

**THE EFFECTS OF BIBLICAL AND CULTURAL PATRIARCHY ON
THE LIVES OF MARRIED DAMARA WOMEN IN THE
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN THE REPLUBIC OF
NAMIBIA (ELCRN)**

Nokokure Rogate Gaomas

Student no. 205507049

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Masters of Theology Degree in the
School of Religion and Theology, University of KwaZulu Natal,

Pietermaritzburg
2007

DECLARATION

As required by the university regulations, I state that this study, unless indicated otherwise is my original work.

N. Gamas
Signature

11 Apr 2008
Date

As supervisor, I agree to the submission of this dissertation

Supervisor. Dr. Sarojini Nadar

.....
Signature

.....
Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and for most, I thank God the heavenly Father/ Mother for giving me strength, ability and understanding and thus made it possible for me to accomplish my task. At the same time I love to thank all who played a part throughout my studies and helped me to come where I am right now.

I am thankful to the ELCRN who has granted me the opportunity to further my studies, especially Bishop Z. Kameeta for believing in me. Also the United Evangelical Mission (UEM) for funding my studies.

I am indebted to my supervisor, Dr. Sarojini Nadar for her guidance, support and encouragement in my work when I felt down.

To my former English teacher, dear friend and editor of my dissertation Susan Bauer, thank you for believing in me and for your motivation, I will cherish your unselfish generosity and sacrifice as tokens of ideal (womanity) humanity.

In the same vain, I want to thank Annalise Kockott for her tremendous contributions and assistance as the librarian of the Lutheran Theological Institute (LTI).

I also thank the participants of /*Â#gomes* (Okombahe) and vicinities who spent their time untiring on my research and contributed tremendously to this study. Without their support I could not have finished this dissertation. Also to all my friends, whose names I unfortunately cannot mention here, thanks for all your support and encouragement,

To my extended family back home, my parents and in-laws your emotional and material support did not go unnoticed and is well appreciated.

Special thanks to my husband Jive for his support, and for sharing household duties with my son Gerald, while I focused on my studies. Also for taking care of the younger siblings, Hatago and /Khachetago..

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyse the links between patriarchy in the bible, the Damara culture, and the ecclesiological practices of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCN). Using empirical research (interviews) and socio-historical methodology, the study demonstrates how biblical patriarchy affects married Damara women and evaluates the consequent roles of women in the religious context of the church, in the light of the biblical and cultural patriarchy which Damara women are subjected to.

So the study is conducted on three levels: cultural patriarchy, ecclesiological and biblical patriarchy. A study on the cultural patriarchy reveals the social lives and roles of married women, while ecclesiological patriarchy reveals how culture influences women's role in church. Both moreover, reflect ways in which women are being denied full humanity and thus deprived of public roles, revealing clear gender roles for each gender. The presence of biblical patriarchy is revealed through a study on the social and religious lives of married women in the Bible, which too indicates similarities with the Damara culture in which women are being treated as inferior to men. The comparison of the biblical and the Damara cultures help illumine ways in which both cultural and biblical patriarchy influence married Damara women's lives.

For the purpose of this study the theories that are used are: African women's theologies, Feminist cultural hermeneutics and feminist ecclesiology.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
 CHAPTER 1	 1
Introduction.....	1
Background and outline	1
Research problems and objectives: key questions to be asked	4
Research problems and objectives: broader issues to be investigated	6
Principal theories upon which the research project will be constructed (research design)	6
Research methodology and methods.....	9
Limitations	13
Structure of dissertation:	14
CHAPTER 2	15
Introduction.....	15
Marriage among the early Damara people.....	16
The Importance of marriage.....	17
Initiation of marriage.....	18
The marking of the girl	20
The consent of girl's parents	22
Marital gifts.....	25
Marriage preparation	29
Time of silence (Inōbas).....	30
The wedding feast	32
Rituals of da#ais (stepping on feet) and khaukhaus (firemaking).....	34
The accompanying girl.....	36
Practices in marriage	37
Barren women	37
Rules for married women.....	40
Gender role construction	43
Equal rights in marriage	47
Decision-making and dependency	51
Marital problems	52
Widowhood	54
Marriage today	55
Conclusion	56
CHAPTER 3	59
Introduction.....	59
Definition of Church	61

The role of women as being church in the congregation of /Â#gomes (Okombahe)	62
The traditional role expectations for women	64
Changes in women's roles in church	65
The way Okombahe society regards and treats women in leadership positions	69
Conclusion	71
CHAPTER 4	74
CONCLUSION	74
Concluding summary	74
Bibliography	80
Interviews	87
Appendix 1	88
Appendix 2	90

Behold the Rib¹

So God put Adam into a deep sleep
And took out a bone, ah hah!
And it is said that it was a rib.
Behold de rib!
A bone of man's side.
He put de man to sleep and made wo-man,
And men and women been sleeping together ever since.
Behold de rib!
Brothers, if God
Had taken dat bone out of man's head
He would have meant for woman to rule, hah
If he had taken a bone out of his foot,
He would have meant for us to dominate and rule.
He could have made her out of back-bone
And then she would have been behind us.
But, no, God Almighty, he took de bone out of his side
So dat places de woman beside us;
Hah! God knowed his own mind.
Behold the rib!

¹ A Sermon cited cited by J. Cone (1975: 58-9).

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

1.2 Background and outline

The preceding sermon drawing on the biblical account of creation, is obviously attempting to highlight the equality of spouses in marriage, through subverting an age-old obsession with an insignificant rib. This age-old obsession with the significance of the rib can be found in many cultures and the Damara culture is no different. However, contrary to the way in which the rib is used in this sermon to advocate equality, in Damara culture the rib is invoked as a sign that women are indeed inferior having been created from a “mere rib”.

Furthermore, the man is understood to be created first and assumes therefore the leading role, with the woman to follow every step of the man. Strengthening the understanding that women are inferior to men is the exhortation in the marriage formulary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia, (hereafter ELCRN), which emphasizes woman’s subjugation to man citing the apostle Paul:

“Wives, be subordinate to your husbands, as is proper in the Lord. Husbands love your wives and avoid any bitterness toward them” (Col.3: 18-19).

(The African Bible)

The creation stories and the epistles are not the only biblical texts, which bear influence on gender relations within Damara culture. In this dissertation, I would like to examine some of these biblical texts, in addition to some cultural “texts” to show how each of them contribute to the oppression of women in Damara society.

Ethnically the Damara people are classified as a Khoe¹ group, because of the clicks in their language; on the other hand, because they are Black, they are associated with the

¹ Khoe means “people”

Bantu. Damaras² share the same language with the Nama, with only dialectical differences that also change in meaning from region to region. In 1993 their population was estimated at 132 000, which makes up 8,5% of the total Namibian population. The area in which Damaras live extends from the north to the south of the country and from east to west. They occupy the area from Otavi to Rehoboth, including central Namibia, in which the capital city Windhoek is found. From east to west, their population stretches from the Kalahari Desert to the Namib Desert on the west coast, and along the border of the Etosha pan up to Kamanjab and Khorixas (Buys & Nambala, 2003:xxviii). The Damara tribe is comprised of the following eight clans: /Gowanin, who live in the areas from Gobabis in the east, to Rehoboth; /Khomanin, in the /Khomas mountains including Windhoek; Tsoaxudaman, from Otjimbingwe up to the valley of the Swakoprivier; !Oegân in the Erongo (!Oe#gâb) mountains up to Okombahe; Dâuredaman in the Brandberg where Uis is located; Namidaman and //Huruben in the area of Sesfontein; #Aodaman, !Omen and Augowan in the Paresis mountains, including the present Otjiwarongo; and /Gei-o-daman from Outjo to Omaruru³. The clans' names are derived from the geographical areas where they live (: xxix).

This study focuses specifically on women of the !Oe#gân-clan of /Â#gomes (Okombahe) and the surrounding areas. /Â#gomes is the Damara tribal centre, which holds traditional and sentimental value for the Damara tribe at large, as it is the place that contains important shrines where the Damara kings are buried. Therefore, the Damaras come together once a year at /Â#gomes to hold their traditional festivals in which they commemorate the deaths of the fallen kings. While Okombahe is the settlement of the Damara tribe as a whole, it is the territory of the !Oe#gâ-clan of the Damara, over which they hold jurisdiction.

² Since it is a language shared by two different tribes, it came to be called Damara/Nama language or *Khoe khoe gowab* (khoe khoe language) after the Namibian independence.

³ See H. Vedder. (1928: 42). Also S. Nambala (1994:17), as well as the included Namibian map for the geographical areas in which Damaras were found and still live today.

The Damara belong mostly to the ELCRN, which was founded by the Rhenish Mission Society in 1842. The Bible was introduced by the missionaries (of the Rhenish Mission Society), who taught that it was a book of authority. Because mission and colonialism went hand in hand, the authority of the Bible was never questioned and was understood as the Word of God⁴. The Bible, for many Christian people all over the world and certainly for the Damara people, is a book of authority, which should be obeyed, regardless of the culture in which it was originally written. Thus, the Bible has shaped and influenced the lives of Damara Christians since their conversion in the 19th century.

The reason I have chosen to focus on the Damara within the ELCRN is that I am a member and a pastor in this church. Being a Damara woman myself, I have observed the prevailing traditional systems of male domination in the marriage practices of the Damara tribe. I am better placed to write about my own people, particularly as an insider who knows and observes oppressive cultural practices toward married women that happen in my own tribe.⁵ For this reason, I have undertaken ethnographic research among the Damara people.

Ethnography is a research method that investigates different aspects in each culture and its social customs. Ethnographers gather information about people by staying together with them and collecting data through interaction and observation. Ethnography has usually been used to describe researchers who are outsiders studying a group of people in a particular location – here I am appropriating ethnography to include “insider research.” The data are later analyzed and interpreted. Analysis is important as it enables the ethnographer to tell the story of the people or group that is the focus of her or his research. Complementing the analysis, interpretation helps the ethnographer describe the meaning of such a story. Such research “make(s) the story meaningful to insiders and the results meaningful to outsiders” (LeCompte M & Schensul, J, 1999:2-3).

⁴ See for instance, laws that were drawn up by missionary Knudsen concerning captainship, which emphasized God’s Word as the law that governs over the people with justice, in J. Baumann.(1967:17). C.J. Hellberg (1997:39-44) describes how mission activities in Namibia went hand in hand with colonialism, **and that the people had little choice but to accept all missionary teachings as norms.**

⁵ This is also in line with the theory of feminist cultural hermeneutics, which I have chosen as a framework for this dissertation.

The cultural practices of the Damara are male dominant. The sources of this male domination are often traced to the patriarchy in the culture only, but it is my contention that there is a link between the patriarchy that exists in the culture and the patriarchy that exists in the Bible, particularly because of the authority given to the Bible by the Damara people. For example, according to Damara culture, women need to be accountable to their husbands in all aspects of life. They have to get permission from their husbands for everything they do. Similarly, according to the Bible, women are under the authority of their husbands to whom they have to be submissive (Gen 12:10-16; 20:1-2).

It would be helpful therefore, to study the patriarchy that exists in the Damara culture in conjunction with, and in the light of, biblical patriarchy. In order to uncover the effects of patriarchy on women in the Bible, I study the experiences of the women in the Bible. Because of the vastness of the material, I focus mostly on the matriarchs, although I also examine the way women in general were subjugated under male domination in the Old Testament. To do this I look at instances in which these women were deprived of their rights as human beings⁶ and were silenced by their culture. There is also evidence from the Bible that the patriarchs took decisions on behalf of their wives which women were expected to obey.

Having exposed the patriarchal patterns in the Bible, I show how such similar patterns exist in the Damara culture, to such an extent that even if one were to insist that they were co-incidental, one will still need to admit the similarities and links. I show in this dissertation that just as in the ancient biblical culture, marriage reduces the independence of married Damara women and places them in subordinate positions. The dignity and humanity of married Damara women are not taken into consideration.

1.2 Research problems and objectives: key questions to be asked

⁶ The term human right is a modern concept, but I use it within the category of liberation hermeneutics, reading from my own context.

Societies are comprised of men and women who form a community, yet women are not regarded as equal members of these communities. Women are limited to traditional gender roles such as domestic work and childbearing, which confine them to the home. Childbearing is, of course, not problematic in and of itself, but it becomes so when it is regarded as the only activity of which a woman is capable, and in cases where women are not given the choice to decide whether or not they want to have children. While taking care of their children at home, women miss opportunities outside the home and are thus unable to develop themselves. The gendered roles decided upon by the cultural and biblical beliefs of Damara society mean that many women suffer unequal treatment. In the Bible, emphasis was put on having children, especially boys, a practice that forced barren women to allow or accept polygamy by giving their handmaids to their husbands, as in the examples of Hagar, Bilhah and Zilpah⁷.

Oduyoye observes, in her seminal work, *Daughters of Anowa* (1995:131), that almost all African women experience patriarchy, even if it is hidden from outsiders. It is hidden because women fear men's reaction should they reveal the truth, and they thus endure their oppression in silence and solidarity. Nadar (2003:189), citing West, has also noted that the dominated have ways of dealing with their oppression, but that their fear of the consequences of their actions, should they defy their inferior status, prevents them from acting.

Clearly, the unequal treatment of women due to their gender, whether in the Bible or in Damara culture, has negative effects on women⁸. Because the Bible and their culture have such a negative authority over Damara women's lives, and because both are patriarchal, an analysis of how this patriarchy influences married women is needed. Hence, the objectives of this study are:

1. To demonstrate how biblical patriarchy affected married women in the Bible, through a socio-historical investigation.

⁷ See Gen 30:1- 13

⁸ P, Guriras (2002:2) states that the Damara women are required to be silent about sexual matters even if they are raped, thus preventing women to report rape to the police. See also F, Moyo (2004:73) who argues that sex as a taboo and a power tool in which women are powerless, promotes the spread of HIV because of the women's inability to take decisions in sexual issues.

2. To illustrate how the Damara culture sustains patriarchy, through empirical research providing concrete examples of the way in which women are treated
3. To evaluate the consequent roles of women in the religious context of the church, in the light of the biblical and cultural patriarchy which Damara women are subjected to.
4. To analyze the correlation between biblical and cultural patriarchy,

1.3 Research problems and objectives: Broader issues to be investigated

Through analyzing the persisting male dominance in Damara culture, which affects women negatively particularly in the religious context, this study also to a lesser extent, exposes the roles of Damara women in family, politics and society. This further raises questions about Damara women's feelings regarding their treatment culturally, socially and in the religious sphere. Clearly, the way women are raised and taught to behave contributes to the persistence of patriarchy in Damara society, and this perhaps leads to feelings of inferiority, which are internalized by women. This psychological dimension is also one that is out of the scope of this research, but it is hoped that this research will raise the awareness that patriarchal and oppressive cultural and religious attitudes need to be challenged in order for women to gain freedom in all aspects of their lives.

1.4 Principal theories upon which the research project will be constructed (research design)

I explore the extent of the effect of patriarchy on Damara women by applying certain principal theories in the analysis of their stories: African women's theology (a field of study which is explained in detail below); feminist cultural hermeneutics, as pioneered by Musimbi Kanyoro (2001:104a); and ecclesiology in the framework of feminist ecclesiology. These approaches focus particularly on cultural practices in the lives of African women. They are also activist in nature in that they aim to create a future in which women are equal to men. Therefore, these approaches are employed as a means of seeking ways to promote positive social change.

African Women's Theology is a type of feminist theology, itself a branch of liberation theology. Since feminist theology originated in America, it advocated for the liberation of white American and European women. In order to make feminist theology meaningful to women in different contexts other than the white American and European contexts, African women came up with a theology that could address their own experiences. This has come to be known as African women's theology (Phiri, 2004:16). The task of African women's theology is, first, to express African women's experiences. Women's experiences can be accessed by means of storytelling, which is seen as an important "source of theology", as it encourages stories⁹ of women and listening to women from different countries (Oduyoye, 2001:10a). Reflection upon these stories revives certain important aspects of culture and belief such as Africans' understanding of God - an understanding to which women have contributed tremendously (:23a). African women's theology is valuable because it is constructed in a way that it is congruent with women's priorities and is constructed "from the place of women" (:11a). It emphasises interpretation of the Bible and culture from the woman's place, seeking to distinguish and extract that which is liberating. Since women are aware that not everything they have been taught is beneficial to them, African women's theology encourages women to approach the Bible with suspicion (Schüssler- Fiorenza, 1992:27, 30; Frymer-Kensky, 2002:xvi), while acknowledging the different context and culture in which it was written. African women's theology also rejects any harmful interpretation to women or the voiceless. It encourages recognition of positive aspects of culture with the aim to advance these. It maintains that nothing is unchangeable (2001:12a). Oduyoye (:13a) continues to argue that the "key to this search is women's full humanity and participation in religion and society". Therefore, African women's theology is an appropriate tool for this study, because it identifies with Damara women's understanding of the Bible through their own experiences, since African women take experience as a starting point of theology.¹⁰

⁹ Due to the limitation of words, in this study, I have not recorded the participants' experiences and those of others in the community in full, but rather extractions of their stories.

¹⁰ See Phiri (2004:16) who states the importance of experience 'African women's theologies in the new millennium. Kanyoro (2001:167b) also advocates storytelling as a method that deals with women's experiences. Oduyoye (2001:9a) states that African Christian theologies use women's experience as a starting point.. Western feminists Exum (1995:65) also points out that feminism starts with the marginalization of women in the history which feminism seeks to expose. Fiorenza Schüssler (1997:3) in

Feminist cultural hermeneutics deals with women's experiences within culture. Kanyoro (2001:104a) argues that feminist cultural hermeneutics "can help us develop a vision for mature cultural dialogues". It recognizes the subordination of women in the cultural context and aims to rescue them from cultural bondage by finding ways in which to change society. Moreover, feminist cultural hermeneutics serves to critique culture and the Bible and then aims to recover the suppressed voices of women under patriarchy. As can be noted from above, feminist cultural hermeneutics is born out of the need for an interpretation of culture from women's perspectives, through which life experiences are explained in ways that are sensible to women. Therefore, it critiques issues of culture that subject women to a lower status, as even the Bible, which is regarded as the Word of God, is read through cultural lenses. Kanyoro (2002: 6) shows through a study based in her local Kenyan context how some African women take everything they read in the Bible for granted without taking into account the fact that the Bible was written for a specific context. Therefore, feminist cultural hermeneutics does not only deal with culture that needs to be reinterpreted, but advocates for such a cultural re-interpretation of the Bible, which is known as biblical hermeneutics. Biblical hermeneutics enables people to reinterpret biblical texts "in the light of their times and culture" (: 9). Therefore, cultural hermeneutics is a tool that puts culture as well as the Bible through a test. Kanyoro considers cultural hermeneutics as a tool that analyses and interprets the way "culture conditions people's understanding of reality at a particular time and location" (: 9).

Not everything in culture is negative; therefore, Kanyoro (2001:167b) further suggests a theology of inculturation to reclaim culture. She adds that such a theology needs to promote justice, support life and the "dignity of women" (: 167b). Therefore, like African women's theology, she suggests the story-telling method as a means by which the thought patterns of women regarding their cultural belief system can be discovered.

addition, says that the interpretation of the Bible by women shows how women were limited culturally and socio-religiously.

Feminist cultural hermeneutics is therefore another theoretical framework for my study, which enables me to draw out positive elements in the Damara culture, while reinterpreting abusive practices in culture.

