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Zambian Women's Struggle for Political Rights

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my darling mother and my dear father who have encouraged me all the way.

I dedicate it also to all my family members sisters and brothers for their supports in doing this research.

I do not forget my teachers who sustained me in all levels of learning.

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Abstract

The status of African women has been generally disadvantaged in society. Women have been marginalized and ignored through history due to culture and inequality. The traditional norms of African societies were patriarchal in their nature. They gave favor to men than women in social, economic and political arena. The study is concerned with an examination of the struggle of Zambian women for political right during the period. The study throws light on how the status of women has evolved over time starting with a literature review on the historical background. Then, tackling certain factors which affected their status before and during British colonialism, and denied them equal access to most spheres of life including education, employment and decision-making. Focus will be also on the struggle of women as individual or collective to achieve equality, and their active role and involvement in politics til independence in 1964. This was the time when Nationalist politics took strong hold on the campaign for independence. The aim is to investigate the role of Zambian women in the struggle for freedom, equality and political right.

Table of Contents

DEDICATION.....	I
ACKNOWLEDGMENT.....	II
ABSTRACT.....	III
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	IV
GENERAL INTRODUCTION	1
<u>CHAPTER ONE :women in pre-colonial zambia</u>	
Introduction	2
1-Historical Background	2
2-Issues determining Zambian Women’s Inferiority	4
2-1 Social factors	4
2-2 Cultural factors	5
2-3 Political factors	6
3- Zambian Women’s Contribution	6
Conclusion	7
<u>CHAPETER TWO: women in colonial zambia</u>	
Introduction	8
1-Patriarchal System.....	8
2-Zambian Women under colonial Patriarchy.....	9
3-Zambian Women and Politics.....	12
4- Women’s Struggle for Equality.....	14
Conclusion	15
<u>CHAPTER THREE: The campaign for Indpendence</u>	
Introduction.....	16
1-The Rise of Women’s Organizations.....	16
2-Women’s Involvement in Nationalist Politics.....	17
3-Organizations Fight for Women’s Right.....	18
3-1 National Organizations for Women.....	19
3-2 The United Nation’s Women Treaty.....	19
Conclusion.....	20
General Conclusion	21
BIBLOIGRAPHY	22

General Introduction

General Introduction

One of the most important topics in the study of gender is the issue of inequality between men and women. Throughout history, gender inequality was obviously practiced around the world. South Africa was one of the countries of multi-cultures, ethnic traditions and discrimination, where women were perceived as inferior to men. The present research deals with Zambia as a case of study. When looking into the history of Zambian women, it was evident that their status was ignored and disadvantaged in terms of social and power relations. Regardless to their subordination in a patriarchal society in which authority was given to men, Zambian women were under-represented in the State Affairs. This was rooted to the pre-colonialism in Zambia and continued during the colonial time. All privileges were in favor of male in the decisions-making processes, and female power was totally reduced. However, through time, Zambian women became aware of their neglected rights especially in the political arena. They refused that passive situation and started looking for their equality. According to what was said above, I put the following research question: Did Zambian women succeed to get their political right?. keys terms (women's rights,Zambia,political,struggle) . After bringing out the research question, we asked the following subquestions: Were Zambian women marginalized in politics? To answer this question we suggested these hypothesis: Zambian women were under-represented in political arena and deprived from equal political rights. The issue of women's participation in politics was my interest in my work because it inspired me as I would like to develop knowledge about women's role in politics and their achievements over history. The main objective of this work is to investigate the participation of women in the struggle for equality and the campaign for political right in Zambia. The research paper was conducted through a historical and descriptive perspective. It was divided into three chapters: The first chapter deals with the historical background to the status of Zambian women before the British colonialism and tries to set the factors that affected their inferiority in a patriarchal society. The second chapter tackles the effect of colonial patriarchy on Zambian women, and the influence of patriarchal system, then how those women responded to the colonial rule in their struggle. Finally, the third chapter concentrates on the significant role that Zambian women played in Nationalist politics during independence and how their status was improved through time. The findings has shown The different achievements of equal rights, women's participation in politics, contribution in the development of Zambian politics.

