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DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES

**CAN A WOMAN LEAD? UNMASKING CULTURALLY-SANCTIONED GENDER
INEQUALITY AMONG THE LEMBA OF MPOSI AREA, MBERENGWA**

SUBMITTED BY

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ABSTRACT

The research focuses on the history of the Lemba people, the roles played by women in Lemba societal life and the capability of women to lead in Lemba culture as well as their potential to lead. Various techniques were employed to sample the respondents from Mposi area to gather data that was necessary for the study. Interviews and observations were used in this study. The research findings revealed that women have important roles to play in Lemba culture even though they are looked down upon by their male counterparts especially their being treated unfairly in some of the rituals. However, women have potential to lead in Lemba culture since they can perform some duties which are usually ascribed for men only. Lemba women also recommended some ways to combat gender inequality in their culture. It is recommended that the elders in Lemba culture should revisit some issues which lead to gender inequality.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CMH

Cohen Modal Haplotype

ELCZ

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe

LCA

Lemba Cultural Association

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCING THE STUDY

1.0 Area of investigation

This investigation focuses on the history of the Lemba people, the role played by women in their social lives, the capability of women in Lemba culture and practices. It also focuses on unmasking culturally-sanctioned gender inequality among the Lemba people in Chief Mposi in Mberengwa district of Midlands province, Zimbabwe. The study also dwells on how women are treated or viewed in as far as Lemba people are concerned.

Lemba people in Mposi prefer to be called *Vamwenye* and this name came from *Chilemba* which is a Swahili word meaning turbans worn by some of the Bantu people or “*Lembi*” a Bantu word which means “non-African” or respected ones. Lemba may be translated to mean the people who do not want to eat with others (Mativha: 1992). They also want to be identified as *Basena* meaning they are coming from Sena, *Basoni* (this is used as a greeting by Lemba women, *Vhalungu* (Europeans, Non-Negroes or strangers, *Mushavi* (traders) (Von Sicard 1952:140).

Parfitt (1995) points out that they speak Bantu language from their geographical neighbour. However, they have religious practices and beliefs similar to those in Judaism and Islamic religions which the Lemba people note that these beliefs were transmitted orally up to the present generation. However, these beliefs and practices lead these people to look down upon women and they are regarded as the second class citizens by their male counterparts. Women are denied leadership in the public as well as in the private sphere

1.1 Statement of the problem

Women in Lemba culture are not considered as equal to men. Women are undermined and they are not given any first priorities. Their duties are limited. As a result men always lead in different spheres of lives. For instance women in Lemba culture are stereotyped as if they are bearing machines and men have the final say concerning their female counterparts' lives. Women are there to perform minor duties such as cooking, brewing beer, washing to mention but a few. Given some of the duties, women have no role to play in Lemba social lives.

1.2 Aim and Objectives

The aim of the study is to advocate for the equality of men and women in Lemba society. To achieve this aim, the following objectives will be pursued.

1.2.1 To discuss the history of the Lemba people.

1.2.2 To assess the role played by women in the social lives of the Lemba people.

1.2.3 To analyse the capability/potential of women in Lemba culture and to suggest ways to combat the inequality between men and women among the in Lemba.

1.3 Methodology

This dissertation makes use of the phenomenological method and the feministic hermeneutics. Also, data collection instruments like interviews and observations were used.

1.3.1 Phenomenology

The method used in this dissertation is called the phenomenological method. The phenomenological method aims to bracket out all biases, preconceived ideas and prejudices

of the researcher. The believer is believed to be always right which constitutes a central feature of this method. This method seeks to view religions on their own terms. When using the phenomenological method, value judgement is avoided, it cultivates empathetic imagination and accurate descriptions are provided in religious phenomena. Cox (1992) notes that the phenomenology of religion generally seeks to promote objectivity where particular religions are shown as believers accept them. The phenomenological method is viewed as a positive perspective on religion and it seeks to promote religious tolerance.

This method has however its own disadvantages. Klostermaier (1976) points out that this method avoids cultivating attachment to any particular religion, it promotes only the researcher with a general understanding. Using the phenomenological approach does not inspire commitment. Total objectivity of the researcher becomes a problem. Cox (1992) argues that when investigating any religion in this case the Lemba, each person brings with him cultural, social and psychological understandings which are sometimes hidden to one's consciousness. However, the fact that the believer is always right can lead the researcher astray.

1.3.2 Feministic hermeneutics

The term feminism was coined from the French word *feminisme*, which refers to a political position or stance of someone committed to changing the social position of women (Coggins and Houlden, 1980:10). According to Green (1995:359), feminism is a global movement which started in the 17th Century to work towards the emancipation of women. Russel (1996:257) notes that “feminism is an effort by men and women critical of sexism to dismantle the cultural hegemony of males over females as well as masculinity over femininity.” The sexism which has to be fought by feminism is defined as, “an attitude or action which subordinates any person on the basis of gender”. Generally, scholars concur that

feminism is a movement that fights the inequalities based on gender and it has its roots in Christianity, though this phenomenon has since diversified to and can be applied to other religious contexts apart from Christianity. In other words, what feminism stands for is the equality between men and women in society, the aspect that is targeted by the researcher hence trying to answer the question, can a woman lead?

Green (1995:78) points out that the advantage of using feministic hermeneutics is that it will expose the negative aspects of the Lemba people, of Mposi area. For example, it exposes how gender disadvantages women from power, education, scholarship as well as leadership positions. Feminist hermeneutics helps to transform issues which has already changed some of the oppressive structures in the home, culture and society. It also gives religion the power to meet and address new needs of humanity in Lemba society. Mill (1969) argue that there is diversity which is considered to be a major strength of the feminist movement. Using this method, it is apparent that the Lemba people will be constrained to revise and revisit their traditions in order for them to be applicable to the future generations. The feminist hermeneutics are relevant to this study for they treat humanity with dignity hence regarding Lemba women as equal to Lemba men in their private and public spheres of life.

The branch of feminism utilised in this study is liberal feminism which is an individualistic form of theory, focusing on women's ability to maintain their equality through their own actions and choices. It argues that society holds the false belief that women are, by, nature, less intellectually and physically capable than men, thus this belief tends to discriminate against women in the different spheres of life (Tong: 1989).

On the other hand, feministic hermeneutics has got its own weaknesses. For instance liberal feminist allows too much of its focus to fall on a metamorphosis of women into men, in doing so, it disregards the significance of the traditional role of women. It also focuses on the

individual and in doing so, discredits the importance of the community. Another critique is its individualist assumption which makes it difficult to see ways in which underlying social structures and values disadvantage women. They argued that even if women are independent as individuals, they are still dependent upon a patriarchal state (Mill: 1969).

1.3.3 Data collection instruments

1.3.4 Interviews

An interview is a conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee with a purpose (Chiromo: 2006). It is one initiated by the interviewee for the specific purpose of obtaining relevant information for the research (Cohen and Manion: 1989). An interview is a unique research tool that involves the collection of data through direct verbal interaction between individuals. Moreover, the researcher can be able to get valid information without any complications, that is, interviews have improved response rates. They also give room to clarify issues and probing further (Chikoko and Mhloyi: 1995) Interviews also provide immediate feedback and allow for strategizing. The respondents could be motivated to reveal more and allow participation of people of all age groups as well as the literate or the illiterate (Chikoko and Mhloyi: 1995).

Personal/ face to face interview was used by the researcher in this study to solicit information from the elders of the Mposi area, the Nyamukangas (males and females), the members of the Lemba Cultural Association (LCA) and the initiates in Mposi area. The rationale of using this personal interview in the study is that it allows the researcher to get responses fast, to gain clarity of issues and to add on few questions for deep understanding of the Lemba people.

Deliberate sampling is the sampling technique based entirely on the researcher and a sample is composed of elements that contain representatives and typical attributes of the Lemba people. This type of sampling seeks to target people with relevant information for the study. It thus involves deliberate selection of the leaders of the initiators (Nyamukangas), the members of the Lemba Cultural Association for the interview.

Another type of interview that was used is group interview. Borg (1981) points out that focus group is a group of persons picked out and assembled by the researcher to discuss the subject of the research. Chiromo (2006) points out that this type of an interview should be employed due to fact that the research seeks clarification and discussion to attain people's knowledge and experience pertaining the history of the Lemba, their roles in their social life as well as ways to combat gender inequality in Lemba culture.

However, group interviews can be difficult for people who are shy in the society and it might be difficult to assemble people. People may be discouraged from participating. Bearing in mind these implications, the researcher used focus group interview as one of the data collection instruments (Borg: 1981).

