Gender Analysis: The Stunted Discourse in Kenya's Historiography[1]

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Résumé: *Dans cet article une critique et une analyse de l'historiographie récente du Kenya ont été amorcées à propos de l'ignorance apparente ou de la déformation des relations de genre. L'analyse des relations de genre dans l'historiographie kenyane est un discours controversé résultant non pas de l'absence de relations de genre ou d'importantes réalisations et contributions de femmes, mais de préoccupations, de traditions, de précédents et de méthodologies pleins de préjugés. L'auteur termine en rejetant l'historiographie «mâle» et en appelant à une historiographie basée sur les relations de genre dont il trace les grandes lignes.*

Introduction

Since the early 1960s, a massive literature has emerged on Kenya's history. The emergence of this literature is attributable to a wide range of factors, the most important, perhaps, being the nationalist discourses on the process of decolonisation and the political status of independent Kenya. These developments have cause Africanists and African scholars to reconstruct Kenya's past in various terms; Western liberal, nationalist, neo-marxist and orthodox marxist perspectives.

The period after the Second World War and that of immediate post-independence saw the employment of the 'balance sheet' approach by apologists of empire for the study of African history (Gann and Duignan 1978). This school of thought argued that although colonialism may have caused suffering to the African masses in some aspects of social and economic life, it was, nonetheless, a modernising tendency which introduced schools and favourable attributes of capitalist development to the 'dark continent'. It was for this reason that the so-called civilising process was referred to as the 'white man's burden'.

As products of colonial imperially defined education, the immediate post-independence writers did not completely step out of the problematic of bourgeois history. They conceived issues in the same way as their Africanist

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mentors, embracing the bourgeois empiricist methodologies and assumptions. A number of African historians, nevertheless, without transcending the bourgeois problematic conceived their discourses as a refutation of myths and stereotypes that pervaded Euro-American historiography of the period. They hoped to restore African dignity and to nurture a new nationalist socio-political vision in the nascent independent African States of the 1960s. This approach in African studies has been referred to as 'Golden Age of Merrie Africa' in which pre-colonial Africa is depicted as a land of peace and harmony where conflicts was absent (Imam 1988a).

African nationalists and leaders of the immediate post-independence States were obliged to restore 'historicity' to Africa. Social scientists were called upon to reconstruct the African past and culture in African terms (Ranger 1968). Thus, post-independence writers of the 1960s reproduced the experiences of these early years of *Uhuru* (independence) inspired by African nationalism. In the process of historical reconstruction, activities of 'great men' were recollected — in short, Africa's achievements of the past in the social, political and economic dimensions were emphasised and catalogued. That is why this epoch of African social, political and economic relations is termed as a period of *Uhuru* worship (Atieno-Odhiambo 1974). The nationalist discourses sought the recovery of the so-called African agency, African choice, African socialism and the egalitarianism of pre-colonial communities. Yet, in the midst of these celebrations of *Uhuru* in the first phase of the development of African historiography, *his-story* dominated the discourse over *her-story* and *our-story*. This was a continuation of the male dominated colonial historiography.

Enter the neo-marxist approaches of dependency of underdevelopment and unequal exchange at the close of the 1960s and in the early 1970s, and some new thinking emerged. This holistic global explanation of history was devoted to relationships between Euro-America and Africa. It asserted that Euro-America exploited Africa's economic resources to the former's advantage (Rodney 1972). Whereas discourses such as Chinweizu (1975) grounded in the neo-marxist problematic explained global economic relations in terms of the *West* and the rest of us in the Third World, and highlighted exploitation, they ignored issues of class and gender relations within the political economy of Africa.

Only Rodney (1972) discussed the position of women in pre-colonial Africa and the effects of colonialism on African women. But despite this omission, neo-marxist discourses illuminated pertinent concerns of African States regarding development. The issues of development of Africa in relation to Euro-America were explained as if the continent was undifferentiated in terms of gender, culture and geography.

Dissatisfied with neo-marxist explanations, orthodox Marxists offered an alternative discourse based on dialectical and historical materialism. The materialist conceptions of history attempted to give an account of social and historical processes as driven by the motor of class struggle. They argued classes existed in Africa and their major concern, therefore, was to define and to explain the class structure in Africa. Standing out in an antagonistic relationship are those who effectively control the means of production, and those who effectively possess no means of production (Ake 1978:62).

