

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICS IN MERU, c.1880-2013

BY

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REG: C50/CE/25372/2011

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL
SCIENCES IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS OF KENYATTA UNIVERSITY**

APRIL 2024

DECLARATION

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

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my husband Linus Mworja, our children Jackline karimi and
Dennis Karani

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I thank the Almighty God who inspired and gave me the means to accomplish this work. I also thank my supervisors, Dr Edwin Gimode and Dr Susan Mwangi for patiently guiding me with exemplary scholarly knowledge and for their invaluable mentorship. They went beyond their call of duty, sacrificing their time to assist me until where I am now. I most sincerely thank Dr. Shiyuka Elvis Karani from the Department of History, Archaeology, and Political Studies, for tirelessly supporting and encouraging me all through this journey. I am grateful for the input of my classmates, colleagues and friends who supported and aided me throughout this course. To all the informants who took part in this study, thank you for providing valuable information.

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DEFINATION OF TERMS

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION	refers to active engagement of citizens in the democratic processes of selecting and supporting candidates for political office.
POLITICAL PROCESSES	refers to the various activities, procedures and mechanisms through which political decisions are made, policies are formulated and governance is carried out
ELECTIVE POLITICS	refers to the process of selecting individuals to hold public office through elections.
MARGINALISATION	Refers to discriminative acts that disadvantage marginalised groups in accessing and having a say in socio- economic and political arena.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CAWP	Center for Women and Politics
COK	Constitution of Kenya
CMS	Church Missionary Society
DC	District Commissioner
EAP	East Africa Protectorate
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
GOK	Government of Kenya
IEBC	Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission
KANU	Kenya African National union
KNA	Kenya National Archives
MOE	Ministry of Education
MYWO	Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organization
NACOSTI	National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
TSC	Teachers Service Commission
UN	United Nations
WAD	Women and Development
WID	Women in Development

ABSTRACT

Women comprise more than half of the total population in many countries in the world, and they play major social and economic roles. Despite this, women are constrained in political participation., especially in Kenya. Against this background, the current study sought to examine the participation of women in politics in South Imenti in Kenya's Meru County, focusing on the period 1890-2013. The study sought to answer three questions. First, how did women engage in the political processes of the Ameru in the pre-colonial period? Second, how did the colonial order affect women's participation in politics among the Ameru? And third, what trends may be discerned in women's participation in the politics of South Imenti during the post-colonial period? The study acknowledges that the Ameru society has been predominantly patriarchal since the pre-colonial period to the present, with little upward mobility of women in the public space. Further, despite the colonial system of administration generally marginalizing women from public spaces, women from South Imenti transcended these constraints and have played prominent political roles in post-independence Kenya. In spite of this, the women have performed dismally in elective politics. In seeking to understand this reality, this study was guided by the Social-Cultural Patriarchal Theory, complemented by a broad understanding of gender ideologies. These were used to explain the inability of women representatives to attain the 30 percent global threshold, something that derives from residual cultural barriers that militate against progressive socialization that assign specific tasks to particular genders. For instance, household tasks such as cooking, childcare and farming are assigned to women and girls, thus preconditioning them to domestic spaces. Regarding methodology, the study employed mixed methods that combined qualitative and quantitative approaches of collecting and analysing primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected through in-depth oral interviews, questionnaires, and archival material, while secondary data was collected from published journal articles, books and book chapters, newspapers, theses, internet resources, and periodicals. For fieldwork, the researcher used stratified sampling techniques to categorize wards in South Imenti Constituency where the research was based. There was also purposive sampling, particularly snowballing technique, in selecting respondents. Snowballing was appropriate because after each interview, respondents would recommend other potentially informative respondents. In total, 72 respondents participated in the study; six (6) from each of the six wards in South Imenti Constituency, three (3) focus group discussions, and twelve (12) Key Informant Interviewees. The data obtained was analysed qualitatively. The findings of this study reveal that women in South Imenti Constituency continue to suffer various challenges in their pursuit of political leadership. The challenges relate to economic, social and political impediments that women regularly encounter. Ultimately, the challenges contribute to the continued marginalization of women from political leadership, a reality that can be traced across the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. This calls for urgent intervention strategies to enable women to achieve greater successes in their political aspirations.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Globally, women constitute more than half of the population in many countries (Ndambuki 2010; Kabira 1997; Nzomo 1993). Women also play major social, political and economic roles in the world (Mwangi, 2004; Mittulah, 2010). In the economic sector, women make vast contributions through agricultural work, trade, and wage labor contributing about 80% of productive agricultural labor worldwide (Nzomo, 2003). In the rural areas of countries in the Global South, women provide 60-80% of agricultural labor (United Nations Report on Economic Development 1991).

Apart from agriculture, women also actively participate in trade, especially in sourcing, marketing, and delivery of produce. Women's acumen in short and long distance small businesses in rural and urban areas is globally recognized. And though women have for long been left behind in politics, they continue to play critical roles locally and globally. Indeed, despite women's contributions to the growth of many countries around the world, their participation in the political realm generally remains unsung.

Even in scholarship, relatively low attention is accorded to this area. For instance, between 1940-1960, only a few scholars and policy makers cared to acknowledge women's roles in the political development of many countries. It was as though women were on-existent. Amina Mama, a leading African feminist scholar, pointed

out this gap in a 1991 study, lamenting how women had been obscured in the then existing corpus of social scientific studies of the state of the nation in Africa. According to Mama, wherever women were mentioned in the then body of literature, they were grafted upon male figures – fathers, husbands, brothers, sons, or other male relatives.

Even in oral literature, women were majorly presented as wives and daughters requiring protection, love and care. The media also entrenched this diminishing representation of women and girls by casting them as emotionally delicate beauty figures whose relevance lay elsewhere but in development (Muyoyeta, 2004). The Women in Development (WID) and Women and Development (WAD) discourses that played out from the 1970s were broadly informed by such presumptions. The logic of diminishing women's roles in development led to the erroneous perception that women were passive actors to be merely carried along in the journey towards development.

On its part, WID debate assumed that women were not a necessary part of mainstream development, although they could be integrated in various development programmes. In fact, the WAD discourse emphasised the interaction between women and development processes as opposed to actual integration. The WAD proponents lamented unfair class and wealth distribution skewed against women, and argued for collaboration of men and women. Although the WAD and WID debates advocated for different approaches to mainstreaming women in development matters, they nonetheless acknowledged the important role that women play in development. While

acknowledging the significant contribution of women in politics in Africa, however, there is still little recognition of the roles of women in politics.

Women under-representation in politics is a global problem. For instance, Lynne (2011) asserts that the United States of America lags behind similarly ranked nations regarding the number of women in political offices. This is despite the fact that women in America comprise 50.8% of the population and were the first in the world to obtain the liberty to vote in 1920 (US Census Bureau, 2011; Kunovich & Hughes, 2007). As recently as 2013, women in America held only a fifth of the senate seats and the Lower House (Congress). Relatedly, women in America represent just 23.4% of the statewide elective executive offices, and 24.1% of the state legislators (CAWP, 2013). Even other developed countries such as Britain and France have very low representation of women in decision-making positions. Thus, women's ideas and contributions remain at grassroots low-level mobilizations and their views hardly get to the political negotiation table.

The same situation prevails in many African countries. With the patriarchal norms that influence how children are socialized to venerate masculinity, women remain marginalized in politics, with a wide gap between men and women in legislative representation. It is arguable that the apolitical domestic spaces designated for many women in Africa adhere to the Victorian ideology, while political decisions are mainly made in the public realm that is dominated by men. As private beings, women are thus required to nurture families and engage in reproductive unpaid roles. Hence, women in many African countries fall below the globally recommended 33% threshold of women in key public and private political positions (Kanyinga & Okello,

2010; Tripp, 2003). This is why women cannot influence major decisions. Notably, the tokenism of 'gender desks' created by many public institutions position women as 'representatives' and nothing else.

In pre-colonial Africa, women actively contributed to society as caregivers, farmers, and traders. Some scholars go farther to argue that women in some African societies had more power in the pre-colonial times; they had significant input socially, economically and politically (Uchedu, 1963). Examples abound. One was among the Igbo speakers of Eastern Nigeria. The Igbo's dual sex institution of sharing authority and power created the space for women to acquire rituals and political power (Uchendu, 1963:24). An official called Omu among the Igbo was in charge of women affairs, including regulation of market trade. Similarly, Iyalode among the Yoruba of Western Nigeria had jurisdiction over all women and represented women at the King's Council, which was nonetheless male dominant. The queen mother of the Asante of Ghana represented the matri-lineage, not women's interest (Tripp, 2003; Uchendu, 1963:32). Among the Mende and Sherbo who are an indigenous group in Sierra Leone, women and men were the equal candidates of the chieftaincy. Such communities were few and far apart, however, because in general women's participation in public spheres of their communities, specifically in politics, was miniscule. In fact, very few women had actual political capacity in the real sense (Awe, 1992). Women generally only played complementary roles in political leadership and, as recent literature shows, women played second fiddle to men even in such communities that apparently allowed women greater public visibility (Mba, 1982; Nwankwo, 1996; Ikpe, 2004).

According to Hay (2005), the advent of colonialism affected African women's position in politics since colonialism entrenched the treatment of women as inferior to men. The Victorian conception of women, which the colonial agents transposed to Africa, cast as belonging to the private domains. This saw the situation of women deteriorate as they began to be relegated to the periphery in many aspects of the colonial order economically, socially and politically.

The post-independence period has seen some countries in Africa – Rwanda, Angola, Mozambique, Uganda, Tanzania, and South Africa, among others – make progress in the rates of women's performance in politics. Statistically, Rwanda leads in Africa and globally with 56.3% political representation being women (Tripp, 2003; Mitullah, 2010). And while numbers may not necessarily translate to advancing the needs and aspirations of women, they still show progress and inspire other women in Africa and beyond.

Regarding women in political representation, Kenya performs dismally. For example, since the 2013 General Elections, very few women have won at the ballot, thus showing the degree of gender inequalities in the country (Mwiruri, 2013). Until 2010, the participation of women in parliamentary politics remained minimal. But the new Constitution of Kenya (2010) requires the government to adhere to the two-thirds gender rule, where public appointments shall not exceed two thirds of any gender (Nyamwaka, 2012). The two thirds gender rule, among other constitutional provisions, has led to more Kenyan women emerging into politics as candidates and mobilizers. For the same reasons, public appointments have accorded Kenyan women more visibility and participation in politics. Despite these important strides, inclusion

and participation of women in the political sphere compared to men is minimal, despite women comprising more than half of the Kenyan population. Against this background, this study used historical methods to interrogate representation and participation of women in politics in South Imenti Constituency for the period 1890-2013.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The dominance of men in decision making in society is a global and historical issue, despite women outnumbering men in many countries. There seems to be a carryover of precolonial gender biases that survived colonialism and post-colonial attempts at establishing gender parity in matters of politics. In pre-colonial Africa, Kenya included, patriarchy was prevalent and women were generally excluded from public spaces or merely assigned complementary roles. Even the colonial order did not change much for women; in fact, colonialism continued with the pre-colonial assumptions of male superiority in society. In “British Africa” for example, the Victorian conception of women as belonging to the private domain seemed to legitimize the relegation of women to the margins of political participation.

This study is about participation of women in political processes. It examines the pre-colonial place of women in politics and goes on to establish continuities or changes during the colonial period. It then seeks to establish trends that developed in female participation in politics during the post-colonial period from 1963-2013. The study takes the case of the Ameru women to demonstrate these continuities and changes. In the final analysis, it centers on the place of women of Imenti South in Meru to illustrate the trends.

The study attempts to demonstrate the fact that public participation has not been easy for Ameru women from the pre- colonial times. It however seeks to show the flipside by demonstrating the efforts made by a number of specific women to participate in a male dominated domain in the colonial and pos-t colonial era

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study was to examine and establish trends in women participation in politics in Meru during pre-colonial through colonial, to post-colonial eras.

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- i) Examine the place of women in Meru politics before the coming of colonialism;
- ii) Investigate the influence of colonialism on women's involvement in Meru politics during the colonial era;
- iii) Identify and discuss the trends of women's participation in the elective political processes among the Ameru of South Imenti Constituency in the post-colonial period.

1.4 Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following questions:

- i) How did women engage in the political processes of the Ameru in the pre-colonial period?
- ii) How did the colonial order affect the participation of women in politics among the Ameru?

- iii) What trends may be discerned from women's participation in the elective political processes in South Imenti Constituency in post-colonial times?

1.5 Research Premises

The study was anchored on the following premises:

- a) The Ameru society was predominantly patriarchal in the pre-colonial period with little upward mobility of women in the public space
- b) The colonial system of administration largely marginalized women from public spaces while promoting men.
- c) The women of South Imenti Constituency in post-independence Kenya have played a prominent role in politics despite performing dismally in elective contests.

1.6 Justification and Significance of the Study

The creation of a nation that is just and with gender equity relies greatly on men and women participating equally in the politics, economics and social roles of their country. Any political agenda that does not recognize gender inclusivity and that fails to seek the views and voices of the people as a whole, often lacks credibility and subsequently the much-desired success. The dominance of men (at the expense of women) in decision making in society remains a common feature, even in areas that need women prioritization. The representation of women, particularly in elective politics, can ensure their contribution and participation in directing the political process and shaping policy to address and protect women's interests in society.

Kenyan women comprise over half of Kenya's population; and they play critical roles in the socio-economic affairs of the country. In the economic sector, women make vast contributions through agriculture, marketing and wage labour. In all, women contribute 80% of productive agricultural labor worldwide (Marteshi, 2006). In rural areas of countries in the Global South, Kenya included, women provide 60-80% of agricultural labour (Ndambuki, 2010). This study picked women as a category because compared to men, they remain underrepresented in politics, despite their higher numerical strength.

Regrettably, little literature exists on women's political participation in rural areas. Mwangi (2004) notes that local research remains minimal in most counties in Kenya, which explains dearth of information on women's political participation in the rural areas such as South Imenti Constituency. According to the Imenti South District Development Plan (2009), South Imenti Constituency is generally one of the richest constituencies in the greater Meru, endowed with plentiful rainfall and an overall conducive climate for agriculture. Women in Imenti South Constituency play major social and economic roles – just as they do in other parts of the country. Despite such contribution, women are generally uninvolved in politics – which has been male dominated since independence.

The period between 1890 and 2013 remains significant as it helped the researcher trace how women fared in elective politics during the pre-colonial period, the colonial period and the post-colonial era. In particular, 1890 was the year when the colonial masters began to exercise foreign control of their colonies, thus changing gender roles of many African countries. Understanding the implications of colonialism for women

in South Imenti was thus important. The year 2013 was an important period to end the study because the year coincided with the last competitive elections – which gave an indication of women’s performance in electoral contests – before the current study was conceived.

The data obtained during this study is significant as it will contribute to the much needed literature on local women’s participation in politics, especially those of South Imenti. It is also expected that this study’s recommendations shall help the government policymakers to think of how impediments to women’s political participation in Kenya can be overcome and gender disparities in politics be bridged.

1.7 Research Locale

The study was conducted in South Imenti Constituency, Meru County. Meru County lies to the East of Mt. Kenya and shares boundaries with Laikipia County to the West, Nyeri County to the Southwest, Tharaka Nithi to the East, and Isiolo County to the North. Meru county straddles the equator, lying within 0°6’ North and about 0°1’ South and longitude 37°W and 38° East. The county has a total area of 6936.2 KM² (soft-kenya.com, n.d., say Kenya.com 2012). As of 2012, the population of Meru County stood at 1,443,555, of whom 713,801 were male while 729,754 females. According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, Meru County's population was estimated at 1,601,629 (KNBS, 2012). Relatedly, the IEBC (2012) report revealed that South Imenti constituency had the highest registered voters in Meru County.

Meru County has nine (9) sub-counties (which are equivalent to constituencies) and forty-five (45) electoral wards. The constituencies are: Tigania East, Tigania West,

Igembe Central, Igembe North, Igembe South, North Imenti, Buuri, Imenti Central, and South Imenti (Republic of Kenya, 2010). South Imenti Constituency, which was the study area, comprises six (6) electoral wards, thus South Imenti, Mitunguu, Abogeta West, Abogeta East, Egoji East, and Egoji West (IEBC, 2013).

The researcher considered this location because Meru County and particularly South Imenti are highly patriarchal societies (Jenkins, 2008). According to Sifuna et al. (2006), the deeply entrenched socio-cultural dynamics of Meru forms part of the socialization process that constructs femininity of Meru women. The study examined key socio-cultural aspects that form the socialization process of the Ameru women, that would critically influence their participation in the South Imenti Constituency's electoral political processes.

Figure 1: Meru County, Kenya



Source: Wikipedia

political participation, it also dealt with aspects of their non-participation in electoral politics. Men were also incorporated in this study for comparative purposes and to achieve a complete gender picture.

However, the study had some limitations, especially of a narrow scope since it did not cover comprehensively the women in politics beyond the selected constituency. To address this limitation, the study borrowed from Babbie (2014) who posits that in case a study sample is too large or not achievable practically, then a sampling of the available respondents suffices as the scope of the research. Furthermore, there were some instances where some of the women informants were too busy to respond to the researcher. To overcome this limitation, the researcher rescheduled the interviews at the time convenient for the responses.

1.9 Literature Review

Many studies have been conducted related to women's engagement in elective politics. According to Mitullah and Odhiambo (2007), political participation in the electoral process takes various forms, including voting, campaigning as candidates, or vying for parliamentary or civil seats. Women participate in all these processes, which is why the current study sought to investigate how women in South Imenti Constituency perform.

Maria Nzomo (1996), while writing on the participation of women in electoral processes, noted that even though women representation in politics during electioneering periods is more than that of men, evidence shows that women do not always proceed to hold public office in proportions to their numbers or degree of

involvement in the electoral processes. Nzomo further argues that whether in urban or rural areas, women suffer marginalization as their peculiar situation.

