts into an introspective document of processing the here and now experience of pain and suffering. In this way, African biblical hermeneutics will entirely broaden the perspective of ordinary text-readers in approaching both the Bible and society.

The participants and witnesses alike had a story that displayed the underlying realities through the episodes of pain and suffering in Gĩkũyũland, which in retrospect redirect the text-reading process to a view from below. The text-readers are positioned by this view to rebuild the terraces of hope against inevitable destructiveness of dominant ideologies through which the text-readers’ reconnections of faith and practice is accomplished. This helps the text-readers convey hope and sincerity to the rest of the community through a text-reading process that invites Africans to challenge and transform the existing religious, moral, social, cultural, economic and political structures that inhibit Gĩkũyũ people in their hermeneutical struggle for justice and peace.

The study recognized that the dominant ideology bars the text-reader not to openly lament or expose the overwhelming forces of dominations through their mutated forms of exposing the text-readers to societal numbness. The voices of lamentation captured by community structures have a broad range of application in the process of surveying the crucial role played by lamentation in its art of ordering the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Gĩkũyũ community. They demonstrate the community’s ability to compose, interpret, integrate and evaluate different sources of text-reading materials. Over the years, the Gĩkũyũ text readers have adopted a variety of text-readings that govern the way in which they read
Rachel’s narrative (Jeremiah 31:15-17). The re-reading of this text has evoked the Gĩkũyũ text readers to embrace a holistic, imperative and urgent application of the word of God from the angle of post-colonial hermeneutical consciousness.

The study endows the ordinary text-readers with comprehensively structured opportunities of interpreting the text through open commentary on reasons for revolutionary changes as factored in the text of Jeremiah. Lamentation and weeping of Rachel envisage to a text-reader a portrait of resistance and protest that proposes in its provisions of great clarity, precision, and use of post-colonial hermeneutical engagements. The understanding of the text through a hope-driven community is made to reflect on interrelated hermeneutical, cultural and experiential understanding and practice of securing concrete voicing of socio-economic and political challenges. The hope-driven text-readers should echo changes update and clarify text-reading procedures related to Agĩkũyũ context of suffering.

The crucial feature of this approach is its emphasis upon formulating post-colonial certainty of consistent and compatible voicing of hermeneutical presentations through a high regard of dialogue and solidarity with the marginalized text-readers. This presentation make’s the ordinary text-readers to be the post-colonial principal protagonists who are impelled to connect an insertion experience to their interpretation of the underlying socio-economic realities. The text-reading process is done through direct exposure and involvement in the hermeneutical procedures and questions. It makes the ordinary text-readers to confidently clench the underlying socio-economic realities through renewed hermeneutical enterprises, which are deeply rooted in ordinary text-readers’ lives rather than something that happens in another place with other people.
6.2.1 Achievements
The study achieved its objectives (1.4) by looking at various issues and making suggestions, through the data collected from the community. Through objective -I, the study made its survey on hermeneutical role of appreciating, giving thought, living out and sustaining the lamentable state of ordinary text-readers’ socio-economic realities among the Gĩkũyũ community. This survey worked very well in sensitizing text-readers on how the Western training models alienate text-readers from their socio-economic situation by subverting or eliminating lamentation. This hermeneutical concern helped in establishing the horizon in which lamentation becomes a hermeneutical or interpretive key for organic understanding of the text in relation to situation of oppression under which the ordinary people live. The objective –II, effectively examined the background on socio-economic realities through postcolonial framework in which text-readers were made to understand the encounter of Agĩkũyũ motif of lamentation with the Euro-centric hermeneutic. It has led to the understanding of how the Gĩkũyũ community is conditioned and obviously enmeshed in grave hermeneutical distortions. It also singles out how the official text-readings are done from a restrictedly colonial mode and how such could be subjected to a hermeneutical movement from exclusivity to inclusivity through a focused recapturing of marginalized and forgotten voices. The objective –III, successfully identified the dynamics of Rachel’s narrative, in Jeremiah 31:15-17 with various factors that lead the ordinary indigenous poor and marginalized text-readers in Gĩkũyũland to continue lamenting despite conversion to Christianity. This was done through the underscoring of the importance of lamentation as reflected in the Old Testament by Jeremiah’s framework of expressing grief as it resonated with Gĩkũyũ people’s past, present and future drives in hermeneutics of life. The objective –IV, was accomplished through its suggestions on general and specific integration of biblical
motif of lamentation into a holistic critical method of text-reading, among the ordinary Agĩkũyũ text-readers. As a result the study was able to raise a case for the inclusion of lamentation in the biblical hermeneutics in Africa by drawing much attention to the need for grounded training of candidates to Church ministry that resonates with African people’s lifestyle, thought pattern and life imagery.

Listening to the voices of lamentation and its hermeneutical underpins gives the ordinary text-reader the proper tool of recognizing the social reality in a critique mode that puts Western epistemology and its system into question. It helps the post-colonial academia to critically deal with its claim that every human being no matter how ignorant or submerged in the culture of silence is capable of looking critically at the word of God in a dialogical encounter with others. Having witnessed and experienced the hermeneutical implication of lamentation we can thus, embark on an intercultural journey through a theological reflection that takes into a new mode of biblical hermeneutics.

6.3 Recommendations
At best the practical way forward is to respond to joys, sorrows, hopes and fears of the community through a sustainable text-reading process. This response is made through a collaboration of text-readers’ concern with the Bible. Such a reading is geared towards the process of achieving positive decisive and well-informed transformative action of post-colonial premises. Lamentations is taken as the hermeneutical equivalent, and appropriate indicator of the intellectual, personal vocation, and spiritual aptitude of reflecting on interrelated theological, cultural, and experiential text-reading process. Thus, the contemporary usage of lamentation is an important opportunity to introduce a new hermeneutical approach to text-reading that will focus energies and resources on the poor
and the marginalized. The hermeneutical question of how the ordinary text-readers should live in dialogue with their ancient world, listening, learning and relating it to the text, through the hard work of poetic alternative, opens the post-colonial Gĩkũyũ text readers to the enactment of God’s faithful capacity for newness.

This poetic alternative begins with the recognition of true social realities of post-colonial ordinary text-readers-like poverty, oppression and discrimination embedded on philosophical and popular religious traditions of the West. Lamentations over such social realities are firmly interconnected, for one will always echo the text-readers’ struggle against evil forces while the other envisages a religious quest for freedom. Identifying what has been affirmed and directly handed over by Western world of colonizers to the colonized text-readers is a crucial aspect of examining the aspirations, drawn from the text-reader’s concern and opinions. In this connection, all what they were taught was to undertake an abstract reading of the Bible which has led to proposals for alternative hermeneutical resources. The new proposals includes a variety of contexts and approaches towards the incorporation of marginal voices as well as the examinations of the aspirations drawn from the text-reader’s concern and opinions. This incorporation opens up a post-colonial hermeneutical process of freeing the text-readers from the shackles and fetters of colonialism. It does this by bringing clarity, precision, and ease in comprehending the word of God. This can be achieved through a number of concrete steps as described below.

I. Creating Self-Awareness of African Biblical Hermeneutics
A post-colonial self-awareness of the existence of African biblical hermeneutics makes lamentation a crucial drive to a hermeneutic of suspicion. So, the need for a distinctively African context of text-reading is anchored on the indigenous realm of politics, history and
struggle for human dignity. Making our choices of what need to be addressed in our contemporary context of lamentation; it is a crucial component of framing the guiding questions of our freedom from hermeneutical captivity. The evocative and creative function of lamentation is precisely what is at work in our reflection on the difficult way in which the old known world is relinquished and a new unknown world is embraced. This creates the self-awareness that makes the text-readers’ experience a hermeneutical ground of linking his/her language with experience. Such linking opens the reader to a hermeneutic of suspension and a hermeneutic of symbolization in a process that makes the colonized text-readers to categorically clinch on paradigmatic acts of dismantling and scattering the voracious rudiments of Western secularism. By determining and prescribing biblical textual-meanings and applications to all, the Western world has perpetually left the colonized text-readers to grapple with the whole issue of doing biblical hermeneutics from Western perspective. The proposed act of dismantling the religions and philosophies that suppress the underlying potential of a distinctively African biblical hermeneutics through domination is complimented with lamentation as a hermeneutic of symbolization; this symbolization leads to recollections, consolidations and new formations of African hermeneutical gains.