Since this dissertation not only deals with the social aspects of culture, but also with church activities of women, feminist ecclesiology also proves to be an important theoretical framework in this regard. Ecclesiology is the way the church defines itself. However, ecclesiology can be seen “as a form of male discourse by which men have attempted to define valid and invalid forms of being church as well as identifying women’s discourses of church as not being church” (Watson, 2002:6). In the history of the church, women were not regarded as church; therefore, Watson argues, “Feminist ecclesiology is responding to a situation of profound ambiguity” (: 5). Feminist ecclesiology takes women’s presence and significance in church into account, which it aims to analyze in terms of “development of the ecclesiological debate” and such ecclesiology aims to reclaim areas of church that previously were dominated by men (: 6). It advocates for women’s involvement in church on their own terms. It also endeavours to rewrite ecclesiology in such a way that it enables “multiple discourses of being church” (: 11). Furthermore, feminist ecclesiology analyses injustice in the church with the aim to “transcend boundaries” set in church and “to transform it into an open space where justice is found” (: 14). This framework is important since it recognizes women’s presence and their humanity in the church and acknowledges women’s activities.

All these theories are significant to this research, since all have the potential to transform a society. In using them, I intend to contribute to the transformation of patriarchy in Damara culture and to empowering Damara women towards it. The same theories are used to analyze the experiences of the women of the Bible in which they are silenced and oppressed.

1.5 Research methodology and methods

This is an empirical study based on primary data, which were collected by means of interviews and case studies, as well as published and unpublished written material on the topic. Written material brought to light the experiences of women living under male domination. This study comprises three levels, namely cultural patriarchy, ecclesiological patriarchy and biblical patriarchy, as it tries to find out if there is a link between cultural patriarchy and biblical patriarchy, while at the same time it highlights the influences of both cultural patriarchy and biblical patriarchy on Damara women's church lives.

The church-based research involved interviews with women of Okombahe who belong to the ELCRN. Since this dissertation investigates the experiences of Damara women, qualitative research was undertaken. I conducted research among married and divorced Damara women in the vicinities of Okombahe. The fifteen women included those from different levels in society, those with limited education¹¹, those who have had access to education, those employed outside of the home, and those who worked within the home. Among the group, two were widowed and two divorced, while all others were still married. Apart from one childless woman, the other women had between four and eleven children. The occupational roles of the women varied: five were homemakers, one was a retired nurse, and two were pensioners, a retired hostel worker, a business woman, a pre-school teacher, a school principal, two hostel workers (secular and a church hostel, respectively) and a traditional headwoman¹², who serves as member in the traditional authorities of the *Oe#gâ* clan of the Damara tribe.

Their ages ranged from 48 to 78. This age group was chosen because they are not young; rather, they are more experienced than younger people and would provide more mature information. It was important, for the purpose of this study, to select women from this age range since they have trampled deep prints into life and have experienced both traditional culture and the dawning of new innovations in women's lives that could be relevant for this study. Interviews with these women were aimed at hearing their different views about how they perceived and experienced marriage.

¹¹ By this, I include both women with low education and women with no education at all.

¹² The headquarters of the !Oe#gan traditional authorities is settled in Okombahe and it is responsible for the administration of justice in that traditional constituency.

I selected the women randomly for participation in the interviews. This method depended largely on the accessibility and willingness of the participants. The fact that I was acquainted with the women because they belonged to the congregation in Okombahe that I served as a pastor for two years, made the interviews easy. The participants were also helpful in referring me to other women they thought would assist me. I wanted to get a wide sample of women in different marital statuses¹³, and this snowballing technique of sampling helped. This technique, considering the limited time available for the research, was important and helpful for collecting information because it expanded and accumulated the research data rapidly. This method of sampling captured a variety of women from a cross-section of the Damara society, hence providing a more detailed and fuller picture of the group as a whole.

While I hope that my study illuminates the effects of biblical and cultural patriarchy on married women, and may thus be used by them to improve their life, a qualitative study to open up the broader issue of the effect of these patriarchal forms upon Damara women will probably need to be taken up in the future.

I conducted semi-structured interviews, guided by open-ended questions, with the women who were required to tell their stories and experiences of patriarchy. Semi-structured interviews facilitate discovering new aspects by a detailed investigation of explanations given by the participant (Bless & Higson-Smith 1995:110). These interviews were recorded by means of note taking and tape-recording.

Appointments made with the women I decided to interview preceded the interviews, and I scheduled two to three meetings, depending on the need. In the first meeting, I stated the reason for my research and explained the nature of my research, so that the participants had time to think it through. During the second meeting, I explained the meaning of the consent form they were expected to sign and I allowed the participants

¹³ Although, I am aware of same-sex marriages, (though not yet legalized in Namibia) and same-sex relationships of women, I limited my study to women in heterosexual marriages.

time to decide whether they still wanted to participate. To ensure the ethical nature and accuracy of the outcome of the research, the participants were informed of their right to refuse to answer whatever question they did not wish to. They were also assured of the confidentiality guarantee should they prefer that their names not be mentioned in the dissertation. They were informed that the confidential information would be stored in a safe place. At the third meeting, I conducted the interview. The consecutive visits with the women helped establish their trust in me.

The interviews were conducted in the mother tongue, (Damara) and were recorded with a tape recorder, while at the same time I took notes. I then transcribed and translated the interviews into English. While care was taken to translate as accurately as possible, some things, that cannot be translated well into English, because English is deficient with regard to expressing some things that are done in African societies. African languages have specific words and terms that English does not have because native speakers of English lack similar cultural practices in their societies. For this reason, I include some parts of the interviews in the vernacular so that readers of Damara origin, or those who are able to read it, can see for themselves whether the English translations are accurate. Another reason for stating what the women have said in the vernacular is to attribute authenticity to the voices of these women. This might be a bit cumbersome at times, but since I do feminist work I do not want to talk on behalf of these women, or be a mere mediator. Rather I want their voices to be heard.

The women were happy to contribute to the creation of knowledge about marriage in the Damara culture, because there is a scarcity of books written on the Damara and even those that exist contain mostly distorted information¹⁴. It is also common knowledge that

¹⁴ See for example C, Allison's (1988:8-9) description of Damaras, , who gives an account of the Damara livelihood with not wholly correct information on the way they treat livestock. Also R, Jones (1951:5) who pretends that the Damaras from Aukeigas were relocated to Okombahe and fails to state that different clans of the Damara tribe lived in different areas from the north to the west and east of the country, including Okombahe. Besides this, he also fails to mention that all these places still have their original Damara names, indicating the inhabitants distorted the names making it easier for them to pronounce. See also Heinrich, Vedder (1937: pp 66) who portrays the Damara in a derogatory manner, an image that is totally distorted from the reality. Brigitte Lau (1982: 3-4), condemns Heinrich Vedder who, while doing ethnographic studies, centered it on the whites' viewpoint supporting "colonial settler myths, especially regarding the 'Bergdama'".

women were rarely, if ever, involved in the writing of issues that pertain to their history and culture. This is also true in ancient Israel in which the recorded history mainly reflects male interests. This is likely because the male authors of the Biblical texts were male and had little interest in giving accounts of women's experiences. This is a fact that is also supported by Oduyoye (1995:1) who argues that history only contains "stories of the powerful". Women are definitely not among the powerful, and this is certainly the case with Damara women. Therefore, all of these participants gave their consent to use their names in this dissertation. This may be because it is their first time to partake in a research that relies largely on their knowledge and the realization that the information they provided might be valuable for the study at hand. They also felt honoured to have been involved in such a study they too regarded as important, since I explained the importance of this study, which does not only focus on collecting of data, but also to write about the history of Damara people.

The research also helped me draw conclusions from observations made during the interviews. I preferred not to interview women in a group, but rather individually for two reasons: to ensure confidentiality, and to provide the women with the opportunity for sharing their experiences without interruption.

1.6 Limitations

There were two possibilities that might have been a hindrance to my research. Firstly, although the participants and I belong to the Damara tribe, we belong to different clans: they belong to the !Oe-#gâ- clan, while I am from the Tsoaxu-clan. Secondly, the fact that I am a pastor might have hindered them from sharing their experiences with me, although I considered the opposite true in certain circumstances. However, I did not believe that these factors would be a major hindrance, since I have been working with these women while serving for two years as pastor of this Okombahe congregation of which they are members. This is also one reason why I chose to do my research among them. Therefore, the fact that I am not a total stranger to them (because we belong to the same tribe and because I am their pastor) had more advantages than disadvantages.

Furthermore, my being a woman probably made it easier for them to talk freely with me about their experiences¹⁵.

1.7 Structure of dissertation:

The research is divided into four chapters, each dealing with a separate issue.

Chapter 1 forms the introduction, in which the purpose of the dissertation is given. It demonstrates how African women's theologies, feminist cultural hermeneutics and feminist ecclesiology serve as the appropriate theoretical framework to analyze data.

Chapter 2 focuses on the effects of cultural patriarchy on Damara women. The information is drawn from women's experiences by means of interviews with them, while at the same time drawing on examples of biblical patriarchy that support women's subjugation and the influences of this on Damara women.

Chapter 3 illustrates women's experiences in the church in the light of patriarchy within the framework of ecclesiology and the way claims of biblical authority are invoked in order to dominate them.

Chapter 4 forms the conclusion. It briefly re-states the problem being researched and the effects and consequences of biblical, ecclesiological and cultural patriarchy on Damara women. Finally, the chapter contains recommendations as to how the issue of patriarchy can be dealt with by various entities: women, society and church.

¹⁵ See for instance Haddad (2000:4) who as a woman priest has conducted research among women with fruitful results.

CHAPTER 2: THE EFFECTS OF CULTURAL PATRIARCHY ON MARRIED DAMARA WOMEN'S LIVES

2.1 Introduction

This chapter studies the effects of biblical and cultural patriarchy on married Damara women's lives and is based on interviews conducted with married or widowed Damara women of /Á#gomes (Okombahe). This chapter also examines the effects of patriarchy on married women in the Bible, by focusing on the matriarchs of Israel, namely Sarah, Rebecca, Leah and Rachel, to show how they were affected by the patriarchal culture in which they lived as married women. A comparison of the experiences of the matriarchs with those of married Damara women will expose ways in which the claims of biblical patriarchy may support certain viewpoints of Damara culture.

Ruether (1996:205) describes patriarchy as a system, which enforces male sovereignty in the legal, social, economic and political relations of a society over people in that male's household that are dependent on him. Dependent people are all people living in the same house as the head like wife/wives, daughters, unmarried sons and slaves.

In the African context, Isabel Phiri has noted that Jewish culture, like the African culture, is patriarchal and hierarchical because males dominate it (Phiri, 2000:12). The term "patriarchy" in the ancient Israelite culture has its origin from the time Abraham was called by God who promised that he would be the father of many nations. Patriarchy was passed on to Isaac and Jacob, who were regarded as the great patriarchs of Israel as well. The duties of the patriarch were to lead the family worship and naming of children based on their experiences with God. Likewise, tracing of children was also only through male lineage, and houses were named after males (Douglas 1962:940).

The Bible reflects patriarchy in its reference to women in juxtaposition either to their fathers¹⁶, fathers-in-law¹⁷, husbands¹⁸, brothers or sons¹⁹. In instances where women are mentioned by name, their roles are stereotyped or their identity ignored, for example, the genealogy of Jacob did not reflect women's presence²⁰. There are very few rich, descriptive passages of women. From this we can assume that female leadership was unthinkable in the ancient Israelite society, and that the mother would be subjected to the will of her son once the husband has died.

The above given descriptions of patriarchy clearly show the role of the male as head of a household in biblical times and in our current context, a function which obviously cannot be shared with a woman. It also shows that people in the family as well as society are ranked hierarchically. This means that the father and men in general occupy the position of the leader. It also implies that decisions were taken by males and that women were expected to comply with male decisions. Because the Bible plays an important role in the lives of Christians and the Damara people in particular, the culture was quick to focus upon those biblical rules that denied women leadership and to apply these to the culture. This was likely facilitated by the fact that women were already culturally confined to domestic affairs.

2.2 Marriage among the early Damara people

This study focuses upon monogamous marriage, which is the norm among the Damara people. Monogamy is a marriage in which one man marries only one woman as also promoted by the missionaries. However, there are two types of marriage acceptable in Namibia. The first is "in community of property," which is most preferred. The second is "out of community of property," which requires both parties to enter into an ante nuptial contract signed by both partners. Such a contract spells out properties of each partner.

¹⁶ See Gen 5:4; Gen 19.

¹⁷ See Gen 38.

¹⁸ See Gen 6:18; 8:18; Gen 25.

¹⁹ See Gen 26.

²⁰ See Gen 46 in which women are portrayed as passive.

2.2.1 The Importance of marriage

Oduyoye (1995:64) describes marriage as a “natural, long-term relationship between women and men other than family ties”. Bonding of male-female, as she has observed, is usually sexually oriented. Likewise, Lloyd Fanusie (2006:141), a lay preacher from Sierra Leone, notes that marriage is the norm for male-female sexual relationship and that “the couple can procreate in fulfillment of God’s will.” She suggests that procreation in marriage is regarded as the norm and that all extramarital relationships are frowned upon.

Marriage is viewed as an important institution for the Damara people, an age-old cultural practice that was passed on from generation to generation. According to Mrs. Julianne Gaomas (3 November 2006 10h29, Okombahe, Namibia), a housewife, the Damara values marriage “because male and female should stay together as husband and wife”. Again: “They should take care of one another in times of need” (Rosa !Nôabes, 25 October 2006 11h00, Okombahe). Mrs. Adolfine Guriras (25 October 2006 10h23) adds that with regard to childbearing, marriage ensures social stability and morality. “Thus, a married woman has children by one man only, while in the absence of marriage she would have children by different men”.

Based on the above evidence on the importance of marriage in different African societies, it can be argued that both men and women need each other as partners in marriage. These arguments also state the importance of children in marriage. While marriage is seen as an important institution for both sexes and for society at large, Mrs. Guriras’ account suggests that the institution is more valuable for women than for men, a view that is supported by certain scholars²¹. This position suggests that the aim of marriage is to control women, their sexuality and their reproductive power. Whereas men appear to be permitted to enjoy sexual freedom and a variety of partners, this is not the case for

²¹ See for instance Ipinge, S, Hofnie, K and Friedman, S (2004: 16) who argue that among the Ovahimba and the Otjiherero of Namibia, while a woman may be expected to be faithful to the husband, the same is not expected from the husband. They further argue, that the husband has freedom to multiple sexual relationships with the aim of bearing more children, and this situation is even worsened by migration, which results in a man having multiple sexual relationships.

women, because there was more emphasis on women bearing children of the same man and being sexually faithful to the husband.

Similarly, Bernadette Mbuy Beya (2006:158), a religious sister argues, "Marriage is regarded as the social regulator of sexuality. Marriage is the union of persons of opposite sexes for the purpose of the procreation and rearing of the human species". She spells out how girls are prepared for their marriage when they are initiated sexually and that women are expected to meet conditions their respective societies require from them (: 157). She, however, notes that women are not allowed to show their sexual desires even if they are aroused (: 158). Women might be expected not to initiate sex, while at the same time they are expected to be ready whenever the man demands sex. The rules regarding women's sexuality may suggest that women are not in control of their own sexuality, but that men control it. Control over women's sexuality involves decision making about having children and how many to have, for studies in Africa have shown that if the wife is unable to have children, a man does not hesitate to marry another one who can give him children²². The numbers of the children of the participants witness to the fact that there was no negotiation with regard to the number of children the couple wants. This also signifies the fact that women were expected to have as many children as possible.

2.2.2 Initiation of marriage

Oduyoye (1995:44) argues that parents want the best suitable spouses for their daughters, a situation that often results in the most unsuitable spouse winning the competition. At the same time, Oduyoye (: 44) shows the danger that is involved in the parents' choosing of a suitable spouse for their daughters, while trying to choose the best possible man. The parents' attempts in choosing husbands for their daughters may indicate the parents' eagerness to ensure their daughters security.

²² See for instance, Mbiti (1989:139) who argues that polygamy ensures continuance of life through children. Iipinge, S Hofnie, K and Friedman, S (2004:16) have shown that this is a case among the Ovahimbis and the Hereros too.

African scholars hold different views with regard to who is responsible for choosing a wife. Through her studies on marriage among various West African tribes, Oduyoye (1995:64) observes that marriage is governed by proverbs, which include teachings on how marriage needs to be prepared for, as well as how it should be maintained. Among these teachings of the Yoruba and Akan tribes, men are seen as hunters for wives and not vice versa, though the teachings warn against hunting for a wife hastily.

On the other hand, John Mbiti²³ (1989: 132), a leading classical African theologian, offers an extensive discussion on the way a wife is chosen or arranged for. His work shows that there are no fixed guidelines for choosing a wife among the different African tribes he has studied, and that this issue in question differs from tribe to tribe. He maintains that in Sudan, the parents of the boy arrange a wife for their son. This includes arrangements of the boy's parents even with a pregnant woman in the hope that the child to be born would be a girl with whom their son would marry when both are at the age to be involved in marriage. He spells out that the children, however, may only get married once they are old enough. He further states that in other societies negotiations for marriage are done during the puberty period. Mbiti (1989:133) also notes that in some societies the young people make their own choices with regard to the future spouses, later informing their parents who would start the marriage negotiations²⁴. The Kiga and the Wolof, according to Mbiti, arrange marriages of their children through a mediator. The mediator would go on their behalf to the girl's parents' to find out whether marriage between their children could be favourable.

In the Damara culture, according to Mrs. Christaline !Uri#khos (25 October 2006 13h35, Okombahe, Namibia), marriage was often fostered by the realization that God's temple cannot be polluted through fornication. Surely, the Christian understanding of marriage must have influenced this, since some people preferred that a woman proved her fertility before marriage, by falling pregnant so that barrenness would not be a problem in

²³ I am aware that Mbiti is a dated source, though I rely on his classical works on African societies because he provides much material that is relevant for this study.

²⁴ See also Pendleton's (1971:12) work on marriage among the Africans of Namibia. Tanaka (1980:106), also observes the same practice among the San people.

marriage. Thus, Damara people did not regard pre-marital sex as immoral. In Damara culture, as in the Asante of Nigeria,²⁵ a woman was not allowed to propose marriage to a man²⁶. Because of this, she was always in anticipation of being eligible for marriage and of being chosen by a man or by his relatives. It was preferable that a man married only a girl that was “given” to him and should he refuse a girl who was chosen for him by his people, he would be liable to pay for damages in the same way a man who impregnates a girl would pay (Agnes //Hoebes 25 October 2006 18h51, Okombahe, Namibia). From this, it can be seen that women played a passive role during initiation of marriage. They only responded to the proposal of the men’s family. This may be a cause of the inability on the part of the woman later on to negotiate sexual matters in marriage.

2.2.3 The marking of the girl

Despite Barnard’s (1992:209) claim that men arranged their children’s marriages among the Damaras, from my interviews with the participants it became clear that women were, in fact, responsible for arranging marriage, although men assisted them. The mother of the boy or his aunt (*miki*)²⁷ initiated marriage. It was especially the task of the *miki* to find a girl from another house or village for her brother’s son, brother or any male relative. Christaline !Uri#khos (25 October 2006 13h35, Okombahe, Namibia) says that a girl was chosen according to her ability to do work around the house, such as milking and gardening and she describes the marking of a girl as follows:

Tarare /gôas ge gere //hûi #ûi he ôasasib âs ai, /aos tsî !hâna #gasa !kho #ga hâsa. Mikisas khoeb dis ge nēti i /gôasa gere saobasen. /Gôasa saos !aromas ge mikisa sa, //is ge #nûi hâ i !ganus tamas ga io //ga hâ karaba nē /gôasa ge re #nûi !om tamas ga io gere //ga. Nēs ge ge sao i ne /gôas ‘meer’ !norasā tamasa. Oms dawas ga oa /khi os ge mamasa xa ra dihe hām i xas go //gahe !ganus tamas ga io

²⁵ See M, Oduyoye (2004:87) who spells out regulations of the Asante concerning marriage.

