

The Echoes of Social Justice Trends in Kenya: A Case of the Rt. Rev. Bishop Alexander Kipsang' Muge

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DOI : <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.807173>

Received: 25 June 2024; Accepted: 10 July 2024; Published: 14 August 2024

ABSTRACT

The late Bishop Alexander Muge of the Anglican Church of Kenya, Diocese of Eldoret, made a remarkable contribution to the struggle for social justice in Kenya in the post-colonial era. However, his contribution to the struggle for social justice in Kenya has not been scholarly studied, hence the need for the present study. The purpose of the study was to establish the extent of Muge's contribution to the making of Kenya's trends in social justice. The objective of the article was to evaluate Rt. Rev. Alexander Kipsang' Muge's efforts towards empowering Kenyan society socially and economically. Liberation theology, as understood and used by theologians in Latin America in the early 1900s, was applied to the exploration of Muge's struggle for social justice and the economic empowerment of Kenyan society. Knowledge of Muge's contribution to the making of Kenya's history as well as being one of the architects of the struggle for democracy in Kenya, underlie the significance and justification of the study. Data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. Archival and oral sources were significant in generating data. Purposive sampling, especially the snowball technique was used to identify interviewees. Analysis and interpretation of data employed a quantitative historical method. The findings of the study fill a knowledge gap about Rt. Rev. Bishop Alexander Kipsang' Muge's contribution to the cause of justice and socio-economic empowerment of the post-colonial Kenyan society.

Keywords: Social Justice, Corruption, Democracy, ethnicity, human-rights.

INTRODUCTION

The late Bishop Alexander Muge of the Anglican Church of Kenya, Diocese of Eldoret, made a remarkable contribution to the struggle for social justice in Kenya in the post-colonial era. This article deals with the following the status of social justice in Kenya in the early years after independence, Muge's fight against corruption, Muge's struggle for democracy, democracy status in Kenya in the 1980s, the origin and development of NCKK and its struggle with KANU over electoral system. The chapter also deals with Muge's fight against tribalism and ethnicity, the struggle for the rule of law, Muge's fight for human rights, Muge's declaration of wealth and his death. However, the article begins by examining principles of justice in society, which help define the rights and obligations of people relative to each other and to the social institutions of which they are part. (E. Stevens Jr. and G. H. Woods, 1992: pp. 5, 28, 75-76)

Statement of the Problem.

Knowledge of Muge's contribution to the making of Kenya's history as well as being one of the architects of the struggle for democracy in Kenya, underlie the significance and justification of the study. However, his contribution to the struggle for social justice in Kenya has not been scholarly studied, hence the need for the present study.

Objectives of the Study.

The objective of the study was to examine the Rt. Rev. Muge's contribution to the struggle for social justice in

Kenya in the post-independence era, 1963-1990.

Social Justice in Kenya in the Early Years After Independence.

The struggle for independence in Kenya was centrally driven by an aim to decolonize and establish a post-colonial regime that would involve African self-rule, representation and the government's accountability and respect for citizens' civil rights, individual freedoms, economic development and social welfare. To realize such liberty, independent political institutions that comprised of elected legislature, accountable presidency, independent judiciary, and law-abiding and accountable public service were required. These institutions that were copied largely from the Western liberal model were regarded as pillars through which, social justice, economic fairness and accountability, civil rights, freedom and prosperity would be realized. (Wanyande, P., et al, 2007: 1)

However, up to the 1980s, the post-colonial governments negated and drifted away from their noble and legitimate goals and functions. The pitfalls witnessed were captured under four themes: governmental representation and accountability, respect for rules and ethics, just distribution of resources for equitable development, and moderation of social and political relations including conflict resolutions.

Wanyande notes that the governance crisis in Kenya today stems from the previous political transitions, especially the reluctance to embrace change amid considerable public awareness of civil rights, liberties and obligations on the one hand, and government obligation and responsibility on the other.

The 1980s and the early 1990s witnessed long-standing public controversy between clergymen and politicians in Kenya over the relationship between religion and politics and the role of the church in national development. Politicians became critical of clergymen who commented freely on national political issues, accusing them of misusing the pulpit and asking them to resign from church ministry and join politics instead. Church leaders, on the other hand, maintained that the church cannot be blind to social evils. (P. Wanyande et al, 2007: 2) Vocal clergymen saw their role as complementary to, rather than conflicting with that of politicians in the development of a free and just society. Churches stood their ground that justice and peace are among the major objectives that churches seek to promote in human societies. (Weekly Review, 29 March 1985, p. 6) Bishop Henry Okullu of the CPK Diocese of Maseno South, in his book *Church and State in Nation Building and Human Development*, says:

To talk about justice and full participation in decision-making is not simply fashionable –it means that Christians are concerned that power, political or economic, with all its trapping, is concentrated in too few hands, nationally and internationally. This breeds and encourages social injustice: injustice breeds violence, nullifies accountability by those in power and leaves the great majority of the people of the world materially marginalized. Peace without justice is a hollow dream which will never come true. (H. Okullu, 1984:5)

The churchmen saw it as a duty and calling to advocate for justice and peace in society. To the majority of politicians in the era, the church ought not to speak of anything touching politics.

Muge and the Fight Against Corruption

Corruption is a vice that kills integrity and works against socio-economic progress in all societies. This explains the reasons why most nations and societies have established institutions expressly entrusted with the duty of fighting corruption. Religions, because of their knowledge of values and integrity, and owing to their extensive presence and reach, faith institutions, leaders and networks offer powerful potential force in raising government standards in the work of development.

Throughout history, faith leaders have raised some of the most courageous and effective voices to combat corruption and promote good governance. (K. Marshall & M. Van Saanen 2007:231) In the world today, the growing attention to ensuring high standards of governance all over there is a broader and more pressing public expectation that faith leaders and institutions should go beyond their traditional focus on personal and community values to even more active roles in common-front alliances against corruption.

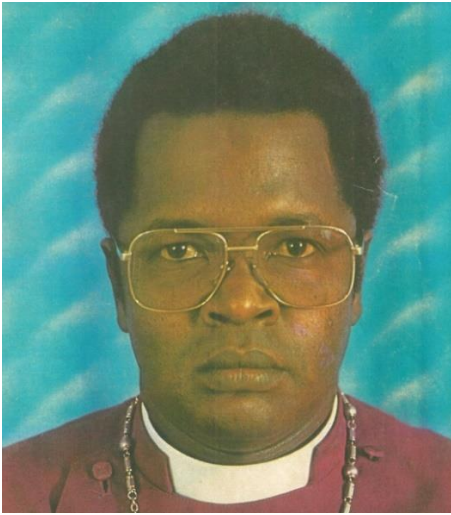


Fig. 1: The Rt. Rev. Bishop. Alexander Kipsang' Muge

Source: Weekly Review, 19 September 1996, p.1

The religious world claims a classic prophetic role of speaking truth to the governing authority and helps to set and preserve social standards. There is a common expectation that religious teaching and preaching will instill solid values, remind and admonish people to follow them, and rise against, them when and where standards are breached and public integrity fails. However, several public policy challenges relate to the actual and potential roles of faith leaders and institutions in fighting against corruption and for higher standards of public integrity. These challenges include building on common religious teaching to promote public integrity; pursuing purposeful dialogue on areas of difference and disagreement; exploring the potential for mobilizing faith organizations to resist corruption; concentrating on religious education and teaching to encourage integrity and public ethics; strengthening fiscal management and accountability within faith communities and programs and monitoring poverty level and public sector expenditure. (K. Marshall & M. Van Saanen 2007:232-233)

The concern about integrity is not restricted to, neither is it a menace in the public governance and the secular realms only but is equally a matter that requires observance within religious circles. The damages corrupt practices inflict on development work have more direct implications for faith institutions when they are engaged in designing and running development programs. It is, in fact, a concern whether faith institutions are sufficiently sensitive to the potentially corrosive effect of leakage of funds and conflicts of interest and whether they are well equipped to combat these problems and defend the high moral standards the pulpit holds. (Marshall & Saanen, 2007: 238)

However, the developing world offers many contemporary faith leaders who have devotedly worked hard to fight for social justice and stand for truth. For example, Archbishops Desmond Tutu and Njongonkulu Ndungane of South Africa, cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga of Honduras and Bishop David Gitari, Henry Okullu, Rev. Timothy Njoya and Alexander Muge, of Kenya fought for social justice. The church leaders provided a concerted effort and crusade for democracy and empowerment of society socially, economically, spiritually and even politically.