Khasiani (2006) and Ghai (2002) also note that women are still marginalized in politics. In the same vein, Khasiani (2010) also notes that women in Kenya comprise 52% of the total population and 60% of the voters. In short, women are the majority. Naturally, one would assume that given their numerical advantage, women should play a very significant role in elections since their total number of votes is higher than that of men. These figures and arguments informed the current study by providing the background information on the status of women in politics – the subject on the current study.

Even with reference to other parts of the world, some scholars have focused on obstacles hindering women's effective participation in elective politics. For instance, Nyokabi (2010) argues that universally, the challenges women face in politics and political aspirations are similar in many aspects, although the Kenyan experience shows some unique aspects. Karl (2000) explores some of the parameters that impact women's political participation including household status, labor rights, childcare provisions, education, financial access, and inclusivity; legal rights, traditional cultural beliefs, and gender-based violence, among others. All these dynamics resonate with women in Imenti South Constituency and have a bearing on their participation in electoral politics.

According to the United Nations Women Report on Kenya's 2013 General Elections, cultural practices intimidate female candidates and voters. This includes 'cursing' based on prevailing cultural practices that discriminate against women taking

leadership positions or roles, for example among the Maasai community. Culture often directs social attributes and the stereotyping of women's roles. Social stereotyping on the role of women in turn influences decisions regarding participation in politics and contesting for elective offices.

Concerning patriarchy, Lynn (2003) demonstrates how men among the Ameru society have dominated politics since pre-colonial times. According to Lynn, in pre-colonial Meru society men exerted their authority and control over women at the family level and within the larger community.

Midamba (1990) also notes that the African traditional laws provided the basis for the development and entrenchment of patriarchal institutions in Kenya. These institutions have led to relations of dominance based on gender. Obura (1991) argues that the societal perception of women who engage in politics has always been negative due to sex stereotypes. This has been a great obstacle to women's engagement in electoral politics. In this regard, Lynne (2011) argues that in a patriarchal culture, male characteristics are valued more highly than female qualities and femininity is marginalized. For Lynn, patriarchy privileges men over women regardless of class, race or ethnicity, sexuality or political ideology. Poverty has been another major hindrance to women's participation in politics. Mitullah (2003) argues that financing a campaign process is an expensive process which many women are not able to afford.

Many researchers have also pointed out political violence against women as a factor that leads to the dismal performance of women in Kenya's elective politics. Mitullah (2007) harps on gender-based violence in politics, citing a particular case that happened in Meru where a woman was brutally attacked during the campaigns that

preceded the 2007 General Elections. The violence was so vicious that the victim withdrew from the race. This problem recurred in the 2013 elections. Nyokabi (2010) and Okumu (2003), respectively, argue that such threats are a means of discouraging the participation of women in elections.

Marie (2003), while writing on factors influencing women's political participation, points to formal education as a factor linked to politics among men and women. Relatedly, Lynne (2011) suggests that education dictates the direction of politics and its undertaking. She acknowledges that education has a direct influence on associations of technical skills requisite for politicking, besides building attributes that enhance participation in politics, such as, revenue and job creation, and access to charitable organizations that are known for funding electoral processes in various countries, among others. With all these in mind, the current study sought to investigate whether such challenges could be playing a similar role in hindering women from South Imenti Constituency from taking part in electoral processes.

Understanding the status of women in any society is also important. For this study, therefore, the researcher revisited available information on pre-colonial Meru society to access the social, economic and political roles played by women in this society. The researcher established similarities between the Meru dispensation and arguments made by earlier scholars. For instance, Midamba's (1990) earlier referenced view that African traditional laws provided the cornerstone for the development and entrenchment of patriarchal institutions in Kenya came out in the researcher's conversations with respondents.

In the same vein, exploring the pre-colonial Meru society in this manner helped to establish how patriarchy has been exercised within this community and how it has impacted on the women of Meru in general. Elsewhere, Kabira and Masinjila (1997) point out that Kenyan politics is a product of both traditional African and colonial patriarchy. Similarly, M'Imanyara (1992) demonstrates how patriarchy was exercised among the Meru from the family level to the larger community. This existed within social, economic and political structures.

According to Nyaga (1997), men dominated the Meru government. The Meru government comprised two parties, thus Kiruka and Ntiba. These alternated in running the government. These two parties comprised of only men, denying women a chance to participate in matters of decision making within the community. M'Imanyara (1992) also points out that the Njuri Ncheke council of elders, comprising of only men who exercise key social, economic and political duties, naturally excludes women. The secrets of the Njuri Ncheke cannot be revealed to women, thus leaving them out of the current political and cultural conversations that the community is involved in. In this respect, Fadiman (2012) interrogates the essence of women councils among the Ameru community, arguing that such councils only performed social roles, unlike the men's councils whose key roles were economic and political.

Regarding the role of women movements and organizations, Mitullah and Odhiambo (2007) argue that women issues began to attract scholarly attention only due to international and local pressure on countries to ensure effective participation of women at all levels. According to Mitullah and Odhiambo, the 1965 Universal

Conference came up with a symbolic International Women's Year, and this was followed by 1968 and 1976, which were declared the start and end of the decade for women, respectively. The climax of these developments was celebrated in Nairobi in 1985, followed by the 1995 Beijing Conference. According to Midamba (1990), these international women's conferences provided serious opportunities for the empowerment of women politically, particularly in Kenya.

Midamba further points at relevant women-centred entities that have played major roles in the political empowerment of women. In Kenya, such entities include the *Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organization* (MYWO), the Women's Bureau including the National Council of Women in Kenya (NCWK), among others.

All these show that women continue to struggle for public visibility and greater relevance in the dynamics of national electoral politics across the world. In Kenya, the struggles carry on in spite of the widely recognised roles that women played in the historical struggle for independence, and the roles that they continue to play in contemporary forms of mobilisation, campaigning, social justice, and all other variables of social democracy. And yet, despite all these dynamics, no scholar has examined the role of women and their place in electoral politics in Meru County and specifically in South Imenti Constituency. Therefore, this researcher sought to fill this gap in knowledge by examining various aspects of women's participation in electoral politics while focusing on women in South Imenti Constituency of Meru County.

1.10 Theoretical Framework

Different theories have been used in explaining women's poor performance in elective politics. Accordingly, the current study integrated the Social-Cultural Patriarchal Theory and the Gender Ideology as a framework of analysis. Socio-Cultural Patriarchal Theory is attributed to Sir Henry Maine, who defines it as the theory of the origin of the community in differentiated families, often in cohesion based on an authority that is perceived to accord protection issued by an elder, often a male (Ankita n.d). The social-cultural patriarchal ideology has been used to explain the inability of women representatives to near the 30% global threshold of women in leadership (Mitullah, 2010). According to Mitullah (2010), this ideology is coated in cultural norms and attitudes which represent roles such as cooking, farming, and childcare. Those norms and expectations are largely assigned to women and girls who are confined to domestic spheres where they are required to perform less empowering work. Therefore, patriarchy and gender theories were found most suitable for this study since they could help to establish the factors behind the poor performance of women of South Imenti Constituency in electoral politics.

In scholarship, the term 'patriarch' means the standard of the 'patriarch' and initially, it was utilized to depict a particular kind of man – one who commanded an enormous family unit that included ladies, junior men, youngsters, and household workers all under the standard of this prevailing guideline. Presently, the term 'patriarch' is used broadly to allude to male mastery over the power relationship by which men overwhelm ladies (Bhasing, 2006:3). Male-centric society broadly implies the indication of male strength over women and children in the family and the expansion of male predominance over women in the general public (Lerner, 1989). Patriarchy

suggests that men control all significant organizations of society, while women are denied access to such power.

According to Wanjiku Kabira (2010), the male-centric ideologies work on the presumption that men are naturally better than women, and that women should therefore be viewed as the flimsier sex that needs to rely on men's exertion for their endurance. Subsequently, male-centric logics are viewed at all levels as the only genuine guides to fair administration of society, including over women (Kabira, 2010).

For long, the Meru people have embraced male-centric cultures (Fadmann, 2012; Lynn, 2003). As per Lynn (2003:16), men in all perspectives have commanded ladies in Meru society since pre-colonial times. Lynne notes that men among the Ameru have since then applied their position and authority over women at the family levels and beyond. This male dominance among the Ameru is pervasive in all aspects of private and public interactions (Kamarae, 1992; Stacey, 1993; Aina, 1998). On a related note, Sylvia Walby (1990) certified that male-controlled society through a long verifiable procedure has become a framework that has proximate varieties. Walby portrays male-controlled society as “frameworks and practice that shape the social structures where men abuse ladies” (Walby, 1990:20). Walby further sees male-centric society as an arrangement of social structure, where men rule, persecute and misuse ladies.

The term ‘man-controlled-society’ has been used in the past to allude to the efficient association of male matchless quality and female subjection (Kamarae, 1992; Stacey,

1993; Aina, 1998). The term 'man-controlled-society' is characterized as an arrangement of the male position that abuses ladies through its social, political and financial organizations. In line with this, a patriarch is viewed as the leader of the family unit and inside the family, he controls profitable assets, work powers and regenerative limits dependent on countries of prevalence and inadequacy and legitimized by contrasts in sexual orientation and age.

In recent scholarship, feminists have theorised patriarchy as a real basis of subordination of women to men (Beechy, 1979). Society is patriarchal to the degree that it is "male-dominated, male-identified and male-centered" (Johnson, 1979: 5). According to Johnson, the extent of male domination in the patriarchal system entails the authority of men in every aspect, such as politics, economics, religion, military including domestics (Beechy, 1979). Feminists have also theorised about the centrality of patriarchy, which normalizes gender inequality, as the key source of women's current socio-economic and political disadvantages. Male domination over women is due to women's historical exclusion from public life generally and from politics particularly.

Feminists and other gender scholars concur that women are oppressed throughout the world. There is the social, economic, political and legal basis for the exploitation, degradation and exclusion of women in society (Kowen, 1993:6). In a gendered culture, there are stereotypes around religion, politics, education, health, and other aspects, that dictate how men and women are expected to act (Cornwall & Lindfarne, 1995; Holmus, 1995; Holmes, 1995). These very expectations on men and women should act to create the differentiation that is deeply rooted in patriarchy (Kelly,

1998). This specific universal ideology is a system that shapes the lives of both men and women through the creation of a conformity approach to numerous aspects of the society, including politics.

In her report concerning women exclusion from the formal political arena, Farzana explains it as part of a historical tradition and, therefore, not as an entirely new situation. Farzana claims that women's exclusion is the result of a patriarchal ideology that determines the relationship model of women and politics (Kemitraan, 2014). Political manifestation is men's control exerted over women's political aspirations and control of women's free choices in their lives. Patriarchal constraints for women's political participation focus on the public domain of state institutions, especially political and social ones. Thus, formal political institutions and those related to electoral systems exclude women in the processes of recruiting political representatives in parliament (Kemitraan, 2014).

Other scholars reiterate the view that state social institutions are entrenched in reproducing patriarchal structures that place women in subordinate positions (Walby, 1990; Kamla, 1993). Such institutions include the religious, educational, and the media, all of which are considered to be pillars of patriarchal reproduction in which men are groomed to be the patriarchs and women the subordinates (Walby, 1990). Furthermore, social institutions and platforms for socialization of masculine and feminine roles end up defining personal identities of males and females. From childhood, gender socialization is instilled and later it cultivates gender-based behavior (Kamitraan, 2014). Masculinity and femininity are neglected as gender norms.

The sociological patriarchal ideology has been resistant to change and is often used in justifying the retention of women in the domestic domain (Mitullah, 2010). In Mitullah's view, domestic domain is perceived to be inferior to the public domain. This is even though the family is the basic functioning unit of any society in the world. Roles associated with men allow them to gain and grow within the public sector, which they protect ring-fence against possible entry of women.

Politics still bears the negative perception of being unsuitable for women, a notion that is maintained by educational religious and media institutions (Kamitraan, 2014). Subsequently, despite many countries' political systems opening doors to women to participate in elections for parliamentary representatives, women are still assigned to subordinate positions determined by the state's patriarchy. This is why, despite the 30% gender rule provided in the Constitution of Kenya (2010), the practice on the ground undermines women's assertion of their political rights. Indeed, women are still required to fight to overcome patriarchal obstacles to achieve this dream.

As in many African societies, women in Meru have generally been confined to private domains while men transcend those to occupy the public domains (Lynne, 2003). For Lynne (2003) and M'Rinkanya (O.I 15/10/2014), within the households of the Ameru community, men exert substantial authority over women, and simultaneously act as spokespersons and guardians of their communities.

As already indicated, the Meru women councils are restricted to playing only domestic and some social roles M'Rinkanya (O.I 15/10/2014), while men's councils (Njuri Ncheke) perform public social, economic and political roles. Essentially, men dominate women in private as in public.

This study was also informed by the idea that gender is a socially and generally constructed concept, pegged on the role that men and women play in their daily lives. Gender refers to the attributes, opportunities, and relationships associated with being a female or male, and the socio-cultural relationships between women and men, boys and girls (Kasomo, 2012). According to Kasomo (2012), these attributes, opportunities, and relationships are not naturally occurring but rather, socially constructed and inculcated through socialization processes.

Noteworthy, gender is not only about roles but also about the relationships. And yet, what people state that women or men are or shall do is related to the question of who sets the roles and for what function. Gender is also about power, privileges, responsibilities, rights, and duties (Kasomo, 2012). Kasomo argues that in Kenya, political development priorities are perceived from a sexist perspective. As such women have no significant input in political dispensation. This means that the oppression of women and their subordinate positions in society are located in the personal structural and cultural realms. This is despite the fact that the European Commission (2001) emphasised gender equality where all human beings, men and women, should be let free to develop without limitations set by strict gender roles. The European Commission advocated for equal visibility empowerment and participation of men and women in all spheres of life, public and private.

1.11 Research Methodology

1.11.1 INTRODUCTION

This section focuses on research methods and the procedural approach applied for the research. It describes the target population, sampling procedure, research instruments, data collection techniques, and methods of data analysis.

1.10.2 Research Design

The researcher employed a mixed research methodology, which combined qualitative and quantitative approaches. Mixed methods enabled the researcher to generate multiple perspectives, compliment the data sources, and provide avenues for comparison. In history related research, studies that mixed methods are more comprehensive as compared to those that rely on singular methodology.

1.11.3 Sampling Techniques and Sample size

Sampling involves the selection of a sub-section of a population to represent the whole population. Sampling enables obtaining information on a broader population from a smaller representative population. Thus, a sample is part of the whole population. . Because a sample has shared traits with the whole population, subsequent observations of the sample are deemed to apply to the whole population.

Informants for the current study were selected from each of the electoral wards of south Imenti Constituency. The researcher employed random stratified sampling technique in the selection of respondents. The researcher selected six respondents from each of the six administrative wards of South Imenti Constituency. In order to obtain in-depth data, the researcher also facilitated three Focus Group Discussions in each of the wards, drawing eight participants that from the respective villages in the wards. The researcher also interviewed twelve key informants in the constituency.

The participants in the Focus Group Discussions were different from those to whom questionnaires were administered. The researcher also enlisted some key informants, identified among individuals considered to be knowledgeable in the political participation of women in the constituency. Such informants included retired senior chiefs and those who served as councilors in the defunct Meru Municipality. In total, seventy-two respondents were involved in the study.

The researcher stratified the sample based on gender categories. This ensured that more women compared to men were oversampled. The stratified sampling allowed the researcher to use various categories of the population. The method was relevant because the researcher sought to undertake a gender-based topic that must categorize the overall population into male and female categories.

Stratified purposive sampling also was applied to categorically select only members of the population that were relevant to the study, thus women in politics. Subsequently, the selection was biased towards politicians and those involved in electoral processes. This was done to ensure the researcher interviewed men and women voters, aspirants and political officeholders.

For purposes of complementarity, the snowballing technique was used where informants helped the researcher to identify more potentially informative respondents. This helped the researcher to avoid interviewing respondents who could not provide valuable information, thus leading to wastage of time and energy. Snowball sampling also enabled the researcher to locate informants known only to possess certain relevant information for answering specific research questions. Snowball sampling is

critical in circumstances where the target population and respondents may pose a challenge in their location.

1.11.4 Target Population

The target population for this study was the voting-eligible population of above eighteen years old drawn from South Imenti Constituency. The researcher settled on the lower age limit because the Constitution of Kenya (2010) only allows citizens of eighteen years and above to vote. The respondents were selected from each of the six electoral wards of South Imenti Constituency.

1.11.5 Research Instruments and Data Collection

In the current study, the researcher used interview schedules and questionnaires. The questionnaires comprised both open and closed-ended questions and were organized in sections that corresponded to the research questions. Both primary and secondary data was collected. Secondary data consisted of published books, articles, journals, periodicals, non-published theses, seminar papers, election-monitoring reports, and local newspapers that touched on women, elections, and post-independence South Imenti politics. These secondary sources were collected from various libraries including the Kenyatta University Postmodern Library, Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library of the University of Nairobi, and the main library at the Kenya Methodist University's main campus. The researcher also sourced material from the Ministry of Education Library, Meru National Library, Imenti South Sub-County IEBC offices, and the Imenti South Sub-County administration office. Secondary data is key in theory-based research; secondary data allows the researcher to work on the primary data. For the current study, secondary data was prime in enabling the researcher to build an informative background to women's involvement in politics globally, in Africa, and in Kenya.

Primary information was collected using researcher designed questionnaires and articulate interviews with the key informants, political aspirants and political office holders, notably members of the county assembly and members of parliament. For primary data, the researcher employed various methods for data collection, including Focus Group Discussions (FGD), one-on-one interviews, key informant respondents' interviews, and life histories. Both male and female respondents were deliberately chosen to participate in discourse-based meetings that were planned to deliver verbal data obtained from FGDs. The researcher facilitated the FGDs with the help of a research assistant to take notes of the discussions. To back up the notes, the FGDs were also recorded. At the start and end of every session, participants were reminded to uphold confidentiality when regarding each other's contributions.

