

Original Paper

“Small House! The Cross’s Religiously Modified Institution.” A Historical Cultural Materialist Approach to the Genesis, Growth and Development of Small Houses in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

The family is the most important basic social institution in any state since time immemorial. It is from this institution that clans, tribes and nations were born. It was the center of the means of production. Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular, the family system tallies with the religious or the ideological system or vice versa. African Indigenous Religion (AIR) is a religious ideology anchored on communalism and it is anti-individualism in the same way the African family system operates. Through the historical cultural materialist approach this paper argues that the “empire” (imperial states) disrupted, dismembered and destroyed the pristine African family institution through its pervasive tool; “the cross” and its willing agents. The cross (church/temple or Christianity) and its agents criminalised the communal family for the individualistic idealistic family. Individualism is not an African value, it is a foreign model and as such foreign models will not work to the expectations of Africans. Among other causes, the cross, through cultural hegemony gave birth to the “small house” in Zimbabwe. The church is an anti-structure institution to the Zimbabwean communal kinship system. It is the argument of this paper that the cross was developed and deployed to criminalise, shame and stigmatize the African family or kinship values (among them polygamy) resulting in nefarious clandestine legitimization of an illegitimate Western construct “small house”. A family is ideologically unique and as such the conception of a family with regard to the religion of the empire is individualistic as its Christian religious ideology is. The paper goes behind the present through solely focusing on the historical cultural and material conditions that led to the genesis, growth and development of the ‘small house’ in Zimbabwe as an offspring of the church. This chapter concludes by arguing that the small house is a genetically modified institution of the church.

Keywords

small house, cross, polygamy, popular and official

1. Introduction

There was Africa and Zimbabwe beyond the veil of Christianity, slavery, colonialism and imperialism. Africa before and after the conquest by the “Global North” is the pertinent issue examined by this paper. From the 15th century Europeans not only colonised the rest of the world, they also colonised information about the world. They developed monopoly over concepts and images and the hall mark of their colonisation or hegemony was the colonisation or violence over African culture, particularly marriage. The church/cross was a colonizing structure responsible for producing marginal societies, cultures and human beings. The church, “new enemies disguised as friends”, upon their arrival in Africa they had an agenda not of making Africa as Africa but of making Africa Europe, socially, economically, politically and otherwise. The church of the empire was on a mission to impose its language, religion, trade, dress, marital system, images and democracy. The victims of imperialism became the colonised, that is, those whose lands, minds, cultures, economies and political institutions have been taken possession of and rearranged according to the interests and values of the imperializing powers (Mudhimbe, 1988, pp. 1-2). The paper is not tied to the common assumption that the encounter or the relationship between the European missionary and the African people were all rosy and smooth. The seeds of the Victorian cultural ideology of divorce, individualism, adultery (small house), patriarchy and victimization of African women were planted during this encounter. The church is the institution that bore the small house among other methods through criminalization of polygamy. This is exclusively a historical cultural materialist analysis of the genesis of the small house institution in Zimbabwe and it is not motivated at the contemporary jokes or sayings associated with the small houses. To understand the present, one has to understand the history behind for backward is forward and forward is backward or history is the future and the future is history.

2. The Historical Background of “Small House”

Pristine Africa was defined by diverse values and traditions; polygamy, monotheism, ancestor veneration among others. These were the unquestioned African values, or the founding values of Africa. All these pivotal aspects were anchored on a collective ideology which was informed by Africa’s religious ideology: African Indigenous Religion (AIR). AIR is a religious ideology practiced communally. It is anti-individualistic in all its aspects. This explains why all facets of life in pristine Africa were carried out collectively or communally; marriage, ancestor veneration, farming, and education and so on. Monotheism, polygamy, ancestor veneration and life being characterised as here and now and never futuristic (Zvobgo, 1986, p. 44). Life was materialistic. However, Zvobgo’s claim that Africans are not futuristic is problematic if not wrong. Africans believe in the here and after and that is why they believe in the spiritual world; the abode of the ancestors or the living-dead.

This paper is focused exclusively on the resilience of polygamy through revitalization process of small house. “Small house” is transformed clandestine polygamy! To really understand the resilience of polygamy one has to trace and appreciate the cause, growth and development of the Zimbabwean loathed “Small house”. It is the position of this chapter that “Small house” is a clandestine form of polygamy! A small house, is a woman who lives with a married or unmarried man as if she were his wife, without being lawfully married to him. This kind of woman is more or less a “modern” phenomenon in Zimbabwe, brought to Africa by the influence of “western civilisation” that is Christianity and colonialism. Generally, unlike polygamy; it is practiced clandestinely since it is not part of or acceptable a culture, above all, it only began with the advent of the foreigners particularly the missionaries of the empire. Missionaries regarded polygamy as a sin and instituted some punitive measures against polygamous Africans. The church through its agents (missionaries) and the Bible brought this loathed form of union. In this paper church (religion of the empire) is in reference to religious institutions of the “Global North and West”, which among them; the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, The Dutch Reformed, United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe (UCCZ), and Presbyterian to mention a few. These churches were the front-runners or foot soldiers of the empire with a double mandate of “evangelization and civilisation of Zimbabweans!” There were no small houses before the criminalization, banning and defamiliarisation of polygamy by the church (Zvobgo, 1986; Mann, 1994, p. 167, p. 174).