Chapter One

Women in Pre-Colonial Zambia

Chapter One: Women in Pre-Colonial Zambia

Introduction

Zambia is one of the most African societies that limit the roles of women to domestic work and caring for children, however men have carried the notion of masculinity which consists of the fact that better leadership is oriented to men and women are traditionally excluded. It is because of the cultural norms that serve men all times as dominants and treat women as subordinate. It is traced back to the pre-colonial period when women were exposed to social orientation. Also practices such as men lead while women submit to them, and men are the stronger and women are inferior; all that shows the positions that have been belonged to both gender. In general, women in Zambia as in other African countries share common experiences of subjugation to men in all spheres of life due to the patriarchal culture. So it was obvious that isolation of one gender than another. In other words, in a patriarchal society men hold the positions of power and dominate women by making the decisions and determining what the society looks like, however women in most homes were treated as second class citizens. they were exposed to clean, cook and look after children, and they were always under the control of their husbands as they do productive activities such as farming. Although Zambian women faced many obstacles, discrimination, marginalization, social, cultural and literary issues that broke out their destiny and restricted their freedom and many rights in life, they played some role in economy, agriculture and had working opportunities in factories. They challenged that harsh conditions life in some social and economic contexts by playing important roles.

1-Historical Background

Historically speaking, Zambian women have generally remained the silent voices of history. They have been marginalized as they were not featured as an important partner in the struggle for freedom. The reason for this neglect of women is that Zambian society is traditionally patriarchal. It was men who had *authority* in society, women were seen as subordinate to men. Their role was primarily a domestic one which was limited to home works, raising children and care for the family. In other words, women were not expected themselves with matters outside the home; it was the domain of men but not considered a feminine one. (Kamini.Krishna:1) Motherhood was particularly women's role, they care for the home and see the needs of the family while men are left to handle all the decision making processes.

Chapter One: Women in Pre-Colonial Zambia

This latter explains that in a patriarchal society men hold the position of power, and leadership is viewed as a masculine matter.(Brenda.Nyirenda:1) Under traditional law women are treated as perpetual dependents of their male relatives before marriage or their husbands after marriage. In addition, there has been gender role division of activities; this has been traced to the subordinate status of women. It signifies the biological differences between men and women and the physical characteristics among humans. This gender division assigns men to public and women to private activities and family life of the men.(Irene.Manda:2,3)

Zambian women have thus been considered subordinate to their indispensable function of child-bearing and are seen as a socially determined aspect because they have special and natural capacities of child's caring; however men are unable to fulfill this delicate and sensitive function. So Zambian traditional culture has made it clear that men and women have different roles in society.(Irene.Manda:4,5) From early childhood when girls and boys grow up, they know what kind of society they are growing in. Girls were told to behave in an expected manner, which was different from that expected from boys. For instance, girls were exposed to home work and not found in the midst of men, they are responsible for the firewood, water and cooking while boys were expected to do wider crafts such as hunting, fishing, building and fighting as they were given an opportunity of sitting at public meetings where social matters are discussed. So this opportunity enabled them to gain knowledge relating to public issues and to keep informed with current affairs.(Irene.Manda:6) .Moreover when speaking about education in Zambia, the pre-colonial period has shown how girls were oriented to different practical experiences. These were mainly for preparing them to their future roles as wives and mothers.(Irene.Manda:5)

Zambia women were further denied equal employment opportunities with men. In most employments women were discriminated against, this included the mining industry which was the largest employer, and even in household service women were not the main interest. Several countries such as Europe and America have considered female as the main source because it suited the interest of the white population to keep women as servants. In contrast in Zambia household service has remained oriented for men which explain that employers do not take women servants for granted.(Irene.Manda:8) Besides, when men migrated to towns to search for wage employment, women were needed to continue with the agricultural production of food.

