

# Gender relations among Kenya's Luo in Central Nyanza, 1945-1963

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**Abstract:** This paper contends that the numerous laws enacted in Kenya from colonial to post-independence periods have been the primary cause of women's marginalisation in the private and public spheres. The Luo of Central Nyanza, for example, faces challenges in ensuring the active and equal participation of women in social, economic, and political matters, which is the cornerstone of this paper. As a result, this research aims to look at the impact of cultural image on gender relations among the Luo of Central Nyanza from 1945 to 1963. Furthermore, the authors argue that colonialism aided in the breeding of gender inequality among Luo men and women in Central Nyanza, as evidenced by disparities created by missionary-sponsored schools in which boys were given preferential treatment. On the economic front, British colonial policymakers permitted men to grow cash crops while women were left to grow subsistence crops for family consumption with little to sell for economic growth and empowerment. Many young men with colonial education, such as Oginga Odinga, Achieng Oneko, C.M.G. Argwings Kodhek, and others, were at the forefront of local and national politics Central Nyanza, at the expense of young women, except for a few, such as Grace Onyango and Grace Ogot. They acquired formal education under challenging circumstances. To elaborate on the essence of gender disparity practices spearheaded during colonialism and their effect on men and women's social, economic, and political endeavours among the Luo of Central Nyanza, the authors used primary data from the Kenya National Archives as well as field information from informants interviewed in the current administrative counties of Siaya and Kisumu.

**Key Words:** Gender Relations, Dynamism, Gender images, Patriarchy, Public Sphere, Private Sphere. Domestic Violence, KNA (Kenya National Archives)

## I. INTRODUCTION

In every global society, culture and gender relations are an essential part of men and women's socio-economic and political endeavours. This comprehensive cultural picture can help to clarify the gender role in a society<sup>1</sup>. Culture refers to people's way of life and how they make sense of their surroundings on a person or collective level in broader society and is commonly thought to be archaic forms of life fixed and bounded within a group<sup>2</sup>. A deeper interpretation of cultural images, on the other hand, reveals practices like disputed

<sup>1</sup>Henry A. Giroux, *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope: Theory, Culture, and Schooling: A Critical Reader*, *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope: Theory, Culture, and Schooling: A Critical Reader* (Taylor and Francis, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429498428>.

<sup>2</sup>Matthew Thomas Johnson and Matthew Thomas Johnson, "What Is Culture? What Does It Do? What Should It Do?," in *Evaluating Culture* (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2013), 97–119, [https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137313799\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137313799_5).

power relations between men and women. As a result, it suggests that culture is diverse and subject to change in both the public and private spheres of society. Cultural variations occur at the same time, and cultural values and traditions shift with time. Culture is a powerful institution that defines gender roles and maintains gender disparity within a society. Gender images within cultural cultures are also an essential manifestation of gender relations in culture<sup>3</sup>.

Gender relations apply to the broader field of culture as a social construction of male and female roles and how policies related to such engendered societies are designed and enforced. In culture, gender inequality refers to a power imbalance between men and women<sup>4</sup>. Gender inequality is portrayed as having less economic, social, and political power, forming marginalised groups in society, often subjected to gender-based violence and abuses within the private and public sphere.

Women are the weakest in almost any community and hence the most oppressed due to unpaid reproductive and domestic jobs in the home and less paid labour<sup>5</sup>. Men are at the forefront of this type of gender relation marginalisation, perpetuating the vice in the social, governmental, and economic realms of society with the help of cultural solid and national discourses, as well as statutory and customary law.

As culture lives and is created by people's experiences, women are recognised as the transformational pillars in cultural practices in succeeding generations, making women architects and caretakers of culture<sup>6</sup>. Cultural patterns, on the other hand, often used to justify abuses of women's human rights<sup>7</sup>. Women's rights, culture, and faith are all regarded as inferior in many nations, denying them the ability to make their own choices about their lives in their respective

<sup>3</sup>Karen Celis et al., "Gender and Politics: A Gendered World, a Gendered Discipline" (Oxford University Press, 2013), <https://researchportal.helsinki.fi/en/publications/gender-and-politics-a-gendered-world-a-gendered-discipline>.

<sup>4</sup>Tabitha T. Langen, "Gender Power Imbalance on Women's Capacity to Negotiate Self-Protection against HIV/AIDS in Botswana and South Africa," *African Health Sciences* 5, no. 3 (September 2005): 188–97, <https://doi.org/10.5555/afhs.2005.5.3.188>.

<sup>5</sup>Carol Emslie and Kate Hunt, "The Weaker Sex? Exploring Lay Understandings of Gender Differences in Life Expectancy: A Qualitative Study," *Social Science and Medicine* 67, no. 5 (September 2008): 808–16, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2008.05.009>.