Authentic information was obtained from the Kenya National Archives in Nairobi. The information was contained in yearly reports, journals, and correspondences by pioneer management authorities. These sources gave data on social, monetary and political parts of the Meru region during the research time scope. The information obtained was useful in illuminating the political dynamics during the research time scope. The researcher also obtained some oral information from one-on-one meetings with respondents.

1.11.6 Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, the researcher employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The researcher began by transcribing the data, including audio data that was transcribed into text format. This method is more appropriate in the identification, analysis, and reporting of patterns within the findings. The researcher examined

collected data from various informants and identified the patterns as they emerged in the course of the analysis. A pattern was taken into consideration as that which took into account important essences of the data. Secondary data was subjected to textual review for the sake of critiquing and testing the validity and accuracy of the documents used in the study.

1.11.7 Logistical and Ethical Considerations

The researcher obtained permission from the necessary authorities, thus Kenyatta University, National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), the Ministry of Education (MOE) and government administrative authorities such as the county administrative authorities. These were mainly the offices of the sub-county commissioners and area chief. Authority was also sought from the IEBC's office to be allowed to access the records. The researcher gave the assurance of confidentiality to the respondents regarding any information they provided, and guaranteed that the information would not be used for any other reason but only for the study.

CHAPTER TWO

WOMEN IN THE PRE-COLONIAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATION OF THE AMERU UP TO 1895

2.1 Overview

This chapter examines the social-economic and political organization of the Ameru before colonialism. The chapter details the origins and migration of the Ameru people; their pre-colonial societal organization and economic structures. The chapter highlights the role of women in the pre-colonial political economy of the Ameru while showing how gendered political participation was.

The Ameru are a Bantu ethnic community that occupies the North Eastern slopes of Mt Kenya (Rutere, O.I.25/11/2014). In the same oral interview, Rutere states that the Ameru comprise seven major sub-tribes of Chuka, Mwimbi, Muthambi, Imenti, Tigania, Igembe, and Tharaka. These sub-divisions are linguistically related but distinct in identity because of their characteristic dialects. Imanyara (1992) discusses Africa's linguistic sub-divisions, arguing that the Meru language, 'Kimiru', belongs to the Niger-Congo family, meaning that they migrated from around the Congo basin.

2.2 A Brief Reconstruction of the Origin of the Ameru

The Ameru are a Bantu speaking community that occupies the North Eastern slopes of Mt Kenya. Like other Bantu speaking groups of Eastern Africa, the 'Kimiru' language seems to belong to the Niger-Congo family, meaning that their ancestors of antiquity at one time lived in the general region of West-Central Africa (Ogot, 1967). Yet, this general West-East movement conflicts with a popular tradition of the migration of the Ameru into their present area of residence. According to Imanyara

(1992; 45) such traditions, point to a Northern ‘*Urio*’ origin of the Ameru. According to Inoti (O.I. 20/12/2014) the Northern origin of the Meru is very strong because they would describe their origin by facing westwards according to the direction of the sun, in which position their right hand would point Northwards as their home. This Northern direction of origin is amplified by Imanyara (1992: 47) who gives an ancient Egyptian origin of the Ameru.

The work of Berling Webster and Ralph Herring in Uganda provides further support to the idea that the name Meru is originally Sudanic. According to these scholars, the name *Miru* existed in *Luo* and Bantu speaking areas. Webster and Herring argue that the names *Miiru*, *Miuro*, *Jamiru*, *Omiru*, and *Ngimiuro* are applied by the people of the Central Sudanic (KNA, Meru Annual Reports 1933-34). Of importance to Ameru historiography is the linguistic similarities of the names given to those traditions in the interlacustrine region. These traditions refer specifically to the movement of Bantu speaking peoples through the location of the area of Meroe in the River Nile and that the name *Miru* collectively embraced many Bantu ethnic groups, including those whose ancestors lived around Meroe.

On this, Imanyara (1992:49) notes that there survived a song sung in primary schools as the children entered the sports fields as recently as the 1950s, which song suggests that the Ameru indeed came from Meroe. This was affirmed by Inoti, (O.I., 20/12/2014) who properly recalls this song.

Leader	<i>Ameru Twaumau?</i> (Meru People where did we come from?)
Rest	<i>Meroe</i>
Chorus	<i>Meru Meroe</i> <i>Meru Meroe</i> <i>Meru Meroe</i> <i>Meru Meroe</i>

To Inoti, this song proves that both *Meru* and *Meroe* co-existed with the same meaning. *Meroe* was applied to mean ‘town people’ or ‘land occupied by Meroitic people.’ Today, the same meaning of *Meru* persists among the Meru of Kenya (Nyaga, 1997:7).

The most popular and explanation of possible origins of the Ameru is the Mbwa area tradition, according to oral tradition and scholarly research. According to Kiambi (O.I. 19/12/ 2014) the Ameru came from an island in the East known as Mbwa. It is said to have been irregularly shaped like a cooking gourd, encircled by a coral reef. According to Ogot (1976: 140) Mbwa is most likely the Island of Mande which is part of the Lamu of the North West of Kenya. According to Fadiman (2008: 2), the island was encircled by bitter water. Again, oral tradition Marete (O.I., 16/12/2014) about unique features of the tides of the island is corroborated by Ogot (1971: 140) and Fadiman (2008: 22). The tides were said to take place twice in a day, once during day time and once at night.

Linguistic evidence further supports the Mbwa tradition. According to H.E. Lambert, a notable linguist and former Commissioner of Meru District (1933 – 1935 and 1940 – 1941) suggested that the Ameru word ‘*Mbwa*’ (or *Mbwaa*, is derived from the Swahili term *Pwani*, meaning beach or shore. (cited in Fadiman, 2008:23). According to Lambert, linguistically the only difference is that the Swahili word has (added) the

locative ending (-ni) while discarding the nasalization ("b") in favor of aspiration ("p"), where the Meru word having retained the "m" before a labial. Lambert also believed that the fundamental meaning of the Swahili stem "*pwa*" denoted not only shore but also "the place where tides ebb" (KNA, Meru Annual Report, 1949).

2.3 Migration and Settlement of the Ameru

The Ameru originated from *Mbwa* where they lived before migrating and settling in the Northeastern slopes of Mt Kenya. Around A.D. 1700, the *Nguo Ntune* (red clothes) attacked *Mbwa* (Fadiman 2008; 17). They came around in small ships ("driven on the water by the wind") which landed on the shores of the mainland on the counter sides of the island. They then crossed the intervening waters on rafts ("big logs tied with small ones") and stormed ashore (Ogot, 1976; Imanyara, 1998; Nyaga, 1997).

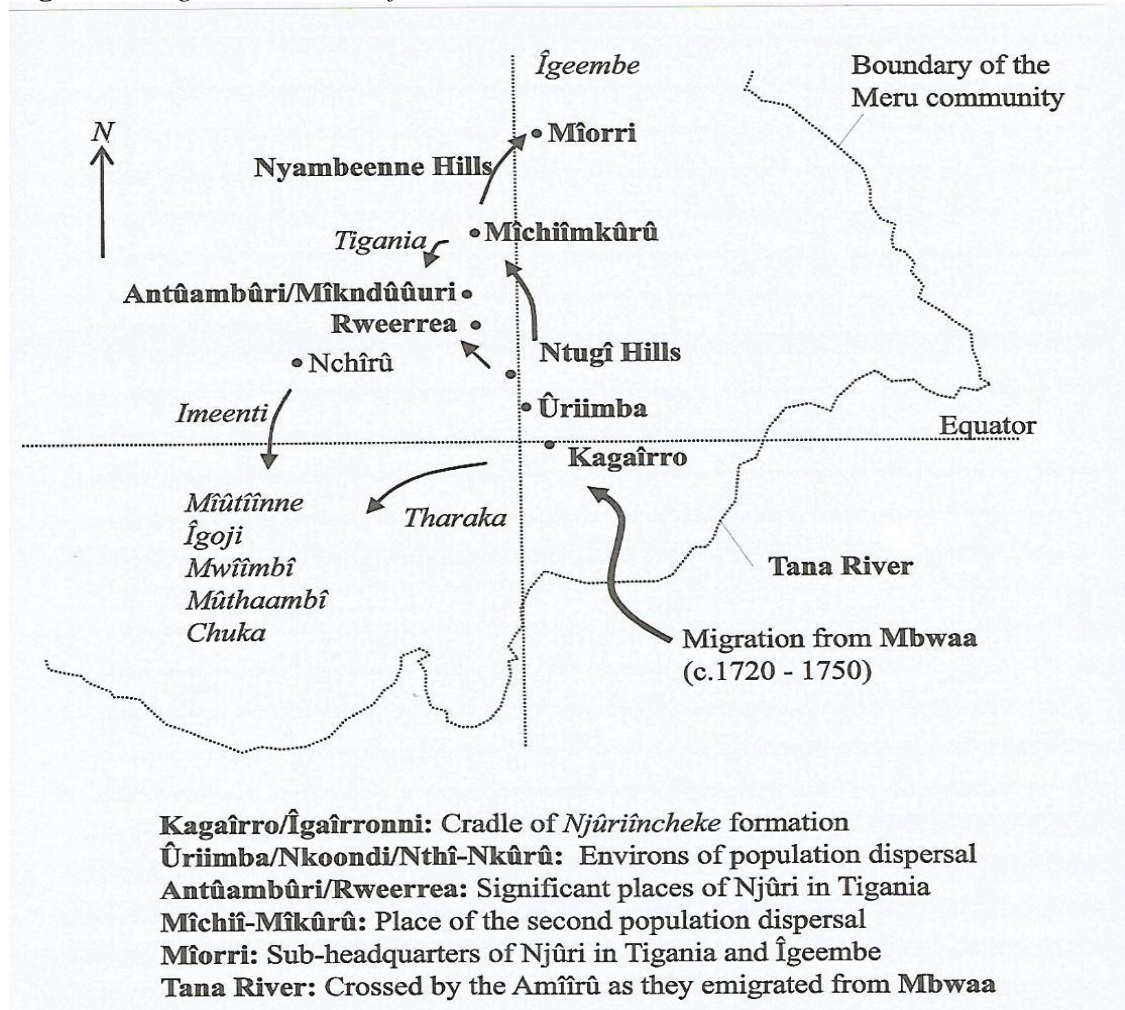
According to Rutere, (Mutwiri O.I) the invaders were East African Coastal Arabs, descendants of one of the earliest Middle Eastern migrant groups. Some versions of the myth state that the group conquering is called *Nguontune*, or 'red legs'. According to M'Mbijiwe (O.I., 17/12/2014), the "light-skinned non-African such as Europeans persons and Arabs were usually termed 'red' by Bantu-speaking people. It was the invaders' skin (rather than clothes that the Pre-colonial Meru perceived as 'red'.

The Ameru oral traditions vividly recall persecution of their ancestors by the *Nguontune*, and the subsequent decision by the Ameru to escape. According to Gatobu (O.I., 20/12/2014), the islanders were made to perform oppressive and unbearable tasks which bordered on magic. Then came along a Meru wise man, prophet Muga, also known as Koomenjue. He organized the escape of his people from

the 'slavery' they had been subjected to on the island. This detail is recapped in Imanyara (1992: 43). The Ameru would later equate escaping from the island to the dry land to Israelites' crossing the Red Sea.

After crossing the Red sea, the migrants always took Northwesterly movement. According to Gatobu (O.I., 20/12/2014), the translation of the term "westward" is probably "Inland", hence according to tradition, the migrants spent about four seasons moving along the River Tana's southern bank. The migrants later left the river entirely turning westward into what tradition explicitly calls a "desert". They named this area *Ngaaruni* (Arid place) or *Mariankanga* (holes of the guinea fowl), which also carried a linguistic implication of aridity. According to Fadiman, at this point the migrants began to call themselves *Nгаа*, a word possibly derived from the thorns *Migaa* that they used to protect themselves with at night (Fadman, 2008:58). In either case, the migrants henceforth referred to themselves as *Nгаа* until their eventual fragmentation near Mt Kenya. As earlier noted, the migration of the Ameru from their suggested area of origin was finally marked with their eventual settlement on the northeastern slopes of Mt Kenya (Imanyara, 1992:38). The ancestors of the Ameru began arriving in the Mt Kenya region from around 1732. They slowly spread out to cover their present territory. By 1895, when the British established their colonial administration in Kenya, the Meru were established as follows:

Figure 4: Migration Routes of the Ameru



Source: Gichere, et al (2016: 13)

2.4 Women in the Pre-colonial Socio-Political Setting of the Ameru

In pre-colonial times, many African communities generally subordinated women to their men folk. According to Midamba (1940: 23), the customary law that spelt out the social roles clearly privileged men over women. Hence, although the roles of the two were essentially complementary, men were generally considered to be superior. This section examines the socio-political structure of the pre-colonial Ameru society. It begins with the socio-political activities that were carried out within this structure, focusing on women.

The Ameru had gradually settled over most of the area that they occupy by 1895. It had taken them centuries of gradual extension into new areas of the North eastern slopes of Mt Kenya. In the meantime, the Ameru had evolved a socio-political structure that started at family level, through lineage families, clans and onto the highest of the Njuri Ncheke. We argue that the rites of passage were carefully designed and implemented such that men were empowered to assume greater roles in the system. The system privileged boys and men, assigning them greater leadership roles. This basically confined the female child and the woman to domains that were socially less progressive. Some of the socialisation mechanisms included gendered rites of passage and other rituals, including some that are discussed below.

2.4.1 The Ritual of Circumcision

This section summarises the circumcision rites of the Ameru. The initiation phase among the Ameru had more rites for the male child than the female. In fact, the initiation was for the men only. The male child had to go through several stages that helped him to grow as a well-disciplined man of integrity (Nyaga, 1997:34). There were institutional stages both for the circumcised and uncircumcised males. The first group of the organization was meant to prepare a male child for future responsibilities in society. These included *Kamichu*, *Kigumi*, and *Gaturi* (Imanyara, 1992:79). For the uncircumcised, the first stage was that of withdrawing a child from childish behavior through a process called *Kanamataka* (meaning to splash mud on oneself). This stage was also known as *Ukurua* (meaning to be made mature) and was for boys aged between seven to ten years old. M'Rimberia (O.I., 18/12/2014) observes that the stage involved making the boys realize that they were no longer children. The candidate was expected to stop childish behavior as *guchuna murugo and ijuga* (to scrap the cooking stick and utensils). He was also required to stop sharing the same

house with his mother and to avoid immodest behavior with girls (Nyaga, 1997:35), a thought also advanced by M'Rimberia (O.I., 18/12/2014).

The second stage was that of making one alert, called *Kaminchu* (to open one's eyes). To qualify for this stage one had to be at least twelve years old. The instructions given in this stage were similar to those given to scouts (Nyaga, 1997:35). The third stage was that of making one brave, firm and resolute. This stage was referred by the name *Kiigumi* (meaning to struggle to do the difficult things for those between thirteen to fifteen years old). The stage was very important, as circumcision could happen without it. Members of *kiigumi* had to comply with regulations such as to stop eating a certain type of green vegetables known as *Nyani* and green porridge (*ruguru*) that was normally prepared by leaves from arrowroot stems. The meal was a preserve for women and children. These rites show how exclusion of women led to dietary discrimination. The other rule was that at no time was a boy at this age be allowed to spend the night in his mother's house (*Kiuru kia ngina*). He was also not allowed to be touched by members of *Kaminchu* on the head or play with the young folk classified as *Nchuna*. He was also required to behave in a way that portrayed himself as a respectable member of *Kiigumi* (Imanyara, 1992: 8). According to Imanyara, *Kiigumi* was the ground-level "social organization for teaching good conduct and a sense of duty in pre-colonial Meru society. It featured boys and not girls."

A more important organization existed by the name *Gatuuri* to further prepare uncircumcised boys for greater responsibilities in the society. *Gatuuri* had also an inner organization at an advanced level (Imanyara, 1992:81; Nyaga, 1997:37). *Gatuuri* was also the last organization that trained uncircumcised boys. It drew its membership from boys of between fifteen and twenty-five years old. A candidate to

the organization had to pass a test after which he was required by custom to look for another boy in *Gatuuri* to become his 'father' in the organization. The fee for membership was cowrie shells (*tigira/thigira*). This was followed by a ceremony that was organized in the home of the candidate to inform the public that he had been recruited into *Gatuuri*, (Imanyara, 1992:8). One important aspect of the ceremony was giving the boy a new name, after which he was taught to accept that he was an integral member of the society and that he was required to develop a sense of responsibility and respect in relation to his organization and the whole community (Imanyara, 1992:81; Nyaga, 1997:37).

The institutional stages for the circumcised and the old included *Ramare* (stage of intermediaries), *Kiama gia Nkomango* (stage for upholding the law and condemning the evil), the *Njuri Ncheke* (council of supreme leaders) and the *Njuri Impere* or *Njuri Mpingere* (unit of the council of supreme leaders/grand jury) (Nyaga, 1997:34). Socio-political institutions of *Ramare*, *Kiama*, and *Njuri* were exclusively for circumcised males. *Ramare* comprised of warriors who had demonstrated leadership qualities. They were chosen to join the elders who had also been chosen by the other elders to form one council. This council was formed during the 'reshuffling of the government. (Nyaga, 1997:38). After admission to this council, the young man was briefed on his responsibilities to the whole society. These responsibilities included to defend the community from the enemies and to protect girls, boys, men and women in the community (Nyaga, 1997:38). Since young men were held as true protectors of all people in society, it was common to hear women crying for help from young men when in danger.

Based on the above, it is clear that the initiation process was exclusively aimed at the male children only as they grew into adulthood. Thus, the leadership apprenticeship among the pre-colonial Ameru was biased against girls and women because throughout the initiation phases, boys were strategically moulded into men who are taught leadership skills and accorded the mental strength to handle leadership challenges. Women did not undergo such rites that were considered integral to leadership. This means that men were well equipped to lead in comparison with women.