Again, this re-symbolization and re-description of ordinary text-readers lives is realized and set against ideological character of Western hermeneutics, which have for centuries messed up the discipline of hermeneutics in its imperial nature of denying and depriving the indigenous people their legitimate goods for life in Africa. Thus, the need to point out traditional blind spots and, also to understand the extent to which Gĩkũyũ religion and culture is incorporated, in order to play a similar role in understanding the biblical text should evolve out of the indigenous efforts of appreciating the contextualized text-
meanings. Investing on a powerful paradigm of old equilibrium in Africa is a weapon fashioned against all colonial vestiges that make the subjugated text-readers numb, mute, liable to oppression, and easily used by others (c.f. Brueggemann 1996:28:). Noting that lamentation is a process of engaging in a lively debate over the strengths and weakness of its speculative proposals of calling for God’s justice: The African biblical hermeneutics comes naturally out of the development of theme, character, plot, story, and worldview through which symbolic language makes lamentation a broad display of poetic, imaginative and figurative hermeneutical tentacles.

Reading the biblical text from African culture and religion marks the official nativity of a socio-political reading, which takes abject poverty, the dehumanizing system and the oppression of the poor seriously. It means a hermeneutical confrontation of Euro-centric prejudices, which have failed the test of connecting, secularizing and humanizing the word of God among the formerly colonized people. So, embarking on African critical historical review of hermeneutical issues makes lamentation an expression of concrete situation of life by human agents who speak of God's saving acts within a series of events. Hermeneutical reviews in Africa are necessary for they involve dialogical expressions held between a compassionate God and the afflicted community. Such expression embodies all what sifts the prejudices of dominant ideologies as it pushes the text-reader to reject all what is objectively tied to an event that confuses the past with the present.

The process of coming out of abstract hermeneutical constructs captured through objective thinking means that text-readers will no longer reduce God to a mere object. The dialogical thinking of African text reading finds its great support in Rachel’s talk to God because it is
characterized with a post-colonial cultural and social distress that turns the voices of lamentation into a hermeneutical assault. This assault is waged against the amorphous, ambiguous and indefinite system of oppression. As a consequence, the bridging of the gap held between the needs of ordinary text-readers and the present modes of text-reading through a theological reflection is overdue. The radical deeds previously undertaken by Agĩkũyũ text-readers in their vehement rejection of both the status quo and revisionist approach to social change must be rethought, revisited and reinterpreted in dialogue with the postcolonial proposals of a cultural and linguistic context different from the one in which the word of God was first preached by colonialists in Africa. The context and interpretation of biblical text must be in dialogue and solidarity with the marginalized interpreters. It calls for a scenario where the cry of humanity in distress and its response of praise are made to God. Insertion experience is expressed through lamentation as a beginning of a hermeneutical task that caters for socio-economic and political realities of its audience. A direct exposure and involvement of biblical scholars in a hermeneutical question is an essential hermeneutical mode of influencing and mobilizing the text-readers out-cries into active participation of their future through bottom-up approaches. The human experienced conditions, hardships and miseries in life should not be denied to play its role in socio-cultural analysis and evaluative critical reflection and is need to understand the hermeneutical issue at hand. The root cause and structural aspects of hermeneutical question are addressed through the recognition of the critical aspects of historical experiences.

The text-reading process among the Agĩkũyũ is brought into a process of historical manifestations and intensification of faith development. It is boosted to bring the indigenous hermeneutical resources of the protagonist into a process of shaping the biblical and
theological teachings and understandings at individual and communal level. This is done through the evocation ontological questions posed by the lamentation text of the Agĩkũyũ in form of a hermeneutic of suspicion that demystifies and disenchants the Euro-centric ideologies: Who is our prime interlocutor in determining our view of reality, our sense of what it means to live as a human being in this society? Who sets the text-reading agenda? Who frames the questions? Who offers the key categories for our understanding or our condition? Who benefits from the way in which transitional processes are conducted and political arrangements are put in place or who does not benefit, who suffers the consequences? This incorporation is significant because it attests a text-reading that motivates the rejection of dominant ideology and all what it is set to fulfill. By getting a grip on ordinary text-readers’ reality, the biblical scholars are truly and actively involved in a hermeneutical enterprise rooted in concrete situation of life rather than something that happens in another place with other people. This immersion opens them to perceive things just the way they interpret, formulate the causes, and explain the situation under which they live. This development will be used by text-readers to analyze the hermeneutical factors responsible for persistent poverty in developing countries. The socio-economic and political realities are viewed in the light of the changing conditions under which the African motif of lamentation is expressed and experienced by the marginalized lot.

II. Post-Colonial Theory and Lamentation

The study underscores the incorporation of small but never interrupted exceptional streams of lamentations in Gĩkũyũland; it suggests that ordinary text-readers who are heirs to this heritage be engaged in a hermeneutical precision of post-colonial circles of alternative consciousness that serve to outweigh the Euro-centric hermeneutical yoke. So, by teaching and participating in biblical hermeneutics through lamentation, we can demonstrate our
ability to resist arbitrary force and cruelty of injustice inflicted on text-readers through miscarried African perspective of biblical hermeneutics developed in Euro-centric contexts.

Clearly, the interests of African and Euro-centric hermeneutical perspectives have to be worked out against each other by a classification of the ordinary text-readers in its recovery of marginal discourses. In this case, the contribution of African voices of lamentation in biblical scholarship through cultural hermeneutics will in a holistic sense lead to a restructuring of socio-economic systems. By tracing the hermeneutical debate and practices envisaged by biblical motif of lamentation, we institute a hermeneutical lens out of the progressive hermeneutical struggle recorded back to the advent of colonialism. When traumatic memories are analyzed from this perspective of African worldview and culture; expression of lamentation comes into play through identification and affirmation of text-readers’ socio-cultural context as a crucial subject of interpretation.

By affirming lamentation as a hermeneutic of suspicion we begin identifying lamentation as an inevitable feature of post-colonial listening to the cry of the poor and the marginalized over and above the dominant ideologies. According to the post-colonial advocacy of hermeneutics of suspicion; the true meaning of a text will come about through the hard work of unmasking the dominant ideological codes, in order to allow the underlying reality to publicly materialize. In post-colonial voicing of lamentation the text-reader realizes that there are many disagreements that lead to hermeneutics of suspicion, but the conflict of their interpretations shall nonetheless unify their common interests in finding the true meaning, by stripping away the supposed meaning. The post-colonial interpretation of the biblical and Gĩkũyũ motif of lamentation should be occasioned by a gap between the real meaning of the
biblical and Gĩkũyũ text; its apparent meaning. Thus, suspicion shall play a pivotal role in this study’s classifications of lamentation as an indigenous effort that equally directs the course of an exegesis of a particular text or of a group of signs that may be viewed as a text. As a broad-spectrum way of text-reading, lamentation shall be applied in construing the Gĩkũyũ religious utterances, which are initially not written down as a text, but are merely expressed as acts of post-colonial interpretation.