Muge spent the better part of his priesthood life-fighting corruption. According to Muge, the state of affairs in the 1980s required a radical shift from 'armchair prophecy' to active involvement in the emancipation of the poor. Bishop Muge, not only addressed the issue of corruption in the government but also in the church and the entire public as well. (Otieno, 1993:51) Even before he was appointed a bishop of Eldoret, Muge had established himself as a critic through most of his sermons in which he attacked corruption and other social evils. It was probably out of his apparent concern for public morality that President Daniel Arap Moi appointed him a member of a presidential commission that was charged with formulating a national code of ethics while Muge was still assistant provost at All Saints Cathedral. The Bishop felt that besides being against Christian morality to use public office for personal aggrandizement, the practice results in widespread malcontent among members of society, leading to other social problems. (Weekly Review, 29 March 1985, pp. 5-6.)

The article established that Muge founded most of his sermon materials on the prophets of the Old Testament with themes revolving around “the best friends the poor man ever had and the biggest scourge the rich man ever had”. Most of his sermons were full of condemnation of sugar daddies and mummies the exploitation of female job seekers by immoral would-be bosses, the misuse of public funds by public officials, the dubious accumulation of wealth, the rigging of elections and other forms of corruption and injustices. Muge explained that injustice was the cause of many problems affecting society. The Daily Nation of 25 August 1985 reported the bishop to have said that justice was the backbone of everything without which all other tenets and principles that govern the society are rendered null and void. (Daily Nation, 25 August 1985, p. 48) Addressing a youth congregation attending a seminar in Nairobi in August 1985 whose theme was “Church and Society today”, Muge asserted as follows about justice:

It is the backbone of peace; it is the backbone of unity and it is the backbone of love. Take away justice and there is no love, peace and unity. Justice is the backbone of the Nyayo philosophy of peace, love and unity. (Daily Nation, 25 August 1985, p. 48)

The bishop concluded his remarks by pointing out that the church had the duty to educate the people, share with them, pray with them, and above all, practice what the Bible expects from Christians.

The article noted that one of the remarks the Bishop made concerning justice that attracted condemnation from politicians across the country was when Muge compared human rights in Kenya with that of South Africa. In 1987, Muge alleged that there was as much injustice in Kenya as there was in South Africa. He made the remarks about arbitrary arrests that were taking place in Kenya, particularly in the Mosop constituency. Obadiah Meli, who became the Director of the Kimng’oror Health Centre from the date of commissioning to date, recounts how together with Mr and Mrs Silvano Chemengen and another two people had been arrested while on their way home from Eldoret.

Meli explains that after being stopped and ordered to get out of their vehicle, they were taken around several hours into the night without reason for the arrest, and were finally taken to Kapsabet Police Station. In the police Station, no charges were preferred against them neither were they booked in the Occurrence Book, commonly known as OB. Muge received the information about the arrest late in the night. From his house in Eldoret, Muge immediately travelled to Kapsabet. On arrival at the Kapsabet Police Station, police officers declined to listen to him and instead moved away from the reception. Muge got the opportunity to check the police OB and discovered that the five arrested people had not been booked in the OB. Using his former police knowledge as a signaller, the bishop used the station’s police radio phone to call the Officer Commanding Police Division (OCPD) at Eldoret. The OCPD travelled to Kapsabet and had a short discussion with his officers and later with Muge. The five arrested were released that night. (Meli, O.I, 16February 2014.)

Muge, later in a church service wondered why the government of Kenya could demonstrate against apartheid injustices in South Africa yet there were as many injustices in Kenya. (Weekly Review, 4 December 1987, p. 21) The comparison generated angry reactions from politicians across the country, with some calling for his detention. Muge stood his ground and maintained that the church had a pastoral duty to act as a watchdog and point out evils in society. He was convinced that the church is entrusted with a major responsibility and role to play in human development. (Drum, September 1986, p. 2)

The study further noted that the life mission and service of Alexander Kipsang’ Muge can be configured better in the Bible prophet, Amos. Muge identified three main areas in which Amos (the bishop’s favourite Old Testament prophet) considered his mission for the poor and the oppressed: the administration of justice in courts, the confident affluent life of the upper class, and the worship of God in the sanctuaries. In Muge’s exposition of chapters five and six of Amos, he affirmed that before the birth of the prophet Amos, the court as a legal institution was most crucial in the life of Israelites. It was the place where righteousness should bear its fruits and justice established. The weak and the poor ought to have legal defence in the courts. However, in the legal proceedings which Amos observed, the bishop noted that according to prophet Amos, righteousness was discarded and justice offered to the poor was a bitter draught. The judicial process had been corrupted by the powerful and the rich and was being used only as an instrument of oppression. The situation prompted prophet

Amos to declare, “Let justice roll down like water and righteousness like an overflowing stream (Amos 5:24)” (Otieno, 1993:48)

Muge did not believe in the view that the contract between the rich and the poor in our world today is a new phenomenon, nor is it peculiar to the extent that we need to create new theologies. Themes in liberation theology were already circulated by the prophet of old. Given this, Muge said that prophet Amos denounced the rich because their wealth was specifically the result of the oppression of the poor and the corruption in the courts and cited Amos 3:10; 5:11; 6:4-6, which was detested by Yahweh. He said estates had grown through dispossessing the peasant; the lofty elegant residences were no more than robbers’ dens. The managers of the economy were insulated from the suffering on which it was based. (Otieno, 1993:49) It was rightly said of Bishop Muge that:

For much of his adult life, the late Bishop Alexander Kipsang’ Muge has been a controversial figure who often stepped in wrangles. The authorities within the Church of the Province of Kenya (CPK), the secular state and politicians came to feel and fear his harsh, headline-grabbing criticism. Almost immediately after being ordained a deacon of the CPK in 1975, Muge plunged with alacrity into his first battles with the church hierarchy and the leadership of the umbrella organization of the protestant churches in Kenya, the National Christian Council of Kenya (NCCCK), over all kinds of issues. (Weekly Review, 17 August 1990, p. 9.)

Muge believed that the high calling of Christians should be accompanied by a high moral standard. He exhorted Christians to fight all evils and the men behind them using means available including political ones. (Daily Nation, 2 December 2013, p. 9) In one of his sermons, the bishop asserted:

If the church sleeps and conforms to the standards of this world, then she will be held responsible for all unchallenged evil taking place in every given society, such as immorality, corruption, injustice and greed. Christians must not just resist such immoral characters but must expose them as well. (Weekly Review, 29 March 1985, p. 6.)

The Bishop made appeals to Christians and the rest of the citizens as well to make a concerted effort to fight corruption. Whenever he found an opportunity he castigated perpetrators of corruption. On 25 August 1986, while opening a five-day Kenya Anglican Youth Organization (KAYO) seminar at the Ex-Senior Chief Koinange High School in Kiambaa, Kiambu District, Muge protested the high level of greed among some Kenyans then. He said that many Kenyans were worshipping material belongings instead of God. The bishop said:

This irreligious attitude had made many grab almost everything within their reach at the expense of the ignorant ones. A time will come when these grabbers have nothing to grab unless they begin to grab their property. (Daily Nation, 26 August, 1986, p. 5.)

Muge urged young people to say “NO” to corrupt people in authority who wanted to be bribed to render services to their compatriots. In the 1980s and 1990s injustice was growing, and so was corruption and bribery. (The Standard, 6 August 1990, pp. 1-2) As an assistant provost at All Saints Cathedral, the prelate dedicated most of his sermons to fighting corruption in the government and the larger society. Despite the high-handedness and intolerance with which the KANU government treated critics, Muge boldly and fearlessly condemned corrupt officials in the government. (Weekly Review, 17 August 1990, p. 8) The press reported:

In his highly popular and well-publicized sermons, Muge, much to the consternation of the politicians among the congregation rained vituperation against corruption in society and the hypocrisy of political personalities in Kenya. The provost of All Saints Cathedral had become the darling of the local press which lapped up his every word and splashed his sermons in banner headlines. His superiors within the CPK church watched with growing unease and displeasure. The government was also watching Muge with keen interest and a team of police officers visited the Cathedral towards the end of 1982 and searched it in vain in the hope of finding some incriminating materials against the fiery clergy man. (Weekly Review, 17 August 1990, p. 10.)