Chapter One: Women in Pre-Colonial Zambia

As there were not many job opportunities in Zambia as was the case in the industrialized countries. This lower level of employment put women at a disadvantage that augmented their subordinate status.(Irene.Manda:8,9)

2-Issues Determining Zambian Women's Inferiority

Zambia was one of the African traditional societies where it is believed that women's status is lower than men. This belief is rooted in the nature of cultural norms applied in Zambia. In other words, cultural practices have favored men over women and considered women as inferior to perform tasks which are mostly done by men. So there are many factors which contributed to Zambian women's inferiority:

2-1- Socials factors

Zambia was one the African patriarchal societies which gave women the secondary class and considered men as the powerful. Patriarchy refers to male supremacy and female subordination. It means the rule of the father and it refers to the society dominated by men over women. Men were given a higher status in society and this helps them to contribute in the public life. Patriarchy is rooted to the nature of traditional norms in Zambia because domination was reinforced by Zambian cultural values and customs.(Abeda.Sultana:2) In social spheres women were almost unvalued and had lower status. They were looked inferior and dependant on males. They have to be guided and protected by men because it was believed that men are the head in the family and the stronger both physically and mentally. For example, the belief of women's weakness was one of the reasons that did not permit women to engage in public spheres like her counterpart men. So Zambian women were submissive to the demands of their husbands and the function of their activities was limited to home and family. This means that women were generally treated as second class citizens and their needs were fulfilled only by men.(Abeda.Sultana:7)

One other basic reason for women's inferiority was education. It was favored to upper social classes where educated people had better chance of education, however in lower classes women's education was less important. It was from childhood that girls went to school just to be prepared for being future wives and mothers. Illiteracy was also a prime cause because most views upon women were that women have lack of knowledge and they are weak

Chapter One: Women in Pre-Colonial Zambia

mentally as they have poor learning capacities. Yet Zambian women still account for the majority of the adults illiterates. In addition, they are often denied recognition in society because they suffer mostly from underestimation, as they have little awareness of their rights. However regarding to education, illiterate women was due to illiterate parents. Parents prefer providing money and push their children to work than encourage them to learn and acquire knowledge, so this was one of the causes of illiteracy.(Rodrigo.Martinez&Andre.Fernandez:8)

2-2- Cultural Factors

Culture and traditional customs have generally kept Zambian women lower. It was due to the patriarchal system which was a barrier to women's advancement. It gave more priority to men and restriction to women's properties.

These cultural customs affected women to engage within society as they lead to stereotypical position of women and inferior abilities within cultural contexts. Women are treated as passive objects, rather than active participants in the cultural life of their society.(Abeda.S:1)On the other part, early child marriage had contributed to negative impacts on women; parents quit their daughters out of schools and push them to marry at an early age. This affected women badly and made them feel low and reinforced to assume difficult responsibility.(Jeannette.Bayisenage:6)

Cultural beliefs based on the concept of male dominance are at the root of perpetuating gender disparities in Zambia. For example, Boys are highly valued and socialized for decision-making, controlling households and community while girls are assigned roles that prepare them for marriage and motherhood and are also taught to be submissive and obedient. Besides throughout their life, females are expected to be under the control of male. These negative cultural practices and beliefs had an impact on Zambian women's status.

Literature was even one of the domains where Zambian women faced restrictions in society. They were discriminated and had harsh treatment; even critics were oriented to them such as the inability of creation in writing, lack of certain characteristics to be good innovators and they could not express themselves to face obstacles or speak out against the patriarchal society. So literary bonds predetermined women's destiny and denied them access to freedom of expression. Therefore, they were suffering from inequality because it was believed that women were supposed to behave according to traditional gender roles and they are unable to engage in society. (Charles.Fonchingong:135)

Chapter One: Women in Pre-Colonial Zambia

2-3- political factors

The status of women in Zambia in the pre-colonial arena was inferior. It revealed their subordinate nature to their male counterpart. The customary law imposed limitations on women in politics which made them subordinate. Its resource rooted to the traditional practices and customs of most African societies. For instance, women could not be the head of household as they were not seen as rulers. So women accepted the belief that men are the superior in affairs of State. Politically, it was evident that they were deprived from the essential rights, besides the discriminatory gender practices had an impact on gender inequality in the political sphere. However the exclusion of women was a reason of oppression, domination and exploitation. It was the men who contribute and participate in decision-making and women were submissive in political positions.(Brenda:28)