²⁶ J, Tanaka (1980:106), also observes the same practice among the San people.

²⁷ The Damara language distinguishes between an aunt who is the sister of the mother, who is called *maro* (younger mother) or *makai* (older mother) depending on whether she is older or younger than one’s mother, and the sister of the father, who is called *miki*.

*karab a !khai e. Os ge mamasasa gere miba ma khaukholes xas go //gahe !khaisa.
!Nasāse di ge /gôade ge /u i !aromas //gahe tamas ga io #nûi!omhe ba he di ge re
sa.*

To mark her girl, the woman had to give her a bracelet or necklace made from traditional beads she was wearing. This was the sign that the girl was no longer free. Upon coming back to her own house with such a bracelet or necklace, the girl was asked whose necklace or bracelet she was wearing. She would then tell her mother from whom she got such a necklace or bracelet. Often, the girls to whom the bracelets or necklaces were given did not know the significance of such a gift.

According to the culture, the woman who marked a girl had to meet the mother of the girl to tell her for whom she had marked her. Mrs. !Uri#khos gives a detailed explanation on what such visits entailed, saying that it was the duty of the mother and the *miki* to decide on a date on which the two families should meet to talk about marriage. She maintains that adults traditionally did not discuss things with their children and the girl would still be unaware of the actual reason for the visit of this woman. Only after the woman's departure would her mother tell the girl that she was to be married. Since men were not very involved in issues concerning girls, the mother was obliged to convey the news of the prospective marriage of their daughter to the father of the girl. Likewise, the aunt of the boy would also tell her husband that she had marked a certain girl for her brother or nephew. The families on both sides were then notified of the date upon which they must come together at the girl's house. From that moment on, the uncle of the boy and the boy himself would watch the girl to see whether she would be a suitable bride (Christaline !Uri#khos 25 October 2006 13h35). In addition, Mrs. Annalise #Gaeses (25 October 2006 15h00) said that decisions taken by elders were obeyed because of the respect they commanded. The man rarely rejected his sister or aunt's choice, while the girl was not given a choice.

The custom of marking illustrates that the women had the actual power in setting the marriage in motion; it shows how prominent a *miki* was in choosing one's spouse. While this was the case, this practice is no longer current. Choosing of a girl by an elderly family member is not unique to the Damara culture, but the same tradition occurred in ancient Israel too. According to Gen 21:21; 24:1-67; 28:2; 29:23, 28, the parents of a young man chose a bride for their son and would negotiate with the father of such a woman. Rebecca and Isaac's marriage an example, the participants also pointed to, illustrates how most Hebrew marriages were arranged.

Mrs Gisela Pieters (24 October 2006 15h55 Okombahe) said that arranged marriages are no longer current. She says people today get married because they fall in love with one another. Mrs !Howaes (25 October 2006 17h08 Okombahe, Namibia), a principal at the local Primary School, shared that opinion, saying that present day marriage proposals are done by the couple, who then inform their respective parents about their intention to get married. The parents of the couple then act upon this announcement by starting with the wedding preparations, in accordance with culture. Mrs !Howaes' statement indicates that elders still have an influence on the marriage of their children.

Since the young people choose their partners without the intervention of their elders, they also decide whether to live together before getting married. Mbiti (1973:196) confirms that young people in modern times choose to live together in trial marriages for fear of committing themselves to one another. I agree with Mbiti that such trial marriages may be problematic for everyone involved, especially if there are children born out of such trial marriages after which the parents end their relationship. Most of the time, the children stay with the mother, often placing her in financial predicaments, as she has to look after their needs as a single parent.

2.2.4 The consent of girl's parents

Marriage is a family issue and therefore requires the involvement of family members on both sides. Pendleton (1971:12) argues that seeking of permission from relatives of the bride is a common practice among different tribes in Namibia. Accordingly, Mrs. Sabina Xawes described the process that was followed when a man's family approached the women's to *dî-âm* (seek permission for the hand of a woman). This, she explained, only took place after sunset, and sometimes included as many as five sessions of meetings.

!Gameb ge //khō//khōsa tsî !gōm daoba. //Nâ amagan ge khoeb di khoena khoes di maman di ma-am sa #hâba hâ. Khoes oms dawan ga /khi, on ge !uri !khāib /aesan nî khau u xun, doros tamas ga io /aexoas, /aen, 'kersn' hîa !nâba ra man /khara sî, hîan !hub ai //în ai! â ra #nûi na. !Khāib ga //khowa am he o i ge ra #âibasen saris ân go ma-am he ti. !Khāib di//khowa am hes ge sâos !haokhoen di saris go ma am hes disa tsîn ge nesisa #âibasens //în di saris di sa a mi //kha, /nai i ga a #ansa xawe (Mrs Sabina Xawes, 25 October 2006 12h49 Okombahe, Namibia).

Marriage is seen as a serious and difficult step to take. Therefore, the elders of the boy or man need to seek consent from the parents of the girl. At the outset, as they approach the girl's family, they bring a white cloth containing items that provide light such as a fire lighter, wood, a candle etc., which they would put on the ground in front of them. If the cloth is opened, it is a sign that their visit is accepted. Acceptance of the white cloth signalled that the visitors' visit was approved of and that the visitors could state the reason for their visit, even though this reason was already known (Mrs Sabina Xawes, 25 October 2006 12h49 Okombahe Namibia).

Although everyone knew what to expect at the girl's house, it seems that nobody could anticipate the exact outcome of the negotiations. The description of the process for obtaining consent indicates that asking for a bride could not be taken for granted, and that it could be difficult convincing the parents of the girl. One can conclude that this process symbolizes that marriage is a difficult task. On the other hand, it points out how valuable

women were to their families. Mrs. Gisela Pieters (24 October 2006) further explained that an agreement to marriage was almost never reached on the same day, because it would be an insult to one's daughter; it would make her look cheap by agreeing on the first day. Consequently, the family of the boy would be sent away regardless of how far they had travelled, to test their persistence and to see whether they were serious. However, this was done in a playful manner. Mrs. Gerhartine Goabas (24 October 2006 18h 05 Okombahe, Namibia), a widow, added that if the boy's family were serious they would return. These discussions between the elders took place in the absence of the two young people. Upon agreement to the marriage, the groom's family would be asked to give the *apa gomas*²⁸ (bride gift), which was to be delivered the day before the wedding took place (Sabina Xawes 25 October 2006 12h49 Okombahe, Namibia).

While this process might seem as if the prospective brides themselves have no say in the matter, asking for a wife could reinforce respect from the man's family for her parents as well as for herself. One should note, however, that even though marriage preparations were dominated by men, seeking of permission required not only the consent of the fathers, but also that of the mothers. In both societies, no marriage was conducted without the consent of the parents. In ancient Israel this was the prerogative of the fathers and not of both parents, while in the Damara culture, "parents" included all elderly family members such as aunts, uncles and grandparents on both sides. The involvement of all these elders implies that marriage is an issue that must not to be taken lightly. As much as parents' consent is important, the agreement of the young women should be seen as equally important, helping to ensure that they do not enter into marriages with which they are unhappy, since this could lead to subsequent problems.

While the parents in other societies, as mentioned above, arranged most of the decisions regarding spouses, it was the prerogative of the *miki* in the Damara culture to choose a girl. This means that women had more authority in marriage negotiations and that men only joined the women on the day the two families met for the negotiations for marriage. During these meetings, it seems that men had the final say in giving consent to their

²⁸ *Apa gomas* is discussed in detail below.

daughter's marriage. However, the giving of consent was determined by women who would give a signal to men whether to continue with the proceedings and to hand over their daughter or not. Such agreement ensured that the marriage would be a communal venture, and not the prerogative of only one individual or gender. It might also be argued that the inclusion of both men and women in this process ensured harmony in the society and indicated mutual responsibility of the elders who were consenting. The involvement and participation by elders of both genders could also prevent attribution of blame later on, if problems arose. This mutuality is also an example of spouses sharing duties and decision-making. Because the entire decision-making process rested with the elders, one may conclude that marriage decisions were too serious to be left to the young people themselves. It is, therefore, reasonable to expect that such negotiations would take place over a series of several sessions.

The emphasis on obtaining permission from the girl's parents may suggest that such a girl belonged to a family in which she might play a vital role. On the other hand, it may suggest that women are valuable and permission to marry needed to be asked properly from her parents. The parents' entire involvement also indicates that their blessing for their children's marriage was essential. Another reason for the elders involvement in this was to admonish both the man and the woman about marriage. There were certain things that the future groom was not supposed to do, such as putting the ring on the finger of his prospective bride. Only the *miki* or his sister was allowed to put the ring on the woman's finger. This custom would prevent him from removing the ring from her finger whenever he felt like. However, it was the prerogative of the *miki* to remove the ring from the finger of the girl, should she be unhappy with the girl she had chosen. The obedience of the young people to the decision of their parents demonstrates the cultural value of respect for one's elders. However, Mrs. Adolfine Guriras (25 October 2006 10h13 Okombahe) maintained that a woman could refuse to marry a man whom she did not want to marry.

There is a difference in the way in which wedding preparations were undertaken previously and the way they are undertaken today, and Mrs. Christaline !Uri#khos (25

October 2006, 13h35 Okombahe) said that whereas the parents held the sole decision-making responsibility in consenting to the marriage of their daughters, today some girls refuse to listen to their parents, even if the financial circumstances of the parents²⁹ do not allow marriage. It is also observed that today the couple decides upon the date of their engagement and wedding, something that was previously done only by the parents “and that people get engaged on a Friday and marry on a Saturday,” says Mrs. Helga !Howaes (25 October 2006 17h08 Okombahe, Namibia).

It is possible that women have gained more freedom and independence because of their education and employment outside the house, which allows them to make their own decisions for their weddings. It might also be argued that the elders, with their ignorance of modernity, have not kept current with the times in their seeking and expecting to influence wedding preparations.

2.2.5 Marital gifts

Marital gifts are known by different names in the societies that observe this custom. In some societies, it is known as the bride gift, bride wealth, lobola or dowry. Likewise, this gift means different things, according to the particular culture.

(a) Nuptial gifts

Oduyoye (1995:133) points out that nuptial gifts among the Asante consist of drinks and food exchanged between the two families, but that they do not have economic value for either of the families. These gifts serve as a sign binding together the whole nation, which might be seen as a contract that was signed between the two families. Only the groom's family gives these gifts, and they are refundable if a marriage is dissolved.

²⁹ The parents of the couple previously undertook preparations for a wedding, but today this task is being denied them, since women are already economically independent before marriage and decide what and how they want to do.

In a similar manner, in the ancient Israelite culture if the father agreed to the union, the father of the man too had to give a bride's price to the father of the woman (Gen 31:15), which was in the form of money. The bride's price was given as the sign of a contract and signified the bond between the two families.

I prefer using the term "nuptial gift" because it signifies there is no economic means involved in the giving of these gifts. However, I need to clarify that there are two types of nuptial gifts among Damaras: one is the giving of a cow, which already has a calf³⁰ to the parents of the bride by the groom's family. The second one is the exchange slaughtering of cattle. This exchange is reciprocal between the two families.

According to Mrs. Christaline !Uri#khos (25 October 2006 13h35 Okombahe, Namibia) and Mrs. Sabina Xawes (25 October 2006 12h49 Okombahe, Namibia) during the exchange slaughtering, the groom is expected to slaughter a cow at the woman's home before sunrise the day before the wedding. All parts of the cattle had to be handed over to the family of the girl together with food for the wedding and household necessities consisting of items from a needle to an axe. When food is brought, a portion of each item is first sprinkled on the ground, a gesture signifying a gift to the ancestors, seeking their blessing for the festival. The woman's family conducts the same ritual at the man's home. This traditional practice of exchanging slaughtered cattle persists today. The giving of nuptial gifts by both the families may suggest their equality in undertaking marriage.

(b) *Apa gomas*³¹

The participants explained that the *apa gomas* (bride gift) was a non-refundable gift given to the parents of the bride as a sign of gratitude to the parents or the person who raised the girl (Adolfine Guriras 25 October 2006 10h13 Okombahe, Namibia) and who may

³⁰ A cow having a calf signifies that it can produce milk to the family, who can feed themselves from milk.

³¹ The term *apa gomas* is derived from the way African women carry their babies on their backs. In this context it refers to carrying of the girl during her infancy. So *apa gomas* means the token of appreciation that should be given for the carrying of the bride and for what the parents had done for her during her childhood.

have sold their livestock for her education. It cannot be returned to the groom's family even if the couple divorces. Selling of livestock for the education of a girl was understood to be an investment of the parents in their daughter, which she would return after completing her studies and when she began earning a living by looking after the parents (Gerhartine Goabas 24 October 2006 18h05 Okombahe, Namibia). The bride gift was also to repay the parents for all that they had done for their daughter since childhood, (Gisela Ganases 5 November 2006 15h00 Omaruru, Namibia) as she was now going to a different home. In addition, Mrs. //Hoebes (25 October July 2006 18h51 Okombahe, Namibia) recalls that the *apa gomas* was not asked from everybody. Rather, the bride's family looked at the economic situation of the family of the groom and if they did not farm with cattle they were not forced to give a cow, but were allowed to give according to what they had. Sometimes, nothing was asked from them. On the other hand, provision was made to give money that was equivalent to a cow's price. Nevertheless, substitution of money for cows created problems since the cost of cattle was not a fixed amount. This, left room for the parents to abuse the situation.

Cattle were very valuable possessions and were indicators of a family's wealth. The cow with a calf that was given to the bride's parents shows that women were very valuable for the household or the family. This indicates that a woman was worth a lot and that parents took care of their daughters, knowing that they would look after them when the parents became old and unable to look after themselves. Since this cow could multiply, its value was immeasurable, as were the duties women fulfilled in homes.

Mrs. Gaomas further explained the significance of a woman to her house as follows:

Tare khoes ge kaise ge #hâ#hâsa i //îs //gâus !aroma tsîs ga a !game-#ûihe, os ge ge re khoeb di //gâus di khoen di gei tsî oms ais ga di hâ sîsenna khoeb khoen dawa ra di, nê!khais ge //khati soasa //în //gâus dawa ra xu.. /Nîsa ra #âibesens ge //îs mamara gē!gâ ra ni khoe e uhâ tama i tsî nî !â sa. //Nâ amagas ge nē gomasa /gôas hîa goro mamasa ra #ûmas am!nâs ai ra ma he i ra //nâ gomasa xu #û (Juliane Gaomas 03 October 2006 10h29 Jamberero, Namibia) .

So the woman used to be very essential to her home and if she was taken away, she would become part of the groom's household and will perform duties she did at her home for her in-laws, which leaves a gap of her absence at her parents' home. This also might mean that the biological parents won't have anyone to look after them, which can in some cases mean starvation. Therefore, this cow served as a substitute of the daughter who fed them and would now provide for them from such cow (Juliane Gaomas 03 October 2006 10h29 Jamberero, Namibia).

That cattle were chosen among all livestock to serve as substitutes for daughters suggests that a cow was valued more than any other animal. Today's monetary equivalent of a cow, is in the range of R3000 to R4000, and if it is a cow, and not a bull, it is more valuable because of the offspring it may produce. Although agrarian farming was important to most Damara communities, since that was the main form of production and livelihood, there is a difference in their way of farming today. Therefore, even if these people live in urban areas, the cow given at a marriage feast is always taken back to the farm.

According to Mrs. Sabina Xawes (25 October 2006 12h49 Okombahe, Namibia) and Elfriede Tjongarero (10 December 2006 12h15 Okombahe, Namibia) the *apa gomas* was also demanded to feed a child the bride might have had before marriage³². This cow, that was given as the bride's gift provided milk with which the people could sustain them, and the cow would also multiply. In the Damara culture, something that is given to someone else in good faith is not requested back, even if the two are not happy with one another. Therefore, in case the couple decides not to go ahead with their marriage, after the cow has been given to the bride's parents, it is never returned to the previous owner. Gisela Ganases (5 November 2006 2h05 Omaruru, Namibia), Elizabeth /Uises (10 December 2006 2h30 Okombahe, Namibia) and Rosa !Noabes (24 October 2006 12h35 Okombahe, Namibia) all agree that the giving of the *apa gomas* was a good practice.

³² A child born before marriage belonged to the mother's biological family and had to remain with its grandparents if the mother marries a man who is not the father of the child.

However, there seem to have been changes with regard to the practice of the *apa gomas*, as the participants themselves noted. Mrs. Guriras said that the cow nowadays has been substituted with goats (Adolfine Guriras 2 July 2006 10h13 Okombahe, Namibia). On the other hand Mrs. Pieters (Gisela Pieters, 24 October 2006 15h55 Okombahe), Mrs. Sabina Xawes (25 October 2006 12h49 Okombahe, Namibia) and Elizabeth /Uises (10 December 2006 2h30 Okombahe, Namibia) stated that there is a decline in the practice of *apa gomas* and it has even been stopped in some places because of the misunderstanding that emerged about its meaning. They identified the following reasons why the *apa gomas* is no longer given. Firstly, people feel that they are buying the girl, while the man regards a woman to whose parents he has given the *apa gomas* as his property to whom he can do whatever he wants. Another reason for the decline of the *apa gomas* is the inflated financial burdens the girl's parents put on the man and his family.

From the explanation of the *apa gomas* by the participants, it is clear that the original custom of giving the *apa gomas* was done with good intentions, and this was never questioned by the women themselves. Judging from what the participants disclosed about the *apa gomas*, women also welcomed this practice. However, one can see that its meaning differs from person to person, and that may have been abused to the benefit of the girl's parents, especially when it started to be substituted with money. It is also possible that the misunderstanding of the *apa gomas* as buying a wife might have been influenced by the Damara people's intermingling with other tribes who regard giving a bride gift as a way of buying a woman. Some have suggested that the giving of *apa gomas* also contributed to women's increased dependence upon their husbands, facilitating a situation in which women expected that their husbands do everything on their behalf.

Overall, there have been definite, gradual changes, indicating dissatisfaction with this practice because it humiliates women and relegates them to the status of objects to be sold and bought. The decline seems to have started about three decades ago, as evidenced by the fact that the parents of some of the participants who were married for longer than

thirty years had stopped this practice. This suggests that many disagreements and views that arose over the giving of the *apa gomas* eventually led to its abandonment.

Mbiti (1973:65) warns against absolute rejection of cultural practices because of their negating effects. He proposes reconstructing it to regain its cultural value, which is binding the two families. Mbiti has a point in his suggestion that reconstruction of cultural practices is crucial for a society. It makes debates on culture possible in which different people can give their views and reach a conclusion that is sensitive to everybody's needs. Such a resolution would also prevent parents from requesting too much for their daughters. Perhaps giving of the *apa gomas* might revive the value of women to a household and thus could foster appreciation toward women.

2.3 Marriage preparation

The process of marriage in the Damara culture involved various rituals that were to be observed, especially by the bride. Edet (2006:25) describes ritual as involving

“role change and geographical movement. In both cases, the person undertaking the passage from one state to another must abandon certain attachments and habits and form new ones”.