When a particular case of Euro-centric worldview is presented by lamentation it is in comparison with the Gĩkũyũ religious texts, and so, surface meaning of lament is not the same as the deeper, true meaning and the task of extricating the true meaning of the Gĩkũyũ religious utterance in post-colonial era becomes the role of hermeneutics. Though, the Euro-centric hermeneutics as applied in post-colonial Gĩkũyũland is in reference to sacred texts it shall remain ambiguous to different text-readers at different times in different cultures and in different places. The voice of lamentation shall strengthen the African biblical hermeneutics in post-colonial process of bridge-building between the two 'worlds', the world of the colonized and the world of the colonizer. The distance in time, culture, world view, and language between the colonizer’s text and its reader shall apply to written texts and lamentation, through the discipline of hermeneutics, which makes lamentation a marginal discipline of interpreting the sacred texts in post-colonial era. The scope of lamentation includes more than rules for interpreting religious texts as it guarantees the expansion of thinking for a moment about the unsavory things in the text that people would rather not discuss. This way lamentation becomes a valuable guide designed for human creations, which shall tolerate diverse imprints and repositories of human experiences.
What is true in the context of the colonizer envisaged by Eurocentric cultural text is also true of all indigenous artifacts of pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Agĩkũyũ culture. It presents lamentation of the oppressed as a context and text befitting the interpretation of the plight of the colonized. Lamentations should be understood as 'texts' to be 'read through the ordinary language. It shows that its distinctiveness is part of the post-colonial human living document; a post-colonial reading of a community as a book. It is the bedrock of community psyche and language that directs the marginal voices toward the expression of pain and suffering. It determines how a community 'reads' its own situation of whatever tragedy strikes it. Lamentation should appeal to the African cultural hermeneutics first, as an approach that offers alternatives to apply methods of inherent sciences to probe the human voices of distress. Secondly, it bolsters the hermeneutics of suspicion by applying other methods of inborn sciences, but also heightening the various features of indigenous explanations and understandings of pain and suffering.

In invoking the understanding of indigenous culture, by approaching its monuments, inscriptions, documents and shrines; the study presented the ‘Gĩkũyũ text of lamentation' for interpretation by subsequent generations of 'text-readers'. The Gĩkũyũ text of lamentation includes the documentation and conveying of traditional religion through a revisit of community rituals, artifacts, dogmas and priesthood. Thus, the term lamentation was in its broader sense used to apply to a hermeneutical approach beyond the written Gĩkũyũ texts of religion. Since, Gĩkũyũland is not an exceptional victim of capitalistic ideologies; the Eurocentric religion in Africa and elsewhere has offered consolation to the oppressed workers by promising them a future life free from drudgery, injustice, and suffering. By means of such consoling techniques, modernity as a religion inclined to direct the attention of the colonized
workers away from their misery, to the promised better life in the hereafter, thereby blurring their focus on the prevailing injustice, just as opium deadens the senses of its user. Eurocentrism numbs the ordinary text-readers' realization of the extent of their oppression by directing their concerns to a world to come. It also diverts their attention away from the real source of oppression through its provisions of ephemeral comfort. This Euro-centric biblical hermeneutics distracts the colonized text-readers from the real cause of their misery, as it keeps them from doing anything about it. However, the process of suspecting, naming and erasing the painful memories of colonial degradation and effacement of African culture provides the post-colonial era with a comprehensive community of ordinary text-readers with common experiences over time. Such a post-colonial prospect of unsettling the invading foreign critical theories, results in growing in faith, emotional maturity and moral integrity, through public awareness of abundant life amidst deep mistrust and death.

III. Lamentations as Incarnation of Hermeneutics

Incarnation implies God’s radical breaking into history to fulfill the purpose of redemption through the reality of Emmanuel (God-with-us) as a contextual hermeneutics. The incarnate God has continued to hear the cry emanating from the pain and suffering. Towards the text-readers’ grasp of this reality, the process of hermeneutical protest displayed in laments has to become an integral part of African hermeneutics and faith: And yet, the Euro-centric hermeneutics seems to ignore this reality. Lamentation as a hermeneutics of confrontation expands the horizons of applying the word of God to where claims and advocacy for critical correlation open to a confrontation of the past and the present. In a culture that emphasis the autonomy and self-reliance, the primary problem is to exclude lamentation in text-reading. Lamentation fronts a confrontation that expands the hermeneutical horizons through a
dialectical relationship of divine and human as symbols of familiar texts to life which forms the foundation of new and profound hermeneutical methods that culminate into a critical correlation. This correlation leads to a call for lamentation as a poetic inspiration in the development of hermeneutics. The publicity of hermeneutics through lamentation is not an event of speaking, but of being spoken through and to. The text-reader does not speak from a foreign interpretation but from local context. The text-reader’s experience of the harsh realities of inequality, oppression and exploitation is embedded in poetic language, which comes in to broaden the spectrum of hermeneutics. As much as much as the text-reader is properly concerned by the language of receptivity to the creative word of poetry the rich cultural diversity in songs, dances, dreams, and religious practices are made compatible with the word of God by entering into and submitting to it. The laments are grounded in the text-readers’ worldviews and contexts of a poetic manner of thinking, which requires the text-reader to give up abstract thinking in order to embrace a process of hearing and reading the word in its originative power and meaning.

The logic of claims and advocacy of a hermeneutics from below leads to an interpretation that stems from the tenets of critical correlation presented by Roger Haight (1999: 45) and the issue of experience as the medium of God’s revelation located in human experience by Schillebeeckx (1980). Schillebeeckx works conveys a model of human experience as Jesus own experience and that of his followers in confronting any form of revelation that loses touch with concrete experiences of text-readers in their relation with the incarnated word (God’s presence), which means freedom. If Gĩkũyũ text readers are to recover their lost paradigms of protest and faith in post-colonial era, the church and the academy needs to urgently immersed itself into the experiences of the marginalized lot in solidarity with them.
This recovery need to build on a deliberate rethinking of the development of biblical hermeneutics in the line of contextual hermeneutics. It is made possible by expanding the horizon of communal laments through a critical and on-going social analysis of the past as launching pads of transformational decision and action of the present. A call on the need to address lamentation, as a mechanism of coping with cultural abuses and oppression opens the eyes of the oppressed communities to realistically see the opportunity and seize their space for a dignified life, suffering, and death. Likewise, reading and studying the text in direct relation to the ordinary text-readers’ circumstances of daily lives makes the value and meaning of the word of God more rooted, primarily in the personal and then, in the social situation of the text-readers. Our revisit of indigenous lamentation text affirms the incarnation and its significance in the message of the cross, which will bring the vulnerable and suffering humanity at the heart of God.

The verbalization of pain to Yahweh, without losing touch of our faith can help us to unite in supporting the hungry, homeless and unemployed to voice their pain and anguish, without losing their trust in God. This protest mechanism makes African laments a vantage point, for a critical understanding of contemporary forms of imperialism and the unraveling of the Westerner’s abstract representations of pain, denial and cultural otherness with all its underpinning of colonial projects. The God of the Bible becomes vulnerable to the reality of human suffering by truly being present to redeem it. The indigenous lamentation paradigms should not be treated as primitive, neglected, severed or scuttled by fixed answers. This reality of incarnation should be brought into human history through the narrative of Rachel in what Matthew treated as a fulfillment of what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: "A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be consoled, because they were no more.” The text-reading community has to be clear as to whose hermeneutical interest it is going to serve. Hence, the sovereign God is equally the God of pathos who feels pain, hunger and misery when humanity is suffering. This sovereignty is fundamental in the art of producing, thinking, speaking and expressing wholeness and diversity of lamentation in the light of what is being postulated from a biblical standpoint.