Various methods were deployed by the missionaries to totally destroy polygamy through giving birth to small house, which among them include, criminal law, divorce, baptism, excommunication, Christian villages, schools and medical missions (Kapungu, 1974; Vambe, 1972, 1976; Vengeyi, 2013). All this was well calculated at institutionalizing “social death” (Patterson, 1982) of the Zimbabwe’s popular social system of marriage. All these instruments were deployed to make sure African values were totally replaced by western traditions. This is an age-old system readily deployed by the empire to assert its control over natives’ culture.

This paper is motivated towards deconstructing misrepresentation of one of the key African social custom of polygamy/polygyny which was forced to transform into an individualistic clandestine un African “small house.” Unlike the western ideology of monogamy, polygamy was a popular kinship system to both men and women in Zimbabwe in the precolonial era. Marriage in pristine Africa was collective in nature which affirms that the whole family or clan (men and women) took part. However, the advent of the church through cultural hegemony, intentionally disrupted and destroyed the African family structure and institution. Marriage in Africa was carried out by the family and as such the bride was not for an individual but the entire family. It is the position of this paper that the legislation against (authored by the Cross-in collusion with the empire) polygamy has done more harm than good. However, it has to be noted that polygamy was never patriarchal as Victorian knowledge production would like to project. As said earlier, polygamy was a result of marriage which was a collective affair with agreement and at times request by the first wife to have deputy. There are many reasons why

polygamy was the popular marital culture but that is beyond the scope of this paper. The church pleaded with the government to craft a legislation that criminalised polygamy amongst Africans (Cheater, 1987; Vambe, 1972; Zvobgo, 1986). The church's position is neither warranted by scripture nor sanctioned by apostolic example nor justified by common reason. The cross' position exacerbate and immortalizes the growth and spread of HIV/AIDS in Africa. It breaks up families and weakens the social fabric resulting among others in "fatherless children", "single mothers", "street kids", coloureds and orphanages.

Small house is a term used to express a form of clandestine unsanctioned "family life" in which promiscuous or adulterous relations of the sexes results in the child's father being unknown (intentionally or unintentionally) or a social condition in which kinship is reckoned through females only and in which there would be no recognition of any social relationship of fatherhood. In such kinship, men are neither given exclusive rights to sexual relation with the woman nor take the wife to live with, but only visits her in her home. Men do not have any legal rights over her or her property. The wife "small house" can divorce the man by asking him to discontinue to visit her. No *roora/lobola* is payable or required for the small house union which affirms why it is not part and parcel of African values and culture and by implication it conforms to Western kinship system of non-payment of *roora/lobola*. Despite differing viewpoints about the purpose and perception of *roora/lobola* its payment gives value to a woman (Gelfand, 1973, p. 173; Bourdillon, 1987, p. 50). Despite being a social reality, small house does not constitute an African family system neither is it in line with the African spirituality; ancestors. African spirituality does not condone adultery/small house. In reality, a small house is an adulterous affair or in real terms prostitution. Instead it reduces the status of women to sex objects which is a western conception of women, despite being projected as an African conception of women. (Dinan, 1983; Karanja, 1994; Lacombe, 1987; Mann, 1994, p. 167, p. 174) argues that "outside wives" emerged in the late sixteenth through eighteenth century at the same time that Christianity became established in Africa.

Small houses hardly existed in Africa until the advent of Christianity and colonialism between 1560 and 1800 respectively. The prevalence of small houses in Zimbabwe affirms that polygamy is a sacred and popular culture of the Africans (men and women) and above all it is resilient to western cultural hegemony. Monogamy instead, it is the "official culture" of the elitist settlers, missionaries and their African agents. Despite monogamy being the official kinship culture, it was/is not popular culture among most Zimbabweans! Monogamy only managed to be widespread and to be projected as the popular marriage system because of various reasons (coercion by the empire through a battery of embargoes against polygamists) that compelled Africans to hypocritically accept and practice it.

However, the prevalence of small houses is an affirmation that monogamy or "Christian marriage" is just a mere "front-stage" drama (Goffman, 1959) devoid of realism. In short, monogamy is just a front stage act hiding behind the reality (polygamy/polygyny) which is in the backstage. Zimbabweans became engaged in this frontstage drama (monogamy/Christian/Western marriage) for various reasons

including the following; the need for baptism, employment and status. This subsequently, was the genesis of the sex and class system resulting in women in Zimbabwe (due to western cultural hegemony over AIR) losing their privileged status to be subordinate to their male counterparts. This was also the birth of “patriarchy” and “gender” inequality in Africa; both (patriarchy and gender) of which are Western social constructs which have done much harm to the African family institution. This is so because all the Abrahamic religious ideologies (Christianity, Islam and Judaism) are patriarchal where males are the centre of everything; a male God, his son, his bishops and priests (Amadiume, 1987, p. 121; Ani, 1994, p. 171; Oyewumi, 1997; Williams, 1987, p. 56; Vengeyi, 2013, p. 72). Polygamous families could not receive baptism until divorce was instituted (Inyamah).

