Examing the Wrongs Against the Present African Women: An Enquiry on Black Women's Roles and Contributions from Antiquity - A Black African Male Scholarly Comparative Perspective

by

Onencan Apuke Cankech

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
Department of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education
University of Toronto

© Copyright by Onencan Apuke Cankech (2010)
Examining the Wrongs Against the Present African Women: An Enquiry on Black Women’s Roles and Contributions from Antiquity - A Black African Male Scholarly Perspective

Onencan Apuke Cankech
« Master of Arts »
Department of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education
University of Toronto
« 2010 »

Abstract

The thesis examined the roles and contributions of Black women during the African ancient civilization by analyzing the lives, roles and contributions of Queen Hatshepsut and Nefertiti as case studies and interrogates how Black women positioned themselves as political, military and spiritual leaders during the age of antiquity. The argument is that African women were more involved as leaders in the affairs of their communities as compared to the contemporary times. By using African centered paradigms, Afrocentricity and juxtaposing robust anti-colonial and Black feminist thoughts, the thesis investigates and recreates systematic narratives of the past roles of African women at the very height of African civilization, discussed the changes in sex-gender roles and explained why contemporary women continue to experience difficulties in assessing position of leadership and resources. The study reproduces measured facts to confront the blurred roles and contributions of African women and situates it at the centre of education.
Acknowledgments

I am indebted to the Ontario Institute of Studies of Education for providing me the space to carry this research. My special thanks go to Prof. Njoki Nathani Wane (my supervisor) who at all times did not hesitate to assist me whenever I wanted. Her interest and comments were far enriching and beyond my simple guesswork could have ever imagined. Equally, I thank Prof. Paul Olson for his critical comments and advise. Similarly, I would like to acknowledge with much appreciation Prof. George Sefa Dei in whose class of African Development I learned first to refuse any idea that Africa is a dying continent. My brief encounter with Prof. Molefi Asante can also not pass without being mentioned. I found his lectures especially on Afrocentricity very challenging to modern scholarship and made me see Africa as a story of heroism and courage which will forever remind the world about its contributions in civilizing the rest of humanity.

I feel blessed that my journey in the academia made me meet these fine professors. To me, the analyses of these professors were very refreshing and illuminating, and indeed qualify them to fit in the class of finest intellectual philanthropists of our time. To my classmates in Black Feminist thoughts, Indigenous Knowledge, African Development and Spirituality classes, I just want to say that you were exceptional lots. I enjoyed your sense of intellectualism. I owe you all my appreciation and wish you all the best of luck.
To friends: Ocen Alexandre, Lajul Michael, Okema Vincent, Lugemwa Joseph, Asio Evelyn, Akena F.A, the Lillians, Dr. Onek Adyanga, Dr. Okaka, Dr. Ocan, Mukwaya S. Nasser and many other whose names I cannot mention here, I express my appreciation for your encouragement during various stages of my education. Please accept my sincere gratitude because without your insights and support, I would have possibly got lost and gone somewhere else. Thanks.

Finally, this thesis might not have seen the radiance of today’s world without the support from my brother George Kinyera and his wife Santa Laker, uncle Paul Ojera and Min Adong (R.I.P), auntie Adong and uncle Ocan Ben (R.I.P). Equally, I express my sincere appreciation to my late sister and brothers and uncle: Lamunu Florence, Omony Charles, John, Ojara, Okello, and Lakwoo Wod pa Sulu (R.I.Ps.) who ensured that I continue to remain focused, stay cheerful and enjoy the best schooling experience—something that was relatively very scarce during the years of civil unrest and mayhem which ravaged my people and devastated the countryside aswell. Thanks.
Dedications

This thesis is dedicated to my late grandmothers Min Akele Sulu, Min Angee and my mother Mrs. Akweyo Eromalina Apuke (magnificent women) in whose hands I first learned intricate earthly survival modes.

AND

My father Mr. Apuke C.V. Omony (R. I. P) whose love for education and knowledge electrified several and earned him perpetual presence in so many minds.
# Table of Contents

## Contents

Abstract......................................................................................................................................................... ii

Acknowledgments ................................................................................................................................................ iii

Table of Contents ............................................................................................................................................... vi

Chapter 1 Introduction........................................................................................................................................... 1

1 Background and Connection to the study ........................................................................................................... 1

1.1 Antiquity: Its significances, links and Implications ......................................................................................... 8

1.2 Why go back up to the past to understand the present wrongs? ................................................................. 10

1.3 A Brief Synopsis and Breakdown of the Chapters ......................................................................................... 17

1.3.1 Chapter One: Introduction, Connection and Assumptions ........................................................................ 17

1.3.2 Chapter Two: Personal Discursive Locations of the Author in this Study .................................................. 18

1.3.3 Chapter Three: Discursive Frameworks ................................................................................................... 18

1.3.4 Chapter Four: Research Methodology .................................................................................................... 20

1.3.5 Chapter Five: African Women in Antiquity: A Case Study of Queen Nefertiti and Queen Hatshepsut .... 20

1.3.6 Chapter Six: Discussions, Analysis and Recommendation ..................................................................... 21

1.4 General Assumptions and Propositions in this thesis .................................................................................... 22

1.5 Limitations of this study ............................................................................................................................... 26

Chapter 2.......................................................................................................................................................... 36

2 Personal Discursive Locations in this Study ..................................................................................................... 36

Chapter 3 Discursive Frameworks ....................................................................................................................... 52

3 Theoretical and Pedagogical Implications in this Study .................................................................................. 52
| 3.1 Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change | 53 |
| 3.2 African Centered Paradigm | 57 |
| 3.3 Black Feminism/African Feminist Thoughts | 60 |
| 3.4 The Anti-Colonial and Anti-Racist Theory | 63 |
| Chapter 4 Research Methodologies | 72 |
| 4 Introduction | 72 |
| 4.1 The Content Analysis | 77 |
| 4.2 Africanist Historiography: Epistemological and pedagogical significances | 78 |
| 4.3 Conclusion | 82 |
| Chapter 5 Black Women’s Leaders in Antiquity: A Case Study | 85 |
| 5 Introduction | 85 |
| 5.1 Queen Nefertiti (fl. c.1372-1350 B.C.) | 87 |
| 5.2 Queen Hatshepsut: The Woman King of Egypt | 96 |
| Chapter 6 Discussions and Conclusions | 102 |
| Bibliography | 127 |
Chapter 1
Introduction

1 Background and Connection to the study

Recent balance sheets on women’s roles and participation in the affairs, especially in the political arenas in most African countries are worrying to say the least. Dr Mazrui, a professor of political science and the current director of the Institute of Global Cultural Studies at State University of New York in his article *Africa and Women’s Empowerment* stated:

Until 2005 Africa and the United States were almost the only regions of the world that had never elected a woman to be Head of State or Head of Government. Europe had produced Margaret Thatcher and a number of Scandinavian female leaders. Latin America started off with Isabella Peron, the widow of the great Argentine leader. The Caribbean has had female Prime Ministers, the latest in Jamaica. And Asian female leaders have ranged from Indira Gandhi of India to Megawati Sukarnoputri of Indonesia. Now Liberia, a product of both Africa and the United States, has in turn produced Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Africa's first female elected president.¹

Mazrui’s disclosure invites several questions, whose answers require a complete understanding and examination of contemporary African issues from both historical

and present locations. For example, why to date, African people have failed to gain courage to elect women in many leadership positions yet, in most countries, women are the majority. What could have gone wrong in the minds of African people considering the fact that during the early African civilizations, many women ruled vast empires? And finally, how do we understand and explain the present oppressive “cultural” and “traditional” practices against women in Africa from an epistemological level? And lastly, how much African tradition informed these practices and are they traditional at all anyway?

True, in many African countries, women are underrepresented in all positions of leadership from village level up to the national parliament. While in some communities in Africa, we find women left out of political leadership, women are marginalized from decision making (even those that are centered on them) and are largely left out of major religious positions. Women generally do not own resources like livestock and as a category do not inherit any basic resources yet they contribute a greater share of production and do all the reproductive work (W. M. Kabira, E. A. Nzioki, 1993:23). Okot p’Bitek laments thus:

Women of Africa
sweepers
smearing floor and walls
with cow dung and black soil
cook, Ayah, the baby on
your back
This thesis seeks to examine women’s roles, participations and contributions during Africa’s early civilization as an attempt to provide explanations and responses that would address the concerns, such as those of Prof. Mazrui cited earlier. The enquiry will particularly focus on women’s participation in politics, the military and spirituality, while centering discussions on prime African women leaders. Through this, the study attempts to examine how “things” were at the dawn of human civilization in Africa as far as this particular subject is concerned with a view to provide an explanation to the diminished role of women in contemporary Africa.

Like elsewhere in other parts of the world, African women have endured and tolerated living under the shadow, mercy, insolence and arrogance of men for quite a

---

long time. Notwithstanding that, the story of women’s oppression and subjugation is a little bit different in Africa compared to the western world. In the first place, in early African civilization, records suggest that women did not suffer so much at the hands of men compared to other parts of the world. For example, the male and female gender gap was much narrower. Ivan Van Sertima (1984), in the article *The African Eve: Introduction and Summary in the Black Women in Antiquity* tells us that, “… the myth of female inferiority seemed to have been developed in Europe and Asia rather than in Africa." Secondly, after the invasion of Africa by various interests, Black people, male and female alike, were subjected to various degrees of terror and humiliation as their humanity was equally contested and relegated afterward. The Black people had to adjust and learn new ways in the face of marauding conquerors whose intentions to cause pain and injury on innocent people in Africa discriminated no sex and gender. All these call us to seek for the origin and an explanation as to why women’s participation in the affairs of contemporary African societies continue to meet significant resistance both at community, national and continental levels, and to establish how this sad state of affairs can be addressed.

This thesis will specifically inspect the performance of African women in leadership and examine the gender relations during the then, African sprawling civilizations at antiquity. The period is very important and events therein have

---

occupied human thought for centuries because of its significance to man’s final journey into a new age.

The thesis begins by examining and drawing connections between the present and the “near past” before submerging into the ancient world for the purpose of assessing why in the present-day Africa, women’s roles and participations in the affairs of African people is not what it was before. A quick glance at some practices against women in contemporary African societies prompts a serious intellectual analyst to inquire why the present (21st century), is mainly constituted by what it is not. For example, Sertima (1984), writes about great black women rulers in Meroë. He noted:

Larry Williams and Charles Finch trace these women, so prominent Greek myth, back to their Ethiopian origin. They also introduced us to the most powerful line of all black queen - the Candaces (from the Meroitic “Kentake,” which means queen mothers) ...they point out that unlike the Egyptian Queens, who largely owed their authority to being great wives of pharaohs, (Hatshepsut being one of the exception), the Ethiopian queens were independent rulers.⁴

This, Sertima noted, raises the question as to what extent the early African matriarchal patterns underwent changes as the African moved downward into Egypt. Besides this, David Sweetman (1984), in Women Leaders in Africa also writes about the Candace of Meroë (3rd century BC to about 2nd century AD; about 284 BC-AD 115) and observed

---

that whereas Egypt had few great women leaders Meroë had many, so many in fact the outside world believed it never had kings! Despite the meager historical evidence concerning Meroë, we know of seven of these by name and have some knowledge of others. An account of them and the state they ruled is one of the most fascinating stories from Africa.5

It is therefore possible that during the African ancient civilization, Black women leaders, who independently ruled as sovereign, and whose influences were felt across vast territories, were not rare or scattered occurrences. This thesis therefore goes back into the ancient world (antiquity) and situates it as a pivotal point of reference in the enquiry to find out what went wrong. This is significant because since Kwame Nkrumah led the first independent African country, more than a half-a century ago, only one African woman has assumed the position of presidency in any African nation. Further to this, evidence from the post colonial Africa informs us that women’s roles and participations in the management of the state and other community affairs in Africa continue to meet considerable obstacles. This thesis ruminates on how black people, male and female in antiquity, understood their roles. It also explores the contradictions which the arrival of slavery, colonialism and post colonial experiences inflicted on male-gender relationships.

In an attempt to learn from the past, this study investigates and examines the lives and contributions of some of the greatest African women rulers, with the primary

focus resting on lessons drawn from Queen Nefertiti (c.1370-c.1330 BC) who was a queen of ancient Egypt; wife of Ikhnaton (XVIII dynasty) and aunt of Tutankhamen. Further to this, the thesis will draw lessons from Queen Hatshepsut, a leader of ancient Egyptian society during the XVIII dynasty around c.1479-1458 BC. Hatshepsut is credited with taking the unprecedented and extraordinary courage of capturing power from her step son and nephew and asserting her authority and ruling like any other Egyptian king. During her reign, she mostly assumed a male identity. Many scholars to date consider her to be one of ancient Egypt’s greatest female rulers, possibly greater than Cleopatra or Nefertiti.

Nefertiti and Hatshepsut were great Black rulers in ancient Egypt; however, they could not have been the greatest of all Black women leaders. But one thing is certain, history or luck was on their side. Unlike many magnificent Black women in African early civilization, whose lives were partially or completely wiped out from historical records, these women, especially Nefertiti, continue to receive critical scholarly study even in the twenty first century. Sertima, (1984) explains that most writers have concentrated on the queens and goddesses of Ethiopia and Egypt not only because of the fact that documents in the Nile Valley are voluminous compared to the sketchier records in other parts of Africa but also because the imagination of the world, not just that of Africa, was haunted by these black women.”

The thesis therefore re-invites

---


discussions on issues that have blocked, or hindered African women from fully engaging in the affairs of the land by delving back into history and hunting for explanations. It suggests a way forward for enhancing women’s roles in contemporary African societies. By shifting the locus for discussion to the past, first, the thesis provides another lens through which obstructions to full participation of women can be interrogated and discounted as Black people face the challenges of redefining women’s roles in the present time.

1.1 Antiquity: Its significances, links and Implications
Antiquity is of particular importance in this study because it represents a period in history when African ancient civilization had possibly experienced the least stress and corruption from foreign persuasions. During this time, the ancient Black people in Africa had suffered minimal physical and spiritual injuries—something which the later Black generation, and their beloved continent had to endure for many years to come due to marauding human trades, imperialism and neo-colonialism which affected all corners of the African continent. Therefore, this period is crucial for studying how ancient Black people used to behave and what life looked like before the advent of slavery, European colonialism and other factors that shaped the lives of African people, in a significant manner.

Further to this, this period as a precursor to humanity’s entry into another age, informs us what was at play in the continent and reveals why and how Black people responded to European colonialism the way they did and tells us how these encounters
could have influenced cultural and political development in the later years. It, therefore, provides a solid ground and locus to study how the impacts of these encounters continued in the post slavery, post independent and neocolonial African contexts. To understand the consequences of this encounter, it is crucial to separate Africa first from the effect and impacts of these evils. Therefore, the need for a critical examination of the human relationships in Africa before the advent of slavery and colonialism cannot be overemphasized; that is to say, we need to go back to antiquity in order to go forward.

By going back to antiquity, this thesis does not assume that during that period, Africa had no relationships with other people. True, during the era of antiquity, European presence was already registered in the African continent; nevertheless, their influence was very minimal and had an insignificant impact on the continent. Philip C. Naylor, (2009) for example confirms:

During the period of the late antiquity, North Africa and Europe underwent similar historical experiences. Europe endured invasions by the Germans and Slavs. The Germanic vandals arrived and settled in North Africa and from there controlled the western Mediterranean’s sea lanes for a century. Compared to their tribal kinsmen’s significance in the development of Europe, the vandal’s ephemeral presence hardly left any imprints upon the identity and development of North Africa.⁸

Finally, this study examines whether the widening gap between women and men in key political positions in Africa today is abnormal or not and seeks to establish if that trend also fits well within the trajectories of how early African people conceptualized and theorized gender roles. I hope that by examining the lives and contribution of these two prime African women leaders, the thesis will provide another avenue of understanding and contesting practices which for generation have obstructed or impeded full participation of women in the running of affairs in which every Black person, women and men alike proudly call “Africa- the Sacred Motherland.”

1.2 Why go back up to the past to understand the present wrongs?

Tsehloane C. Keto in his Vision and Time: Historical Perspective of an African Centered Paradigm tells us that “information about the past events and the actions as well as their consequences is what later generations call history”\(^9\) and Deborah Gray White, (1999) added that history gives people, a sense of identity, a feeling for who they are, and how far they have come.\(^10\) Most importantly also, through history, knowledge and lessons from the past is conserved for use by present people as they define and redefine their historical mission and as they construct a social vision for their future (Keto, 2002:2). History therefore assumes a critical role of storing records, acting as a guide through

---


which we may understand and interpret the consequences of our past and present actions, and measure their impacts. That is why knowledge about the past is very important and is central not only for one’s identification but because it also informs, and provides cultural signature motifs and substance of social heritage we will leave behind for posterity (Keto, 2001:3). Knowing one’s history therefore provides a panorama through which past human actions and behaviors can be calculated and approximation of their future implications and potentials can as well be assessed.

To date, Black women and men have been historically imagined and presented to the world in several false images. Early historical writings are littered with such falsehoods which were crafted to dehumanize, and eventually remove all Black people from human families and justify humiliation of the Black race. For example, it legitimated slavery since Africans were savages. Meanwhile the beliefs that the Blacks were subhuman with uncontrollable sexual habits like animals provided reasons for exploitation of their labour because they were lewd, lascivious and wanton people (Marshall 1996:6, Jordan 1982:52-23). Further to this Scobie, E., (1984) reported that from Renaissance’s painters, to the seventeen, eighteenth and nineteenth century artists’, the African woman in Europe was a favorite. African women and children were frequently painted by some of the most celebrated painters like Rubens, Hogart, Zoffany, Gainsborough, Reynolds, Watteau, and many others. The qualities most evident in many of the paintings of African woman are sexuality and sex. For instance, William Hogarth (1697-1764) the prolific British artist, in one of the pictures entitled “An Unpleasant Discovery” shows friends of an Englishman dandy discovering that he has
a Black woman in his luxurious bed. In one of his best portraits, titled “Negress Mounting a Horse,” the French eighteenth-century artist Robert Auguste shows a sensual, physical study of a nude African woman about to mount a stallion.11

In addition to the above absurdity and ridicule, it is equally important to recognise that the attacks against Black people were not only racist and psychological in nature but sometime it was also directed against the physical landmass of Africa. Here we find that during various times in history, many attempts were made, for example to “dislocate” or “dissect” huge chunks of landmass from Africa continent and place it elsewhere. Early European explorers and writers targeted prime places in Africa, where visible signs of remains of advanced civilisation were present and claimed that those places belonged somewhere else, not in Africa. It is therefore not so uncommon to find educated people around the world who still believe that ancient Egypt was not part of African civilization.