IV. Tracing of Future-Hermeneutical Trends and Lamentation Genre

The rhetoric which dominated the arrival of colonialists in Gĩkũyũland was the rhetoric of sovereign promise of God leading, willing, and guiding the entrepreneurial ambition which makes oppression passionately theological and intensely hermeneutical. So, re-reading the Gĩkũyũ people’s experience to this time and place in light of biblical narrative is a specific hermeneutical journey of risk, trust and obedience in tracing the colonial hermeneutical trends to avoid a repeat of what had happened upon the advent of Bible among the colonized. This study acknowledges the centrality of lamentation as a hermeneutical location of text-readers’ deep certainty that colonial bondage, barrenness, oppression, and marginality are not God’s will for them.

There is an important dialectic between hermeneutics and lamentation; lamentation stands for a hermeneutical location without which the text meaning becomes null and void. When Rachel’s voice speaks of the antagonistic relationship between prophet Jeremiah’s voice of lamentation and the ideology of the Babylonian Empire, the Hebrew Scripture engages in a hermeneutical effort, to which the Hebrew text becomes sensitive to marginal voices. Hence, the re-reading of the biblical lamentation texts in the light of alien and hostile environment captured by hurting stories of ordinary Agĩkũyũ text-readers, with a purpose,
of deciphering life in the mirror of the text. Lamentation ensures that new imaginative enterprise stays very close to the present reality of suffering and displacements. As it insists on appropriating synchronic and diachronic findings in its fresh ways of articulating the African biblical hermeneutics, whose insights are deeply grounded in tradition, enormously imaginative in articulation of high ethical acts of faith. African biblical hermeneutical process is not complete until lamentation comes in to reject the seduction of Euro-centric hegemony. It becomes a hermeneutical location of contemplating on how to return to the African worldview without losing sight of the word of God. The voices of protest should demonstrate the trend taken by African biblical hermeneutics in summing up the cries of the marginalized and the poor of the land. The central realm of societal lamentation anchors on a re-reading of lamentation texts through African hermeneutical reflection which makes hermeneutical urgent agendas of mapping out ways and means of restoring hope in a world of despair. A paradigm shift through lamentation is needed in addressing the missing linkages between the past and present through utterances of grief which is never heard in a hermeneutical comfort-zone before. The interpreters who have lost their central place in public discernment are at different times and in different places challenged by the central role played by lamentation in pursuits of hermeneutics.

Such, interpreters are not only affected by their own perspectives of interpretation, but also by the predispositions and values of their audience which brings faith to the fore through a public processing of pain. Thus, the study stays very close to perception that the interpretation is shaped by the audience and the values they hold. The more complex part is the recognition that text’s interpretation and interpreters’ motifs broaden through ordinary text-readers gestures of understanding the text and so, when the text is properly understood,
it addresses peoples’ exigencies. It ascertains the motif of lamentation as a place where one goes to discover a fitting hermeneutical response to a particular constraint. Affirming lamentation means a hermeneutical assault against the negative forces of denial that lead communities to hermeneutical captivity and uncertain future. Lamentation further, opens a forum for developing text-readers’ sensitivity to hermeneutical blind spots posed by traditional and colonial thinking, which advocate for a hermeneutics that promotes dependency, and the complex subjects of denial. Lamentation, as a marginal voice affirms the context and cultural circle by challenging the elites who often find it primitive to explore the indigenous ways of text-reading. Thus, lamentation will provide Africa with future hermeneutical trends and perspectives that exceed the perpetual dependency on abstract readings that claim to understand and fix all peoples’ problems.

These trends entail a committed search and struggle for decolonization, which calls for public naming and shaming of all what have negatively affected the text-readers’ ability to solve their hermeneutical problems, through local initiatives. This struggle for liberation of the oppressed text-reading reading process becomes a process governed by challenges and responses. Especially, where the text-reading process will embark on identifying, indigenous structures, methodologies, and institutions that endorse lamentation as dynamite of blowing the established order of alien forces that induce inappropriate textual meanings in Africa. Denial as part of Euro-centric negative view of grief and grieving that consign lamentation into oblivion of emotionalism by undermining wounded text-readers’ position in the hermeneutical radar is done away with upon the post-colonial search for hermeneutical pathways through linguistic genres. The text-readers search for new pathways of interrogating the Bible through their suffering and pain by making a reflection of their
This view explicitly and implicitly contain authentic entirety of human concerns through its perceptions of self in the face of the oppressor. Their religious beliefs, their fatalism, and their rebellious reactions (Freire, 1995: 163) are fundamental parts of aspirations expressed in ascertaining how the ordinary text-reading schemes, are embedded in the marginalized voice in naming the text-readers’ historical condition by calling for God’s help. A recovery of lamentation goes with putting suffering to its rightful place of text-reading process which spells out the overwhelming suffering in Gĩkũyũland. The protest of the Gĩkũyũ people against colonial misunderstandings is yet to disappear among the ordinary text-readers because such hermeneutical protests are inevitably found in day-to-day expressions of challenges against underneath forces of hermeneutical cover-ups. The dregs of Euro-centric hermeneutical perspectives in Gikũyũland are still held up in conflict with Agĩkũyũ hermeneutics of life and so modern day protests to any excuse of following others irresponsibly is welcome. So, a revisit of lamentation genre projects a reading lens which appraises the ancient biblical tradition and African worldview, culture, and life into a hermeneutical rationale of reversing these effects.

The ideological conditioning to which Africa and Africans were subjected to by the advent of biblical texts as a powerful rhetorical instrument of imperialism necessitates the essence of lamentation genre as a true cross cultural hybrid of boosting the indigenous particularity. It fosters the unprecedented cultural pluralism within the general scheme of post-colonial hermeneutics. Supporting this claim, Black (2005: 54) says that: “The spine of lament is hope; not that vacuous optimism that 'things will get better,' which in the short run is usually a lie, but the deep and irrepressible conviction, in the teeth of present evidence, that God has
not severed the umbilical cord that has always bound us to the Lord.” A responsible usage of lamentations in day-to-day hermeneutical discourse presents the reader with a ground of social life upon which the institutions of life are constructed through the crediting of the ordinary text-readers with a hermeneutical discourse that takes a lot of interest in negotiating and shaping of power. The broadened understanding of marginalized text-readers conditions relies on hermeneutical materials extracted from preaching and poetry by committing to memory the contemporary laments into a process of biblical hermeneutics.

So, lamentations and lamenting are integral parts of human nature, hence the cry of the oppressed should not be interrupted or impeded or stopped by any human explanation or solutions. Lamentation precedes interpretation but interpretation is what makes lamentation complete. In addition, lamentation occurs through participation in the community as a whole, where lamentation comes in to interpret all what occurs successfully within the hermeneutical context. In this case, the voice of lamentation poses as a hermeneutical location of appropriating the synchronic and diachronic findings of African biblical hermeneutics. Hence, African hermeneutical process is not complete until the essence of lamentation becomes a hermeneutical location of recognizing the reality of human disequilibrium. Lamentation as paradigm of constant unveiling of reality empowers a text to continue to address grieving audiences at different times and in different places. If the audience affects the way in which an interpreter constructs the interpretation; the interpretation is audience-conditioned. There is, for these poetic authors, an important dialectic between hermeneutics and lamentation: lamentation stands for a hermeneutical location without which the text meaning becomes null and void. Brueggemann (2002: 118-120) has acknowledged the centrality of lamentation as a liturgical hermeneutical location. It
entails the questioning of the claims of ideologies at different, but inter-related levels. It goes beneath the surface not only to question, accept or reject the ideology at a superficial level but, to critically and suspiciously appraise a particular ideology in question. When Rachel’s voice speaks of the antagonistic relationship between prophet Jeremiah’s voices of laments and the ideology of the Babylonian Empire, the Old Testament (OT) scripture engages in a lamentation hermeneutic, to which Hebrew text becomes sensitive to marginal voices. Hence, the re-reading of the biblical lamentation texts in the light of an ordinary Mũgikũyũ text-reader’s hurting stories is basically enjoined to the purpose of deciphering life in the mirror of the text. Lamentation offers a focalised way of life in its combat against the culture of silence. It has to spell out a hermeneutical location as it appropriates synchronic and diachronic findings where new fresh beginnings of African biblical hermeneutics are affirmed.