It has to be noted that the ‘official’ culture is always associated with the elite in any society. The official culture normally exists where there is a counter culture; which is the popular culture. In “postcolonial states”, (there is nothing postcolonial, it is a myth) the official culture is almost and always a foreign culture to the society whilst the popular culture is the indigenous culture which is always practiced and embraced by the majority of a given society. This is so because all postcolonial states, through the elite; have adopted foreign values and traditions (Christian marriage system, the Roman-Dutch law, religion, dress, language and worldview) without any changes. Why the elite? This is so because the empires strategy was to target those in corridors of power for social and religious conditioning and in turn the underclasses will be inspired by their leaders too. This explains why the ancient Israelite/Davidic monarchy (pushed for and loved by the elite) was regarded by the underclasses as “a return to Egypt” (colonialism or subjugation) (Vengeyi, 2013, p. 77). To the majority underclasses instituting a monarchy was a vote of no confidence on Israelite independence from the imperial Egypt. It is a top-down culture and it is not socially engaged nor does it appeal to the common people or the underclasses. As such, such a culture has to be imposed upon the underclasses by those within corridors of power accompanied by written legislation (Native Marriages Act 1901) often with heavy criminal penalties such as imprisonment, excommunication, demotion or death penalty to polygamists.

On the other hand, the “popular culture” or the indigenous culture is socially grounded and engaged with/within the society or the common people. The popular culture comes from the grassroots and there is no need for written legislation to compel one to practice it. It is highly valued and associated with the underclasses (Storey, 2001), and such a culture carries the founding values of the society. Popular culture also goes hand in glove with the popular religion, in the case of Africa; AIR is the popular religion whilst Christianity is the “official religion”.

Small house is a new form of “polygamy” in Zimbabwe which is a direct response to the criminalisation of polygamy by the cross and the law among other causes such as the “white or yellow peril” (Schmidt, 1992, p. 172; Pape, 1990). Missionaries together with the colonial government of the day crafted legislations like: Native Marriage Ordinance and the Native Adultery Ordinance which were meant to reinforce the European monogamy system which they projected as a “civilized” kinship system to be embraced by all Zimbabweans. This settler’s legislation made it unacceptable or a

criminal offence to marry in “twos and threes” and it was illegal to register more than one wife (Mukonyora, 2007, p. 50). What then were the implications of this Victorian legal instrument? In short, it legalised divorce. This was not surprising as it was a common and acceptable cultural practice among the missionaries and the empire. Diana Jeater (1987, pp. 9-10) also argues that the once recognised system of African marriage was not only declared illegal but also made into a criminal offence. In addition, the gravity of the church together with the Rhodesian legislation on the polygamous families resulted in them being denied sacraments of Baptism or the Holy Eucharist. Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Eucharist were some of the tools employed by the missionaries to institute divorce among polygamous men to liquidate the rest of their wives to remain with only one. Some polygamists were ordered to divorce the rest of the wives and remain with only one wife under the blessings and command of the very missionaries (Mbiti, 1973, p. 82; Zvobgo, 1996). This, by implication the church gave birth, endorsed and blessed divorce amongst polygamous Zimbabweans. It has to be noted that divorce has been there but it was not an African culture for the church (a foreigner in this case) to institute divorce. Divorce was only carried out mainly on adultery grounds and collectively by both families (of the bride and the bridegroom) not by an individual or an alien institution such as the church. This by implication gave birth to the rise of small houses in Zimbabwe. For Zimbabweans, there is nothing called small house other than adultery or prostitution. Small house is a western designation that tries to sanitise and project this western engineered kinship institution as the best for Zimbabweans through the denigration and atomisation of everything that is indigenous, for example, polygamy. Such is the context that led to the rise, development and “popularization” of the small house phenomenon in Zimbabwe and beyond.

4. Theoretical Framework

Small house is a socially constructed reality in Zimbabwe and beyond. To really understand and appreciate its inception, development and practice, historically, culturally and materially; the sociological exegesis or the historical cultural materialist methodology will be used particularly its paradigm of struggle between Zimbabwean and Western marital systems or the intellectual paradigm of struggle between African scholars where some understand and analyse African issues in Western lenses while others understand and analyse the same issues with African lenses. It makes use of the Marxist tools of sociological analysis to interpret texts/narratives, particularly on the class struggle and the role of religion in social organisation (Vengeyi, 2013, p. 39). The method assumes that the historical, cultural and material existential situations of the people affect in every way how they read, interpret and understand particular social realities or any other issues. Thus for this method, the reader’s history, culture, class, gender and race are very important hermeneutical tools to unpack the meaning of particular social realities since the small house is a product of a similar context in Zimbabwe. By implication, the meaning and existence of the small houses/co-habiting is conditioned by the nature of struggles of the society in which the reader is situated. This chapter confirms Vengeyi’s (2013, p. 41)

argument that situating the Bible in the life struggles of the society is not at all out of place. He argues that for a society to really appreciate the relevance of the Bible, such a text has to respond to pertinent questions of a particular society in which it is placed in and the same is true for the development and existence of the small house.