Also, it is important to point out that Friedrich Hegel (1830); a renowned German philosopher taught his unfortunate students in Europe that “Africa is not a historical part of the world. It has no movement, no development to show, no historical movement in it. That is to say, its northern parts belong to Europe or Asian world. What we mean by Africa is in a historical sense, a sense not developed, still enveloped in the condition of the natural, and which must be presented here as being only at the

threshold of history of the world.”¹² These kind of thoughts were not historical accidents but were intended to deny African people their true history. David N. Abdulai (2000:26) emphasized that there was a grand design to portray Africa as “history-less” because if Africa has no history, it has no future since people without history cannot know, trace or remember where they are coming from.

Meanwhile before the falsehood of Hegel could be contested and dispatched to the gutters of history, Trevor-Roper, another professor, but this time a more “distinguished” scholar at Oxford University claimed that what is known as African history was only “a tale of barbarous tribal gyration.”¹³ These kinds of analysis and conclusions by renowned scholars make one wonder whether some of the European scholars had run amok or were just merely suffering from dosage of intellectual insanity and questioned their level of sobriety as well.

These confusing conclusions in the academy about Africa(n) later had a huge bearing on how imperial enterprise and their agency behaved and conducted their business in Africa when finally she succumbed to the marauding colonial powers and its machinery. It is therefore clear that the ideological and psychological assault against black people did not just appear from nowhere nor can it be dismissed as intellectual accidents; it was a grand design, assembled and refined overtime under the critical eyes


supported by false scientific, historical and religious doctrines before it was sent to the final end users to consume and deploy. This kinds of ideological dispositions, punctuated with deliberate and systemic distortions of non European knowledge and values helped to redefine African history for many years. Most of the historical facts were summarily dismissed because to some of the western scholars it only qualified to be bundled as “myths” of “tribes” living in a “dark” continent, with their doctors known as witchdoctors, etc. Paradoxically, all these occurred at a time when many western scholars and their societies were comfortably jubilating and romanticizing mythical traditions like the halloween, validating the practices of psychics as well as licensing these “western witches” without any shame. To date, several western scholars still continue to imagine a world divided between two types of human beings. One of their own, which is great, civilized, developed, sophisticated as opposed to the non-western uncivilized, simple, primitive and under-developed society.

History therefore becomes an important tool not for just remembering the past only but also assists as a primary navigator piloting her passengers to the desired future goals. Fentress and Wickham (1992:7) in Social Memory emphasized that we are what we remember and what highlights our past determines our present and our future in so many diverse aspects that memory becomes an essential element of our personal and social identity. When we remember, they added, we try to represent ourselves to ourselves, giving face and sense to our existence. And we do so not to ourselves in a very personal intimate space, but to others in order to show them, in a social sphere, our
personal and social collective nature. Therefore, when we remember, we represent ourselves to ourselves and those around us.

From existing records, the first Europeans arrived at the coastal cities of Africa around the end of the 15th Century. Before the Sixteenth Century William Chancellor, reported in his book, *The Destruction of the Black Civilisation: the Great Issues of Race from 4500 B.C. to 2000 B.C* that most Africans living in the interior of Africa had not seen a real “White” person. Nevertheless, the presence of whiteness was already recorded in the minds of many African communities. African people believed or were aware of the existences of other people who are not necessarily black for a long time. For example, in some early African societies, the devils and other evil spirits were believed to be white and rituals to wade-off these evils were always led by chanting dancers whose faces and bodies were hideously painted with white chalk.14

Nonetheless, despite this popular belief, when Europeans arrived at the coastal cities in Africa and began penetrating its hinterland they were received and welcomed warmly as African traditions required. For example, H.S Kabeca Mwaniki in *The Living History of Embu and Mbeere to 1906* shows us that even warnings of the impending dangers from foreign invasion were ignored by African people. For example the prophesy, like that one of Iberi Wa Irugi, a great tribal prophet of the Embu and Mbeere people who is said to have summoned his people and using his white billy goat,

---

warned: “...I have seen an animal with an iron mouth against Kirinyaga (Mount Kenya), moving from where the sun sets towards where the sun rises. This animal will collect all the nations to one place where the nations will be helpless.\textsuperscript{15}” We therefore notice that despite all these prophesy, Africa’s newest visitors being accorded VIP’s treatment and welcomed as any guests is, in their land of abode. This was partly because African people, from time unknown respected their culture and their spirituality strictly called for total protection and the sanctity of all human life, regardless of color and all other known differences. Besides this, ancient African traditional and spiritual teachings also rested heavily on the doctrine that demands harmony and coexistence with all things (both living and non living). This also explains partially why even the witches (usually the most detested people) were able to live among the people and to practice their rituals freely within the community as long as they scratch nobody or caused mental injury to anyone.

lastly, it is also significant to emphasize that, despite the collapse of pseudo-scientific racial hierarchies and colonial empires, doubts about African history continue to be voiced, including, by some leading scholars. Nevertheless, this will not prevent the history of Africa from being heard now. This is because as one of the African proverbs, in Igbo say: \textit{Ikwikwi nyuru ahuru si umunna ya kwere ya egwu, ha si ya "tufia" anghi ekwere ihe ojoo egwu,} which literally means that when an Owl farted and demanded to be praised by his kinsmen, they mocked him because it is not right for

people to dance to an abomination. Today the journey of reconstructing the African personality continues, its history will play an important role for it has become a theology of our time, a reservoir in which one delves to find particular traditions that might suit one’s end—for even myths, must have some sort of root in reality (Hans Roger & Eugen Weber, 1966:21).

1.3 A Brief Synopsis and Breakdown of the Chapters

1.3.1 Chapter One: Introduction, Connection and Assumptions

Chapter One contains the introduction, connections and assumption of this thesis. The basic propositions which apply to this study are discussed. These assumptions and propositions set a firm ground and are essential in facilitating the scrutiny of materials. Further to this, these propositions over time have enabled researchers to critically examine and retell Black peoples’ stories, i.e., how in fact it was, and to assess how early African people experienced and understood it. Due to the significances of the encounter between Africa and Europe, this chapter briefly looks at how this relationship evolved, and its impacts and implications as they reach maturity. A clear understanding of these encounters is crucial in assessing the dilemmas confronting women in Africa today. Finally, the chapter presents the rationale of this study and provides insights why this investigation is important not only to people of Africa but to the world’s community of learners.
1.3.2 Chapter Two: Personal Discursive Locations of the Author in this Study

This chapter explains the multiple locations I chose to enter in this debate. I explain the reasons why this particular topic, despite the fact that it is an unusual territory for most men, appeals to me greatly. I am aware that for ages, man, has been accused of subjecting women to hostile regimes of male domination for many generations. Here, the factors which were instrumental in igniting my interest and ambition in this area of knowledge production is traced and are explored in greater detail. I present and illustrate why, despite being a male, I find it awesome, enriching and feel at ease debating issues surrounding Black women’s oppression, marginalisation and situate myself as a voice calling for change. Central to this, I also interrogate my conscience, and as an advocate and campaigner for total elimination of every human induced poverty and misery, I submerge myself within this enquiry. Finally, the chapter ends by pointing out the difficulties I faced in carrying out this study which ranges from the problems of reading and interpreting African histories to isolating Black women’s experiences and history from those of black men due to the uniqueness of their shared experiences.

1.3.3 Chapter Three: Discursive Frameworks

This Chapter describes theories and discursive frameworks which the author uses in this study. This investigation employs multiple paradigms, i.e., the African Centered Paradigms—Afrocentricity, Black Feminism thoughts, with the Critical Anti-Colonial and Anti Racist theory being positioned at the centre. These theories are used alongside
indigeneity because of their significances in understanding and locating African people. Further to this, in this chapter, the author summons the academy to commit itself to a pedagogy which recognises the fact that Black people can no longer be placed at the margin and studied as if they are objects for experimental investigations. It therefore follows that issues of concern to Black people, especially Black women should be situated at every center of intellectual discourse. The centrality of Africalogy philosophy in understanding African phenomena is evoked. Prof. Molefi Asante (1990), in *Kemet, Afrocentricity and Knowledge* summed it that Africalogy seeks to bring a new birth to the intellectual enterprise by encouraging scholarship to tear itself away from the imposition of European domination, in fact, to place Europe in a normal context, separate from its arrogance, and within an arena of pluralism without hierarchy.\textsuperscript{16} Therefore, by moving away from the constraints of Eurocentric epistemological presuppositions, the study argues for repositioning African people without subjected anyone to unnecessary pain. Asante, (1990) also warned that Africalogy cannot achieve its purpose as a liberating discipline unless it was founded on assumptions that dignify humans rather than negate them. Africalogists must critique but also propose concrete actions that lead to the lessening of disharmony, suffering, misunderstanding and dislocation.\textsuperscript{17} The centrality of Afrocentric ways of examining and analysing African based phenomenon is emphasised in most chapters of this thesis.


\textsuperscript{17} Asante, M. K (1990). p. v.
1.3.4 Chapter Four: Research Methodology

Chapter Four of this thesis describes the main methodologies used in this investigation. The study basically employs the Qualitative Content Analysis and Africanist Historiography as the main research methods. The author explains and discusses the significances of using the two sets of methodologies in this chapter. Ndabaningi Sithole, (1965) in his book *Writing in the Political Awakening of Africa* for example explains that Africa has been inhibited by a myth, and that myth is now cracking. In some areas it has reached the last points of falling asunder; in others it’s showing only very serious cracks without falling apart; and yet in other others areas it suffers only significant cracks.18 The re-emergence of Africanist historiography as a research methodology and African centred paradigms are providing excellent lenses through which African phenomena can be examined, and the written wrongs and myths about African people can be contested and corrected as well. Nevertheless, the limitations of these methodologies are also discussed.

1.3.5 Chapter Five: African Women in Antiquity: A Case Study of Queen Nefertiti and Queen Hatshepsut

This chapter examines two of the greatest women rulers in Africa during the ancient African civilisation at the dawn of antiquity. They are Queen Nefertiti and Queen Hatshepsut. These two extraordinary female leaders ruled vast empires located along River Nile Delta, covering surrounding areas, in what today is known as Egypt. The

---

Chapter Six: Discussions, Analysis and Recommendation

This chapter analyses the critical roles women played in African history during antiquity and makes a comparative analysis with the contemporary Africa societies. In this chapter, the thesis particularly looks into issues emanating from colonialism to consolidation of patriarchal relations and practices in African societies as a starting point of explaining women’s low status and reduced participation in social and political affairs. This chapter also goes further to look at some contradictions that could have emerged in Africa’s later traditions, particularly those that were directed against women. Here, I scrutinize some of the myths, which some writers elsewhere have variously used to suggest that marginalization, oppression and subordination of
women is deeply rooted in African traditions. Finally the chapter ends by suggesting recommendations.

1.4 General Assumptions and Propositions in this thesis

Over the years, solid propositions about studying of African History continue to emerge and are taking root in the academy. Chancellor Williams, (1990) identified and tells us of the importance of correct propositions in analysing African phenomena. These propositions aim at advising how African history should be read, written and told so as to free it from the constraints and confines of Western Eurocentric narratives. In this thesis, I variously use the following propositions to guide me in reading, comprehending and analyzing issues which are central in this research.

First of all, in this thesis, I presuppose that the African continent is the homeland of the ancestor of all the Black people, and that African people occupied it since the beginning of time. By 50,000-40,000 years ago if not earlier, Africa was already inhabited by fully modern people. As William, C., (1990:34) noted, prior to 2000 B.C, all the people in North Africa were Black people. And before the 17th Century C.E; North Africa was peopled mainly by Black and there were no large population of Arabs in North Africa before the rise of Islam and the religious movement that gave rise to the fervor converts of other people. Therefore, I insist that ancient Egyptian civilization

was basically a Black civilization. I, therefore, emphasize that Asiatic peoples, who now occupy most of North and Eastern Africa are no more indigenous African people than the Dutch and the British who occupied and populated some parts of the southern region of African continent. The question of where their homeland is, like where all other foreign invaders came from is not debatable.\textsuperscript{22}

The implication of this is quite simple to understand. In this thesis, when I talk of Black or African people, the Asiatic, the Dutch, the British, the Arabs, the Portuguese and many other people who later settled or acquired citizenship in African nations or countries are eliminated from the African or the Black people which I variously make reference to. I emphasize that in this thesis, I am basically concerned with issues radiating from antiquity, and during this time, Africa was populated by Black people. Other people were occasional visitors like the Barbarians who briefly occupied parts of North Africa. Hence, Queen Hatshepsut and Queen Nefertiti, the primary focus on this thesis were Black women; they did not come from elsewhere as some writers have guesstimated. Also it is vital to note that in this study Black equals to African. I also use Black as a singular because I also contend that Black people wherever they may be, are one people, and agree that there are no varieties of Black people.

Like in the sciences, the strength and the weakness of the African continent and people should be measured retrogressively. This should include going back in history

\textsuperscript{22} Williams, Chancellor (1990) "The Destruction of Black Civilisation: Great Issues of Race from 4500BC to 2000 A.D. Third World Press: Chicago, Illinois. 34.
to find out how it survived the inhumanity of European and Asiatic onslaughts. Therefore, in this thesis, I particularly situate myself and refer to the past and examine how Black people lived before the destruction of Africa began from the shores and spread deep into the African continent, including inside the vast “impenetrable” African rainforest. The debates about African traditions and culture should not only go beyond Africa’s earliest donation to humanity (the gift of the Homo sapiens) but should also examine how the Black people in Africa (the cradle of human civilization) tragically lost the sprawling civilization.

Finally, I contend that neglect of Afrocentric knowledge, industry and indigeneity coupled with selective readings of African history and contributions of Black people has led to ruthless misunderstanding and deliberate distortions of facts about Black people, especially those relating to Black woman’s roles contributions. Because of this, I will insist that any study, which ignores or underscores the roles and contributions and the experience of Black women is a negation of facts and will remain incomplete, and only possibly good for intellectual amusements and gymnastics.

Therefore, through these carefully selected assumptions and prepositions, this thesis attempts to bring to light some of the salient knowledge which enabled Africa to stand high at a time when so many nations of the world were struggling to advance beyond what the era of Stone Age men achieved. Here, I should add that from latest historical findings, it is becoming clearer that during most parts of antiquity, Africa can comfortably claim to have been the pivot of human civilization and enlightenment. One
thing which is also true is that this complex civilization was under the guidance and leadership of women more often than previously thought. The thesis therefore provides new lenses through which African women’s historical contributions can be understood, within comparative contexts.

Further to this, as mentioned earlier, many early European scholars including anthropologists studied Africa under a general theme of studying the “Dark Continent” and its primordial occupants, the “savages.” The acceptance of usage of such a theory had implications on understanding almost everything they came across or originated from the continent. From an ideological stand point, it baptized and legitimized slave trade, accelerated colonialism and the exploitation of the continent’s mineral resources, but most importantly, it allowed the debasement of African people and created a lens through which people outside Africa would feel and understand African people for several centuries. Ryszard Kapuscinkii in *the Other* confirms that the image of the Other that European had when they set to conquer the planet is that of a naked savage, a cannibal and pagan, whose humiliation and oppression is the sacred right and duty of European – who is white and Christian.23 So we find that in French colonies, for example, the policy of assimilation of the “natives” found its ideological legitimacy. To them, the policy of assimilating the African appeared be a non discriminatory mission and was viewed by many as an act of generosity since it would pull the Blacks out of primitivity and usher them into modernity. Frenchmen had to waste a lot of time and

resources attempting to achieve the noble mission of assimilating the “savages.” However, the implication of assimilation on the culture of its victims was enormous because by accepting one culture, one had to lose one’s own consciousness and identity. Yet Amilcar Cabral, (1974), a prolific writer observed that culture has proved to be the foundation of many liberation movements and argued that only societies which preserve their culture are able to mobilize and organize themselves and fight against foreign domination.”

1.5 Limitations of this study

Every generation has a duty to write and preserve its own history. Kirkpatrick, (1926), an American diplomat once stated that “History is a better guide than good intentions.” Unfortunately for Africa, this has not been the case. Most historical writings, artifacts, and paintings about Africa were destroyed, looted or scattered. While some are still buried deep beneath the sands, other precious records of the old civilization unfortunately were blown away by the winds of colonialism and imperialism as others succumbed to the ruins of slavery and ravages of time. Today, however, archaeologists are uncovering some new findings, some of which were not known before. As new discoveries continue to accumulate, it is becoming clearer that civilization developed in Africa thousands of years earlier than it was long believed. For example, we now know that Africa had an Iron Age culture with cities and trade routes


about 250 years Before the Common Era. All this new information is leading to a revision of the written history and has energized efforts by contemporary scholars to restore and give African people a sense of identity, a feeling for who they were, and to insert their contributions to humanity again. The arrival of more efficient technology and research methodologies is aiding and making it possible to investigate the past more accurately. The new discoveries are giving new insights on how African people used to live, because many writings about African people at the early times were rarely concerned with understanding the African. Besides this, most European writers did not consider Africans’ lived experiences as something that should qualify as accurate source of authoritative historical and intellectual data. Africans words, voices, knowledge and experiences were therefore largely ignored or dismissed. Most importantly also, writing about Africa went through several phases which were also heavily influenced by their ideological orientations and is linked to how the relationship between Europe and Africa evolved through historical times. It is important to look briefly at the impacts and implications on understanding and interpreting issues in Africa.

Kapuscinski’s R (2008:26-29), divided the relationship between European and Others into four main eras. Here, he noted that during the era of merchants and envoys which lasted until the fifteen century, European made first contact with Others; on trade routes or on diplomatic missions. Later, during the era of great geographical discoveries Europeans attempted to discover the Others. However, the mode of this mission of discovery has been fiercely contested. For example scholars like Emanual Levinas (1906-95) questioned how Europe could discover other continents, yet they were known even
before the dawn of time? To him, as Kapuscinski, R (2008) reported, it represented an era of conquest, slaughter and plunder, and should be viewed as the dark ages in the relationship between Europeans and Others. Afterwards, the era of enlightenment and humanism followed and the first real human understanding of the *Others* were made. In this period, not only exchanges of goods were made but also cultural and spiritual values exchanges came into the equation. Finally, the enlightenment period which gave rise and continues to this day was characterised by three successive turning points: the turning points of the anthropologist; the turning points of Levinas\(^{26}\) and the turning point of multiculturalism. It was only during the age of enlightenment that new significant changes of relationships between Europe and other people of the world started to emerge. Significantly here, we find changes in how the *Others* were viewed. Kapuscinski, (2008) for example observed that even though the use of the term “savage” was very much in vogue and common in western scholarship, it was later supplemented with the adjective “noble”-the “noble savage.” Slave trade and colonial expansion were still going on, but something in the thinking and morality of the European had started to change, and it had become necessary to consider the appearances—people no longer talk of the (guilt of) “colonialism,” but of “the mission” to “civilise,” “conversion” or “bringing help” to the poor, backward people.\(^{27}\)

\(^{26}\) Emanual Levinas (1906-95) was French philosopher, a religious thinker and Talmudic commentator. His major work *Totality and Infinity*, was published in 1961.