The article notes that while serving in Nairobi, Muge chose to fight corruption from the inside-out; that is, correcting the evils in the church before reprimanding the government and the wider public. Other than the critical sermons Muge issued from the pulpit, seminars and conferences, he also wrote critical articles in the

Target Newspaper. (Weekly Review, 17 August 1990, p. 9.) One theory had it that Bishop Muge was moved to Eldoret partly because of the increasing uneasiness of the church hierarchy with his pricking sermons and partly to distance him from the press. However, this was not to be. From the pulpit in Eldoret, just like Okullu in Nyanza, he continued to draw media attention with his charged and highly controversial sermons and statements about both clerical and secular issues. A few months after taking over Eldoret Diocese, Muge began another chapter in what he perceived as the iniquities of politics of his home district, Nandi. After the 1988 elections, Muge claimed that there was extensive corruption in the election in the form of rigging and bribing of voters. He claimed that the 1988 crop of politicians from Nandi District did not represent the wish and choice of the electorate and therefore lacked legitimacy.

Addressing a Justice and Peace workshop organized by his diocese on 27 June 1988, Muge said: “There is an outcry in Kenya today that the present parliament is full of people who are the friends of party officials and not the choice of the electorate.” (Weekly Review, 22 July 1988, p. 16)

In West Pokot, Muge put the government to task over famine and theft of relief maize. Muge claimed that a civil servant in West Pokot District had diverted a consignment of 6000 bags of maize to his home and removed 35kg from each bag, leaving 56 kg out of the initial 91kg in each bag. Muge further claimed that the stolen maize was later sold to the National Cereals and Produce Board. The bishop argued that he had evidence and even dared the West Pokot DC, Lagat to prove him wrong. The cleric linked an Under Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Co-operation with facilitating from behind the scene the sale of the maize to the National Cereals and Produce Board. The only government response to Muge’s allegation came from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Co-operation, which denied any involvement in the alleged maize scandal. However, the rest of the substance of the allegation was not responded to. The area DC, who had been directly challenged by the bishop opted not to comment. Muge termed the incident as not only criminal but also a broad daylight robbery. (Weekly Review, 15 September 1989, pp. 7-8)

In another turn against corruption in West Pokot District, clergymen led by Muge, presented a list of 11 chiefs and 15 assistant chiefs who had been dismissed by Lagat on allegedly flimsy grounds of misappropriation of money collected in funds drives, the corrupt allocation of land reserved for the poor, the diversion of maize destined for South Sudan and school feeding programs in the District. (Weekly Review, 15 September 1989, pp. 27) Earlier, the bishop had engaged the government in a controversy when he claimed that people were starving in West Pokot District. However, the local provincial administration denied the claim. The president visited the area and defended the government but, also immediately organized food supplies to the area, which was a sign that indeed there was a food shortage if not starvation. West Pokot District occasionally experienced food scarcity and loss of livestock due to frequent and prolonged droughts. Muge used every available opportunity to speak against injustice.

In August 1986, the NCCK organized a National Pastors’ Conference to discuss KANU’s resolution to adopt a queue-voting system. Muge, who attended the conference, presented a paper titled “Church and society in search of justice”. The substance of the paper was a call to Christians to castigate injustice of all kinds in the same ways as the prophets of the Old Testament. In the paper, the bishop said:

Whenever church leaders castigate evil in society such as corruption in public office and the acquisition of wealth by dubious means, they are told to resign from the church ministry and join politics. But the ministry of the church is not confined to sacraments only, for it is a prophetic mission as well. There are examples of corruption quoted in various sections of the Public Accounts Committee. Reports like the 1982/83 which, showed how millions of shillings are lost every year through open fraud and misappropriation. (Weekly Review, 19 August 1986, p. 4)

Muge observed that the church must educate people at the parish level about such great losses so that every individual is aware of his rights and is in a position to defend them accordingly.

When the KANU Electoral Review committee visited Eldoret on 3 August 1990, the Diocese of Eldoret led by Bishop Muge, presented an 11-page memorandum that addressed various socio-economic and political evils in the government. Despite the KANU Review Committee's main focus being electoral matters, the Diocese of

Eldoret employed a wide-based approach. The Standard newspaper reported:

The Church of the Province of Kenya (CPK) Bishop Alexander Muge yesterday hit out at a clique of ministers who are unashamedly grabbing public resources from the poor and the government for selfish enrichment. Such scandals involving some ministers often appear in the press yet the government does not even state such glaring scandals. (The Standard, 4 August 1990, pp.1,10)

The Diocese of Eldoret asked the government to come out clear over the practice where the government gave land to individuals who in turn sold it to Parastatals and other public institutions at exorbitant prices. “Why doesn’t the government directly issue land to those parastatal bodies?” queried the diocese. However, two days after presenting their memorandum to the KANU Electoral Review Committee, Bishop Muge received accusations and criticism from two cabinet ministers. In response to the accusation, the Diocese issued a statement jointly signed by Muge and CPK clerical secretary, Rev. Stephen Kewasis. The statement read in part:

Let it be known that all the points raised in the memorandum presented by the bishop were the views of the Christians in the Diocese of Eldoret whose representatives met on July 30, at St. Mathew’s pro-cathedral to prepare. Let it be known that the Christians in the diocese stand firm for everything contained in the memorandum. They are ready to face any consequences that might arise as a result of their true and honest views. (The Standard,6 August 1990, pp. 1-2)

Muge, who seemed undeterred, shade more light on the statement presented on 3 August 1990 to the Electoral Committee. Muge said that members of the public were eager to know the cabinet minister who was involved in Shs. 81 million irregular transactions in the Kenya Planters Co-operatives Union (KPCU) and a plot in the Muthaiga area of Nairobi belonging to the late vice president Mr. Joseph Murumbi. Muge stated that members of the public were accusing a certain minister of using his position to grab land.

The Bishop gave an example of land in Uasin Gishu, where agents of the said minister harrowed five- acre maize belonging to a family who had been squatters in the said land since 1962. The prelate pointed out that the harrowing was supervised by Administration Police officers from outside the district. Wheat was planted in the land and when the poor family reported the matter to the chief, the District Officer and the police, no action was taken even though the destruction of crops is a criminal offence. (The Standard,6 August 1990, p. 2) In a bid to demonstrate how widespread injustices and corruption were, the prelate asserted that in Trans-Nzoia District, two government officials and another person (Name withheld) bought a farm parcel number 8940 measuring 1200 acres.

The unnamed person and his 28 partners contributed Shs. 1500 while the two officials and their agents contributed Shs. 119,000 each. The Bishop claimed that two officials had borrowed a Sh. 4.4 million a loan from the Agricultural Finance Corporation that was a 100 percent loan for the purchase of the land which was registered into a company owned by the two officials. The bishop notes that the 28 members who were entitled to 400 acres were given only 25 acres while the rest was taken by the two officials. “Is this justice in our independent Kenya? How can one person with his agents own thousands of acres at the expense of the poor?” The cleric posed. Muge appealed to the president to set up an independent commission of inquiry composed of church leaders and lawyers to investigate the questionable activities of some cabinet ministers. (The Standard,6 August 1990, p. 2) The study confirmed that the Muge was all along committed to fighting for equity and fairness in society.

Muge’s Struggle for Democracy in Kenya

Democracy, as a practical process, is a gateway to good governance, responsible leadership, and creative participation. The process of democratization and good governance requires institutions that can guarantee participation, inclusiveness and accountability. (A. S. J. Tarimo, and J. S. P. Manwelo, 2007:9) This explains the basis for the common definition of democracy as the rule of the people by the people for the people.