<sup>6</sup>Jennifer R. Pharr et al., "Culture, Caregiving, and Health: Exploring the Influence of Culture on Family Caregiver Experiences," *ISRN Public Health* 2014 (March 26, 2014): 1–8, <https://doi.org/10.1155/2014/689826>.

<sup>7</sup>Pharr et al.

societies. Poverty has been rampant in Africa due to bad cultural practices among tribes, family members, the government, and people. Discrimination, sexism, and violations of women's rights are prevalent in the majority of these conflicts. Women had authority and prestige before colonialism in Africa because of their active role in family agricultural production; but, during colonial times, they were reduced to less critical human beings than men<sup>8</sup>.

According to Baden (1993), women's access to land is now determined by their relationships with their husbands. The problem was exacerbated by men's legal access to land due to the commercialisation of agriculture during colonial times, which degraded women and rendered them invisible in society because they no longer had a say in land development. Colonialists altered well-established rules, such as the shared land system, to make it more beneficial to everyone. Instead, they wrote new ones that limited women's land ownership rights, leading to women's poverty.<sup>9</sup>

Women began to become migrant workers in the 1930s, looking for work in Nairobi and Mombasa. Migration by women to the cities was significant because their roles were changed, expanded and dignified as they were no longer confined within the domestic chores. However, colonial and African society rules and laws favouring the male gender made it impossible for them to succeed in their transformational endeavours; as a result, they were left with no choice but to make money by brewing beer, doing casual work on white-owned farms, and doing domestic work in their families' homes (Baden, 1993). Their endeavours of entering the workforce were a struggle for women gender attempting to change how they were considered in discriminative societal norms. In 1895, the European imperialist spearheaded a divide and rule strategy based on religious, cultural and ethnic alignment. During the colonial periods, the colonists adopted a divide and rule strategy based on religious, cultural and ethnic alignment. This, therefore, enhanced conflict tensions within families, communities and the country at large, a strategy being played even today stressing both gender and ethnic identities (Francin, P. et al., 2001). This makes it challenging to address socio-economic-political thoroughly and gender discrimination challenges affecting women and men who will not accept interventions as they are perceived to be initiated outside and not their demands.

Many societies worldwide are struggling to adapt to the realities of globalisation, especially in our current governments of developing nations, where communities are attempting to create their own identities and repair the damage caused by social fabrics inherited from colonial regimes.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup>Fatuma B. Guyo, "Colonial and Post-Colonial Changes and Impact on Pastoral Women's Roles and Status," *Pastoralism* 7, no. 1 (January 1, 2017): 13, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13570-017-0076-2>.

<sup>9</sup>Guyo.

<sup>10</sup>Sanni Yaya et al., "Globalisation in the Time of COVID-19: Repositioning Africa to Meet the Immediate and Remote Challenges," *Globalization and*

This reformation also offers people a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to build a community based on human rights and equality principles, drawing on the positive aspects of tradition while rejecting harmful and unjust norms.

#### *The Early Geographical Setting, Migration, Political and Economic organisation*

The map below depicts the geographical setting of Central Nyanza during the years under migration and settlement between 1730 and 1760 AD.<sup>11</sup> It is worth noting, though, that the Luo did not migrate all at once into their current territory, but only in harmony, leaving some people behind<sup>12</sup>. Piecemeal movements and settlements were needed because the said areas were already inhabited by more powerful Bantu speaking groups such as the Abagusii and Abakuria<sup>13</sup>. The Luo had to devise plans to conquer and outwit the Abakuria and Abagusii from their homelands because they already possessed ironworking skills such as the hoe and spears. The history of Bantu people in western Kenya dates back to the early Iron Age. The Gusii and Luyia of Lake Victoria are thought to be the descendants of the first Bantu groups to settle in Kenya, and they are credited with introducing iron smelting and the use of iron tools to the area<sup>14</sup>.

#### Area Map for Nyanza



Source:<sup>15</sup>

*Health* 16, no. 1 (June 24, 2020): 51, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12992-020-00581-4>.

<sup>11</sup>AMB. Gumbe Evans Gumbe, "The Role of Women in Inter-Ethnic Peace Building in South Nyanza, Kenya, 1850-2008," *The International Journal of Humanities & Social Studies*, vol. 3, March 31, 2015, [www.theijhss.com](http://www.theijhss.com).

<sup>12</sup>Gumbe.

<sup>13</sup>Mildred A.J. Ndeda, "Population Movement, Settlement and the Construction of Society to the East of Lake Victoria in Precolonial Times: The Western Kenyan Case," *Open Edition Journal*, 2019.