African hermeneutical process is not complete until the narrative deeply indebted to lamentation which has run out is re-entered in a fresh way which necessitates a hermeneutical location. The lamentation paradigm of naming the world in a way that echoes what God may do to African situation stands to empower text-readers’ readiness in addressing a grieving audience at different times and in different places. If the audiences affect the way in which an interpreter constructs the interpretation; the interpretation is audience-conditioned. Through Rachel’s voice we should acknowledge that the biblical motif of lamentation as articulated by book of Lamentation, Job, and Psalms among others, confirm, this study’s claim that the Scripture is by itself a lens that engages in this hermeneutic. In confirming this close relationship linking lamentation and hermeneutics; Brueggemann (2007), O’Connor (2002) and Miller (1995) have convincingly argued that
“hermeneutical location arises out of a primordial function of lamentation.” This primordial function is basically placed to make known textual meanings. The Gĩkũyũ people’s encounter with dramatic and traumatic events of colonial and neo-colonial era is mirrored in post-colonial expressions of natural and spontaneous voices of lamentations. To re-read the lamentation text spells out the urgent hermeneutical agenda of restoring hope in a seemingly hopeless world. The voices of protests sum up the marginalized in a central realm of societal expression of grief. Such an outline affirms the perception that the interpretation of a given text is shaped by who the audience are and the values they hold.

Hence, text’s interpretation motif broadens into the interpreter’s understanding and so, when the text is properly understood, it speaks to exigencies. In this aspect the development of analytical model of post-colonial text-reading process is an imperative. It should culminate into a continuous response to hermeneutical displacements with a distinct rhetoric of tracing, illustrating, organizing and accomplishing the following processes; 1) External environmental analysis of the looming danger of dominant ideology; 2) Internal environmental analysis of the realistic and creative prospects of lamentation as a voice that reflect the underlying social-reality; and 3) The development of values through mission and vision of strategic trends and objectives raised by marginal voices of lamentation in biblical and African biblical hermeneutics. The expression of sadness at loss; righteous indignation at the destroying enemy; and a deep, confident yearning for God’s positive intervention in Africa makes this study commitments in following up the lamentation trends in African biblical hermeneutics quite a noble task. Figure 6 below illustrates Development of work plans out of lamentation hermeneutical trends.
The above trio-processes cited by work plan can drive the strategy formulation, strategic implementation and control of broader general tracing the future hermeneutical trends through the contextualization process. What is striking in this model is its reciprocity of divine response to human outcry, through the Scripture leading to growth of human life in its fullest potential. The above framework should be posited to mediate the gap between the text and the audience, through the enabling of text-readers into speaking daringly to their contemporary struggle and to make provisions of vitality to their biblical faith.
Consequently, lamentation provides a sanctuary of hidden meaning to a particular hermeneutical location without which there is no concrete actualization of textual meanings.

6.3 Suggestions for Further Research

For African biblical hermeneutics to stay close to the present reality of suffering and displacement there is need, for further post-colonial research on new imaginative enterprises. This study’s proposal for further research emphases the following areas:

1) The hermeneutical approach developed by the researcher in this study be vetted, pre-tested and tried in similar research processes by theological institutions or other stakeholders such as NGOs. So, a replication of similar study should be done on the same outside the Gĩkũyũland, especially on Agĩkũyũ in Diaspora.

2) Finding out if any relationships exist between post-colonial text-reading and lamentation in other African communities or whether the target audience in text-reading influences the impact of the official interpretation presented by church leaders.

3) Development of more hermeneutical resources by other stakeholders such as the Gĩkũyũ women who have successfully used lamentation to fight oppression from different fronts

6.4 General Conclusion

The study is able to identify the interconnection and correlation of lamentation genre of the bible and text-reading in Gĩkũyũland to a discourse of addressing human anguish, pain and suffering in Africa. A postcolonial analysis of Gĩkũyũ motif of lamentation indicates that lamentation genre is a powerful tool that meets a hearty response from robbed and maltreated text-readers who contribute generously to the development of African biblical
hermeneutics. The study revealed that early generation of African biblical scholars is well-versed in Western classical hermeneutical resources. And yet the text-readers, among the Agĩkũyũ still have unresolved hermeneutical problems and concerns, such as induced denial of lamentation, and its consequences on textual reading and meaning. The perpetuation of Euro-centric hermeneutical models has given way to hermeneutical gaps, which are an impediment to the development of hermeneutical values that can give Africans a new and distinct identity in biblical scholarship. The study acknowledges lamentation genre as a site where hermeneutical critique and construction of textual meaning is achieved through direct awareness of the word of God. Since lamentation is not simply a construct in language and culture of naming the world but of affirming a local hermeneutical task that abhors external imposition of what the word of God connotes. The Euro-centric hermeneutical resources are therefore, a by-product of a totally different context from that of Gĩkũyũ people, for it is born out of hermeneutical and theological reflections, inspired by different situations in life, and expressed in the context of those situations. Thus, it is difficult if not impossible to overcome this hermeneutical gap and understand or interpret meaning between situations that are so different (Galgalo, 2003: 23). The gap and disharmony between Gĩkũyũ text readers’ interpretation of the Bible and actual life style, displays historical track record of the Kenyan Church as a ‘numbed institution’.

The circumstance surrounding her institutional numbness culminates to a failure in broadening the diverse dimension of human values and this has definitely contributed towards her low score in influencing the wider frameworks of moral and ethical values. Such a low score in the society is attributed to post-independence institutional reluctance in reviewing the organizational structures inherited from and perpetuated through paternalism.
of the colonial Christian missions. The transformational insights are muzzled and colored by colonial attitudes as it is reflected in the wider society. As a result, the dominant text-reading process makes the church hierarchy to continue viewing its ordinary members from a colonial perspective, an attitude that the church remains as a conservative enormous force of a neutral and stubborn institution opposed revolutionary thinking. Such opposition thrives in hermeneutical gaps that detach the pastors from their parishioners denying them equal partnership in the text-reading process. The influence that attaches a pastor to the text-reading process is caused by the fact that he/she is the sole biblical scholar-cum theologian in a broad spectrum of mainly ignorant and illiterate masses. Pastor’s control over parishioners, as a representative of Euro-centric ideologies of dominance, and an agent of threat and violence to the spiritual life of ordinary text-readers, calls the ordinary text-readers to conclusive submission.

The deep-seated nature of Euro-centric African pastors continues to instill fear and anxiety as no ordinary text-readers would like to be labeled a heretic and thereafter be excommunicated from the Christian community. The oppositional post-colonial text-reading process will not see the light of the day, if it will evade the critical and confrontational approach to societal outcries. In this wake, we must construct a radical hermeneutical assault against colonial bequeath and its vestiges. The question that remains unanswered is: Why does the ordinary membership still support an organization that has consistently resisted changes back to the days of freedom struggle?

The institutional forms taken by the post-colonial Church in Kenya seem to put its priorities on internal bureaucracies and other working programs, at the expense of hermeneutical functions, although they are presumed by ordinary text-readers as unfulfilling. The Euro-
centric text-reading process is, therefore, threatened by ordinary text-readers, who seem to pull the modern biblical scholarship away from the comfort zone of its Euro-centric base. The hermeneutical conflict and tension that emerges from lamentation seem to lie at the heart of ideological religious prescriptions of life as bone of contention, and there has been plenty of it at the heart of ordinary text-readers’ life. If modern biblical scholarship is rooted as it should be in the scripture, tradition and reason, then the post-colonial text-reading process in Gĩkũyũland should be anchored on people’s context. The reason for this is that, sound text-reading is possible only, when it gets in touch with the process of harmonizing the center with the periphery.