As noted above, it took many European writers and scholars long to change their ways and finally understand that the Others, were equal, and as human as any other European. For the Blacks, it certainly took longer. It should also be noted that the advent of the age of enlightenment did not change European attitude toward the others in many fronts only that there were sometimes a genuine attempt to understand the Others. Kapuscinski, (2008) asserts thus:

“… in this era of cultural change, passing from narrow Eurocentrism to more universal visions that embrace the entire world, a new branch of social sciences was born – anthropology. Anthropology is aimed toward the Other, dedicated exclusively to him. Contained within it is the idea of understanding the Other by getting to know him, the idea of accepting diversity and the Otherness as constituent features of mankind.28

This partly explains why historical records by early scholars from Europe are full of inaccuracies and is a limiting factor in any historical analysis. There is little doubt, European scholars experienced a lot of difficulties in understanding that those who did not look, talk, and behave like them, were human, and for a long time, they couldn’t get it and accept the simple fact that everyone belongs to the same human family. In addition to that, European scholars were determined to confine the history of Africa within a narrow narrative and this apparently did not end with the last departure of

colonial governors from African soil. Sadly, despite various revolts against colonialism and challenges against the domination of the knowledge system, it did not disturb and rupture western thinking. In some cases, it ended up with only taming the tone only leaving “scientific studies” of the Black the same as they were many centuries ago. With the rise and the spread of independent African states and Black Revolution in the United States, Chancellor William (1998:37) observed that the scholarly representatives of European supremacy quickly reformed their techniques of mind control. Highly financed African Studies Associations, Societies, History Journals, and Periodicals were set in Europe and America, all under complete white control and direction. These post colonial African studies did little to reconstruct African history as the main lens through which Africa was imagined, remained and was not dismantled.

Further to this, researching about any early event that occurred in African history is time consuming and a mind boggling chore. In any research attempt, one cannot avoid to meander through writings and materials many of which were never intended to be used by Black people. Elaborating on this kind of dilemma, one of the first African historians who had gone through a doctoral apprenticeship to teach at Makerere University admitted on his appointment in 1950 that he “knew less about Africa than did Herodetus.”29 Yet, Herodetus, a Greek historian of the fifth century, B.C., at his best, was only able to feed the people of Europe with a good deal of speculations and rumors about Africa people. For example, he only saw its inhabitants as impulsive

children of nature who scoured the length and breadth of the continent in a manner comparable to beasts.\textsuperscript{30} For any historical enquiries, reliable sources which provide solid knowledge about the past are of paramount importance. This would enable historians to analyze, to interpret, to compare, and to theorize issues under investigation. This most often, as noted before, is not the case with African historical written records.

In addition to this, for centuries European did not send its best to explore what they did not know. Kapuscinski, (2008), observed that in those days, ships’ crews largely consisted of villains, criminals and bandits, the inveterate, avowed rabble; at best they were tramps, homeless people and failures, the reason being that it was hard to persuade normal persons to choose to go on a voyage of adventure that often ended in death.”\textsuperscript{31} These people, some of whom were insane, were the first to have the opportunity to come into contact with Africa, and report their stories to their European masters and their words became history which today we mostly rely on despite the obvious limitations of their reports. Scholars and students of African history have very few options and continue to rely on the notes written by these fellows.

It is for this reason that the post war pioneer of African historical studies, the likes of Du Bois had to spend most of their valuable days fighting two big battles. One against an academic establishment skeptical about the possibility of recovering Africa’s past and those with fixed minds animated by racism, whose objections were more

\textsuperscript{30} See http://digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/africanjournals/pdfs/Utafiti/vol5no1/aejp005001008.pdf
frequently grounded in their understanding of what history was and not what history could be. The other was the methodological assault against the established way of “doing” history, aimed at circumventing the dearth of written records for much of the continents. All these continue to present serious challenges in historical inquiries and overcoming these set of roadblock is just a nightmare.

Finding women in non-western history, just as in the history of the western world requires persistence and a lot of perseverance because of the absence of women in conventional historical sources. For example, the role of women in agriculture, health, craft, religion, politics and arts and other arenas have often been regarded as negligible, exceptional, infrequent or irretrievable for other than the very recent period. In addition to this, most often a researcher basically relies on notes left by explorers and missionaries. But these notes as Parker and Rathbone, (2007) have noted, sometime may stop in explaining the mission’s task and how native institutions could be overcome. All these may be valuable sources but they were not intended to be such at all, the writers were detailing bigger European interest. Any references to Africans were merely incidental to larger purposes. Just piecing all these fragments together could be a research field by itself as noted by William (1987:33). Gaily (1970) also pointed out how writing a text on African History was a difficult task. He observed that the continent is so large and the people and the cultures so diverse that no one can be


equally familiar with all its facets. Further to this, despite the growing linguistic, anthropological, political, and historical evidence available, there are certain important areas of the past where nothing is known.\(^{34}\)

Researching about Africa is therefore tedious and sometimes very annoying because one cannot avoid lingering around European writing in attempting to extract and critically filter European “scholarly” writings, which were falsified or suppressed facts of significance about the colonized people of Africa. An old Chibemba proverb which says, “umubiyo mushenda nankwe lifufya lwend”, which literally means that “Walking with anyone who is not a friend makes the journey long indeed.” An African historian faces this dilemma and has to rely on faulty documents in any attempt to study the history of his people. Ali Mazrui explains that even in a simple attempt to establish that ancient Egyptians were Africans contemporary Black nationalists sometimes seek evidence from the Greeks. Cheikh Anta Diop, one of the most formidable contemporary African scholars on Egyptology had to turn to Graeco-Roman sources. While another scholar, W.E. B. Du Bois, a distinguished American intellectual invoked the testimony of Herodotus to show that the ancient Egyptians were “curly –haired” to show that they were Black in the real sense\(^{35}\). Nevertheless, some few writers, however, tried to write what they saw in Africa without too much

---


bias. For example in 1352-53, Ibn Battuta, one of the most traveled of all Muslim writers during the Middle Ages describes the African in Mali as follows:

They are seldom unjust, and have a greater abhorrence of injustice than other people. Their sultan shows no mercy to anyone who is guilty of the least act of it. There is complete security in their country. Neither traveler nor inhabitants in it has anything to fear from robbers or men of violence. They do not confiscate the property of any white man who dies in their country, even if it is uncounted wealth. On the contrary, they give it to the charge of some trustworthy person among the whites, until the rightful heir takes possession of it. They are careful to observe the hours of prayer, and assiduous in attending them in congregation and bringing up their children to them...36

Finally while some contemporary historians have turned women’s life histories and the use of oral testimony to fill the lacuna in published sources, this has limitations in the earlier period.37 And last but not the least, a major problem with European sources of information about Africa is the fact that it is scattered. Researchers are confronted with hundreds of pages of notes in many files to scan through but only to find a few useful pages.

On another note, I would also like to add quickly that in any study which involves Black people, it is quite impossible to isolate women and look at their contributions as a single entity without taking into account all major actors in making Africa what it is. The ingredients that in the past and currently define Black ontology both on practical and epistemological levels are the contribution of a complex whole. Africa’s early men and women in unity, made Africa what was, and no sex can claim complete responsibility for the civilization which at the time, was possibly the most advanced one in the world. From history and time immemorial, the three major actors in Africa—the men, the women, and Africa as their mother of posterity—were living in harmony and their stories are immensely interconnected and intertwined also in many unique ways. Last but not the least, writing about women in ancient Africa, is not a straightforward matter. Like in many societies, Vivante, (1999), explains that the existing sources—textual, representations, and archeologically—as well as their interpretation, presents a series of problems. Beside this, most information about ancient Black civilization are still buried deep, in the sand and valleys of history, and as anthropologists excavate, new knowledge is being produced and is constantly changing what we presently know about this civilization.

---

Chapter 2

2 Personal Discursive Locations in this Study

Writing about women’s history is not an easy task for an African man to undertake. Like elsewhere, men remain in the dock accused of enslaving and subjugating women to all kinds of oppressions for generations. For African men, the case is even more intricate as in many western media they have been bombarded with images which portray them not only as simple oppressors of women but also perpetrators of crimes against women like female genital mutilators, polygamist, etc. This kind of outlook therefore forces male researchers, (including those whose aim is advancing women’s causes), into a defensive position, and to express their intentions clearly even before jotting the first few pages. Therefore, one question which certainly a man writing about women’s empowerment and emancipation must answer today is: How can a male African locate himself, with ease at the epicenter of the debate concerning women?

I join this crucial discussion on the roles of women in Africa from multiple angles. First, and the most obvious one, I enter the conversation as a black man, who is fully conscious that my prosperity and posterity is intrinsically linked to the wellbeing of all African women. Secondly, being an advocate for total elimination of every human induced suffering and misery in Africa, I find this issue speaking and appealing to my inner ideals in so many ways. Last but not the least in importance, as a student of equity and versatile educator whose philosophy is heavily informed by Afrocentric epistemology, and whose pedagogy is heavily influenced by Black feminist thoughts, I
find myself swinging inside discussions concerning women’s emancipation and empowerment in Africa and elsewhere with so much ease. I will explain the implications of these multiple locations in the succeeding paragraphs and also briefly illustrate it, as a rejoinder elsewhere in this thesis.

As a young man, growing up together with my peers in my village located in the heartland of Africa, I was taught from an early age that my success in life is intrinsically linked to the successes of my sisters and brothers, nieces and nephews, aunts and uncles, grandmother and grandfather, ancestors and those yet to be born, and all those known and unknown to me. In short, I was born and blessed to belong to the world in which I would enjoy companionship with the accompanying security and shared resources. This teaching has persuaded me to seek a deeper understanding and comprehension of issues as a member of the human family. Besides this, as a Black man who has experienced African conditions from the periphery and inside as well, I find myself sometimes at a loss and pain as to why so many wrongs continue to be reproduced against my sisters. Therefore, this study fits well within the prism and is an energizer to my inherent faith and confidence in Africa, the continent which taught humanity civilization and which is a fine place to live for all races, sexes and gender.

As mentioned earlier, my early philosophy of life was to a great extent shaped by several collectives, including shared history and shared experiences within my community which rotated around Afrocentric narrations and wisdoms. However, as I grew up, and began the journey of formal schooling, I came also to the realization that
what I was taught was not unique to me alone in my village; it was an equally similar and a significant moral code that also provided guidance to the wider black communities elsewhere. I also found that my experience as a black man is symbiotically intertwined and woven in intricate schema with black women, regardless of localizations, especially after interrogating major issues using the Black feminist framework as a critical lens of examining issues manifesting themselves in the present time. Miriam Makeba, a celebrated African Music Queen, who to date is regarded as one of the most important female vocalists to emerge out of South Africa, and is also hailed for bringing African music to the heart of global theatres in the 1960s, had this to say to the world’s audience in a song, while remembering the common struggle and shared experiences of black women and black men:

We are the living and the dead
We are every generation
Even if we are debased
We are every generation
Even if we seem to have no future
We are every generation
Let us go, like the dragon in the legend
Let us go forth and make,
Let us open a path.39

Such powerful words, sang by an African woman, Miriam Makeba on the occasion of marking Nelson Mandela’s final walk to freedom from the jail manned by the racist apartheid regime, continues to remind me of the common experiences shared by Black people regardless of sex and gender. Makeba had previously declared “…you see when our men come back from the mines, when they come back from the ghetto after going through the pass-checkpoints, the police humiliation, the women come together and sing for them; and the song that gives our men the most courage is the one I am going to sing for you. It’s called Dubula.40” These words and songs, in praise of African men coming from a very courageous woman of excellence are not unusual to hear in Africa. It, therefore, made me to continuously question, where oppressive cultural practices against Black women in Africa originated from and also to find out whether these practices are also deeply rooted in the culture of Black people as some writers and media tend to portray.

Further to this, the lyrics, such as the one of Makeba, reminds me to recollect, and to reflect deeply on the commonality of the collective experiences of Black people during the era of dehumanization, exploitation, and the denigration of the Black race which lasted for over 500 years. It should be remembered that Black people, as a whole, were subjected to these obnoxious agenda without sex and gender biases under false racial and ideological dogma. This doctrine saw humanity sub-divided into separate

and exclusive; superior and inferior biological substances, lending legitimacy to committing criminal acts against every aspect of the lives of Black people wherever they may be. Black people, men and women alike are still suffering from the memories and imaginations of the debasement of their humanity. As a Black man, my experiences of the pain of oppression, colonialism and the wickedness of enslavement are similar in so many ways to that of African women. To date we all continue to endure the impact of the dehumanization of the Black race, the pain of spiritual injury and the consequences of imperialism in a globalised world. I therefore see my location in this conversation as an authentic attempt to respond to our combined experiences, find what went wrong, and contribute towards eliminations of the wrongs against Black women as we search for healing together as one.

Further to this, I also see the experience of Africa, my birthplace similar to that of the ship Titanic in many ways. To use the words of George B.N. Ayittey, (Ph.D.), the Titanic, “The Unsinkable Ship,” was the world’s greatest and mighty ship, whose builders hoped would dominate the transatlantic liners’ business for many years to come but unfortunately the ship sank within hours on its maiden voyage after warnings of impending dangers were ignored. Today, though the Titanic is long gone, the remains of its wreckage are still being carefully dug out and collected from the seabed. Through this, human minds are kept reminded of the catastrophe which tragically ended the lives of 1517 people. Like the Titanic, the earliest human civilization which occurred in the African continent was an important innovation in the history of humanity and is still relevant today for people to recall and draw examples from
despite its tragic end. Like the Titanic, several warnings of the impending dangers to the continent were ignored leading to the devastation and destruction of one of man’s most exquisite and sophisticated early civilization. Kaluli Neng (2004) in *Reclaiming Africa* wrote:

No human disaster can equal the cataclysm that shook Africa. We are all familiar with the slave trade and the traumatic effect on the transplanted people, but few of us are aware of the horrors it wrought on Africa itself. Vast populations were uprooted and displaced, whole generations disappeared. European diseases descended like plagues, decimating both cattle and people, cities and towns were abandoned, family networks disintegrated, kingdoms crumbled, the threats of cultural and historical continuity were so savagely torn asunder that henceforth one would have to think of two Africas: the one before and the one after the holocaust… Five centuries later, archaeologists, digging among the ruins, began to pick up some of the pieces.\(^{41}\)

But unlike the SS Titanic whose remains are being gathered so that people could stare at it in various museums, today, African scholars are digging the remains of Africa’s past civilisation and reassembling these ruins in search for deeper understanding of how the damages inflicted on Black people could be alleviated. Fortunately, Africa was strong

enough to survive the complete destruction and annihilation unlike the mighty Titanic.
The defeat of slavery and the end of physical occupation of Africa by colonial bodies has provided opportunity to reclaim and learn from the remains of its glorious past. This to me, this study is part of the process of recovery and restoration of Africa’s heritage and this cannot be achieved without learning from the past. Neng, (2004) for example tells us of how the future generation would desperately try to learn from past age should a nuclear disaster occur and re-position the age of modernity to the dark ages. He imagined and described:

The destruction of the superpower today, for instance by a nuclear war, would lead to instant disappearance of knowledge and technical skills. Survivors on the periphery, although they would remember the aeroplanes, television sets, robots, computers, space machine circling our solar system and the exploits to the moon and mars, would not be able for centuries to reproduce that technology. A dark age would certainly follow. Centuries afterward, the technological brilliance of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries would seem dream-like and unreal. Until archaeology begins to pick the pieces, those of us who follow in the centuries to come would obviously doubt what has been achieved in the centuries preceding the disaster.42

Neng, (2004) concluded that “this has happened in the world. Not in the same way, of ours, but with the same catastrophic effect. It happened in Africa.” As Neng illustrated,

some people have difficulties in imagining that African people once were the custodians of sprawling and expansive civilisations which no other place in the world could claim. For example, they forget that toward the end of antiquity, the West was technically less advanced than the East and Europeans were able to overcome their inferiority only with the help of Arabs who—beginning in the seventh century, wherever they moved—spread the achievements of antiquity (Diop, 1987: 35). Further to this, it should also be remembered that most of the achievements and progress humanity made, especially in Africa during antiquity were destroyed and disappeared with the ravages of the middle ages.

Today, the conditions in many parts of Africa look hopelessly cataclysmic and catastrophic to say but the least. Images of children and women, in Somali, in the camps in Northern Uganda and Darfur in South Sudan, in the Congo and so many places dominate Western media and relief efforts. Indeed Jawaharlal Nehru once observed that “you can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women”43. During the ancient time, history tells us different things about how African people used to live.

By choosing to research and contest the practices which have become roadblocks and hindered women’s roles and participations in Africa, I find myself creating a space and a locus through which I can insert my voice among those articulating for shifting

43 Retrieved from The Hunger Project: http://www.thp.org/where_we_work/south_asia/india/research_reports/chronic_hunger_and_status_of_women
and rethinking of the present educational and political agenda to that which recognizes the integration of African original indigenous thoughts and foster a developmental discourse which speaks to everybody in the continent. Dei (1993, 1998) argued that for the idea of “development” to have any credibility at all, it must speak to the social, cultural, economic, political, spiritual, and cosmological aspects of local peoples’ lives, as well as to their specific needs and aspirations. I am convinced that the current underrepresentation of women in the sociopolitical and economical affairs of African people, serves no constructive and valuable purpose. I am also persuaded by the wisdom of the magnificent African philosopher who once implored that “I believe in the God of Africa. I believe in the Black people of Africa. I believe that it’s not in the will of the God of Africa to sentence the Black people to servitude in any form forever. I believe that there is a destiny for the Black people of Africa.” 44 As mentioned earlier, Black people share a common destiny and posterity and I believe that this cannot be realized unless women’s issues are equally addressed.

Further to this, my interest in this research is also partly an answer to Ahmed Sékou Touré, the first president of the Republic of Guinea who told us that to take part in the African revolution, it is not enough to write revolutionary songs; you must fashion the revolution with the people. And if you fashion it with them, the songs will come by themselves. Also in order to achieve the real action, you must yourself be a living part of Africa and of her thoughts; you must be an element of that popular

energy which is entirely called forth for the freeing, the progress and happiness of Africa. There is no place outside the fight for the artist or for the intellectual who is not himself with, and completely at one with people in the great battle of Africa and of suffering humanity, Fanon, (1986).45

In my everyday life, including thoughts and praxis, these words sustain my spirit and fortitude; they give me moral strength and provide me with positive energy which propels me to examine my own inner self in the process of searching for a solution for the current dilemma facing African people. Fortunately, this kind of energy is not being transmitted to me alone. From all corners of Africa and elsewhere, many sisters and brothers in the struggle are also experiencing it in their own unique ways.