<sup>14</sup>Mildred A.J. Ndeda.

<sup>15</sup>"Luo Exhibition Pitt Rivers Museum," accessed April 15, 2021, <http://web.prm.ox.ac.uk/Luo/luo/page/exhibition/index.html>.

According to legend, during the pre-colonial period, the Luo travelled along the Nile River searching for fish since it was one of their primary food sources and their population was growing. The river could no longer sustain the growing population, so people were forced to move in different directions: some to the east of Uganda, such as the Acholi, and others to the west of Tanzania<sup>16</sup>.

Concerning livelihood, the bare Luo subsistence is fishing, farming and pastoral herding. Fish was accessed principally from Lake Victoria while farming activities were generally practised within Migori, Siaya and Kisumu counties. Some of the crops planted by the Luo include rice, maize, beans and several fruits such as mangoes. In terms of herding, cattle, goats, and sheep were the preferred livestock. During the colonial and post-colonial eras, residents of the lake region's cultural, economic, and political perspectives shifted dramatically.<sup>17</sup> Due to their active agricultural production status, women in Africa in general and among the Luo, in particular, had authority and prestige during the pre-colonial period<sup>18</sup>.

However, due to the commercialisation of agriculture during colonial times, this became less important, leaving women with no position in society.<sup>19</sup> Colonialists altered existing the customary laws and drafted new ones that denied women equal rights to men (in terms of division of labour). As pointed out earlier, women's access to land now hinged on their relationships with their husbands (Baden, 1993). People's lifestyles are often affected by their surroundings. Sudan was the original home of the Luo of Kenya, and it had two distinct climatic seasons, a dry season and a rainy season. During the dry season, people flocked to swamps and rivers where there was water, particularly the Nile Valleys.<sup>20</sup> During the wet season, the Nile floods and people are forced to move to higher regions on the hills top and erected their homestead. From there, each father rules his family, an indication of leaving out women on decision making power. When there was a population expulsion, many Luo moved to find new homes. From this initial settlement, more prominent and more substantial political units grew under the leadership of *ruoth*, who stood both at the centre and apex of the social, political and economic organisation of his group<sup>21</sup>.

In the event of a conflict among the Luo, the '*Ruoth*' was expected to be a representative rather than a king.<sup>22</sup> Rather than becoming a law administrator, he was to be an arbitrator. He was known by the community based on his friendship with

all of its members, and in his opinion, he embodied the group's collective will. *Ruoth's* disposition necessitated a wealth of cattle and grains to provide good hospitality and assistance to his less fortunate relatives.<sup>23</sup> Junior elders were established in administration to assist clan leaders, and each clan was expected to have a peacekeeping force.

However, the Luo, split into thirteen major *Ogendini* (Subsidiary division) by the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>24</sup> The clans were organised based on patrilineage, with each *Ruoth* being advised by the territorial council (*BuchPiny*), which consisted of elders (*JodongDhoote*), peacemakers (*Ogayi*), and war leaders (*OsumbaMurwayi*).<sup>25</sup> Small councils called (*Doho*) of Sub-*ruoth* dealt with state matters, and below council were small councils called (*Doho*) of Sub-*ruoth*. Policies compel (*OgulMama*) to follow through with her collection decision.<sup>26</sup>

Apart from fishing and adopting agriculture from the Bantu, the Luo mainly were cattle keepers, as seen above. After cattle, the Luo culture's economic evolution valued cattle as part of their capital.<sup>27</sup> As previously mentioned, the Luo held cattle and thus placed a high value on it compared to other economic activities such as fishing. Owning cattle meant that that the household would benefit from food and clothing through skin products. Indeed, the Luo without cattle were scorned<sup>28</sup>. However, as they migrated, the Luo met the Bantu on how they learned the art of crop growing.<sup>29</sup>

Luo religious views and rituals have been greatly influenced by Christianity. Faith cultures today rely on indigenous traditions as well as Christianity for their values. The Luo revere the Anglican Church and the Roman Catholic Church. On the other hand, many Luo does not make clear distinctions between religious traditions of European and African roots. The Luo musical and dance tradition is carried out in mainstream churches. The ancestors continue to play an important part in the lives of many Christians. The ancestors, according to folklore, live in the heavens or underwater, from which they can be reincarnated as humans or animals.

When naming an infant, ceremonies are often held to ascertain whether a ghost has reincarnated. Through their visions, ancestors' ghosts are said to connect with the living.

Troublesome spirits may cause misfortunes in the Luo religion if they are not remembered or honoured. The Luo word for spirits is *juok*, which means "ghost." The Luo call God by a variety of names that allude to his influence. Were, for example, means "one who is sure to grant demands,

<sup>16</sup>Bethwell. A Ogot, *A History of the Luo-Speaking Peoples of Eastern Africa - Academia Kenya*, 2009, <https://academia-ke.org/product/a-history-of-the-luo-speaking-peoples-of-eastern-africa/>.