The method also argues that behind every text/narrative there is an underlying struggle which has to be analysed and interpreted. In this case, this method's relevance has to be appreciated in the underlying struggle behind the small house through the historical cultural materialist approach to Zimbabwe's pristine marital traditions in relation to the Western traditions through the church. "Small house" is a direct product of the underlying struggles instigated by religio-political struggles between AIR and Christianity, between the missionaries and the autochthons. Also, to be noted in this struggle is the foreign legal instruments on marriage as enshrined in the Roman-Dutch Law. This category of struggle provides lenses to understanding and appreciating the direct causes of the informal kinship relations of the small house. It also shows the struggles between the dominant/coloniser (Church/ missionaries) and the dominated/colonised (AIR/Africans) socio-economic and religious classes in Zimbabwe using the racial, class and gender struggles between the empire and the colonised. It affirms the struggle between the "centre" (AIR and polygamy) and the periphery (Christianity and small house). The periphery always struggles to be the centre whilst the centre want to remain rooted. This approach explains how the struggles between natives and the missionaries culminating in the dominant class, missionaries; banning and criminalising polygamy fueling Africans to go underground (small house). Small house versus polygamy was also a class, gender and race struggle between the cross and Zimbabweans. .

However, besides the historical genesis of the small house it will be too simplistic to ignore the material conditions which also fuel this phenomenon. It becomes a complex issue when one considers other drivers to the rapid and widespread growth of the small house phenomenon in Zimbabwe. Other than the church and the Western marital laws, there are also numerous circumstances fueling and leading to small houses: marital disappointment and divorce, failure to get a man for marriage, widowhood, some socio-economic reasons, natural disasters, physical disability and pathological reasons.

There are many reasons why men go for small houses. He may come to her not because she is a prostitute or an easy lay, as some people put it, but because she is a likeable personality. Or she could be someone who understands his needs better. Or someone who knows how to handle him effectively, physically and spiritually. Or someone who appreciates his thoughts or aspirations. The view given by many people is that the small house is an evil, worthless, and foolish person. That is indeed, not true always, and or rather is a grand generalization. Among other issues as discussed above responsible for small houses in Zimbabwe today, namely, childlessness, wife's bad health, sexual incompatibility and so on. There are couples who cannot accept a childless marriage even today, so the door for small house is still open. Invalidity, sexual incompatibility and inequality, widows, and men who are still charged with a moral conscience to marry the girl they have made pregnant-all are still with us today. All this is fertile ground for small houses in Zimbabwe. Pertaining incompatibility "Christian married"

couple, the husband may want to dissolve the union but since divorce may result in some legal, economic and social disaster, he may ceremonially decide to keep his licensed/legal wife. By virtue of this licence which is referred to commonly as “Marriage Certificate”, she acquires a new designation-Mrs. However, to get out of such marital doldrums he clandestinely engages a second, third or fourth wife and under these circumstances this wife is popularly known as “outside wife” or “small house”. Small house might also be known in various names, “outside wife” “single mother”. This is the dimension of this chapter that the small house is a Western marital “legal” system and the church’s offspring with reference to Zimbabwe.

6. Polygamy

According to Jonas (2012, p. 143) the term polygamy is derived from the Greek word *polugamos* which literally means “often marrying”. A polygamist is simply a man who is married to more than one wife, living with them at the same time. Polygamy therefore, is the act of being polygamist. Africa has practiced polygamy as far back as the records can take us. In other words, polygamy is and has always been a way of life in Africa. Since the arrival of the white men in Africa, with the joint effort of the church, he has been doing his best to abolish polygamy. Indeed, a great deal has been done to wipe out polygamy in colonial Africa. Yet the tradition has continued to survive albeit in a new form: small house. The colonial church in particular, has been fighting against this tradition on the basis that it is incompatible with the Bible, or that it a sin; whereas the colonial administration went against it with the claim that it is not in keeping with modern civilisation (Maillu, 1988, p. 1).

Polygamy allows for sexual relationships between one man and two or more women, all of whom are members of the single socially sanctioned marital unit. In Africa polygamy occurs in many tribes to regulate social relationships between men and women (Mbiti, 1973). Many people among them scholars assume polygamous marriage were a male goal before reducing women to slavery (Bourdillon, 1987, p. 50) and forces them to become economic chattels (Falen, 2008, p. 52). In most African states polygamy is considered a laudable ambition, not a handicap, to have a plurality of wives (Daneel, 1992, p. 176).