In addition to this, Ama Ata Aidoo, one of Africa’s most superb female writers, in a key notes address on the topic African Woman Today, held at University of Nigeria declared that “…every woman and every man should be a feminist-especially if they believe that Africans should take charge of African land, African wealth, African lives, and the burden of African development.”46 I share this strong feeling and sentiment, and this has enabled me to examine issues from multiple perspectives including, Black and African feminist pedagogy as a prime tool for my own liberation. Carole Boyce Davis while articulating the contours of African feminist agenda also tells us that these


perspectives “…recognize a common struggle with African men for the removal of the yokes of foreign domination and European/American exploitation. It is not antagonistic to African men but challenges them to be aware of certain salient aspects of women’s subjugation which differ from the generalized oppressions of all African peoples.”

My own experience and personal journey especially in schools in Uganda also resonate with the Black women feminist agenda in many unique ways. This is because ever since I entered a classroom, I have never been at ease with the education I was undergoing and some of the practices in school caused me a lot of discomfort. In school I was taught about the backwardness of my people before the arrival of the Europeans. Nevertheless, as a little boy, I constantly asked why the civilized European and Arabs bought and sold people one time. In my religious education class, I was taught that I was born in sin and as a sinner it is only through following the way of the Redeemer, Jesus Christ, that I would become free again. I had to enroll for Christian instructions and search for that redemption and rescue. Later, I was confirmed hence becoming a new person in the eyes of Almighty God—I was assured. To me, this was so wonderful because I hoped that my new faith would change my life and prepare the way for me to be admitted into the congregation of sacred people and become a tool to lead others into the path of salvation and happiness. Nevertheless, this encounter with colonial education shortly caused me a lot of pain and frustration, but this dissatisfaction would

---

ultimately became a quiet source of resistance and fuel to challenge oppression and what did not make sense to me. For example, my resistance to domineering predispositions began manifesting itself clearly as the Head Prefect of Christ the King Demonstration Primary School (a Catholic school). I recall when I refused to hand in the list of pupils who skipped Sunday mass to be punished, a practice I flatly rejected. I told the school’s headmistress that it was simply not right to punish or whip children just because they did not come to church. True, the school rules demanded among other things that every student to attend prayer but I argued against a rule that was oppressing many students’ especially non believers of the faith I also professed. Because of this, I was summarily dismissed not only from being the school’s head prefect but also from the school as well, yet it was just a few weeks from writing my final national examinations papers. I ended up paying a heavy price but, thank God, my conscience did not break or meander in a significant manner. Within days, after helping my grandmother milk her cows, I recapitulated from the shock; I accepted the reality and began “teaching” myself to become an independent learner as I faced the difficult journey ahead. Also, while at high school, in Kibuli Secondary School (a Moslem school); I witnessed a lot of unfairness and inequality directed towards female students. It was not long before I launched a popular campaign to address such within a popular platform and slogan calling for equal treatment, regardless of sex and gender. This platform gave me a rare opportunity to begin reexamining and contesting the wrongs against the females more deeply at a relatively young age. My call for equal and fair treatment of all students, regardless of gender inspired students in my school to
controversially elect me as the “Head Girl”48 of the school, a position I won with over 98% of all valid votes. However, the school administration denied me the opportunity to serve in the said position since I am a man. Nevertheless, they acknowledge the issue at hand and quickly rewarded my effort with an honorary title as a consolation. I should add that my primary aim was achieved as I uniquely ignited discussion on issues affecting female students in the school.

I tell this story with enthusiasm because I consider my current academic project, to be more specific, researching on women issues as a continuation of my life long struggle to voice my thoughts in areas of women’s emancipation, empowerment and advocacy for a just society. Further to this, I would like to highlight that this effort did not just appear from nowhere, it has a historical context. In addition to this, it is also informed by many oppressive practices and tendencies I have witnessed in my community and around the world as a child, as a student, educator and a global citizen. Therefore, this study to me is a small attempt to dislocate and dismantle these ills and foster harmonious coexistence which cuts across sex and gender divide.

In summary, I should add that as a young man, my formal education and schooling was not any different from my female counterparts’. From the beginning, my education subjected me to intense ideological disorientation, deliberately designed to

48 Note: In Kibuli SS, student’s top leadership comprises of the Head Girl (HG) and the Head Boy (HB). The HG generally represents Girls and the HB serves boy’s interest. Whereas I identify myself as a boy, I was overwhelmingly elected to be the HG. However, the school later refused to allow me assumes this position but recognized me as “Honorary” HG. The school administration later appointed a Head Girl.
make me psychologically and spiritually dependant on western theorizing and mythologies. Nevertheless, as I searched to find the authentic truth and purpose of schooling, I was continually confronted with endless distortions and falsehoods especially about Black people and realized that the more I advance, the more I am removed from reality. In the long poems *Song of Lawino* and *Song of Ocol*, by Okot p'Bitek, (1985), Lawino grieves and sings about how colonial education has emasculated and weakened emerging modern African intellectuals. She sang "my husband's house is a dark forest of books … their manhood was finished in the classrooms, their testicles were smashed with big books." While WaThiong'o, (1987) in his polemical work *Decolonizing the Mind*, pointed out that the lack of congruency between colonial education and Africa's reality created people who have been abstracted from their reality. They yearn for their lost identity and their lost African heritage. And Godfrey Mwakikagile noted that the conquest of Africa led not only to oppression and exploitation, but also denigration of her culture and indigenous institutions. One other aspect was the brainwashing of African children into believing that they had no history they could be proud of; that all their customs and traditions were bad, and that even their languages were bad; nothing good. In fact many of them were so brainwashed that they tried to become more British; more French, than the British and French.

---

themselves. I therefore take this research as personally important because through it, I find a way through which I may liberate myself and refuse to get lost forever.

Finally, the last two decades like many others have not been easy for Africa. Osei, (2005) tells us that at the dawn of the last century, several western media houses announced the impending death of the African continent. This paradoxically happened when the rest of the world was waiting with enthusiasm, appetite and energy to delve into the 21st millennium. Africa on the contrary attracted exceptional soothsayers who only imagined annihilation and calamity as they beamed one big horrifying news headlines after another across and beyond western capitals. Time Magazine for example guessed that Africa will be one big frustrated continent of demagogues, drug lords, displaced and dying people (Osei, 2005:2). While The Mail and The Guardian of July 1, 2005 went further and prophesized, then announced the “Death of a Continent, sick people and sick economies and added that Africa will never be the same.” Africa is not going to die, and I have faith that all her people will be free forever because there are many beautiful stories to tell the world. One such story is the story of Queen Hatshepsut and Queen Nefertiti, the two formidable women from Africa, which this thesis examines. Steve Bantu Biko, a renowned anti-apartheid activist and the founder of the Black Consciousness Movement whose life unfortunately was ended abruptly in a

South African police custody cell, also tells us that to arrive at the right solution, one has to ask the right questions and that one is either part of the problem or part of the solution. I have refused to be part of the problem; I also call on other people, particularly every man to do the same. The solution to human problems in Africa may not fall from heaven, the way God poured manna to feed his people in the wilderness in the face of disaster. I have selected to be part of a team, ready to dig deep, learn how our ancestors lived with each other in harmony before and contest the present wrongs. By keeping quiet about these wrongs against the mothers of humanity, we would only allow them to multiply and subsist perpetually. The seeds of these wrongs were planted a long time ago and will continue sprouting and flourishing in the otherwise, sacred continent. To end the regimes of wrongs, against the daughters of Africa, it requires us to locate robust frameworks, capable of reorganizing components of our muzzled and disfigured traditional and cultural praxis. Africa cannot breathe the last breath because history tells us that it survived mass devastation, which no other continent experienced before, and probably any modern states subjected to, would probably collapse with much ease. However, for long, the use of appropriate theories to examine and confront the problem facing Africa has been missing both at the conceptual and practical level. The need to reclaim African philosophy and way of life cannot therefore be overemphasized. Black people need to go back to the drawing board and using African ways of knowing, thoughts and practices, locate the necessary tools and utilize them as paradigms for liberation. Within this framework, most of the solutions of the present dilemmas facing Black people can be located.
Chapter 3
Discursive Frameworks

3 Theoretical and Pedagogical Implications in this Study

Much of early African history was written by European anthropologists, missionaries, explorers and travelers who wrote it within the theoretical frameworks of their own ethnology and to suit various interests. Other historians and scholars later relied on these writings despite some of the obvious shortcomings in explaining African phenomenon. The usual assumption that history is a science made this very possible despite huge amount of guess work in their conclusions. Nevertheless, the gradual process of decolonization and the struggle to free African people from the yoke of slavery and imperialism marked a turning point from this sad era. Many scholars and political activists captured this opportunity and began the long struggle to rebuild African history. For example, the successful struggle which saw Ghana in 1950 becoming the first independent state in the continent revived and energized the dreams of the African intellectual patriots who in 1945, assembled under the chairmanship of W.E.B. Dubois and endorsed an agenda to unite and reconstruct the continent that in 1887 in Berlin was divided and allocated to various European powers free of charge. The post independence era therefore offered a quick ideological opportunity for African intelligentsia to start reassembling its mutilated and fractured history and clean remaining colonial and imperial messes. It also presented a possibility for African people and its intelligentsia, in the continent and scattered around the globe to reflect
back and begin a search for hybrid lenses capable of explaining Africa to the rest of the world as it was and should be understood. This was partly because many scholars especially those of African descent could not wait, for they had concluded that the mere physical absence of colonial bodies from the continent would not be enough to stimulate and usher Africa into a new era of freedom and dignity. The need for intellectual exploration to reconstruct knowledge about the past, and assist African people to create or recreate their lives again using African-centered paradigms after centuries of European and Arab vandalism could not be postponed any longer as millions of African nations celebrated the hard won freedom.

I am convinced that by locating and situating this study within anti-colonial and post-colonial liberation and philosophical theories—namely Afrocentricity, African centered Paradigms, Black Feminism Thoughts, Critical Anti-Race and Anti-Colonial theories as the primary frameworks, this thesis would be able to critically interrogate the roles and contribution of African Women leaders during the early civilization and allow us to examine, review and tell the story of Queen Nefertiti and Hatshepsut as a case study; inspect ancient African male-female gender relations at the dawn of civilization, and report the way Africans saw it, witnessed it and understood it.

3.1 Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change

In this thesis, I contend that Afrocentricity, the theory of social change (as finally assembled by Prof. Molefi Asante) offers a unique historical and philosophical perspective through which intellectual inquiry and investigation of African life before
and after the destruction of slavery and imperialism could be centered. Asante (2003) explained that Afrocentricity is a mode of thought and action in which the centrality of African interest, values, and perspectives predominate. In regard this regard, the theory calls for the placing of African people at the center of analysis of every African phenomenon. Thus, it is possible for anyone to locate and place African people and situate their experience in any given phenomenon as a subject and not object of intellectual discourse. In terms of actions and behaviors, Afrocentricity call for the compliance and devotion to the ideal that what is in the best interest of African consciousness is at the heart of ethical behavior as well. Most important also, Afrocentricity seeks to enshrine the idea that blackness itself is a trope of moral values and principles. Thus to be black is to be against all forms of oppression, racism, classism, homophobia, patriarchy, child abuse, pedophilia and white racial discrimination. Further to this, the Afrocentric discourse, as a dialectical reading of our world like other knowledge system, shares some ideas about the nature-society-culture interrelationship. Scheurich and Young (1997) highlight the ontological, epistemological and axiological position that may characterize different knowledge systems. The ontological assumptions speak to the primary assumptions people have or make about the nature of reality. In African systems of thoughts, the ontological viewpoint stresses that to understand reality, is to have a complete or holistic view of the society. This therefore calls for analysis of the relationship in the society especially

---

how homogenous existence among nature, culture and society is fostered. Central to this, is the idea of mutual interdependence among all peoples; hence the existence of the individual and or subject becomes only meaningful in relation to the community one is part of. On the other hand, the epistemological position argues that there are different ways of knowing reality. Thus, in African systems of thought, knowledge is seen as cumulative and as emerging from the experience of the social world. Practice and experience are seen as the contextual basis of knowledge. Knowledge is for survival, and the two go alongside each other and cannot be separated. On the other hand, gaining membership in a community gives one the rights which are equally matched with the responsibilities one will be expected to perform on behalf of the people one lives with. Meanwhile the axiological position maintains that there are “disputational contours of right and wrong or morality and values... (that are) ... presumptions about the real, the true and the good as illustrated by Scheurich and Young, (1997:6). Writing in an article entitled Why Write “Black” in Afrocentricity and the academy : essays on theory and practice, George Sefa Dei, (2003), also clarified that in African systems of thoughts, the cultural, spiritual and ideational beliefs, values and practices are evaluated within the history and contexts of the communities as societies strive to set their own moral tone. Therefore, I find this theory crucial in understanding Africa especially in that it allows experience and practices to be situated within the complex process of knowledge production and usages.

Further to this, by challenging Eurocentric knowledge as the only valid way of knowing, Afrocentric principles recognize that even if the seeds of Eurocentric
knowledge and some of its false assumptions have been sowed, a critical learner can censor it and arrest its growth as it germinates and prevent its maturity. This theory therefore uncovers and gives prominence to what the Eurocentric academy has long neglected especially explaining African people to the world. Through this, we are also able to examine the male-gender relations and the contributions of African women in ushering humanity to civility. Most importantly also, the theory lubricates the mind of a critical learner to employ popular education to undo any form of intellectual enslavement and subversion of reality in efforts to liberate education and popular masses. Finally, through Afrocentricity, it becomes possible to inspect and anchor the memory of African people for the rest of the world to experience the richness of its great past and to imagine its formidable potentials in the future equally. In conclusion, Asante, (1985) in the article Afrocentricity: Notes on Disciplinary Position tells us that:

Afrocentric idea is essentially about location. Since Africans have been moved off of their terms culturally, psychologically, economically, and historically, it is important that any assessment of the African condition in whatever country be made from an Afrocentric location. We begin with the view that Afrocentricity is a quality of thought, practice, and perspective that perceives African as subjects and agents of phenomena acting in their own cultural image and human interest.55

Afrocentricity therefore becomes a powerful antigen for decolonizing African people and phenomena and understanding African values, not only from the present locations but it allows us to visit other historical periods including antiquity and to reclaim Africa from the ruins of slavery, imperialism and neocolonialism. As a social, political, psychological and philosophical thought, engineered to aid the re-discovery, location and actualizing of African people and agencies, the theory is offering an opportune moment for the academy to engage and imagine Africa beyond the devastations and waste that it has witnessed, which is not equaled anywhere else in the known history of humanity.

3.2 African Centered Paradigm

Like Asante, Tsehloane C. Keto, (2001), in the Vision and Time: Historical Perspective of an African-Centered Paradigm offers a very powerful literary witness and a process that aid the intellectual exploration of the central role that time and location play in the construction of knowledge about the past. Through this paradigm, Africa’s salient contribution in the historical perceptions and critical examination of knowledge production is uncovered and analyzed. In this paradigm, we gain insights in the social prognosis and construction of knowledge, including learning from the past and begin freeing the process of knowing from the intellectual dependence on western paradigms. I find his insights having practical applications for both scholars in the academy and appealing even to those whose intentions is simply to casually read about Africa, even for curiosity purposes. Keto, (2001) informs us that:
Out of an African Centered Paradigm, there emerges a complex of theoretical perspectives that affect the process of knowledge formation. The paradigm places Africa at the centre of information and construction about Africans and leads to the formulation of a social policy that derives its inspiration from relocation of knowledge about Africans, people in Africa and peoples of African descent outside Africa on the geo-cultural region that is Africa.56

This paradigm is also useful in uncovering and examining hidden realities which were overlooked or disregarded by historical writers especially just before anarchy and mayhem began to be inflicted on the Black people and the African continent. Because of this, I rely on this paradigm to analyze and interpret the performance of women in various aspects which were crucial during the ancient African civilization. The application of this theory enables the thesis to interrogate issues emanating from the practices and experiences of Black people in Africa and critically explore possibilities for situating and advancing the cause for women’s emancipation and empowerment in contemporary African communities. Keto, (2001: xii), also argues that the African centered paradigm represents an important stage in the re-emergence of African intellectual thoughts and knowledge(s) which suffered from constraining epistemological frameworks of the colonized past. In addition, the paradigm addresses the contemporary urgency to construct a new and equitable intellectual foundation upon which a balanced global knowledge system about the world can be erected.

African centered paradigm therefore becomes another exceptional robust epistemological machine of our time, capable of energizing human minds and through which the people of the world, and most importantly, the academy can learn how to comprehend African phenomena. Also, it provides another lens or agency for Black people to examine issues that affect them as a race and as part of a wider human society and to organize response based on solid understanding of self and its relationship to the society, while avoiding falsified “culture” and “traditions” and history which heavily legitimized intellectual and ideological bankruptcies by encouraging oppressive practices against women. In addition, this paradigm also allows modern scholars to redefine and redirect the focus of every human social scientist in their quest to imagine and construct knowledge by ensuring that all geo-cultural paradigms are put on equal footing. These in effect permit African indigenous knowledge to reemerge and supplement efforts in rebuilding knowledge that serves humanity beyond the western theoretical perspectives. Therefore, through this paradigm, the process of legitimizing knowledge construction, formation and production about continental Africa—the land of all the Black people becomes possible. In short, Keto, (2001) summarized that the central justification for the paradigm is the overdue recognition that over the last two centuries, knowledge about Africans, inside and outside Africa has been greatly distorted by reliance on the framework of analysis, interpretation and perspective premised on a European center, a European perspective and European preferences. Finally I would like to point out that both the Afrocentricity and African centered paradigm are fundamentally concerned with re-centering Black people as subjects and
not objects of investigations. Nevertheless, whereas Black people as a race share similar experiences like the cruelty, dehumanization, exploitation, etc, of slave trade and colonization, the impact of these evils were not equal on reshaping the sex and gender relationship in the continent. This therefore calls for a framework, capable of analyzing the unique experiences of Black women. In this thesis, I utilize the Black feminist thought to address this.