Aylward Shorter (1998:61) defines ritual as a “symbol in action, with or without accompanying verbal symbols” and holds that “ritual dramatizes experience.” He explains that rituals help people deepen their experiences of events and “expresses values which cannot be put into words”. Rituals can be communitarian, for instance, puberty initiation rites, or individualistic, as in the case of marriage. Rituals can be distinguished as life crisis, redressing or liminal. Life crisis rituals have to do with the passing from one stage to the other with the help of the community. These include rituals associated with the rite of entry, separation and the liminal period, and the “rite of incorporation into new state” (: 62) Redressing rituals have to do with the redressing of calamities. The liminal phase is temporal and helps people to understand human existence. The rituals for “candidates for marriage are classified under “initiation to social strata” (: 63).

Oduyoye (1995:13) more specifically explains ritual in marriage as the recognition of a “person’s majority” and his or her publicly accepting responsibilities such as “childbearing and rearing”. She further notes that marriage rituals focus more on the “transfer of the woman from the spiritual power of the father to that of the husband”. Ritual, she adds, is the transformation of a wife from her old life to the new, which starts at her husband’s house, indicating that ritual of transformation has more significance for women than for men since she is the one actively involved in it. Ritual, therefore, also defines territory. While recognizing that there are more rituals for women than for men, “perhaps reflecting their view of the greater spiritual strength of women,” Oduyoye (1995: 16), argues that the rituals are aimed at curbing this strength unless it is to the benefit of men.

2.3.1 Time of silence (!*nōbas*)

Rituals in essence are done in preparation of the initiate’s changing role in the society, indicating that a person is passing from one stage of his/her life to another and that he/she needs to be prepared for it. Observance of the *!nobas* can be seen as the time in which the initiate is subjected to the liminal phase of this ritual in which she/he is being prepared for his/her new role. Therefore, liminality marks the end of one phase and indicates the beginning of a new one. In case of marriage, women especially receive instruction on marriage from their female elders in this time. Their status during such rituals is that of an inferior toward their instructors, according to which they have to accept everything they are being taught.

In the Damara culture, the *!nōbas* (time of silence) preceded the wedding. The *!nōbas* was the time in which the bride had to spend from one to three weeks indoors. Mrs. Adolfine Guriras (25 October 2006, 10h13 Okombahe, Namibia) explained that this practice had a dual meaning: it announced the beginning of the wedding celebrations, which started with traditional singing and dancing accompanied by guitars and singing, and it was also the instruction period for women regarding marriage and how to behave.

There were certain regulations that were to be observed during this time, as Mrs. Xawes (Xawes, S, 25 October 2007, 4h00-4h15 Okombahe) clarified. The woman and the man were not supposed to meet. It appears, from the participants' stories, that the in-laws of the bride were responsible for her daily bath³³ and meals during this time of *!nobas* and one elderly woman, usually the groom's *miki* (father's sister), was assigned to serve the bride. *!Nobas* was a practice that was only observed by the bride, whereas the groom was not expected to be indoors because he was the head, traditionally the provider and hunter, and could go out to work.

The exchange slaughtering³⁴ also took place during the time of *!nopas*, while the bride was sequestered within her room. This might be understandable since, in addition to preparing herself for her wedding, a woman was not supposed to take part in the slaughtering itself. However, the groom was expected to kill the cattle by stabbing it with a knife, as a sign that he would be able to feed his family through hunting.

However, the *!nobas* faced serious challenges by modern life styles in which women also work outside the house. Mrs. Goabas (24 October 2006 18h05 Okombahe) explained that this period has been shortened to one week because women are employed outside the home cannot afford to stay away from work for such a long time or may not obtain leave for this period. On the other hand, it has been noted that some women do their own preparations and keep themselves busy, especially with shopping, right up to the day of the wedding, which interferes with the *!nopas*.

Together with the *apa gomas*, the practice of *!nopas* is declining. Elaide Gaomas (5 November 2006 3h4 Omaruru, Namibia), Gerhartine Goabas (24 October 2006 6h05 Okombahe, Namibia), Gisela Pieters (24 October 2006 3h55 Okombahe, Namibia) mourn the loss of this custom because they believe that its decline left women unprepared for their weddings and marriages. On the other hand, those who applaud its demise say that it was unfair to impose such rigid strictures upon women and not upon men.

³³ This normally was applicable to rural settings where bath water had to be boiled outside on the fire.

³⁴ This refers to the reciprocal slaughtering of cattle at the respective house of bride and groom by respective in-laws a day before the wedding takes place.

Although premarital instruction can be valuable in preventing problems in marriage and in avoiding divorce, it is problematic when only women, and not their intended husbands, are forced to observe this period of instruction. Some balked against the gender insensitivity of such a practice and its implication that only women, and not men, were in need of such instruction. Women's diverse opinions of the *apa gomas* somehow indicate their dissatisfaction on the negating position it subjected women to, but that they lacked ways of articulating this. This inability of women to challenge the culture could be due to their inferior position within the culture.

On the other hand, culture may have identified women as the more important partner in sustaining marriage, thereby providing women with tools for the task ahead of them. Despite the fact that the society and culture tried to keep women at home, women started to join the public workforce, with the result that some cultural practices lapsed. In light of Mbiti's suggestion that cultural practices need to be revived, the *!nobas* might be reconsidered and reworked in a way that involves both parties, taking into account the individual circumstances of the couple.

2.3.2 The wedding feast

The feast is an important part in the wedding because the whole community is involved in the joy and happiness of the event. "The wedding feast was accompanied by music and joy. People danced from the bride's house to the groom's. The marriage was concluded by slaughtering of cattle and by eating traditional baked bread." (Mrs. Agnes //Hoebes 25 October 2006 18h51 Okombahe, Namibia). During this feast, the head of the house was treated specially because he was given a beverage made especially for him, as Mrs. Christaline !Uri#khos (25 October 2006 13h35 Okombahe, Namibia) recounts. After the wedding feast, the couple was expected to move in with the parents of the groom for a while before building themselves an independent home and kraal. When they moved to their new home they would be given cattle or goats by both parents, to enable them to make a new beginning (Gisela Pieters, 24 October 2006 15h55 Okombahe).

Mrs. Ganases gives detail on the process that was followed in bringing the woman to her new home.

...//Nâba xus ge khoesa //is di /asa oms dawa ge re sî ũ he #nab /kha //nu he hâ se. Mari i ge !hub ai ge re ao he, tsîn ge !game-aona āohe go mari i gō #aide ais //ga ge re !gû khoeb oms dawan ni sis gose. Tamas ga ion ge ni ma /ni khoe i xan nî hui hes go se. Khoeb oms dawas ge khoes āisa ge re !gu he lapin /kha, tsîn ge //is āisa ge re mû#gao khoena marina ge re #nûi hoa lapigu nî u//nâ toa hes gose. Nes khao!gâ i ge ora #ûna /aokhoen !nâ ge re /gorahe (Gisela Ganases 5 October 2006 15h00 Omaruru).

...Then the woman was brought to her new home while the people danced. Money was scattered on the ground, and the couple and their followers had to take some steps forward depending on how much money was scattered until they reached the home of the man. Otherwise, they would remain where they were until someone rescued them. At the groom's house, the bride's face was covered and anyone who wanted to see her face would put down money first until all her coverings were removed. The uncooked, leftover food was distributed among the family.

The marriage feast indicates that a wedding is not an affair between the two families and/or the newlyweds only, but that it is a community event, a community being defined as a group of people living in the same place under same laws. Oduyoye (2001:33a) spells out the importance of African communities' caring and sharing with one another, noting that this is a way in which harmony is maintained. She has summed up community as "a source of wholeness and well-being" (: 34a). In a sharing and caring community, life is seen as "an integrated whole", which needs to be protected by all. Ideally, people recognize the needs in the society and take it upon themselves to care for others voluntarily. This may also indicate the community's contribution to the success or failure of the wedding. In other words, there is a need that all people present at the wedding are taken care of.

The feast and the procession of the bride to the groom's house were linked together, where another ritual was performed to welcome the bride, which is described below.

2.3.3 Rituals of *da#ais* (stepping on feet) and *khaukhaus* (firemaking)

Mrs. //Hoebes gave a detailed description of the ritual that takes place at the newly-weds' new home:

!Game taras ge nēsi //is di /aesa ra tsoatsoa, tsis ge tsáuxa-am gomasa ra mâ he is //is /aesa tsoatsoa u. Goma i ga /khai os ge //is di maman xa pirinara mahe. Khoeb di maman ge omsa ra ombara, !haras oms /guse hâs /kha ira //ira di /guri hâ ûiba tsoatsoa. Nebas ge khoesa ge re da-#ai he is //nâpa /gui hâ. Khoes ge nesi sa !game#ga si go //gâus di, //nâ amaga i ge khoeb /khāb di //khāra khaukhoesa ne da-#aisa ge re di. Ne !khais ge nes a //is di /asa om !khaisa ge re //gau tsis !gûbe xu tite sa matigose i ga !gom xawe. !Gûs ga xawes ge nî oa/khi. //Napa xu ige gomasa !haras !na ra #ga he. Tsis ge //is mikis tamas ga io aisa sa //isa /aesa ra khau khau doros tsî /ûis tsîn /kha (Agnes //Hoebes 25 October 2006, 18h51 Okombahe, Namibia).

The bride is starting her own fire, so she would be given a cow with a calf to start her fire with. In the absence of cattle she would be given goats by her biological family. The parents of the man would prepare a house and kraal for the man near theirs so that they could start a separate life. A ritual of *da-#ais* (stepping on bride's feet) is performed, in which her feet are stepped on to indicate that they will stay put there. The woman belongs to the family into whom she has married; therefore, an elder woman from the man's side should perform this ritual. This symbolizes that this is her new home and she is not to leave no matter what happens. Even if she goes, she has to return. Then the cattle are brought into the

kraal and her aunt (*miki*) or older sister would demonstrate to her how to make fire³⁵, using a traditional lighter and a stone, while she is imitating her instructor.

This ritual marks the importance of the wife's moving to her new home. However, it only emphasises the bride's domestic duties and not those of the groom. The rituals accompanying a Damara marriage confirm Oduyoye's claim (1995:13-16) of the gender-biased nature of the practice of such a ritual. Since rituals form an integral part in the lives of Africans, especially with regard to rites of passage, including both genders in marital rituals would be both appropriate and advantageous. More gender inclusive rituals would provide opportunities for both the bride and groom to prepare themselves for a transformation of self from their unmarried state to their married life together.

I tend to agree with Oduyoye that rituals are focused more upon women than upon men. Most of the Damara marriage rituals are centered on the wife, probably to spell out clearly her roles. The mindset behind these rituals appears to place marital responsibilities on the woman's shoulders, but it can also place her in a precarious situation. The *da#ais* ritual may signify that a woman might not leave her house even if she is trapped by domestic violence. Moreover, *da-#ais* seems to be reinforcing the biblical law on divorce³⁶ in which women have no power of initiating divorce. This might even make it difficult for women to seek help from outside in case of problems. It also reinforces the domestic role of the woman as signified by the fire-making ritual. Besides this, since fire symbolizes life, this ritual emphasises that the woman, and not the man, needs to keep the life burning in that house. Keeping the light burning is used proverbially; it refers to taking care of the well being of others in the household. Thus, the rituals of the *da#ais* and *khaukhaus* are immensely significant within the culture: they imply that women perform the central role in keeping alive the marriage and the household.

³⁵ Fire-making, one of the tasks of a woman, was, however, already taught at a young age at her parents' home.

³⁶ See Deut. 24:1.

2.3.4 The accompanying girl

The Damara bride did not go to her new home alone, but was accompanied by a younger sister who had to see how the couple was getting along (Gisela Ganases 25 October 2006 15h00 Omaruru, Namibia). The sister would help the bride in her new home, especially if the bride had a baby³⁷. This was a temporary arrangement, for such a girl was to return to her parents or was free to leave if she found a husband during this time. The accompaniment sometimes took unforeseen turns. Occasionally an affair developed between the husband and the girl, as Mrs. Gisela Pieters (24 October 2006 15h55 Okombahe) recalled. However, Mrs. Gerhartine Goabas (24 October 2006 18h05 Okombahe, Namibia) argued that to prevent an affair from developing between the sister and the husband, the sister's presence was only a temporary arrangement.

Likewise, the ancient Israelite brides, for example Rachel and Leah were given women, Bilhah (Gen. 29:29) and Zilpah (Gen. 29:24), who would serve them personally and with whom they later shared their husbands. In both instances, the role of the accompanying girl was to help the bride with household duties. The accompanying girls, however, were prone to sexual abuse. For example, Rachel, who did not have a child, gave her maid to Jacob so that she bore her children. This also occurred in the Damara culture. Although not socially condoned, sexual relationships occurred between husband and sister.

This could be blamed on the hierarchical structure of the culture in which the minor or the younger woman was not allowed to differ in opinion with her elderly superiors. Such situations call for reconstruction of social structures so that even a minor is given opportunities to express her opinion.

Therefore, Mrs. Rosa !Nôabes (25 October 2006 11h00 Okombahe, Namibia) added that sometimes an infant or young child was given to accompany the bride instead of the sister. Mrs. Juliane Gaomas (3 November 2006 Jamberero, Namibia) explained that the couple then had to bring up this child as their own and that the giving of a child to the

³⁷ According to Damara culture, women are not supposed to do their household duties for several weeks after childbirth, such as cooking, touching a pot or a needle.

couple symbolized the bond between the two families. She further stated that this was also a practice used to overcome the problem of barrenness.

This practice of accompaniment seems to have been to help the bride cope with her new environment and family. One might reasonably conclude that accompaniment favoured the bride, for it might be argued that culture takes the new and unknown environment to which she is moving into consideration by letting a family member accompany her so that she does not feel strange and lonely in her new place. However, it is not clear whether the young girl was a willing companion or whether she was simply adhering to their culture and the elders who made decisions. It becomes evident that obedience to elders was so significant that no one, especially women, dared to question the authenticity of a decision taken on their behalf. In addition, it seems that obedience to one's elders might have been used to impose rules upon women in the name of culture.

2.4 Practices in marriage

2.4.1 Barren women

Even though the Damara believe that the ability to have children is from God and that not all women were meant to have biological children, it becomes apparent from this study that barrenness caused problems. The participants felt that children were a God-given gift, and if there were no children, this should be accepted. The ancient Israelite society, like African communities, emphasized the importance of childbearing, and all women were expected to embrace their obligations to be mothers, whether they wanted to or not. The Israelites understood that the continuance of the covenant with Yahweh was through the children (Laffey, 1989:11).

Therefore, they believed that bearing children was a gift of God; hence, lack thereof was seen as God's curse (Gen.16: 2, 16: 4; 30:1-23). Sarah clearly underwent social pressure for her barrenness. According to Gen 16, her situation forced Sarah into polygamy when

she gave her Egyptian female servant, Hagar, to Abraham with the hope that Hagar³⁸ would bear a child for her. While bearing children was emphasized, the society hardly took notice of the important role women played in procreation as creators and sustainers of life. However, Bellis (1994:22) notes that the only time a woman was ranked equally with a man was when she became a mother

Lack of decision-making authority was even worse for a female slave or servant. In this situation, Hagar apparently had no say and had to comply with the wishes of her mistress. As noted earlier, this seemed to be a custom of the time that the wife find a surrogate mother with whom her husband would have a sexual relationship to produce an offspring for him (Kroegeer & Evans 2002:11).

The story of Sarah and Hagar shows that the patriarchal and hierarchical nature of the society ensured that women's primary focus in their marriages was to make their husbands happy by giving them sons. Therefore, they tried everything in their power to have children, even if it was through someone else. This is an indication that women's lack of control of their own sexuality forced them into oppressing other women just to fulfil their desire to have children at the cost of the other.

It seems that because the Damara, like other African societies such as the Akan of Ghana³⁹, attached so much value to children, they made plans in solving the problem of barrenness. This, in Damara culture was treated in two ways: firstly, "a midwife massaged women who could not have children due to medical reasons so that they could bear children. Today, this problem could be solved with medical help". (Gisela Pieters, 24 October 2006, 15h55 Okombahe). Secondly, if one of the sisters had many children, a baby would be taken from her and given to the sister who could not bear children. People believed that it would open the womb of such a woman. She had to bring this child up as her own. If she could still not have children, she could then take another baby from her

³⁸ The eligibility of Hagar as a surrogate mother for Sarah shows how many women entered into polygamy involuntarily, most often because they were not in a position to make decisions or reject the demands of their superiors.

³⁹ See M, Oduyoye, 1995:49.

sister (Annalise #Gaeses 25 October 2006 15h00 and Agnes //Hoebes 25 October 2006, 18h51 Okombahe Namibia).

Taking of children from a sister, who most probably was unmarried is similar to the practice of the ancient Israelites in which the Hagar Bilhah and Zilpah (Gen. 16; 30) bore children and gave to their mistresses. The similarity in these situations may be that the women whose children were taken away from, might not have had a choice in doing that, but had to comply with the social order of their respective societies.

The way barrenness was treated by the respective cultures reveals that women's sexuality was an issue discussed openly, and was often dealt with insensitively because the lack of children was blamed on the woman alone (Adolfine Guriras 25 October 10h13 Okombahe, Namibia and Helga !Howaes 25 October 2006 17h08 Okombahe, Namibia). In both societies, it seems that infertility was met with ignorance and lack of knowledge. Besides the man's possible infertility, it also proves that the people were unaware of the way a woman's monthly cycle works, determining when a woman is fertile or not. The woman's monthly cycle, however, gives women power over their bodies and fertility. She may control whether to become pregnant or not. In this way, women could use their cycle to prevent unwanted pregnancies. Whereas the society's attempts to cure barrenness might have been intended well, it was aimed at women only, many of whom were probably not infertile, since the problem might have lied with men. There seems to have been no similar attempt to 'help' infertile men to produce children. This exemplifies a predisposition to scapegoat women for whatever went wrong in the society. It also shows women's powerlessness in defending themselves.

Alternatively, Oduyoye (1999:105) states that some African societies suggested surrogate parenthood in solving the problem of barrenness⁴⁰. Moreover, the practice of taking babies from another woman, for example, from a sister, to be given to the childless one, might have been done without the consent of the biological mother. Besides this, it shows

⁴⁰ However, such solutions do not take the risk of transmission of sexually transmitted diseases and subsequent HIV into consideration in contemporary contexts.

that the society was insensitive and did not help the couple to cope with and accept childlessness. The importance of having children put a burden on childless women, which made them feel worthless. Oduyoye (1999: 105) affirms this by stating that people's continual giving of advice to barren parents made them bitter, in addition to their already feeling excluded from the society's important naming rituals. She further (: 118) raises the point that embracing the value of fertility does not necessarily require all human beings to procreate, but to "increase in humanity" by filling the earth with God's glory. She suggests that this ought to be the message given to childless couples and so it is possible to reject oppressive interpretations of people to childlessness.

2.4.2 Rules for married women

The participants indicated that there were certain rules set out for married couples, and that there were different rules for men and women. A married woman was expected to set an example for other young people through her behaviour. For example, a married woman was expected to stay at home and limit her friendships. She had to keep herself busy with household duties. Men were also expected to end their friendships with other unmarried young men and to stop roaming around, but their movements were not restricted as were the women's. The couple was told that they are now one another's friends and that they had to do things together.

A woman had to respect and listen to her husband, be submissive, and to serve him food on time. This was something on which all the participants agreed. They further indicated that submissiveness of women to their husbands is clearly portrayed in the Bible. They noted that some women who had been free to do what they wanted stopped doing so after getting married. The couple was expected to discuss complaints they might have in the privacy of their room only.