Polygamy is not due to human concupiscence, insatiable sexual drives and the like as most Western scholars’ claim. Polygamy lowers the incidence of “illegitimate” children, whom are unwelcome in an African society, and eliminates the need for adoption, which Africans loathes. In polygamous societies few girls remain unmarried and the number of men who engage in “adulterous affairs” (small house) is considerably reduced. Polygamy stabilises African society since it allows all women a chance for marriage, eliminates fornication and decreases tendencies for divorce. In addition, children are seldom born out of wedlock. This also explains why the concept of “street kids” just like “prisons and orphanages” is very foreign to Africa and Africans before the advent of the agents (missionaries) of the empire. This background review of polygamy is discussed intentionally as a bedrock on which the small house is invented. The paper is not myopic to other causes to the genesis of the small house such

as White or Yellow Peril, however, that is beyond the scope of this paper. It should be noted from the outset that the small house can easily be understood after an in-depth discussion of the various facets of polygamy.

7. The Cross and the Small House': Strategies Employed by Missionaries

When Western missionaries first arrived in Africa, they thought that people who had married according to their tradition which they pejoratively described as “customary” social structure in polygamous marriages were living in sin. It has to be noted that every marriage in this world is just but customary. The so called “white wedding/marriage”, or “Christian marriage”, is just but a Victorian customary marriage foisted on Africa and beyond to dismember and falsify African marriage systems. Missionaries considered polygamy a social problem, neglecting to reckon with the fact that it was a social system with both legal and ethical approbation (Bourdillon, 1987, p. 36). The church’s rejection of polygamy has been socially disruptive and morally questionable in that the Bible did not condemn the practice of polygamy. Instead, the Bible is replete with polygamous marriages: Lamech and his two wives (Gen, 4:23), Abraham with Sarah and his concubines Hagar and Kethurah (Gen, 16, p. 25, pp. 1-2), Jacob with Leah and Rachel (Gen, p. 29, pp. 15-30), David with seven named wives (1 Sam 18:17-30; 25:38-43; 2 Sam 3:2-5), Solomon and his royal harem (1 Kgs 3:1, 11:3) and Rehoboam with his eighteen wives (2 Chron 11:21). Instead, polygamy was the most popular and acceptable marriage system in ancient Israel (Gen 25:1; Gen 30:1-10; 1Kgs 11:1-4; 2 Sam 3:7).

The church has often by legislation refused to baptize or to recognize Christian converts who continued to live in polygamous relationships (Mbiti, 1973, p. 82; Zvobgo, 1986, p. 44; Mukonyora, 2017, p. 50). The church rather authorized divorces, which Africans regarded as rather a despicable social evil. The Jesuit priest, Fr. J. O’Neil and later supported by Revd. Richard Sykes wrote in 1905:

“With regard to the older pagans, there does not seem to be much hope of converting them to Christianity. Polygamy prevails among them all, and about the last thing man could be persuaded to do would be to give up any of his wives” (Zambezi Mission Records, 1906, p. 9).

The phrase, “to give up any of his wives,” by Father J. O Neil implies nothing less than divorce of polygamous union. As this was not enough, Fr Peter Prestage and the Wesleyan missionary Revd. J. W Stanlake were of the same mind in regarding *lobola* and polygamy as the purchasing of a wife. What then was the solution? The Zambezi Mission records notes that the majority of missionaries and mission stations advocated the “reform of the native family”. Reforming the native family is just mere propaganda for nothing less than destroying the African marital structure through divorce, excommunication, dispossession of land, mission stations and so on. The cross was a colonizing structure responsible for producing marginal societies (small houses), cultures and human beings. Sykes for example, said that the defeat and displacement of polygamy would necessarily be slow. “You cannot uproot in a day from the life of a nation what is part of that national life.” (Zvobgo, 1986, p. 46). In other words, Sykes is just a reflection of the church’s hegemonic stance against embracing the

ideology of unity in diversity.

The church has tried to encourage monogamy by citing its apparent advantages: less dowries, less nagging in the home, yet the church has ignored other factors: moral problems created by abstinence from sexual intercourse for two years after child birth, the dilemma, the shredding of the social fabric when there is no male heir born of monogamous union. Before the coming of westerners, it has to be noted that polygamy was hardly an issue at all, neither was gender and patriarchy as well. It only came to be an issue with the advent of the missionaries and settlers. Indeed, this was a war against African culture (Amanze, 1998, pp. 52-53). For missionaries, polygamy was the “chief obstacle” (Kitching 1935, p. 35) and “strongest hindrances” (Nau, 1945, p. 279) to missionisation in Africa. This is well summarized by Jean and John Comaroff who argued that the church had used ideology and hegemony to enforce a worldview that is very foreign but powerful. For the Comaroffs, colonialism is not merely taking over of land but also the consciousness of the people (Jean & John Comaroff, 1986). In short, the church falsified the marital consciousness of Zimbabweans through various facets.