Interviews also pose problems. Oppenheim (1992) states that interviews have exorbitant financial costs and they are time consuming. They are easily influenced by personal attributes and may also suffer from interviewer dominance. When using interviews, sensitive issues may not be openly discussed especially in this case, the Lemba people are very suspicious therefore confidential information cannot be supplied to anybody they do not trust like outsiders, especially in this case, the researcher is a non-Lemba.

1.3.5 Observation

The researcher opted for observation due to the fact that, it is more than just looking and listening. Observation can provide rich qualitative data, sometimes described as “thick description” (Geertz, 1973:41). For example, where the relevant phenomena have been carefully observed, detailed field notes can be compiled. If anyone wants to understand and explain what exists, he/she needs to go and observe it. Observation helps the researcher to observe and discover first-hand information; therefore this method used at various places in Mposi area.

The researcher observed the roles of the Lemba women and the treatment of the Lemba women as a resident in Mposi area but not as a Lemba. The fact that she resides in that place, she is aware of some issues concerning ill-treatments which are being done to women in Mposi and she was able to observe many cases which the women experienced as she can share some stories with the residents. There are some gatherings which the researcher attended especially the *Lobola* payment (bride price) in which observations were made.

Observation is for the advantage of the researcher because it provides viewing or participation in unscheduled events (Chiromo: 2006). DeWalt (2002:3) argues that observation improves quality of data collection and interpretation and facilitates the development of new research questions. Chikoko and Mhloyi (1995) point out that the major advantage of the interview technique is its directness rather than asking people about their views and feelings. In this case, the researcher received much information in an easiest way for she was observing the phenomena as they occurs.

1.4 Justification of the study

The research is justified in the sense that there is gross inequality between men and women in Lemba society. The plight of Lemba women seen to be worse off than other societies in the sense that due to their link with the Jews, the Lemba is very patriarchal more like their kins, the Jews. The research is further justified in the sense that there is less literature focusing on the Lemba women especially in Mposi area. While Spiwe Chabata wrote a thesis covering the area under study, *The effects of modernity and technology in Lemba culture in 2014* her work does not cover women in this area in particular since her focus is on the effects of modernity in the culture of the Lemba in Mposi area. This work adds to the academic literature on Mposi area hence it is justified. I consider this work justified also in the sense that though I am not a Lemba, I stay in this area. Therefore I have fingertip knowledge about the plight of Lemba women in this area.

1.5 Literature review

Quite a number of authors have written on the subject, but this study will review some important sources, concerning the subject. The literature will be established by the research.

Le Roux (1997) pointed out that the Varembe, also known as the Balemba, Basena, Basoni, Vamwenye, Lemba and Balepa, live among other ethnic groups in Southern Africa, but consider themselves to be Israelites who after the Babylonian exile migrated to Africa. They are possibly of African ancestry and this is shown by the religious practices like animal, ritual slaughter, food taboos, circumcision rites and endogamy.

According to Mandivenga (1989), the first indication of people in the Zambezi region with Islamic characteristics, now identified as Muslims. He refers to Senor Ferao, Captain of Sena in Mozambique who in 1810 observed a people in the South East of Sofala, without names

but with cultural characteristics that resemble the people now identified as the VaRemba. Features that distinguish them from other people are their abstinence from pork and rejecting all sorts of meat that is not killed by the hands of one of their sect members. In their habits, customs, languages, superstitions, songs and dances, they imitate the natives.

Parfitt (1992)

Since the late twentieth century, there has been increased media scholarly attention to the people's claim of partial common descent to the Jewish people. Genetic Y-DNA analyses in the 2000s have established a partially Middle-Eastern origin for a portion of the male Lemba population. Both Arabs and Jews share this DNA, but the Cohen Modal Haplotype, an indicator of Jewish ancestry, has been found among the males of the leadership clan at rates even higher than in the general Jewish population. All these above views will help the researcher in chapter two in which I will be discussing the history of the Lemba people.

Flory (2010) points out that it is no secret that women generally get the short end of the stick, so to speak, when it comes to how women are treated and viewed in religions and religious institutions. A pretty safe rule of thumb would be that women do all the work, while men take all the credit. Putting it charitably, women are generally treated as somewhat less than equal with men in most religious settings and belief systems. Theron (1990) points out that women are generally seen as second class citizens, weaklings, and inferior, submissive to men and are not really respected. It is expected for them to serve, obey and not to question men. They are dependent on men.

Parmar (2003) points out that women have always played an important role in agriculture, women play a major role on the land in food production through irrigation schemes. However they lack access to land for farming, entitlement of resources and inputs such as credit and technology. Reuther (1983) agreed with Parmar that women are important to agriculture and

it often makes them solely responsible for the collection of fire wood, fodder and water. The main responsibility for sustaining the family is usually assigned to women, increasingly so because of migration away from degrading rural areas. Phiri (2003:9) points out that women have more concern for the family upkeep, in which they spend most of their time working at home, in the fields even when they are ill.

Women are still not completely equal to men. Although more women are becoming leaders, they have to work extra hard to earn the respect of their male as well as female colleagues. While some men respect and treat women with dignity, others still see women as lesser beings. Women are primarily caregivers at home, doing the cooking, cleaning, washing and nurturing the children. Although women are growing more independent by following their own careers, a wife that becomes more successful than her husband may hurt his ego. When visitors come, the wife normally does the cooking and joins the guests for the meal (Flory: 2010).

According to Haralambos and Holborn (1970) some sociologists and anthropologists argue that there is no society in which women do not have inferior status to that of men. For Haralambos, the development of the Liberation Movement has led to attention being focused on the subordinate position of women in many societies. Some people have the mentality that women have always had subordinate positions in all societies, others argue that, the origin of gender inequalities can be tracked from historical events. These views will assist the researcher in writing chapter three in which she will assess the roles of women in social lives of the Lemba people.

Bourdillon (1993) views that in African cultures women and not men are the custodians of culture and primary transmitters of culture in society and they do not question prevailing

customs. In fact, by often openly supporting them and transmitting them to the next generation, they act as agents of men in perpetuating culturally sanctioned gender inequality.

Douglas (1966), points out that women play an enormous role in reaching the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, as women are involved in subsistence agricultural production in Africa than men. The gender equality and the empowerment of women will unquestionably improve their ability to provide for their families. Globalisation and political changes have contributed to sociocultural changes and more women occupy leadership positions.

Oduyoye (1986), has the view that feminism has become the short hand for the proclamation that women's experience should become an integral part of what goes into the definition of being human. This experience denotes the suffering of women in a bid to attain the fullness of their being. Feminism calls for the incorporation of the women into a community of interpretation of what it means to be human.

Fabella and Oduyoye (1986) advocates that the first creation account defines the human species as composed of male and female who stand equal in dignity and honour before God and are given co-mastery over creation. The second creation account Genesis 2:4b-24 can even be said to symbolise their equality, since according to Augustine, they were thus intended to walk and thus "together look where it is as they walk" and thus these accounts cannot be cited of the belief that women are by nature equal to men. All these views will help the researcher in chapter four which dwells on proving the capability and potential of women in Lemba culture as well as ways to combat gender inequality.

CHAPTER TWO

The History of the Lemba people

2.0 Introduction

Chapter one focused on the area of investigation, statement of the problem, objectives, methodology as well as literature review. Chapter two seeks to discuss the history of the Lemba people of Mposi area. It will give the different views concerning Lemba people and their history.

In several ethnographers' accounts, several of the Varembe people originally constituted one group that eventually dispersed in different directions. As a result these dispersed groups were identified as Varembe or Vamwenye in Southern Rhodesia. Amwenye in Southern Nyasaland and Malepa, Balemba or simply Lemba in the Transvaal of South Africa (Mandivenga 1989:100).

Schapera (1962) conjectured that the Lemba are suspected of being Semitic in origin. The reasons for this belief are amongst others that they speak, not in Venda as one would expect, but a dialect of Karanga. Obviously acquired during a sojourn from far north, and that their features, though of course dark, are distinctively non-Negro. They eat no pork, not any animal which has not been kosher-killed by a slitting of the throat and they do not intermarry with those not of their race, all such being called *Vhasenzi*, which is identical with *Washenji*, a word used along the coast for wild, folk, pagans or eaters of dead meal.

The Lemba people belong to the Zhou totem and they speak the language of the groups surrounding them. The Lemba people of Mposi speak Shona and most of them use the Kalanga dialect which is mostly spoken in the Mberengwa district.

2.1 The Origin of the Lemba people

Nothing exact is known about the origin of the Lemba, but some scholars are divided concerning their origin. Some recall their origin from Arab tradition whilst others regard them as being an off shoot of the Yemen Jews from a city called Sena in the Eastern Yemen. They suggest that the Lemba and Arabs are the same the people who have the same roots with Jews. However, they separated because of mixed blood after the Babylonian Exile. Two schools of thought were proposed by different scholars that are the Jewish traditional origin and Arabic tradition as well as some indigenous accounts concerning the Lemba people.