Though the ordinary text-readers are not biblical scholars or theologians in the Euro-centric sense; their text-reading process extends the edges, through the interpenetration of various ideological fronts. By clothing the word of God in the color and vesture of societal outcry, the optimism that crops out of textual-meaning would further stress the brokenness of ordinary text-readers’ spontaneous urgency of textual-interpretation. This class of text-reading is always based on the simple process of explanations and solutions that awaken textual-meaning, through concrete response to challenges, arising out of ordinary text-readers’ daily life. The ordinary text-readers thus, dwell in a world which is apocalyptic by nature; where the imperial forces of evil are ranged against the forces of good, and both can easily be recognized by the text-reader. Indeed, more often than not, their textual meanings defy all attempts at rigorous and abstract systemization. In doing so, the text-readers are persistently engaged in this vital ongoing conflict that divides their world. The church should nurture poetry and encourage many of its singers and composers to keep on creating new songs and new dances that voice text-readers’ rejection of political and spiritual
oppressions. The voices of lamentation should reflect the text-readers’ disgust with cultural imperialism, rejection all forms of hermeneutical captivities and their proliferations of imposed textual meanings.

The ordinary text-readers are fashioned by their common cultivation of ideas in what is literary reawakened by the world of the text. The contemporary relevance of the text-readers’ stories and mythological thought forms are demonstrated through the reliving and rethinking of textual-meaning, in a historical and cultural context of interpretation. The oppositional post-colonial African biblical scholarship plays its part of expounding and interpreting its hermeneutical resources, through envisaging of an ordinary text-reading process. Although ordinary text-readers take the Bible as a canonically fixed and formally defined text, they can invalidate the Euro-centric interweaving of dogmatic Bible commentaries that spring out of imperial ideological scripts. The Gĩkũyũ people have to articulate and interpret the Bible in relevant and comprehensible ways that are grounded on African personality. Their listening to the voices of lamentation remains a major way of fighting silence in Gĩkũyũland. Appreciating the concrete socio-economic realities of the Gĩkũyũ people means the embrace of lamentation as an aspect of African biblical hermeneutics, which is articulated through, and pragmatically lived out by ordinary text-readers. The introduction of the dynamics of Rachel’s narrative (Jeremiah 31: 15-17) among the ordinary text-readers, in Gĩkũyũland, allows the community to develop a reading strategy that opens the biblical motif of lamentation to their traditional art of ordering of the society. In situations where the dominant ideology is seen to bar the text-reader from openly lamenting or exposing the overwhelming forces of dominations, voiceless and down trodden wretched of the earth need to be suppressed.
The inevitable efforts are that challenges are out rightly posed against the mutated forms of text reading as the text-readers use them to raise hermeneutical questions out of the indigenous and biblical text. Eventually, the societal numbness is eventually put to question, because lamentation texts are neither a data nor evidence, but sites for perspective and persuasive will-to-speak out. By giving the biblical motif of lamentation its proper place, in the history and experiences of the Gĩkũyũ people, the Euro-centric hermeneutical legacy is significantly confronted to pave way to future hermeneutical assaults against the colonizer. It engages the text-readers; including socio-economic approach to what the church should publicly teach on homiletics through uncompromising opposition to political oppression and strong condemnation of those hermeneutically collaborate with Euro-centric hermeneutical inhibition and occupation of the post-colonial church.

The hermeneutical springboard of promoting and facilitating the growth of leadership skills among the ordinary text-readers is rooted in lamentation, which becomes an eschatological and liberating act. It is a new reality of the word of God in history surrounding, the African Church and its mission. The new orientation forms the principles, and methodology of strategic planning which will eventually lead to a provisional resilience of the Agĩkũyũ. The critical consciousness of the Gĩkũyũ text readers leads to the identification of the root causes of their problems, through a continued chat with their context. The colonial endeavor to indigenize the word of God through domestication of African religious symbols and artifacts lacked the thread that runs through a person’s hermeneutical actions, convictions, and decisions. Thus, the Gĩkũyũ motif of lamentation could serve the process of re-awakening the memories and calling for justice in the face of pressing and persistent pains of living. Re-visiting the indigenous motif of lamentation means that those who read the Bible for
personal gain and are motivated by foreign interests no longer seduce ordinary text-readers into beliefs and practices that reduce them to consenting, docile and obedient adults.

The former colonizers whose hermeneutical interest and presence doubted, mistrusted and questioned by text-readers is still given undue superiority by Western trained theologians, semi-illiterate pastors and evangelists who now are being lured to acts of hermeneutical infidelity. This group of elite is bound by its Euro-centric training background to a conditioned status that attempts to impose on ordinary text-readers to unquestioned belief that all the mirrored struggle by the Biblical text accounts only for spiritual battle and not for earthly struggles for survival. It stresses on text-readers’ surrender of their bodiless souls to Christ in a total disregard of concrete evaluation of the text-readers culture.

The teaching that tolerate all oppressions and exploitation in order that text-readers may have good home and better conditions in heaven when they die. The text-readers’ culture is not treated in terms and conditions of its own values and goals before reaching to any form of hermeneutical verdict. This form of hermeneutical infidelity diverts the devoted ordinary text-readers from contemplating their impoverished condition of life. It is usually spread through spiritual abstractions and other considerations of exceptional schemes that blindfolds the text-readers to focus on a preaching which does not go beyond "Blessed are the thirsty and hungry" (Matthew 5: 6) to those who endure tribulations in their hearts. The cultural values form the worldview of the Gĩkũyũ people, which acts as a beacon that guides social relationships in the society. Any post-colonial reading for liberation should carefully start with a faithful examination of text-readers’ customs in the light of a globalized world. Lamentations therefore, becomes our model for ministry to those who are burdened by mental anxieties; for people in distress and would need a gentle helping hand, through the
words of encouragement. This reality is evaluated and studied as a new orientation, where the old hope for the end of time becomes hope in the present reality, a hope opposed to the way things are done here and now.

The ordinary text-readers who struggle for their survival through public processing of pain and suffering as anticipated by post-colonial illuminations and reproves do so because their right to life is constantly threatened by miscarried agitations for true meaning of the word of God. This means that the situation of the IDPs, the homeless, landless and other victims of organized oppression and exploitation spells out a site for contextual hermeneutics, which must be invested, transcribed and incorporated in contemporary text-reading process. Hence, the echoing of protest, through Rachel's lamentation, becomes a paradigm of exposing the lies and falsehoods of post-colonial regimes and intellectual agents in Africa. Its task is to consistently elucidate, explain and make intelligible the regulative principles, which influence or control the action and speech of the Gĩkũyũ people. It embodies a hermeneutical tradition that preceded the Bible and accompanied it, guiding and influencing its utterances, as well as following it. Of course this tradition of protesting pain and suffering rests on personal experience encounters of a text-reading community which is so difficult to convey to another context. The lamenting community has its unique way of addressing the distressing circumstances; this uniqueness is what has given the Church its new potentials of accomplishing its mission on earth. In spite of the suspicion and sometime open hostility towards the ideological interpretations of the Bible, the restoration of the collapsed physical, emotional and spiritual universe of Africans finally, finds its wholeness anchored in honest laments made to God. A key tenet of this regeneration is the production of indigenous knowledge, in the presence of the Lord which means freedom, healing and
restoration. The promise that Christ is with the text-readers to the end of the age resonate with African clamor for a context of establishing a spatial and metaphysical link with the personality of a messiah who saves the world. Phrases like; "There is hope for your future, declares the Lord" (Jeremiah 31:17) can make a great difference in Christian life if articulated and properly appropriated in people’s lives.