Cohen contends that the fundamental idea of democratic legitimacy is the authorization of state power, which must arise from the collective decision of the members of a society, governed by that power. Precisely, it arises

from the discussions and decisions of members, as made within and expressed through social and political institutions, designed to acknowledge their collective authority. On a deliberative understanding of democratic practice, democracy is not only a means through which citizens can promote their interests and hold the power of rulers in check but, it is also a means to organize collective problem-solving mechanisms. The mechanism has to depend, for its legitimacy, on the expression and criticism of the diverse opinion of all members of the society.

Democratic discussion and decision-making is better understood as a process in which differentiated social groups attend to the particular situation of others and are willing to work out just solutions to their conflicts and collective problems from across their various positions. (I. M. Young, 2000:6) In essence then, democracy is a political system, where citizens participate in decision-making on all matters affecting their lives. The central purpose and import of a democratic system is to overcome political disorder and irresponsible leadership. (A. S. J. Tarimo and J. S. P. Manwelo, 2007:113) The system has been practised for many centuries with an equal measure of success and challenges. The movement of democratizing the continent of Africa, which began in the late 1980s and gained momentum in the 1990s, has had a less significant impact on the process of political transformation. The slow political transformation, to a large extent, is attributed to the misplaced equation of multi-party politics to democracy.

In Kenya, and many parts of Africa (as it applied), democratization was equated to multiparty politics, regular parliamentary elections and competition for positions of leadership. Tarimo and Manwelo assert that such practices, on their own, cannot guarantee the full participation of the masses in the political process. (M. Makau, Kenya's Quest for Democracy: 68-69, 81-82) The democratization process in Kenya in the 1990s witnessed and experienced the deficiency. The clamour for political change lacked the vision and procedure that could be followed to bring about structural change. Instead of promoting a democratic culture, multiparty politics created confusion, ethnic divisions and destructive competition with the incumbent government exploiting the situation to continue in power. (W. A. Throup, and Hornsby, C. Multiparty Politics in Kenya, 34-50)

During the 1980s in Kenya, the process of democratization was chiefly promoted by the church, the Law Society of Kenya, and the Civil Society. Throup and Hornsby observe that as the State and the ruling party became more repressive, politicians had been silenced one by one. With the trade unions muzzled, University students harassed and suppressed, main-stream churches and professional bodies such as LSK dared to speak out. The church commanded tremendous respect at all levels of Kenyan society. Kenya is deeply a religious society and many people saw the church leadership as a bastion of moral propriety and principle willing to criticize the regime and corrupt ministers given that the press and the political process had become tarnished. (W. A. Throup, and Hornsby, C. Multiparty Politics in Kenya:35)

The NCKK national pastors' conference held in August 1986 marked a turning point when the churches finally responded to attacks by KANU. Among issues discussed, the body spoke out strongly in defence of the secret ballot. Until then, only a few individuals had dared to criticize the government. Liberation struggles began to expand and church leaders recognized that the NCKK, and Muslims too, could sustain a reform movement. As political freedoms declined, so did the individuals who had led the 1986 assault, Bishop Okullu and John Gatu were joined by a younger generation of church leaders; most notably, CPK's Rt. Rev. David Gitari, Rt. Rev. Alexander Muge, Rev. Timothy Njoya and Bishop Ndingi Mwana a Nzeki of the Catholic church. Having taken up the mantle for crusading for democracy, the NCKK, became both a platform and a tool to agitate for democracy through civic education and pressure on the government. (Otieno, 1993:3)

The NCKK: Origin, development and Muge's struggle over electoral systems

The formation of the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCKK) can be traced far back to the colonial period. The process leading to the formation of the NCKK has its roots in the 1900 missionary conference held in Madras, India. The main concerns, then, were the native church, its support, self-government and advancement. Yet another important agenda discussed was a society of mission and their co-operations. The concerns were re-stated and reinstated at the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference where participants agreed to look at the world as a whole and confront Christian churches. Further, during and after the First World War, emphasis was put on what the pattern of missionary co-operations and the goals of mission work should be in particular contexts to new spiritual, social and political realities produced by the war. While the events were taking place

internationally, the same mission challenges and desires were experienced in Kenya. (Otieno, 1993:4)

In 1913, mission organizations held an ecumenical conference at Kikuyu, Thogoto, to discuss a federation of participating missions. Five main-stream churches at the time approved a proposal for the formation of a federation. The three churches were the Church Missionary Society (CMS or Anglican), African Inland Mission (AIM, later Africa Inland Church), Gospel Missionary Society (GMS), Church of Scotland Mission (CSM, later Presbyterian) and Methodist Church. The efforts did not quite bear fruit because of resistance by the Zanzibar bishop, Frank. (Crouch, 1993:4)

However, in 1918 an alliance of Protestant missions, Kenya Missionary Church (KMC) was established whose main aim was to work towards a native church a reflection of an idea pushed earlier during the Madras conference. Three objectives were put in place to realize their goal: to set up Alliance Medical Training College, Alliance High school and Alliance Technological College. Out of the three objectives, only one, Alliance High School was established. In the years that followed, the school became a centre for the preparation of educated African elite that would later take charge not only of the mission work but, also of the independent nation of Kenya. The KMC included non-mainstream churches such as the Salvation Army. The KMC pursued concerns like education, health, and labour policies. According to Crouch, its main purposes were:

1. To fulfil closer fellowship for Christian workers
2. To nurture the desire for an African church
3. To serve the whole community irrespective of race or belief.

Out of the three purposes, the race question posed the greatest challenge which became an agenda in the International Missionary Council held in 1928 in Jerusalem. (Crouch, 1993:6) Preservation of African culture and how to relate Christian life and message in light of non - Christian systems of life and thought highlighted.

Around the same time, nationalism was sweeping across the African continent. The force was strong such that by 1929 independent churches with nationalistic perspectives came up. Kikuyu Independent School Association (in 1929) and the African Independent Pentecostal church (in 1937) were formed to demonstrate the need for Africans to be given education by the church. As the growth of independent churches in central and western Kenya expanded, they accused the KMC of not recognizing them or accepting them into their membership. Another International Missionary Council was called in which the chairman, J. Hopkins, summarized the changing situation that the KMC faced and needed to address as follows:

We cannot as a missionary council, pursue our evangelistic activities without acknowledging the conditions that determine the ordinary life of the people to whom we are called to proclaim the gospel.... The methods we adopt in the effort to transform men and women through the power of Christ must be adjusted to the new conditions that will confront them, the new rights that they claim, and the new responsibilities they will be called upon to carry. (A. Chepkwony, *The Role of Non- Non-Governmental Organizations in Development*, 1987:55)

The outcome of the IMC conference was the transformation of KMC into the Christian Council of Kenya (CCK). The transformation of KMC to CCK was intended to bring all Christian churches in Kenya on board. However, some challenges continued to exist. Independent churches were left out of the fellowship with further minimal participation and representation of Africans in the CCK. In addition to the KMC goals, the CCK's included:

1. Rehabilitation of soldiers returning from World War II
2. Evangelization of the Indian population.
3. Development of Christian education

Although CCK was an ecumenical venture, born of a long tradition of ecumenical efforts, her composition had varied theological orientations and traditions. The CMS, CSM, the Full Gospel Society and Methodists were liberal while the American missions such as AIM, Lumbwa Mission and the Seventh-Day Adventists were fundamentalist evangelicals in approach. (Crouch, 1993:8) As the political resurgence gained momentum, coupled with the return of Kenyatta in 1946, the council considerably became a platform for nationalistic

movements. One of the main objectives of the council was to promote the extension of the kingdom of God among all the people of Kenya through evangelical unity and cooperation, the CCK adopted the following other functions:(Crouch, 1993:289)

1. To present a representative to periodic church conferences and counsel for spiritual and general welfare.
2. To promote the growth of a united front in evangelical work.
3. To promote study and investigation of all problems relating to the kingdom of God including issues touching economic, social and political realms.
4. To help form an enlightened Christian public opinion on all issues affecting the spiritual, moral and physical welfare of the people of the country, to give expression to such opinion and to bear on public questions.
5. To provide liaison between the members of the council and other Christian bodies outside Kenya as the general assembly from time to time approves.
6. To provide liaison between its constituent members and the government of Kenya in educational, medical, social and other matters relating to the general welfare of the people.
7. To hold land and buildings where holding will further Christian cooperation.