Essentially, the orthodox marxist historiography dealt with relations of production. Thus, in its analyses, the position of women and men was explained in relation to the economic system. Gender relations was analysed in terms of capitalist development. As such, subordination, marginalisation and oppression of women was interpreted as part of the wider plight of workers' relations to capital. In this conception, capitalism drew all women and men into the wage labour force, a process that was assumed destroyed the sexual division of labour. Indeed, many texts on Africa's political economy subsumed gender relations into the larger struggle against capital (Ake 1978, Freund 1984).

Orthodox marxist scholars attacked the dependency and underdevelopment writers for their theoretical inadequacies, empirical shortcomings and ideological biases (Zeleza 1993). Yet in their reconstitution of social and historical knowledge, they continued to perceive and define women largely in terms of their relations to men who are assumed to be the norm and not affected by gender relations. This problem is compounded by the fact that the androcentric social science researchers were (and are) mainly men and therefore, carry their idiosyncrasies into social enquiry. This makes it difficult to examine more diffuse forms of social relations of gender as opposed to analysis based either on 'women' or 'men'. Indeed, Archie Mafeje (1988) encountered this problem during his research on *African Households and Prospects for Agricultural Revival in Sub-Saharan Africa.* He discovered that in most literature on Africa men constituted the mode of reference.

The mid 1980s saw the gradual decline in the application of marxist paradigms of analysis to social studies, perhaps because of their inadequacy to explain the crisis in Africa's development. Writers began to reconceptualise social and historical processes in terms of Western liberalism. Debate raged on 'popular social movements, social transformations' and 'the struggle for democracy' (Nyong'o 1987, Mamdani *et al.* 1988). Yet even in these discourses which emphasised the so-called participatory democracy, gender relations was not adequately appraised. Instead issues of class or party politics seemed to take the centre stage. This explains why in 'mainstream' social science the emphasis has been on men while ignoring the experiences, concerns and aspirations of women. It is

time the discourses in social sciences become gender sensitive. But for this to be achieved there is a need to appraise the existing body of knowledge with a view to replacing it with a gendered analytical approach.

This paper attempts to appraise the characterisation of gender relations in the process of reconstructing Kenya's history. And as Imam (1990:242) correctly asserts:

> In contributing to the appreciation of the complexity of ideology and culture and their inter-relationships with 'the material', gender analysis highlights the significance and necessity of considering ideology, subjectively, consciousness, and their roles in (for example) political activity, production relations, or the individual, democratic processes and the State.

Gender analysis is likely to illuminate social and economic relations in Kenya's history and thereby enables us to explain the contribution of both men and women. It will debunk the redundant 'malestream' approach to historical explanation and accord both men and women their role in history.

Portrayal of Gender in the Historiography of Kenya

An examination of the historiography of Kenya reveals the stunted nature of gender discourse in social and historical explanation. Most literature on Kenya's past lays emphasis on 'malestream' history and also tends to 'invisibilise' or misrepresent women. Women are either not present at all, or they are depicted as naturally inferior and subordinate, as victims of male oppression (Zeleza 1993:1). In others, the roles of women and men especially in pre-colonial Kenya are portrayed as being complementary. In the latter works where heroes are celebrated, heroines are also mentioned.

Colonial Historiography

The above characterisation of Kenya's historiography, results from the way issues of social and historical concern were problematised in African social studies.

Indeed, colonial anthropology and ethnography of the social studies disciplines facilitated the creation of myths, stereotypes and the warped image that came to dominate imperialist discourses on Kenya as was the case with Africa. These disciplines helped organise and transform non-European areas (including Africa) into fundamental European constructs (Mudimbe 1988:1).

Anthropology was established as the handmaiden of imperialism to study non-western societies. Its initial concerns were to chiefly classify, typify and then hierarchically order humanity on a scale ranging from primitive to civilised. With the establishment of colonialism, European anthropologists accompanied missionaries and traders to Africa and studied 'primitive' societies as if they were closed system, or museums in which they could

explain hitherto, supposedly extinct phases of European history (Mama 1991).