According to Mungiria (O.I. 20/12/14) unity across the various Meru clans (*mwiriga*) and sub-groups was achieved through an age-sets system, run along the same lines as the other central highlands Bantu societies. Following circumcision, every adult grew into a member of a particular age-set (see Table 1 below). Each age-set comprised fifteen years, meaning that for example, a man circumcised seven years after another might still belong to the same age-set. The system was cyclic such that one age set grew into a new phase as another replaced it. The system is Cushitic and Nilotic to a greater extent (Ferdinan, 2008). Further, the age-sets were founded on initiation rituals that entailed the participation of men only. Through age-sets, the men were formed into what would become leadership cohorts that would consult vertically or horizontally and formulate a tight bond that dominates the leadership of the community. In this regard, women were excluded from plans of preparing future leaders.

Table2.4.1.1: List of Ameru Age-Sets From 1752 to 1976

Year	Age-set	Social-political alternation
1976	Mung'atia	Ntiba
1962	Gichunge	Kiruka
1948	Mbaabu	Ntiba
1934	Mbaya	Kiruka
1920	Kiruja II	Ntiba
1906	Miriti	Kiruka
1892	Riungu	Ntiba
1878	Kiramana (Muthamia)	Kiruka
1864	Kaburia	Ntiba
1850	Kubai	Kiruka
1836	Nturutimi	Ntiba
1822	Tamburu	Kiruka
1808	Kiruja I	Ntiba
1794	Mbarata	Kiruka
1780	Micugu	Ntiba
1766	Ngutugua	Kiruka
1752	Mbaringo	Ntiba

Source: Imanyara, 1992:114

2.4.2 Marriage and Child Bearing

Marriage and childbearing among the Ameru clearly demonstrated the complementary roles of men and women. Even then, women's roles were portrayed as being secondary to men. This was apparent in an FGD held at Igoji on 20th December 2014. Sentiments at the FGD were clear that marriage was an important institution among the Ameru. Marriage was exogamous in that one was not allowed to marry from their clan because of the belief of sharing a common ancestor to all clan members. Polygamy was a common aspect in pre-colonial Meru society; men were allowed traditionally to marry many wives.

There were three major components of Ameru marriage namely; courtship, dowry, and the day the bridegroom fetched the bride (Nyaga, 1997:107). The courtship period was very important as it was the time when partners got the opportunity to learn about one another well before they got married. All marriage negotiations were between men. Women were not involved. Dowry was to be paid by the man or man's family to the woman's family. Dowry among the Ameru consisted of five items, thus one ewe, a container of honey (*giempe kia nainchu*), a heifer, a ram, and a bull (Nyaga, 1997:113). Dowry never distinguished between the poor and the rich. This is because these items paid as dowry had symbolic meaning. The items were shared by in-laws. What followed after paying of the dowry was the marriage ceremony. The father of the bride or the father's closest relative conducted the ceremony, preferably the members of Njuri Ncheke (Rimita, 1988:63). On the wedding day, and as the bride waited to be fetched in the evening, the girl's mother called village women who came to offer thorough counseling to the bride before she left her father's home. From the FGD, it emerged that the bride was advised particularly on the virtues of a good wife - respectful to her husband, and never to be rude or argue with him even if he annoyed her. She was made to believe that "the neck does not grow over the head" (Nyaga, 1977:116). She was not expected to hit back when being beaten by her husband. Rather she was expected to be submissive to her husband in all aspects. If a woman hit back when being beaten by her husband for whatever reason, that itself created a good ground for divorce depending on how serious the husband viewed the matter. Otherwise, a woman would be penalized by Njuri Ncheke and was cautioned never to repeat the offense. Among the Ameru community, men were allowed to beat their wives (Rimita, 1988:65). Once dowry was paid, any children born in that marriage belonged to the husband. Women had no children under the Meru custom (Rimita,

1988:63). Women were also never involved in resolving any marital differences or conflicts once they arose. Such matters were resolved either by the man's father, then referred to the girl's father and if the problem persisted, the clan council made the final decision. If the matter was very serious warranting a divorce, the matter was handled by the Njuri Ncheke (Nyaga, 1997: 127, 128). In this way, women were made to play second fiddle to men in an institution that is clearly complementary to both genders. This also came out in another FGD held in Kanyakine on 21/12/2014, where participants concurred that the profiling of women in marriage into a secondary role by the Ameru people in a great way made the culture biased toward women and their potential.

The bearing and raising of children was the natural expectation of the marriage. This was the primary duty of the couple. Barrenness was frowned upon, while a fertile woman who gave birth to many children was highly respected. Yet, even in this area where women actually gave life their role was still minimized. They were basically to be seen and not heard. At the same time, gender biases could also be noticed in the treatment of infants, depending on their gender. Boys were given greater significance in preparation for a vibrant public life later.

According to Gatobu (O.I. 19/12/2014) immediately after childbirth, women first broke the news about the sex of the baby by ululating four times if the baby was a boy and three times if it was a girl. Another rite for welcoming the baby involved obtaining blood from cattle. If it was a boy, the father would obtain blood from the neck of a bull, in the case of a girl, the blood was obtained from the neck of a heifer (Nyaga, 1997:138). The breastfeeding practice was that the male had the prioritization

of the right breast and female the left. Right from childbirth, a male child was equated to a 'bull' while a female was equated to a 'heifer', indicating that the men were accorded dominance over the women, right from birth.

2.4.3 Land Ownership and Inheritance

According to Mburugu (O.I., 18/12/2014) the marginalization of women in the Meru public space was clearly played out in the area of inheritance. The economic resources from the family level to the community level were under the control of men. The clan owned the land and was in the trust of all the units of family. The Njuri Ncheke had a final say in all issues related to land (Gichere; 2008:21). Also, according to the Meru custom, women were not entitled to own property, something that was confirmed by deliberations at an FGD held at Kariene on 17th December 2014.

The Ameru had also clear rules which governed the distribution of the property of the deceased. One could distribute his property during his lifetime. In such a case one ensured fair and equitable distribution among his sons following the customary rules. Daughters were not entitled to ownership of land, although the exception to this rule occasionally arose where a man had no sons. However, even then he could give a small share of the land to his daughter(s) while the rest went to either the nephew named after him or his brother(s) (Imanyara; 1992: 143,144). According to Mburugu, (O.I. 18/12/2014)

Daughters could only possess land indirectly so long as they had not been married. In such a case the appropriate brother could avail some land for her to cultivate during her lifetime. This could only happen when both parents were not alive.

2.4.4 Religion

From time immemorial, the Ameru people had a strong belief in the existence of only one God, a supreme power to whom they offered prayer and sacrifice, both in public and private (Murianki, O.I., 18/12/2014). The Ameru referred to their God in many names like *Baaba wetu*, *Murungu*, *Ngai*, *Kinii-Kiiru*, among others (Rimita, 1988:15). The male elders, especially members of the Njuri Ncheke, performed key religious roles for instance presenting prayers, which others responded to. The role of the women was peripheral. Women could not raise their voices in the presence of men, as they were not allowed even to lead a prayer. In the words of Murianki, (O.I., 18/12/2014):

“It was a taboo for a woman to stand in front of men. It was considered disrespectful especially to the husband. How can a woman stand to talk in a gathering yet the husband is in attendance?”

The Ameru had also a strong belief in the existence of spirits, whom they believed played a part in bringing either happiness or sorrow in the community, depending on the kind of life they lived. The Ameru referred to these spirits as *Nkoma cia bajuju betu* (the spirits of our ancestors). The Ameru lived in practical interaction with these spirits that entailed making libations and dropping bits of food to them to quench their thirst and relieve their hunger. Libations were also made to appease these spirits in times of misfortunes in a family (Nyaga, 1992:42).

The prophets had an honored place among the Ameru. The Ameru people had a powerful prophet called *Mugwe*. They relied on such prophets who advised them during times of crisis. Such prophets also predicted impending calamities, thereby permitting those concerned to avoid it ritually. During wars, the warriors turned to prophets for ancestral blessings, practical guidance, and approval of their plans. Men

of Imenti sought out the *Mugwe* to provide his approval (Nyaga, 1992: 104,105). These spiritual leaders did not only act as intermediaries between God and the people, but also served as a unifying factor between people of different clans to stop the escalation of wars.

During the offering of public sacrifices, the ceremony was organized and led by only old men who had reached a certain stage of initiation, thus members of the old men's council. During such occasions, women played a minimal role. Those that had reached a certain age of initiation prepared fermented gruel (*ugali*) and picked fruits from certain wild plants known as *ntongu*, after which they made a procession to the area or site where the sacrifice was made. Even then, the women were expected to stay a distance away from the actual site of sacrifice, making their role more peripheral. This demonstrates a clear gender biased mindset in the public where women were relegated to observers.

2.5: Pre- Colonial Economic Organization of the Ameru

The Ameru, just like many other African communities, engaged in economic activities that would see them interact on a need basis. The community was and still is largely agrarian, cultivating crops and keeping livestock. However, these economic activities – including trade, land ownership and agriculture – also served as arenas for gender roles.

2.5.1 Economic Activities

The pre-colonial Ameru economic activities were an arena where the male dominated the proceeds while the women worked to produce.

2.5.2 Agriculture

The Ameru were mixed farmers. They cultivated maize, millet, sorghum, and cowpeas. Their staple nourishment was called *Kithanda*, which was a blend of green maize, green vegetables, and maize flour. The maize flour was made by grinding maize using two stones that crushed the maize to flour. Maize flour meals included *ucuru, ugali and irio*. The Ameru also kept animals such as cows, goats and sheep. They also attached specialty to some animals that were utilized for penance. Mostly, the sheep of one colour, either dark or white was reared for this holy purpose. Women played their role in the growing of subsistence crops for the whole family. Their work required them to be on the move, which made them trek long distances as a portion of the ranches were situated far away from their homes. Men did practically nothing in assuming any ranch work (Gichere, 2008:22).

2.5.3: Trade

In the FGDs and oral interviews (Mungiria, O.I., 20/12/2014 & Giitu, O.I., 21/12/2014), the researcher established that the Ameru's trading activities in pre-colonial times involved individuals cutting spoons and scoops out of wood, and making a plate out of gourds called *tujuga* (calabashes). They additionally made pots and bushels, and tangles for dozing on.

Respondents also indicated that the Ameru were likewise a tracker/gatherer community. They hunted wildlife, for example *Ndia* (deers), *Nkurungu* (dik-dik) and gazelles. They assembled nectar, and customary organic products, for example, *Ndoroma, Ndakuye, and Mattoo*. There existed an association known as the *Aathi* who practiced chasing and assembling. With the appearance of the British in Ameru, chasing was prohibited and the *Aathi* association was restricted. Subsequently, the

Ameru were considered adversaries of the colonial rule since this gathering had prevented many people from claiming their work. Chasing, blacksmithing and creature exchange was a protection for the men.

Basketry was a job that was associated with women. The women also made earthen pots, holders and different domestic utensils. The women gave the homestead produce, which was sold and additionally claimed for exchange by the men. It is a reasonable marker of men procuring from what the women endeavored to plant.

SUMMARY

Based on the above information on social, economic and political organization of the Ameru it is quite evident that the Meru society was indeed a patriarchal society just like other African societies. In pre- colonial Meru society, men exerted their authority and control over women both at family level and the larger community as well. The above analysis clearly reveals that pre- colonial Meru women played minimal political roles, as this was a reserve for men. They never took leadership positions neither could they be consulted when key decisions had to be made regarding matters affecting the entire community. Meru women had no representation in the Njuri Ncheke council of elders including the two parties 'Kiruka' and 'Ntiba' that governed the Meru community.

CHAPTER THREE

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICS IN THE COLONIAL ERA IN MERU-1895-1963

3.1 Overview

This chapter examines the role of women in politics in colonial Kenya generally and in Imenti South Constituency particularly. The chapter details how colonial rule was established in Kenya, and particularly among the Ameru. Further, the chapter discusses the political economy of colonialism in South Imenti Constituency. Essentially, this chapter is an analysis of the colonial political and economic policies such as land alienation, taxation, and forced labor of colonial rule in South Imenti Constituency, and how women were implicated in these policies. Lastly, the chapter details women's participation in the fight for independence through their roles in political parties, propaganda, espionage, oath administration, and armed struggle. The data is derived from the interviews the researcher conducted with various key persons identified during the research.

3.2 Establishment of Colonial Rule in Present Kenya

The origin of white presence in present Kenya is to be traced to two general missionaries of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) who first settled on the Indian Ocean Coast around Mombasa (Were & Derek, 1987). They were the first white people to explore Kenya's hinterland, leading to later reports that Ludwig Krapf was the first white man to see Mt Kenya in 1849 while Johann Rebmann was the first one to sight Mt Kilimanjaro in 1848.

Soon after these missionaries' pioneering activities, white traders began to venture into the interior from the interior into the coast. In 1888 the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC) was founded to explore possibilities of trade in present

Kenya, and to hold brief on behalf of the British government. The Company became bankrupt in 1895, and was replaced by the East Africa Protectorate (EAP) that was formed the same year. The first twenty-five years of colonial works in Kenya were experienced under the EAP until 1920 when the country was declared a colony. By that time colonial rule had taken firm root in present Kenya.

The key interest of the British colonization of Kenya was pursuit of economic interests at the expense of the indigenous communities. Sir Charles Eliot, Commissioner (1901-1904) advised the British government that the EAP appeared “admirably suited for a white man’s coming (Kiruthu, Kapiyo, & Kimiri, 2011). Sir Eliot encouraged white migration into and settlement in the “Protectorate.” This led to an influx of white population and with it the annexation of land from indigenous people. This was especially the case in Central Kenya among the Agikuyu and in Rift Valley among the Maasai and the Kalenjin.

According to Koczberski (1998: 597), colonization in Africa is associated with fundamental long term changes to indigenous social and political structures and to land tenure and land use. This in turn led to a disruption of whole societies lasting the colonial period. In Kenya, this disruption and reworking of socio-economic systems lasted sixty-eight years, till independence in 1963. Koczberski (1998) rightly argues that broadly, women bore the brunt of colonial oppression and socio-economic destruction.

3.3 Establishment of Colonial Rule in Meru.

In 1908 the British established their colonial administration in Meru with Edward Brother Horne as the first district commissioner. He was nicknamed *Kangangi* (a wanderer) by the Ameru because of the movement he made here and there riding on his horse. He arrived in Meru during the age group of *Murungi* (Imanyara, 1972:71; Gichure, 2008:20). Horne was initiated into the membership of indigenous legislative Njuri Ncheke, a symbolic act that sealed a diplomatic accord between the colonial administration and Njuri Ncheke elite (ibid). Six years Horne's arrival, World War 1 broke out and the British recruited some of the Meru men as porters. The present age-set at the time was thus nicknamed *Kaaria* from the English name "carrier" (Imanyara, 1992:71).

The effects of colonialism and the two world wars deprived the *Miriti* and *Guantais* of their right to leadership. The betrayals were initiated by the *Murungi* age-set alongside their sons, the *Kiruja*. These age-sets were pro-British (Mungiria, O.I., 20/12/2014). The betrayal caused resentment from both the age-sets of *Miriti* and *Guantai*'s, who pushed for self-rule, liberty, and favourable land reforms, which later led them to join Mau Mau, world war veterans became leaders.

3.4 The Victorian Patriarchal Ideology and the Suppression of Women in Colonial Meru

In Chapter Three of this study, we demonstrated that patriarchy was prevalent among the Ameru in precolonial times. This section shows how the colonial order combined with the traditional Ameru patriarchy to further limit women from participating in matters affecting them. The study shows that despite these deliberate constraints, the

Ameru women utilized whatever spaces they could find to participate in societal affairs of their day.

The British colonial order was a product of the Victorian Era which covered the reign of Queen Victoria that spanned from 1837 to 1901. This was a period in the 19th Century when Britain led the world in many areas, including the industrial and agrarian revolutions. Yet it was also the period of the highest gender disparity in British history. In fact, the era has been described as the ‘Golden Age of Patriarchy.’ During the period, men discriminated against their female counterparts in almost every aspect of society, including their families. This patriarchy was reinforced by governments, political parties, the legal system, and religious institutions.

Just as men gender controlled the British societies, the colonial order exercised hegemonic control over the societies they colonized. In the place of the woman being subservient, the colony and its “subjects” were expected to serve the “king” without raising questions of equality and fairness. For African women, colonial rule meant that they suffered double subjugation which entailed bowing to patriarchal traditional assumptions of inferiority to men, while suffering discrimination under colonialism as Africans. Consequently, active participation of women in public affairs during colonial era was greatly curtailed.

Colonialism institutionalized this ideology among the Ameru people, including those of South Imenti Constituency. The colonial government amplified traditional patriarchal leadership forms and styles (Kabira & Masinjila, 1997: 3). Apart from retaining the Njuri Ncheke council of elders, which was male-dominated, colonialism also ensured that nearly all the top colonial administrators in South Imenti and the

greater Meru were men. Colonial habits and lifestyles were also transposed upon the Ameru, and reinforced the traditional British structure where women existed as appendages of the male 'breadwinner.' Women were popularized as social butterflies whose sole responsibility was to stand behind their husbands and provide the obligatory moral support (Kabira, 1997:3). Ultimately, the colonial system rigidly put in place a system that sharply divided the domestic (home) sector from the public sector, subsequently promoting modern forms of separate private (home) spheres for women and men and public spheres that were largely male. As earlier noted, the socio-economic and political structures of the Ameru women were entirely relegated to the private (home) domain while men dominated the public sphere.

3.4.1 Gender Disparity in Colonial Government Employment

The colonial order involved a new way of doing things and a new system of upward mobility. This system was pegged on Western formal education as promoted by Christian missions and colonial government. The jobs available in government needed literacy skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic. Depending on the level and type of skills one attained, he/she would work as a clerk, a teacher, an accountant, a nurse, a medical attendant, a police man, an interpreter, an assistant chief or chief, a foreman and such other jobs in the civil service. Where papers were not required, for example in the police force, physical strength tipped the balance (Kithinji, O.I., 20/12/2014).