In the period between 1950 and 1958, the CCK was engaged in rehabilitation activities. The CCK was the first church organization in the Third World to receive funds for emergency activities and reconstruction. Alongside rehabilitation and counselling, traditional education and medical activities formed an outreach program for the council.

For effective execution of its functions, the CCK reorganized itself into six departments:

1. Evangelism.
2. Christian education and training.
3. Literature, audio-visual and broadcasting.
4. Health.
5. Family life and
6. Social services.

The years between 1952 when the state of emergency was declared and 1963 when Kenya attained independence, were full of nationalistic upheavals. (Crouch, 1993:8) Following the Swynnerton Plan, there were economic reforms that brought some changes. In the 1960 Lancaster Conference, the CCK drafted a document titled 'Kenya's present and future'. This was a guide to CCK's interpretation of the situation then and what the council perceived Kenya's future to be. The document was so important that it provided a framework for the church's thinking on political, social and economic matters. After the conclusion of the Lancaster Conference, the council drastically changed its role from being a mere coordinating body into a huge implementing body.

Growing in task and size, CCK developed contact with sections of the nationalist movement and organized workers' seminars on welfare issues and future church prospects. Seminars on "The Kenya we want" were organized where people expressed their aspirations for the Kenya they envisioned. The CCK, which in 1966 changed its name to the National Christian Council of Kenya, laid a strong foundation for its role in so far as social-economic and political issues are concerned. In 1984, CCK became the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK). (Crouch, 1993:8)

During the democratization process, which occurred in the 1980s and the 1990s in Kenya, parallel lessons could be learnt. The disunity witnessed over the approach to nationalist struggles was equally experienced during the democratization process. In the same way, the CCK established the print media, *Rock*, for communication, so did the NCCK publish *Target* newspaper to provide the Christian interpretation of the major issues of the later period. In essence, NCCK was to play, and still play, an integral role in the liberation and democratization processes. Through civic education, mediation and arbitration roles, provision of education and health services, participation in development projects and relief assistance, and the contribution to constitutional processes, the NCCK is an important component in the governing of Kenyan society at large. However, the NCCK's main role remained an evangelical one. (Crouch, 1993:289)

A new turn of events relating to the electoral system was witnessed in the 1980s. After the introduction of a de jure one-party system through the repealing of Section 2(A) of the constitution in 1982, the KANU government began drifting fast towards dictatorial tendencies. Coupled with intolerance forthright election irregularities and the trampling upon of human rights and freedom, KANU moved on to legislate election rules that were incompatible with the tenets of democracy. The areas targeted for changes by the establishment were not only the electoral system. Related systems such as the security tenure of the Attorney General and that of the Controller of Budget and Auditor General were removed leaving the executive without checks and balances, which were part of a functional constitution. The NCKK saw this as weakening the judiciary by vesting more powers on the executive. (Weekly Review, 3 February 1989, p. 7) A more critical issue that brought another disagreement between the NCKK and the government, was the introduction of the queuing system of voting to replace the secret ballot one. It was after the snap election of 1983 that the KANU regime began taunting for the change from the secret ballot systems to the queuing system. By mid-1985, the NCKK had collected enough courage and conviction to fight against the new proposed system of voting. The NCKK was not in isolation in the struggle but was also pushing together with the Law Society of Kenya.

Just like the NCKK, the Law Society of Kenya was uncompromising on the queuing system and asked the government to give Kenyans more time to debate the issue. The society even went ahead to suggest a referendum or public discussion. (Weekly Review, 3 February 1989, p. 8)

In a 1986 NCKK pastors' conference held in Limuru, the pastors resolved to reject the new electoral voting system. The resolution of the conference on the matter read:

The conference had listened to the experience of many Christians in the congregations from all over the country and felt convinced that the electoral system as practised (had been used during the KANU party election in 1985) has not demonstrated free and fair participation of all Kenyans. We call upon the government to come up with an electoral system which is fair and just and that will restore the confidence of Kenyan in the elections. (Weekly Review, 8 December 1989, p. 8)

The debate was to continue for some time with politicians reacting from all quarters of the republic. In their defence of the establishment, politicians led by Oloo Aringo charged that the issue of 'queue-voting' which the church decided to oppose was not negotiable. Moses Mudavadi threatened that the government would consider moderating the freedom of worship.

Despite the harsh criticisms and threats from the government side, the NCKK stood firm. In a CPK youth conference later in the year (1986), churchmen came out even more strongly against the queue-voting. Those who came on most vigorously were CPK bishops Kuria, and Muge and the catholic bishop of Nakuru, Ndingi Mwana a Nzeki. Kuria told the youth conference that queue-voting was unchristian, undemocratic and embarrassing. Muge told the youth conference that the role of the church was to stand up against the pressures of totalitarianism in the name of one-party systems and against the detention of political opponents without trial. (Weekly Review, 3 February 1989, p. 7)

As the debate continued, Muge became even more outspoken over the issue. In the first week of December 1989, Muge released a statement in which he termed the queuing system as unrealistic and undemocratic and had left many people dissatisfied. Muge was particularly critical of the '70 percent provision. The provision stipulated that any contestant who got 70 percent of the votes cast during party nominations would go to parliament unopposed. In short, a 70 percent provision would give many aspirants direct tickets to parliament. Responding to Aringo's claim that the new system was popular, Muge referred him to the protests that followed various elections citing the general election in Nandi, Kirinyaga, Muranga and Nyeri districts in which voters were dissatisfied with the procedure. He reminded Aringo and the supporters of the new system that even the president's public statement to the effect that public servants and the clergy would be exempted from queuing was never implemented. Responding to President Moi's stand that queuing was a good system, Muge said:

Those in support of the queue-voting system should observe what is happening in Eastern Europe, where the masses are rising against an unpopular government. When leaders in any given country perpetuate themselves in leadership by manipulation through rigging and other evil means they lose legitimacy and the moral authority

over the ruled. Such leadership was no longer accountable because they did not represent the people's feelings. (Otieno, 1993:92-96)

In a spirited effort to defend his position about claims by several politicians to the effect that the NCKK was out of touch with the success and popularity of the system, the bishop wrote a commentary in the press in the form of an open letter. In summary, Bishop Muge noted that:

1. Elections were important issues which needs a lot of attention and consideration whenever a section of the Kenyan population raises a question. He further noted that election is a contract between the governors and the governed.
2. The KANU national chairman, Oloo Aringo, claimed in his press conference that "the majority of Kenyans took part in the last elections and were satisfied with the results, and that NCKK represents Christians and the people who voted were Christians
3. The churches were opposed to the electoral system of queue voting system commonly known as "mlolongo" and the issue of 70% winners.
4. Rigging during elections; be it by queuing or secret ballot is an evil which should be condemned.
5. The church condemned interference from foreign countries. He claimed that Kenya can stand on its own and excel.

Despite the government hurriedly passing the queue-voting system into law alongside the removal of security of tenure for the Attorney General, Chief Justice and Auditor General, the NCKK continued to put pressure on the KANU government to reconsider their step. The resistance against NCKK's struggles for a democratic society did not only come from politicians but also included several other Christian churches.