2.2 Jewish Traditional Origin of the Lemba

The possibility that the Lemba might have a Semitic ancestry (embedded in an African culture) is further suggested by the pre-occupation with religious practices like animal sacrifice, ritual slaughter, food taboos, circumcision rites, endogamy to mention but a few. Although it is difficult to actually “prove” their Jewish claims, genetic tests by Professor Trevor Jenkins from the South African institute for Medical Research at the University of Witwatersrand, have shown interesting connections between the Lemba and the Jews (Parfitt:1995).

Le Roux (1997) is of the view that some Jews migrated to Africa after the Babylonian exile and those Jews were considered to be Lemba people. He continues to say that due to cultural aspects that are similar to those of the religious practices mentioned above, it might be possible that they are the ones who moved to Southern Africa.

The Lemba are an allegedly Jewish people in southern Africa, many living in modern day Zimbabwe, Malawi and South Africa. The community as a whole numbers close to 70,000. Although they speak the same Bantu languages as their African neighbours, some of the

Lemba's religious practices are similar to those in Judaism. Their tradition suggests that they may have migrated to Africa from the Jewish communities in Yemen (Parfitt: 1995). Daneel (1996) concurs with the above author that the Lemba were probably traders who operated between the east coast and the interior. It is even possible that the Lemba came from Yemen, to the East Coast of Arab traders. This is proved with Lemba customs, festivals and rituals with an Old Testament resonance. Truly, the Lemba could be African "Jews", Israelites who after Babylonian exile migrated to Africa.

Tudor Parfitt, head of the Judaic Studies department at the University of London, reported the results of DNA testing showing both Semitic origins of the Lemba in general and the now well-known existence of a marker associated with the Kohanim on the Y chromosome of many Lemba males (Parfitt:1993). Spurdle and Jenkins (1996) argue that the ancestors of the Lemba were Jewish craftsmen and traders from Yemen as reflected in their oral tradition. They continued to say that the genetic results are also consistent with the oral tradition that only males came through the sea to Africa and had to take local wives. In order to provide a more detailed picture of the Lemba paternal genetic heritage, Thomas analysed 399 Y Chromosomes for six microsatellites and six biallelic markers in six populations that are Lemba, Bantu, Yemeni-Hadramaut, Yemeni-Sena, Sephardic Jews and Ashkenazic Jews and found out that the Lemba are Jews.

Moreover in 1996, Bradman and Parfitt collected 120 male DNA samples in the Hadramaut from Sena and the results show a significant similarity between marker of many of the Hadramaut Y Chromosomes and those of the Lemba. Even genetic markers common in Jewish groups, including Jewish priesthood in Israel and worldwide show up both in the Hadrami DNA as well as in Lemba. Parfitt concludes that these results could indicate that in the past Jews inhabited the Hadramaut and immigrated to the shores of Africa (Parfitt: 1996).

In addition, from DNA samples taken specifically from the Buba clan (the priestly clan) elsewhere, a very close relation has emerged between the Buba and those priesthood in Israel. The distinctive pattern predominantly found among members of the Jewish priesthood is called Cohen Modal Haplotype (CMH). This common set of genetic markers on the Y chromosome has preserved the Cohen Modal Haplotype (CMH) as a potential watermark of Judaism. Among the Lemba it is 8, 8% a similar frequency to the Israelites Jewish males (Parfitt 1995). Thomas et al (1998) concluded that these results are supportive evidence that there was a Jewish element in the history of the Lemba.

Dr. Rudo Mativha, Professor M.E.R. Mativha's daughter, argues that the Lemba are descended from a group of Jews who left Judea in approximately 500 B.C.E and settled first in Yemen before travelling south through Africa. They are believed to migrate through Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and South Africa which has been retained and passed down through oral tradition.

Gayre of Gyre (1967) views the Lemba people as being an offshoot of Yemenite Jews, who centuries ago crossed the "Phusela" which is the sea and came to Africa. At this place they rebuilt the Sena in Mozambique and helped to construct a great stone city which is identified as Great Zimbabwe. Mandivenga argues that the Lemba people are said to have settled in Great Zimbabwe for a very long period.

They are some of the Lemba beliefs and practices that are similar to Judaism which include the following:

- They are monotheists that is they call their creator God.
- They hold one day of the week to be holy and praise *Nwali* which is similar to the Jewish Shabbat.

- They praise *Nwali* for looking after the Lemba, considering themselves a chosen people.
- They teach their children to obey their parents.
- They refrain from eating pork or other foods forbidden by the Torah, of forbidden combinations of permitted foods.
- Their form of animal slaughter, which makes meats fit for their consumption, resembles Jewish *schechita*.
- They practice male circumcision, models of circumcised male organs which were found at Great Zimbabwe.
- They place a star of David on their tombstones
- Lemba are discouraged from marrying non-Lemba, as Jews are discouraged from marrying non-Jews.
- Lemba bury their dead in an extended rather than a crouched position (Mativha: 1983).

The oral history of the Lemba proved that they had male ancestors who were Jews who left Judea about 2,500 years ago and settled in a place called Senna and later migrating into East Africa. Parfitt, the British researcher observed the location of Senna which was more likely in Yemen. It was specifically in the village of Sanaw, which had a vibrant Jewish population since ancient times, but dwindled to a few hundred people since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 (Parfitt: 1992).

2.2.1 The *Ngoma Lungundu* / the Sacred Drum

Lemba tradition tells of an object, the *Ngoma lungundu* or drum that thunders, that was brought with them from Yemen. Parfitt has theorized that it was the Ark of the Covenant which was lost from Jerusalem after the destruction by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 BC. He claimed to trace a missing copy of the artefact to a museum in Harare (UK. Channel 4). Radiocarbon dating showed it to be over 600 years old and Parfitt suggested that it was a replica made while the Lemba were in Yemen, after the original Ark had been destroyed (Parfitt:1995).

Parfitt discovered the *ngoma* in a Harare museum in 2007. It had last been exhibited in 1949 by colonial officials in Bulawayo. It was taken to Harare to be protected during the drive to independence and it was not found at the museum. It is believed that a portion of the artefact could be 700 years old (Vickers: 2010). Parfitt (1995) believed that *ngoma* was the oldest wooden artefact in Zimbabwe. The Lemba *ngoma lungundu* was put on display in February 2010 in the museum celebrating its history and of the Lemba.

Parfitt (1995) discovered a 700 years old replica of the covenant, a chest which was allegedly build by the Israelites 3000 years ago to hold the stone tablets on which the ten commandments were inscribed. Around the same time, a sense of genetic studies were conducted, providing the Semitic origin of the tribe. Lemba men carry the Cohen Modal Haplotype Y-chromosomal type characteristic of the Jewish priesthood at about the same rate as that of the major Jewish populations.

There is one particular sub-clan which is Buba within the Lemba. They are considered by the Lemba people to be their priestly clan. The Buba clan carried most of the Cohen Modal Haplotype (CMH) found in the Lemba. This marker is also most prevalent among Jewish

Kohanim, or priests. According to Lemba oral tradition, this clan played a leadership role in bringing the Lemba out of Israel and into Southern Africa (Parfitt: 1995).

When Lemba people entered Africa, they divided into two groups in which the one staying in Ethiopia and the other travelled further south along east coast. Lemba people claimed the second one who settled in Tanzania and Kenya and built Sena II. Some were said to stay in Malawi and they are descendants who even reside there today. Others settled in Mozambique and later on they migrated to South Africa as well as Zimbabwe in which they claim to build and help the construction of the great enclosure. However, the second theory from the school of thought is Arabic tradition which is going to be discussed in the next section.

2.3 Arabic Tradition Origin of the Lemba people

Beach (1980:183) regards the VaRemba or VaMwenyi as descendants of early Muslim Arabs or Pre-Muslimi Arabs. However, that they were Moors Mohammedans in the East Coast is not in doubt. Both the Mapungubwe and Zimbabwe states, traded with these people as Beach (1980) would testify.

Hammond-Tooke (1974) seems to give a correct sequence of the VaRemba's Arabic traditional origin. He adds that the VaMwenye (the Lord's or Master's people) are the descendants of the Semitic Traders from the East Coast that is of Arabs. Accordingly, the ancestors of the Lemba came from a huge town somewhere across the seas where there dwelt many craftsmen in metal work, pottery, textiles and ship building. They came to South Africa and Zimbabwe to trade their goods especially gold and ivory. They began leaving some of their men behind with unsold cargo and thus established port. They moved further and further inland and became well known to the natives but did not mix with them as they deemed

themselves superior. Then one day came shattering news that the city had been taken by the enemy. Hammond-Tooke (1974) continued to say that they could never go home. So they began taking native wives, chiefly Rozvi, Karanga, Zezuru and Govera, by this time they were already organised in the twelve 12 clans as they are known today.