The set-up was from the very beginning skewed in favor of men and against women. Formal education was new to both genders, yet the boys were more disposed to it than the girls. Initially, the Ameru resisted to send all their children to colonial schools. Gradually, however, the boys were allowed to attend while for the girls were kept at

home. Girls were victims of the traditional gender stereotypes since they were not expected to be prominent in public matters. Rather, they were expected to stick by the sides of their mothers to learn how to be good wives and good at nursing and caring for their children. This argument was well advanced by Kithinji, (O.I., 20/12/2014) who stated that:

“Nobody would take their daughters to school because after all they would be married off to go benefit another family. So fathers saw it fit to send their sons to school and many were proud to boast to their friends that the son had learnt how to write their names”.

Consequently, up to the 1940s when boys were exposed to western education, many girls among the Ameru were confined to performing domestic chores. As ‘jobs’ began to emerge for Africans in the government, the girls could not even attempt to compete. A very small percentage was able to fit in the new order. In this way, a whole generation of women was disadvantaged. While the modern western culture and lifestyle became more acceptable and the yardstick of gauging success, women remained less visible in the public space.

An example of this disparity was in the recruitment of Africans into civil leadership. During the entire colonial period, only two women served as ‘chief’ and ‘assistant chief’, respectively (KNA/DC/MRU/1/8/1952). In the whole of colonial Kenya, the only two women who ever served as administrators were Magana Ogonga Nyar (the first woman colonial chief from Western Kenya) and *ciokaraine* who served as Assistant Chief from the present Meru County. No woman was appointed to the position of ‘headman.’ This absence in leadership correspondingly pointed to minimal participation in forums discussing matters of the community, especially in respect to distribution of public resources. In fact, gradually all public employment except nursing, teaching, and secretarial jobs came to be identified with men. Table 2 below

shows the appointment of tax collectors in Meru in 1952, as an illustration of this gender bias.

Table3.4.1: Tax Collectors Appointed by the Colonial Government in 1952

No.	Name	Responsibility post	Year
1)	Wilfred Rutere	Tax-clerk	1/1/1952 -31/12/1952
2)	Mr. Ayub Kirimi	Tax-clerk	1/1/1952 -31/12/1952
3)	Mr. Livingstone	Registration – clerk	1/1/1952 -31/12/1952
4)	Mr. Kaburu Kubwa	Registration – clerk	1/1/1952 -31/12/1952

Source: KNA/DC/MRU/1/8)

3.4. 2 Public Resources and Economic Empowerment of Ameru Women

This study defines politics as activities associated with governance of the community, especially in relation to resource allocation. In this respect, land remains the primary resource around which much contestation has taken place in Meru from pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial eras. The establishment of colonial rule in Kenya was marked by land alienation from Africans to the British, especially in what became the ‘white highlands’. In Meru, colonization brought with it individual land ownership. This greatly favoured men. Traditionally, although men still controlled land ownership and use, there were special rights for women which ensured that their need for resources was clearly addressed (Mbogori O.I. 16/12/2014). This was overturned with land tenure and use during the colonial period. There was adjudication and individual titling of land in the name of the male head of the household. Thus, in the political economy of colonization, Ameru women were completely deprived of the right to own land. It was the man who had overall charge and after him his sons took over.

Women were pushed to the periphery and had no say in the allocation and use of land in the family. They were at the mercy of their husbands. This marginalization was easily transferable in the emerging colonial agriculture, which witnessed the introduction of cash crops such as tea and coffee. Men owned the plantations and earned money from them, while women remained on the margins working to produce subsistent food crops on small parcels ‘given’ to them by their husbands (M’Mungania, O.I. 17/12/2014). According to Mbogori (O.I. 17/12/2014), and as already argued in this chapter, the colonial order oppressed women twice, first as Africans and secondly as women. The public space for the women of Meru County and especially in Imenti South Sub-location was deliberately set to be dominated by men. The women were disempowered and hardly influenced public life.

3.4.3 Male Migrant Labor and the Takeover of Homes by Women in Meru

One area where the emerging colonial order impacted on men and women in Kenya unevenly was the exposure of the former to modernity through colonial labor requirements in the plantations and in the emerging towns. The alienated land for white settlers meant that there was need for African labor. Yet the Africans were not willing to provide this (Mugambi, O.I., 18/12/2014). The origin of imposition of taxes on Africans was the need to force them to go to work on white farms in order to pay the taxes.

Among the Ameru of South Imenti Constituency, there was land for family distribution in the sense that the men left the women back home and went out to earn money for the taxes. Many young husbands left the homes to be run by their wives (Karatu, O.I. 28/12/2014). The women cared for their children, the family farm, and generally unofficially headed the households. Here was the unusual situation where the constant male figures in the community were the chiefs and older men. It is to the

great credit of the women folk that during this period the families did not break up thanks to the women who did more than their conventional share of labour (Hay, 1984: 13).

Apart from provision of labor on the farms, the development of urban centers like Meru, Embu, Nyeri, Thika, and Nairobi towns became a new attraction to the Meru politics as the decades passed. The ‘taste’ of money changed the men’s perception of life. They realized that with money it was possible to live an easier life that exposed one to the amenities of modernity, especially as found in the towns. Gradually, the men would last longer away in the towns where they provided labor. They would appear at home on quarterly, biannually, or annually to see their families. They were absentee husbands whose domestic responsibilities fell squarely on the shoulders of the women.

The flip-side was that while it had become the norm for the men to “go to work” for months, the same could not be envisaged for women. It was not imaginable that a woman could leave her home to an urban center in search for employment (Midamba, 1990). The thought of it was perceived as a danger to familial stability and a disruption of traditional family values (Mbogori, O.I. 15/12/2014). In fact, in the early phase of colonialization, it was the policy of the government to restrict women movement, especially the unmarried ones. According to M’uketha (O.I. 15/12/2014). The women were as much as possible to be confined in the villages so as to make the men go back from time to time. Unfortunately for the women, the men came to understand the new order of modernity faster and better and took the advantage of the awareness to dominate new situations that emerged during

colonization. The men firmly positioned themselves to take charge of the social-political structures that came up.

The sharp division between the public and private sectors kept women in the private sector and men in the public sector. A public sphere of ideas, opinions, resistance activities and generally nationalistic oriented movements developed. These were male-dominated sectors, so Ameru men enjoyed political education which prepared them further for leadership. Although women inevitably participated in nationalistic political action, they were not given a place in the mainstream (M'Kirimania, O.I., 16/12/2014). Most of their activities were glossed over as supporting their husband's brothers, fathers, and other relatives. In other words, their participation was not seen as arising from their commitment and articulation of the political situation.

3.5 Maendeleo ya Wanawake organization- (1950s)

In 1952, the government established a unit called “Women in Development” in its community development programmes (Nzomo, 1989). It came to be better known by its Kiswahili translation – *Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organization* (MYWO). What suddenly prompted the government to do this so late during colonial rule is not clear. However, it is likely due to the fact that the Victorian ideology that had informed government policy regarding women for almost six decades was wearing thin. A policy that just discriminated against one gender was no longer tenable. The authorities needed to help women to catch up with their male counterparts. The MYWO set up branches across the country. The organization became the first local Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) charged with the responsibility of mobilizing women for their development.

In Meru generally and Imenti South Constituency particularly, the *Maendeleo ya Wanawake* organization was very active and effective in raising awareness among women on how to shed their past and become modern and effective participants in public affairs. The organization encouraged the girl child to realize that she could perform well in school. It sought to make women better mothers in both taking care of the children and the whole family.

The *Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organization* had come into existence just as the Mau Mau armed liberation struggle was taking shape. It is arguable that the organization was created by the colonial regime as an alternative forum to the crusade for independence that had started in the late 1940s, and which was gaining momentum in 1952. For the rest of the 1950s, the organization was used by the colonial government, especially in the Mt Kenya region, as an instrument against the Mau Mau struggle which had recruited women into its ranks. In this way, the MYWO was used to manage and to discourage the Meru women from joining the militant Mau Mau (Mugambi, O.I. 18/12/2014). The MYWO was positioned as ideal for progressive women, as contrasted with the Mau Mau members who were depicted as wild, backward, uneducated and violent (Ithinji, O. I. 28/01/ 2015). Many women in South Imenti Constituency were willing to join MYWO primarily to escape from the harsh forced labor conditions that had been imposed by the colonial government. Members of MYWO were exempted from hard labor and also received salaries from the colonial government.

3.6 Participation of Women in Politics in Meru- 1895 to 1963

From 1952 to 1960, Kenya was in turmoil due to the Mau Mau war. The Kikuyu, Embu, and Ameru took an active role during this resistance (Maloba, 1993: 88;

Kabira & Masinjila, 1997; Gachichi; 1986). South Imenti Constituency was a hotbed of Mau Mau. In August 1952, the first evidence of the administration of the Mau Mau oath in Meru District appeared. The ceremonies took place in the upper Abothuguchi and South Imenti locations in Meru (KNA/DC/MRU/1/8). Margret Wangui (1986) argues that in the absence of active enrolment and partaking of women in the struggle for independence, the Mau Mau would have lacked longevity. Wangui further notes that women established a critical link between the fighters and the nondescript side of the struggle living in the reserves. Her sentiments are echoed in the interview findings between the researcher and the Nkubu Primary Head Teacher, Mbogori (O.I., 20/12/2014), who says in a subtle but tactical manner, women played a key role in the social struggles in South Imenti Constituency and the world at large.

Women's roles during the Mau Mau were as multi-faceted as the war itself (Maloba, 1993:177). These roles encompassed the creation and maintenance of key supply channels that ensured food, medicine, guns, and news were supplied through the resistance. Some women combined both domestic works with minor military duties like cleaning guns and helping to make weapons and ammunition. Eventually, some became full-fledged warriors, fighters alongside men as narrated by various women interviewed by the researcher (Mbogo, O.I., 20/12/2014; Mbogori, O.I., 21/12/2014; and Gatobu, O.I., 20/12/2014). Uniquely, the assertion above is a life experience for the first woman MP from Karimi, who was the Ameru community (Karimi, 2019). Some women participated in the struggle and these include Muthoni Wagacie, Wagara Wainana, Priscilla Wambaki, and Rebecca Njeri. They took up key leadership roles (Presley, 1988; Kabira, 1997; Gachichi, 1986). Wamuyu Gakuru created and

led a unit of girls believed to be prostitutes but who in a real sense were Mau Mau warriors.

Women kept on proving themselves reliable and well equipped to execute Mau Mau errands. Some of them were selected into the political field. Ruth Gathoni (2014), a previous political activist, contends that the Mau Mau held gatherings where women attended and aired their views during the Mau Mau. Prior, women only received reports of the decisions made during the meetings that were held in their absence (Kabira, 1997:65). During this time, the Mau Mau initiative stopped being a preserve of men. There was no contrast between male or female pioneers. Men perceived ladies' political capacities where a few women, for example Muthoni Ngatha, rose to the senior position of a field marshal. Recent scholarship has correctly acknowledged the important roles of women during Mau Mau (Maloba, 1993). Maloba sought to correct what he saw as a deliberate effort to omit the valuable contribution of women in Mau Mau. This kind of omission had created the false impression that politics was mainly a male domain (Presley; 1988). Indeed, the Ameru women were equally involved through their great contribution during the Mau Mau war KNA/DC/MRU/1/8.

In 1961 there were general elections organized by the legislative assembly of Kenya. KANU won the majority of seats with twenty-four out of sixty-five. All seats were won by men. This was replicated in the 1963 pre-independence elections where Jomo Kenyatta emerged as the prime minister, and had a majority of men as the elected leaders (Imanyara, 1992). Previously in 1962, Kenyatta had led a group of male parliamentarians to London during the second Lancaster House Conference to discuss

the creation of the Kenya Constitution, notably with male leaders. This conference had only one Kenya women representative, Priscilla Abwao. All other delegates were men. She was, therefore, alone and the singular female voice alongside a multitude of men legislators (Musandu, 2006:66).

3.7 Women Involvement in the Struggle for Independence

The Ameru women and by extension, South Imenti women, played a big role in the struggle for independence as waged by the Mau Mau movement. Women's roles included serving in propaganda teams, espionage, and armed struggle. This section reviews the role played by women in the struggle for independence.

Women of South Imenti were involved in the real struggle. They played the dominant part of engaging in non-battle jobs that were additionally key to the sustenance and endurance of the Mau Mau movement, both in the woods and the stores. Explaining why not very many ladies were remembered for the top Mau Mau initiative positions, General Nkungi reacted by citing a Kimeru axiom that, "*Mwinire ukimwarairia muka nuogaaru nyingi*" (Ithinji, O.I., 23/01/2015). This implies that a woman has a place in several "homes," therefore when conditions compel her to leave one home for another, she moves her devotion from the previous "home". In that specific setting "home" alluded to the Mau Mau and "the follower camps", separately. That was why Mau Mau constrained and deliberately controlled South Imenti ladies' access to the top authority positions, aside from in extraordinary and uncommon cases (Muriuki, O.I., 18/12/2014). Generally, in South Imenti and the larger Ameru people, ladies could wed into a few families on various occasions throughout their lifetime and change their loyalty as required.

The accompanying South Imenti women, among them two Generals, are a portion of those distinguished by different respondents (Ithinji, O.I., 28/01/2015; Mwirigi, O.I., 16/12/2014; Rutere, O.I., 19/12/2014; Mutwiri, O.I., 24/12/2014; and Mberia, O.I., 15/09/2015) as having been engaged with real battling during the Mau Mau. These included General Kithonjo (otherwise known as Charity), General Nkobia (Jacinta Kabika spouse of Mwariama), Kathambi (PA to Baimungi), Julia Karuki (PA to General Kula – Twende), Ka-White (from Kianthumbi Town), Kathuni wa Mathiu (from Katheri), Cio-Mubea (Daughter of Muthigari from Kianthumbi), Karegi (from Kithirune), and Wanjiru (Baimungi's Kikuyu wife).

3.8 Ameru Women and the Colonial Order: Coming out of the Closet

The emerging complex colonial context impacted on the Ameru Society and the role of women. Gradually, the traditionally unquestioning and submissive “women” began to reflect on and interpret developments in their society. Key factors that influenced this changing self-perception included the western formal school system, exposure to western culture (especially through Christian missionaries), opportunities for employment of Africans as clerks and teachers in the new system, as well as opportunities of petty business. According to Gachihi (1986), all these impacted on African women in Kenya. Despite the ethos associated with Victorian England that privileged men, women in colonial Kenya began to redefine themselves within their socio-political contexts. This self-consciousness began in the early 1920s when women in Nairobi demonstrated in defense of Harry Thuku who was fast becoming the mouth-piece of African interests and welfare in the colony.

Apart from Nairobi and Central Kenya (among the Agikuyu) where this consciousness was clearly most pronounced, women in other communities began to variously express interest in the public sphere. In the 1930s, the Ameru women stood out to express their views on various issues. According to Lambert, a former colonial administrator and anthropologist, in the 1930s Ameru women questioned certain actions by colonial agencies. Lambert (1956:100) records that thousands of women from Abothuguchi area in Meru mobilized themselves and marched to the administration station. They demanded the exhumation of bodies buried by the order of the Native Authority Ordinance, but which was against Meru customs. To the Ameru, this was discretion of tradition which had in turn led to failure of norms and to famine. In this case, it took the women mobilization to protest for the community.

In another incident, Lambert (1956:100) notes that in 1939, women from Igembe looted an Indian's store as a protest against random price inflation and exploitation of the locals. This was not imaginable even in pre-colonial Meru. A new Meru woman was emerging to take her place in the public space. Then in 1949, as a result of growing hostility towards colonial policies and general contempt for the Africans, Igoji women in South Imenti rioted against the then newly introduced soil conservation programme (M'Rimberia O.I. 2014). Thus, women had their voices heard in a way that surprised even the men. Such protests proved to be a forerunner of the militant Mau Mau struggle that broke out in the early 1950s.

One woman who symbolized the new Meru women during the late colonial period was Ciokaraine M'mbarungu. She was born in 1909 in the Maua area in a family of diviners (M'Rimberia O.I., 18/12/2014). Lore suggests that M'mbarungu was

orphaned early in life and grew up close to her grandfather, Kiabira wa Mwichuria, who was a “Mugo” or medicineman. Some sources indicate that she grew to become a diviner herself (F G D, Kanyakine, 29/12 2014), but there are no reported incidents where this was manifested. However, one event that is captured in Meru oral tradition was with Mau Mau in early 1954. Accordingly, Kibuti, a member of the Ameru Njuri Ncheke was killed by the Mau Mau in Gauki area. This killing irked the colonial administration which accused the residents of supporting Mau Mau fighters in the forest, sending them reserved food and other supplies. To cut this supply chain, the colonial regime decreed that all the residents of Gauki move from the area of Kiegoi. Senior colonial chief M’Mruaa of Igembe went further by ordering the residents of Ithima and Akachiu to congregate near the location of the current Maua Town with gummy sacks and baskets. They were ordered to uproot or destroy their food crops like yams and bananas. This was meant to be punishment for their ‘collaboration’ with the fighters in the forest. It was then that the woman Ciokaraine, who was in her mid-forties, rose to mobilise the community of both men and women to disobey the chiefs’ orders. The community obeyed her and embarrassed the chief, the Njuri Ncheke and the colonial administration. Yet, she did not just rebel for the sake of it. When she appeared before the Njuri Ncheke, she proved to be the ‘voice of reason’ in the ongoing conflict in the area. Her argument was simple. Destroying the crops would lead to famine and create a new problem. She argued that it was more appropriate for the council, the chiefs, and the government to guard the crops and protect the residents from the threats of Mau Mau since they were also victims. Ciokaraine’s bravery and level of reasoning challenged and changed the colonial outlook towards the community. The government established a buffer zone next to all the farms near the forest. This insulated the residents and their crops from the Mau

Mau attacks. In recognition of her balanced approach to the conflict, the colonial government appointed Ciokaraine to be an assistant chief, a position she held till 1959 when she retired.