3.3 Black Feminism/African Feminist Thoughts

As a robust theory which generally is concerned with advancement of all Black women, the Black Feminist thought offers an embodiment of premium positive intellectual ideals through which excruciating experiences of Black women can be analyzed and retold. Prof. Wane, (2007) tells us that Black feminism is an epistemology that seeks to provide a voice for women who are not represented in mainstream feminism, which is based on the experiences of white, middle-class, heterosexual women whose lived experiences are analyzed without interrogation of race or colour and the “Other aspect” which typify the black woman’s difference.\(^57\) While Collins, (1990:39) while answering the questions “What is Black Feminism?” stated that it’s a process of self-conscious struggle that empowers women and men to actualize the humanist vision of community.\(^58\) Further to that from Mirza, (1997:21) we learn that Black feminism is


primarily a political project marked by “strategic multiplicity and contingency” with the main purpose to “…excavate the silences and pathological appearances of collectivity of women assigned as the “other” and produced in the gendered, sexualized, wholly radicalized discourse.” Black feminist thought also provides a pathway through which many aspects of African life can be investigated. For example, it articulates African spirituality, political identity/consciousness of black women and allows its relevance to be experienced beyond the continental Africa. Massaquoi, (2007) argues that it integrates Black Women’s political identity and spiritual consciousness as a people to spirituality, in its diverse manifestations and in global contexts while also rejecting the traditional western oppositions between the spiritual and the intellectual. Mazama, (2002) writing in the Journal of Black Studies explains that Spirituality is a cosmic energy that permeates and lives within all that is and this cosmic energy shared by all confers a common sense to everything in the world, and thus ensures the fundamental unity of all that exist. In the African context, people do not see or conceive of themselves as separated from the cosmos but as being completely into a universe that is much larger than any of them and yet it is centered around them.

On another note, Cummings (2007) asserted that like African history, Black women’s histories are also histories of contestation, resistance, struggle and triumph—

whether it be challenging the kinship system, or securing resources.\textsuperscript{61} Overtime, Black feminism has established itself not as a counter theory but as a powerful perspective whose time has arrived to re-energize the historical resistance of black women against all forms of oppression, subjugation and suppression as well as to erase the utopian and presumptuous narratives within which black women issues are discussed both inside and outside Africa. This theory as a liberation paradigm as Carol Boyce Davies et al argued, recognizes that certain inequities and limitations existed/exist in traditional African societies and that colonialism reinforced them and introduced others. It further recognizes that African societies are “ancient societies” and that these problems should be addressed from a historical standpoint. This therefore calls for critical examinations of the structures which were used to foster equality and maintaining a balanced sex-gender relation in earlier African communities. Like African feminism, Black feminist thought is particularly concerned with the examination of African institutions which are of value to women and rejects those which work to their detriment and does not simply import Western women agendas. African feminism respects African women’s self reliance and penchant to cooperative work and social organization. Theoretical African feminism understands the connectedness of race, class and sex oppression.\textsuperscript{62}

Finally, I should emphasize that Black feminist thought allows us to analyze the continuing impact of colonialism on women. This is crucial as recent research suggest

\textsuperscript{61} Cummings, Joan Grant writing in \textit{Theorizing Empowerment}, Inanna Publications and Education In. Toronto, 2007, p. xiii.

that the consequences and impacts of colonialism continues to reproduce itself even in the present times particularly in political areas and this phenomena has for so long been underrated with the diminished brutality of colonialism. Therefore, the use of Black feminist thought as an anticolonial framework helps us to conceptualize and digest the issues that emasculated due to colonialism and its racist intentions and this is of paramount significance to this thesis.

3.4 The Anti-Colonial and Anti-Racist Theory

Finally within the theoretical frameworks, in this thesis, I do see imperial domination and colonization of the subdued people not only as a former doctrine that rested heavily on domination of a people by foreign governors, coupled with economic and social exploitation, but I also see it as a process that from its very beginning, was meant to humiliate, dehumanize and rewrite history as it imposed new meanings and the purposes of human life on its innocent victims. Lord Lugard, (1926), in the Dual Mandate fluently advised his masters and Europe that “As Roman imperialism …led wild Barbaria of this island of Britain along the path of progress, so in Africa today we are repaying back the debt, and bringing the dark places of earth …the torch of culture and progress.” Such thinking which negated the values of others therefore calls for anticolonial and anti-racist lenses to be evoked so as to engage, confront and humble the egomaniacal Western Eurocentric pretentiousness of cultural superiority and imaginations. Beside this, this paradigm undresses the Eurocentric hegemonic and

totalizing claims of global wisdom while denying it the comfort of insulting other non-Westerners and their knowledge system.

By utilizing the anti-colonial discursive framework and the anti-racist theory, this thesis also gives prominence to the “subjugated knowledge(s)” (Foucault, 1980) and questions the intellectual hegemony and asymmetrical power relation in the academy which tends to limit valid knowledge by recognizing knowledge(s) produced and sourced locally, from cultural histories, riddles, proverbs, painting, folktales and myths. It consequently provides frameworks through which African scholars could invade and catechize using the western colloquium because for centuries Africa has been penetrated by others without it attempting to counter-penetrate in return (Mazrui, 1978) and require the Westerners to confront themselves as representatives of the culture and race accused of crimes—“crimes of violence, crimes of suppression, crimes of conscience.”\(^\text{64}\) The anti-colonial and anti-racist theories are therefore providing important lenses for scholars to view and understand the contributions of African women from time immemorial.

In conclusion, in this thesis, as seen above, I employ multiple theories. This is principally because African experience cannot be explained as a singular. For example, the fact that imperialism and colonialism were not clothed in one type of attire, the use of multiple theories becomes a necessity in understanding their complex behaviors and how these transmutes and continue to shape male-gender relationship even in

\(^\text{64}\) Graveline, F. Jean., Circle Works, Transforming Eurocentric Consciousness, p. 32.
contemporary Africa. Further to this, the costumes that imperial and colonial agencies were dressed in evolved over centuries to include classifying human beings into physical, biological and genetically distinct groups. Colonial agencies and mentality accepted insidious assumptions and its menaces that humanity can be divided into sub-groups of unchanging natural types and that human mental and moral behaviors as well as individual personality are related to their racial, social and physical characteristics. The anti racist perspective therefore becomes a paradigm of choice that cannot be easily negated in any study which involves interrogating the consequences of imperialism on the colonized persons. This is also true because by denoting some people as being “primitive” while designating others as “civilized,” the ideals of imperialism which formed the central genesis and core of eurocentrism committed a grave error by “hierarchalizing” humanity and inserting the crime of racism in the encyclopedia of human biography as well.

My choice to evoke and use multiple theories in this research is also informed by recognition of the fact that much of early African history as written by earlier scholars, missionaries, explorers and travelers were written to suit various interests of the time. Other historians and scholars later relied on them despite some obvious shortcomings in explaining what Africa was. The usual assumption that history is a science made this very possible despite huge amounts of guesswork in their conclusion as mentioned earlier. In Africa, the gradual process of decolonization and the struggle to free African people from imperialism marked a turning point of this sad era and indeed, it captured the imaginations of many scholars and political activists. As imperial empires began to
crumble, the pan-Africanist could not wait any longer to begin the process of rebuilding the true history of Africa. As African people became free from colonialism and the gradual demise of the physical colonial presence as colonial regimes started to disappear one after the other, the collapse of these colonial states in African was nevertheless not accompanied by total disappearance of the ideology and theories which established them in the first place.

To date, various false theories have been used to study Africa, many of which have collapsed miserably with the advent of superior science, research methodology and critical paradigms with the emergence of the 20th century. The breakdown of Western empires and the entry into the international arena of the former colonial states as new independent states also facilitated this. Nevertheless, a few obnoxious ones are staggering and lingering in the archives of various universities while some others are buying time and surviving in “life support” systems in museums scattered all over the world, desperately waiting for the possibilities of resurrecting for another life, in changed form and tone in time to come. For example, the famous 19th century conclusion by some scholars that humankind can be divided into discrete races has been abandoned by geneticists and historians as well throwing their most passionate and enthusiastic followers in total confusion. Equally, the once flamboyant theory which suggested that the African Civilization somehow could have “diffused” and melted in Africa by the process of dissemination of some kind i.e. essentialization of African Civilization has met its death with much ado about nothing, to use the words borrowed from Shakespeare’s play. Similarly, Darwin’s theory of the Origin of Species
(1859) which speculated that superior races could be contaminated through contacts with inferior ones has been finally censured. Nevertheless, despite the fact that some of these theories have been under sustained scholarly ambush and common sense attacks, a few continue to invite discussions especially within racist scholarship because it offers the possibility for a planned racial development (eurogenics) and was instrumental in extending imperial practices, particularly the “paradoxical dualism” which was at the center of the debasement and denigration of colonized subjects.

In the United States, Professor W. J. Burgess “one of the greatest political scientists of his time” when confronted with suggestions that would finally allow black people to participate in the American democracy scribbled the following words:

…but there is no question, now, that Congress did a monstrous thing and committed a great political error, if not sin in the creation of this new electorate. It was a great wrong to civilization to put the white race of the South under the domination of the Negro. The claim that there is nothing in the color of the skin from the point of view of political ethic is a great sophism. A black skin means membership in a race of men which has never of itself succeeded in subjecting passion to reason, has never, therefore, created any civilization of any kind. To put such a race of men in possession of a “state” government in a system of a federal government, is to trust them with the development of political and legal civilization upon the most important subjects of human life, and to do this in the
communities with a large white population is simply to establish barbarism in power over civilization.\textsuperscript{65}

Today, the situation may be different but racist insults especially against Black people persist in America and elsewhere continues. The election of a Blackman, Barack Obama into the most powerful office on earth that is to say as the president of the United States of America has possibly only eased that kind of mindset. For instance, even some of the most liberal American still sometime find it very difficult to resist the temptation of murmuring racial nuances and slurs against the Black. For example, the Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) and an adherent of the Obama agenda recently had to apologize for alluding to Obama as “...a black candidate who could be successful thanks in part to his “light-skinned” appearance and speaking patterns " with no Negro dialect, unless he wanted to have one.”\textsuperscript{66} The remark by Harry Reid, an experienced legislator and a very honest white supporter of Obama reveals in part that the readings of many Americans as far as racism is concerned are still opportunistic and lopsided. Also recently, a Tea Party protester wasted no time and shouted “Ni**er,” “Fa**ot” at a very distinguished member of the US congress. Also a staffer for Rep. James Clyburn (D-S.C.) told reporters that Rep. Emanuel Cleaver (D-Mo.) had been spat on by a protestor while Rep. John Lewis (D-Ga.), a hero of the civil rights movement, was called a 'ni**-er.' And Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.) was called a "fa**ot," as

\textsuperscript{65} Burgess, John W., (1902). \textit{Reconstruction and the Constitution 1866-1876} (The American History Series, New York Charles Scribner’s and Sons), p. 133.

\textsuperscript{66} See CNN http://politicaltickerblogs.cnn.com/2010/01/09/reid-apology-for-negro-dialect-comment/?fbid=5LDcEjoLpQg
protestors shouted at him with deliberately lisp-y screams. Because of these some observers are viewing the Tea Party in the US as another congregation of racists agenda, principally directed against a Black presidency. On a global scale Prof. Ali A. Mazrui also noted that whereas there is evidence that suggest that in the last years of the twentieth century the salience of race was on the decline, there is no evidence suggesting that the salience of culture was on the rise. He also noted that the balance sheet varies from country to country. For example, South Africa is a less racist society than it was in the 1980s. But the Netherlands and Norway may be more racist now than 20 years ago.”

Similar racist insults and abuses were piled on the Black people living in continental Africa as well as its islands by European scholars, settlers and their colonial officers. Many of these people lacked respect for African people. For example, Colonel Ewart Grogan, a white settler and the leader of the Kenya British Empire Party, while making a presentation at Makerere University College, in Uganda covering the education of the native remarked that “Just teaching a lot of stupid monkeys to dress up like the Europeans won’t do anything good. Just cause a lot of discontent. They can never be like us so better for them not to try.” While another settler went even further and elaborated eloquently his feelings against a Black labourer by saying “I’ve actually got a


68 See article by Ali A. Mazrui Is this the Dawn of a Post-Racial Age?: From Othello to Obama, P.12

farm hand who wears a tie—but the stupid bastard doesn’t realize you don’t wear a tie without a shirt!”  This kind of worldviews had a huge impact on how education was organized and carried out in many African colonial states. The implication of the above is obvious but its consequences were far reaching since it impacted on their victims for several generations. Indeed, as Mwakikagile, (2000), concluded, “…it was a sweeping indictment against all “native Africans” as a bunch of idiots.”

In conclusion, the hostility and hate expressed against Black people was not simply espoused by idiots but university professors, scholars, colonial agents based on many false theoretical assumptions. Further to these, the insults against Black people were glorified and applauded by many sane people without considering the pains and horror their victims were undergoing. It should also be noted that conclusions about black people did not just come abruptly nor was it an accident; it was built over time and was supported by false scientific and historical studies and imaginations. However, these bogus assumptions are falling asunder partly due to the massive assaults especially by Black scholars, scientific advances and discoveries during the 21st century, and most importantly, the re-emergence of African original epistemology, which for so long was confined or excluded from the academy. The use and findings of these frameworks would always be contested unless accompanied by correct methodological approaches. Further to this, recognition of the symbiotic relationship between theories,

---

methods and research finding in contemporary Africana studies (Steward, 2005) is very important in any inquiry.

---

Chapter 4
Research Methodologies

4 Introduction

In every study, the methodology employed by a researcher in the examination of the phenomena under investigation is of crucial importance. This is more so when one attempts to launch a study of events that shaped the contemporary understanding of issues in the African continent and elongate the lens through the dark periods of colonialism and slavery to encompass the ancient African civilization. This is because, over years, various theories, paradigms and perspectives have been used to study and make conclusions about what Africa is. As noted in the preceding chapters, many times, the conclusions about the Black people and Africa were merely intellectual speculations imagined by several scholars using methodology which could not explain what Africa was before the eventual enslavement and colonization of African people. Due to the advent of modern science coupled with the acceptance of other non-eurocentic research methodologies in the academy and intense intellectual scrutiny especially during the later half of the 19th century, many obnoxious conclusions about Blacks and Africa are now fading on their own; others were summarily dumped in the dustbins of history with ease. Nevertheless, some false historical writings remained contested or are being preserved in various museums, possibly waiting for a decent burial date as I earlier argued.

It should also be emphasized that for the past 100 years or so, many paradigms dominated the western academy as the academics, at various levels searched for
knowledge and reproduced it to study the peoples and events in Africa mainly for the consumption of Western people and to assist imperial designs. Within the same premise, it should also be noted that in the early academy, there was a school of thought, which totally denied the existence of African history. For example, as late as 1959, while excusing himself for excluding Africa from his *Philosophy of History* course, G.W.F Hegel, a renowned scholar of the time had to simply say these words “…perhaps, in the future, there will be some history of Africa to teach. But at present there is none; there is only the history of Europeans in Africa.”73 Scholars with a psyche’s like that one of G.W.F Hegel were not few, neither were they too unintelligent to come up with such horrible conclusions. Their biggest blunder could partly be traced to the dominance of the eurocentric research methodology, bankrupt ideology and theories which dominated western scholarship most of the time during their era.

These popular but false presumptions and suppositions about Africa nevertheless started experiencing difficulties as more scholars began understanding African peoples on their own terms, and at around 1960s, the obnoxious addendum of eurocentrism as relates to African people and its history was partly overcome. This gave way and opportunity for a new set of scholarship to have another fresh look at Africa’s past and other phenomena. The reemergence of African scholarship and scholars of African descent who began intense research on African history further aided the

process of refreshing human minds about issues in Africa as it was and how it should be understood. The abilities of these scholars, especially those with Afrocentric minds to confront the misrepresented and omitted facts gave extra velocity in rethinking and rewriting African history. Further to this, the changes in the thinking in the Western academy which became a necessity as the world experienced rapid political and scientific changes especially during the middle of the twentieth century also played some secondary roles. Here I should emphasize that many eurocentric scholars merely adjusted the framework through which they view Africa without significantly making a fundamental shift in the analysis of African phenomena. It is also important to emphasize that all these effort to transform understanding of Africa did not bring an end to the pain and healing to the injury caused on the innocent people in Africa nor did it mark the end of a long struggle against injustice, rather it was a beginning of a long struggle that will certainly take also a very long time to repair the enormous damage melt on Africa and its diaspora.

Jacques Depelchin for example, in his book *Silences in African History: Between the Syndromes of Discovery and Abolition* observed:

The paradigm of denial of African history was replaced by a paradigm which affirmed the existence of African history, in reality, however, it was the former which continued to dominate but under a different form. The apparent paradigmatic shift - from denial to recognition - can be revealed as false by showing that the affirmation was paralleled by systematic silencing of questions,
themes, and/or conceptualizations. So, in reality, what took place was a redefinition or reformulation of the denials.\textsuperscript{74}

Therefore, it is crucial that the research methodology used, in any study involving African phenomena be versatile enough to address this unique situation as there are several hurdles to jump through.

This study primarily involves reviewing and analyzing the roles and contributions of two great African women; Nefertiti and Hatshepsut. In a study like this, many feminist theorists and women’s rights activists advise that the philosophy behind the choice of research methodology to be employed in studies whose primary concerns are women should attempt to address the key questions confronting women in the contemporary world. Fonow & Cook, (1991) also pointed out that the philosophy behind methodology, data collection, and specific methods must be linked to the empowerment of women. Equally, Ogundipe-Leslie, (1995) in \textit{Women in Africa and Her Diaspora: from Marginality to Empowerment} on the same subject added that “Women’s empowerment should be looked at as the ability to promote positive life in all its forms while removing barriers, including all things, people and structures threatening to limit the potential of African women to be full human beings.”\textsuperscript{75} While George Jerry Sefa Dei (1995) theorized in \textit{Indigenous Knowledge as an Empowerment tool for Sustainable}

\textsuperscript{74} Jacques Depelchin. \textit{Silences in African History: Between the Syndromes of Discovery And Abolition} (Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota Publishers, 2005), 12.

Development that the debates about women empowerment should be about the self or agency having the power to voice and articulate its concerns. While Cheryl and Strobel warned us that in studying and interpreting the history of women, it is imperative that we avoid the three major pitfalls, that is to say, interpreting women as exotic, and looking at women as only the victims or women as anomalies. She added that the labeling of non-western societal values as being primitive or backward or barbaric is very prevalent in western societies. This unfortunately frequently provided the only knowledge known to them about other cultures.76

In view of the mentioned central and significant facts, the need to choose a research methodology carefully while looking at women issues cannot be overemphasized. In this study, I employ two major sets of methodologies, namely, the Content Analysis and Africanist Historiography which I hope will address some of these concerns. I am convinced that these two methodologies possess the necessary “arsenals” capable of confronting falsehoods, destroying or demystifying stereotypes and fallacy which continues to be peddled against the Black people, and most importantly, African woman. Also, I should add that because the written history of Africa cannot be relied on all the time, this research will use information recorded in the oral traditions of African people. However it is also important to stress that African history in general has been terribly contaminated. Therefore, neither written nor

unwritten history should be accepted as authentic without rigorous verifications to sieve out impurities and falsehoods. These two methodologies will lend room and enable me to focus, investigate and bring to light the contribution of the two great African women rulers – the primary subject in this investigation, with much ease.