In addition, Mandivenga (1989) pointed out that before 1800 AD the Muslim Arabs were staying in *Matapa* state and this view can best explain the history of the Lemba people. Due to this fact Arabs Islamised the Swahili speaking as well as the Sena speaking. Hence their whole indigenous customs, practices and social way of life have been affected because their diet, marriage customs, circumcision are similar to Muslim practices. Thus, such names like Hussien, Abdullah, Salim, Ali, Ibrahim, Gaddafi to mention but a few have been adopted by Lemba people and the whole system has been influenced to a greater extent. Mandivenga (1989) added that the Lemba people adapted the practices, customs and social way of Muslim life but they are indigenous Shona people. These views are supported by Beach (1980) who noted that the Muslim community was becoming more absorbed in the Shona world.

Moreover, Hassan the Nyamukanga pointed out that when a MuRemba (circumcised) Lemba person slaughters a beast, he faces east. The holy city of Mecca is located in that direction. During the process, he who slaughters the beast utters the following words “Big Milayi; Takabira” meaning Slaughter in the name of Great God. This compares with Bismilani; Allahu Akbar, which means “Slaughter in the name of God, God is great”. This view supports that the Lemba people have got an Islamic-Arabic origin.

De Vaal (1958) noted that the teachings on circumcision rites which include the greetings, customs and salutations, is Arabic. The Lemba people are also taught a tradition of carrying knives after the males graduated. Hence there is an irrefutable link between Arabic tradition and culture which today is imposed amongst the Yemenites and Arabs of which Jews do not

practise this custom. By virtue of the fact that the Lemba people have resemblances with Arabs, it can be concluded that the Lemba people have an Arabic origin.

Le Roux (2003), points out that the ritual of sacrifice of the Lemba, *Pesah* is similar to the Jewish festival, called *Pesach*. These traditions are common to Muslims in the Middle East and in Africa and they are not exclusively Jewish as well as common to other African tribes and other people. Hammond-Tooke (1974) identified Lemba beliefs and practices have similarities with those of Muslims, for example, endogamous marriage which are common to Muslims as well as certain dietary laws. There are also similarities, especially the Lemba clan names which are Arabic and Semitic, like *Saidi, Bakeri, Haji, Sharifo, Hamisi, Hasane* and *Sadiki*, Hammond-Tooke concluded that the Lemba were descended from Muslims.

2.4 History of the Lemba people of Mberengwa

Due to the fact that there is no exact account concerning the history of the Lemba people, the researcher decided to consult the elderly people and some leaders of the different associations of the Lemba people in Mposi area. However, the researcher found nothing exact about the history of the Lemba people since these groups of people are not of the same view as two schools of thoughts have been given. Some argue that they came from the Arabic origin since such names like *Alim, Ali, Saidi, Ashaado, Saleem, Abdullah* and others are given after the graduation from *Ngoma*. However, some people in Mposi area who have been interviewed believed that they are people who came from the Jewish side due to the fact that they claim that all twelve tribes of the Lemba people came from Israel and their dietary laws are also similar to the Jews.

According to Mupandasekwa who is a Nyamukanga (male circumciser), the Lemba are Arabs but in Zimbabwe, instead of calling them Arabs, people call them the VaRemba, Vasoni or Vamwenyi. He also pointed out that such names which are given to the initiates are the

names of their forefathers (Mpandasekwa, interview, Makereni, 01\03\2016). As a result, the researcher concluded that the Lemba origin can be traced back to Arabic origin.

Following this Arabic tradition, Mr Zhou Pardon, (interview, Mposi, 05\03\16) of the Lemba tribe and a teacher at Mposi High School viewed that the VaRemba were found in South Africa, some of the VaRemba in Mberengwa fled to South Africa (the Venda area) for security purposes. When the security situation improved some of them trekked back to settle in Mberengwa where they are still to be found under chief Mposi, who was a Ndebele tributary chief. To this day, the VaRemba still adhere to cultural practices which point to their Arabic origins.

After the researcher interviewed four elderly people from Matandu area under chief Mposi who belong to the *Sadiki* tribe, she learnt that the Lemba people have a tradition of carrying knives in their pockets. One identified as Matandu told the researcher the reasons for carrying those knives saying that they can be used to slaughter animals which they catch themselves. They carry their knives because of their preservation of culture and values in which they are prohibited to eat the meat which is slaughtered by a non-Lemba as they observe their *Kosher* which is their way of killing animals. So it is their requirement to always carry knives for them to be able to slaughter an animal when they meet it even if they are asked to slaughter in the household they use their own knife to do it. By virtue of this it can therefore be argued that the Lemba people originated from Arabic tradition.

Moreover, during the initiation ceremony the leaders at the ceremony dress in white clothes, the head shaved and they wear skull caps on the heads as the researcher observed. The Nyamukanga Mpandasekwa, (interview, Makereni 01/03/16) views the skull caps as Kofi. The garment which the Arabs wear is called *Klemba*. Thus, the name “*Lemba*” came from that name which was given to the Arabs when they entered Mberengwa wearing those

garments. When the researcher interviewed six elderly people in Mposi area, they pointed out that the shaving of heads is a cultural practice that shows that they are ritually clean and they inherited it from their forefathers. They continued to say that when the initiates returned home from their bush camp they will wear white cotton clothes and the Arabs also wear white cotton clothes and skull caps. It could mean therefore that the Lemba people indeed belong to the Arabic origin.

There is one group of the Lemba people that settled in Mberengwa district at Dubwi under chief Mposi that claims to have originated from a place called Gorongoza in the eastern border of Zimbabwe and Mozambique. These people are believed to have links with the Yao Muslims, Machawa who come *from* Malawi. Their migration was caused because of the Shona Ndebele wars which happened during the 19th century. Due to the attacks by the Ndebele army, which was called *impisi*, they ran away to Chishawasha near Harare. Eventually they moved down south and settled in present-day Mberengwa. There they practised their traditions and customs, which include male circumcision and female initiation (M. Makotore, interview, Ruvuzhe, 04/01/16).

Nyamukanga Mpandasekwa, (interview, Makereni, 03/02/16) views that the Lemba people originated from Sana'a which is translated as Sena today and Sana'a is the capital city of Arabic Republic of Yemen. He points out that Yemen is the mother of Arabs and the clans of the Lemba are taken out of the *Quran* and all the practices of the Lemba are Arabic. Therefore the Lemba people are from Arabic Tradition.

Turning to the other side of the coin, the researcher interviewed the headmaster of Mposi High School, a Lemba from *Ngavi* tribe and the secretary of Lemba cultural Association (LCA) and he pointed out that the Lemba people are the descendants of Judah because he links the traditional marriage among the Lemba people with that of the Jews. Due to the fact

that the Jews were against intermarriages and the Lemba people do not allow it, this automatically means the Lemba people are the descendants of Judah. They practice endogamy in which they marry among themselves. Mr Ngavi A.T, (interview, Mposi High, 15/03/16) has the same view with Parfitt who argues that the Lemba practices and beliefs are similar to those in Judaism.

Mr Tafirei Mavhunduse, (interview, Mposi High School, 20/01/16) who is the treasurer of the Lemba Cultural Association (LCA) who is from *Sarifu* tribe conjectured that the Lemba people are of the Jewish traditional origins because of their twelve tribes which resembles twelve tribes from Israel. Mbuya Makotore also says that

Isu Varemba pamarudzi ose okwedu ari gumi

nemaviri Vaera Zhou tiri ma Judha, Takabva Iriraeri.

(As Lemba people we have 12 clans as our totem is elephant we are Jews, we came from Israel).

Thus, as seen above Mr Mavhunduse and Mbuya Makotore are of the view-point that the Lemba people are actually Jews.

Zvavamwenye Zhou, (interview, Ruvuzhe 25/01/16) who is from *Ngavi* tribe has another piece of evidence that shows the Jewish origin of the Lemba people. When the researcher interviewed him, he argued that the Lemba people originated from Sena, Mozambique and they passed through places like Chimanmani, Masvingo and they stayed in Gokomere, Mapakomhere, Jerera, Bikita, Gutu and some of their descendants are still there. Later on they travelled through Zvishavane and they stayed at the river called Shave meaning *mushavi* (trader). From Zvishavane they also stayed in Mberengwa under Hadji Chief Mbelengwa

from which the district got its current name. He based his view by giving the way they recite their totem. He says

VaMupfure, VaGato, VaGokomere, VaSakuringwa,

Hemeni Tavera, VaChikomochimwe, Chisingagari

varume vatyi (cowards), VaShavamombe kushava

mbudzi mukadzi anofa, Vakashava mombe

dzisina mhuru dzikauya dzinokuma dziri mudanga,

Varungunanguwo, nevari Vuhindi, neMapakomhere,

Jerera raMadi, Vazungu vakabva Sena.