3- Zambian Women's Contributions

Throughout pre-colonial Zambian history, the status of women was difficult to understand because there were domains where women suffered from discrimination and others where they contributed to their society. For example, although Zambian women had limited political rights, their role in the pre-colonial economy was interesting. They had the responsibility of providing for the family. They were in charge of fire, water and the earth, They took part as marketers, potters, mine workers, cultivators, also women in the mine sector were engaged to wash coal and made the clay pots, as well as they controlled some economic tasks.(Kamini:2)

In the other part they cooked, transported water and planted the fields. It was their contribution to their family. For example: cotton cultivation was a source of wealth as it was the advantage of Zambian women and essential to land development. In agriculture, Zambian women controlled farming, marketing and trade. Their power was based on those tasks besides society gave them more chance to control land, farming and engage in a range of productive areas. They have been seen to play important roles in rural economies. Moreover, they were limited to domestic activities but they worked as servants and housewives in factory jobs.(Kamini:2)

Chapter One: Women in Pre-Colonial Zambia

Furthermore, the contribution of women in those areas and the important role in pre-colonial Zambia whether in economy, social life were highly valued. This does not mean that the position of women at that time was ideal. Still women faced many kinds of discrimination prior to colonialism and even during the colonial time.

Conclusion

The status of Zambian women in the pre-colonial period was a social and cultural phenomenon. The subordination of women was clear at that time before colonialism. This was due to cultural norms that favored men as the powerful, the stronger and the dominant; however women are not equal to their counterparts, and were not recognized. Besides, they were denied similar access to most spheres of life because traditional beliefs expected that women have to be mothers, housewives, bearing children and doing home works while men do all the decision processes in life. This means that Zambian women were suffering under the control of men in a patriarchal society. So Zambian society looked upon women as inferior and unable to challenge men in the public arena. Although women did not have an ideal position in Zambia and faced many kinds of discrimination, they played important roles in some fields such as industry and agriculture. Pre-colonial Zambia was not the only period that had shown the lower importance of women's status in society but during colonialism Zambian women suffered also from the rulers system and inequality under patriarchy which neglected and reduced female power especially in political life.

Chapter Two

Women in Colonial Zambia

Chapter two: Women in Colonial Zambia

Introduction

The status of Zambian women was very low before colonialism and it exacerbated in colonial time. This put them facing poverty as well as social and cultural disadvantages in a society where gender inequality was obviously practiced because of traditional culture that looks upon women as inferior, however it was in favor of males such as: education, decision-making, and many others areas. The Zambian government has denied the gender balance that prevented women from contributing in such fields. This prevention was traced back to the nature of traditional African societies in which values and customs affected gender especially female sex. Zambian women were less favored and discriminated against. It was clear that women in Zambia were subordinate, submissive and underrepresented not only because of traditional culture that considered women as inferior but also because of the patriarchal system that excluded female power and the impacts of colonialism on their situations. Zambia was invaded by the British and with the coming of the invader, gender inequality kept a continual issue even during colonialism. Western gender stereotypes and patriarchal traditions were almost for reducing female power and autonomy and forcing them to live under restricted laws that denied them freedom in political, economic and social context. So the British colonial rulers dominated political, social, economic and all spheres of life, in the other part They considered men as the privileged power and the dominant. This affected Zambian women and marginalized them especially in politics, the representation in leadership was never in the favor of women but men were concerned with top positions in politics. However, Zambian women did not passively accepted this disadvantaged situation. They responded in various ways by struggling, protesting , involving in movements to ask for their equal rights and achieve independence .

1- Patriarchal System

Patriarchy came from the idea of the rule of father. It is composed of two words pater which means father and arche means rule. It describes the father as the head in the family. The concept has been dated back to the men's oppression over women through social, political and economic spheres in which men control productive resources, labor force and limitation of women's capacities.