<sup>17</sup>Ogot.

<sup>18</sup>Ogot.

<sup>19</sup>Magdalen Nyagweso, "Oral Interviews" (December 28, 2019).

<sup>20</sup>Gumbe, "The Role of Women in Inter-Ethnic Peace Building in South Nyanza, Kenya, 1850-2008."

<sup>21</sup>William Ochieng, *An Outline History of Nyanza Upto 1914* (Nairobi : Kenya Literature bureau , 1974).

<sup>22</sup>Peter Nyateya, "Oral Interviews" (November 16, 2019).

<sup>23</sup>Peter Nyateya.

<sup>24</sup>Ogot, *A History of the Luo-Speaking Peoples of Eastern Africa - Academia Kenya*.

<sup>25</sup>Gumbe, "The Role of Women in Inter-Ethnic Peace Building in South Nyanza, Kenya, 1850-2008."

<sup>26</sup>Mary Okumu, "Oral Interviews" (Mary Okumu , November 20, 2019).

<sup>27</sup>Samson Okelo Mula, "Oral Interviews" (Samson Okelo Mula , November 21, 2019).

<sup>28</sup>Peter Nyateya, "Oral Interviews."

<sup>29</sup>William Ochieng, *An Outline History of Nyanza Up to 1914*.

*Nyasaye*, he who is begging, *Ruoth*, the king, *Jachwech*, the moulder," *Wuonkoth*, "the rain-giver," and *Nyakalaga*, "the one who flows everywhere." Those that require God's help pray and make prayers to him.

Christianity has fused most notably with traditional religious beliefs and customs in "independent Christian churches," which have attracted large followings. For example, the *Nomiya Luo Church*, which started in 1912, was the first independent church in Kenya. The founder of this church, *Johanwa Owalo*, is believed to be a prophet similar to Jesus Christ and Muhammad. *Owalo* later teamed up with a Catholic priest and began teaching a new theology that rejected both the Pope and the trinity doctrine.

## II. THEORETICAL ASPECTS

This paper employs a theoretical paradigm based on the DFID's theory of change to examine the impact of cultural image on gender relations in the Luo culture. ([https://www.theoryofchange.org/pdf/DFID\\_ToC\\_Review\\_VogelV7.pdf](https://www.theoryofchange.org/pdf/DFID_ToC_Review_VogelV7.pdf)). The theory of change focuses on gender equality and girls and women empowerment by articulating the vision for achieving gender equality. It also explains gender relations in terms of gender equality, empowerment, and securing women and girls' rights. The theory narrates and maps the pathway evolving to change, and this entails critical interventions and principles. It makes it easier for individuals, organisations, and researchers to achieve cultural gender equality and women's empowerment. The theory is ideal for the current paper. It provides the process of achieving gender equality over time, giving general dynamism aspects of the cultural image on gender relations progress.

The Luos homestead forms the primarily religious, social, and economic units. Each family consists of the father /wives, married children, married sons, and some families had servants. The family's size depended on the number of wives and children the husband had<sup>30</sup>. Polygamist men were head of many households and were considered wealthy since polygamy was considered to enhance a man's economic and political status. A woman was left to compete with their co-wives within a polygamous setup.<sup>31</sup> Politically, the Luo group had patrilineage clans, each clan headed by *Ruoth*, each *ruoth* was advised by the territorial council (*BuchPiny*), consisting of elders (*JodongDhoot*), piece makers (*Ogayi*) and war leader (*OsumbaMurwayi*)<sup>32</sup>. Council deals with state and below council were small council called (*Doho*) of Sub-*ruoth* with the warrior force (*Ogul-Mama*) to enforce a collective decision.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup>Ogot, *A History of the Luo-Speaking Peoples of Eastern Africa - Academia Kenya*.

<sup>31</sup>Owiti Gabriel Oguda, "The Luo Co-Wives of Kenya: Using Resistance Resources to Achieve an Empowered Quality of Life" (University of Bergen, 2012, 2012).

<sup>32</sup>Ogot, *A History of the Luo-Speaking Peoples of Eastern Africa - Academia Kenya*.

<sup>33</sup>Gumbe, "The Role of Women in Inter-Ethnic Peace Building in South Nyanza, Kenya, 1850-2008."