Obedying the rules was expected in order to prevent divorce as the participants understood, which was unacceptable. Thus, the women were prepared for the hardships

of marriage and knew what to expect. The survival of the marriage depended on the woman, and she was often blamed if things went wrong. The participants admitted that a woman was also expected to ensure peace and harmony in her marriage by seeking forgiveness, even if she was not the one who might have caused a conflict. According to this, women were not even allowed to oppose their husbands because this was seen as disrespectful. The participants claimed that the biblical story of Sarah and Abraham⁴¹ demonstrates love for one another and that Sarah was humble to Abraham. They maintained that Sarah called her husband "lord" out of respect for him and that she was submissive to him. The participants also stated that it was the duty of women to support and encourage their husbands in their work and that Sarah fulfilled all that was required of her. They believed that these stories exist to show how women should behave toward their husbands. Although they believed that these texts expect women to be humble and be submissive to their husbands, showing them all due respect, they nevertheless added that this does not mean that the men should trample over them. As part of the rules for women, they cited the story of Samson and Delilah⁴² and dishonesty of Delilah, saying that they believed that this story warns them not to deal dishonestly with their spouses.

The rules and expectations explained by the participants brought to light that these rules mostly confined married women to their homes and made them inferior to their husbands, making it impossible for them to share their skills and creativity with the public. Women seem to have been taught that humility toward their husbands is respect. The enforcement of respect could be seen as an act of subjugating women. Whereas respect for one's spouse is essential to a relationship, the mutuality of such respect seems not to have been emphasized, based on what the participants disclosed. This may imply that women must have suppressed their real feelings for fear of not disturbing the peace around them, and that in order to show respect, women needed to have the interests of men foremost in their hearts, taking care not to upset them. It seems that women's subjugation to men was forced in the ancient Israelite times as well.

⁴¹ Gen. 20; 12: 10-20

⁴² Gen. 16:4-31

One cannot help noticing that the cultural rules for married people created unequal partnership between them, with the result that women may often have been in constant fear of their husbands. In this way, culture also created intolerant husbands and continual enforcement of male power over women, because some husbands changed in their attitudes after their marriage so that women feared doing things in their absence or without notifying them as Sabina Xawes (25 October 2006 4h00 Okombahe, Namibia). Such behaviour of men suggests that it is being fostered by the way in which they were brought up and taught to believe that men are superior to women. Besides this, their constant reference to the male/female relationships in the Bible made women more inclined to applying subjugating practices of the Bible on themselves, as pointed out by the participants. Thus, intensifying their belief that some rules must have been taken from the Bible. This could be seen as inhumane treatment of women, which relegates them to the lower rungs of the society's hierarchical ladder.

Like rules, African proverbs play an important part in one's life because they are focused on directing and influencing people's lives. Oduyoye (1995:73) acknowledges the power of proverbs in African communities and argues against proverbs with dehumanizing effects on women by saying that they "do not empower" (: 74) but weaken." Examples of negating metaphors of women used as models are found in the Bible as well for example, Prov. 31. I take the same position with regard to inappropriate rules for women in Damara marriage. As we saw above, these rules fracture the relationship between the husband and wife instead of creating a partnership between them.

This ought to be taken into account when people claim that it is important to maintain culture. There seems to be a need for amendment in the rules, the result of which can help build healthy marriages. While maintaining and upholding culture, such rules could also be transformed into new rules and rituals with which all people are happy, rules that recognize the dignity of both the wife and the husband.

Mrs Pieters (24 October 2006, 15h55) shared that these rules were not static. She said the rules have changed as time passed allowing women to make their own decisions

independently. Most people, she said, realized that the rules given to women were applicable in previous days, but cannot be applied today because people today realize that these rules led to women being treated unjustly. Such changes show that culture is a human construction that can change with time according to the changes and needs that come in life. This indicates that more people in the Damara society realized that some rules are dated and therefore inapplicable to current day life.

2.4.2 Gender role construction

Women born in patriarchal societies feel the effect of gender role construction throughout their lives. This starts from their birth, and includes their disputable education (i.e. whether they need to be educated or not), and definite regulations about what they ought to do and what they must not do. This subsequently leads to adult roles with expectations of increasing responsibilities toward others and limited opportunities for self-expression. As a result, women were not visible in the society and were confined to their homes most of the time. The participants shared how different gender roles were constructed and told how such roles were maintained.

*!Gôagusib ge /geisase gere #gāo/khā he Damara!haos !nâ tsîn ge khoena
!gôagun nî gowab !nâ tamas ga i o tare tsî aore se !khaisa ge re #hâba /kha he.
Nes xa !aroma he hâ se i ge aore tsî tarese ge /huru/hao he tama hâ i. //Khatin ge
!ommi /kha tawetegus tsîna ge ma-âm sa tama hâ i: aore !gâsab ge !nuse mâ tsî
!gâsasa haib /kha ge re tawete. Aorekhoegu ge tare !gâsadi kamers !nâ #gâs tsîna
ge ma-âm he tama hâ i. Tarekhoes ge ai!gâ //kha//khasensa ge #hâba tama hâ i,
//îdi #guro sîsen i oms sîsen e #ânsa #hâba hâ oms dawa /gui a //kha//khasen he
//kha e xu-i a o (Gisela Pieters, 24 October 2006, 15h55 Okombahe, Namibia).*

Mutual respect was highly emphasized in the Damara culture and people were expected to respect each other whether in language⁴³, behaviour towards each other, or behaviour between male and female. Based on this, brothers and sisters were not allowed to play together. They were not even allowed to greet each other by hand: rather, a brother would stand at a distance and greet his sister with a stick in his hand. Brothers were also not allowed to enter their sisters' rooms. Women had no opportunity for further studies because their first obligation was to know "womanly work" which was learnt and practiced at home. This involved needlework, embroidery, building traditional houses⁴⁴, nurturing children and looking after old people (Gisela Pieters, 24 October 2006 15h55 Okombahe).

Distinction between the two sexes seems to have been made in everyday life in things that might be insignificant to the outsider, as described above. All of the participants agreed that there were separate gender roles for men and women. Women's duties were centred on the house, which included fire making, while a man had to work outside the house. Carpentry, milking, chopping wood and gardening were the men's work and women only helped with gardening. They also observed that some areas, such as milking and gathering wood, are considered unisexual, but that domestic work is the woman's alone. Today however, they noted men could also come into the kitchen.

The participants further shared how men were so spoiled that they did not even prepare their own bath water, because "that was the duty of the wife". The woman also had to know when the man was hungry and always kept food and drink ready before he even asked for it. Mrs Shangombe confirms, "it was the task of the woman to take care of the man as if he was a child" (Sarah Shangombe 3 November 2006 11h01 Jamberero, Namibia). During harvest time, men and women had to participate. A girl was not supposed to look after goats in the field: she had to stay at home, and milk cows or goats. The man had to go out and could ride horses, which the woman was not allowed to do.

⁴³ The Damara language distinguishes between pronouns used to address younger or an older person, or between the polite and impolite usage thereof.

⁴⁴ A traditional house was built with sticks and cow dung, and was the work of women.

Mrs //Hoebes (25 Oct 2006, 18h51) shared that one of the duties of a woman was the serving and distribution of food to men. She said that it was commonly accepted that the man first had to choose his piece of meat before the wife could distribute it to the rest of the family. She explained that even if bread was baked in the absence of the husband, it had to be kept in the safe place called the //hāos⁴⁵ for him, and was only shared with the family after the man had taken his share. If the man went out hunting for many days, whatever he had hidden in the //hāos must not be touched. Thus, men even controlled the distribution of food. It was also the duty of women to raise the children religiously and encourage them to attend Sunday school. The participants felt that some aspects of these rules and expectations might have been taken from the Bible.

While only a man was regarded as a hunter who should hunt and provide for his household, Mrs Pieters (24 October 2006 15h55 Okombahe) differed with this view, saying, "A woman is also a hunter because she gathers food from the fields and forest". She further recalled that there were no schools before the arrival of the missionaries to Namibia, and that girls stayed at home and did domestic work, while boys worked in the field. However, she added, when the schools opened, girls together with boys were allowed to attend school, although schooling for girls was limited and they were not sent to high schools. The reason behind this, according to her, was that girls were supposed to take care of domestic affairs and to stay at home so they did not need much education anyway. Studies on the perception of gender relations in Namibia seem to corroborate the above view expressed by Mrs. Pieters, that there are indeed differing roles assigned to men and women. Such studies have shown that a woman's world revolves around domestic chores including raising of children, while that of a man revolves around his authority. (Iipinge S, Hofnie, K and Friedman, S, 2004:71). Elfriede Tjongarero (10 December 2006 12h15 Okombahe, Namibia) expressed her dissatisfaction with gender roles such as domestic chores that were enforced on women because of their gender.

⁴⁵ //Hāos is a place built in the kitchen above in a corner and is like a drawer where food is kept for the husband.

While there were roles established for each gender, it seems that these roles sometimes overlapped and that women did work that was only supposed to be men's. One can argue that overlapping duties of men and women contributed to the changes that occurred in gender roles, which made it possible for women to enter the "male arena. It can also be argued that overlapping gender roles could be useful in promoting gender-neutral roles.

Mrs Goabas (Gerhartine Goabas 24 October July 2006 18h05 Okombahe, Namibia) mentions that the rule binding them to domestic work was the reason why women were confined to domestic work at home and at other people's homes to earn some income. However, she says that the specific community influenced the way children were brought up and that some parents sent their daughters to be educated, some of whom even became medical doctors, or went into other professions.

With regard to gender role construction, it is clear that the society did not contemplate what women might want to do, but prescribed predetermined roles to them. Prescription of roles, especially to women, was done in such a way that its implications could be seen as oppressive and biased because it limited women from doing what they might like to do. Since men were believed to be superior to women, they were prevented from working in the domestic sphere, which was women's domain, another example of the inequality between men and women.

It appears as if the culture, in constructing clear, designated gender roles for men and women, was striving to strengthen the boundaries between women and men that were not supposed to be crossed, with the result that one gender was burdened with many more tasks than the other. At the same time, women were excluded from public affairs and confined to household duties. This also may have prevented women to take up positions, such as being elders in church because of gender discrimination. It also could be observed from the research that rigid gender roles threatened and often destroyed the harmony in marriage because there were gender limitations to most household tasks. It seems that gender role distinctions were not only made in the Damara culture, but was present in the ancient Israelite society.

The ancient Israelite culture too constructed gender roles, which determined the type of work that could be done by women only, such as baking of bread⁴⁶, preparing meals (Gen. 18:6; 2Sam.13: 8-9) or inviting and receiving guests (Judges 4:18; 1Sam.25:18; 1Kings 4:8-10), fetching household water both for guests and their camels (Gen.24:11, 15-20; 1Sam. 9:11) and spinning of wool for clothing (Ex.35:26; 1Sam.2:19; Prov. 31:19). Since baking of bread was their task, women were responsible for the grinding of grain. Grinding was not supposed to be done by a man, for this would humiliate him (Judges 16:21; Lam. 5:13). As noted above, roles given to women were seen as inferior and inappropriate to be executed by men (Laffey, 1988:83). Bellis (1994:21) suggests that the primary role of women was that of childbearing for her husband.

Cullhed (2006:26) citing Butler says: "gender behaviour is shaped by societal structures", but adds that such societal frameworks can be changed and rejected. I would extend Cullhed's argument and claim that gender roles are also a construction of the society, and that these can equally be challenged and rejected. Gender role construction and gender rules, as discussed above, offer a glimpse into the way people saw equality in marriage. In the next section, I will discuss equality in detail.

2.4.4 Equal rights in marriage

Gender equality in marriage, in a broad sense, may refer to the equal responsibilities of both partners with regard to things that concern them both, for example, decision-making or acquiring property. Equality implies that no one is superior to the other. The Married Persons Equality Act of 1996 of Namibia, abolished any marital power a husband might have over his wife and thus gave both spouses equal status in marriage with regard to financial decision making (Government of the Republic of Namibia, 'Married Persons equality Act, 1996 (Act 1 of 1996)', May 1996. <<http://www.lac.org.na> 1996>. In addition, the Director General of Women's Affairs, Minister Netumbo Ndaitwah (1997)

⁴⁶ See Lev. 26:26

pointed out that this act enabled women to stand on an equal foot “with their husbands” and at the same time condemned the “concept of marital power” which previously limited women’s financial independence without the husbands’ consent (United Nations, ‘Enactment of Married Persons equality Act in Namibia praised by Experts of women’s Anti-Discrimination committee’ July 1997. <<http://www.scienceblog.com>. 1997>).

The participants held different views regarding equality within marriage. Helga !Howaes (25 October 2006, 17h08 Okombahe, Namibia) and Elfriede Tjongarero (10 December 2006 12h15) understand equal rights as a recognition of the dignity of women and their rights, through which they are enabled to make their own decisions and to own property, instead of being submissive to their husbands. She further noted that, in actuality, the lack of equal rights for women has denied women equal opportunities for taking up higher positions in work. This, once again, shows how women are still grappling to find their rightful place under the sun.

All other participants agreed that there was no equality between men and women in marriage because the men were regarded as the heads of the households on whose shoulders rested all decision making and control over his family rested. Even while recognizing that there was no equality in marriage in earlier times, the participants believe that men and women cannot be equal because wives need to be submissive to their husbands. They understood such submissiveness as respect for the husband. They seemed to favour this hierarchy in marriage and perceived marital equality as a threat to marriage because it fostered competition between wives and husbands. In addition, they maintained that equality in marriage destroys cultural values of mutual respect between men and women, allowing everyone to do what he/she likes.

The participants’ support of gender inequality in marriage reflects that of the broader society, since the women defended it strongly. Moreover, it is a reflection of the pastors’ portrayal of what marriage ought to be, which is even emphasized on, in the marriage formulary, as has been indicated in chapter one. This idea of women’s subordination might have been an influence that the Bible has on the Damara culture, since the biblical

texts that deal with male/female relationships portray spouses unequally. The participants themselves regarded such passages as giving them guidance in the daily lives (Christaline !Uri#khos 25 October 20006 3h15 Okombahe, Namibia, Gisela Pieters 24 October 2006 3h55 Okombahe, Namibia, Gerhartine Goabas 25 October 2006 Okombahe, Namibia, Agnes //Hoebes 25 October 2006 Okombahe, Namibia).

Frymer-Kensky (2002:120) argues that ancient marriages were not egalitarian and, accordingly, wives were subordinate to their husbands. While there are clear signs that there was very little equality between spouses in the Bible, Mathews reminds readers that the ancient Israelite society was not unrelentingly hierarchical by citing examples of women like Deborah who was a judge (Judges 4:4-5:31) and Huldah, the prophetess (2 Kings 22:11-23:25). More common, though, are positions such as that of the apostle Paul in Eph. 5:22 which supports hierarchy in marriage.

Another instance that clearly proves that women were not regarded as men's and their husbands' equals can be seen in the way the society regarded religious vows taken by women. According to Num. 30:4-17, a woman could make religious vows, but such vows were binding only if approved by her father or husband. Webber (1983:149) comments that Jewish men and women were regarded as "spiritually equal before God", yet the practical side showed something different. Although women were allowed to make vows, they still needed the approval of the men in whose care they were. This is an indication that women were regarded as lesser than men and constantly in need of a man's guidance in their decision-making. Hierarchy, closely linked with patriarchy, was the societal structure that manifested superiority of men. Men were valued more because they occupied a higher position in such a structure than women (Giblin 1996:143).

In addition to this, apostle Paul's vehement teaching on wives' submission to their husbands⁴⁷ may have made it impossible for Damara people to accept equality in marriage, since they follow the Bible to the letter. Because of so much emphasis on women's submission to their husbands, equality might have been impossible in the

⁴⁷ See Col. 3: 18; Eph. 5:22- 24; 1Tim.2: 11.

biblical times, as it too becomes evident in the lives of married Damara women. This, it could be argued, put Damara women under the double dominance of both their own culture and that of the Bible, which may be extraordinarily difficult, if not impossible, to counteract.

Therefore, it would be helpful if people learned to analyze their own culture to find valuable, gender-sensitive elements that can be promoted. Likewise, the Bible also needs to be read and interpreted with the aim of finding gender justice. This could help people look at culture critically in its construction of structures biased toward one gender. What becomes clear from this is that culture is seen and treated as static, making it difficult for the people to realize that some cultural practices are derogatory or harmful.

Some of the participants (Gerhartine Goabas 24 October 2006 12h35 Okombahe, Namibia, Elfriede Tjongareo 12 December 2006 12h15 Okombahe, Namibia and Agnes //Hoebes 25 October 2006 18h51 Okombahe, Namibia) thought that equality in marriage has arisen because so many people are now educated and many of them own property. They recognized that both partners might have been independent prior to marriage and both might have owned separate property since both earned income. However, they admitted that it may no longer be valid for one person to hold a superior position to the other, and some acknowledged that the church also rejects inequality in marriage. On the other hand, while some women said that the church rejects inequality, S. Shangombe (3 November 2006 11h01 Jamberero, Namibia), Agnes //Hoebes (25 October 2006 18h51 Okombahe, Namibia), E. /Uises (12 December 2006 14h30 Okombahe, Namibia) and H. !Howaes (25 October 2006 17h08 Okombahe, Namibia) stated that the church teaches that a woman is inferior to a man. This idea needs to be taken seriously, since there are several biblical texts that are cited in support of women's inferiority.

The continuing inequality of men and women can be attributed to the low education levels of women due to poor finances or consecutive child bearing, which kept them at home and even out of school. Sabina Xawes (25 October 2006 Okombahe, Namibia) said that another factor contributing to inequality is that the man (who enters a marriage)

already has an attitude of superiority, which the woman does not oppose out of respect and fear. Even clergy are not immune from such attitudes: some couples have been told by their pastors that equality is an important part of marriage and that everything must be balanced, but that a woman has less status than man (Rosa !Nôabes 25 October 2006).

From the way the participants reacted towards statements about equality in marriage, it can be inferred that equality of spouses in marriage is not debatable; they themselves also submit to that ideology. From this, it can be inferred that women are the recipients of oppressive elements of culture as well as of the Bible. Looking at the participants' acceptance of marital inequality, and taking into consideration the age and the level of education of the participants, their viewpoints are not surprising. Clinging to tradition and culture, they do not realize that they are denying themselves opportunities to be treated as individuals in their own right.

This study has indicated that *married Damara women are trapped between culture and the changing socio-political circumstances, which demands marriage equality for both partners*. The participants want to be loyal to the proscriptions of culture, even if this means accepting male domination and opposing laws that intend to liberate women. It seems hard for these women to understand what equality might entail, or how they could benefit from a more just marital arrangement.

It is also likely that their low levels of education made it difficult for them to recognize liberating mechanisms for women in Namibia as established in the Namibian Constitution.⁴⁸ The Damara women's inability to perceive marriage equality positively shows that there is much work to be done to make them aware of their rights, dignity, and humanity.

2.4.5 Decision-making and dependency

⁴⁸ Article 14 of the Namibian Constitution declares that all people, regardless their gender, may enter into marriage voluntarily and not by force. It further stipulates that they are equal in marriage.

Agnes //Hoebes (25 October 2006), (Juliane Gaomas, 3 November 2006), and Elfriede Tjongarero (10 December 2006) indicated that women have limited decision-making powers. The wife had no authority to make decisions even in the absence of her husband. The limited decision-making power of women also meant that a wife could not go anywhere without her husband's consent. This custom, along with their views about the importance of marriage for the women, may offer reasons why women feel that the husband needs to be consulted before any decisions are taken (Helga !Howaes 25 October 2006 17h08 Okombahe, Namibia, Agnes //Hoebes 25 October 2006 18h51 Okombahe, Namibia and Annalise #Gaeses 25 October 2006 15h15 Okombahe, Namibia). Women's inability to make independent decisions can hamper women's social lives and even their participation in public life for example in church.