Chapter two: Women in Colonial Zambia

So patriarchy structure was the major feature of the traditional society that was based on social norms and that gave all privilege to males. For instance, qualities as power, courage, self confidence and ability, all these qualities characterized the activities that permit to men to engage in. (*Smith.Nicholas: 467–478*)

Along history different African countries have been dealt with the history of men, even the histories were all written by men however women remained the silent voice and their participation was totally ignored because the belief that women are inferior kept them isolated through history. This ignorance was a cause to their subordinate status and the secondary class in society. In addition to that, from early history women were associated with the home and child care, while men did other tasks like hunting, crafts, trading and even participating in war. It was men who take prestige in their tribes because he leads them and sees himself better in what he does. Moreover he shows that the different tasks assigned to him define his role as important than women. So because of being stronger, male dominance was the privilege in society however women were regarded as the second class citizens. Consequently, this division of tasks between gender was a biological function. According to some traditional views understood that these functions are a result of biology of men and women which means the biological roles and tasks oriented for women are different from that of men such as what men do in public sphere is seen hard to be done by women. Aristotle views on women were also about the structure of patriarchy. He saw that the relation of male and female is related to superiority and inferiority because women as an inferior have lack of authority morally and physically. As he claimed that women's role assigned for reproduction and serving men. He added that male domination is natural and patriarchy is more based on gender roles differences. (*Smith. Nicholas: 467–478*)

African societies such as Zambia was patriarchal society in which power is the dominant in all spheres. Patriarchy reinforced women to believe that the existence of men in their life was seen as a privilege. Consequently, the dignity of women had been abused in African societies.

2- Zambian women under colonial patriarchy

Colonialism affected negatively African cultures. Its pretext was to eradicate the local traditions and applying the ruler system of the colonial power. This included women's visibility, representation and struggles.

Chapter two: Women in Colonial Zambia

So the colonial power has ignored gender equality which has been resulted in worsening the status of women but They supported male dominance. Zambia was one of the African countries where women were disadvantaged and discriminated against. Regardless to the inferior status of Zambian women before colonialism, colonials had an economic and socio-political impacts on women while the occupation of the country.(Eric:10) Historically Zambian women played a necessary role in society. They were responsible for keeping the home, reproduction, feeding the family and caring for children, as well as controlling the land. However, historians John Middleton and C. Miller revealed that in colonial times men were given the role of overseeing and dominating the public realm. They worked outside of the home, including working in positions of political power. The private realm and domestic duties such as cleaning and food preparation was reserved women.(2008,443)

One influence of colonialism on Zambian women was the alienation of lands. The system of land in Zambia was managed on traditional basis. The territory was administered according to African Customary Law, and the customs and traditions differed from a tribe to another. By the arrival of the British colonizer, this system of land had been eradicated. They included English law to regulate the system of land administration. Therefore, They applied the tenure system which based itself on English law because their first aim was to protect their interests. The British colonist occupied most of lands and acquired them for their own profits.

They wanted to apply the idea of private ownership of lands. Thus, women were completely excluded from this ownership. Land became used for commercial purposes by introducing cash-crops. Besides, the colonizer built factories for transporting goods and doing business.

So Zambian women were affected and lost access to land which was the basis of their cultivation and food production. As they became economically dependent on men which means that men were put at the higher of agricultural activities by colonial rulers. Agriculture became commercialized, however women lost their power. Secondly, women were affected by wage labor in which they were forced to work for European plantation and provide wage.

The work of women in agriculture was for financial purposes that served the British power to get profit. So the economic policy of the British colonizer exploited women's labor due to the increase of agricultural production. The establishment of commercialized agriculture left women without a real place in society, also it contributed to the loss of women's economic power. Commercialization was applied by the colonizer.

Chapter two: Women in Colonial Zambia

Consequently its effect was to take lands that had been controlled by women and become belonging to male ownership.

Although Zambian women were working for the colonizer, they were unable to be productive as they had been previously.(Shaina Huston:83) The men in the other part were also forced to become dependent on the colonialist. Men began to leave their homelands and migrate to the cities looking for employment; they left their wives and children families. Thus, it led to the neglect of men duties over home and even over their own fields. They saw that their dependence work on colonialist was a source for their survival and gain wealth. However, migrant labour influenced women socially and economically. It destructed the African families because women or wives became alone and they worried about their husbands and positions in society. Thirdly, the British policy of education was completely in the service of men because women were just prepared for being future mothers and wives.