This totem emphasises on the trading and hunting of the Lemba people, their status as well as their origin. (It says the iron makers from the places called Gato, Gokomere, Sakuringwa, who lived in an isolated hill which the cowards cannot be able to stay, the hunters of big animals like cattle, the perfectionists in terms of iron making skills who were also in Vuhindi, Mapakomhere, Jerera (Masvingo Province), who looked different from others who came from Sena).

From the above totem (chidawo), the informant insisted that the Lemba people came from Sena and passed through Masvingo Province. He pointed out that the Lemba people are priests and Levites and they brought the Ark of the Covenant (*ngoma lungundu*) at Dubwi and it was later stolen and today it is believed to be at the in Harare museum (*Zvavamwenye*, interview, Ruvuzhe, 05/01/16). So the Ark of the Covenant is believed to be which was lost

from Jerusalem after the destruction by Nebuchadnezzar. Zvavamwenye agrees with Parfitt on the above issue and they concluded that the Lemba people originated from among the Jews.

From the researcher's field observations, the origin of the Lemba people is a hard nut to crack, that is, it is not clear and there are controversial issues pertaining their origin. The information given concerning the origin depended on the type of an interviewee. For instance, if the researcher interviewed Christians, they regard themselves as associates with the Jews. For the non-Christians they had mixed views/accounts. Some sided with the Jews and some with Arabs due to different reasons. Basing on the information obtained by the researcher, the Lemba people originated both from Arabic and Jewish traditions.

2.5 Conclusion

Chapter two focused on the history of the Lemba people as well as the origin of the Lemba people of Mposi area in Mberengwa district, Midlands Province. The origin of the Lemba people is not clear because some of the informants from Mposi area indicated that they are Muslims while others insisted that they are Jews. So there is no exact account of their origin, it is a controversial one. The next chapter which is chapter three, will focus on the roles of women in Lemba social life.

CHAPTER THREE

The roles of women in Lemba social life

3.0 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the history of the Lemba people. This chapter seeks to assess the roles of women in Lemba social life. Lemba women play some pivotal roles during male circumcision, female initiation, marriage, home coming ceremonies, *lobola* payment, child bearing to mention but a few.

Even though, Lemba women have pivotal roles to play in Lemba culture and society at large, these roles are viewed as minor duties by their male counterparts. Lemba women have pivotal roles to play in their culture as they are the pillars in most religious ceremonies.

3.1 Male circumcision/ *Ngoma*

In Lemba culture, they practice the rite of circumcision (*ngoma*) and this rite is very important for it marks the bridge that separates individuals from an earlier stage of seemingly passive life and it officially propels that individual into the stage which is socially more productive. This means that, it is the initiation from boyhood to manhood in which there will be cutting off of the foreskin of the male organ (Mbiti 1991:15). This rite is similar with that of the Jews, as a covenant. According to *Nyamukanga Mpandasekwa*, circumcision is done in mountains and in the early 1940s it was only done in *Dubwi* Mountain which is located in Mposi area. All people of Mberengwa had to come to this mountain to be circumcised. However, today they can operate on any mountain.

Women in Lemba have an important role to play during the circumcision rite called *Ngoma*. Their duty is to provide food for initiates by so doing they also camp in the bush to assist the men by cooking for them. Tsetsewani, (interview, Ruzengwe, 08/01/16), states that the

women who help them with food never meet with the initiates, they wear only skirts and pants and they do not wear blouses. After preparing food, they take and leave it on the other side of the mountain in the bush. There will be seniors of the initiates stationed at the place where the food is put. These people are responsible for guarding the food until the women return to the place where women stay during this period and the initiates will later come to collect the food. A long whip of *mukambamasani* or *mubhubhunu* tree will be used as the sound to code them that the food is being brought.

Nyamukanga Hassan, (interview, Gwai, 05/03/16) pointed out that when these women fail to cook food well, they are beaten by (*Vadabi*) using *Munyadza*, or *Mubhubhunu*, or *Mushumadombo* and other trees. They will be whipped on their back because they failed to follow the rules from the Lemba tradition.

Besides providing food to the initiates, these women also train the girls who take part in the welfare of the boys during their circumcision. They teach the girls who accompany the boys how to cook good food and to be responsible enough. The girls are taught different recipes to cook traditional food such as dried vegetables with peanut butter, rapoko sadza, sorghum sadza and others. This information was supplied to the researcher by three women, (interview, Don Bosco Primary in Mposi area 03/03/16) who are from the Lemba tribe.

3.2 Female initiation (Komba)

Komba is a rite of initiation that is practised by the VaRemba people of Mberengwa, in Southern Zimbabwe. Hannan defines the term *Komba* as *kuibva*, which means “ripe” (Hannan 1961). The VaRemba also refer to their girl initiates as *Komba*, meaning the girl is ripe for initiation into womanhood and marriage. The puberty rite may take to itself overt references to sexual practices. The girls who qualify to go for *Komba* are those who have

commenced menstruation. This is an indication that the girl is mature and is capable of getting married and bearing children. A younger girl who has not commenced menstruation cannot attend the ritual but can attend other levels of dance entertainment suitable for her age. Komba rite is conducted in the months of June and July which is winter season, to teach them to endure hardships in life (Mabuwa: 1993).

Douglas (1966) points out that in every Lemba village there are some elderly women called *Mbuya Nyanye* or *Chinoni* whose role is to teach and initiate young girls into the rite of Komba. Mrs Y Simari, (interview, 13/03/16) pointed out that there are special qualifications that must be fulfilled in order to enrol for the Komba rite. The girl should have gone through her first menstruation which is a sign of her maturity and she must therefore be equipped for adult life. Also, the girl must be a virgin. The non-Lemba girls married into these families re-initiated into the culture. They are expected to conform to the Lemba traditions and customs.

According to Mrs Masarira, (interview, Chegato, 03/03/16) of Hadji Tribe, girls unlike boys do not live in lodges. A girl leaves her parents and goes to stay with her aunt, or a relative who is a Lemba. These women together with other initiated Lemba women including a *Jembere* (Nyamukanga) teach the initiates hereditary formulae and songs. The initiates are also taught how to handle their households and husbands. *Mbuya Zodzi*, (interview, Dubwi, 20/01/16) added that the nights are spent elongating the *lubia minora*, for which medicine made of parts of a bat is effective and in singing and dancing. Some of the songs among the Lemba are in praise of various important sibs, others have reference to sexual functions, while the most important songs of all contains advice not to be deflowered. Girls are taught different styles for sexual intercourse. One is called *Sunda* (Python dance) one girl here dresses as a man, with imitation penis, who after inviting even girl to accompany “him”, seizes one and stimulates sexual intercourse while the *sunda* song is sung:

Sunda, sundani valele

Huwee

Sunda sundani valele

Mwana wamani

This song says (python dance, humming, python dance, dance my fellow sister)

Furthermore, female initiation rite can equip the girls understanding menstruation and they are being taught about hygiene. The skills of life are imparted and girls are taught the basic roles of a woman in society, for instance the respect for the husband and in laws. According to P. Hamandishe, (interview, Chamawanga, 01/02/16) from *Ngavi* tribe, the household duties, sociocultural norms, brewing beer, ritual ceremonial duties, sexual conduct, prolonged sex, self-reliance and traditional medicines are also taught by the Lemba women (female initiators).

Moreover, the Lemba women also teach the initiates to wake up early, fetching water in the river, cultivating fields, fetching firewood in which they should make what they called firewood which is bundle tied long “Mutanhugwa”. Virginity testing is also carried out. The initiates are taken to the river early in the morning for virginity testing (B Mseva, interview, Don Bosco, 04/02/16). Mrs N Zhou from Chegato village who is the teacher of initiates of “Komba” pointed out that if water could not pass the opening, they say that the girl is still a virgin and she is praised for that and is encouraged to remain like that until marriage. Simangaliso Zhou, (interview, Makereni, (4/02/16) pointed out that the virgin is then put on the back of the female initiator *Mudabi* from the river as an appreciation. On the day of graduation she is given gifts whilst she is in the kraal. Those who are not found to be virgins

are thoroughly beaten by *Mkambamasani*, *Mubhubhunu* or *Mushumadombo* and a half bottled water will be given to the initiate's parents as a proof that their daughter is not pure.