The traditional land tenure system was one in which land was corporately held by patrilineage and not individual.<sup>34</sup>. Alienable includes firewood, clay sources, water source, pasture and farm, and women received usufruct rights to agricultural plots and other resources by virtues of their husband's membership in the patrilineage<sup>35</sup>. Property like land which was communal in the ancient Luo community; however, under the Swynnerton plan introduced to Kenya by the British eroded the system and adopted a new reform program aimed at promoting commercial agriculture in favour of the British, primarily consolidating landholdings and register individual title to land favouring Africans male who was ready always to evacuate and free to live anywhere<sup>36</sup>.

The effect has been transforming land into an alienable commodity in a system of almost exclusively male individualised ownership with little concern for women access to it. Usually, it was divided into the segmentation of which large pan used in planting sisal for commercial and subsistence crops for family consumption. There were no title deeds or formal documents of land possession during the pre-colonial era, but this changed under British colonial rule.<sup>37</sup>. The land belonged to the community living around the area, and central Nyanza was not exempted.

*Cultural images on gender Relations in Education's sector, 1945-1963*

During the pre-colonial era, education in Kenya was informal, with children learning from adults; however, when colonialism began, Europeans in Kenya, through missionaries, began evangelism followed by elementary education, which focused solely on the 3Rs (Reading, Arithmetic, and Writing) and elementary agriculture to prepare them to work on European farms. During the pre-colonial era, education in Kenya was informal, with children learning from adults; however, when colonialism began, Europeans in Kenya, through missionaries, began evangelism followed by elementary education, which focused solely on the 3Rs (Reading, Arithmetic, and Writing) and elementary agriculture to prepare them to work on European farms.<sup>38</sup>. The colonial philosophy of formal elementary education did not spare Central Nyanza. Christian missionaries were the ones who brought formal western education to Kenya.

This occurred in Nyanza when the World Fathers (WF) and the Christian Missionary Society (CMS) arrived in 1901 and 1903, respectively. In the Buganda empire, these missionary activists became arch-rivals in the 1890s, vying for religious supremacy. Bear in mind that Tucker (the third Bishop of Equatorial Africa) made two trips to Western Kenya in

<sup>34</sup>Mary Okumu, "Oral Interviews."

<sup>35</sup>Owiti Gabriel Oguda, "The Luo Co-Wives of Kenya: Using Resistance Resources to Achieve an Empowered Quality of Life."

<sup>36</sup>Daniel Rotich Kandagor, "Oral Informant" (1993).

<sup>37</sup>KNA/ DC/KSM/1/3/86, "Agricultural Annual Report" (Nairobi, 1954).

<sup>38</sup>Johannes Seroto, "A Historical Perspective of Formal Education for Black People in the Rural Areas of South Africa with Special Reference to Schools in the Northern Province" (University of South Africa, 1999).

September 1892, eager to learn more about his diocese. His first trip was on foot to Lake Victoria's southwest coasts, where he sailed to Buganda on the west coast. He camped at Chief Mumia's court in Nyanza on his second trip, taking the new eastern route. Some of the first missions established in this early period include Kisumu (1901), Ojola (1906), Aluor (1913) and Rang'ala.

However, this significant development in colonial education in Kenya favoured males at the expense of females. Few Africans who attained University education before independence were males. Mbiu Koinange, for example, was the first Kenyan to receive a university degree, earning a master's degree from Columbia University in 1938<sup>39</sup>. The situation was similar among the Luo, with men continuing to be preferred in the educational field. In particular, Oginga Odinga graduated from Makerere University with a bachelor's degree as one of the Luomales.<sup>40</sup> This provides further evidence that boys were provided more educational opportunities than girls. As a result, during the colonial era, the funding system for education was discriminatory, as more schools were constructed for boys than for girls' education<sup>41</sup>.

As seen in the table below, the colonial government founded the following schools with discrimination: Roman Catholic (RC's) schools; Kibuye, Rang'ala, Nangina, Church Missionary Schools (CMS.) Ng'iya and Kima Girls received fewer funds, while Boys Schools like CMS. Maseno, Nyangori, Yala R.C., C.M.S. Butere teachers training, and RC It is clear from the table below that the central colonial government put more money into boys' education than girls' education<sup>42</sup>.

Table 1: Colonial Education from 1945-1963

| Boys school                      | Funding            | Girls school                                      | Funding |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|---|---------|
| Maseno C.M.S./Primary Secondary  | £3,590-12          | Nangina (Ursuline sister from Utrecht (Catholic)) | £350    |
| Yala RC."                        | £2,430             | Rangala Girls (Catholic)                          | £509    |
| Teachers training RC (Yala)      | £485               |   |         |
| Nyangori P.A.G.                  | £3,590-12          | Kibuye (Patrick sister from Manchester England)   | £310    |
| Kima PAG                         | N/A                | Ng'iya (CMS) small but Efficient girls school     | £363-12 |
| Rangala Catholic (Private Aided) | N/A                | Kima Girls  | N/A     |
| Mangu Catholic                   | N/A                |   |         |
| Kabaa                            | N/A                |   |         |
| Teachers Training CMS (Butere)   | £385 (Partly Luos) |   |         |
| Alliance high                    | N/A                |   |         |

<sup>39</sup>R. Mugo Gatheru, *Kenya: From Colonization to Independence, 1888-1970* (Jefferson (NC): McFarland, 2005).