However, the participants admitted that both partners owned money communally, so they could both decide what should be done with it. Nevertheless, Gerhartine Goabas (24 October 2006 18h05 Okombahe, Namibia), Sabina Xawes (25 October 2006 Okombahe Namibia) and E. /Uises (12 December 2006 14h30 Okombahe, Namibia) said that women who earned money outside the home were expected to hand over their salaries to their husbands who would decide how the money was to be used. They said that women themselves did not have problems with this arrangement because they believed that this was the way things were to be done in marriage. Gen 12: 10-20; 26: 6-11 also recount biblical women's limited decision-making power over themselves. According to these passages, Abraham and Isaac respectively made decisions on behalf of Sarah and Rebecca in which they expected them not to disclose their marital status to Pharaoh for fear that they would be killed so that Pharaoh would take Sarah and Rebecca take as wife/s for himself.

The viewpoints presented above show that decision-making were not meant for married Damara women, who often relied on the Bible for guidance. However, this may deprive women of their self-expression because it places them in a second-class position. It can also be argued that the inability to decide for themselves robs women of their dignity as

full human beings who can think for themselves. Preventing women from decision-making can be seen as constraining their productivity and innovative power.

While, it seems that women had limited decision-making power, women had the right to own property. The participants shared the view that cattle and livestock had separate owners and were marked differently, although they were kept in the same kraal. In case of the death of a spouse, this gave the survivor the right to own all the property. Thus, the widow/widower had the prerogative of deciding whether or not to give some of the property to the in-laws. From the women's statements, it became clear that the family of the man had no say over property left by the deceased husband.

Mrs. Adolfine Guriras added that in some cases, if the widow remarried after inheriting from her deceased husband, the property would be divided between her and her children and she had to leave to stay with her new husband. This was done to prevent her new husband from moving in with her and abusing her property. According to Christian tradition, and especially among people who marry without an ante nuptial contract, properties acquired during the marriage are co-owned by both spouses.

2.4.6 Marital problems

Like any other marriage, problems were unavoidable in the Damara marriages and therefore they have put in place certain measures to deal with marital problems (G. Goabas 24 October 2006 18h05 Okombahe, Namibia, G. Pieters 24 October 2006 15h55 Okombahe, Namibia, and A. //Hoebes 25 October 2006 18h51 Okombahe, Namibia). Women had to keep problems secret and could only go to the in-laws who had power over marriage and could dissolve it, should they notice unsolved problems that were of a serious, harmful nature. A wife and husband would go to their respective in-laws should they have problems with one another because no one was allowed to bring their marital problems to their biological parents (H. !Howaes 25 October 2006 17h08 Okombahe, Namibia, S. Xawes 25 October 2006 12h49 Okombahe, Namibia). However, in serious cases, the wife could return to her biological parents. If the husband wanted her back, he

would have to go to her parents once again to ask for her. In fact, a woman was only allowed to return to her husband if the husband went to her parents to make peace and ask her to come back (S. Shangombe 3 November 2006 11h01 Jamberero, Namibia, J.Gaomas 3 November 2006 10h29 Jamberero and A. Guriras 25 October 2006 15h40 Okombahe, Namibia) A similar incident is also recorded in Judges 19.

In the Damara society, infidelity of either of the spouses was regarded as a marital problem and was dealt with like any other problem, including violence and spousal abuse. Spouses were expected to approach their respective in-laws for resolution of these problems. Most of the time, since the women were expected not to talk of their problems outside their homes, they accepted the abusive nature of the men and kept it secret, partly because they were dependent on their husbands and partly because their culture taught them to be silent and keep secrets about their marriage. A good wife was to deal with her problems in the privacy of her home with her husband (Gisela Ganases 5 November 2006 15h00 Omaruru, Namibia, E. Gaomas 5 November 2006 15h35, E. Tjongarero 12 December 2006 12h15 Okombahe, Namibia and A. Guriras 25 October 2006 15h40 Okombahe, Namibia).

While men were free to have multiple sexual partners, there were rules mandating the fidelity of an Israelite woman. A woman was expected to be faithful to her husband from the moment she was betrothed to him (Douglas 1962:788). Women were not to be caught in adultery (Deut. 22:13-21), which was punishable by death. Brides were expected to be virgins when they married--if a bride was not, she would be executed--and it was the task of the fathers to ensure that their daughters were virgins when they married (Deut. 22:20).

Given the value of culture in the lives of those within the society, critical questioning of culture is essential so that women need not succumb to cultural demands that permit them to be harmed. When that happens, culture becomes one's enemy, and can lead women into vulnerable situations in which they can contract sexually transmitted diseases from their unfaithful spouses.

The way marital problems were handled shows that women were not fully in control of their own marriages. Therefore, it is important that culture be designed in such a way that all people have equal rights. It also becomes necessary for women to be recognized as people who form a particular culture, and who are responsible, together with men, for its upholding. When women lack independent decision making and function as subordinates in marriage, culture needs to be re-evaluated to determine who benefits by denying women their humanity and expression of opinion. Thus, the next section deals with the expectations of women as far as marital problems are concerned.

2.4.7 Widowhood

Studies have shown that widows in some African societies go through difficult times in which they are even expected to adhere to certain cultural practices, such as ritual cleansing or mourn the death of her husband for a determined period of time⁴⁹.

The participants shared different views on widowhood in Damara culture. According to Mrs. Sabina Xawes (25 October 2006 12h49 Okombahe, Namibia), a young widow was returned to her parents with her inheritance. While, in some cases, as Mrs. Gisela Pieters (24 October 2006 15h55 Okombahe, Namibia) added, she could remain at the house of her in-laws since she was accepted as part of that family. In the case of remarriage, the prospective husband had to ask for her from her in-laws, because she was now their daughter. The in-laws would then inform her biological parents about the intended marriage. Since the widow now had two families, she was even helped with her children by her family on both sides, as Mrs. Christaline !Uri#khos (25 October 2006 13h35 Okombahe, Namibia) noted.

In ancient Israelite society, a widow did not own any property, though provisions were made for them like their Damara counterparts through which they could gather food for themselves (Thurston, 2002:745). Such provisions included: receiving of tithes every three years (Deut.24:17-18), invitation to public meals (Deut. 16:11, 14) and being allowed to glean in the fields (Deut. 24:19-24; Ruth.2:2).

⁴⁹ See for instance M, Oduyoye (1995: 150).

It seems when women became widows; they did not have much of a choice about remaining in their deceased husbands' houses, which were, of course, theirs too, because those decisions were taken on their behalf. It might be argued that widows were regarded as weak at the time of the loss of their spouses and that they were not in a state of making decisions for themselves, with the result that the parents-in-law decided on their behalf about what would happen to them and where they would live. The decision-making of the parents may also imply that since a married woman could not make decisions without her husband, the parents saw themselves fit to take decisions for her. The process of decision making for the widow indicates that these women were hardly given room to decide for themselves, nor asked what their wishes were. A more charitable interpretation would be that the parents-in-law, in consideration of her loss, did not want to bother her unnecessarily and took decisions in the hope that they were actually doing her a favour. Even though Damara widows were not expected to marry the brother of the deceased spouse, as was the ancient Israelite custom, their treatment with regard to their dwelling was similar. In the twenty-first century, however, Damara widows have full rights to the property of their deceased husbands, as they married "in community of property". Marriage in community of property helps protect the property rights of widows as well as ensures that they are being treated with dignity.

2.5 Conclusion

Damara women are taught from childhood that men are superior to them. In preparation for this, girls are brought up differently from boys, with marked distinctions in role divisions. Girls are meant to do domestic chores and are thus trained for taking care of their future homes.

When it comes to their own marriages, women have limited decision-making power. They are taught how to behave in marriage and how to treat their husbands. They continue to be denied the right to education and consequently remain dependent on men. The stereotyped unequal relationship of husband and wife in marriage makes it

impossible for women to be treated equally to men, and Damara society does not appear to be stepping forward to rectify the situation.

Although, women are being confined to the domestic sphere where their work around the house is disregarded, it appears that domestic work is indispensable to any household. Therefore, it is crucial that the negative ways of referring to domestic work need to be rejected. Seeing the indispensable duties women perform in their homes, I suggest empowerment, which will enable women in valuing themselves and what they do in a positive light. In this regard, the church together with the Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Welfare could join hands in launching programmes to raise awareness of the Married Persons' Equality Act of 1996 among women. This study has shown how women are loyal to their culture. Their loyalty also proves that they ensure peace and stability within their marriages. This suggests that women could be used as agents of cultural transformation. In order to accomplish cultural transformation, with women as agents, it is important that women recognize their self worth and question unjust cultural practices. This chapter has shown that patriarchy exists in Damara culture, but it also has proved that no culture is static, which implies that negative aspects of patriarchy can also be overcome.

Even though most of the oppressive cultural practices with regard to women, as pointed out in this study, underwent gradual changes until its falling into disuse or decline, the legacy and ideologies behind such practices are inherent in the Damara and women find themselves on various levels still subjected to discrimination, particularly because in many quarters they are still regarded as minors in comparison to men.

Male domination is deeply entrenched in the Damara culture. This chapter has pointed out practices that are inherent in the Damara culture, but also has indicated some practices that are found in the Bible among the ancient Israelites. Among these are: the payment made to the parents of the girl should she become pregnant before marriage, control of sexuality of women, importance of children, parents' consent to marriage of their daughters, barrenness, women's subjugation and submissiveness to their husbands.

These similarities indicate that Damara women not only are affected by patriarchy in their culture but suffer under the biblical patriarchy, which influences the culture and their ecclesiological lives in different ways.

One can assume too, as also confirmed by the participants, that the Damara women's reading of the stories of other women in the Bible, most specifically those in relation to men, provide them with models of how women should act toward their husbands. Such readings suggest that the way they interpret the Bible contributes to their feeling and behaving inferior to their husbands, although they seemed to find nothing wrong with this. As could be seen from their understanding of the biblical texts, this sort of reading and interpretation suggests that Damara women fail to extract empowering and liberating aspects from the Bible. Kanyoro (2002:10) argues that the reason for this subservience may be grounded in the fact that women take the Bible seriously and that they see any difference from culture as a "taboo".

In the next chapter, I will explore the effects of patriarchy on women in their ecclesiological lives.

CHAPTER 3: THE INFLUENCE OF ECCLEIOLOGICAL PATRIARCHY ON MARRIED DAMARA WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with the way biblical and cultural patriarchy affects married Damara women. Since culture and religion cannot be separated from one another, it is important to examine in this chapter the way in which women experience patriarchy in the church⁵⁰. Oduyoye (2001:25a) affirms that African culture is religion-based, and because culture also influences the religion of the people, she uses the term “religio-culture” (: 25a) since it embraces both the culture and religion. Oduyoye (: 25a) asserts that religio-culture rules and directs life in Africa. However, since the indigenous religion of the Damara people is no longer widely practiced⁵¹, I will simply examine Damara women’s experience in church under the influence of patriarchy within the framework of ecclesiology using feminist ecclesiology.

To do this, I aim to look at women’s involvement in church and to explore certain patriarchal challenges they face. This chapter also looks at whether women hold any religious and leadership positions in the church (Okombahe Congregation) and to what extent the society accepts women in these positions of the church. It raises questions about Damara women’s feelings regarding their treatment in the church by their culture.

It is necessary at this point to provide some definitions of ecclesiology. Letty Russell (1996:74) defines ecclesiology as, “thinking about the church”. According to Watson, “Ecclesiology can be understood as a form of male discourse by which men have attempted to define valid and invalid forms of being church as well as identifying

⁵⁰ Despite the fact that the ELCRN does not have any official line on the role of women in church, gender inequality is prevalent in church, as will be outlined later.

⁵¹ See Vedder (1966:62) for a description on the religion of the Damara people. Also De vries (1977: 64-75).

women's discourses of church as not being church" (2002:6). On the other hand, feminist ecclesiology defines church from a feminist viewpoint, taking women's experiences and their humanity in account. It also refers to the way women "speak about their being church" (Watson, 2002: 2). She elaborates on this saying:

In naming their own experiences, women acknowledge their power and their being in the image of God. By naming themselves as those who are church, women claim their power to name the church as the space where such naming relation can take place (: 2).

Feminist ecclesiology, being part of liberation theology, was born out of a need to challenge and reinterpret "patriarchal interpretation of church" (Russell, 1996:75) in order to recognize the "full humanity of women together with men". Oduyoye (2005:153) states, "ecclesiology is not simply studying and talking about the church. It has to do with being the Church". Therefore, feminist ecclesiology advocates for the full humanity of "women together with men" (Russell, 1993:22). Its interest is in raising the needs of women. Letty Russell (: 22) states that fighting for the cause of women does not necessarily make one female, but only advocates for full "human-hood" of all people. This signifies that men can also advocate for women.

"The critical principle of feminist ecclesiology is a table principle that looks for ways that God reaches out to include all those whom the society and religion have declared outsiders and invites them to gather round God's table of hospitality. The measure of the adequacy of the life of a church is how it is connected to those on the margin" (: 25).

This table principle originated from the round table arrangement of the Presbyterian Church for Pentecost celebration. Its emphasis was that different people could sit together and share around the round table, without being discriminated against. The table principle is an attempt to engage faith and feminism "in a table talk as theological action and reflection" (1993:24). This principle is drawn from Jesus' invitation of the destitute of the

society in Luke 19:1-10, "to share the feast of God's household" (Russell, 1993:25). Since feminist ecclesiology is dealing with advocacy of women, its task is to welcome all that are put on the margins in the church. It also aims to encourage women on the margins to move to the centre and speak for themselves (: 26).

3.1.1 Definition of Church

For the purpose of this study, the term church also needs explanation. Church can be defined both as a "spiritual entity and an institution, which is divided into denominations" (Watson, 2002:8). Church can be seen as the participation of "Christians, living in one place" (Russell, 1996:75). Church is the "community of Christ, where everybody is welcome. It is the 'community of Christ' because Christ's presence, through the power of the spirit, constitutes people as a community gathered in Christ's name" (: 76).

Mercy Oduyoye (2005:151) on the other hand argues that participation is a way of "being church". According to the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, the church means all people, whether "ordained or not", and that it is an institution that is church "when it seeks justice" (: 152). Oduyoye further explains how being church is a costly sacrifice that one can make in one's quest to experience abundance of life (: 153).

Studies in the history of the church show that church had been defined from within a patriarchal structure. Based on this, it has been noted that women are being treated as "separate entities" of the church "with whom the church has to deal as one of those challenges it has to face" (Watson, 2002:1). However, Watson (: 2) points out ways in which the church excluded women from being church, for example through refusal of ordination of women (: 1) and refusing women's full participation in sacraments (: 2). Watson (2002:2) further gives a historical perspective on the way the church had maintained and ensured its unjust practices toward women by being biased about their gender. According to this, women are defined "in terms of childbearing" (: 2) or "in relationship to men" (: 3).

In addition to this, Rev. Immanuel David (1992:9), professor of Ecclesiastical History, states that women's discrimination is demonstrated by history and that women were

“regarded as second class citizens, inferior to men, stereotyped into roles of dependency, submission and passivity. They have been exploited as sex objects. Many looked on women as a necessary evil to fulfill men's sexual needs and to bear their children. Women have been excluded from the power centres and decision-making process in church and society”.

Recognizing all the dehumanizing treatment of women in the church, Watson (2002:1) in her book “Introducing Feminist Ecclesiology”, advocates women's being church and maintains that women “have a say in what the church is all about”. She argues that church be seen as a “community of women, men and children” (: 1), without exclusion of the other. Despite their limitation of being church, women have found the church to be the space in which to develop “discourses of faith often against or in spite of patriarchy” (: 3). Since men held all positions of power, feminist theologians aim for women's participation at all “levels of life in church and society” (David, 1992:11).

The participants shared their experiences that made them feel that women are being treated as inferior to men and as second class in church. This, they argued could be seen in the roles that they are assigned to do and that are accepted to be women's tasks. Cultural gender role distinction, which denies women public roles, surfaced through in church, for which the culture could be blamed. Furthermore, in this study, the church also means women being church that belong to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN).

3.2 The role of women as being church in the congregation of /Á#gomes (Okombahe)

It has been noted that in the congregation of Okombahe the women are in the majority, and that currently more women than men are active in worship⁵² and in teaching children, whether at home or in church. Subsequently, they started to fill positions previously held by males. On this local level, women are in various leadership positions: elders (of which they also make up the majority membership), choir leader, deaconess, the organizing committee and the finance committee. The membership of the committees also reflects the number of the women in the congregation, which bears evidence of their active involvement. Ironically, though, some women themselves prefer to appoint a man as a chairperson to such committees. This suggests that, had there been more men active in the church, women probably would not have been given the opportunity to serve in these positions. It might be argued that this is a cultural influence, which maintains men's superiority. The participants also shared their observation that due to their large number, women also contribute more financially than men do.

Likewise, Exodus 35:1-38 reveals women's presence and notes that they also contributed to the building of the tabernacle by bringing gifts. According to Deut 31: 12-13; Josh 8: 35; Neh. 8: 2 ff. women had equal responsibility in keeping the law. These passages suggest that both men and women were addressed. Likewise, both men and women received equal treatment with regard to punishment if they transgressed the law (2 Chronicles 15: 12-13; Deut 17:2-5; 29: 18-21). The same was true for all the people that led others astray (Deut 13: 6-11). There is also evidence in the Bible that some religious women, such as Deborah (Judges 4:4-5:31) or Huldah ("Kings 22:11-23:25), in spite of their patriarchal societies, emerged to the forefront in worship. These passages show that there exists no strong consensus as to the treatment and acceptance of women in the worship.

It is obvious that while some texts prevent women from full participation, others affirm women's involvement in worship and things that were accompanied by it. This surely

⁵² This is congruent with the observation of Brigalia Bam (2005:12) that women make up the majority number in church. She refers to church as the "church of women" and regards them as backbone of any church.

must have created double standards for women, as they would live in uncertainty as to what was really allowed and what was not.

3.2.1 The traditional role expectations for women

There are certain rules that are prescribed for different genders. The participants noted that it is taken for granted that women are charged with taking care of the church building and its preparation for each service and ensure that everything is tidy and in its place. Moreover, a woman is expected to be voiceless and was not allowed to lead worship services by those who were in leadership, though they could hold devotions at home, especially during Christmas time⁵³. However, women are now able to testify or to preach in church.

A woman should show clearly that she is married through her clothing, by wearing long dresses covering their knees, signs that there are clear dress code rules for women. This means that women have to always cover their heads when they are in the service because this is understood as tidiness. Gaomas (2005:9) also confirms this saying that the "ELCRN tends to regard 1 Corinthians 11: 2-16, with its emphasis on women's head coverings, as the prescribed way in which women should attire themselves for church". Bam (2005:12) sees this role of women as their being "slaves of slaves", because of the roles they are given and accept or allow within the church.

In this regard, the Damara women share a similar experience with the ancient Israelite women whose involvement in worship was limited and controlled by purity rules. Bellis (1994:21) argues that the religious laws in the same way excluded and determined biblical women from full participation in worship because of their gender since the laws only applied to men, for example, the sixth commandment is a warning directed to men⁵⁴.

⁵³ Women distributed passages from the Bible that proclaim the birth of Jesus to children, who had to recite them.

⁵⁴ See for instance Ex. 20; Deut. 13: 6; 21: 10-14.