4.1 The Content Analysis

Researchers have long debated about the relative value of qualitative and quantitative inquiry.\textsuperscript{77} Strauss and Corbin (1990) argued that qualitative methods can be used to better understand any phenomenon about which little is yet known.\textsuperscript{78} While Busch (2005) observed that qualitative research method as a process can be used to deepen one’s understanding of complex social and human factors in ways that cannot be understood by numbers.\textsuperscript{79} In this thesis, I generally rely on qualitative research method as a main tool of enquiry. I therefore seek to use content analysis. Holsti, (1969) also offers a broader definition and submitted that content analysis is "any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages."\textsuperscript{80} Further to this, content analysis as a complex process of interpreting the presence, meanings and relationships of certain words, themes or/and concepts within written or oral text(s) allow researchers to make inferences about messages based on the


\textsuperscript{79} See Busch et al (2005).

context within which those messages were produced (Appiah 2006). Besides this, Steve Stemler, (2001) in An overview of content analysis: Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation summarised that content analysis enables researchers to sift through large volumes of data with relative ease in a systematic fashion (GAO, 1996). It can be a useful technique for allowing us to discover and describe the focus of individual, group, institutional, or social attention (Weber, 1990)\(^81\). Therefore, a critical and rigorous analysis of already written material is crucial in this research. Content analysis will allow deductions to be made after collaborating it with other methods of data collection. This is of a primary importance considering the fact the main question which this thesis intended to respond to, can only be answered after examining material and events some of which date or occurred many hundreds of years ago and were also mostly written or recorded by those whose intentions remained suspect to date.

4.2 Africanist Historiography: Epistemological and pedagogical significances

In addition to the content analysis, this research utilizes the Africanist Historiography as a main methodological instrument of investigation as well. Africanist Historiography is simply a historical research methodology that traditionally has been seen as the study of the history-of-history and its main task is “simply to show how it really was” or to “ascertain the facts.”\(^82\) The use of African Historiography aids the acquisition of

---


knowledge and information, including original African indigenous knowledge, beliefs and narratives which directly would relate to the lived experiences of the African peoples. This methodology aids the process of digesting the written history of Africa people on its way severing the dependency on earlier writers whose narratives were heavily influenced by the imperial mindset. In effect, it’s a very powerful decolonizing instrument as it also recognizes that history is not only written, it can also be located within human memories, the common senses and going further including the interrogation of what particular group of people hear, feel, believe and continue to experience and narrate in their living world. Through this, the Africanist Historiography uniquely smoothens the path of a successful exploration of the ambiguous relationship especially within historical writings and peoples’ lived experiences, hence allowing humanity to become the subject of historical analysis. Also important to note, Africanist historiography aids the inspection and removal of biases in historical writings hence providing another social microscope through which the authenticity of historicity of a phenomenon or matter being investigated can be defined, scrutinized and analyzed independently and as a collective.

Ralph A. Austen in his essay titled *African Historiography: Essays in honour of Jacob Ade Ajayi* submitted that “Africanist historiography did define itself, we find the issue of autonomy posited in three forms: first against the preceding colonialist historiography on Africa, secondly as based upon African forms of social organization and indigenous documentation, and finally as pointing towards appropriation and
adaptation of western cultures in the building of the modern African nation.”

In addition to this, Africanist Historiography can advance human understanding of the various dynamics which operated in the multiplicity of complex relationships that occurred and witnessed, in this case by African early or ancient ancestors and actors whose presence still manifest themselves in oral philosophy and teachings. This is of significant importance in this thesis since most of the events and issues in this study occurred in Africa, and were recorded historiographically in the arts, experience, beliefs and memories of African people long before the eyes of imperial scholarship could land on anything in the great continent of Africa. In addition to this, Africanist historiography enables a critical examination of beliefs and practices and other phenomena in Africa that for ages due to various pressures and ravages of time were compelled to adapt to imperial designs as others went into forced hibernations in a dire attempt to avoid complete annihilation but with the hope of seeing the light of the succeeding day should conditions become fertile for its seed to germinate and sprout into freedom.

By aiding the re-emergence of the ancient Africans’ worldviews and scholarship, Africanist historiographers have methodologically and uniquely opened another pipeline through which dialogues between the past and the present can be carried out hence assisting in heightening the desire for Afrocentric consciousness. This in effect

---

reclaims the African prime ideals and re-locates it at the very epicenter of knowledge production, and most importantly reasserts this wisdom to assist in the battle against unjust practices that have hindered propulsion and usage of knowledge to advance the cause for empowerment of women in Africa within a framework that encourages transformation by revision and re-articulation of Africa’s maimed past. Besides these, by recognizing and acknowledging the discernible and immortality of the traditional African world view and taking these pivotal positions, the Africanist historiography rejects colonial historiography which continues to present Europeans as the main actors in African affairs, which also allocates the Muslims and other “white” Mediterranean people a supporting or residual roles but positioned indigenous African people as mere passive recipients of history. Africanist Historiography therefore has constituted itself as a powerful ideological response to colonial historiography. Last but not least, this epistemology provides a vista for understanding the gaps between the missing, misplaced and the distorted written records particularly, those in Africa. Therefore, Africanist historiography, as a robust methodological tool of enquiry will allow me to inspect and overcome the insidious historical melancholy and false representation of African people and history, and stimulate discussions and further research in this area which should interest everyone who is thinking and talking about women’s emancipation in Africa and beyond.

4.3 Conclusion

The use of these two major methodologies therefore provides the ability for this investigation to submerge into the past quickly, maneuver through what is known and pull out relevant information necessary for answering the main questions on this particular subject of study for the benefit of the present and future academy. By combining the two major methodologies, this study also satisfies the need to know Africa on her own terms by exploring African history while extending the boundaries of how to know and what was known about Africa’s assumed past beyond how it was known past the imperial and colonial circles and arenas. Jones, G. I (1974) also informed and reaffirmed that the motives of colonial writing were to:

“…encourage first on the historical grounds, the need to record for posterity the last vestiges of the primitive cultures which the twentieth century was about to engulf; then on the ground of administrative convenience, the need for accurate information about the peoples whose territories were being organized into districts, divisions, and provinces of the colonial empires.”

Africanist Historiography, as a historic methodology presents to the world knowledge systems an important shift from the euro-orthodox narrative-descriptive methodological framework in historical enquiries. This methodology, has over time positioned itself as a suitable research method capable of correcting the Eurocentric version and assumption which were so prominent in the colonial historiography and

---

history. Therefore, the methodology is useful in solving both the methodological and epistemological problems which students of African studies will obviously face in their studies. For example, the assumption which was prevalent in early studies that African peoples lived in “stateless” societies and as such had no history because nothing was recorded for future references can be confronted and answered by the use of Africanist Historiography as a thematic research appliance. On a similar note, Morrison, (1977) reminds us that to refuse to remember the past and the journey into the margins is to kill one’s ancestors, and “when you kill the ancestors(s), you kill yourself... (but) nice things do not always happen to the totally self-reliant if there is no conscious historical connection.” Therefore, teaching only consciousness is not enough. This is because in the long journey to remember the past, the “historical past” of Africa should begin with the use of methodologies that will make the African people feel and get connected to their own history.

I, therefore, anticipate that the combined use of these two major historical and contemporary methodologies allows me to overcome many obstacles since finding complete written account about African women in early times is impossible just as in the western traditional societies. The call for persistence, perseverance and use of multiple methodologies and paradigms due to the silence, neglect and obliqueness of the traditional historical sources cannot be overstated. This research hopefully will provide additional materials which would enhance the understanding of male and

female relationships as we continue to reflect on lessons the ancestors of the Black race taught the world. Further to this, I remain hopeful that this thesis will provide momentum and another centre of energy to further the cause for women emancipation as we discover more lessons from the remains of the era which saw Nefertiti and Hatshepsut becoming great leaders of their time.
Chapter 5
Black Women’s Leaders in Antiquity: A Case Study

5 Introduction

For long, historians, anthropologists and other social scientists have studied and told the world of many famous Black women in Africa during ancient times. However, most often, the responsibilities of these great women, who significantly influenced the development of the African ancient but sophisticated civilizations have been presented and theorized within a general constricted thesis such as king’s consorts or wives, or at the very best, African queens. In some cases the prominence of great women from Africa has been repudiated or dismissed without much debates as some sort of historical mishaps. For example, Joann, (2004:186) observed that it was generally believed that it was virtually impossible for a woman to rule Egypt as a king. Although no one can ignore the twenty-year dominance of the Pharaoh Hatshepsut, she is generally explained away as an aberration, a fluke, and the exception. This kind of mal-analysis has not only belittled and served to de-regularize unique accomplishments and triumphs of ancient Black women but also continues to influence the process of comprehending male and female gender relations in Africa significantly.

However, recent researchers are now informing the world that many of the so call African queens, some who previously were imagined to be only wives of great kings in Egypt, were in fact rulers in the ancient times. Joann, (2004:186) emphasized that the evidence shows that they ruled in their own right as female pharaohs, even if they are always subtly demoted by the use of the modern term such as “queens” which
usually signifies nothing more than marriage to a male king. Further to this, female pharaohs were not uncommon in Egyptian society. Recent research is now suggesting that there were many more female pharaohs than was originally ever known. Joann, (2004:186) in *The Search for Nefertiti: The True Story of a Remarkable Discovery* also observed that despite the best attempts in certain quarters to sweep these women under academic carpet, it is apparent that at least six of them ruled Egypt as absolute monarchs- Neithkret in the 6th dynasty of the Pyramid age, Sobeknofru in the 12th dynasty, Hatshepsut in the 18th, Tawosret in the 19th, Cleopatra in the dynasty of the Ptolemaic pharaohs, and now, perhaps Nefertiti herself.

Elsewhere in Africa the story of women who ruled great nations is not any dissimilar to that of ancient Egypt which has generally invited more debates and discussions. For example, Sweetman, (1984:8) observed that in Africa’s second greatest civilization of Meroë, there were so many great women leaders that the outside world believed it never had any king! Today, it is becoming clearer that history has not been kind to so many women luminaries in Africa. In this thesis, I take a critical look at Nefertiti and Hatshepsut. My interest is to examine their roles particularly in areas of leadership philosophy and spirituality, which were very critical in man’s long journey and momentous exit out of the dark ages.

---

5.1 Queen Nefertiti (fl. c.1372-1350 B.C.)

Queen Nefertiti has been presented to the world in many ways. To many scholars, she was a queen and consort of the sun worshipping pharaoh Akhenaten around 1367-1350 B.C., yet others proclaimed her to be a sovereign leader of Egypt at a critical moment of her history. In the Karnak there are inscriptions describing her as “Heiress, Great of Favours, Possessed of Charm, Exuding Happiness, Mistress of Sweetness, beloved one, soothing the king’s heart in his house, soft-spoken in all, Mistress of Upper and Lower Egypt, Great King's Wife, whom he loves, Lady of the Two Lands.”

One thing which is however certain about Nefertiti is the almost unanimous agreement of many scholars who consider her as one of the most beautiful, influential and astute women of her time. Nefertiti, a name which means "the beautiful woman has come," is one of the most famous and beloved of all ancient Egyptians.

Nefertiti, the queen and the ruler of the ancient Egypt was one of the world’s greatest women and blessed to have lived in an ordered, sophisticated and civilized world in Africa. During her time, though many years after human families got their final distinctions as the most advanced hominoids, some were yet to embrace sophistication and were possibly still struggling to figure out how to get out of caves and catch up with the prosperity being experienced in Africa especially in areas located along the Nile valleys. So it is imperative to recognize that

89 See [Tour Egypt](http://www.touregypt.net/who/nefertit.htm)
Nefertiti became a leader of Egypt at a time when the African people, by most accounts were on top of the drama of human civilization.

Nefertiti’s elegance, remarkable but unusual, underscores a position of authority and astuteness that make her stand out among the few lucky women whose compelling contributions did not miss the eyes of the day’s bygones. Though her era to some writers is considered antediluvian, she continues to gather interest and is a subject of endless contemporary debate and investigations. History tells us that for many years, Queen Nefertiti was one of the most influential women in the ancient world. She was the envy of men and women alike, her image and influence transcends the world of beauty which many people are accustomed to or obsessed with. Further to this, Nefertiti is said to have been blessed by the sun god and because of this, she was adored by her family and worshiped by her people as well. We therefore see Nefertiti being considered godly in the highly spiritual ancient society in Egypt. The image of Nefertiti was celebrated throughout the territory of ancient Egypt and today prime spaces are reserved to preserve her legacy in Egypt and other world’s museums of progress and civilization.

Nefertiti lived and ruled during the 18th Dynasty, a period of tranquility in Egyptian history and also intertwined with unprecedented prosperity and abundance in a nation burgeoning with confidence as it moved the world toward the era which would later facilitate the arrival of the age of enlightenment. Julia Samson (1985) reports that Egypt then, was a wealthy country, blessed with abundant natural resources,
plenty supply of water, industrious and hard working people. However, some scholars writing today portray this legendary Black queen with some features as Caucasian by representing her with a light-colored skin texture. Nevertheless, according to many prominent Egyptiantologists and other distinguished scholars, this is not true. Nefertiti was (to the best of our knowledge) an Egyptian, living at a time when Egypt was the most cultured and one of the most powerful nations on earth.90

Also at that time, the Egyptian courts were acknowledged world over as the most sophisticated centers of the world’s enlightenment. Joyce Tyldesley (1998:2), for example, pointed out that just before Nefertiti, Egypt was the world’s only known superpower. Before her, King Tuthmosis, successfully raised the obelisk at the temple in Karnak and led a successful campaign into Nubia lands. He also established good diplomatic relations with the Syrian Kingdom of Mitanni. The well trained Egyptian Army was second to none in the ancient world, and with time, a severe shortage of enemies, willing to face inevitable defeat made it virtually impossible for Amenhotep and other leaders who followed thereafter to enjoy the sort of victorious campaign which had enhanced the reputation of the 18th dynasty kings.

Further to this, the predictable behavior of River Nile and the fertile land around the delta assisted Egypt to become prosperous and a nation on its own right in the annals of history. Agricultural science was advanced and many produce especially grains were grown and produced in vast quantities to feed the nation. This was helpful

in building a formidable economy capable of paying wages of public employees and catering for its urgent needs, and beside this having so many surpluses for brewing beer as the Egyptians celebrated success in times of peace and tranquility. Food shortages became things of the past, surplus food was stored in huge stores for future use especially in times of famine, poor harvest and other natural catastrophes. A highly efficient and disciplined civil service was in place to ensure efficient running of the state and this coupled with a sophisticated judicial system in place, the Egyptians lived in a spectacular society which few people possibly enjoyed during this period.

In addition to this, it should also be noted in ancient Egypt, the king officially headed the army, the priesthood and civil services, relied upon a core of bureaucrats who ran the country on his behalf. Included in the cabinets were men of high births and those of humble origins who had by their exceptional intelligence and ability earned promotion to some of the most influential positions in the land (see Tyldesley 1998:13). Further to that, freedom from extensive and unnecessary wars assisted Egyptian rulers to be more preoccupied with improvement of the lives of their people. They were able to use the vast surplus labor and deploy some of the finest architects and build temples to worship and praise Egyptian gods and pyramids for the burial of its royalty and sovereigns. Monuments were also constructed to signify and keep records of this successful era as other places, far from the centre of ancient Egypt reaped benefits as well from this civilization. For example, the Nubians are variously reported to have received a fair share of the new monuments signaling the advance of the new civilization on the making without so much discrimination. This clearly shows the
respect of other people who may be considered to be Egyptian then. At this time, Egypt became an undisputed universal center of excellence and civility. Its royal court was acknowledged as the epitome of sophisticated luxury combined with prosperity. All foreigners wished to emulate the Egyptians—and the Egyptians themselves were firmly convinced of their own cultural superiority. No Egyptian was likely to see a foreign education as in any way beneficial to an Egyptian prince, and the Egyptian royal sons did not enjoy the ancient equivalent of the Grand Tour.  

From ancient studies, Egypt became one united country by around 3000 B.C., under the first Pharaoh called Narmer (Menes). This just before Nefertiti came into the scene. However, during the early years of this century, Queen Nefertiti for yet unexplained reasons disappeared from records of history until one German excavator stumbled across a unique royal treasure of an Egyptian crowned Queen. On 6 December 1912 the bust of Nefertiti was excavated in the workshop of the sculptor Thutmose together with some unfinished portrait busts of the Queen Nefertiti. As it was usual at that time the finds were divided between Egypt and the foreign holder of the excavation licence. In this partition the painted bust of Nefertiti was part of the German share. The bust was shipped to Germany, given to the wealthy wholesale merchant James Simon (1851-1932). Sir Flinders Petrie found remains of a city believed to have once been greatly decorated but later razed to ground. The pharaoh of the city is now

91 See Joyce Tyldesley., Nefertiti, p.37.
known to have been Akhenaten—the husband to crowned Queen Nefertiti as carvings discovered have shown. The statue head has enabled the world to see Nefertiti in a way that describes her as no world could. (See Tyldesley, 1998:7).

For many decades, many pictures and artifacts attributed to Nefertiti have been unearthed. These new discoveries have revealed her regal, religious and family life possibly more than any other queen of Egypt. Nevertheless, unusual for the life of such a great personality, who has subjected human minds into endless discussions debates, not so much to date is known of her early childhood and youthful life. Yet this journey could have also played a central role in her rise from obscurity to become one of the greatest women in ancient civilization. Therefore, to date, the world is still pondering the exact details about the lineage of this great African ancient ruler. Julia Samson explained that:

One account suggests that she was daughter of a provincial nobility and part of a small harem given to the boy Ramses by his father, Seti I. The second, a more likely account suggests that Queen Nefertiti was Ramses’ own sister, the daughter of Queen Tuaa. Nevertheless, one thing which many historians tend to agree on is that Nefertiti’s portraits present to the world, a woman of graceful bearing and the tall, supple elegance of the African race. Her husband thought of her (as evident in inscriptions) as “possessed of charm”; and “sweet of love” and
expressed “one is happy to hear her voice” and she “contents” the Aten with sweet voice.”

Clearly Nefertiti was a woman of distinction and honor. Nefertiti’s full name was Nefernefruaten-Nefertiti. Most writers use the short name “Nefertiti” because that is the name she is well known with and many people tend to comprehend. From the date her remains were discovered and shipped to Germany, a protracted struggle to return her remains to Egypt continues. Most notably, Dr. Kurt G. Siehr Ph.D. (Zürich) writes that even attempt by Egypt in 1929 to exchange valuable antiquities in exchange for the return of Nefertiti was declined by Germany in 1930. Also in 1933 when German diplomats and politicians wanted to return the bust, Hitler declined to do it.