The implication of imperialist and anthropological discourses for the study of Kenya's history are immense. Africans were depicted in negative and dehumanising terms. If 'the African man' in imperial literature was portrayed as a savage barbarian, 'the African woman' was relegated to a miserable being of lower status. In most explanations, African women were depicted as playing second fiddle to men in Western writings. This perception results from the postulations of 'modern science'. Indeed, this pseudo-science hierarchically ranked humanity, with white man-the-scientist at the pinnacle of thought and invention of civilisation, gradually descending through European women, and other various races, with Africans swarming at the base (Mama 1991:7)

Descriptions of the political and economic activities of Kenya are contained in the earliest written accounts. These are mainly observations of the nineteenth century European travellers and employers. In colonial historiography, these writers were concerned with activities of men, as women's lives were not their primary subject. In fact O'Barr (1985:14) confirms this when she says that:

> information about women can only be gleaned from casual references enmeshed in descriptions of other events and ideas. In their journals, reports, and books, these men emphasised how the women they saw differed from European women.

Thus racism in colonial Africa enabled privileged white women to acquire and enjoy an 'honorary male' status. These were European women explorers and hunters, and those who came as wives of travellers and explorers. In their own societies, they had been denied the privileged status. It is these wives of travellers, explorers and colonial administrators who during the colonial period were involved in a domestication project of African women. They established charitable women's societies in Kenya like *Maendeleo Ya Wanawake* (a women's self-improvement project) which hoped to incorporate African women (wives of colonial collaborators) into the larger colonial administrative structure.

In 'malestream' colonial writings, African women were portrayed largely as the media of exchange and reproduction. Men used them to create and maintain public order and to perpetuate male status quo (O'Barr 1985). African women were left nameless. Furthermore, women were treated as a homogeneous entity, a factor that obscures their contribution to social and historical processes. Indeed, this explains the gender bias that is prevalent in the historiography of Kenya in favour of men. This bias has its origins in colonial historiography.

That masculinist colonial discourses exploited existing gender divisions in Africa and reinforced the indigenous patriarchal ideologies, cannot be

gainsaid. In the accounts of European colonial explorers, advocates of empire and administrators in Kenya reproduced images of tyrannical chiefs and local leaders. They should therefore be understood in this context. In these stories, African masses were generally described as suffering under the so-called backward leadership. At a different level, the role of women in politics, commerce and cultural activities were minimised save for a few accounts whose explanations centred around women and men who were related to the aristocracy (Zeleza 1996).

Jomo Kenyatta, for instance, in *Facing Mount Kenya* (1938) conceives his sequel in the same way Western anthropologists did in their narrations of 'other' cultures. Despite the efforts he made to describe the way of life of the Kikuyu, he was hamstrung by the same imperial tools of conception and analysis which misconstrued social processes in Africa. Kikuyu culture was presented in masculinist terms and portrayed as static as opposed to the dynamism of life in the West. Indeed, Kenyatta did not see any anomaly in the initiation rites of Kikuyu people despite the fact that female circumcision dehumanised women. Instead, he defended it. Moreover, the *Mumbi* and *Gikuyu* story of creation by which the beginnings of gender ties are presented in pre-colonial society, was interpreted in terms of the dominant patriarchal ideology. It seemed to confirm male supremacist ideology in Kikuyu history.

The Kikuyu story of creation postulates that Gikuyu (who was male) was the founder of Kikuyu community. He was given the land around Mount Kenya by 'God' and was subsequently to become its custodian. In due course, the same 'God' gave Gikuyu a wife, Mumbi as his helper. Kenyatta treated the *Mumbi* and *Gikuyu* story of creation as a myth without demystifying it by providing an adequate historical explanation of its emergence and use to oppress women. A diagnostic demystification of the myth would have illuminated gender interests and the conceptual roles in the mythology of the Kikuyu society.

It would seem from Kenyatta's study that the prime actors in society were men. Kenyatta largely ignore the vast experiences of women. Consequently, he relegated the latter to the periphery of social and historical enquiry. Subsequent writers on Kikuyu history have come to rely on Kenyatta's work. In the event, most social scientists using this work, for example Muriuki (1974), tend to freeze women in static roles as wives and mothers.

Nationalist History

African nationalism in colonial Kenya gave impetus to an alternative interpretation of Kenya's past in nationalist terms. Imbued with the spirit of nationalism, historians as other social scientists celebrated the rise of new States by cataloguing the achievements of pre-colonial African people. They

glorified those who resisted colonialism and lauded the efforts of nationalist leaders in nation building (*Hadith* series proceedings of annual conferences of the Historical Association of Kenya of the 1960s and 1970s). Africanist and African social scientists in the post-independence era produced knowledge on pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Kenya.