At the initial stages of the controversy about the electoral system, two churches distanced themselves from the statement and supported KANU's resolution to introduce the method. The African Independent Pentecostal Church (AIPCA), announced through its bishop, Daniel Kirugo that the NCKK's statement was against African culture while the Full Gospel Church equally expressed their support for KANU and that its loyalty to the president was direct and not through an individual or religious organization. Other churches that came out in support of KANU while denouncing the NCKK include the association of Baptist Churches in Nyeri, the United Pentecostal Church of Kenya and the Rift Valley branch of the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims. (Weekly Review, 29 August, 1986, p. 3)

One of NCKK's key players in the struggle for democracy in the 1980s was Alexander Muge. He was the chairperson of the NCKK Justice, Peace, Reconciliation and Human Rights Committee between 1984 and 1990. Right from the time he was appointed the assistant provost at All Saints Cathedral, Muge became a contributor to the roles and functions of the NCKK. During his tenure in the NCKK Justice, Peace, Reconciliation and Human Rights Committee, Muge championed democracy, peace and reconciliation. The major concerns of Muge as regards democracy were honesty, transparency and accountability, freedom of choice for the electorate, free media, rule of law, and observance of freedom and human rights in electoral processes. Muge maintained that the church is bestowed with the duty of being a watchdog over any evil in society. (Weekly Review', 1 January 1988, p. 7)

Muge's Fight Against Ethnicity

Right from the early years when Bishop Muge joined the church ministry, he began the struggle against ethnicity and nepotism. Muge joined St. Philip's Maseno Bible School in 1973 after a six-year service in the paramilitary General Service Unit (GSU), and upon graduation in 1976, he was ordained and posted to St. Mary's Church, Kabete, in Nairobi. At St. Mary's Church, Muge was disturbed by what he saw as rampant nepotism and tribalism, not only within the church in Nairobi but also in the CPK countrywide. Six months later, Muge was transferred to St. Stephen's Church Jogoo Road where he continued to speak against tribalism. It was reported that:

Even after he was transferred from Kabete to the larger St. Stephen's Church, Jogoo Road, Muge continued his

crusade against the CPK hierarchy with unabated zeal and condor. In Nairobi, he deplored a Kikuyu-dominated church and lost no opportunity to press for the posting to the city of clergymen from different parts of the country. (Weekly Review', 1 January 1988, p. 7)

Muge continued the crusade at St. Stephen's Church for a year before proceeding to London Bible School to study for a Bachelor of Arts degree in theology. He graduated in July 1982 when returned to Kenya. He was posted as assistant provost at the All-Saints Cathedral in Nairobi. Barely four months at the All-Saints Cathedral, was Muge again up in arms against tribalism. In support of a statement issued by the then Minister for Culture and Social Services, the late Stanley Oloitiptip to the effect that the Central Bank of Kenya recruited the majority of its employees from one locality in Central Province, Nyeri, where the then Central Bank governor hailed from. Muge issued what the Weekly Review article termed a "Widely publicized press statement". In the statement, Muge described the Central Bank's employment policy as "pure and planned daylight promotion of ethnicity and nepotism". He called on the government to take measures to correct it. (Weekly Review, 20 January 1989, p. 10)

When Muge was elected bishop of the Diocese of Eldoret in January 1983, he even queried his election as bishop of the diocese claiming that he detected an element of tribalism. Whatever the basis of his election, Muge said he had been elected chiefly because he was a Kalenjin and his flock was predominantly Kalenjin. At the Diocese of Eldoret, the focus of his controversy with Nandi politicians revolved around CPK-sponsored development projects and election malpractice in the entire Nandi District. When the disagreement, which initially was between Bishop Muge and the then Mosop MP and Assistant Minister for Education, Science and Technology, Stanley Metto, turned national, top KANU politicians joined the combat in support of Metto. (Weekly Review, 29 January 1988, p. 5)

When Muge spoke against the interference of church-sponsored projects by Hon. S. K. Metto, in collusion with the district provincial administration, he was viewed by politicians as anti-government. Following the arrest of some Kipng'or residents by police over a health centre and a water project tug of war between Muge and Metto, Muge had wondered in one of his sermons whether injustice in Kenya was any different from apartheid in South Africa. (Weekly Review, 17 August 1990, p. 10) Despite a barrage of criticism from both local and national levels, Rift Valley KANU politicians called for a meeting in Eldoret purposely to condemn Muge over the remarks. Muge stood his ground and reminded Kalenjin politicians that he was not a tribal leader but a church leader in charge of various ethnic groups in the diocese. (Weekly Review, 2 June 1989, p. 9) At one time, leaders from his Kalenjin community pressurized him to promote ethnic interests, but he denounced them and said:

We have nothing in common with those who call themselves Nandi leaders. I am not an ethnic leader. I am a spiritual leader with pastoral responsibilities over many ethnic communities in my diocese. (Otieno, 1993:41)

Muge refused to see himself through the ethnic lenses which characterized the politics of the time. So intense and widespread were the attacks that even leaders in some churches demanded that Muge be defrocked. A statement released by the evangelical fellowship, for example, urged the CPK to strip Muge of his "sacred decorations". (Weekly Review, 4 December 1987, p. 21)

In a speech Muge made on 27 June 1988, he told a justice and peace workshop organized by the ACK and held at the Reformed Church Centre, Eldoret that in Africa, leaders surround themselves with people of their ethnic affiliations who tyrannise the entire population. Muge also asserted that totalitarianism in the name of party system, and detention of political opponents without trial, was part of the tyranny exercised by the leaders. (Weekly Review, 22 July, 1988, p. 6) Just like the reformist prophet Nehemiah of the Old Testament, Muge condemned the rich and the powerful for their unjust behaviour. (Otieno, 1993:52-54)

He castigated religious leaders for condoning and even encouraging such immoral activities. In an address the bishop gave to an NCKK seminar on 'effective communication of the Gospel' in September 1983, the prelate lamented that the church in Kenya had failed to live up to her expectations. The Bishop claimed that the NCKK in particular was like a rotten potato. To the best of his knowledge, the NCKK as an institution had done nothing to warrant it fighting evils in the government and the society at large. Muge claimed that all the evils found in, and practised by the government such as tribalism, favouritism, and nepotism were found in the NCKK. Muge

emphasized that if the church wants integrity and effective communication of the gospel, the church must clean its house-NCCK, first to be heard and respected. (Daily Nation, 2 December, 2003, p. 6)

In an apparent reference to a prolonged Katakwa strife in 1989, Muge accused the head of his CPK church in Kenya, Archbishop Manasses Kuria of being tribal and insensitive. This followed a section of Busia District CPK adherents' struggles to be recognized as a diocese. Some representatives of Katakwa had travelled to Nairobi seeking Kuria's attention and had to spend several days in the cold outside Bishop Kuria's official residence in Nairobi. (Weekly Review, 30 June 1989, p. 10) A Weekly Review further reported.

Some of the senior CPK bishops, notably the vocal Muge and his fellow liberals seemed to agree with Katakwa protests that the CPK needs a thorough shake-up in its leaders to rid it of the various evils which they see as having crept into the church leadership under Kuria. For several years, Muge has been sniping at the archbishop's heels with oblique charges of tribalism, nepotism and corruption within the church hierarchy. (Weekly Review, 30 June 1989, p. 9, 13)

Following a prolonged protest by members of Katakwa in Busia in need of being commissioned as a Diocese, Muge took a divergent view to support the residents of Katakwa as opposed to the church administration. The residents of Katakwa finally granted their desire.

Muge's Struggle for the Rule of Law.

Bishop Muge observed and fought for obedience to the law. Having initially served as a security officer, entrusted with the responsibility of enforcing the law, Muge proved to be a rule-of-law crusader. In his undertakings, Muge referred to the law in an attempt to provide or realize an amicable solution in the event of a legal dispute. This demonstrated how the prelate believed in the rule of law, which he frequently called for the government to observe.

Bishop Muge was so much cautious of the law and always referred to it in all he did. At one time while on an official visit to Canada, Bishop Gitari asked him to meet members of the dissident Mwakenya group. Muge took caution and ensured that he first informed the authorities of the government of Kenya. (Weekly Review, 5 May 1989, p. 19) Muge later confessed when President Moi accused Bishop Gitari of collaborating with the subversive group. Gitari had opted to remain silent, which Muge saw as tantamount to an admission of guilt. Part of Muge's confession read:

My mission was in the Diocese of Fredrickton and Nova Scotia and Bishop Gitari mission was mainly in Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto. Bishop Gitari telephoned me one day when he was about to return home and told me that he had met two Kenyans in Toronto with subversive literature about Kenya. Gitari asked if I could find out more about the men only one of whose names I could remember as a Mr. Kamau. After taking the precaution of informing the government of Kenya about the matter, I met the two... (Weekly Review, 5 May 1989, p. 19)

There are other several occasions when Muge reminded the church, the government, and the society to follow due process in their undertakings. In September 1982 a vacancy arose for the post of the head of Mt. Kenya South Diocese following the death of Rev. Sospeter Magu. When an election was called for the post, it emerged that the Anglican head in Kenya, Rev. Manasses Kuria had attempted to impose a candidate of his choice to head Mt. Kenya South Diocese.