3.9 The Mau Mau Uprising among the Meru and the Role of the Women

From 1952 to 1960, the Kenya Colony was in a state of emergency due to the Mau Mau war (Maloba 1993). According to Ndubai (2016), the history of the struggle has been dominated by pro-Kikuyu narratives at the expense of other participating communities, especially the Ameru and Aembu. He dispels this notion and demonstrates that the 'others', especially the Ameru, played a significant role in sustaining the struggle from the beginning to the end. Ndubai points out that all the senior ranks in the Mau Mau structure were shared almost equally between the Ameru and the Agikuyu. These were: field marshals, generals, brigadiers, majors, and captains. Prominent Ameru personalities in the structure were General M'anampiu Gaita, Field Marshal Mwariama, General Mathenge, and General Baimungi. They recognised field Marshal Dedan Kimathi as their commander in chief.

The Ameru played a key role in sustaining the struggle in all the communities. They participated in military combat and in all the other aspects of the struggle. In fact, South Imenti was a hotbed of the war in Meru. According to the records of the colonial government, earlier evidence of the involvement of the Ameru involved the administration of the Mau Mau oath in August 1952. This was in the upper Abothuguchi and South Imenti locations of the then Meru District, (KNA/DC/MRU/1/8).

For this study, it is noteworthy that the Ameru women with their Agikuyu counterparts in central Kenya collectively sustained the war until the end (Mbogori O.I., 2014). Gichihi (1986) rightly observes that the role of the Agikuyu women in the struggle was in the form of critical link between the combatants and those who managed a nondescript role, as well as operating from the ‘reserves’ or area of ‘native’ settlement. The main players in this entity were the women.

What happened in the rest of Central Kenya was replicated in Meru and Embu. Indeed, these were key theatres of the same war and under the same command. Hence, the roles of Ameru women of South Imenti in Mau Mau, to use Maloba’s phrase (1993: 177), were multifaceted, involving the creation and maintenance of key supply channels which ensured that food, medicine, guns and intelligence were conveyed from the civilian villages to the combatants (KNA/DC/MRU/1/8). Some of the women combined these conveniently female roles with a degree of involvement in combat, fighting alongside their male counterparts (Gatobu, O.I., 2014). This, however, was more pronounced among the Agikuyu women in Central Kenya. Nevertheless, a number of Ameru women took part in combat and need special mention (FGD Kanyakine 28/12/2014).

General Kithonjo aka Chanty, was a resident of South Imenti. She rose to become a ‘General’ in the Mau Mau army and played very strategic roles. She coordinated the ‘production’ and conveyance of arms and ammunition to the combatants in the forest. She ensured that food, clothes, and medicine supplies were sustained. This earned her the designation “Mureri wetu”, meaning “our provider.” She coordinated the gathering and passing of much needed intelligence on what went on in the community

(Mutwiri O.I., 17/12/2014). Yet when need arose, Kithonjo would get involved in live combat. It was this that earned her the title of General.

Another prominent Meru woman in Mau Mau was General Nkobia, alias Jacinta Nabiha, wife of Field Marshal Mwariama. She got into Mau Mau activities in her teenage. This is how she met her future husband. Her specialty in the forest involved the making of guns. She was clearly involved in the combat leading to her promotion to General Nkobia (meaning General hot) (M'mbijiwe O. I. 18/12/2014). She was famous for buying a spear which she surrendered to the African-led government in 1963.

Other prominent Ameru women in Mau Mau included Kathambi, who was the personal assistant to General Kula Twende; Kathuni wa Mathiu, Cio-Mubea, Karegi, and Wanjiru from Central Kenya, but who was General Baimungi's wife.

Summary

It is evident that women's political participation in the colonial era was constrained by gender-biases and demeaning mistreatment right from the national level to constituency level. Thus, the roles women played in politics at the time were under the patriarchal order. The order suppressed women, restricted the full realization of their potential and prevented them from exercising their rights to land, liberty, and respectful labor, among others.

Despite these challenges, women played critical roles in the struggle for independence through deeds such as championing for the struggle propaganda, espionage and

oathing. Hence, women were instrumental and powerful despite the alienation of roles institutionalized by the cultural institutions of South Imenti specifically, Meru and colonial societies generally. Policymaking and political decisions were a preserve of the men. The role of women's political participation in this era was thus naturally peripheral, but not at their choosing. Instead, it is at the systemic bias that existed both at the traditional level and the colonial level.

The chapter has demonstrated the role of women in public affairs in Kenya during the colonial period in general and in Meru in particular. The chapter details how the Ameru women emerged from a highly patriarchal precolonial sociopolitical set up into a colonial Victorian order that privileged men over women in the public space. It shows how the new colonial order opened more opportunities from men, while excluding women and condemning them to almost non-starters in matters of formal western education, and government employment.

The chapter similarly details the resilience of the Ameru women in maximizing the little space that they secured to better their lot. As we hope to have clarified, the Ameru women were not docile and static objects; rather, they were live agents who learned how to take their chances and to excel in their own way to the benefit of the whole society. This is seen in the specific examples of the Meru women who led protests against obvious colonial injustices and sought to correct the lies. The chapter has also detailed the role of the Ameru women in the Mau Mau struggle for independence. In short the chapter is about the evolution of a new Ameru woman responding vigorously in the suppressive colonial system. The next chapter examines the place of Imenti South Women in public affairs in independent Kenya.

CHAPTER FOUR

PARTICIPATION OF SOUTH IMENTI WOMEN IN POST-INDEPENDENCE POLITICS, 1963-2013

4.1 Overview

This chapter focuses on the place of women in post-independence politics in Kenya generally and Meru in particular. The chapter demonstrates the transition from the colonial political roles dominated by the white settlers to the self-rule of Africans, while examining the roles of the Ameru women from independence in 1963 to the 2013 General Elections.

The chapter argues that the exit of colonialists enabled men in Kenya to take over political power, neglecting women in politics, resource allocation, and representation in public spaces. However, women began to gradually work their way into these public spaces by participating in central elective politics as voters and then competitors, in spite of gender-based hostility towards the women. Apart from running for elective positions in the national assembly, women also made their presence felt as the deciding factor in the voting. Furthermore, they mobilized themselves at 'ward level' local politics to influence issues concerning them at the grassroots levels.

On December 12, 1963, Kenya attained her independence from Britain. Yet the new order quickly assumed the male dominance in practically all public areas. Ironically, this was only the start of a new liberation movement for the women, in a process that was very gradual (Nzomo 1989). The first general election in transition in Kenya took place in May 1963. The Kenya African National Union (KANU) party under Jomo Kenyatta won easily. Kenyatta became the founding Prime Minister and, in 1964, the

first president of the Republic of Kenya. Notably, the first ever parliament was all male. There was not a single woman elected or nominated, despite seven women contesting in the 1963 elections (Kanyinga & Okello, 2010: 600). This would be the trend in the decades that followed (see Table 3 below). In all, progress of women inclusion in public electoral politics was gradual.

Table4.2.1: Women Representation in Kenya’s 1st - 11th Parliaments: 1963 – 2013

<i>Parliament</i>	<i>Years</i>	<i>Total Number of Members Elected</i>	<i>Total Number of MPs Nominated</i>	<i>Number of Elected Men vs. Women</i>		<i>Number of Nominated Women vs. Men</i>	
				<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
1 st	1963-1969	158	2	158	0	2	0
2 nd	1969-1974	158	11	157	1	10	1
3 rd	1974-1979	158	16	154	4	14	2
4 th	1979-1983	158	15	154	4	14	1
5 th	1983-1988	158	10	156	2	9	1
6 th	1988-1992	188	10	186	2	10	0
7 th	1992-1997	188	13	182	6	12	1
8 th	1997-2002	210	14	206	4	9	5
9 th	2002-2007	210	12	200	10	4	8
10 th	2008-2012	210	12	194	16	6	6
11 th	2013-2017	290	12	274	16	7	5
	TOTAL		125	2021	112	94	30

Source: Amin & Smoll (1975); ECK, (1997:110); Nzomo, (2003:25); Kamau, (2010:3); Mburia, Thuo & Nyambura (2011); FIDA (2013)

As Table 3 shows, from 1st to 10th parliament (1963 – 2012) only fifty women candidates were elected to the National Assembly and only twenty-five were nominated (Kihoro, 2007; Mitullah, 2010). During the terms of Jomo Kenyatta and Daniel Moi, women remained largely marginalized in Kenya’s elective politics. Indeed, some scholars assert that women roles in electoral politics have always been watered down to playing auxiliary roles to male politicians (Kasomo, 2012).

The 1969 General Elections led to a unicameral national assembly of 158 members. The election witnessed two women in make headlines. Jael Mbogo, who was then a nominated councilor from Eastlands in Nairobi, contested against Mwai Kibaki, who was then the Minister for Finance, for the Bahati (currently called Makadara) parliamentary. She was the only woman out of the seven candidates, and gave Kibaki such a stiff competition, only losing by about five hundred votes. The second woman to make history was Grace Onyango, the first African female mayor of Kisumu (1965-1969). She successfully vied for the Kisumu Town parliamentary seat in 1969 and made history as the woman to be elected to parliament in Kenya. She was re-elected in 1974, alongside two new elected female members: Julia Ojiambo of Busia Central and Philomena Mutai of Eldoret North constituencies. The election of these women in the 1970s set the pace for greater participation of women in the national politics, especially in the 1990s during the peak of the struggle for constitutional review. The promulgation of the current constitution in August 2010 was a major breakthrough for the women of Kenya in addressing critical issues involving inheritance, representation, and women's rights generally.

4.2 The Meru Women in National Assembly Politics: The Case of Annarita Karimi Njeru

Among the Ameru, the role of women in emerging politics remained low-key, as seen in the dismal participation of women in constituency politics as candidates. In the 1963 transitional election, Meru County had six constituencies, namely Meru West, Meru Central, Tharaka, Meru South, Nyambene South, and Nyambene North. All these seats were won by men. (KNA/ADM/4/2 VOL II; 1963 KNA DC/MRU2/1/3/P:63.64). Table 4 represents the results of the 1963 election.

Table 1.3.1: An Analysis of Meru General Election Results: 1963

REGIONAL ASSEMBLY				
Constituency	Name of the Candidate	Gender	Party	Symbol
Meru West	Janarius Gituma	Male	KANU	Cockerel
South Imenti	Stanley Rinkanya	Male	KANU	Cockerel
Nyambene South	James Kanampiu	Male	KANU	Cockerel
Meru South	Bernard Njoka	Male	KANU	Cockerel
Nyambene North	Joseph Muturia (returned unopposed)	Male	KANU	Cockerel
SENATE				
Meru	Julius Muthamia	Male	KANU	Cockerel
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES				
Meru West	Jackson Angaine	Male	KANU	Cockerel
Meru Central	Simon Kamunde	Male	KANU	Cockerel
Tharaka	James Njeru	Male	KANU	Cockerel
Meru South	Philip Nyagah	Male	KANU	Cockerel
Nyambene South	Abraham Gachiata	Male	KANU	Cockerel
Nyambene North	Samuel Ithirai (returned unopposed)	Male	KANU	Cockerel

Source: KNA ADM/4/2/vol II/156 - 1963

In 1963, South Imenti was not a constituency but a ward for the regional assembly. There was also a seat for the greater Meru District in the senate, which was won by Julius Muthama, a man. A second senate seat reserved for Meru was the senate nominee, which was also taken by a man, Alexander Kiraithe. It was not until mid-1970s that the first woman in Meru – Annarita Karimi Njeru – featured in competitive politics at National Assembly level. Ms. Njeru was born around 1940. She lost her mother in 1953, a decade before independence and was taken in by the Igoji Mission. She did her high school at Loreto Girls, Limuru. In 1967, she earned a scholarship to the USA and on her return to Kenya, she was employed by the

Teachers Service Commission (TSC) as a graduate teacher. She became the head teacher of St. Mary's Girls, Igoji (*The Standard*, October 13, 2019).

In 1974, Karimi resigned from her teaching job to contest for the Meru Central parliamentary seat (Kanyinga & Okello, 2010). She raced against six men in a hotly contested election, campaigning with meager resources. This impoverished her, but she emerged fourth with two thousand (2000) votes. The seat was won by veteran politician and tycoon Kabeere M'Mbijiwe.

M'Mbijiwe's victory was challenged in court on grounds of using witchcraft. According to Karimi herself (O.I. 2014), she had gone back to the TSC and had been redeployed, but the turn of events made her resign and enter the fray once more in 1975. During the trial of M'Mbijiwe, his male opponents testified against him, and his election victory was nullified by the court. Karimi testified to the effect that she did not witness any witchcraft from M'Mbijiwe. Hence, in the subsequent by-election, M'Mbijiwe mobilized his supporters to vote for Karimi. In an interview with this researcher (O.I., 2015), M'Mbijiwe explained that he supported Karimi in order to get even with his male opponents. His support for a woman was intriguing to many, but he reasoned that he wanted to derive some fulfillment from knowing that his male opponents were defeated by a woman. The interpretation by society would be that they were not 'men enough' to be beaten by a mere woman. M'Mbijiwe did not spare his resources and influence in supporting Karimi. He particularly wanted revenge on his key political enemy, Pius Mugambi. According to Karimi herself (O.I., 19/12/2014) she maximized M'Mbijiwe's help and the overwhelming goodwill of the Meru community, which was experimenting with a woman leader, , and her own

oration skills. These factors combined to give her a comfortable win in the 1975 by-election, thus setting a record in Meru history.

Yet, whereas other people see her election as historic, for Njeru her the stint of four years in parliament constitutes a dark chapter that she would rather forget (Karimi O.I., 19/12/2014). True, she strode where no woman in the entire Meru region had ever ventured before and none did after her. Yet with the benefit of hindsight, she reflects on the period with regret: “what did I come out with”? Wainanina Ndung’u The record gave me more pain than joy – first Meru woman MP” in (Qtd in Wainaina Ndung’u, <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke>). The sad reflection relates to the events that befell her shortly after her election to parliament. She argues that her political career was short-lived because when she got to parliament, she began commenting on sensitive matters touching on corrupt people in government. In doing this, she set in motion forces that quickly turned against her.

In what was viewed by many people as politically instigated charges, she was charged in 1978 on two accounts of corruption by misuse of public funds during her tenure as the head teacher at St. Mary’s Igoji. She was convicted and sentenced to four years in jail. She hung on to her seat by lodging appeals against the sentence until parliament was dissolved in 1979. This ended her short political career as member of parliament. Ultimately the way her particular case was handled became a reference point in subsequent cases and attracted research by scholars. She remains one of a kind and her achievement, one that many women considered a model.

4.3 Meru Women Participation in Grassroots Politics 1963-1990

Grassroots politics play an important role in the governance system of a country. To holistically achieve Kenya's development after political independence in 1963, it was imperative that both men and women were involved in all development spheres: socially, economically, and politically. Yet, available literatures that this was not the case. Women were left out of the political front as leadership was considered a manly affair. Women's equal participation and leadership in political and public life cannot be underestimated. However, data shows that women are underrepresented at all levels of decision-making worldwide, and that achieving gender parity in political life is far off.

In the Meru municipality, data available in various Kenya Gazette Notices indicates that in the decades following attainment of the country's independence, not a single woman was elected to the municipal council of Meru. The Kenya Gazette Notice No. 389, the Ministry for Local Government appointed nine men to the membership of the Meru Township Committee on January 19th 1963. These were M. L. Sanderson (Chairman), J.K. Simon, E.K. Mbogori, J.A. Mackinon, C.V. Patel, Arbi Solomon, V.R. Patel, Chief Naaman M'Mwirichia, Noordin Ibrahim, and Josphat Kabanga as members. In the subsequent years, the appointments were not any different save for the increase in numbers which translated to more men getting exposed and involved in the municipality political leadership at the expense of women. For instance, the Kenya Gazette Vol. LXXVI No. 46 of 1974 issued on the 27th of September reported forty-one (41) men appointed to the Meru County Council, while in the Kenya Gazette Vol. XCV No. 13 of 1993 issued on February 18th, also reported that forty-two (42) men had been appointed to the County Council of Meru. This is evidence of how women were intentionally discriminated against in actively participating in the

politics in Meru County. This was not because the women did not possess the requisite qualifications, but due to the patriarchal nature of political leadership in the region.

4.4 The Place of Women in the Multi-Party Era Electoral Politics -1992-2013

This section reviews the involvement of women in elective politics after the re-introduction of multi-party democracy, from 1992 to 2013. The section seeks to establish if the re-introduction of multi-party democracy, together with the promulgation of the Constitution of Kenya (2010) improved the involvement women from South Imenti Constituency (and the rest of Kenya) in competitive electoral politics.

Multi-party democracy was re-introduced in Kenya in 1991 through the repeal of Section 2A of the then constitution (Daniel, 2012). This constitutional amendment to some extent provided a chance for the wider participation of women in politics (Kanyinga & Okello, 2010). In this regard, it was conceived that a level and bigger political field would be made for women's contribution to constituent governmental issues (Kabira & Nzioki, 1995; Nzomo, 1995).

With the re-introduction of multi-party democracy, women had great hopes of securing political positions. Several studies, however, show that between 1992 and 2002, there were never more than eight (8) women members of parliament out of the 222 (Mitullah, 2007; Kanyinga & Okello, 2010). These scholars argue that the overall performance of women during multi-party elections of 1992, 1997, 2002, and 2007 was way below expectations that women would win at least 30% of the seats available. Noteworthy, however, the projected 30% critical mass of women

representation has not been achieved since the re-introduction of multi-party democracy in Kenya.