However, the knowledge they produced was conceived predominantly in patriarchal terms. The nationalist writers of the political and economic histories of the Kenya's past emphasised the activities of men. The accounts of pre-colonial and colonial African male leaders were prevalent. These leaders included Oloibon of Maasai, Orkoyoit of Nandi and Nabongo of Wanga.

In commerce, there were numerous examples of successful male Swahili, Akamba or Arab traders. Women were occasionally mentioned in their stereotypical roles as good craftspeople in the spheres of weaving and pottery or traders among others. There were no women political leaders with the exception of religious and cult leaders such as Mekatilili wa Menza and Siotune who led the Giriama and Kamba people respectively into resistance against British colonialism.

The immediate post-independence nationalist social scientists on Kenya aimed at recovering and reinterpreting the neglected aspects of African history and culture in the colonial discourses. Working within this framework, numerous theses by researchers on politics, culture and history were produced all of which glorified the African past. For instance, African historians wrote extensively on the cultural history of various peoples of Kenya. These included, Ogot (1967), Were (1974), Ochieng' (1974), Mwanzi (1977) and Ayot (1979) among others. These works discuss pre-colonial and colonial experiences of Africans in relation to men as the norm of interpretation. In pre-colonial Kenya, migration of peoples from one region to another and the formation of States are recollected with male patriarchs such as Mulogoli of Logoli being portrayed as founders of the emerging communities. The roles of women are merely glossed over even in works such as Hay (1976) which attempt a gendered approach to historical interpretation.

Nevertheless, there are scattered studies which attempt to examine the changing roles of women during the colonial and post-colonial period. These works discuss colonial and post-colonial policies and their impact on gender relations. They include Pala (1974, 1975), Strobel (1974) and Pala *et al.* (1978). However, in the main, nationalist historiography perpetuates the myth of a classless pre-colonial Africa and it ignores issues concerning control, power and exploitation based on gender. Consequently, this historiography is insufficient in explaining the full gamut of social and historical process in Kenya. The nationalist writers did not quite break with the empiricist approach of colonial historiography that emphasised the need

to relate facts as 'they are'. The nationalist school of thought merely combed for facts in the African past without offering penetrating historical insights. Its objective was to demonstrate that Africans had a history before the coming of Europeans to the continent.

Neo-Marxist Approaches

The application of dependency and underdevelopment perspectives to the study of Kenya's past became visible in the historiography of Kenya from the early 1970s. The main argument is that the economic crisis in Kenya as was with the case of all of Africa, should be interpreted within the general framework of the centre-periphery relationship. Imperialism is construed as having a historical function, generating adverse social and historical processes in Kenya. This approach adopted the Frankian geographical metaphor which recasts imperialism as the 'centre' and the so-called oppressed countries as the 'periphery' (Mamdani *et al.* 1988:7).

In the historiography of Kenya, there have been numerous such studies conceiving issues of social and historical concern within the neo-marxist mould. However, only a few studies of those available will be cited here as all of them cannot be critiqued. The dependency and underdevelopment writers on Kenya reconstruct African experiences in terms of Kenya's relations with imperialism. It is assumed that colonialism led to peasantisation and proletarinisation of the peasantry and thereby disrupted the existing pre-capitalist order. African social and economic institutions were transformed in a way that was disadvantageous to Kenya. Kenya's dependency character and underdevelopment is attributed to the nature of relations in which Kenya entered with Europe over the years since the fifteenth century. The advent of the late nineteenth century colonialism and the integration of Africa in the international capitalist system exacerbated underdevelopment in Kenya. Foreign capital was introduced to Kenya, explaining the need for control of Kenya's economy by British colonialists. Most of the surplus that was generated in Kenya from colonial investments was remitted to the centre (Rodney 1972, Kaplinsky 1978). Moreover, an African bourgeoisie evolved and played to the interests of the 'centre'.

Researchers on Kenya's history have explained the role of the colonial State in social and economic terms. They absolutise the hegemony of the colonial state by producing knowledge on the system of control which was used to facilitate colonial exploitation and underdevelopment of Kenya. Laws of taxation, labour control and the regulations pertaining to the movement of citizens ensured that colonialism benefited Britain. Indeed, studies conducted for instance by Wolff (1974), Van Zwanenberg (1975), Bowles (1979) and Sticher (1982) discuss various aspects of Kenya's economic history within the dependency and underdevelopment parameters.