The use of lamentations will disorient the tendency of seeing all things through the lens of rational and scientific ways of demanding unnecessary conventional explanations and understanding, which are hindrances to the use of lamentation in worship today. The Agĩkũyũ tradition of re-inventing themselves by restating previously held opinions and views should fit the changed climate of socio-economic and political concerns that culminate in a long process of struggle, conflict, and theological reflection. Thus, re-conquest of power calls for Gĩkũyũ people to narrate their own story and identity with a God who is infinitely compassionate to the fears and aspirations of the marginalized (Exodus 3: 7). Jeremiah 31:15-17 invites the ordinary Agĩkũyũ text-readers to become co-partners with exiled children of Israel, reading Rachel’s struggle in the context of the comforting presence of God. In the process of reading, the ordinary post-colonial text-reader is maneuvered by Rachel into citing the many ambiguities and gaps left by Babylonian perspectives which the Israel’s matriarch resists by refusing to be silenced.

These hermeneutical opportunities of citing the ambiguities and gaps present the study with a tool of contradicting the legacy of European missionaries as an inadequate and irrelevant text-reading model and skill among the Agĩkũyũ text-readers. The colonizers who had deliberately encouraged a skin-deep indigenous hermeneutics could and should have done far more than what they did in spreading the word of God among the Agĩkũyũ. So, the
missionaries’ text-reading enterprise had a less dramatic and less persuasive hermeneutical impact on the Gĩkũyũ people than it was thought, the main function of missionaries’ hermeneutics in Gĩkũyũland was only expected to give impetus to an ongoing process of hermeneutical development already in existence among the Gĩkũyũ people. It is for this failure that the Euro-centric missionaries’ era of biblical hermeneutics will go down in history and on a balance of hermeneutical underdevelopment and humiliation of the indigenous resources as a period of wasted opportunities and of ruthless exploitation of the Gĩkũyũ indigenous hermeneutical resources. Hence the Gĩkũyũ ordinary text-readers may through lamentation as a voice of reclaiming their lost indigenous hermeneutical identity dig deep into their already available resources embedded in their ancestral authenticity of public processing of pain and suffering. African’s future biblical hermeneutical development programs and strategies depend on their power to resist the marginalization of voices through reflection and analysis. As Nobel laureate Bishop Desmond Tutu reminds us, “It is not what is done to us that matters, but how we take what is done to us (Ayittey, 2001: 220-222).” So, Gĩkũyũ people do not have to prove anything to anybody.

They should go ahead and devise African interpretation of things, creation of solutions and self-mastery schemes, of self-understanding and their universe in relation to endemic poverty which is the worst form of social ills in Gĩkũyũland. Precisely, the poetic skill of lamentations is the power to identify, describe and tell a story of social injustices by spelling out the principle options for the poor through text. It draws insights into the art of blowing the hermeneutical trumpet through solidarity and equality in what will differentiate the losers from the benefactors among the text-readers and interpreters. Such insights are chronicled in songs in a way that the ordinary text-reader is open to experience
hermeneutical vitality in every epoch. In this case, the poets are stimulated to remain sensitive to the manifold cultural forces are at work.

In doing so, the hermeneutical resources for addressing socio-political issues are echoed and discussed through rich diversities of view point that evidently reflect on African poetry. Under such circumstances, lamentation would by extension, engage the dehumanized text-reader to a metaphysical reunion of the past and the present. Finally, the text-reader’s search for true identity is achieved through a sincere hermeneutical grasp of social, political, and economic factors involved in development of African biblical hermeneutics. Lamentation functions in hermeneutics are rather to stimulate more thorough reflection and more honest engagement. Lamentation alone therefore cannot change the harsh reality of poverty and marginalization, or even eradicate the trauma in text-readers’ life. It is there to redefine text-readers’ expectations, and in turn prompts a quest for textual understanding through the priorities of text-readers’ interests. With a collective effort of will, real change can occur.
A: Books


Byamungu, G. T.M. (2002). *Scripture(s), Tradition(s) and Church (es)*. Frankfurt: Verlag Otto Lembeck.


Lapon Sound Investments Limited.


**B. Edited Books**


478
Nairobi: Uzima Press.


C: Journals


D: Theses


E: Magazines/Newspapers


F: Internet Sources


Turning into mungiki http://kenyaimagine.com/


G: List of Selected Interviewees

The study interviewed 329 informants during the field research. Majority of the informants had requested anonymity; so out of many informants who had provided the vast oral data only a few were directly and indirectly referenced.

Lucas Kanyeki Ndogo

Wambui Warwîmbo

Thogo-wa-Gîkunju

Gatukû-wa-Kabata

Kabata-wa-Wairagû

Martha Njeri Thogo
Jason Kamotho Kamau (alias General Kamwamba)
Wachira-wa-Mūthaki
Kairū-wa-Maina
Kang’ara-wa-Mūthaki
Muthoni-wa-Kirima
Peter Mbūrū Kariūki
Joseph Mwangi Kabugī
Mūtungu-wa-Kihumba
Kabīra-wa-Gachini
Mwaniki -wa-Kageca
Maaragua -wa-Kageca
Karangi-wa-Kabogoro
APPENDICES
APPENDIX 1: Introductory letter to the Respondents

Dear Respondent,

I am Rev. Joseph M. Wanjao, a Doctoral Student in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies of Kenyatta University. I am carrying out a study on the Role of Lamentation in the Development of African Biblical Hermeneutics among the Gĩkũyũ people. The outcome of which will be a PhD thesis. Kindly, therefore, respond to the questions as is appropriate.

The data sought from this interview guide/schedule will be needed for no other purposes except for this academic research and will be treated with confidentiality.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Rev. Joseph M. Wanjao
APPENDIX 2: Interview Guide/Schedule for Pastors/Evangelists

Names: (optional) ……………………………..Sex………………………………

Age……………………………………Location/village………………………

Education level………………………………..Church affiliation…………………..

Designation……………………………….. Date……………………………………

1. How do you and your congregation regard the post-colonial importance of biblical motif of lamentation vis-à-vis Agĩkũyũ motif of lamentation? Please explain your answer.

2. Give your personal commitment and that of your church in addressing text-readings which are acceptable to the marginalized members of your community? Explain your answer.

3. Is your local church membership open to African expressions of traditional beliefs and practices such as lamentation? Yes ( ) No ( ). If your answer above is ‘yes’ how has that affected their reading of the Bible?

4. How can ‘creative expressions of lamentation be introduced into the text-reading life of your church?

5. How is your church involved in lamentation through songs, poems, plays and dances in recent times? Please suggest any usage of indigenous lamentation practices in their understanding of the Bible?

6. In your opinion, do the socio-economic realities of the Agĩkũyũ community affect your art of preaching and the way your congregation read the biblical text?

7. Do you believe that the past denials of lamentation have affected the shift of power and accountability from the colonized to the colonizers in Kenya?


9. Identify one or two common hermeneutical lenses inherited from the imperialist mode of textual interpretations.

10. In your judgment state three traditions of text-reading which makes the word of God to be fully received, thoroughly thought through, and fully lived in relation to harsh socio-economic and political realities among the Agĩkũyũ?
APPENDIX 3: Interview Guide/Schedule for Ordinary Text-readers

Names………………………………………………………………………………
(Optional):.Sex……………………Age………………………………
Location/village……………………Church affiliation…………………
Position……………………………….… Designation…………………………
Date……………………………………Education level……………………

1. Besides reading the Bible for spiritual nourishment: When do you really read the Bible for survival?

2. What role do the daily cries for survival play in your understanding of the Bible?

3. Have you read about Rachel in Jeremiah 31:15-17? What have you learned about Rachel from this text?

4. Why is Rachel’s lamentation so much appropriate for people like us Kenyans?

5. List as many places and events for which you can imagine Rachel grieving today in Gĩkũyũland.

6. How does the preaching in your church handle the Agĩkũyũ themes of lamentation? Give reasons for your answer

7. In the light of the prosperity gospel commonly preached in our churches and also through the TV stations; what role does the biblical motif of lamentation play in the socio-economic and political realities in Kenya?