During the 1992 General Elections, there were nineteen (19) female aspirants who were endorsed by political parties to vie for parliamentary seats in Kenya (Nzomo & Kibwana, 1993: 155). Out of the 188 elected members, six (6) women were elected. In the 1997 General Elections, two women – Charity Ngilu and Wangari Maathai – contested for the presidency (Kanyinga & Okello; 2010:41). Both candidates obtained a mere 492,796 votes (7.98%) (Mitullah, 2010). Male presidential candidates combined captured 92.02% (Kanyinga & Okello; 2010: 41). In the parliamentary elections, there were fifty (50) women candidates against 882 men. Only four (4) women were elected (Mitullah, 2007). The number of votes obtained by women in the parliamentary election was 220, 756 (3.78). This, according to Oloo (2010), contrasted sharply with the 5, 816, 600 (96.22%) that male candidates garnered.

Remarkably, however, further gains were noted during the 2002 General Elections in terms of the level of women participation. For the first time since independence, nine (9) women were elected as members of parliament (Kanyinga & Okello, 2010; Mitullah, 2007). For these scholars, more than 200 women sought parliamentary nominations but only nine of them were eventually elected.

Kenya's 2007 General Elections were historic in the struggle for women's parliamentary representation (Mitullah; 2007). The 2007 elections yielded the highest number of women candidates in parliament compared with the previous elections. A total of 269 out of 2548 (10. 61) contestants were women. Out of these, only 15

(5.6%) were elected, while six were subsequently nominated. This comprised 9.5% of the overall representation in parliament. This number increased to twenty-two after the 2008 by-elections in Sotik and Bomet following the death of Lorna Laboso and Kipkalya Kones, respectively, who were replaced by women (Kanyinga & Okello 2010). Out of the fifteen women elected, five were from the Kalenjin community. The by-election pushed this number to seven. Table 5 below summarises women versus men's participation and representation in parliamentary elective politics from 1st to 11th parliament (1963-2013).

Table4.5.1: Women Representation in Electoral Politics From 1st to 10th

Parliaments

Parliament	Period	Total No. of Constituencies	No. of Women Elected	Available Slots for Nomination	No. of Women Nominated
1 st	1963-1969	158	0	12	0
2 nd	1969-1974	158	1	12	1
3 rd	1974-1979	158	4	12	2
4 th	1979-1983	158	5	12	1
5 th	1983-1988		2	12	1
6 th	1988-1992	158	2	12	0
7 th	1992-1997		6	12	1
8 th	1997-2002	188	4	12	5
9 th	2002-2007	188	10	12	8
10 th	2008-2012	210	16	12	6
		210			
		210			
Relevant Totals			50		25

Source: Kihoro, 2007

4.5 South Imenti Parliamentary Election and the Place of Women: 1992 – 2013

Parliamentary elections in South Imenti Constituency during the multi-party era continued being dominated by men. The re-introduction of multi-party democracy had very little impact on the participation of women in elective politics. Since the 1975 by-election when Annarita Karimi Njeru was elected to parliament, no other woman

ever attempted to contest for any elective position until 2007. Table 6 below is an analysis of South Imenti Parliamentary Election from 1992- 2013.

Table 4.6.1: South Imenti Parliamentary General Election 1992-2007

Year	Name of candidates	Gender	Votes Garnered	Percentage %	Rank
1992	Kiraitu Murungi	M	17, 867	43.1%	1
	David P. Mugambi	M	16,078	38.78%	2
	Gilbert K. M’Mbijiwe	M	6,046	14.58%	3
	Lawford Ndege Mundi	M	684	1.65%	4
	Mburugu M. Kioga	M	492	0.19%	5
	Sebastian M. Kirimi	M	288	0.69%	6
1997	Kiraitu Muurungi	M	3,8153	73.94%	1
	Eliphaz Riungu	M	12,851	24.9%	2
	Leon M. Kinyamu	M	597	1.16%	3
2002	Kiraitu Murungi	M	30,374	61.37%	1
	Eliphaz Riungu	M	12,285	24.97%	2
	Mugambi Imanyara	M	4,281	8.7%	3
	Kinoti Mukindia	M	583	1.18%	4
	Gitonga Kanampiu K.	M	528	1.07%	5
	Sebastian M. Kiome	M	433	0.88%	6
	David P. Mugambi	M	314	0.64%	7
	Samuel G. Kithinji	M	312	0.63%	8
	Lawrence Mbae	M	92	0.19%	9
2007	Kiraitu Murungi	M	39,114	53.16%	1
	Eliphaz Riungu	M	15,027	20.42%	2
	Julius S.Meeme	M	10,115	13.75%	3
	Cornelius Muthuri	M	5,788	7.87%	4
	Mwega	M	754	1.02%	5
	Zaverio K. M’Imwere	M	436	0.59%	6
	Robert M. Inoti	M	349	0.47%	7
	Fredrick J. Kinyua	M	325	0.44%	8
	Lawrence Mbae	M	305	0.41%	9
	Peter K. Mbogo	F	299	0.41%	10
	Asenath Kaimuri	M	277	0.38%	11
	Nyamu	M	245	0.41%	12
	Wilfred K. Kioga	M	240	0.33%	13
	Jediel K. Gilbert	M	219	0.3%	14
	Eliud E. Muthamia	M	83%	0.11%	15
Lawford N. Mundi					
Walter K. M’Muguna					

Source: IEBC Meru County Parliamentary Elections 1992-2007

Table 6 shows evidence of poor involvement of women in the Imenti South Constituency parliamentary elections since the re-introduction of multi-party democracy. The 1992 General Elections saw six (6) candidates, all men, vying for the

seat. The same scenario was repeated during the 1997 and 2002 parliamentary elections, where three (3) and nine (9) candidates, respectively, contested for the seat. It was not until the 2007 General Elections that one (1) woman, Asenath Karimi, contested for the Imenti South parliamentary seat, competing against ten (10) men. . She emerged position ten (10) out of eleven (11) who vied for the seat.

4.6 The 2010 Constitution and the Involvement of South Imenti Women in politics

In Kenya, the post-independence era has perfected gender-biased policies that were introduced by the colonial governments. During the Jomo Kenyatta and Daniel Moi eras, women continued to operate from the periphery while men enjoyed the fruits of ‘Uhuru’ (Mitullah, 2010; Oloo, 2010). Mwai Kibaki became president amidst euphoria that saw both men and women from all walks of life rally behind his government. His major promise to Kenyans was to bring a new constitution that would open up Kenya's democratic space. The Constitution of Kenya (2010) subsequently afforded women greater opportunities by creating more political seats to be contested by both genders. In the present Meru County, women's voter turnout has been quite impressive for decades now. However, despite their numerical advantage, women do not seem to win seats proportionate to their numbers. This is more glaring in South Imenti Constituency.

Related to this, the UN Women Kenya Report on Kenya’s 2013 General Elections indicated that women in Meru were the majority registered voters with 263,398 (54%) compared to men whose figures stood at 223,867 (46%). The report indicated that this trend was nationwide in 2013.

Yet, like elsewhere in Kenya, women in South Imenti Constituency remain at the periphery of politics. This is why since independence, only one woman from South Imenti Constituency has been elected to parliament – feat that was achieved way back in 1975. It is apparent that women's numerical strength in Kenya generally and more particularly South Imenti Constituency does not translate to higher women representation in elective politics. Instead, what has been experienced over time is a wide gap concerning their male counterparts where, for decades, men dominated women politically (Mitullah, 2010; Oloo, 2010).

The Constitution of Kenya (2010) provides that each Kenyan is recognized and considered politically. In Article 100 and Article 177 (1) (b) specifically provide that no more than two thirds of the members of the national assembly – as indeed any public appointments – should be of the same gender. Thus, the constitution stipulates social, financial and political privileges of women by ensuring that no gender will hog more than two thirds of either elective or nominative positions at any level (Kanyinga & Oloo, 2010).

Article 27(6) of the constitution speaks to the Bill of Rights, providing that the state must develop legislation and measures to implement the two thirds gender rule (Constitution of Kenya, 2010). This provision not only ensures there is equal representation in both elective and appointive positions, but also recognizes and seeks to address the past injustices to access to political leadership.

The 2010 constitution further provides more seats that were to be contested for. Such political seats include presidential, gubernatorial, senatorial, national assembly,

county assemblies, and women representatives (Constitution of Kenya, 2010). Despite all these constitutional provisions, the current gender composition of the national assembly and senate is below the two thirds requirement (Kanyinga & Oloo, 2010).

The 2013 General Elections were unique in Kenya's election history. This is because it was the first election ever held under the new constitution which established a devolved system of governance comprising of national and county government (Kanyinga & Oloo, 2010). Accordingly, it was the first election to be held with six elective positions to be vied for.

According to the UN Women Kenya Report on Kenya's 2013 General Elections, apart from being numerically more than men, women were also the majority in terms of casting votes (UN-Women Report, 2013). The report further shows that not many women were elected in many competitive positions and many of the women candidates seemed unable to qualify for higher positions (Mbogori, O.I., 20/12/2014). Martha Karua the only woman presidential candidate in the 2013 elections, garnered only 43, 885 votes (0.361%) of presidential votes and emerged sixth (6th) out of eight (8) presidential candidates. No woman won the senatorial and governor positions (UN Women Report – 2013). Sixteen (16) women were elected in constituency seats, eighty-one (81) women were elected as members of county assemblies (MCA's). The slight improvement noticed during the 2013 General Election on women representation was boosted through affirmative action and the constitution gender threshold, including the forty-seven (47) elected women representatives. Four (4) women were nominated as members of the national assembly, while eighteen (18) were nominated as women senators.

However, from the data gathered, women from the South Imenti Constituency seemed reluctant in joining other contestants in exploiting the rare opportunities provided by the new constitution. Most of those who contested ran for members of county assembly (MCA's) seats. This meant that more men than women exploited the provisions of the 2010 constitution (IEBC; Parliamentary results 2013). In this respect, Table 7 analyses the South Imenti 2013 Parliamentary General Election

Table4.7.1: South Imenti Parliamentary General Election 2013

Names of candidates	Gender	No. of votes	Rank
Kathuri Murungi	M	21,149	1
Genaro G. Gatangugi	M	18,497	2
Cornelius M. Mwega	M	13,058	3
John G. Arithi	M	9,996	4
Hawkins M. Kamundi	M	4,069	5
Murithi T. Nkungi	M	2,484	6
Miriti F. Gakii	M	418	7

Source: *IEBC Parliamentary General Election 2013*

From Table 7 above, out of the seven (7) candidates who contested for the Imenti South Constituency parliamentary seat, only one – Fridah G. Miriti – was a woman. She emerged the last with only 418 votes.

4.7 Gender Representation in the 2013 County Assembly General Elections

As already indicated, South Imenti Constituency has six (6) administrative wards, namely Mitunguu, Igoji East, Igoji West, Abogeta East, Abogeta West, and Nkuene (IEBC 2013). The 2013 General Elections saw an increased number of female gender vying for county assembly seats. Table 8 below shows that five (5) women out of

thirty-seven (37) contestants from different wards contested for the seats. However, from all the six wards, men won the election.

Table4.8: South Imenti County General Election 2013

Ward	Total No. of Candidates	Male	Female
Mitunguu	5	5	0
Igoji East	4	3	1
Igoji West	9	8	1
Abogeta East	11	10	1
Abogeta West	6	4	2
Nkuene	2	2	6
TOTAL	37	32	5

Source: IEBC 2013 County Assembly General Election

4.8 Factors Hindering Women’s Effective Participation in Elective Politics

The gender disparities that exist in Kenya, especially concerning women's participation in elective politics, could be due to deep-rooted patriarchal socio-cultural, economic, and political structures and ideologies. Under these conditions, Kenyan women have been excluded from participating in key governance positions and have been deprived of their basic rights and access to and ownership of strategic resources like land (Nzomo, 2003). Omtatah (2008) suggests that retrogressive cultural and traditional practices such as the ideology of son preference, lack of belief in the importance of educating girls, forced marriages, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), bride price collection, widow inheritance and related rites are some of the ills that impede women’s quest for leadership in Kenya. Omtatah (2008) also notes that poor socialization where boys are prepared for leadership and girls for domestic roles also work against women ascendancy to leadership. Another factor that demoralizes

women from pursuing political positions or neutralizes the brave women who contest is the risk of constituents' brutality (M'Mbijiwe, O.I., 17/02/2014). Also, Omtatah (2008) contends that numerous women come into government issues without the benefit of quality tutoring and hands-on-preparation, which limits their negotiation abilities. As per Omtatah, even individuals with previous coaching will occasionally stumble as government officials. This shows the ladies' impediment as they are compelled to learn on the job. Gatobu (O.I., 20/12/2014) states that a large number of these ladies are not solid and steady for the disorder that is seen in Kenyan legislative issues. This position resonates with Mitullah's (2003) argument that women's relative powerlessness in mobilisation and haggling abilities neutralize them when contesting for political office.

Also important is that the absence of media deceivability additionally neutralizes women (Kithinji, O.I., 20/12/2014). It has been noted that the intensity of the media in building validity and impact in governmental issues is considerable, but then ladies battle to get media inclusion and positive positioning (Women Direct Service Center 2006:10). This may be because the media does not always see women's issues as newsworthy. The media neutralizes the enthusiasm of the ladies when it neglects to offer significance to issues that worry them and their accomplishments, and when it concentrates just on their shortcomings as pioneers. On this, Omtatah (2008:60) argues that the media is often one-sided against ladies when it neglects to grasp sexually impartial ground that do not advance boundaries against ladies. This includes the tendency to emphasise negative mentalities and generalizations by society and absence of help from the electorate.

On the same, Nzomo (2003a) notes that reviews on women's cooperation in governmental issues and basic leadership all around keep on showing that the appointive playing field has consistently been fitted for men, more so in nations. In most African countries, social order administration is seen as manly and culture has supported it. Male-centric society is additionally reflected in the ideological groups whose initiatives are ruled by men.

4.9 Summary

The above findings reveal that indeed women globally and Kenya in particular have suffered various challenges that continue to hamper their struggles for political leadership. Such factors range from economic, social, and political impediments. As already noted, the challenges that keep women marginalized in politics are traceable to the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial eras up to date. This calls for urgent interventions to address these challenges.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Overview

This chapter gives a summary, conclusion and recommendations for further research based on the limitations of the current study. The chapter also gives an overview of the place of Meru women in general during the pre-colonial era, and outlines the impact of the colonial structures and policies on the involvement of Meru women in elective politics. In the process, the chapter highlights the involvement of women of South Imenti Constituency during the period spanning 1963 to 2013. Finally, the chapter comments on the impact of the Constitution of Kenya (2010) on the involvement of South Imenti women in elective politics.

5.2 Conclusions

The study started by giving a general background to the study as a way of contextualizing the different levels of women's participation in elective politics across the world, in Africa and in Kenya. The study further narrowed down its focus to South Imenti Constituency in Meru County. The general overview shows that despite women being 52% of the population in most countries in the world, and thus being the majority of the voters, they are politically marginalized.

The current study was underpinned by aspects of Social-Cultural Patriarchal Theory and Gender Ideology as the analytical frameworks. The two theories created a firm by unpacking the underlying reasons for women's poor performance in elective politics. From its definition, patriarchy means male dominance over women in society generally. It implies that men hold power in all the important institutions of

society and that women are deprived of such power. The study reveals that since time immemorial, the Ameru community has generally been a patriarchal society where women are dominated by men in all aspects. This reality began way back pre-colonial times. This explains women's exclusion from the formal political arena. Gender is also about power, privileges, responsibilities, rights and duties (Kasomo: 2012). This study has shown that because of the gender dynamics, especially patriarchy, politics has broadly been perceived from sexist perspectives. The study also reveals that politics has always been viewed as a male domain, while women are expected to operate within the private domain.

Chapter Two gives an analysis of the social-economic and political organization of the Ameru during the pre-colonial period, showing the place of women in relation to in political matters. Chapter Two starts by tracing the original migration to the settlement of the Ameru, and concludes that the Ameru people were indeed a patriarchal society even then.

Current literature shows that women in pre-colonial Meru society were dominated by men where men exerted their authority and control over them at all levels. The second chapter has also revealed that the pre-colonial Meru women played minimal political roles, as prominence was reserved for men. The Ameru women also had no representation in Njuri Ncheke, which was the political governing council of the Ameru.

Chapter Three evaluates the status of Ameru women during the colonial era. The researcher sought to establish how the colonial politics and structures impacted on the

involvement of the Ameru women in politics and decision making. The chapter reveals that colonialism institutionalized perceptions of superiority of men over women. The colonial government through its policies and structures ensured that women were generally distanced from decision-making, replicating the practices of women's exclusion that were rampant in most Kenyan communities during the pre-colonial period. Hence, in colonial Meru society, women were not allowed to participate in leadership and decision-making forums, which left on the fringes of community politics.

Chapter Four is an analysis of elective politics during the post-independence period before and after the reintroduction of multi-party democracy. The chapter starts by analyzing the involvement of women in electoral politics from 1963 to 1991, and then from 1991 following the reintroduction of multiparty democracy to 2013, when the first elections are held under the reviewed Constitution of Kenya (2010). The chapter also assesses the impact of the Constitution of Kenya (2010) on women's involvement in elective politics. Since the re-introduction of multi-party democracy in 1991, women have made very minimal gains in their participation and representation in elective positions. They are yet to attain the recommended one third threshold. But as the chapter shows, despite these nominal gains, that the promulgation of the Constitution of Kenya (2010) has seen an increased number of women candidates who contest for elective political positions. This was especially noted during the 2013 General Elections.

5.3 Recommendations

Women's political participation in Kenya has come a long way and, despite making minimal gains, women continue to fight for space in the political arena. Establishing the extent of women's participation in electoral politics is fundamental to gender equality and in achieving fairness in democracy. In light of the above, therefore, the researcher makes several recommendations that, if considered, can help improve the participation and consequently the representation of women in both the national and country governments.