The colonial presence in Kenya had significant consequences for social and economic relations in the country.

However, perhaps the most striking theoretical contribution to the explanation of Kenya's history within the dependency school of thought is the study by Colin Leys (1975). Leys examines the social, political and economic process in Kenya. He attributes the underdevelopment of Kenya to imperialism and neo-colonialism. Multinational corporations in Kenya facilitate the underdevelopment and dependency of Kenya upon the 'centre'. Accordingly, the Kenyan ruling group after independence is seen more as an impotent class of intermediaries concentrating on small-scale trade and dependent upon international capital (Swainson 1987). Kaplinsky (1978) also seems to come to the same conclusion as Swainson about the role of multinational corporations in Kenya.

Dependency and underdevelopment debates illuminate in holistic terms the consequences of integration of Kenya in the international capitalist system. However, these writers do not engrossingly address the issue of power relations. Power relations and struggle is part of the oppression of the 'periphery' by the 'centre'. Thus the sexual division of labour and its implications on gender relations are not recognised as viable units of historical study.

Orthodox Marxism and Kenya's Historiography

The inadequacies of neo-Marxist explanations of social and historical process in Kenya engendered an analysis based on class. This school of thought postulates that social and economic enquiry be interpreted beyond the rigid framework of the 'centre' and the 'periphery' approach. Moreover, given the uneven nature of capitalist expansion in Africa and the specific peculiarities of social formations in different countries (such as Kenya), it was imperative to stress some of the material conditions underlying capitalist development in Africa. A concrete analysis of class relations within the 'periphery' and one related to contradictions at the 'centre' was necessary to explain the development crisis (Swainson 1987, Mamdani *et al.* 1988).

Indeed, the foregoing paragraph explains why in the late 1970s debates grounded in the orthodox Marxist problematics on Kenya began among social scientists. For example, researchers in the social sciences conducted a 'Kenyan Debate' (*ROAPE* No. 17, January-April 1980; No. 19, 1981). The debate was aimed at reformulating theory and clarifying issues that had not been engrossingly addressed by the dependency model on Kenya's capitalist development. It was argued that the dependency proponents had:

> Been unable to place their analysis within the framework of the logic of capitalist accumulation, imperialism and class formation ... it is only in terms of the general requirements of capital accumulation that the relation

> of the State to underlying class forces can be adequately understood (Beckman 1981:48).

Capitalist relations in Kenya were introduced during the colonial period. In comparative terms, the dispossession of the peasantry and the process of proletarianisation reached a higher degree in Kenya than in any of the other East African countries. It was observed that after the Second World War, international productive capital increased and dominated the colonised areas more significantly. This reflected a high degree of concentration of enterprise on a global scale. It was also realised that in the 1960s foreign investment in East Africa diversified from traditional areas (plantations and raw materials) into manufacturing (Swainson 1987:138).

Orthodox Marxists identified class as their unit of study of social and economic processes in Kenya. Capitalism and its attendant processes of class formation and political organisation was examined. There was need to explain the rise of the propertied class in Kenya — the petite bourgeoisie. Indeed, at the start of the 1980s, researchers began to publish their findings on the impact of colonialism and capitalist encounter with Africans. Notable studies included Kitching's (1980) who explained capitalist development and the process of class formation in Kenya since the advent of colonialism.

Kitching (1980) explained the socio-economic processes in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial social formations in Kenya within the materialist conception of history. Indeed, he identified the existing pre-colonial work patterns, the utilisation of labour and their changing nature during colonialism. The colonial authorities redistributed and intensified labour power in the colony. The processes of class formation and conflict continued in the post-colonial era with the State being the dominant focus of power.

In terms of gender relations, Kitching makes a worthwhile contribution in identifying power relations within the three periods which he treats in his study. This distinguishes him as perhaps the most penetrating of the Marxist scholar to identify gender and women as analytical categories in social studies. He explains the sexual division of labour and how this has been affected by the changing time and circumstances. On the other hand, while Swainson (1980) discusses the development of capitalism and the process of class formation in Kenya, she does not recognise the struggle for power in terms of gender relations. Swainson subsumes gender within the larger debate of class struggle, a factor that has been identified to constitute a weak point in the orthodox Marxist explanation of the historical process.