Such factors forced many Africans to decide against the church’s traditional teaching in favor of preserving the stability of their social system or else to become hypocritical, that is, to claim marriage to only one woman and yet to secretly propagate children by means of sexual union with many women. Many Africans doubt the validity of the church’s stance because in the Bible they read about polygamous marriages that were not condemned but instead they were praised; Abraham, Jacob, David, Solomon. In addition, the Bible condemns divorce or anyone (including the church) to separate the two in marriage (Matthew, p. 19, pp. 5-6). Polygamy does not vitiate the Lord’s saying that in marriage two people become one flesh. To manufacture consent and execute the total destruction of polygamy as an African marriage custom the missionaries deployed a number of instruments against Africans which among them included, excommunication, schools, Christian villages, medical missions (Vengeyi, 2013, pp. 207-212; Vambe, 1972, pp. 34-49) to mention just a few.

8. Manufacturing Consent: Missionaries/The Cross and the Law

After realising polygamy was deeply entrenched a custom among Africans the missionaries, particularly the Jesuits, after dismally failing to convert and convince Africans of the “goodness” of monogamy over and above polygamy they decided among themselves of what they referred to as “reforming the native family.” Reforming the native family (as noted above) was actually a total destruction of the native family structure. It has to be noted that the destruction of ones’ culture included destroying the ideological (social, religious and political) identity as well. This was systematically carried out through the enactment of a battery of racist legislation like: Native Marriages Act of 1901, Native Marriage Ordinance 1912, Native Adultery Punishment Ordinance (Machingura, 2011, p. 192). The Native Adultery Punishment Ordinance was directly criminalising polygamy as adultery which then projected the custom as a shame to all Africans. To add on, Diana Jeater (1987, p. 9) also noted that the passing on of the 1912 ordinance marled the first time in Rhodesia that recognised

system of African marriage was not only declared illegal but also made into a criminal offence. All these acts were meant to manufacture the consent of the Africans to give in to Victorian marriage custom of monogamy. In order for the church of the empire to succeed on its mission it had to “manufacture the consent” of the blacks. Manufacturing consent is a strategy employed by the powerful elite to undermine freedom and sovereignty in societies and institutions through systems such as sanctions, restrictions and propaganda (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). It is a subtle and insidious way of oppressing the majority where more overt means like violence and terror just won’t work. Manufacturing consent means doing what you want and getting away with it by creating the impression that it’s what everybody wants you to do in the first place. A number of strategies were employed and celebrated by the missionaries to fulfill their mission to ‘civilise’ blacks.

They made use of the Bible, the law, education, Christian villages and the sword to manufacture consent of the blacks into accepting monogamy. Being polygamous became a criminal offense being interpreted as “adultery” despite one having customarily married. They thought by making harsh measures against natives this would bring polygamy to an end. This was an act of cultural hegemony by the missionaries. How and why one may pose a question?

This is so because monogamy was equally a western (Victorian) customary marriage practice in the same way polygamy is to Africans! If customary marriages were to be criminalised then both polygamy and monogamy should have been criminalised as they are both customary marriages. Monogamy just like polygamy is a customary marriage of the West! This clearly shows that the church is an institution heralding cultural violence against Zimbabwean marital or kinship culture; a negation of the concept of unity in diversity. This resulted in Africans accepting and embracing monogamy in a hypocritical sense only to save their skin. In other words, because of the fear of incarceration or excommunication they publicly practiced monogamy while having “unregistered” women (small houses) behind the scenes who were not even known by immediate family members or the missionaries/church. This has continued to date as anything African including polygamy continues to be disparaged and stigmatised as evil and backward. One has to note that the law enacted by the missionaries was not for the protection of the interests of the Zimbabweans but to guard and realise the interests of the church. By nature, laws are never crafted by the oppressed but by the oppressor, however, there are always projected as “people driven” by the elite so that the underclasses embrace them as their product. This explains why men continued in “clandestine polygamy” or small houses. Accordingly, the twin tools of the empire; the church and the law forced Zimbabweans to relinquish polygamy for the private and informal small house union.

Tools Deployed by the Church to establish the “Small house”

(Mis)Education

It is a fact that the church is credited with the building of a number of mission schools throughout Zimbabwe, and many scholars have noted this. However, very few scholars have gone beyond this popularized social reality (Vengeyi, 2013; Mlambo, 1972, p. 73; Ado, 1998; Kapungu, 1974, p. 84) into

interrogating why they built schools? Did not Africans had education before the advent of the settlers? Was education introduced by missionaries? Since history is the only laboratory we have in the human experience, we must not ignore its teachings. The reality is when the missionaries arrived in Zimbabwe, they found out that the indigenous people had their own form of education based on family, clan and tribal units. Such an education system was excellent to groom and make Africans appreciate and be proud of being Africans. Above all, it was excellent in that it molded society to be good citizens and empowered the society both physically and intellectually. It was a socially engaged education which emphasised nothing else other than African values and traditions. It has to be acknowledged that there is no such thing as neutral educational process. Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it or it becomes the “practice of freedom” the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world (Freire, 1970, p. 15). No lions will ever send their cubs to be trained by polar bears!