Women continue to be disadvantaged and disfranchised by socio-cultural practices and gender stereotypes that discriminate against women's leadership and participation in politics. Therefore, this research recommends that government agencies and other actors conduct intensified and sustained gender sensitization campaigns focusing on gender-responsive civil and voter education to share information with women and the community at large on the importance of having women in political leadership.

Secondly, there is also a need to finalize the legal framework for full implementation of the two thirds gender principle in the National Assembly and establishing internal affirmative action within political parties. Political parties are very important institutions for women's access to politics. Therefore, women ought to register as members of political parties and seek leadership positions within those parties. Women also need to engage in cross-party platforms, as these are powerful avenues for uniting women beyond party lines and rallying them around a common agenda. They need to use their numerical strength to compel political parties to adhere to the quota provision. Lastly, women should also identify with male allies to help them

lobby for the implementation of the quotas women. This can be better if they identify and defer to mentors among other women politicians to educate them on the need to contest for political positions.

5.3.1 Suggestions for Future Research

This study focused to assess the involvement of women of South Imenti Constituency in electoral politics as candidates. With the introduction of the Constitution of Kenya (2010) a lot of provisions were codified in law, including extra seats created to be contested for in general elections. The constitution also created two levels of government, thus the national and the county governments. We recommend that a study be conducted to establish how women are faring on politically at the county government levels. This will help to establish whether the political leadership positions at county levels has gender parity, or it reflected the same male dominance that is seen at the National Assembly and the Senate.

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List of informants

<i>Informant</i>	<i>Gen der</i>	<i>YOB</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Area</i>	<i>Date Interview ed</i>	<i>Telephone Number</i>
Nicholas Mburugu	M	1970	Sitting MCA	Nkuene Ward	7/10/2014	0734942471
David Muriuki	M	1975	C.E.O Shepherds for Universal Rights	Meru County	7/10/2014	0722338205
Hellen Kiende G.	F	1972	Lecturer K.U	Abogeta	8/10/2014	0711216832
Janaro Guantai	M	1969	Political aspirant (South Imenti Constituency – 2013)	Abogeta	8/10/2014	0723306845
Magdaline M'bogori	F	1948	MYWO- member	Mitunguu	8/10/2014	0722861630
Isabella Arithi	F	1965	MYWO- member	Nkuene	11/10/2014	0724750508
Martha K. Mburugu	F	1944	Former Principal Nkabune Techniacal Institute	Nkuene	11/10/2014	0708865401
Kabeere M'Mbijiwe	F	1926	1 st South Imenti M.P. under K.A.N.U regime /Njuri Ncheke elder	Nkuene	11/10/2014	0726271926
Stephen M'Mwari	M	1934	Retired Trade Unionist/Kanhungu clan chair person	Nkuene	15/10/2014	0723361111
James M'Rinkanya	M	1928	Njuri Ncheke elder/ Mwari clan chairperson	Nkuene	15/10/2014	0725022491
Njogu M'Ruthiri	M	1945	Retired Civil servant	Mitunguu	17/10/2014	0720068547
Isabella M'Mugambi	F	1938	Farmer	Nkuene	17/10/2014	0734722105
Lydia Kaiga	F	1908	Farmer	mitunguu	25/10/2014	N/A

Sarah Nchurubi	F	1928	Farmer	Abogeta Eeast	25/10/2014	N/A
Annarita Karimi	F	1940	1 st Meru woman M.P. Constituency (1975)	Igoji West	28/10/2014	0733249824
Charity Mbogo	F	1958	Headteacher Nkubu pry.	Nkuene	28/10/2014	0726271926
James Nthiga	M	1956	Pastor KAG church Nkubu	Nkuene	3/11/2014	0728844058
Misheck Riungu	M	1944	Former Principal Katheri High sch./ Rev. Methodist church	Abogeta West	3/11/2014	0716212246
Michael Mbaabu	M	1969	Parish Priest, Nkubu parish	Nkuene	3/11/2014	0726621881
Jennifer M	F	1948	Retired teacher/ MYWO member	Igoji West	5/11/2014	0711303582
Jacinta K.Njagi	F	1972	Principal Kathanthatu sec. sch.	Nkuene	5/11/2022	0722389905
Zipporah Kinya	F	1967	Principal Kaubau Day Sec. Sch.	mitunguu	8/11/2014	0721951611
Secondina Kanana	F	1966	Nominated MCA Meru County Assembly(2013)	Abogeta West	8/11/2014	0725284181
Joyce kirai	F	1952	Nominated MCA	South Imenti	8/11/2014	0724750508
Asenath Kaimuri Nyamu	F	1948	Political aspirant (M.P. South Imenti Constituency - 2007)	South Imenti	11/11/2014	07228448751
Florence Kajuju Gitonga	F	1972	1 st Woman Rep. Meru County & a Lawyer	Meru North	11/11/2014	0722302378
Kinge Imanene	M	1967	Cabinet Secretary Ministry of Agriculture Meru County(2013)	South Imenti	13/11/2014	0721798731
Maurice Kaungu	M	1968	Civil servant(Ministry of Lands)	Mitunguu	13/11/2022	0721454007
Linus M.	M	1961	Civil Servant(Nkuene	13/11/2022	0713284393

Kirimi			Ministry of Lands)		2	
Phares Rutere	M	1932	Secretary General-Njuri Ncheke	Meru County	25/11/2014	0733156208
Gacheri Ithinji	F	1980	Nominated MCA (2013)	Meru County Assembly	27/11/2014	0722361489
Dorcas Mbijiwe	F	1965	Principal – Kiria Day Sch.	Nkuene	27/11/2014	071119754
Jane Mathendu	F	1962	MYWO, Chairlady	South Imenti	2/12/2014	0721338857
Rose Ngaku	F	1958	MYWO, National Delegate	Igoji East	2/12/2014	0723165931 / 0732963530
John Gitonga Arithi	M	1954	Political Aspirant - 2013 general elections	South Imenti Constituency	5/12/2014	0722726784
Peter M. Magiri	M	1966	Educationist	South Imenti	5/12/2014	0714653929
Pamela Inoti	M	1978	PanAfricanist & Governance Specialist	South Imenti	5/12/2014	0733571080 / 0716210099
Dr. Njagi Rwito	M	1937	Lecturer-PUEA	Igoji West	10/12/2014	0722772904
Fr. Murianki	M	1939	Catholic priest	St. Pius x Seminary	14/12/2014	0723915577
Mercy Marete	F	1964	Teacher	Ukuu Day Sec. Sch.	14/12/2014	0722280767
Al-Haji Mwendia	M	1953	Political Activist	South Imenti	15/12/2014	0734612578
Tom Ernest	M	1966	Opinion leader	South Imenti	15/12/2014	0791413465
Murithi Kamwara	M	1987	Youth Rep.	Nkuene	17/12/2014	0727311699
Weddy Makena	F	1995	Lawyer	Nairobi	17/12/2014	0772043735

Focus Group Discussion

<i>Group description</i>	<i>Number of respondents</i>	<i>Area of interview</i>	<i>Date interviewed</i>
MYWO	6	Representatives from the six(6) wards of S. Imenti	20/10/2014
Political aspirants	5	Nkuene Ward	15/11/2014
Women group	5	Igoji East	18/12/2014
Professionals	5	South Imenti	18/12/201
Clan eders	5	Mitunguu	19/12/2014

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Introductory Letter

Dear Sir/ Madam,

This questionnaire is designed to investigate women's participation in elective politics in Meru and more specifically in South Imenti Constituency. The study is being undertaken in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Masters Degree (Arts) at Kenyatta University.

You have been identified as one of the respondents. Kindly complete this questionnaire as honestly as you can. All information supplied will be used solely for this study and will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Your cooperation will be highly appreciated.

Thanks in advance.

Yours Faithfully,

Stella K. Mworia.

Appendix II: Questionnaire

My name is Stella Kananu Mworira. I am a postgraduate student at Kenyatta University, currently researching **‘PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICS IN MERU, c.1880-2013.’**

You have been identified as a respondent in the study. Kindly answer the following questions to enable me to complete my study. I undertake to treat any information you provide in strict confidence and that it shall be used strictly for academic purposes.

SECTION A: BIO-DATA.

1. Sex:

Male

Female.

2. Age:

18-35

36-55

56-Above

3. Marital status: Single

Married

Divorced

Widowed

4. Occupation: Student

Employed

Self-employed

Others

(specify).....

5. Education level: None

- Primary Education
- Secondary Education
- Tertiary Education
- University Education
- Others

(Specify).....

6. Historically how have women fared in politics?
7. Did the women of Meru participate in the struggle for independence (e.g. during the Mau Mau war)? Explain.
8.
 - i. Did the Ameru have a governing council before the colonial period?
 - ii. Who qualified to be members of this governing council if there was one?
 - iii. What was its function(s)?
 - iv. Currently, who qualifies to be members of the above council?
9. What are your views on women representation in parliament since independence?
Have women been fairly represented in civic positions since independence? Explain.
10. In your view, did the reintroduction of multi-party politics helps in promoting women representation in elective positions (e.g. parliamentary, civic etc.)
11. What has been the contribution of political parties (e.g. APK (Bus), ODM, D.P etc.) in promoting women participation in electoral politics?
12. Have women organizations (e.g. Maendeleo ya Wanawake) or NGOs played any role in facilitating women's participation in elective politics? Explain.
13. What factors hinder or promote women's participation in politics?
14. How has the Meru society generally viewed women who engage in politics?

15. In your view do you think that the new Constitution 2010, will help in promoting women representation in elective politics? Explain.
16. Would you support the need for the empowerment of women to participate more actively during the future general elections? Give reasons.
17. What strategies would you suggest need to be adopted to empower/encourage women to participate more actively in the future general elections?

Appendix III: Interview Guide for Politicians

My name is Stella Kananu Mworira. I am a postgraduate student at Kenyatta University, currently researching ‘**PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICS IN MERU, c.1880-2013.**’

You have been identified as a respondent in the study. Kindly answer the following questions to enable me to complete my study. I undertake to treat any information you provide in strict confidence and that it shall be used strictly for academic purposes.

SECTION A: Bio-data information.

Please tick within the box that corresponds with your answer.

1. Sex:

MALE

FEMALE

2. AGE:

18-35 YEARS

36-55 YEARS

56-ABOVE YEARS

3. MARITAL STATUS:

SINGLE

MARRIED

DIVORCED

WIDOWED

4. OCCUPATION:

STUDENT

EMPLOYED

NOT EMPLOYED

OTHERS

(SPECIFY).....

5. EDUCATION LEVEL:

NONE

PRIMARY

SECONDARY

TERTIARY

UNIVERSITY

OTHERS (SPECIFY).....

6. For how long have you been in politics?

7. Which political seat(s) have you contested for as a politician?

Presidential

Parliamentary

Civic

8. Historically how have women fared in politics?

9. Did the women of Meru participate in the struggle for independence (e.g. during the Mau Mau war)? Explain.

10.

i) Did the Ameru have a governing council before the colonial period?

ii) Who qualified to be members of this governing council if there was one?

iii) What was its function(s)?

What are your views on women representation in parliament since independence?

iv) Have women been fairly represented in civil positions? Explain.

11. In your view did the reintroduction of multi-party politics help in promoting women representation in elective positions (e.g. parliamentary, civic positions).
12. What has been the contribution of political parties (e.g. KANU, APK (Bus), ODM etc.) in promoting women participation in elective politics?
13. Have women organizations (e.g. *Maendeleo ya Wanawake* Organization), NGOs played any role in facilitating women participation in elective politics? Explain.
14. What factors hinder or promote women's participation in politics?
15. How has the Meru society generally viewed women who engage in politics?
16. In your view, do you think that the new Constitution of Kenya (2010) will help in promoting women representation in elective positions? Explain.
17. Would you support the need for the empowerment of women to participate more actively during the future general elections? Give reasons.
18. What strategies would you suggest need to be adopted to empower women to participate more actively in the future general elections?

Appendix IV: Research Approval from Graduate School



KENYATTA UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL

E-mail: dean-graduate@ku.ac.ke

Website: www.ku.ac.ke

P.O. Box 43844, 00100
NAIROBI, KENYA
Tel. 810901 Ext. 57530

Internal Memo

FROM: Dean, Graduate School

DATE: 16th November, 2014

TO: Mworia Stella Kananu
C/o History Department.

REF: C50/CE/25372/2011

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL

=====

This is to inform you that Graduate School Board, at its meeting of 12th November 2014, approved your Research Proposal for the M.A. Degree Entitled, "An Investigation into Women Participation in Elective Politics among the Meru- A Case of Nkuene Division",

You may now proceed with data collection, subject to clearance with the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology.

As you embark on your data collection, please note that you will be required to submit to Graduate School completed Supervision Tracking forms per semester. The form has been developed to replace the progress report forms. The supervision Tracking Forms are available at the University's website under Graduate School webpage downloads.

Thank you.

REUBEN MURIUKI
FOR: DEAN, GRADUATE SCHOOL

c.c. Chairman, Department of History

Supervisors:

1. Dr. Susan Mwangi
C/o Department of History, Archaeology and Political Studies
Kenyatta University
2. Dr. Edwin Gimode
C/o Department of History, Archaeology and Political studies
Kenyatta University

RM/mn

Appendix V: Research Authorization from Graduate School



KENYATTA UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL

E-mail: dean-graduate@ku.ac.ke

Website: www.ku.ac.ke

P.O. Box 43844, 00100
NAIROBI, KENYA
Tel. 8710901 Ext. 57530

Our Ref: C50/CE/25372/2011

DATE: 16th November 2014

The Principal Secretary,
Ministry of Higher Education, Science & Technology,
P.O. Box 30040,
NAIROBI

Dear Sir/Madam,

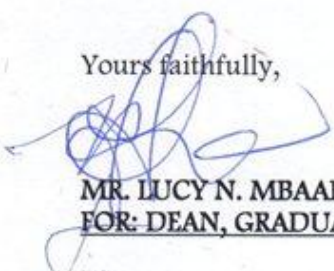
RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION MWORIA STELLA KANANU– REG. NO. C50/CE/25372/2011

I write to introduce Ms. Mworია Stella Kananu who is a Postgraduate Student of this University. She is registered for M.A. degree programme in the **Department of History**.

Ms. Mworია intends to conduct research for an M.A. Proposal entitled, “**An Investigation into Women Participation in Elective Politics among the Meru – A Case of Nkuene Division**”.






Any assistance given will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,


MR. LUCY N. MBAABU
FOR: DEAN, GRADUATE SCHOOL

RM/nn

Appendix VI: Research Authorization from NACOSTI

 REPUBLIC OF KENYA	 NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
Ref No: 550543	Date of Issue: 22/November/2019
RESEARCH LICENSE	
	
<p>This is to Certify that Ms. Stella Mworira of Kenyatta University, has been licensed to conduct research in Meru on the topic: Participation of women in elective politics a case of South Imenti Constituency, Meru County 1963-2013 for the period ending : 22/November/2020.</p>	
License No: NACOSTI/P/19/2823	
550543 Applicant Identification Number	 Director General NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
	Verification QR Code 
<p>NOTE: This is a computer generated License. To verify the authenticity of this document, Scan the QR Code using QR scanner application.</p>	

THE SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION ACT, 2013

The Grant of Research Licenses is Guided by the Science, Technology and Innovation (Research Licensing) Regulations, 2014

CONDITIONS

1. The License is valid for the proposed research, location and specified period
2. The License any rights thereunder are non-transferable
3. The Licensee shall inform the relevant County Director of Education, County Commissioner and County Governor before commencement of the research
4. Excavation, filming and collection of specimens are subject to further necessary clearance from relevant Government Agencies
5. The License does not give authority to transfer research materials
6. NACOSTI may monitor and evaluate the licensed research project
7. The Licensee shall submit one hard copy and upload a soft copy of their final report (thesis) within one of completion of the research
8. NACOSTI reserves the right to modify the conditions of the License including cancellation without prior notice

National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
off Waiyaki Way, Upper Kabete,
P. O. Box 30623, 00100 Nairobi, KENYA
Land line: 020 4007000, 020 2241349, 020 3310571, 020 8001077
Mobile: 0713 788 787 / 0735 404 245
E-mail: dg@nacosti.go.ke / registry@nacosti.go.ke
Website: www.nacosti.go.ke

**Appendix VII: Research Authorization from Ministry of Interior and
Coordination of National Government**



**THE PRESIDENCY
MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND COORDINATION OF NATIONAL
GOVERNMENT**

Telegrams:
Telephone:
Email: ccmeru@yahoo.com
Fax

COUNTY COMMISSIONER
MERU COUNTY
P.O. BOX 703-60200
MERU

When replying please quote
And Date

REF: ED. 12/3 TY/4

26th November, 2019

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

This is to inform you that **STELLA MWORIA** of Kenyatta University has reported to this office as directed by the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation and will be carrying out Research on **“Participation of women in elective politics a case of South Imenti Constituency, Meru County”**.

Since authority has been granted by the said Commission, and the above named applicant has reported to this office she can embark on her research project for a period ending 22nd **November, 2020**.

Kindly accord her necessary assistance she may require.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W.K. Katonon', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**W.K. KATONON
FOR: COUNTY COMMISSIONER
MERU COUNTY**

Appendix VIII: Research Authorization from Ministry of Education



REPUBLIC OF KENYA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
State Department of Early Learning and Basic Education

Telegrams: "ELIMU" Meru
EMAIL: cdemerucounty@gmail.com
When Replying please quote

County Director Of Education
Meru County
P.O. Box 61
MERU

Ref: MRU/C/EDU/11/1/243

26th November, 2019

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION - MS STELLA MWORIA

Reference is made to letter Ref: NACOSTI/P/19/2823 dated 22nd November 2019.

Authority is hereby granted to **Ms Stella Mworira** to carry out research on "**participation of women in elective politics as case study of South Imenti constituency in Meru County.**"

You are therefore authorized to undertake the same in Meru County for the period ending 22nd November 2020.

Kindly accord her the necessary assistance.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Titus Kamande', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

TITUS KAMANDE
For: COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
MERU