Okombahe society tries so hard to define women's roles for them, in church as well as in society, that sometimes the definition also becomes contradictory because while women are expected to be passive in church, the needs of the church require women's active involvement. Whereas women are expected to be satisfied with their inferior status, their domestic roles have accustomed them to managing chores at home. In these management functions they behave instinctively, which has led to their subsequently taking over certain "male positions" in church, as will be shown in the next section. It is noted that while the society of Okombahe attempts to ensure that women maintain the status quo of the culture, by being subservient to men, the society has neglected to hold men accountable for their duties. This may be one of the reasons that contributed tremendously to changes in women's expected roles in society.

3.2.2 Changes in women's roles in church

With time, the traditionally accepted women's role changed so much that they crossed gender boundaries set out by the society. The participants put forward several reasons for the changes that took place in the church. The first one is the independence of Namibia, which emphasizes the equality of both sexes. They also believe that independence uplifted women's dignity and affirmed that independence came while women were already involved in the fight for recognition in the church making women's burden lighter. The second reason they gave is the constant absenteeism of men from church and that the scarcity of men ensured that women began to be elected into roles that were normally given to men, such as being an elder or becoming a pastor.

Thirdly, they attributed these changes to women's education, which now allows them to have a voice. Studies of women in the theological field are promoted, allowing women to realize that they are fully human and that they do not need to stand back. However, the participants noted that the attitude toward women has not changed such as the desire to silence women in church. This forced women to respond to the society's attitude by protesting against the society, being active, taking the lead on their own terms and rejecting patriarchal boundaries set out by the society. The participants said that the

changes that with regard to women in leadership positions are well accepted by women. This gives other women the feeling that they have women that can represent them in councils where previously there were only men. Moreover, the participants expressed the desire that more women obtain theological training and that women should be encouraged to stand together and promote one another by electing more women to the top leadership positions within the church.

From what the participants shared, it seems that women opposed the patriarchal ecclesiological structures of the church, which restricted the roles that women could play, but they did not have enough knowledge and/or the ability to articulate this. However, their comments show that women have slowly managed to break down the unnecessary rules imposed by church upon both women and men. This, in itself, says much, because it shows how women might have been frustrated by, for instance the absence of men as they have pointed out above. Like in the case of equal rights, most of the participants attributed women's freedom of speech in church to the national independence. This shows that they had been patronized socially, preventing women from doing what they had wanted to do.

Since people view things differently, even if they are of the same society or gender, one of the participants has shown clear dissatisfaction with women who are able to sing in deep voices⁵⁵ and she expects that women should resume singing female voices only. The reaction of this woman illustrates her inability to recognize women's being church. Nor does she see the need for women to reclaim their own space within the church. Nevertheless, she is of the opinion that women's desire to perform traditional "male" functions destroys male-female respect. This participant reasoned that contemporary women intrude on men's space. The strong influence of patriarchy is evident in this woman. Such an attitude suggests a need for women's self-awareness, so that they see themselves as fully human, not creatures who are created less than men are. It may also call for recognition and acknowledgment of gifts and abilities as God-given.

⁵⁵ Tenor and bass are believed to be deep voices and therefore unacceptable for women to sing in these voices, while soprano and alto are meant for females.

In addition, the participants noted that there are women who do not support other women in congregational leadership positions because of jealousy. They also noted that some elderly people, especially men, do not accept women's duties in church. The participants also remarked that there is a lack of respect towards women. However, they saw the roles of women in church today as essential for the development of women and the society.

Besides this, most of the participants insisted that the traditional customs on women's dress code be brought back because, according to some, it indicates respect for the church. These women in particular, as well as society in general, have tended to focus their attention on certain disciplines associated with church-going, thereby personalizing certain minor issues and forgetting real issues at hand that need to be corrected, such as people's behaviour towards women, and especially by women. This further shows how women oppose one another on inanities. The treatment of women by one another may suggest a reason for their negative treatment by men, who trivialize women in church. Quarrelling about the women's dress code may suggest ways in which women are being excluded and prevented from participation.

Women's opposition to their own gender performing what some of them consider "males' work"⁵⁶ can be attributed to both the colonial legacy and patriarchy in the culture, both of which elevate males over females for leadership and positions of authority. Women and men who are thus enculturated and are more likely to believe that those gender constructions are valid in church today. Because of this, they are inclined to believe that only men can serve in leadership positions in the church. Therefore, women within the church may refuse to accept other women in "powerful" or "superior" positions. The situation in church, in which strong, capable women find themselves seeking to transcend boundaries while they are deliberately being kept on the margins, indicates that there is a need for women's defining of self, as Bernard Mncube also suggests, and this may need to be done on women's "own terms and not in those of the institutional church" (Mncube, 1991:358).

⁵⁶ Oduyoye (2001:81b) contends that unequal treatment of women, especially by women, is caused by internalisation of "low esteem of women in the Church and other prevailing values that they become accomplices in the suppression of their own gender".

However, noting that people find all kinds of excuses as reasons for women's exclusion, David (1992:25), encourages women "to take every opportunity to become involved at the local level, to exercise those ministries that are already open to them" and to continue their work on the congregational level. David's remark serves as an encouragement to those women who are already part of the active life of the church, while at the same time encouraging others who oppose women, to recognize what women do without judging their gender.

While respecting the views of the participants on the abovementioned issues, I think that there is more to be done in promoting the positive image of women and what they do in the church. Some women appear to have been socialized into thinking negatively about their abilities, with the result that women fail to recognize one another's ability based on sexism. The diverse views on women suggest that there is further need for dialogue between women and women and between women and men to identify together those things that contribute to their spirituality and to their being church. Such dialogue could help them reject whatever is really destroying their spiritual life and their communal being church. Women's treatment in church is, quite simply, an issue of justice which requires just treatment for women.

This study has brought to light that to sustain patriarchy, the Damara culture concentrates mostly on married women who are in direct relationship with men to enforce women's subjugation to men. For instance, there are set cultural roles for women that need to be done in the domestic sphere, preventing them from taking up public positions. In this way, since they have to remain in the private sphere, women are prevented from being active leaders in the church. Whether they are in private or public sphere, they are reminded of their place, which is not equal to that of men. As they have been confined to their homes with regard to their duties, women in church too are confined to minor tasks, such as cleaning and maintenance of the church building. This could make it impossible for women to become leaders or to do things that normally were done by men in the church. It comes to mind how hard it could be to do away cultural rules set by the society

in the ecclesiological arena, since culture governs what happens in church as well. The same could also be said about ancient Israelite women with regard to rules and laws that regulated their participation.

3.2.3 The way Okombahe society regards and treats women in leadership positions

Despite the fact that women do so much in the congregation and the church, the women are aware of the ambivalence with which they are met. Many feel unappreciated for what they do. On the other hand, regardless of the attitude of the society towards them, women feel proud of themselves for being able to do tasks and hold positions that were previously only held by men. Gaomas notes the following in affirmation to women's experiences:

It is clear that women perform many of the routine tasks in ELCRN, even though much of their work remains unseen and unacknowledged. Women have made strides, albeit slowly, in what used to be considered exclusively men's territory, and they have done so despite opposition (2005:14).

Beya (2001:195) recommends that women's dignity and vocation be recognized "through sharing of ecclesial authority". At the same time, she calls upon the church to redefine the male-female relationship (: 184). I propose the value of carrying Beya's comment a step further and suggest that women identify themselves as full human beings and start reading the Bible from their own experiences, rejecting or reinterpreting what subjects women to oppression.

Brigalia Bam (1991:364) sees the inability of the church to recognize women's potential as "a violation of human rights of women on the part of the church". She further argues that preference of male leadership over that of females is grounded and measured on male/female competence (: 364). Noting the disunity even among women, Bam suggests,

“women need to get alongside other women and find a new kind of solidarity”⁵⁷ (: 365). She suggests that women develop a theology that brings all women in church together, irrespective of their race and colour. I concur that for women to bring about social change and to transform male attitudes toward them, women need to start with themselves and admit their own mistakes and involvement in order to be able to convince men about injustices done to women. It is also evident that as long as women are divided on issues of cultural propriety, they are unlikely to be successful in their fight against the oppression of their gender.

This is also a matter of human rights and of people knowing their rights as noted above. Therefore, the Namibian systematic theologian, Paul John Isaak (2000:124) notes the urgency for the promotion of human rights, “human dignity and gender equity”. He states:

The ELCRN sees the protection of human rights as a basic Christian concern, based on the notion that we are all created in the image of God and should promote and maintain human equality and dignity. Furthermore, the ELCRN sees her mission as being one of raising awareness of human rights within herself, particularly as some members of the ELCRN are marginalized and excluded by other members, mostly by Church co-workers and clergy. Therefore, the ELCRN should intensify education on human rights issues and increase knowledge on such issues locally, regionally, and nationally. It should also sensitize church leaders and members through services, Bible studies, theological education, research, information sharing and networking.

This in itself is a revelation of what ELCRN ought to be, and is an acknowledgement that it still has to accomplish this task of seeing all members as church, deserving of equal treatment. Based on the rejection of women because of their gender, Oduyoye (1995:173) asserts that the church itself “questions the true humanity of the “other”, in this case, the women. Since the women are regarded as the other, Oduyoye’s argument states that the

⁵⁷ Kanyoro (2001:159b) has rightly concluded that the problem of women’s oppression lies largely with women themselves, as they too have been influenced by the patriarchal system, and she notes that African women had been “custodians of cultural practices”.

church is patriarchal and it “finds ways of justifying the oppression or marginalization of the other” (: 173).

In her attempts to give possible reasons for women’s discrimination in church, Oduyoye (2001:82a) cites Kanyoro by saying: “the status of women within the church is a microcosm of their status within society of which the church is a part”. Oduyoye’s argument may have articulated the situation of the Damara women well. The patriarchal nature of the society that set out rules for women also expects the same of women in church. From this it can be inferred that women find it hard to break the bonds of patriarchy in society as well as in church. This also illustrates how church life and culture are inseparable; with the result, that culture has an influence on church.

Noting the gender bias against women in church and society Bishop Dr. Kameeta of the ELCRN remarked, as we approached the 21st century:

... The Church must encourage her members, in word and deed, to rouse themselves from their observer status and become active members, engaged and involved in issues that affect all of us, whether in our congregation, neighbourhoods or in the wider community. By putting our suggestions into action, we take ownership of the issues and problems facing us and share responsibility for the outcome. A church in which this is happening, educates and contributes to active citizenship, where people will take active ownership of the process of nation-building, development, prosperity, stability and peace (2000:15).

Dr. Kameeta clearly calls members of the whole church to active membership irrespective of their gender. From this remark, one can assume that he sees the church as an institution that both embraces and challenges men and women together with children.

A glance at the missionaries’ activities reveal that they functioned within colonial and patriarchal frameworks, which is evident in accounts dealing with men’s and women’s

responsibilities in the societies. Heese (1980:154) and Baumann (1967:36) point out that the mission activities made clear gender distinctions and was focused on men and boys, while women and girls were expected to do domestic work and attend needle work classes with the missionaries' wives ⁵⁸. From these actions of the missionaries, the cultural hegemony is visible up to now and suggest that males were superior to females.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the role women play in church and how they are viewed by their society. It is evident that women came into the forefront of the church without the approval of the society, which is male-oriented. The society mostly still prefers male leadership in church, who supports their male preference with anti women biblical evidence during worship. This makes it difficult for women who serve in the church to perform their duties. However, the women proved that, despite rejections and lack of respect, they have fought their way through in doing what they believe they can do together with men. This shows how deeply embedded patriarchy is in the Damara people's lives, hampering the recognition of positive contributions women make to church. It also prevents people, male and female from accepting women as equals who can serve in church with the same recognition and respect as men, since not only the culture is patriarchal, but also the Bible the Damara women read.

The arguments given by the participants on the role of women and the way they are perceived by their society indicates that people have difficulty defining church. Most arguments against women indicate that people argue within the framework of patriarchal definition of church, of which women are not seen as part. However, there are some indications that show women take being church seriously, realizing that if it were not for them the church, as an institution, might not exist. Therefore, they are sometimes subversive in their role, despite the society's rejection of them, and take initiatives without waiting for men. However, in some instances the influence of patriarchy on

⁵⁸ See Deppert (1967:229) who further gives accounts of duties in church that were done by women only.

women surface through their way of thinking, which shows that they do not always recognize ways in which they are denied equal opportunities in church with men.

It becomes clear that not only men oppress women, but that women also hamper women's chances to prosper. Not only culture, but also the Bible and its use in church is guilty of subjugating women because the two are inextricably bound together. To crown everything, women's interpretation and understanding of the Bible are also influenced by the way they were brought up: to consider themselves inferior and to be subservient.

This shows a need for the transformation of culture and church in a way that recognizes the full humanity of women. Such transformation would remind women that they were created in the same image of God as men. There is also a need for women to change the way they read and understand the Bible, by asking whose interests are being served (Exum, 1995:65). This might help women develop a theology that is liberating, one that would help them find new meanings in the Bible.

This chapter has noted that ecclesiological patriarchy as well as the cultural patriarchy prevented Damara women from taking roles that were "reserved" for men in church; similarly, biblical women too had religious restrictions in worship. However, it surfaced how women in both cultures transgressed gender boundaries. The presence of ecclesiological patriarchy and its effects on Damara women may have been derived from the biblical teachings that denies equal involvement of women in church with men. Moreover, it comes to light patriarchal experiences of women in church are constructed culturally and that women feel double oppression of cultural and ecclesiological patriarchy, which both seems to be influenced by biblical patriarchy.

4. CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

The previous chapter has pointed out how discrimination against Damara women is not only caused by indigenous culture. Ecclesiological patriarchy, influenced by the patriarchy in the Bible also played a major role.

4.1 Concluding summary

The aim of this study has been to examine the effects of patriarchy on Damara women in their social and church life and the way it is sustained and to determine if biblical patriarchy has had any influence on that culture. In order to find out if biblical patriarchy has influenced the Damara culture, this study examined similarities between the two. In addition to this, it also examined the way women read the Bible and associate themselves with the stories of other women in the Bible.

In chapter one, I argued that women make up a society together with men, but that they are not regarded as equal to men. This becomes apparent in the way that the Damara society constructed gender roles, ascribing roles to women that are seen as inferior. Such roles most often confined women to the domestic sphere. I proposed that Damara women are not only affected by cultural patriarchy, but that there is an influence of biblical patriarchy on culture, which particularly affects married women.

Having stated my hypothesis, I proposed three theoretical frameworks, which would help identify negative aspects of culture and patriarchy on women, while at the same to draw out positive aspects that can be revived. To do this I used feminist cultural hermeneutics, African women's theology, and feminist ecclesiology. I asserted that feminist cultural hermeneutics tests and challenges culture to elicit ways in which culture can promote justice for all people. African Women's theology was used to encourage stories of women that highlight their needs as human beings, needs on which they need to act for their emancipation. Feminist ecclesiology was used to acknowledge and encourage

women's presence and involvement in church by demonstrating women's contributions as being part of the term "church".

Having established the aim of this study in Chapter One, I focused on the interviews with Damara women in the second and third chapters. The second chapter highlighted through interviews ways in which women are affected by patriarchy. The participants confirmed male domination over women through several examples they mentioned. For instance, women's submissiveness to their husbands; lack of decision-making in marriage; gender roles that denied them public functions and which also kept them under male leadership; their lack of understanding of equality of spouses in marriage. Besides these examples, the participants also cited examples of Biblical male superiority over women. Moreover, these women cited biblical stories that portray male/female relationships, which they unanimously agreed were teaching them how to behave toward their husbands.

They applied these examples to the teachings of the Damara culture about respect toward husbands, teachings that keep women in subordinate positions. It also emerged from the interviews that male domination affects women in such a way that obstructs their progress in public and that they are in constant need of their husbands' approval of what they are doing. This confirms the tremendous impact the Bible, with its biblical patriarchy, has on women and their culture since the Bible is seen as the authentic Word of God that has to be obeyed.

Chapter 3 dealt with ecclesiological issues with regard to the effect of patriarchy on women. However, I bore in mind Oduyoye's (2001:25a) statement that culture and religion are inseparable; therefore, this chapter examined women's experiences in the ELCRN in conjunction with the culture of the people that influence it. The participants also confirmed how culture has an influence on women's church lives by defining cultural roles for women: for example, the expectation that women be minors and passive, while only males assume leadership. This passivity results in the society's consequent rejection of women when they presume roles culturally assigned to males only.

I also explored the extent of biblical patriarchy on Damara culture through studying its effects on women in the Bible first. From there I looked at similar practices in these two societies. This has indicated that biblical patriarchy relegating women to inferior status has had an influence on the Damara culture. The similarities in these two societies in which women's full humanity is denied suggests its influence on Damara culture and, in particular, on married women. This has proved that even though the Damara culture in itself is patriarchal, it is influenced by biblical culture in many ways and so contributes to gender inequality. Although this study has illuminated the existence of patriarchy in both societies and the influence of biblical patriarchy on married Damara women's lives, there are however, flickers of hope in both societies in which women can act independently.

4.2 Suggestions

Having stated the findings of my study, I assert that further work needs to be done in order to make transformation possible. Transformation of the society requires the reclaiming of certain aspects of culture in marriage preparation, in marriage itself, gender role construction and in the rules. Accordingly, the portrayal of marriage as both man and woman needing each other has to be promoted. This begins with the proposal of marriage, which need not to be seen as offensive coming from a woman. Likewise, such a transformation should clarify that children are not a prerequisite of marriage, thus reducing the pain of childlessness in marriage. Married women need to have control over their sexuality and the number of children they bear. Since marriage involve the willingness of two people, the idea of the young woman's family losing their daughter through her marriage also needs to be abolished. Society should happily embrace the fact that both families, in reality, gain a daughter or a son.

Women must be able to participate in the negotiations of marriage together with the men's contribution. However, the society may wish to retain the important aspect of asking for the bride, which signifies her belonging to a family and that she is not a loose woman who can be married without the parents' involvement. This also signifies how

valuable a woman is to her family as she is going to be to her in-laws. Reciprocal slaughtering of cattle need to be encouraged as a sign that both the bride and the groom desire such a marriage. Emphasis needs to be put on the importance of marital rituals, with a greater encouragement of the groom's participation in such rituals. The custom of the accompanying of the bride by a sister is a good gesture, taking into consideration the new residence of the bride and her loneliness, though the accompanier needs to be given a choice in the matter.

Women need to have rights of ownership and full decision-making in marriage. To promote a healthy relationship of the spouses, I suggest that mutual respect, love, and mutual submissiveness of spouses be promoted, advancing communication between the partners and enabling them to discuss any aspect of their lives without any fear of one another. This in itself may contribute to equality of spouses in marriage, which also needs to be reclaimed. There should be gender-neutral roles, enabling women to work in public as well. Society must no longer tolerate the unhealthiness of silence in abusive situations. Women in such situations must be encouraged to speak out, without shame, about any physical or emotional abuse they suffer.

It is essential to examine culture to reject what is denying women their full humanity and to remind women that they need not cower behind men in any activity. Women need to utilize their presence in church fully, without guilt, and live out their God-given gifts. Moreover, the definition of the term "church" needs to be clarified and broadened so that it spells out what and whom this term contains. Furthermore, women need to define and recognize their humanity without neglecting the other gender. They also need to be encouraged to refuse to be denied roles in church because of their gender. With regard to the reading of the Bible, women need to recognize positive elements about women in the Bible and reinterpret texts positively in ways that present women as equal to men.

It has been recognized that more consciousness-raising needs to be done about marriage equality. Kanyoro (2002:89, 2001: 169-171) proposes the Circle of Concerned African Women (hereafter the Circle) as a space in which women can talk about their feelings

and develop their theologies. While I admit that the Circle might be a space for women to deal with women's issues, this is inadequate for the Damara women, as the Circle mostly resides in the academic circles that theorize about women's problems and will therefore not be helpful for grass root women. Nevertheless, I note the importance of dialogue, and suggest that women in various levels of the society holding different education levels enter into dialogue with each other concerning their culture. This may help them, through sharing of their individual stories and observations, to overcome patriarchy in culture. Not only is the culture patriarchal, but so is the Bible, which serves as a source book. Culture also needs to dialogue with the Bible.