The whole western education curriculum was designed to preserve and protect the interests of the “Global North,” Christianity, capitalism and western culture, awkwardly called “civilisation,” almost making learners neglect and abandon their own language, culture, religion, social and political heritage (Mtetwa, 2015, p. 150). Further, Walter Rodney (1988, p. 248) also noted that colonial education was focused on producing clerks and auxiliaries for the colonizers, and not focused on providing creative economic producers of necessary goods and services for the colonized Africans. Furthermore, under colonialism Africans were educated so that they could be better enslaved and “Europeanized”. As Governor Cameron of Tanganyika put it in the 1920s, the intention [of colonial schooling] “was that the African should cease to think as an African and instead should become “a fair-minded Englishman.” It was meant to Europeanise Africans so that they will, eat, think, act, dress, walk and even marry (small house) like a Whiteman. Europeanisation should never be taken lightly but should be borne in mind that it was the colonisation of the mind of the African child!

The western education took shape after 1907 when the British government passed the first Order-in-Council on African Education. This ordinance came as a result of Southern Rhodesian Missionary Conference of 1906 by fifteen Christian church bodies. The British crown regarded education of the African as a responsibility of the missionaries (Mlambo, 1972, p. 73). The Catholic missionaries believed that without schools there would be no missions, no African adherents and no success...pupils meant catechumens and converts (Dachs & Rea, 1979, p. 107) while Anglicans and Wesleyan viewed education as a powerful force by which to weaken the influences of indigenous religion, superstition, customary marriage and witchcraft on African society and expedite the acceptance of Christianity (Zvobgo, 1980, pp. 42-43). This is the education that defamiliarised Africans from their traditional marriage systems through appreciating the western systems among others “small houses” or adultery; regarded by the West as liberalism. The European education system was also meant to sanitise or legalise wanton kinship practice among Zimbabweans. Education is such a

powerful force by which western influence easily found its way among Africans. Thomas Sankara and Steve Bantu Biko (1987) once said “the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed.” Such an education system was meant to capture and control the mind of an African. This was anchored on the ideological premise that if the mind is conquered then everything is conquered as well. The question is whose education was this? Was this education or miseducation? It was meant to disorient Africans from their culture, to reproduce and conform to the idea that “to be is to be like and to be like is to be white.” In culture, dressing, food speech, religion, and marriage (monogamy instead of polygamy). It also gave rise to the class system resulting in class struggle which sharply divided the African social setup let alone the governance system. In other words, western education system led to social death of the Zimbabwean marriage system culminating in the loathsome western small house system which to date has won the allegiance of agents of the empire in the form of feminists, gender activists and various girl-child Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO). By practicing Christianity and being non-polygamous one was regarded as “civilised,” while practicing AIR and being polygamous was negatively described as “uncivilized” and “pagan”. Therefore, colonial education as a source of influence among Africans is no small significance towards embracing clandestine relationships.

8.1 Preaching (African Agents) and Translation of Scripture

Zvobgo (1987, p. 50) argues that missionaries hoped to convert Africans to Christianity through the “ministry of preaching” through the use of fellow Africans. Africans were used to witness to fellow Africans (Ado, 1998). This has been the strategy of the empire in conquering and dividing nations. This strategy has been deployed by ancient empires like Babylon particularly against 7th through 6th century Israel when Jeremiah and Nehemiah became agents of Babylon against their own people (Jeremiah, pp. 36-45). In crude but realistic terms they were puppets or sellouts of their fellows, identity and their culture as well. They committed what is referred to class suicide, however, in a negative way of shooting their own. The importance of Africans preaching to their fellows was emphasized by Dennis Kemp, a Wesleyan missionary in 1898:

The life of the consistent native Christian is a greater testimony to the gospel than the life of the European ever can be... He is skin of their skin; his life is known from his youth upwards; he is trained under conditions known to them, and similar to theirs. In this case his associates can but attribute to the gospel the changed life he lives. He is a standing advertisement to the gospel he preaches, and his message gains cogency from the fact of his life. When a man can get up and say, ‘You know me and my former life; you witness you witness the life I now live. This life I now live, not of myself, but through the power of the Christ whom I proclaim- the effect is conviction.

This prompted all Christian churches to promptly train African evangelists and Zvobgo (1987, p. 51) points out some of the earliest African evangelist as Nyamhlope, Peter Mantiziba and Andria Khumalo. A lot of natives converted after listening to their fellow “civilized” African preachers.