The unequal access to education was obvious in the colonial time. Professor Ambe.I.Njoh saw that:

African tradition and culture are not inherently biased against women as widely claimed in the literature. Most of the socio-economic and political problems, which African women face, have their roots in European colonial development policies, which were designed to discriminate against women. Colonial authorities initially established schools and other centres of formal education exclusively for men. (Njoh: 107)

Njoh gave a clear image about women's access to education. The school aim was to produce girls to enrich life as it was the education of boys more valued than that of girls, because all beliefs were about men privileges such as: get a certain level in education helps more men to look for employment in the future but women were not at an advantage in that. For this reason, women were prevented from having the same educational level as men.

Another major effect of the British colonizer was the concept of the Victorian women. They came with the idea that women were occupied with domestic issues and not concerned with running over politics and economics so their policy led to the eradication of women. As this concept was hold by the colonialists, women were excluded from the new political and administrative system. However in the other part it was supported by men as they began to believe that women were unable to be leaders over the nations. Colonial domination had harmful economic and socio-political effects on Zambian women.

Chapter two: Women in Colonial Zambia

They found themselves exploited and restricted by the British policy. Moreover, the overlooking of the colonizer towards women was the major impact that undervalued them in society.

3-Zambian women and politics

The Zambian society has restricted the role of women to care for family and be recognized as wives and mothers. This restriction has been perpetuated by the cultural norms, customs that have been practiced. Thus, women stayed back behind their male counterpart in terms of decision making role. Also the isolation of Zambian women from the political area can go back to the colonial persecution and cultural practices which excluded women from leadership.

Leadership has been characterized by male dominance and neglected women's participation because top positions were in favor of men then women. Moreover, the belief that women had lack of experience in decision-making and lack of capacity was a reason to their underrepresentation in politics. This means that Zambian women faced great obstacles which affected their equal political participation. Through history leadership has been characterized by the belief that men are better leaders than women. According to Hojgard(2002), the societal conventions regarding gender and leadership traditionally exclude women, and top leadership is viewed as masculine domain. So African women in general and Zambian women in particular still face many challenges in taking to positions. In other words, Zambian women have been marginalized because men took all the decision making. Firstly patriarchy exclude women from politics.

As Sadie(2005) argued that the bottom of the constraints that women face is the patriarchal system where decision making and power are in the hand of males. This means that traditional beliefs regarded women as unable to be participants in leadership. Moreover, restricting women's role to domestic spheres and suffering from subordination to men affected women position.

In the other parts, the denied access to politics has been rooted also to the weak level of women's education where they were not at a higher level.

Chapter two: Women in Colonial Zambia

They were less likely than men to contribute in higher levels of administrations because leadership positions are considered as hard work, tiring and take long times.

However women were expected to pass long hours at home to care for children and cooking. In addition cultural beliefs about gender roles for men and women made the major difference in positions. Growe said that compared to men, women receive little or no encouragement to seek leadership positions. All what affected Zambian women to participate in politics have been explained by the inequality and marginalization in rights that women suffered from. Gender stereotypes discouraged women to be in higher affairs because men had the positive appearance whereas women were under-represented. Another area that undermined women was gender disparities in access to media in which women were not given coverage to be visible in society or even to express themselves, for example lack of capacity and bad mentality a belief that women can not be suit for running into office.

The media continued to ensure fair representation of female compared to male, they were under-represented as reporters, news sources, and audience members.(BRENDA NYIRENDA:38) Also one of the major threats to women's participation in politics was violence against women. It was a social problem which abused human rights and it was based on unequal treatment due to disadvantages given by society towards women. It included physical, sexual and psychological abuse. Violence against women in politics stood as a barrier to equal participation. It discouraged them to run for office, diminishing their electoral chance or forcing them to encourage male power for protection. All forms of violence against women denied them access to share their voice in social issues. So political violence can be seen in the loss of constitutional role to participate in politics as voters and activists, such violence had an impact on women as it restricted their mobility to become politically active. Moreover, women were not allowed to make decisions, and they were isolated from following political parties that were presented by male leaders. Even public perception undermined women's position to win political seats. So, the low representation of women in politics can be attributed to the inherited colonial and cultural practices which excluded women from leadership roles making them unable to play a substantial part in formal politics.