There was further debate on the applicability of the materialist conception of history. Social scientists in the early 1980s undertook a debate on the 'peasant question' in the historiography of Kenya. The 'peasant question' was raised in relation to industrialisation and to agriculture, a theme that had pre-occupied social science researchers at the Institute for Development Studies of the University of Nairobi (*ROAPE* No.20, 1981).

The writers attempted to explain and analyse the processes of local accumulation of wealth and their socio-economic and political consequences for Kenya. It was noted that the process of capitalist development in Kenya created antagonistic social classes based on the private ownership of the means of production.

Whereas contributors to the special Issue of *ROAPE* No.20, 1981 raised fundamental issues of concern in the materialist sense, their collection seems to be gender blind. They do not fully explain how the process of peasantisation, which they discuss, illuminates power relations in terms of sexual division of labour.

An explanation of how peasantisation led to a significant modification of power relations in the sexual division of labour, could reduce the gender bias which Marxist historiography suffers from. For instance, the absence of any substantial changes in agricultural technology or organisation, led to the intensification of female labour time. A profounder analysis of socio-economic processes should take into account determinate factors which create a situation picture of a history of people.

Towards a Gendered History

In the foregoing sections of this paper, an attempt was made to appraise the development of Kenya's historiography. From the evidence given so far, it is clear, most historical writings on Kenya were biased towards explaining 'malestream' experiences. The bias seems to pervade all paradigms of social and historical enquiry regardless of whether they are Marxist or non-marxist. Consequently, an effort towards gendering Kenya's historiography is a two-pronged agenda. It entails producing knowledge on women's and gender history (Zeleza 1996).

It is imperative that knowledge is generated on women history. It is true, literature on women in Africa has grown considerably since the early 1970s within the feminist perspective. However, more information on the undocumented experiences and activities of women is required. In Kenya as little as 20% of the literature produced is devoted to women. This has, perhaps, contributed to the invisibility of women in social and historical studies. That is why reconstructing the history of women illuminates the entire process of historical research:

> It does this by generating new questions and expanding the sources we use to answer them. History has traditionally relied upon written records: diaries, memoirs, account books, compilations of law, censuses, tax lists, and the like (Kleinberg 1988:ix).

The appearance of feminist writings on Kenya has, since the 1970s, challenged the orthodoxy of social sciences which conceived issues of development of society largely through the male agency and identified men with humanity, and excluded women from the history of Kenya. Some of

this literature included: Pala (1974, 1975, 1983), Pala *et al.* (1978), Hay (1976), Strobel (1974, 1979), Nasimiyu (1984, 1985), Likimani (1985), Ogutu (1985), Kanogo (1987), Nzomo (1987, 1989), Zeleza (1988a, 1988b), Were (1990, 1991), Khasiani (1992), Presley (1992), Mukabi-Kabira *et al.* (1993), Mukabi-Kabira and Akinyi-Nzioki (1993), Khasiani and Njiro (1993). These writers draw their inspiration from the feminist movement for the liberation of women world-wide and raise questions about gender discrimination. The feminists highlighted and conducted numerous studies into the conditions of women.

However, to write about women experiences and to explain engrossingly issues relating to women are two different things. Most feminist researches (cited above) tend to concentrate on colonial and post-colonial periods. They ignore the activities of women in pre-colonial era. This has created a gap in the body of knowledge hitherto produced. Consequently, it has complicated the process of reconstructing Kenya's past for those researchers relying on written documents. Moreover, even works such as Kanogo's (1987), which attempt a gendered explanation of the issue of 'squatters and the roots of Mau Mau', end up explaining the participation of women within the traditional social science approach. Kanogo explains the roles of women through the male agency thus innocently down-playing the participation of women in the *Mau Mau* movement.

Despite these shortcomings in the reconstitution of knowledge on the Kenyan past, this literature throws a considerable amount of light on those aspects that were previously ignored by androcentric writers. Perhaps, in the process of researching on women, more attention should be paid on the evidence which have been often less used such as oral tradition, archaeology and archival materials. These would help to fill in gaps which exist in the present historiography and provide data for a gendered history of Kenya.