However, Muge led a group of five bishops to bar Kuria from the attempt. The Weekly Review observed that:

Two days before the election, however, five bishops of the Anglican Church, led by the bishop of Eldoret, the Rev. Alexander Kipsang Muge, filed an injunction in the high court asking the court to restrain Bishop Kuria from alleged attempts to plant his candidates the Rev. Samuel Muturi in the vacant post of bishop of Mt. Kenya South diocese. Muge, on behalf of the five bishops together with his lawyer, Mr. Amos Wako, spent the whole of Friday last week arguing the matter with Kuria's lawyer, Mr. Reginald Simpson, before Justice H. G. Platt. At the end of the day, both parties told newsmen that the controversy had been resolved 'amicably' before Platt in his chambers. It would appear that the ruling was in favour of the five bishops...(WeeklyReview, 22 June 1984,

pp.11-12; Weekly Review, 29 June 1984, pp 8-9)

The government attempted severally to bar and deny Muge freedom of movement and association because of his advocacy for the rule of law. Delivering an open-air Sermon to a gathering in Eldoret town Muge criticized the government for attempting to bar him from addressing any rallies in UasinGishu and Nandi districts. Referring to the deployment of the youth wingers to bar him from carrying out his duties, Muge himself a former policeman, told the congregation in Eldoret that the country had a well-trained police force able to handle acts of lawlessness and whose members are conversant with the laws of the country. He claimed that delegating such a role to youth wingers amounted to introducing the law of the jungle in Kenya. He often reminded the government to rule by law. (Weekly Review, 10 October 1986, pp. 3-4; H. Opuka, O.I, 11March 2014.)

In 1987, the Nandi District KANU branch issued a threat to Muge to the effect that he would face disciplinary action for continuously criticizing the government and even going to the extent of comparing Kenya's Human Rights to that of South Africa. Muge, clear in mind of what the law stipulated regarding such measures replied that he was not a KANU member and that they had no jurisdiction to take any disciplinary action against him. (Weekly Review, 14 April 1989, p. 4) Other law matters that confronted Muge include Metto's claim that the bishop had hatched a plan to murder him. Muge reported the claim to the police and asked for a thorough investigation. However, the police found the claim baseless. Muge asked the police to clear his name which had been tarnished but the police were reluctant and only told him that the file was closed. (Weekly Review, 9 May 1986' p. 10) In response to Stanley Metto's use of police to harass residents of Nandi who supported Muge's social and economic development projects, the bishop imposed a ban on Metto from conducting or presiding in any ACK church functions. This, Muge explained is following the church's provision. In all his undertakings, Bishop Muge proved to understand and believe in lawful procedures. (Weekly Review, 22 February 1985, p. 12)

Apart from himself obeying the law, Muge castigated the government whenever it contravened the law. One of Muge's major concerns about the law was the 1970s and 1980s detention without trial. He frankly and openly spoke against it without fear or favour. It had become characteristic of the KANU era to overlook, evade or conduct their businesses in disregard of the law. Where the claims of the law seemed obvious or conspicuously clear, the government through parliament moved swiftly to re-write the law in question. (Weekly Review, 19 September, 1986) A good example is the introduction of Section (2a) into the constitution in 1982 following the attempted registration of another political party by Oginga Odinga and George Anyona. Parliament is an institution tasked with the responsibility of making laws for which they ought to lead by example in observing them. Equally, the executive should ensure that the law is enforced. However, in the 1980s there was widespread violation of the law. Muge took the KANU government to task for infringing on the freedom of the MPs provided for by the Power and Privileges Act.

The bishop at one time complained that the recommendation for the suspension of Shikuku from the party contravened the Act. Muge posed:

Mr Fred Mati (speaker of the national assembly) had assured Shikuku that the Powers and Privileges Act that protects MPs from public harassment for what they say in parliament was still operational. Muge whose criticism was much more blunt than that of his colleagues wondered why the Nakuru branch of KANU was calling for disciplinary action against Mungai for asking a question in parliament. (Weekly Review, 3 January 1986, p. 7)

While commenting on threats directed at him, Bishop Muge complained bitterly about cabinet ministers who----

Okondo's threats to the two clergymen were an upshot of ministers' use of the law with impunity. Muge further pointed out that some ministers had formed a class of their own, unrestrained by the law like other citizens. (Drum, September 1990, p. 7)

The cleric made the remarks about the then minister for labour, Mr Peter Okondo. The minister had on a Saturday 11August 1990 issued threats, just two days before Muge's death. (TheStandard, 16 August 1990, pp. 1, 7., Opuka, O.I, 11 March 2014) Muge did not confine himself to defending issues that touched politics and politicians. Opuka, who had the privilege to share and work with the bishop, contends that Muge received a myriad of complaints from ACK adherents and the general public. Many of these people sought Muge's

intervention on socio-economic, spiritual and matters requiring legal redress. People came from all corners of the Diocese and beyond. One such case that required legal redress was a land dispute in Uasin Gishu that ended up in the High Court. The big question that surrounded the land dispute which dated from 1979, was whether it was legally tenable for a land dispute adjudicated and settled by a Resident Magistrate's Court, and later upheld in a High Court civil appeal ruling, to be reversed by elders ruling. When the case was brought to the attention of the Bishop, he scrutinized the processes and details of the dispute and realized that it was not following the law that the High Court ruling can be annulled by an elders' ruling.

This was the puzzle that the bishop wanted the Attorney General, Justice Mathew Muli, or the Chief Justice, Alfred Simpson to answer. (Opuka, O.I, 11March 2014; Boen, O.I, 28 March 2014) Before contacting the Attorney-general and the Chief Justice, Muge informed the NCKK who constituted a committee comprising Muge, Rt. Rev. Lawi Imathiu and the NCKK secretary general, John Kamau to oversee the case. The three were able to seek an audience with both the Attorney General and the Chief Justice. (Weekly Review, 24 May 1985, pp. 11-12) Such was among the myriad of concerns Muge attended to on a routine basis.

Muge's struggle for the rule of law was epitomized in a memorandum submitted by the diocese to the 1988 KANU Electoral Review Committee chaired by Prof. George Saitoti, who was the vice president and minister for finance. Led by Bishop Muge, the diocese in their eleven-page statement called for a review of all constitutional amendments made since independence. The statement read in part:

All post-independence amendments to the constitution should be reviewed and the sanctity of the constitution reinstated to conform to the rule of law and the doctrine of separation of powers and democracy. Present national impasse to the constitution of Kenya (Amendment) Act No. 7 of 1982, the act in repealing the constitution of Kenya (Amendment) bill No. 2 of 1968 that required that candidates be nominated by political parties not only shut the door for independent candidates but also affected election laws, the right to vote and the constitutional right of association and assembly enshrined in Section 80 of the constitution. (The Standard, 4 August 1990, pp. 1, 10)

The statement further noted that the amendment undermined the constitution and gave rise to party supremacy that consequently undermined the foundation upon which a just and peaceful society is built. Underscoring the importance of the judiciary, the diocese strongly stated:

We most humbly submit that unless these fundamental and contentious points in issues such as the independence of the judiciary and the equivalent safeguards to the offices of the Attorney General, the Auditor General and the Controller of Budget are addressed, this committee is merely seeking to provide a supervised palliative measure which does not at all touch on the public clamour for justice. (The Standard, 4 August 1990, p. 10)

In the memorandum, the diocese gave five recommendations. Topping the list was the reinstatement of the sanctity of the constitution, review of KANU elections rules, protection of the office of the president, and misuse of power by public officers. The statement also called for the removal of detention without trial to conform to the original Independence Constitution. Concluding issues of law, the diocese felt strongly that no important constitutional amendment should, in future, be passed without being subjected to a national referendum. In the fight for the observation of the law of the land, Bishop Muge reminded elected leaders that they had to pay taxes to the government just like other people. Muge pointed out that all public officers needed to declare their wealth and explain how they acquired it following the Public Servants Act. (Weekly Review, 14 March 1986, p.12)

Muge's Struggle for Human Rights

Muge is on record as having fought attempts by the government to interfere with citizen's human rights. Specifically, Muge defended freedoms of worship, movement, expression and speech, and of the press. He used the pulpit, seminars and conferences to articulate the respect of human rights. During the 1980s, the government resisted attempts by human rights organizations to perform their functions. Human rights activists were frequently arrested, detained or tortured in an apparent attempt to silence them. Muge often dared to reprimand the government for disrespecting human rights.