3.3 Home bringing ceremony (*Kurova guva*)

This ceremony takes place after a year of death. This is the period, when the spirit of the deceased receives the full status of a family guardian (Mpandasekwa, interview, Makereni, 15/02/16). According to Mrs Y, Simari, (interview, Ruvuzhe, 13/03/16) in this ceremony the women have also an important role to play because the beer is brewed by old women who can no longer bear children, menstruate and no longer sleeping with men. The women should have undergone Komba initiation. Girls who are at pre-menstrual period are also needed to do the work, for example, fetching water, brewing beer, "*Kukuya mumera*" (grinding millet and rapoko) and others. She pointed out that women are also responsible for cooking, fetching water, serving those people who would have attended the ceremony to just mention but a few.

Mrs S Mseva, (interview, Don Bosco 04/02/16), noted that if the ceremony is being conducted for a deceased Lemba woman, the fellow women sing and dance Komba. They prepare food and they cook without blouses. The food eaten is African food for example sorghum, millet, rapoko sadza. Only one male should be present who will be holding a stick for boundary. The hair of the attendants would be removed during the ceremony and the shoes should be removed as they should not be worn. Therefore women have a role to play in Lemba culture.

3.4 Funeral

Furthermore, Lemba women have roles to play during a funeral. They do all the household chores expected during the funeral for example cooking, fetching water, cleaning the yard and houses to mention but a few (Mrs S. Hamandishe, interview, Makereni 04/02/16). Mrs J. Foto, (interview, Mposi, 06/02/16) notes that besides performing the above duties, when a fellow woman dies, women are the ones who carry the deceased to the grave after washing and clothing the body. During an interview with five Lemba women, they pointed out that there are comforters of the mourners at a funeral. In an interview, Danga Township, 09/02/16 of five women in Mposi area, they pointed out that they have pivotal roles to play in Lemba social life. They continued to say that they sing and dance at funerals to comfort mourners through entertainment for them to reduce stress. Also one of the informants said

Isu semadzimai tinoperekedza mufi tichiimba

nziyo dzinonyaradza kune avo vafirwa.

(As women we accompany the deceased singing songs to comfort the mourners).

3.5 Lobola (Bride price)

According to Mbuya Matandu, (interview, Makereni, 02/02/16) during the payment of lobola (bride-price), women are allowed to be present, but on the side lines of negotiations, not actively taking part in the negotiations. The paying of the bride price is done when someone is being married. So the Lemba women perform some duties like cooking, fetching water, cleaning and many others. I observed that women act as the advisors of the bride, especially the aunts. They are always there to remind their daughters the duties that are supposed to be performed as a wife. They also accompany the bride to the husband's home and present her as their wife and introduce her to the permanent home.

3.6 Children's lives

Women are particularly important because they are experts in dealing with the problem of Chipande or Nhova in children. This activity is done for a new born baby to avoid harm from external forces. They also prescribe pre-emptive charms to protect the child from the effects of evil charms that were possessed by some members of the community. According to Mbuya Gumbochuma, (interview, Don Bosco, 06/02/16) after the child has been born, there are some rituals which are done for the protection of the child. She pointed out that when the umbilical cord falls, it is taken by the grandmother and she is supposed to bury it in the yard of the homestead of the newly born baby. She continued to note that the intestines of the monkey are given to the baby to avoid what they call "ruzoka" pain in the stomach (intestines). All these roles are done by women.

After the birth of the child, there will be a ceremony to remove hair and the aunties are responsible for removing the hair of the child. During the ceremony, aunties cook food and give to the elders of the family especially female relatives. The hair of the girl child is buried on the entrance of the kraal as a wish for her to be married and many cattle be given (Mbuya Makotore, interview, Ruvuzhe, 2016).

3.7 Child bearing

Child bearing is another role played by women in Lemba social life. Without women the tribe could not be restored and even born. The women are also responsible for the nurturing and the upkeep of children with little contribution of their male counterparts. After the child has been born, he/she needs to be washed, clothed and being given enough food for them to grow healthy as well as surviving. Women are always there for those provisions needed by the children.

Mseva, (interview, Makereni (06/02/16) pointed out that not only children need to be taken care of but also the husbands depend on their wives for the provision of food, clean clothes to mention but a few. Women are there to provide the above needs for their husbands. In providing enough food for the family, women are the pillars of agriculture due to the fact that they are the ones who go to the fields and gardens whilst the husbands stay at home waiting for the wife to put the food on the table. If the husband is away from home, women are there to make sure that the children are fed because she is the one whom the children can see and demand what they want.

Moreover, women go on to satisfy the sexual needs of the husbands. They should perform well to safeguard their marriage. They are supposed to keep a clay pot called “Chinu” in the bedroom which is to be used to bath the husband after sexual activity. Even after the husband dies that pot is used to bath the deceased before burial (Mrs S. Mseva, interview, Makereni 6/02/16). She continued to say that the wife should wear jewellery in the waist to show the husband beauty.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the roles of women in the social lives of the Lemba people. It assessed their roles in families, male circumcision, home coming ceremony, marriage, female initiation and others. The next chapter will focus on analysing the potential/capability of women in the Lemba people and to suggest ways to combat gender inequality in Lemba culture.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CAPABILITY AND POTENTIAL OF WOMEN AND WAYS TO COMBAT GENDER INEQUALITY BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN IN LEMBA CULTURE

4.0 Introduction

The previous chapter dwelt on the roles played by women in Lemba culture. Chapter four will now focus on analysing the capability and potential of women in Lemba culture. Ways to combat gender inequality will also be discussed.

4.1 Capability and Potential of women to lead in Lemba culture

Women have capability and potential to lead in Lemba culture due to the fact that some husbands in this area migrate to South Africa to seek employment leaving their wives with the children and spending many years without them coming back or returning only on holidays. As a result the women become sole breadwinners because they are the ones who are left with the family to feed and to pay school fees. The main responsibility for sustaining the family is usually assigned to women.

In addition, women spend a lot of time at home whilst men migrate to towns working or looking for job. By this virtue, women can manage to do all the household chores as well as working in the fields and small gardens. They are important contributors to agriculture and are often responsible for collecting firewood, fodder and water. So women have the duty to make sure all these duties are done including looking after the cattle when children go to school. Even though women shoulder all these duties the family still holds the title of a husband. By performing all these duties it proves that women can lead in the household set up without the husband's input.

Some women are able to perform the duties/roles played by men. Women can go fishing in the local rivers using nets and hooks. In Mposi area the researcher observed women who go to the rivers and dams to fish and they sell them in the local village for the upkeep of the family. By virtue of this women are economically independent and this role proves that women are capable and have the potential to perform duties which were known to be of men alone.

Moreover, the majority of women are involved in cross border trading in Mposi area to sustain their families. Men were well known cross borders to different countries to trade as well as seeking employment to put food on the table for the family but things have since changed now. Some women in Mposi area are now even going down to South Africa also to seek employment to feed the children as well as paying school fees. By performing these roles, women have the capability and the potential to work for the sustenance of the family which was the duty for only men to take care of the wife and children.

Furthermore, there is an increasing number of women and girls at higher levels of education and enrolling in technical courses. Mr C Simari, (interview, Ruzengwe, 20/03/16) the head teacher at Ruzengwe Secondary School noted that this results in the elevation of women to various positions and professions originally dominated by men. He continued to say that some households in Mposi area including his are now giving room for the girls to go to school as compared with previous years when only boys were given first preference when there was not enough school fees. These girls and women have now become co-breadwinners with their fathers and husbands. This shows the capability of women to lead in Lemba social life.

In addition, due to the elevation of women, some women in Mposi have managed to be ordained in local churches. Reverend Tangawamira, (interview, Danga, 10/03/16) from the

Hadji tribe and the pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe (ELCZ) pointed out that it was hard for her to be at the stage she is now considering that she is a woman. She continued to say that as a Lemba, girls were not allowed to be educated because their parents believed that they will be married. So it was hard for her to attain the status she has as she struggled to go to school. She said, “I am the Pastor for the Mposi area where I hold four congregations of the Lemba people where I lead them regardless of gender.” The role of Reverend Tangawamira as the shepherd of the Lemba people proves the capability and potential of women to lead in Lemba social life since it was the role of men only to preach the word of God. As Lemba women are regarded as inferior by their male counterparts, this gender inequality should be combated in different ways which is what the next section looks at.

4.2 Ways of combating gender inequality in Lemba culture

In Lemba culture most people are Christians, so the church as an institution should educate and raise awareness to the people concerning gender equality. Rigid gender roles can hamper individual choices and restrict the potential of both women and men. Moreover, non-discriminatory gender roles in all areas of life especially in education, career choices, employment and others is an essential contribution towards gender equality. Men should participate and support gender equality needs and policies should also address gender related inequalities.