8. How do your daily conversations with other people at home, at the market place (ndũũnyũ), and on the highways of trade and culture (Mũŋ’etho) determine the way you interpret the Bible in a different way from mainstream interpretation.

9. Are you a modern Christian or a Mũgĩkũyũ Christian? What propels the Agũkũyũ Christians to express lamentation in our contemporary world of self-sufficiency?

10. In your opinion what does a contemporary Mũgĩkũyũ Christian entail?
APPENDIX 4: Interview Guide/Schedule for Theological Students/ Biblical Scholars

Name………………………………………………………………………………………..
(Optional): Sex…………………………….Age……………………………………
Location/village………………………………Church affiliation……………………
Position……………………………………Designation……………………………
Date……………………………………Education level……………………………

1. What is the meaning of lamentation in the Bible vis-à-vis the Gĩkũyũ myth of origin, poetry and oral history?

2. What function does a lamentation play among the Agĩkũyũ, and how relevant are they in modern times?

3. How can the Agĩkũyũ lamentation text be used, in the Bible, to challenge the inadequacies of Euro-centric hermeneutical principles in the African churches?

4. Suggest three ways that can bring the past challenges, and present opportunities, of African Bible interpretation at the center of ordinary and scholarly text-reading process today? Please explain your answer.

5. Given a choice between African and Eurocentric hermeneutics; what hermeneutical aspects, do you think, can probe the African psyche in bringing local community readers together in search for new textual meanings?

6. In your opinion, what role does the indigenous reading community play in replaying the horrors of past devastation and degradation experienced by the Gĩkũyũ community?

7. How did the colonial perspective of text-reading ignore the people’s locations and created otherness in the discourse of the interpretation of texts? Please explain your answer.

8. How can the elemental return to the expression of grief propose to text-readers the various ways of opposing, eliminating and subverting the agents of blind patriotism, hierarchy, hegemony, and monolithic understanding of the biblical text? Please explain your answer.
APPENDIX 5: Interview Guide/Shedule for inculturalist Theologian from Local Seminary/University

Names: (optional)  Sex
Age  Theological Education level
Seminary/University  Designation
Date

1. How far have the biblical studies in this seminary/university gone in terms of deepening the understanding of African based text-reading theories and effective practices?

2. What new hermeneutical uses of lamentation (particularly the initial resources of text-readings offered by your seminary/university to seminarians) do you anticipate the enculturation of the Bible in African historical socio-economic realities would represent for you?

3. The dynamics of Rachel’s lamentation in Jeremiah 31: 15-17 poses both a great challenge and great opportunity of translating African literature and orature for the benefit of relating post-modern Christian life with African structures, people, power, and symbols. Yes or No: If yes explain briefly.

4. As an African your hermeneutic lenses are assumed to build upon your community’s prior use of lamentation, particularly with regard to creativity and ingenuity? Yes or No: If yes please explain.

5. Different contexts of lamentation continue to provide African biblical understanding and perspective with a topology of hermeneutical structures that continues to operate outside theological training circles? In your opinion how does this happen especially among the Eurocentric trained interpreters?

6. What role do lamentations play in reframing the communitarian life at the heart of Africa biblical hermeneutics? Or how do lamentations envisaged in African rituals, stories, theater, and culture promise the African ordinary text-reader the opportunity to facilitate the interaction of the text and real-life?

7. The expansion of dialogue between African cultural and biblical hermeneutical contexts makes lamentation an indigenous resource and heritage of integrating knowledge and skill, moral integrity and religious commitment. Yes or No: If yes give brief explanations.
APPENDIX 6: Interview Guide/Schedule for Eyewitnesses of Ṍũthĩrĩgũ Lament-
Dance
Names: (optional). ………………Sex……Age……Location/village…………
Education level…………………….Church affiliation…………………………
Designation……………………..Date…………………………………………

1. When missionaries brought the Gĩkũyũ Bible to Gĩkũyũland could the community really comprehend its content right away or which part of the Bible had found numerous resonances with Gĩkũyũ culture?

2. Why are the Gĩkũyũ motif of lamentation and the translation of Bible to vernacular interconnected with indigenous responses to alien forces of marginalization?

3. How did the Agĩkũyũ text-readers (athoomi) respond to the skewed textual meanings?

4. How can the Israel’s disciplines of lamentation especially the one captured by ancestress Rachel of Israel’s condition of exile help the Agĩkũyũ in a post-colonial re-reading of the same text.

5. According to you where does the Israel’s motif of lamentation resonate with and affirm the role played by Agĩkũyũ ancestress, Mũmbi, in communal laments?

6. Were the Ṇũthĩrĩgũ dance-songs a cry for military action or a typical Gĩkũyũ form of lamentation over the lost land and violation of human rights by colonial invaders?

7. How did the Gĩkũyũ Bible translation and the Ṇũthĩrĩgũ era help in challenging the foreign hermeneutical theories the role of ancestors in their struggle for survival?

8. Would you consider the missionaries’ censuring of indigenous lamentation during the Ṇũthĩrĩgũ era to be a process of nullifying and silencing the cries of the Agĩkũyũ text-readers? Briefly explain your answer?


10. What facilitates the discourse between Agĩkũyũ experience of sorrow and their quest for the biblical God who participated in human suffering?

11. Were there any confrontation with false cognates and pedagogical interactions of the text during the deprivation of Agĩkũyũ therapeutic re-examination of historical experiences? Ṇũthĩrĩgũ era? Please state your stand in these positions.
APENDEX 7: Interview Guide/ Shedule for Ex-Mau Mau Detainees and IDPs

Names: (optional) ..............Sex......................Age..........................
Location/village.................................Church affiliation..............................
Position...........................Education level........................................

1. In your opinion how was the Bible used to suppress, dominate and control the Agĩkũyũ detainees, by the colonialists and missionaries in rehabilitation camps?

2. What circumstances of exile warrant the ex-Mau Mau detainees and the IDPs to read the text of Jeremiah 31:15-17 in identifying the socio-economic experiences of the Agĩkũyũ? (a) The realities of exile and its hopeless state (b) The act of bringing pain to speech (c) The expression of faith in God amid chaos, doubt, and confusion. Briefly explain your answer.

3. The text-reading models, used by the Kenyan Church today, are colonial oriented than African. Yes { } No { } Please explain your answer from your experience as an ex-detainee in a rehabilitation camp.

4. In your view, how did the Agĩkũyũ ex-Mau Mau Detainees use lamentation in their struggle for survival in detention camps?

5. Is it true that the elites in post-colonial Kenya regimes have perpetuated denials of ex-Mau Mau detainees and the IDPs’ voice of lamentation? Explain your answer.

6. How can the ex-Mau Mau detainees and the IDPs’ laments and protests be developed into a unique perspective of bible interpretations?

7. Give your perspective of lamentation as an ex-Mau Mau detainee and IDP in challenging the hegemonic interpretations.

8. What are you doing to address the unspoken pain and suffering which you endured as an ex-detainee and IDP? Please give a brief explanation of your answer.

9. How is the Bible a viable therapeutic resource to ex-Mau Mau detainees and IDPs in Kenya? Yes { } No { }.Explain your answer.

10. What are your present-day expectations as an ex-freedom fighter, ex-detainee and IDP in text-reading process?