The bishop shared the same conviction with the renowned human rights defender, Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa. Archbishop Tutu posits that people of faith have no other option where injustice and oppression are promoted other than to condemn and fight it hard. (T. Desmond, in W. John, Jr. and A. S. Frank, eds 2010:3)

In the same vein, Muge articulated and defended the freedom and rights of citizens despite great resistance from the government and politicians. In an attempt to silence outspoken members of the clergy and NCKK as a whole in the 1980s for agitating for human rights, the KANU government issued threats. One of the threats targeted curtailment of the freedom of worship. Moses Mudavadi, a KANU official and minister, threatened that the government would consider moderating freedom of worship. (Weekly Review, 15 August 1990, p. 7) An assistant minister for education and MP for Mosop constituency in Nandi also directly accused Muge and other clerics of abusing the freedom of worship given by the government. Reacting to the threat, Muge reminded politicians and government that freedom of worship was neither a privilege nor a freedom given by governments but a God-given freedom for all humanity.

Though Muge was several times denied freedom of movement, he continued to advocate for it. The government at one time issued a warning to Muge not to visit the then West Pokot District. West Pokot District was part of the Diocese of Eldoret, then under Bishop Muge. The bishop had claimed that the people of West Pokot were dying of starvation and the government was not taking steps to save the situation. (Kogo, O.I, March 2014; Weekly Review, 24 June 1984, pp. 9-10) The then area DC, Mr. Lagat, denied the report about people dying of hunger.

Muge Wealth Declaration

To demonstrate leadership by example, the prelate declared his wealth on 11 August 1990. The bishop said:

I am compelled by the spirit of the Lord to implement this recommendation. I own two plots in Eldoret municipality; blocks 14/705 and 706, half an acre each. I bought these two plots from Mr. Kemboi in 1985 at a cost of Shs. 40,000 per plot. I also own a 20-acre piece of land at Kipkenyo in Uasin Gishu District, which I bought from William Kurgat in 1985. I took a loan of Shs. 150,000 from the AFC which I am supposed to repay for 15 years. I have been submitting a monthly repayment of Shs. 1,800 since November 1985. Itake that this piece of land will be mine when I finish repayment in November 2000. I do not own a car, but the diocese purchased a Peugeot 405 for my use with assistance from the Episcopal Church in the US. That is all I own in this world. (The Standard, 11 August 1990, pp. 1, 10)

The bishop did so follow the dioceses' recommendation presented to the KANU Review Committee at its Eldoret sitting on 2 August 1990. The cleric concluded that he expected fellow church leaders, cabinet ministers, senior civil servants and leaders in general to do the same. The diocese also criticized public officers who blatantly subverted and disobeyed court orders or interfered with the due legal process, intending to influence the course of justice. (The Standard, 11 August 1990, pp. 2)

The death of Bishop Muge

On 14th August 1990, Muge went to Busia despite death threats issued against him and Bishop Okullu by Peter Habenga Okondo, the then Minister for Labour. Before travelling to Busia with Katakwa archbishop deacons under his overseership, Muge said;

The recent warning by the minister that I should not visit Busia District or else I would not go back alive was a prelude to the execution of my murder. I would still visit the district in readiness to death. I am perturbed by the irresponsible utterances of Okondo. Probably, I only committed two crimes, the presentation of Eldoret Diocese Christians' views to the KANU Electoral Review Committee and an appeal to the Head of State calling for a commission to investigate the questionable activities of several cabinet ministers and civil servants. (Drum, September 1990, p. 7)

Muge was not scared by Okondo's ultimatum. He proceeded to Busia town in the former Busia District.

While responding to Okondo's threats, the prelate asserted;

The principles and ideologies I stand for, are the root cause of threats on my dear, precious and sacred life. I stand by the memorandum I submitted to the KANU Committee; the threat of death would not deter my quest for an upright community. I will not shift my stand. (Drum, September 1990, p. 7)

The bishop lamented that the corrupt leaders were being protected by the authorities as they continued with their habits. He claimed that the government was protecting some politicians who were grabbing land from poor wananchi, adding that leaders were hiding the truth. He concluded that the truth would come out one day. The bishop said: “I am prepared to die for my principles. We cannot sit back and see things going wrong in our country. Surely, God would be against us”. (The Standard, 11 August 1990, pp. 1, 10) During his last prayer service at St. Stephen’s Church in Busia, Muge pronounced what would be his last plea against corruption to a gathering estimated to have been over 2000. The bishop said:

Christians in Kenya should fight corruption. Most of the leaders in the country are corrupt, and some have grabbed land and property from helpless citizens, Kenyans should pray for them to change their hearts and ways. (Drum, September 1990, p. 7)

Muge lost his life fighting against social injustice facing Kenyan society. His death was widely suspected to have been executed by powerful forces against his outspokenness for justice.

SUMMARY

This article examined Muge’s contribution to the struggle for social justice in Kenya. He was one of Kenya’s architects of Kenya’s democracy, who made a remarkable contribution to the struggle for social justice during the post-independence era. He made appeals to Christians and the rest of the citizens to make concerted efforts against corruption and as an example, he used to declare his wealth publicly. Further, the Bishop advocated for democracy, good governance and leadership. He and the NCKK spearheaded the development of electoral systems and the fight against ethnicity and nepotism which was a big vice within government. He further fought for obedience to the rule of law and human rights in Kenya.

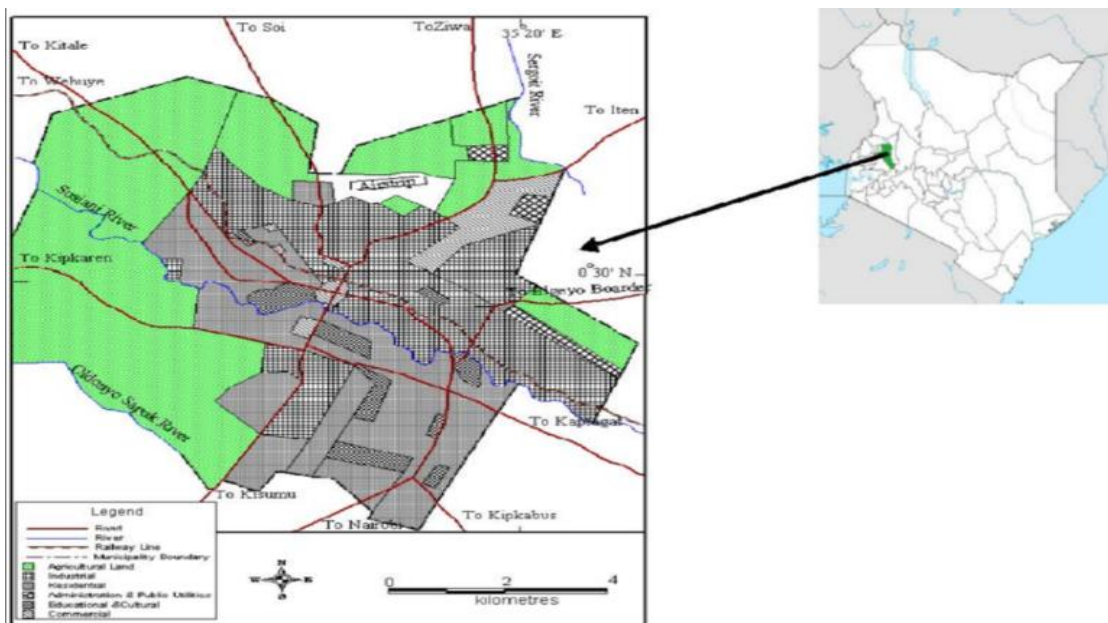


Fig 2: Map of Eldoret Town.

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