In primary and secondary education, gender socialisation should be taught in a way that there should be no demarcation line between men and women. Equality should be shown between them, not to regard the other part as superior or inferior than the other. Gender roles should not have bias in a way that women can be taken as the ones who perform minor duties. All duties are important regardless of who performs them.

Moreover, socialisation and education play a major role in informing people their culture and traditional beliefs that are dear to the society. Horton and Horton (1971) defined socialisation “as a process by which people develop personally by internalizing the culture.” It is important to teach a child basic life skills and parents play an important role in the exercise especially the mother. Skills are supposed to be taught to children regardless of their gender because some of the values instilled in girls include being submissive and subservient to men in the family. This leaves them disempowered and without the skills to escape violent situations and relationships. Therefore gender socialisation and education can help to combat gender inequality.

Furthermore, no household work should be specifically for girls, parents should share the duties equally regardless of the gender. The girl child is not the only one who should do all household chores at home while the boy child is playing. Mrs Hungwe (ZBC News, 8/03/16) pointed out that all children should do the same work, so parents should teach the boy child how to cook not to put the burden on girls only. By so doing, this can help to combat gender inequality and no child will mistreat the other, there will be fairness between males and females because they perform the same duties and it will help them not to regard the other as less important than the other.

Furthermore, Ubuntu can empower men to realise and accept the full humanity of women. When Ubuntu has been cleansed of its patriarchal foundations, it has the potential to inspire men to become advocates of gender justice. Such men will accept the full humanity of women and will challenge sexual and gender based violence wherever it is found (Maimela: 1995).

The other way to combat gender inequality is through campaigns whereby if members of the society feel that they are not being treated well in their society they organise campaign groups to patrol in the community of Mposi area. They do this as way to communicate to their community that they have also the special place just like any other individual. By so doing the society can be educated through action as well as messages on the banners. Women can have a chance to fight for their status as equal to their male counterparts.

In addition, legislative laws should be reviewed for there are some laws which segregate women in terms of land and property ownership. The girl child and the boy child should have equal privilege concerning property inheritance. If their parents die all children should be given the inheritance equally regardless of gender.

Grady (2000) reiterates that unjust societal norms and structures must be unmasked, that is to be exposed, the reality of gender power imbalances must be acknowledged and rejected. Above all, the greatest and most authoritative guide for the community, the bible, must be interpreted in a responsible way, a way that sets free and does not enslave. It should not be used to reinforce, justify and legitimate male supremacy. The church should take the lead on the path to gender equity.

4.3 Gender equality in creation stories

In Genesis 1, there are two key concepts being addressed that is Imago Dei and mission Dei. God created human beings as male and female, according to God's image. Genesis 1:26-27 implies that neither gender is inferior. A man or a woman does not fully bear the image of God, but male and female together (Gillham: 2011).

Jacob Allee (1986) pointed out that Genesis 1-3 sets the tone for male and female perhaps more specifically husband and wife relationships. The account begins with the forming of

both man and woman in the image of God. “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them”. Allee (1986) continued to say that this fact automatically separates men and woman from the rest of the created life forms as unique and special and assigns both male and female human beings a certain kind of dignity and value that is not given to the rest of the things God made. In value men and women are image bearers of God. When analysing the above view, the researcher concurs with the author due to the fact that men and women are equal because they are the product of one producer. They are created in the image of God so there is no way they can be separated from the other and regard the other as superior or inferior than the other.

Furthermore, Gillham (2011) argues that God made for man a woman as a helpmate or someone who would meet his needs and he would meet hers. This is a complementation view of the male and female relationship that says while men and women are equally valuable, that is fully deserving of dignity and respect that they are designed with complimentary purposes so that they might fulfil what the other lacks. Seen in this light, it should be understood that neither men nor women are superior to the other because there is mutual benefit from the other sex by God’s design and purpose.

Moreover, in the second creation story in Genesis 2:22, God created Eve from the rib of Adam and placed her at his side as a companion. The creation of Eve out of Adam’s rib meant that both Adam and Eve are made out of the same material. By having Eve, Adam exclaimed that at least he had a companion who was flesh of his flesh and bone of his bones (Genesis 2:23). Woman and man were created as a unity of the two in their common humanity as is stated in Genesis 2: 24. Therefore, a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife and they became one flesh. Woman and man are called to live in a communion of love, equality, reciprocity and mutuality. In Genesis 1:27 God called humanity

into existence, male and female as the crown of all creation (Webster: 2007). Women and men are equal partners created in the image and likeness of God.

Gruden (2003), points out that Genesis 1; 27 stated that God created male and female in God's image. This means that humans are like God and represent God. This implies that people of every race and gender deserve dignity, no matter how much the image of God is marred by sin, illness, or weakness or age or any disability. Still they have the status of being in God's image and therefore must be treated with dignity and respect that is due to God's image bearer. From the above view, the researcher observed that gender inequality should be not taken for granted, women and men are equal in the eyes of God and no one should be looked down upon the other.

Moreover, the Domestic Violence Act should be taken into consideration when dealing with gender equality. When someone violated someone's rights, laws should be enforced properly regardless which gender committed the crime. If a husband violates the rights of a wife, he should be punished because no one should be looked down upon and no one is an instrument of the other. So if the Domestic Violence Act is practiced there will be fairness between men and women because once a person abuses someone, he/she will have fear of the consequences hence equality can be enforced between women and men. However this act has limping side in the sense that some actions can restrain relationships in the family.

The other way to combat gender inequality is gender mainstreaming which is the integration of the gender perspective into every stage of policy, process, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation with a view to promote equality between women and men (E U:2011). It means assessing how policies impact on the life and position of both women and men and take responsibility to re-address them if necessary. This is the way to make gender

equality a concrete reality in the lives of women and men, creating space for everyone within the community to contribute to the process of articulating a shared vision of sustainable human development and translating it into reality (Gruden:2003).

There should be equal access to education between male and female. Some people in Lemba culture think that women are not supposed to get education equal to that of men. Boys are given preferential treatment as far as educational opportunities are concerned over girls. It is believed that the girls will marry when they grow up and have a husband to look after them. The fact that the boy child is given an opportunity and allowed to pursue with his choice than the girl child may divide people into male and female categories and regard the female as the second class citizen. So by giving them equal access to education, this can combat gender inequality in Lemba culture hence they can see each other as being on an equal footing.

Since, most of the Lemba are Christians, the church should raise awareness to the people in terms of gender inequality. It should educate people that there is no demarcation line between male and female because they are all created in the image of God. Women and men should jointly participate in the quest for justice for all including access to the basic necessities of life such as health care, education, housing, employment and leisure. Justice of inclusion in various social and ecological bonds of life, from the most intimate to the most cosmic should be considered (Jones: 2000). Jones (2000) continued to argue that the joint quest for justice entails that all women and men participate in the decision making and decision implementation process of life from the most intimate to most global. The joint creation of a human rights culture, within which woman human rights is crucial dimension, might be a vehicle to actualise dignity, freedom and justice.

During an interview with five Lemba women in Mposi area, the researcher noted that women should be involved in decision making. If the child is getting married, all parents should

discuss and decide what should be done concerning *lobola* negotiations not only men should be involved. Even if the husband is away, women should not panic to sell a cow for the supplement of the school fees for the children. One of them said that property belongs to the couple in marriage, so she should be given that chance. They said decision making should be enforced in the family issues, women should not act as the outsider, for instance when pledging the child is done, the mother of the child should be involved and she has the right to withdraw the decision made by the father of the child (Five women in Mtuzukwi village, interview, 20/03/16)

Koopman (2010) noted that women and men should live in spaces of constructive proximity that is to show empathy which is to live in each other's skins, feel each other's pain (sympathy) and interpathy that is to feel with each other histories of division and enmity. People should participate in each other's lives, to live with porous boundaries and wear each other's lenses. Women and men should also be freed from minimalistic gender identities and live with maximalist gender identities which make people say I am male but due to my hybridic living with females, I am more than male and I also wear the lenses of women.

Moreover, gender discrimination starts at the family level as soon as a child is born. The response shown by family members when a boy child is born is quite different from that of a girl. Right from birth, the girl child is subject to conditions promoting low self-esteem and later on an inferiority complex. This invariably constitutes hindrances in making vital lifelong decisions such as career choices and the task of contributing to the development of the nation (Grudem: 2003). Mr Mzezewa, (interview, Chegato, 20/03/16) pointed out that in Lemba, they still celebrate and congratulate the mother when the boy child is born. For the girl child, there will be no happiness equal to the one displayed when a baby boy is born. When the wife bears only girl children, the husband will decide to take another wife to bear the sons for him and the relatives will also shun her. In families, all children should be seen as a blessing from

God and no gender should be regarded more important than the other. If the families treat and view every children as equal then it is possible to combat gender inequality.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the capability and potential of women to lead in Lemba culture. It also focused on the suggested ways to combat gender inequality in Lemba culture and on creation stories in Genesis concerning gender equality. The following chapter will focus on the summary of the dissertation, recommendations concerning gender equality in Lemba culture. Conclusions will also be drawn pertaining the whole work in this dissertation.