Transformation of a society is incomplete with women only; it requires the co-operation of both men and women. Therefore, I suggest a communal, gender-sensitive theology that can emerge from women on the grass roots level, which is not only empowering but also inclusive of both genders. I assert that such a theology may develop through the people's constant theologizing on their own experience, bearing in mind that all people share the same image of God in which they were created. This, I hope, will encourage people toward gender sensitivity and help in redressing gender roles. Such a theology also needs to be gender neutral so that it can raise societies without gender biases and encourage people to share duties irrespective of their genders. It is my contention that such a theology will help men and women identify oppressive elements of their culture, while respecting and recognizing their differences. This, I believe, will also influence the way they interpret biblical texts in making them sensible to their own contexts. The church can also help tremendously in reaching this goal by establishing empowering programmes without exclusion of either sex.

This is where James Cone's sermon comes in. According to Cone, the rib should be beheld, (behold the rib). The rib according to him signifies equal partnership of spouses in marriage, as the rib is a bone that is in the centre of human body. Cone points out in this sermon that God's intention with the woman's creation from the man's rib, He/She did not intend that the woman be dominated or to dominate, but that man and woman were created to be side by side as equal partners in marriage. Hence, the head bone, or the

foot bone was not chosen to illustrate a woman's position in marriage but to illustrate equality between men and woman with the rib, portrayed as the symbol of equality, instead of dominance or subjugation. This sermon takes women's humanity into account through its portrayal of women to be equal to men, since the rib symbolises equality as it is on the side. Thus not signifying any dominance or subjugation. Such an understanding can help promote people's recognition that a woman was created from the man's rib so that they are equal partners.

Bibliography

- Allison, C. 1988. *"It's like holding the key to your own jail": Women in Namibia*. Geneva: World Council of Churches.
- Bam, B 1991. "Seizing the Moment: Women and the New South Africa" in Denise Ackermann, Jonathan Draper and Emma Mashinini (eds). *Women Hold up Half the sky*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 363-368.
- Bam, B. 2005 "Women and the Church in (South) Africa: Women are the Church in (South) Africa" in I Phiri & S. Nadar. *On Being Church: African Women's voices and visions*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 12-15.
- Barnard, A. 1992. *Hunters and Herders of Southern Africa: a comparative ethnography of the Khoisan peoples*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Baumann, J. 1967. "Die eerste Rynse Sendinstasie in Namaland" in Baumann, *Van Sending tot Kerk: 125 Jaar Rynse Sendingarbeid in Suidwes Afrika*. Windhoek: John Meinert, 16-22.
- Baumann, J. 1967. *Van Sending tot Kerk: 125 Jaar Rynse Sendingarbeid in Suidwes Afrika*. Windhoek: John Meinert, 36.
- Bellis A.O, 1994. *Helpmates, Harlots and Heroes: women's stories in the Hebrew Bible*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Beya, B.M. 2001 "Women in the Church in Africa: Possibilities for Presence and Promises" in N, Njoroge and M, Dube (eds), *Talitha cum! Theologies of African Women*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 183-206.

- Beya, B.M. 2006. "Human Sexuality, Marriage, and Prostitution" in Oduyoye M.A & Kanyoro M. R.A, (eds) *The Will to arise: Women, Tradition and the church in Africa*. New York: Orbis Books, 155-179.
- Bless, C and Higson-Smith, C 1995 *Fundamentals of social research methods: An African perspective*. 2nd edition. Cape Town: Juta.
- Buyis, G. and Nambala, S. 2003. *History of the Church in Namibia: An Introduction*. Gamsberg: Macmillan
- Cone, J. 1975. *God of the Oppressed*. New York: Seabury Press.
- Cullhed, C. 2006. *Grappling with Patriarchies*. Stockholm: Elanders Gotab.
- David, I. 1992. *Women Church and Feminist Theology*. Cameroon: Faculty of Protestant Theology.
- Deppert, M. "Toerusting van vroulike medewerksters vir gemeentediens" in *Van Sending tot Kerk: 125 Jaar Rynse Sendingarbeid in Suidwes Afrika*. Windhoek: John Meinert, 229.
- De vries, J.L. 1977. Sinkretisme en sy gevare vir Namibia: "Die religies van Suidwes-Afrika by Dr H. Vedder en die gevaar van die sinkretistiese bewegings", Karibib: ELK Drukkery.
- Douglas, J.D. 1962. *The New Bible Dictionary*. London: Inter Varsity Press.
- Edet, R.N. 2006. "Christianity and the African Rituals of Birth and Naming" in Oduyoye M.A & Kanyoro M. R.A, (eds), *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition and the Church in Africa*. New York: Orbis Books, 25-39.

- Exum, J.C. 1995. "Feminist Criticism: whose interests are being served?" in Y, Gale, *Judges and Method: New approaches in biblical studies*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 65-85.
- Fanusie, L. 2006. "Sexuality and women in African Culture" in Oduyoye M.A & Kanyoro M. R.A, (eds), *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition and the Church in Africa*. New York: Orbis Books, 135-154.
- Fiorenza, E. 1992. *But She said: Feminist practices of Biblical Interpretation*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Fiorenza, E, 1997. *Searching the Scriptures*. New York. Crossroad Publishing.
- Frymer-Kensky, T. 2002. *Reading the women of the Bible*. New York: Schocken Books.
- Giblin, M.J. 1996. "Hierarchy" in L.M, Russell and J.S, Clarkson (eds), *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 143.
- Heese, C.P. *Sendigonderwys in Suidwes Afrika 1860-1870: 'n Kritiese beskouing van bepaalde aspekte*. Kaap: Nasionale Drukkery.
- Hellberg, C.J. 1997. *Mission Colonialism and Liberation: The Lutheran Church in Namibia 1870-1966*. Windhoek: New Namibia Books (Pty) Ltd.
- Iipinge, S. Hofnie, K and Friedman, S. 2004. *The Relationship between Gender roles and HIV Infection in Namibia*. Windhoek: University of Namibia,.
- Isaak, P. J.2000. "The Mission and Vision of ELCRN" in Isaak P.J (ed), *The Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia in the 21st Century*. Windhoek: Gamsberg Macmillan, 121-132.

- Jones, R. 1951. *The Administration of South West Africa: Welfare of the Indigenous Population*. Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations.
- Kameeta, Z. 2000. "Theological Perspective" in Isaak, P (ed), *The Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia in the 21st Century*. Windhoek: Gamsberg Macmillan, 11-16.
- Kanyoro, M. 2001a. "Cultural Hermeneutics: An African Contribution" in Dube, Musa (ed.), *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible*. Geneva: WCC Publications.
- Kanyoro, M. 2001b. "Engendered Communal Theology: African Women's Contribution to Theology in the 21st Century" in N, Njoroge and M, Dube (eds), *Talitha cum! Theologies of African Women*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 158-180.
- Kanyoro, M. 2002. *Introducing Feminist Cultural Hermeneutics. An African Perspective*. New York: Sheffield Academic Press.
- Kroeger C. and Evans M. (ed), 2002. *The VIP Women's Bible Commentary*. Illinois: Inter Varsity Press.
- Laffey A.L, 1988. *Wives, Harlots and Concubines*. The Old Testament in Feminist perspective. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
- LeCompte, M. and Schensul, J. 1999. *Analyzing and interpreting ethnographic data*. New York: Altamira Press Ltd.
- Mbiti, J. 1973. *Love and Marriage in Africa*. Singapore: Huntsmen Offset Printing.

- Mbiti, J. 1989. *African Religion and Philosophy*, 2 edition, Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers.
- Moyo F.L, 2004. "Religion, Spirituality and being a woman in Africa: gender construction within the African religio-cultural experience" in *Agenda*. No.61, 72-78.
- Mncube, B. 1991. "Sexism in the church in the African Context" in D, Ackermann, J, Draper, and E, Mashinini, (eds), *Women hold up half the sky*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 355-362.
- Nambala, S, 1994. *History of the Church in Namibia*. USA: Lutheran Quarterly.
- Oduyoye M. A, 1995. *Daughters of Anowa. African women and Patriarchy*. New York: Orbis Books.
- Oduyoye, M 1999. " A coming home to myself: The childless woman in the West African Space" in Farley, M and Jones, S (eds), *Liberating Eschatology: Essays in honour of Letty M. Russell*. Louisville: Westminster Press, 105-120.
- Oduyoye, M. A, 2001a. *Introducing African Women's Theology*. England: Sheffield Academic Press.
- Oduyoye, M. A, 2001b. "Transforming power: Paradigms from the novels of Buchi Emecheta" in Njoroge, N. J. and Dube, M.W (eds.). *Talitha cum! Theologies of African women*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 222-244.
- Oduyoye, M.A, 2004 "Women and ritual in Africa" in M.A, Oduyoye , *Beads and Strands*. Mary knoll: Orbis Books.
- Oduyoye, M, 2005. "Ecclesiology in African Women's Perspective" in I. Phiri and S.

Nadar (eds), *On Being Church: African women's Voices and Visions*. India: WCC, 146-156.

Oduyoye, M.A, 2006 "Women and ritual in Africa" in M.A, Oduyoye and M, Kanyoro (eds), *The Will to Arise*. New York: Orbis books, 9-24.

Pendleton, W. 1971. *Marriage and Urban Tribalism among Africans*. Johannesburg: Institute for the Study of Man in Africa.

Phiri, I.A. 2000. *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy*. Blantyre: Christian Literature Association in Malawi.

Phiri, I. 2004. "African women's theologies in the new millennium" in *Agenda*. No.61, 16-24.

Ruether, R.R. 1996 "Patriarchy" in Russell L. M & Clarkson J. S (eds) *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 205-206.

Russell, L.M. 1993. *Church in the round: Feminist Interpretation of the church*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press.

Russell L, M, 1996. "Ecclesiology" in L.M, Russell and J, Shannon-Clarkson (eds), *Dictionary of feminist theologies*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 75-76.

Shorter A, 1998. *African Culture, an overview: Socio-cultural Anthropology*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa.

The African Bible (Biblical text of the New American Bible) 1999.

Legal assistance Centre. 1988. *The Namibian Constitution*, Windhoek: eStrides Africa.

Tanaka, J. 1980. *The San Hunter-Gatherers of the Kalahari: A Study in Ecological Anthropology*. Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press.

Thurston, B. 2002 "Widows" in C, Kroeger . & M, Evans (eds), *The VIP Women's Bible Commentary*. Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 745.

Vedder, H. 1928 "The Berg Damara" in Hahn, C.H.L et al. *The Native tribes of South West Africa*. Cape Town: Cape Times, 39-78.

Vedder, H. 1937. *Die Voorgeschiedenis van Suidwes-Afrika: Gebeurtenisse in Suidwes tot aan die dood van Maherero*. Windhoek: John Meinert.

Vedder, H. 1966. *South West Africa in Early times: being the story of South West Africa up to the date of Maharero's death in 1890*. London: Frank Cass.

Watson, N.K, 2002 "Methodological Considerations: Towards a Framework of Ecclesiological Discourse" in M, Grey, L, Isherwood and J, Wootton (eds), *Introducing Feminist Ecclesiology*. New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 1-15.

Webber, J. 1983. 'Between law and custom: Women's experience of Judaism' in P, Holden (ed), *Women's Religious Experience*. New Jersey: Barnes & Noble Books, 143-162.

Government of the Republic of Namibia. 1996. *Married Persons Equality Act, May 1996*. <<http://www.lac.org.na>>

United Nations. 1997. *Enactment of Married Persons Equality Act in Namibia praised by Experts of women's Anti-Discrimination Committee*, July 1997.
<<http://www.scienceblog.com>>

Unpublished sources

- Gaomas, N.R. 2005. Women in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia: Tolerated but not Empowered, unpublished Honours dissertation, Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu Natal.
- Guriras, P. 2002. Breaking the silence surrounding Rape: With special reference to the Pastoral Care and Counselling among the Damara people living in Khorixas, unpublished Masters dissertation, Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu Natal.
- Haddad, B. G. 2000. African Women's Theologies of Survival: Intersecting faith, feminisms and development, unpublished doctoral dissertation, Pietermaritzburg: University of Kwazulu Natal.
- Lau, B. 1982. "The emergence of kommando politics in Namaland, Southern Namibia 1800-1870," unpublished Masters dissertation: University of Cape Town.
- Nadar, S. 2003. Power, ideology and Interpretations: Womanist and literary perspectives on the Book of Esther as resources for gender-social transmission, unpublished PhD dissertation, Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal.

Interviews

- Pieters, G. 2006. Interviewed by N.R. Gaomas. Okombahe Namibia, 24 Oct.
- Goabas, G. 2006. Interviewed by N.R. Gaomas. Okombahe Namibia, 24 Oct.
- Guriras, A. 2006. Interviewed by N.R. Gaomas. Okombahe Namibia, 25, Oct.
- !Nôabes, R. 2006. Interviewed by N.R. Gaomas. Okombahe Namibia, 25, Oct.
- Xawes, S. 2006. Interviewed by N.R. Gaomas. Okombahe Namibia, 25, Oct.
- !Uri#khos, C. 2006. Interviewed by N.R. Gaomas. Okombahe Namibia, 25, Oct.
- #Gaeses, A. 2006. Interviewed by N.R. Gaomas. Okombahe Namibia, 25, Oct.
- !Howaes, H. 2006. Interviewed by N.R. Gaomas. Okombahe Namibia, 25, Oct.
- //Hoebes, A. 2006. Interviewed by N.R. Gaomas. Okombahe Namibia, 25, Oct.
- Gaomas, J. 2006. Interviewed by N.R. Gaomas. Okombahe Namibia, 3, Nov.
- Shangombe, S. 2006. Interviewed by N.R. Gaomas. Okombahe Namibia, 3, Nov.
- Ganases, G. 2006. Interviewed by N.R. Gaomas. Okombahe Namibia, 5, Nov.
- Gaomas, E. 2006. Interviewed by N.R. Gaomas. Okombahe Namibia, 5, Nov.
- Tjongarero, E. 2006. Interviewed by N.R. Gaomas. Okombahe Namibia, 12, Dec.
- /Uises, E. 2006. In terviewed by N.R. Gaomas. Okombahe Namibia, 12, Dec.

CONSENT FORM

Study Title: the effects of biblical and cultural patriarchy on married Damara women's lives: A case of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia.

This research is done for the purposes of a Masters dissertation among married Damara women to find out the effects of patriarchy on women.

(underline the appropriate one only)

I, hereby consent to participate in the study.

I give consent to the researcher to use/not to use information given by in her dissertation. I give consent/do not consent that my real identity be used in this research. I understand that I will not be forced to answer any question if I choose not to even after signing this consent form. I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project.

.....
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

.....
DATE

MA-AMS #HAWEB

Xoa#ams //kha//kha !âs dis: /Gu/garusi tsî !haosi aorekhoe #gae#guis di sisen #uib !game taradi ai: ELCRNs !nâ.

Ne ôa!nâs ge Masterb di //kha//khasens !aroma !game hâ. Damara taradi //aegu ra di he, aorekhoe #gae#guis tarade ra tsâ/kha /gaus xa.

Tita Ge nes /kha ra am ne //kha//kha ôa!nâs !nâ //haosa.

Nēs /kha ta ge ôa!nâ-aosa ra ma-am/ma-am tama tita xus go ho xuna //îs //kha//khasens !nâ sîsen u sa. Tita ge ra ma am/ma-am tama ti #hunuma /ons nî sîsen uhesa. //Nôu!a ta ge ra //garihe tama ta

hâ !eream #gao tama ta dî e !ereamsa, xoa !gao toa ta hâs khao!gâs ga xawe. Nê #khanis !kho#ga
hâxuna ta ge ra //nôu!a tsî /gaub ne ôa!nâs disa.

.....
//Hao-aoĩ

.....
Tsēs

.....
Ôa!na-aos

.....
Tsēs

Guiding Questions for unstructured Interviews

On culture

1. Are there any cultural practices that are degrading to women? Give examples. Why are they allowed if they are harmful to women and how can they be stopped?
2. What are the rules for married women in the Damara culture? Is it the same for men? Why/Why not?
3. Have rules for married women changed over the years? Give examples
4. How are divorced or widowed women treated? What rules are there with regard to their behaviour?
5. In case of violence/infidelity, what is a women expected to do? What do you think should women do? How do women solve this?
6. What do you expect the society to do in case of violence/infidelity in marriage?
7. What are the impacts of marriage ceremonies (rituals) on women? How is it done?
8. What provision does Damara culture make for barren women?
9. What does Damara culture say about women's roles in the church?

On the Bible

1. Does the Damara culture regard the Bible as authoritative and that everything written in the Bible is to be obeyed?
2. What do you think were the roles of married women in the Bible?
3. Are there rules according to which women had to live? Were they same for men?

On the Church

1. What role does the church (ELCRN) play in reinforcing/discouraging patriarchal cultural practices?
2. What kind of help does the (ELCRN) provide women through its pastors to their marital problems? What do you expect the church to do?
3. What are the traditional roles for women in the church? Have they changed? When? How do feel about the change?

Dî!na #haweb

!Hao!nasi aib ai

1. Tare khoede ra !goa//na !hao!nasi //naeti ga ha I a? Ai//gaude ma re. Tae xu I !aroma ira ma-am he tare khoedi !oagu I ga tsu o tsi mati I a //khae he //kha?
2. Ma //garaga !game taradi !aroma ha? Aorekhoegu /kha I a /gui? Mati I I o?
3. !Game taradi //gara /khara I ge kurigu ra I khemi? Ai//gaide ma re.
4. Mati di !game khoa ha taradi tamas ga io !oa tarade ra !gawa/I he? Ma //gara ga ha //idi tanisens !ama?
5. #Khawadib/ /aib soas ai tarade tae I di ni di sa ra #gao /kha he? Tae edi ga tarade di khama du ra tsa? Mati di tarade ne !gomsiga oresa ra hoba?
6. Tae eb ga /huhasiba di khama du ra tsa #khawadib tsi /aib tsin di !gomsib !ama?
7. Ma /gaus ai I xoa//guisa di!noa gu !game //audib diga tare khoede ra tsa/kha?
8. Ma /gaub ais #nukhoe //aesa //ora tama tarade ra hui?
9. Tae es #nukhoe //aesa tare khoedi ra /huru kerkheb !na !as xa ra mi?

Elob Mis ai

1. #Nukhoe //aesa Elob Misa gao#amxas ase ra mu tsi I ma xu I hoa I hia //is !na a xoasa e ni //nau/nam he?
2. Elob Mis !na ha !game tarede ma !asa ge re /huru ti du ra #ai?
3. //Garaga ge ha //igu tarekhoedi uiba ge re #gae#guiga? Aorekhoegu digu /kha I ge /gui I?

Kerkheb !harib ai

1. Ma /gaus aib kerkheba aorekhoegu #gae#guisa ra //awo//awo tamas ga I o ma!oa?
2. Ma ame huibab kerkheba taradi !gameb !gomma uha te ra hui? Tae e du kerkheba ni di sa du ra !aubasen?
3. Mate //naetisa tarekhoedi di ra kerkheb !na /huru !a? /Khara I ge? Ma //ae? Mati du ra tsa ha ge /khara/khara sigu !aroma?

(Damara>Nama /Khoekhoegowab version)