Notwithstanding the above, historians now tell us that during the 18th dynasty, women in Egypt enjoyed equality under the law and had similar privileges like men. They were permitted to own property, work outside home and take legal actions and live alone without the protection of men. The “Great Wives” of the Pharaoh for instance, had their own palaces. In the days of pyramid builders, they each had their own pyramid as a tomb. The famous Queen Hetephres (Hetep-heres), daughter of a pharaoh, wife of a pharaoh and mother of Pharaoh Cheops built the largest pyramid known at around 2,500 B.C. The pyramid had beautiful gold embellished furniture in

93 Julia Samson, p. 12
her palaces and her gold and silver jewels were exquisitely patterned with inlays of lapis lazuli, turquoise and carnelian (see Joyce Tyldesley (1998:3). It is also historically significant to note that in one of the many portraits of Nefertiti, she is noted to have abandoned the traditional women’s role in the temple of making music by ringing a sistrum, a hand-sized metal musical rattle. Instead she is seen raising her arms to God, as Akhenaten does, and offers a model of Maat, the goddess of “truth” and ‘rightness’ which is traditionally a king’s offering in a temple.

Everywhere in historical records, we see Nefertiti’s exquisite roles and accomplishments described with such fineness incomparable to no any other women in antiquity in Africa or in any other part of the world. Further to that, Queen Nefertiti somersaulted to assume positions and performed functions which were ordinarily not traditional for women in ancient Egyptian society. Her heroic posture in portraits left for history confirms this. For example, Nefertiti as a regal and sovereign leader of ancient Egypt is seen assuming the role of pharaonic “warrior” king just before her journey to Thebes, and a similar role was noticed while at Amarna. These have provided unequivocal and credible evidence to many researchers to conclude that Queen Nefertiti was more than an ordinary queen.

As ancient Egyptian social lives have been understood she was a ‘warrior king’ who subdued and neutralized her enemies as her army triumphed against the enemies of her people. Only pharaohs were ever found pictured in this conqueror’s role during

95 Julia Samson, p.19
the ancient Egyptian time. While in contrast, in another picture she is shown wearing a long dress and a disc and plumes on her head. The Great Queen Ty, her mother in-law was shown as a sphinx, a human-headed lioness couchant, but holding up the name of her husband the Pharaoh, and is not appearing in the subjugating roles of a pharaoh herself. 96 This kingly image clearly shows Nefertiti, not in battle attire but as a sovereign ruler of the vast ancient civilization situated in Africa, in Egypt.

Nefertiti and Akhenaten simplified and ushered in a religious revolution in Egypt. At no other time did anything approach the utter simplification of one creator as introduced by Akhenaten and Nefertiti, in place of the massive complexities that had gone before and followed after. Their thought was an intellectual break-through; a peak of clarity which rose above the lowlands of superstitions that had existed until then. They swept aside all but the sun disc as a sole creator, they revered the attributes of the goddess Maat, a woman who wore an upright feather in her head-dress, and she was often invoked by them for her element of truth, rightness and order. But these were moral concepts rather than religious benefits to be gained from the deity to whom one applied for life and protection. There is no sign in the Amarna royal tomb of the underworld Osiris-rites, i.e. the ritual of the next world. But, there was complete freedom for people to worship their gods of old. There was toleration for all gods

except the powerful Amen-of-Thebes who is rarely found amongst the multiplicity of deities reproduced by the people of Amarna⁹⁷.

So, the “Great Eighteen Dynasty” began under the most favorable circumstances, for one of the great black queens of Egypt, Nefertiti and her equally famous husband, Ahmose I, heading the dynasty. As was the custom, she had been named after the distinguished queen that had preceded her. None of them, however, ranked near Nefertiti of Eighteenth dynasty in active participation and leadership in national affairs. She helped her son, Amenhotep, in the great work of national reconstruction. If she did not reach the height of the greatest black queen of Egypt, Hatshepsut, it was only because the latter was a queen absolute,⁹⁸ Chancellor William wrote in the pages of one of his most important work- the Destruction of Black Civilization, published by the Third World press in Illinois.

5.2 Queen Hatshepsut: The Woman King of Egypt

From many writings and other scientific discoveries which emerged during recent decades, there is little doubt that Egypt was the land where humanity first witnessed a very advanced civilization in real terms. Egypt had one of most powerful and formidable kings during ancient times comparable to no other civilization on this planet before. Notwithstanding that, one thing which continues to baffle the world of

---

⁹⁷ Julia Samson, p.27.

academia is that at its height of power and glory, when the Egyptian empire covered a wide area of land from the north, right into the Middle East, and to the South, into Nubia, it was ruled by a woman. Queen Hatshepsut, a daughter to Pharaoh Thutmose I ruled this powerful empire and today, only few scholars can deny that she was one of the most extraordinary women in the ancient world and whose signature into human history will continue to stir debates and critical discussions.

As pointed earlier, when we talk about queens of Egypt, many people imagine that they were just another set of princesses more or less lower in ranks than the queen of England whom they are accustomed to. However, Egypt had many queens in the proper senses of the word. These queens had proper protocol like any other Kings in ancient Egypt. For example, the years of their reign were counted from a coronation which was no less solemn than that of a pharaoh. Three of such queens were Queen Nitocris who ends dynasty VI, Queen Sebeknofrure who ended dynasty xii and Hatshepsut who left to humanity an imperishable monument which is justly called the ‘Sublime of Sublimes’, the temple of Der el-Bahri99 (Pierre Montet: 1968:81).

On his death, Tuthmose left a big problem for Egyptians to sort out. His daughter Hatshepsut was by his first wife; his eldest son, Tuthmose II, was by the second wife, and he began to rule when Tuthmose I died not long before 1500. Further to this, in line with the Egyptian royal custom the two children had joined in a philadelphic marriage. They had a daughter, and he had a son by a minor wife; so those

two married also. Tuthmose II scratched out a short career for himself, though he was dominated by his sister’s wife, Hatshepsut; he died about 1500 years after the usual expedition to Nubia. That left Hatshepsut as “Royal Widow” but not as the mother of the next pharaoh, her late husband’s young son Tuthmose III, by a different wife (Richard Sullivan 1986:74).

Prince Tuthmose was very young to rule and despite the powerful existence party asserting his right, he came to the throne only as a lesser partner of the royal daughter, the royal wife Hatshepsut whose claim was also strong for she was the daughter of the king. Before many years, Hatshepsut had assumed the Double Crown and was no longer merely a queen as Nitocris and Sebeknofrure had been. As her Horus name she took Usert-Kau, mighty in kas; as Vulture-Cobra, Uadjit-Repet, which means fresh in years; as Golden Horus, Netert-khau, divine in apparitions. To consolidate her claims, Hatshepsut made use of a theory which was advanced by some theologian of the old kingdom. She maintained that her father, Tuthmose I had intended her to reign. However this was not enough, on the walls of her temple “Sublimes of Sublimes,” she had all her monuments in this sacred drama recorded. Amun-Re, the King of gods, tells all the gods of the Great Enneade of his intention to give sovereignty to Egypt.

102 C. Desroches-Noblecourt, Deux grands obelisques precieux d’un sanctuaire a Karnak, Rev. d’Egypt., VIII, 47.
Although women in the ancient Egyptian kingdom assumed the culture premier office, with its aura of divinity, the reign and the story of Queen Hatshepsut was a different one. She was a formidable queen and ruled as king as any other Egyptian king before her. Further to this, she abandoned most duties and royalties associated with being a queen. Chancellor William (1987: 109) also further observed that:

Queen Hatshepsut, daughter of Thutmose I was indeed a “man” in many of her aggressive and unyielding characteristics as a ruler. As a regent for Thutmose II, she tended to be an absolute ruler and, by expertly relying on her ‘feminine charms’, she was able to have her own way without the real check by the Council, something few Africa Kings could do successfully. But it was not all due to ‘feminine charms’, perhaps not at all. For Hatshepsut was in fact, one of the most brilliant minds that ever ascended the throne of a nation during ancient civilization. Her reign was in two parts, one as a regent and the other as a reigning queen in her own right. There was actually no difference, for Thutmose II was too young to count. Her success on most of these fronts made her one of the giants of the race Chancellor Williams concluded.103

Even before becoming the legal ruler, she was able to implement policies which were popular in her minds and dearest to all other great African leaders. Hatshepsut reorganized and strengthened the country’s national defense before leading armies into

Nubian and deploying her fleet deep inside the land of the Punt (present day Eritrea). Further to this and initiated and completed successfully construction of some of the most spectacular projects in the ancient times. Her temple at Deir el-Bahri remains the greatest surviving monument to a woman in antiquity. Yet to legitimize her position, Hatshepsut also took a male title, dressed as a man and proclaimed herself as a ‘King.’

Further to this as one of the greatest builders in one of the greatest Egyptian dynasties, she raised and renovated temples and shrines from the Sinai to Nubia. The four granite obelisks she erected at the vast temple of the great god Amun at Karnak were among the most magnificent ever constructed. She also assembled a great navy which she employed to advance her wishes especially in expanding the economy and protect her people against the enemy of Egypt during period of wartime. During her reign, Egypt witnessed a relative period of stability, strength and prosperity. As a great leader, a builder and shrewd planner, Hatshepsut recognized that she would not accomplish much alone. She therefore assembled a team of eminent advisors and was greatly assisted by many loyal officials occupying various positions of responsibilities in the courts, civil service, and the military. The high priests, including Hapuseneb, the high priest of Amon and the principal state god of Egypt and the viceroy and governor of Nubiare worth mentioning. Working together with her people as a sovereign leader, Hatshepsut expanded trade and improved the agricultural sectors aswell. One of the

\[^{104}\text{Iris Berger and E. Frances White “Women in Sub-Saharan Africa- Restoring Women to History” Indiana University Press, 1999, p. 10.}\]

most notable events during the reign of Hatshepsut was an expedition to the land of the Punt (present day Eritrea)—the only foreign land Egyptians did not speak of insultingly—it corresponded to the coastal land of the present day Somali and was the source of perfumes and incense that the Egyptians considered essential to their personal adornment and the worship of their gods.  

Chapter 6

6 Discussions and Conclusions

From this study, one thing can be established; that at antiquity, women were a major player in shaping African civilization. In most aspects of lives, Black women were present and made huge contributions to the societies they were blessed to live in. African women were visible. As we analyze the roles and contributions of Black women during the early times, it is imperative to recognize that we are talking about what happened thousands of years ago. This will enable a critical, fair and comprehensive comparative analysis of the events and issues. In addition to this, contemporary interpretations of these issues become also possible.

The cases of Queen Nefertiti and Queen Hatshepsut provide interesting examples for discussions and also raise several questions as well. For example, what propelled women like Nefertiti and Hatshepsut to become the powerful political, spiritual and military leaders at the dawn of human civilization? Today, as mentioned in chapter one, why is it that in recent African history, only one Black woman has ever managed to become a Head of State in Africa yet the first African country attained independence in 1957? And finally, what was present in antiquity and absent now that could explain the difficulties of women’s rise to positions of prominence in Africa today? Here, I also want to point out that Galbraith Welch (1965), in *Africa: Before They Came* for instance tells us that a considerable number of female individuals survived in Africa’s history, a far larger proportion than is carried along in our own—Europe’s and
America. Queen Nefertiti and Queen Hatshepsut, were ancients Black leaders and rulers as well. I should also add that these two Black leaders, who continue to capture the world’s intellectual thoughts, did not somersault and become historical phenomenon miraculously but the social structures then, built and erected overtime by the early people in Africa were on their side. Nevertheless, modern writers tend to be occupied only with their beauty and tend to ignore their achievements and the complex road that led them to be situated at the very centre of human advancements.

In this thesis, I argue that to answer the above mentioned question, it is important to examine how ancient Black people theorized the world in which they lived at the early civilization and before the arrival of slave trade and colonialism so that we understand the pathway that lead early Black people to this advanced civilization. Here, I must state that the impact and consequences of slave traders, colonialism and their agencies cannot be ignored when explaining the genesis of the wrongs against Black women. I will examine and summarize this under three broad descriptors, that is to say spirituality, colonialism, politics and women, while also looking at their impact on sex and gender roles. A critical understanding of these main areas will therefore enable us to examine and to interrogate and find out what went wrong in the preceding centuries of wrongs, where we find Black women facing many new painful experiences, which severally led to changes and reduction in roles in everyday lives of their people.

The reasons for the rise to prominence of Queen Hatshepsut and Queen Nefertiti can partly be traced and explained by examining ancient African spirituality and wisdoms. Recent discoveries, aided by improvement in scientific and anthropological research has given some new insights in this area. Today, we have been informed that Queen Hatshepsut and Queen Nefertiti were amongst others, great spiritual leaders, with some scholars suggesting that they could even have been worshipped. Further to this, there is little debate that ancient Black people were highly spiritual people. African spirituality and wisdoms guided most of their day today lives. In most cases, politics was not separated from spirituality. This could have aided many women to ascend to prominence and claim power. We find this equally true to many women in later African civilization. This therefore invites discussion on how ancient Black people understood their spiritual world, the world which produced many great Black women leaders whose grandeur and inputs in human advancements continue to capture and subject history to endless enquiries. A quick digression and excursion into how the Black people produced, understood and utilized spirituality as a tool for human advancement is therefore vital in this discussion.

From the inception of human civilization, Sonia Sanchez (1984:49), tells us in *Black Women in Antiquity* that the world possessed two minds. These two competing versions attempted to explain the aims and purpose of men and women and the nature of human happiness. Sonia Sanchez explains that the first version saw the *raison d’être* of human civilization as the bringing of Divine life into human life or transmigration of Divine mentality into human society. Under this blueprint, human civilization was
theocratic. Therefore, governments were theocratic institutions presided over by royal priesthoods, religious leaders or Pharaohs (“house of Divine”). This blueprint for human civilization was practiced among others by the ancient black people of Egypt and it informed their understanding of the world in which they shared with other beings. It is here we find women and men being considered as equal and full spiritual beings hence, full partners of civilization as well.

In addition, this vision has one important aspect, crucial in understanding relationships in the ancient world in Africa. Accordingly, it suggested that it’s the women who housed the divine. The implication of this is that women were the repositories civilization and enlightenments; therefore women became the guardians of culture, science, industry, and government in human communities in ancient Africa. This was the vision that guided most of the ancient black people and today, a few African societies still hold it but fewer numbers acknowledged and put it into practices in their everyday relationships with all other beings. On the other hand, Sonia Sanchez also pointed out that as the idea explaining the nature of human life was developing in ancient black civilization, another competing one was also emerging elsewhere. But in this thought, man was primarily considered to be a material entity. Here, man’s happiness is measured by the ability to acquire and maintain a material heaven (wealth and pleasures) as I earlier also mentioned before.

We therefore find that in the ancient African empirical philosophical spiritual thoughts, which also shaped their idea of the purpose of leadership, sex and gender
relations, women were considered equal to men and this wisdom was a powerful factor which certainly assisted to propel many women into positions of honor and excellence in a significant way. Black women were generally engaged in the spiritual lives and wellbeing of their people. Ancient Black people were highly spiritual people as mentioned before. Beside this, women were allowed to hold crucial spiritual positions including leading worships and evoking divine blessings. Today, whereas most modern writers acknowledge this fact, they nevertheless, always tend to reduce and sublime these important contributions of Black women by symbolizing that they were just “King Consorts” hence trivializing or dismissing their significance. But the question still remains; how can a person with such enormous responsibilities be dismissed as a mere consort? This viewpoint, together with the equalization of the understanding of Black Queenship within Western contextualization, has seriously damaged and caused confusion in the sphere of knowledge construction and imagination especially in areas of explaining gender roles in contemporary Africa. The interpretation and understanding of the roles and contributions of Black women in early African history has generally been misrepresented and is devoid of known facts and practices.

Further to this, it is clear that both Hatshepsut and Nefertiti stand alone, as two of the finest political and military leaders in the world at the dawn of human civilization. Their role in advancing a collective social entrepreneurship for their people also clearly illustrates the visibility and the presence of Black women in these critical areas. Also, here we find two accomplished and consummate Black women, sovereign monarchs, with special status, and sometimes enjoying godly status and idolized by the
people they led and those far away from the epicenter of their authority. Examples of such influential women are very rare to find in any other part of the world during antiquity. For example, recently the Discovery Channel announced and confirmed to the world audience that Nefertiti was for over a decade, the most influential woman in Egypt and she was held in godlike reverence by her people. Her beauty was legendary and her image adorned buildings and monuments all over Egypt.108 Welch, (1965) also pointed out that in Africa; “women were like gods because they bear children” and “an African never forget woman’s almost divine function.”109 This ancient wisdom helped significantly in shaping and balancing the distribution of functions in those society and we see clearly in both the journeys of Queen Nefertiti and Hatshepsut being facilitated by this as well.

This is contrary to the experience of women in colonial and post colonial Africa. There is abundant evidence to show that women’s status in today’s Africa is lower compared to the early African civilization. Therefore, I further present the explanation for women’s reduced status in Africa to be connected and also traceable to both European and Arabic imperial impositions. Central to this thesis is colonialism and colonial education which helped to consolidate patriarchal relationships and eventually the domestication of African women as men’s servants and housewives to say but the least.

Elsewhere, Stephen McCarthy, 1994 commenting on pre-colonial Africa observed that the pre-colonial society was small in scale, geographically dispersed but strong and resilient, surviving more or less unchanged for over a thousand years. Nevertheless, the arrival and establishment of colonialism had far reaching consequences on the colonized bodies. In Africa, there were many fundamental changes which occurred after the advent of colonialism and their prior predecessors, the slave traders. V. Y. Mudibe (1988:1) in the *Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* observed that European colonialists wasted no time to organize and transform non-European areas into European constructs. African people unfortunately did not survive this obnoxious agenda whose aim included infusing Western knowledge, consciousness and ways of life. Non Western values and knowledge was the primary target and they became victims of that agenda. Within this prognosis and parameter of understanding phenomena, indigeneity was accused and summarily dismissed under the false doctrine of “primitivity” and this had to be erased if the colonized people were to enter and experience a new wave of civilization. To achieve this, efforts were made to teach new manners to the African which required them to forget their past consciousness and adopt the new hybrids of imperial constructs. P. Smith, (1964:4), an early scholar for example claimed that the description of the past, conscious or

---


unconscious is one of the distinguishing elements of what we call, and perhaps rather loosely refer to as “Western Civilization” and because of this, he declared that the non-western cultures, with the exception of the Hebrews have generally been deficient in “historical consciousness.”¹¹² Therefore, scholars like Smith bred and justified Western arrogance towards African people and also assisted in undervaluing and slaughtering non-European based knowledge and values. Most importantly, they helped to plant a new dilemma that would engulf and change male and female gender relations in Africa because their messages, like a tidal waves, twirled like a tsunami swallowing the entire continent and left devastation which at first, appears to be only a terrible tragedy but later, it turned-out to be a continental catastrophe. Their writings assisted in organizing how education was to be carried out in Africa and had significant impact on gender relations as original African traditional consciousness of defining these relations got wrinkled and ravaged during the long period of active imperialism.