CHAPTER FIVE

Summary, Recommendations and Conclusions

5.0 Introduction

After unmasking culturally-sanctioned gender inequality among the women in Lemba culture of Mposi area in Mberengwa, the researcher came out with the conclusions that women have capability and potential to lead even though men regard them as inferior and second class citizens. Even in creation stories, it is mentioned that men and women were created equally because they were created in the likeness of God. It has been discovered that women have important roles to play and without them the void could not be filled in Lemba people.

5.1 Summary

Chapter one of the dissertation dwelt on the area of investigation, statement of the problem, justification of the study, methodology and literature review.

In chapter two, the researcher investigated the history of the Lemba people and realised that there are two schools of thoughts concerning their origin. The Arabic origin was argued for by some while others pointed to the Judaic origin. Having studied closely Lemba people, the researcher discovered that the Lemba people have different views pertaining their origin. As a result, the origin of the Lemba people is not clear and is controversial.

Chapter three focused on the roles of women in Lemba culture and the researcher observed that the Lemba women have pivotal roles to play in their culture. They perform many duties in Lemba culture for instance in male circumcision they cater for the welfare of initiates, in female initiation (Komba) they educate girls to be responsible enough when married, during home bringing ceremonies they brew beer and cook food, at funerals they are comforters to

the mourners, in marriages they are there to satisfy men's needs to mention but a few. Due to these roles women are viewed as the pillars of religious ceremonies of the Lemba people even though they are side-lined by their male counterparts in what they think are important issues.

Chapter four focused on the capability and potential of women in Lemba culture. The creation stories in Genesis were discussed pertaining the equality between women and men. From the researcher's observation women and men are equal and no one should be considered inferior than the other because they are all in need of each other. The chapter also dwells on the roles which the women can perform even though they are not regarded and considered in patriarchal culture of Mposi area. Basing on gathered information from the informants, the researcher discovered that women are capable to perform the roles which are done by men and their roles are important even though they are regarded inferior and their duties as minor by their male counterparts.

The ways to combat gender inequality were also discussed in chapter four. It was advocated that the Domestic Violence Act should be adhered to and those who abuse the other part should be punished severely regardless of how one thinks he/she is superior. Gender socialisation should be taught in schools and bias should be avoided when socialising in education sectors. In primary and secondary schools students should be also taught that males should not be regarded as superior than females since everyone is equal before God. Avoiding gender discrimination and gender mainstreaming, education, equal roles and others were also discussed.

5.2 Recommendations

Recommendations are of paramount importance to the whole community of Lemba people of Mposi area. After unmasking culturally-sanctioned gender inequalities in the above

community, the writer noted loop holes in Lemba culture as far as gender inequality is concerned. Women are seen as inferior than their male counterparts and their roles are perceived as minor duties whereas those of men are viewed as more important. From the interviews with VaRemba people, the researcher noticed that women are unfairly treated in Lemba society as well as in their rituals, for instance they are beaten when they fail to comply with the demands of the rituals in *Komba* initiation and during *ngoma* where they help men with food. They also work extra hard whilst men are sitting at home doing nothing. The writer recommends that the Lemba people must deconstruct their belief that females are less important than males. They should respect every human being regardless of gender. This can be fulfilled when gender discrimination is removed from birth when people celebrate the birth of the boy child, ceremonies should also be performed when the girl child is born. It is further pointed out that gender roles should not be stipulated because it may cause gender inequality. No role is supposed to be that of male and female, everyone should undertake especially the household chores, both sexes should take part to prove equality.

The researcher also discovered that when the males go to the mountain for circumcision, they are taught to develop a superiority attitude over women. One thing that must remain clear in people's mind is the fundamental reality that women are truly humans just like men, so why does the other human being tend to regard himself as superior than the other whilst both were created in the likeness as well as in the image of God? All that is advocated by the researcher is that the Lemba elders and the Nyamukangas should re-visit their teachings to the initiates to love their wives and to be regard themselves as equal to their spouses. Ubuntu can empower men to realise and accept the full humanity of women as pointed out by Dube (2004).

In unmasking culturally-sanctioned gender inequalities in Lemba culture, it is observed that the marriage institution is one of the controversial issue where women are side-lined during

lobola negotiations, their duties should not only be confined to the kitchen to provide food during the ceremony. The distribution of items is in favour of male counterparts in which a women are given only a cow and clothes and the rest is taken by men. It must be recommended that the Lemba people should allow women to participate during *lobola* negotiations and the price be it money and cattle, should be shared equally between the parents of the child. It was discovered that women are not allowed to take part or to attend in Dare. Despite being side-lined, they are the key influencers in those meetings. Some decisions made there are from those women because men tend to seek advice from their female counterparts beforehand. So there is no need to exclude them from the decision making, they should be allowed to participate because valid ideas can be obtained.

VaRemba people also need to be reminded that menstruation has an essential role to play in the human being's life. They should also bear in mind that menstruation is natural and biological and it is ordained by God, so it should be regarded as godly not to treat them as if they are unclean. Pre-menstrual and elderly people are the only ones allowed to participate in preparation of the rituals of the home bringing ceremony because they are regarded as clean and those who are married and girls who menstruate are seen as unclean. So these people are encouraged to re-think and re-ritualise women's sexuality which insights women to be able to feel both holy and whole in practising their sexuality as Oduyoye (1986) viewed.

Furthermore, in Lemba culture when women are helping the male initiates with food whilst they are in their bush camps and they fail to cook or serve the food as required by the Nyamukangas, they are beaten thoroughly with *Munyadza* or *Mukambamasani* tree. To be honest, is this truly being human, why physical abuse for such minor issues? The researcher recommends that these practices should be re-addressed to protect our dignity as human beings. To be frank enough, human beings should respect other people's human rights for the

just society. Moreover, the VaRemba elite must be aware of the Domestic violence Act which rejects this ill-treatment to human beings.

From the interviews, it was noted that in Komba rituals (female initiation), girls should be found virgins when the tests are done. Those who are found not pure will be beaten thoroughly and the half bottle is presented after graduation ceremony. Having in mind the legislative laws, the researcher recommended that the Vadabi or the Jemberes (female initiators) should not be allowed to beat the initiates, they should ask first the victims what incidents led to this situation. A girl child could have been raped by a relative or a stranger. They should not run into conclusions that the girl is promiscuous. On the other hand, how scientifically is this proven? What about if there are other factors such as sporting activities which broke the hymen? Are these women medical doctors?

5.3 Conclusion

In a nutshell, the writer needs to remind the Lemba people and other readers that in the Bible women and men were created equally in the likeness and image of God. Furthermore, they should know that women have important roles to play in Lemba society and they are the pillars of African society at large. So by this virtue, Lemba elders should re-address and re-ritualise some of the rituals and issues which tend to suppress women in the name of culture. By so doing, this can help to combat gender inequality in Lemba societal lives. Moreover, Lemba women should be encouraged to stand for their rights, to fight gender inequality through awareness campaigns, education in churches and schools, legislative laws such as the Domestic Violence Act and others. Women and men should work together to attain the status of women as human beings not properties or creatures, they should sympathise and empathise among themselves to solve the problem of gender inequality in Lemba culture. Women

should know that they can lead in Lemba society even though they are sometimes looked down upon by their male counterparts.

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INTERVIEWS

Hassan	T	Gwaai	05/03/16
Mavhunduse	T	Mposi	20/01/16
Matandu	P	Makereni	28/02/16
Mpandasekwa	M	Makereni	01/03/16
Mbuya Makotore		Mposi	04/01/16
Mbuya Zodzi		Dubwi	20/01/16
Ngavi	A	Mposi	15/03/16
Zhou	P	Mposi	05/03/16
Simari	Y	Chegato	13/02/16
Simari	C	Ruzengwe	04/03/16
Tangawamira (Rev)	K	Danga Parish	10/03/16
Zhou	Z	Ruvuzhe	05/01/16

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Are the Lemba people from the Arabic tradition or Jewish tradition? Give reasons for your view.

Which practices are similar with Jewish tradition?

As an elder in the society, what are the roles of women in Lemba society?

Do women have the capability and potential to lead in Lemba societal life?

What do you think can be done by women and men to combat gender inequality in Lemba culture?