In addition, to the use of African agents the missionaries also Africanized the scriptures in order to strengthen the faith of converts. The missionaries realised that if their message was to be accepted, there was a need for them to translate their foreign message into the language of the people. They then began the process of translating the various books of the Bible into the local language (Togarasei, 2009). The translations were carried out by John White of the Methodist Church from 1897-1902. This enabled literate Zimbabwean converts to understand the teachings of the scriptures better than before. However, it has to be noted that no translation is an innocent process. In addition, every translation is an interpretation and every interpretation is a corruption of the text. Every translation is to serve the interests of the translator and every translation is a corruption of the text. Translation does not take place in a vacuum which implies that every redactor is driven by certain ideology or ideologies obtaining in his context. Most of the translators of the Bible were Europeans which by implication they interpreted the text in a Eurocentric worldview, which may not be the reality or universal as the universe is never monolithic in terms of cultural values. This is so because one's historical background influences the way one interprets the text Amanze (1998) sums this by describing how European missionaries in Africa understood themselves and the people to whom they were to minister. He says, Salvation (for the missionaries) was only possible if they (the Africans) renounced their past, that is, their beliefs and practices and show willingness to live according to the Christian principles. This involved a wholesale transformation of African ways of life for Africanness' or blackness was, to the Europeans, a symbol of evil (1998, p. 52).

With reference to marriage the missionaries projected the view that it was a sin before God to be polygamous. This is despite the fact that the Bible does not explicitly condemn polygamy neither does it condone fornication and adultery, "small house". According to Hastings the Bible does not provide a firm foundation for limiting marriage to monogamy (Hastings, 1973, p. 8).

8.2 Excommunication and Divorce

As argued earlier, polygamy was deeply entrenched kinship custom among the Zimbabwean people and as such the indigenous people never compromised on their culture. This later resulted in the missionaries deciding on another heinous strategy of expelling polygamist and those perceived to be. In 1902, the Jesuits expelled polygamist from Empandeni. Zvobgo (1987, p. 46; Vambe, 1972, p. 170) argues that a report from Empandeni for the year 1902 read:

We shall loose in numbers, but we shall gain by the deepening of the conviction in the minds of the natives that we mean business, and that there can be no compromise between Christianity and paganism on the all-important question of marriage (Zambesi Mission record, 1902-1905, p. 54).

This had great effect upon the natives to the point that most of them gave in to the demands of the missionaries. They gave in because it was very brutal to be dispossessed of their means of production, the land on account of polygamy. Being expelled meant being disconnected with your relatives and friends. This prompted many Zimbabwean men with a desire for polygamy to be hypocritical by engaging in "clandestine polygamy," or small house. This in African worldview is adultery as a result

of the missionaries and western settlers.

As if excommunication was not enough, a polygamous family could not receive baptism or mass (Amadiume, 1987, p. 119). There were several options one could do to be baptized. One of the requirement by the missionaries was for the husband to divorce the rest of his wives and only remain with the senior wife (Vambe, 1972, p. 170; Gray, 1990, p. 47; Hastings, 1967, p. 171). It has to be noted that missionaries popularized and institutionalized divorced, an abomination among Africans. This has destroyed and desacralised the African marriage traditions as confessed by G. Hartmann, Cape Province missionary;

I feel that by our narrow approach of the problem influenced by European theories, a tremendous harm is done to African people. I myself shall never ask a man to dismiss his wives. It is cruel, immoral and has nothing to do with Christ at all... I have done it once in my life and never again.

With respect to African traditions a husband had no authority to divorce his wife as an individual and no woman was liable for divorce on any other ground other than adultery. However, divorce was always carried out by the entire family collectively. It is clear from this that missionaries turned what was in-lawry into outlawry and outlawry into in-lawry! Children of polygamists were also labelled as bastards and churches could expel polygamous families as well (Mann, 1994, p. 169). This also led to stigmatization of polygamous families in both church and society. In other cases, people publicly relinquished polygamy out of the desire for material wealth, access to schools and political power that they recognised among Europeans (Ekechi, 1972, p. 48). However, all this could not stop clandestine polygamy and it remains common among mainstream Christians to date.

9. Conclusion

Marriage which constitute a family is very important to Africans and was regarded as sacred. Marriage in precolonial Africa was both monogamy and polygamy and there were no problems at all about these two marriage systems. Polygamy among other issues made adultery rare among Africans and there were no clandestine marriages (small houses) as they were a taboo which would lead to excommunication from the village. Polygamy and patriarchy are two different institutions with nothing common between them; one being African and the other Western respectively. The arrival of missionaries of the empire ushered in the Victorian cultural hegemony particularly on African marriage systems which saw the popular polygamy being criminalised by the missionaries to save monogamy. Christianity or the Cross through direct and indirect forces became the central religious ideology over and above the native Africans' AIR. Small house is western system of kinship which found its way on Zimbabwe through the church and the Roman-Dutch law. The church is the fountain of the condemnation of polygamy and the birth of the loathed colonial "small house"/clandestine union or adultery. The church with the aid of various western legal instruments entrenched the small house as the in-thing for Africans, thereby warranting this paper to assert that indeed, the small house is the church's genetically modified institution!

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