<sup>40</sup>Gatheru.

<sup>41</sup>KNA/DC/KSM/1/28/10-23:1940'S, "Annual Report/Education" (Nairobi, 1940).

<sup>42</sup>KNA/DC/KSM/1/28/10-23:1940'S.

|                                |       |  |  |
|--------------------------------|-------|--|--|
| Teachers Training CMS (Maseno) | £ 394 |  |  |
|--------------------------------|-------|--|--|

Source: <sup>43</sup>

*Cultural images on gender relations in Health sector, 1945-1963*

Traditional medicine and curing practices were all that existed until the arrival of the Europeans. The modern medical expertise and skills were introduced to Africa by missionaries at a time when the Africans were unaware of them<sup>44</sup>. It is noteworthy, therefore, that herbal healing practices were despised by missionaries<sup>45</sup>. Malaria, smallpox, yellow fever, leprosy, cholera, and sleeping sickness were among the diseases they offered a clinical medical remedy.

Mission schools, established by missionaries, were used as medical education services. Education institutions such as Thogoto in Kikuyu, Chogoria in Meru, and St. Luke in Kilifi were among these medical facilities.<sup>46</sup> The King 'George VI Hospital' (now Kenyatta Hospital) was established in 1953 to serve as a training centre and a care hospital for Africans. Although the centre was created to teach both men and women, the concept failed to meet standards since women were not educated in sufficient numbers. Unfortunately, male dominance prevailed even in nursing schools, which was not expected. Except for Grace Emily Akinyi Ogot, who received her nursing training at Uganda Nursing Training Hospital in 1953, no known Luo women were qualified as nurses.<sup>47</sup> After graduation, Ogot worked at St. Thomas Hospital in London, England, before moving to Maseno, Kenya, in 1958 to work as an African nurse<sup>48</sup>.

*Cultural images on gender relations in Agriculture, 1945-1963*

In Kenya, the early Luo settlement had a pastoralist focus, and cattle have remained a significant symbol and unit of income, making them an essential part of bridewealth exchanges. This demonstrated that, at the turn of the twentieth century, Luo was compellingly forced into a monetary economy. They were, however, notoriously resistant to cash crop cultivation, especially in Siaya District.<sup>49</sup> Africans, in general, were prohibited from cultivating any cash crops other than the subsistence crops they were allowed to harvest, such as millet and sorghum, as a result of colonial imposition, where Luo was forced to serve as labourers on European farms for low wages<sup>50</sup>. Even though the colonial government in Kenya mainly relocated people from fertile land for commercial

<sup>43</sup>KNA/DC/KSM/1/28/10-23:1940'S.

<sup>44</sup>Dr Shane Doyle, "Missionary Medicine and Primary Health Care in Uganda: Implications for Universal Health Care in Africa," 2015, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK316272/>.

<sup>45</sup>Mary Okumu, "Oral Interviews."

<sup>46</sup>R Heredia, "Education and Mission: School as Agent of Evangelisation," *Economic and Political Weekly* 30 (1995): 2332-40.

<sup>47</sup>Mary Okumu, "Oral Interviews."

<sup>48</sup>Peter Nyateya, "Oral Interviews."

<sup>49</sup>Magdalen Nyagweso, "Oral Interviews."

<sup>50</sup>KNA/ DC/KSM/1/3/86, "Agricultural Annual Report."

cultivation, the traditional land system was patrilineal rather than individual alienable. Since then, women have been prohibited from owning property. However, the colonial government did not prioritise women's socio-economic growth in the agricultural sector, which harmed female economic and social empowerment. As previously stated, women were not only economically disadvantaged but also socially. They were unable to obtain a decent education, which led them to participate in a political sphere dominated by men, thereby impeding them from recognising their gender rights.

In evaluating the dynamism of cultural images on gender relations among the Luo of central Nyanza, this paper looked at how colonialism oppressed women and how the Kenyan state continued the legacy. According to <sup>51</sup>Except for a few women who received a decent education, most women gradually engaged in other women's economic and sociopolitical emancipation. Nyakwaka also stressed the importance of Luo women in post-independence Kenya's political representation. Phoebe Asiyu, Grace Ogot, Grace Onyango, Mama Uhuru, and others were among the women who played essential roles in Kenya, according to Nyakwaka.<sup>52</sup>.