Besides this, its also worth nothing that in Africa, colonial education had limited objectives but one of the most important aims was not only to corrupt and dent indigenous African perspicuity, acumens and sensibilities but also to crowd its people with abnormal complexes, a process that was deliberately designed to help dissolve the “Africanness” in them so as to launch the colonized subjects toward a new beginning. This education system over time alienated and disrupted their historical constructs and imaginations. It also made some of the African people forget their past on the way of

adopting these new thinking as noted before. Colonial education thus silently denied African people the necessary tools that are required to visualize their past as it only “empowered” its people to gaze at and reject their “maimed” past while blaming themselves, or their ancestors and Africa as well, for their predicament.

In the book, How Europe Underdeveloped Africa, W. Rodney, (1981) explains that the most crucial aspect of pre-colonial African education was its relevance to the Africans in sharp contrast with the education which was later introduced during the colonial encounter. The main purpose of this later education was to train Africans to participate in the domination and exploitation of the continent as a whole while laying a foundation for the subordination of its people hence creating mental confusion and aiding the development of underdevelopment.113 True, after the end of slavery and especially during colonialism, several attempts were made by various imperial agencies. However the irrelevancy of the colonial syllabi can also not be overstated in this discussion since it did little to empower the women who proportionately suffered most during the sad era.

In Africa, at a tender age, children in primary schools begin to consume European myths, history, literature, religion, etc, and the studies necessary for understanding themselves and interpreting their past is pushed outside the confines of formal schooling. This education unfortunately did not go with the exit of colonial imperial machines. In his book Africa’s Cultural Revolution, Okot p’Bitek, (1973, 197) for

example recalled how Kenya’s Madaraka (independence) day celebration was ruined for him when a male teacher’s college choir sang to the jubilant crowds:

*Bobby Shaftoe’s gone to sea*

*Silver buckles on his knee*

*He’ll come back and marry me,*

*Bonny Booby Shaftoe.* (see p’ Bitek, 1973)

Okot noted that when he asked the singers who Bobby Shaftoe was, none of the students knew. When he further interrogated why Mr. Bobby Shaftoe should be publicly praised on a Kenyan National Day, a day when Kenyan people join together to celebrate becoming free at last from the colonial rule, the students responded that they just sang it! Finally when he insisted for explanations as to how and why they could enjoy singing about a person they didn’t know and whose contribution to Kenya was nil, they kept silent. What is a silver buckle? No answer. How can Bobby Shaftoe marry a male student when he came back from the sea? They walked away, some of them giggling!

Apart from teaching a lot of useless things in colonial schools, one other renowned fascia that besieged this education was its discriminatory and biased policies towards women from its very beginning. That education was so notorious and many people still remember its versatility in causing disorder and widening the gender gap between males and females in Africa. Here, I should observer further that colonial

---

governments, almost everywhere in Africa gave priority to the education of the male students especially the sons of chiefs and their local collaborators. Religious groups were part of this grand design and facilitated these agenda without hesitation. For example, the Christian churches are well known for this for they first gave preference to boys because of the need to have personnel to carry out the mission of evangelization. Later, missionaries realized that some women needed to be educated so that the educated men could find right Christian wives. P’ Bitek presents the frustration of African women in the *Song of Lawino* thus:

Husband, now you despise me
Now you treat me with spite
And say I have inherited the stupidity of my aunt;
Son of the chief,
Now you compare me
With the rubbish in the rubbish pit,
You say you no longer want me
Because I am like things left behind,
In the deserted homestead!

*****

You insult me
You laugh at me

---

You say I do not know the letter A
Because I have not been to school
And I have not been baptized
You compare me with a little dog,
A puppy!

*****

My friend, the age-mate of my brother
Take care,
Take care of your tongue,
Be careful what your lips say.
First take a deep look, brother…

*****

Listen Ocol, you are a son of a chief,
Leave foolish behaviours to little children,
It’s not right that you should be laughed at in a song!

*****

Stop despising people
As if you were a little foolish man,
Stop treating me like a salt-less ash*116

*****

---


* Salt also called ‘Kado Atwono’ is extracted from remains of some selected plants and dung of domestic animals. It is manufactured by putting the ash into a container, with tinny holes at the bottom to filter after water is poured on the ash. The filtered salty water is then collected in another container placed below. The remains of the process is what is referred to a ‘useless salt less ash and is normally thrown away on footpath and people tread on it (See p’ Bitek, 1966)

As I noted earlier, to date, colonial education in Africa and its emphasis on Eurocentric paradigms in the educational curriculum is as intact as it were at the onset of colonialism with a few countries only subjecting them to some minor modifications.

Like in the western world, the concept of education in most African countries has also for long been limited to the process of going through the formal schooling system (Folson, 1995) and that this is appraised by how propitiously one could mimic and employ it to profit from the economy which is generally demand inspired. This education over the years, recognized Eurocentric acquaintance as the only valid ways of knowing things and repudiated any other models of knowledge as inept, naïve, estranged or just deficient (Anazaldua, 1990 & Colins 1991). Because of this, African based knowledge, which centered on the principles and theories expounded in Afrocentricity were shelved and knowledge production became a monopolized industry where ordinary people and their experience were excluded (Wane 2000: 55). Achievements of great women like Queen Nefertiti and Queen Hatshepsut were nowhere in the new colonial syllabi. Therefore, girls in Africa had to spend years learning how to be good wives instead of learning from magnificent examples set in the past and become great leaders. The African girl-child consequently could not locate any examples to stimulate and inspire their minds beyond fulfilling the purpose of colonial education, which in fact was designed to boost their subordination and domesticating, thereby transforming them to be nice household servants or excellent wives.
The colonial period was therefore a very difficult era particularly for African women. Heinrich Loth, (1987) in a comparative analysis of the rights of women and men in the book *Women in Ancient Africa* asserted that the emergence of the Dark Continent as a supplier of goods and raw materials, the phenomenon of migrant labour, and the spread of the export-orientated economies, all served to undermine the traditional system of work relations and family life. The subordination of women to men was gradually consolidated, even if some of their rights were retained in some areas right down to the 19th and 20th centuries. Therefore, colonial policies greatly assisted and lubricated the process of the disempowerment of women as new sets of sex and gender roles and relationships were initiated in Africa.

It is also significant to point out that recent research has established a strong positive correlation between colonialism and the number of women in political positions. For example, Melanie M. Huges of Department of Sociology (Ohio State University) using a multivariate regression examined the continuing effect of colonial ties on the degree of gender equality in 103 national legislatures. These legislatures are in countries with histories of dominance by at least one of the five colonial regimes: Belgium, France, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom. She reported in *The Continuing Importance of History: the Residual Effects of Colonialism on Women’s parliamentary Participations* that:

---

Across many parts of the world, colonial domination profoundly altered men and women’s relative power... I find that the current levels of women’s parliamentary representation vary systematically across the colonies of different regimes. Those countries with the lowest levels of female access to power are the former colonies of the imperial powers with the fewest women in parliament...While colonialism may now be a part of history, colonial linkages remain important to women’s representation in national legislatures today.  

Notwithstanding the above, examples of many women who occupied prime positions of leadership in ancient African history especially during antiquity has persuaded me to conclude that during African early civilization, women enjoyed a greater status and equally had greater access to political, social and economic currencies. The continuing impacts of slavery and colonization on re-shaping and redefining access to all these resources cannot therefore be minimized. However, several attempts have been made to undermine these facts by presenting misleading information to the world. Some early and casual Europeans observers and travelers were superb in this industry of half truths. For example, Lott, 1987 tells us that Abbe Demanet, after his journey to Africa simply reported that women built the huts, worked in the fields, pounded the rice and corn and did the cooking while the men attended the council meetings, sat and drunk beer together, waged wars, went hunting and fishing.

---

otherwise lazed around, allowing their “female staff” to serve them. This simplistic specie of conjecture were commonly given to elucidate the division of labour which existed in pre-colonial Africa without serious attempt to understand the complexities in African male and gender relationships first. Loth, (1987) also explained that this sort of generalization is not, however upheld by facts and added that the old travel account contains many reports which lead to quite different conclusions.”

Finally, apart from colonialism disrupting and dislocating African ways of life as noted above, the re-alignments of male and female roles to suit colonial arrangement and machines cannot go without being mentioned. Here we realize that though colonialism was oppressive to all, they nevertheless introduced and promoted a system that placed most of the economic resources in the hands of men. And since access to economic resources has a direct link to political power women suffered greatly. This was not the case in the early Egyptian society. For example, Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, writing about events in the nineteen-century Egypt said that one must perforce reject the stereotype of harem as a warm cocoon and come to regard it simply as a microcosm of upper-class Egyptian society, a society in which women felt at ease and which they controlled. I should also emphasize that the colonial period was a time marked with deformation of African cultural mosaic. T.O Ranger observed that power was used to

---

force Africans in distorting identities. But on another hand, power relations distorted colonial social sciences thereby rendering it incapable of doing more than reflecting colonial constructions. In this new model of power relations in Africa, women lost dearly in the arrangement. Men were favoured by most colonial agencies, hence became pseudo beneficiary of European imperialism in many ways.

However, Kabira & Nzioki, (1983) in Celebrating African Women’s Resistance. A Case study of women’s Groups Movement in Kenya tended to minimise the contributions of systems outside Africa in explaining the root causes of women’s oppression in the continent. For example they excuse colonialism, imperialism, communists, apartheid, capitalism and other evils for the heavy under representation of women in the political life and most decision making mechanism. To them, the policies for marginalization of women are deeply rooted in African traditions. They cite some present traditional practices in Africa, like in Masaailand as an example. Here, they noted concrete wealth for men (imasaa) includes wives and children; cattle, goats and sheep; household utensils, furniture, ornaments and money (Were, 1988: 37). However, though current practices in Masaai tend to treat women as property as the writer narrated correctly, I argue that this kind of behavior is not part of original African traditional cultural practices and beliefs. Secondly, I should also emphasize that the reading and examination of African traditional cultural practices should not begin with the entry of

slavery and imperialism; on the contrary it must go further and beyond so as to exclude the impacts of slavery and imperialism so as to understand this mess. Also, through lengthening the scope of the enquiry, it becomes possible to analyze and separate what constitutes, from what is not a genuine African traditional practice. Likewise, there is almost no evidence that women were treated like property in Africa and records which suggest that and such practices were common before the age of slavery and imperialism. On the contrary, in her article, Why do Housewives continue to be Created in the Third world too? Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen clearly explained that:

“...the housewife, as we know her today, emerged in the First World during the 19th century. She is the result of a protracted historical process comparable with and closely related to that of proletarianization...housework as performed by housewives does not represent a set of tasks which women have always carried out because of some natural predisposition, but is the product of a particular history. Nor did the housewife emerge, as it were, spontaneously, in response to the dictates of an economic system. She was created- by the Church, through legislation, medicine and the organization of the workforce (protective legislation, the ‘family wage’).”

The Masai and other present cultures in Africa with such kind of belief should therefore interrogate their mind and find out where they got this horrible idea that

children and women are legitimate men’s property. This is equally true with the Teso’s myth mentioned earlier. There is no evidence to suggest that gardens used to dig it and that ancient Black before the 15th century taught their people these strange and ludicrous “abnormals.”

Further to this, Kabira & Nzioki, (1983) also give examples of African myths to explain the origin of women oppression in Africa. Some writers also continue to use them to argue their case that the subordination and domestication of African women are solidly entrenched in African traditions and culture. One Kikuyu myth alludes:

How long ago, women used to rule and were very cruel in their rule. They made men do all the agricultural work, herd cattle, do all the housework and look after babies. They treated men like slaves and their rule was generally tyrannical. Men could not bear it anymore. They conspired to make all women pregnant and in their period of weakness, overthrew their rule and since then, the Agikuyu have lived “in peace and harmony.”123

So consequently, after the revolts succeed, polygamy replaced polyandry according to the Kikuyu.124 While another one, telling us how women annoyed the almighty god and brought suffering our world is sometime quoted as well. According to this myth, the

Itesot women are blamed for making god getting so upset with human being and decided that human will have to work and fend for him or herself. It briefly states that “In the past, land used to cultivate itself until a newly married woman who wanted to show off to others decided she should go ahead and dig. This act was seen as the reason why human beings have to toil.”\textsuperscript{125} We therefore find women being blamed for being the cause of human suffering and misery. And this is why men today had to dig their gardens which were previously cultivated free of charge by god.

In response, I want to point out that the origins of these funny myths are very difficult to trace but one approximation which may be true is that they were invented between the fifteenth and eighteen century as reactions to horror and suffering experienced in African communities due to the poignant and painful period of human trade. It is also important to note that most of these absurd myths against women were absent in the records of the early Egyptian, Ethiopian civilizations and other Black civilizations. Further to this, these mythologies were not widely spread among the Black Africans and obviously did not capture the minds of many sane African. Nevertheless, they cannot be discounted and dismissed altogether. As mentioned earlier, their origins to date remain suspect. One other probable explanation is that these myths could have emerged or reinforced due to colonial stress since it was most prevalent during the period of imposition of forced labour in colonial Africa. Therefore

it is likely that they were invented by lazy Black men, who dreaded cultivations. It is also possible that it was attempts by selfish men to legitimize and explain the exclusion and exploitation of women from effective decision and alienate them from participating in economic and political decisions with the consolidation of patriarchy in African communities in the later years.

In conclusion, it is imperative that modern Africa needs to seriously address issues surrounding sex-gender relationships. This can be done by looking at examples from earlier civilizations of the Black people. The stories of both Queen Hatshepsut and Queen Nefertiti are relevant. Here, I should also add that sex-gender relationship as relates to the economic and political empowerment should be of primary concern. This study, therefore suggests Black women in antiquity did better in areas of leadership. We are informed of this and the changes which consumed the Black people in the later centuries. W. M. Kabira & E. A. Nzioki, (1993:13) rightly observed that the “traditional” ownership of inheritance patterns which seemed to appeal to many people in Africa today should be reformed with deliberate affirmative action. Nevertheless, despite its shortcomings, changing this incredulous and problematic “traditional” land ownership of resources continue to receive hostility from the male dominated society in Africa yet women in Africa produce food. This hostility has no basis although W. M. Kabira & E. A. Nzioki, (1993) chose to label it as being “traditional” in African contextualization. However, I want to point out that this so called “traditional” practice like patriarchy, are actually modern “traditional” constructs for it goes against Afrocentric epistemologies which ancient Black people learned. Therefore, the issue of access, rights
and the control of primary resources for production by women is a crucial part of the equation that needs first to be resolved if we are to talk seriously about sustainable development in Africa and fulfill the dream of an African renaissance in the 21st century. The day of perpetual male dominance in the social and political and economic dimensions of human lives are over and is not a thing for the twenty first century. A new relationship must be built to ensure that Africa positions herself in a new age, which of course is full of numerous challenges.

Black people need also to reflect back and adopt ancient wisdoms which one time made them the most prosperous people on earth. Here, I am principally concerned with Afrocentric teachings blended with Black Feminists’ thoughts. These epistemes will provide another milestone in re-addressing the current imbalances in sex-gender relationship in the continent. Further to this, it’s important to recognize that in Afrocentric teachings, women are never Black men’s competitors and wives as it is imagined and practice today in most communities in Africa. On the contrary, Black women instrumentality in shaping human civilization from time immemorial is fully recognized and is rewarded like men. Women from time immemorial have been the Black man’s closest ally in breaking the cycle of oppression and loosening the yoke of imperial bondage. Therefore, the fear of the rise of women to positions of authority has no legitimacy since it is not supported by any solid facts in history. It is worth nothing that patriarchal relations still govern the economic behavior of most rural households. Men controlled and managed most agricultural resources: land, livestock, export crops, tools, and means of transport, purchased inputs, credits, and so forth. Men kept the
proceeds of most of the lucrative crops, and off-farm activities under their own control, but still expected their wives’ food crops and small cash earnings to be sufficient to meet most of the family’s daily consumption needs.  

The low representation of women in decision making positions, the tokenist and welfare approach when attending to women’s concerns in Africa must be accepted as one of the most serious failures of contemporary Black people. This is especially so since most future projections- all point to the continued subordination of women and the political legitimacy given to it in spite of lip-service statements such as “women are the builders of homes; “they are the mothers of the Nation”, and “they are the backbone of nation” while condoning the discrimination against them amounts to conspiracy. Therefore, it is important to put in practice an agenda for African liberation which encompasses all beings. For example, African liberators in Mozambique (FRELIMO) clearly stated in their manifesto and plan of action that the emancipation of women should not be seen as an act of charity, the result of humanitarian or compassionate attitudes; the liberation of women is a fundamental necessity for change, the guarantee of its continuity and precondition for its victory. The main objective of any meaningful change is the destruction of the system of exploitation and the building of a new society

126 See African Woman South of the Sahara. Edited by Margaret Jean Hay & Sharon Stichter. Longman Group UK Limited, 1984, p. 21

which releases the potentialities of human beings, reconciling with labor and nature. This is a context within which the question of women’s emancipation arises.\textsuperscript{128}

In early African societies the woman’s “place” was not only with her family; she often ruled nations with unquestionable authority. Many African women were great militarists and on occasion led their armies in battle. Long before they knew of the existence of Europe, the African had produced a way of life where men were secure enough to let women advance as far as their talents would take them (Henrick Clarke, 1984).\textsuperscript{129} Finally, the pre-colonial society was small in scale, geographically dispersed but strong and resilient, surviving more or less unchanged for over a thousand years.

The comparatively short colonial period and the African revolution which swept active colonialism from African soil imposed a superficial modernity in the continent. Most importantly, it left most of the underlying structures of oppression untouched especially those that are directed against women and most often, tradition and culture is evoke in defense of the continuing necessity of obnoxious practices. But the truth informs us that during the rise of great dynasties in Egypt, Kush and Ethiopia, the African women made impressive strides and some became heads of state. Dr. Diop writes that during the entire period of Egypt of the Pharaohs African women enjoyed complete freedom, as opposed to the condition of segregation experienced by the


European women of the classical periods, whether she was Greek or Roman. He further informed us that “no evidence can be found either in literature or in historical records – Egyptian or otherwise – relating to the systematic ill- treatment of African women by their men.”

---

Bibliography


Azikiwe, Zik. *A selection from the Speeches of Nnandi Azikiwe* (Cambridge University Press),

Belle, T. J. (1987). *From Consciousness Raising to Popular Education in Latin America and the*


Chukwuokolo, J. C. *Afrocentrism or Eurocentrism: The dilemma of African Development.*


Burlington: Trinity Press

Croosman, J (2003). *Secular Spiritual Development in Education from International Perspective.*


Dei, G.S.F. (1994). *Afrocentricity: A cornerstone of Pedagogy: Anthropology & Education*


Mudimbe, V.Y. The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge (Bloomington)