Recently, at another level, graduate researchers in universities who have been inspired by the achievements of the feminist movement have embarked on retrieving women's history. Using mainly oral and archival sources, for instance, efforts of Ayot (1990) and Jalang'o-Ndeda (1991) have yielded encouraging results. The former has examined the position of women in Luo societies in the pre-colonial period up to the time when Kenya became a British colony, while the latter concentrates on the impact of male migrant labour on rural Luo women. These works among others, provide useful data in the process of gendering Kenya's history, a history that will recognise the roles of both men and women.

Gendering Kenya's history entails an analysis that recognises relations of gender as constituting a primary organising principle in society associated with enduring symmetries of power (Wilson 1993:5). It challenges traditional assumptions and problematics and seeks to restore women to history while accounting for men's experiences in an equal vein which does

not 'invisibilise' either sex. This is because without this recognition in the process of reconstructing history, there is likelihood to exclude men from a gendered mainstream history. Thus, to eliminate the asymmetrical relations between men and women in a society which is hitherto male dominated, is to see social and economic relations in a more female light:

> Such an analysis shows that beyond biological differences, gender differences are based on social foundations in relation to cultural backgrounds. It makes one aware of women subordination in gender relations and the need to change these relations. It provides science and knowledge with a less gender-biased dimension for it stops overlooking women's position and view (Sow 1994:6).

The process of gendering the history of Kenya involves evaluating the existing political praxis, given that production of social knowledge is a political decision. The State influences the educational philosophy of the country. The political ideology and practice at any given moment will impact on the process of social reconstruction within the schooling system. In short, therefore, a political practice which is gender has to be criticised and influenced to change in order to recognise gender as viable category of social analysis. The curricular will be re-evaluated to accommodate these changes. This will also involve research on the sexual division of roles as they relate to social realities from which knowledge is abstracted.

Since the early 1990s, Kenya has been going through the process of democratisation. Whereas this process has yielded commendable results concerning the freedom of the expression and association, the state has been slow in recognising the role which women play in society and the implication of these in enhancing gender relations. The education system also has not responded to include gender in the curricular. Political practice has remained a masculine domain.

Following this, it is imperative that the democratic strategy be re-examined at two levels. First, the social relations of individuals, living standards, educational level and access to resources should be re-examined. Second, based on the above, it should raise relevant issues and facilitate debate on them (Sow 1994:7). Indeed, democratic pressure groups in Kenya such as the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) and the Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD), should strive to influence curriculum change in the educational system to be more gender balanced.

The changes in the curriculum should be undertaken with the ultimate objective of recognising the contribution of both men and women. Concomitantly, historians and other social scientists should incorporate into their works the life experiences of both sexes. Also issues relating to women should be incorporated into the existing paradigms of analysis. The general pedagogy in the schooling system should be able to stimulate debate while

drawing various examples from both existing androcentric history and women history. This would enable:

> The students and the teacher(s) to systematically question the existing paradigms, the validity of the conventional definitions of historical periods, causality, normative standards of what constitutes knowledge, and the incorporation of gender as a category of analysis (Zeleza 1996:55).

For historians to accomplish the task of gendering the historiography of Kenya, several things have to be considered. For instance, they will re-evaluate the existing body of knowledge and conduct fresh research based on extant primary and secondary sources. The research findings can be interpreted and disseminated within the gender perspective. Furthermore, there is need to revive the Historical Association of Kenya. The existence of such an association or any other professional organisation will illuminate debate on Kenya's historiography, the findings which can be published in a journal of social and historical concern. At the moment, historical research findings seem to be uncoordinated with the absence of such a forum.

Conclusion

This paper attempts to do three things. First, it undertakes an appraisal of the general historiography of Africa, highlighting some of the dominant ideologies that inform historical interpretation and the generation of knowledge. Various schools of thought are identified within the Marxist and non-marxist traditions. Each school of thought defined the interests and aspirations of a particular generation. Also the knowledge produced, tended to popularise the dominant ideology of the time.

Second, the paper evaluates the extent to which gender relations characterise the various interpretations in Kenya's historiography within the different approaches. Sadly, it was discovered gender relations were subsumed under the dominant androcentric discourses, discourses which were mainly grounded in patriarchal ideologies. Hence, this explains why the gender discourse in Kenya is stunted.

Finally, suggestions are given about how historians could move towards a gendered history. These suggestions include concerted efforts to retrieve women's history while at the same time producing a gendered history which acknowledges the contributions of both men and women. Furthermore, the process of gendering Kenya's history involves changing the curriculum and the pedagogy to be more inclusive and balanced in according space to masculinity and femininity.

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