#### *Colonial Employment*

Due to gender disparity in the colonial government's education system, few African girls received a decent education, favouring them in securing quality formal employment in the colonial government.<sup>53</sup> Women were employed as clerks, messengers, and secretaries; the position of secretary was the highest. Unfortunately, most professions, such as teaching, clerking, and medicine was given to white women between 1945 and 1963 because they had a more substantial education than African women, thereby promoting white women at the expense of African women. This was in line with European perceptions of Africans as slaves whose voices were not understood or respected<sup>54</sup>. Because of prejudice and education levels, employment opportunities were consistently given to Europeans rather than Africans. An application letter on application papers, among other things, revealed that European women were employed more frequently than African women<sup>55</sup>.

#### *Gender relations in Politics and Constitutional structures*

Before the United Nations declared international treaties, women's challenges received little or no attention in protectorate colony planning. Luo women were refused access to colonial knowledge and were barred from joining any political activity or formation. As a result, few educated men,

such as Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, Argwing Kodheks and Achieng Oneko, engaged in active dominance in politics, while women were relegated to bearing children and performing household chores. Only a few women, such as Grace Onyango and Grace Ogot, entered politics<sup>56</sup>. politics. As a result, these women have been credited with fostering gender equality and girls and women's education, both of which have been partially adopted in Kenya's culture. Indeed, Grace Onyango and Grace Ogot ushered in a true transformation in Luo politics by ensuring gender mainstreaming.

To demonstrate the stark differences in Kenya's politics and political systems, consider the names of male chauvinism before and after independence. In Kenya, in general, and Central Nyanza in particular, no woman was represented in the caretaker government of the 1960s.

The table below depicts the most accurate image.

Table 2: Care taker government, March 1960

| No | Name                  | Position  |
|----|-----------------------|---|
| 1  | Sir Charles Renison   | Governor  |
| 2  | Sir Walter Coutit     | Chief Secretary   |
| 3  | K.W.S Mackenzie       | Minister for Finance and Legal Affairs                          |
| 4  | Eng. Griffith Jones   | Minister for Legal Affairs                                      |
| 5  | L.T.Col.B.R.Mackenzie | Minister for Agriculture, Animal, husbandry and water resources |
| 6  | A.C.C Swan            | Minister for Internal Security and Defence                      |
| 7  | J.N.Muimi             | Minister for Health and Welfare                                 |
| 8  | M.S.Amalomba          | Min. Housing, Common services, Probation and approved school    |
| 9  | N.F Hamis             | Minister for Information and Broa <sup>57</sup> acting          |
| 10 | R.G.Ngala             | Min for Labour, Social, Security and adult education            |
| 11 | W.B Havelock          | Min for Local Government and lands                              |
| 12 | W.E Crosskich         | Min for Tourism, Games, Forest and fishery                      |
| 13 | IE Nathoo             | Minister for works  |
| 14 | C.B Mathews           | Minister without portfolio.                                     |

Sources:<sup>58</sup>

Similarly, as seen in the table below, there was no election or nomination of a woman in the post-election government of 1961.

Table 3: Post –Election Government, March 1961

| No | Name                 | Position   |
|----|----------------------|--|
| 1  | Sir Charles Renison  | Governor   |
| 2  | EN ( Later Sir Erie) | Deputy Governor  |
| 3  | RG Ngala             | Leader of the legislative council and minister without portfolio |

<sup>51</sup>Dorothy Nyakwaka, "Gender and Political Transformation in Kenya" (Egerton University, 2013).

<sup>52</sup>Dorothy Nyakwaka.

<sup>53</sup>Magdalen Nyagweso, "Oral Interviews."

<sup>54</sup>Mary Okumu, "Oral Interviews."

<sup>55</sup>KNA/AC/KSM/1/31/28, "Annual Report/Employment Letters" (Nairobi, 1959).

<sup>56</sup>Gatheru, *Kenya : From Colonization to Independence, 1888–1970*.

<sup>57</sup>KNA/ DC/KSM/1/3/86, "Annual Report," *Education* (Nairobi, 1940).

<sup>58</sup>Kenya: A Political History. The Colonial Period," *International Affairs* 40, no. 4 (October 1, 1964): 749–749, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/40.4.749b>.

|    |                 |   |
|----|-----------------|---|
| 4  | AMF WEBB.       | Minister for Legal Affairs                          |
| 5  | K.W.S Mackenzie | Minister for finance and development                |
| 6  | A.C.C Swan      | Minister for Defense                                |
| 7  | J.N.Muimi       | Minister for Health and Welfare                     |
| 8  | M.Blundell      | Min .for Agri, Animal, husbandry and water Resource |
| 9  | M.Muliro        | Minister for Commerce, industry and communication   |
| 10 | D.T.ArapMoi     | Min for education                                   |
| 11 | B.Mate          | Min for health and social Affairs                   |
| 12 | T.Towett        | Min for Labour and Housing                          |
| 13 | W.B Havelock    | Minister for Local Government and Lands             |
| 14 | P.Mariah        | Minister for Tourism, Forest and Wildlife           |
| 15 | A.B Jamadar     | Minister for works                                  |

Sources: <sup>59</sup>.

In the April 1962 coalition government, the public representation was dominated by men once again.

Table 4: Coalition Government April 1962

| No | Name                  | Position   |
|----|-----------------------|--|
|    | Sir Charles Renison   | Governor   |
|    | E.N Griffith          | Deputy Governor  |
| 1  | RG Ngala              | Minister for Constitutional Affairs and Administration |
| 2  | AMF WEBB.             | Minister for Legal Affairs                             |
| 3  | J.S Gichuru           | Minister for finance and development                   |
| 4  | Sir, Anthony Swan     | Minister for Defense and Internal Security             |
| 6  | J.N.Muimi             | Minister for Health and Welfare                        |
| 7  | M.Blundell            | Min .for Agri, Animal, husbandry and water Resource    |
| 8  | M.Muliro              | Minister for Commerce, industry and communication      |
| 9  | L.G Sajin             | Min for education                                      |
| 10 | L.T.COL.B.R Mackenzie | Min for land settlement and water development          |
| 11 | FMG Mate              | Min for health and Housing                             |
| 12 | T.J.Mboya             | Minister for Labour                                    |
| 13 | T.M.T.C.T Chokwe      | Minister for work and communication                    |
| 14 | D.T.ArapMoi           | Minister for local government                          |
| 15 | T.Towett              | Minister for Land Survey and Town Planning             |
| 16 | M.Mrcson              | Minister for Commerce and industry                     |

Sources: <sup>60</sup>.

When Kenya gained internal self-government in June 1963, there was still no woman in power.

Table 5: Internal Self-governance June-1963

| NO | NAMES                | POSITION                     |
|----|----------------------|------------------------------|
| 1  | Jomo Kenyatta        | Prime minister               |
| 2  | JaramogiOgingaOdinga | Min .for Home Affairs        |
| 3  | Tom Mboya            | Min. Justice &Constitutional |
| 4  | James Gichuru        | Min. Finance &Economic       |
| 5  | J.D.Otiende          | Min.Education                |
| 6  | S.O Ayodo            | Min.Local Regional Govt      |
| 7  | Dr . J.D Kiano       | Min. Commerce& Industries    |
| 8  | Mr D Wanyumba        | Min.Work, Comm&Power         |
| 9  | MR.E.N Mwendwa       | Min.Labour, Social&Service   |
| 10 | Mr. LG Sajni         | Min .land/games/Fisheries    |
| 11 | DrN.Mungai           | Min.Health/ Housing          |
| 12 | R.AchiengOneko       | Min.Infor/Broadicat/Tourism  |
| 13 | J Murumbi            | Min .of State                |
| 14 | J M.koinange         | Min Pan Africa Affairs       |
| 15 | Lt.Col .B.Mckkenze   | Min Agriculture              |

Source: Kenya Political History June-1963(George Bennet (Oxford University Press)

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Between 1945 and 1963, this paper examined the impact of cultural images on gender relations among the Luos of Central Nyanza, Kenya. It is a clear sign of gender inequality in Central Nyanza's economic, social, and political endeavours. It is also clear that women were subjected to private patriarchy, in which they were only able to do housework and subsistence agriculture, which did not motivate them as demanded by African patriarchal laws favouring men's empowerment over women's empowerment. Men were allowed to obtain early education at the detriment of women who were not educationally eligible, obstructing their access to appointive, elective politics and white-collar government employment. Men were elected and recruited in public offices as chiefs and other formal positions, except a few eligible women.

Men were able to receive early education at the expense of women who were not educationally qualified, obstructing their access to appointive, elective politics and white-collar positions in the public sector, except a few qualified women; men were elected and recruited in public offices as chiefs and several other formal jobs. In the agricultural undertaking, Europeans supported men in their quest for commercial agriculture by providing them with titles deeds, which were legal documents that enabled individuals to obtain bank loans, but women were not allowed to own land for production and thus were subjected to poverty rather than empowerment because they were only allowed to grow subsistence crops.

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<sup>59</sup>Kenya: A Political History. The Colonial Period."

<sup>60</sup>Kenya: A Political History. The Colonial Period."

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