Chapter two: Women in Colonial Zambia

4- Women's struggle for equality

Zambia has been already known by the practice of gender inequality. It was rooted to the Patriarchal society and colonialism that had an effect on Zambian women. Their situation was aggravated due to discrimination, ignorance of freedom, equality and rights. Also, because of their gender, They were victims of unequal treatment compared to men. It included public offices, access to education, rights to vote, fair wages in work and own property. However, these women responded in many cases by protesting and fighting for equality and better status in society, economy and politics. Their struggle started when they realized that their rights have been ignored in most spheres of life. During the nineteenth century, Women's decade was a challenge of Zambian women to to confront male – biased policies.

It was a progress that was achieved through the National Women's Machinery which aimed to realize equality between men and women. It also provides opportunities for women and men to ensure equal access to political and public life and to participate and benefit from national development. Moreover, women's movement has been resulted in the sign of Pay Act to improve female employment and salary in workplace. Industries became an important area for women and through their employment they took part in trade unions. Besides, Zambian women were aware of the responsibility of home care and family and agricultural work that were heavy on their shoulders; many of them began to think of moving into towns where they could have more opportunity for employment as domestic servants because in the towns women find themselves more dependent and assertive.(Bonnie Keller:18)

Zambian women challenged even laws that denied them right to property in which married women were not allowed to own and control property in their own right. For example, after they got married, husbands were controlling their wives and their wage after marriage. Then, Married Women Property Act was signed to protect women's property from the control of their husbands. It also ensured that women are not forced to sell their property by their husbands. On the other part, Voting was recently considered a privilege for men because he was the one characterized by power and authority, however, women could not vote because beliefs were all about the non qualification of women to be involved in matters of politics like voting. So, women in Zambia wanted their voice to be heard. Group of women agitated with carrying signs for vote, the suffrage was even based on a convention that eliminated forms of discrimination on women. Then it became as women's right.(Lorna Mardsen:2)

Chapter two: Women in Colonial Zambia

So the women's movement has a long way to go in its struggle for bringing about new values, a new dimension and a new perspectives. The objectives were to get equality based on gender, job opportunities, improving the existing laws which gave women rights as her counterpart men.

Conclusion

Colonial regime and patriarchal system have influenced Zambian women and reduced their power. They lived under colonial patriarchy in which British colonists ignored totally women and gave privilege to men in terms of domination and holding decision-making. Colonialism have deeply impacted African societies and continued in worsening the status of women. Despite of the low situation and exclusion from equal access to education, employment, economy and under-representation in politics, Zambian women refused that situation and resisted against colonial rules and patriarchy that affected them. They struggled for equality and organizing movements to battle for their rights and to prove that they have important and affective place in society, especially in participating in political arena. Their struggle led to the campaign for independence too.

Chapter Three

The Campaign for Independence

Chapter Three: The Campaign for Independence

Introduction

The marginalization of women in politics pushed them into involvement to reduce political inequality. Their involvement was mainly due to socio-economic and political pressures that they faced previously. Women became aware of their rights so they wanted their rights to be achieved and practiced. One side, women were active in the political organization that they created, in the other side there were other human rights organizations that had an impact in improving the status of women and realizing equality. women's organizations were one of the alternatives of creating a public space for women. It was a step for the mobilization of women to express their interests and to exert pressure on mainstream institutions so as to address their issues. Besides, these organizations were anti discriminatory organizations which helped to bring the same rights to women as men including political participation, job opportunities, education, and other important fields.

1- The Rise of Women's Organizations

The foundation of women's organizations can be traced to the period of the nationalist movements from 1950 to 1960. Women's issues began to be addressed through these organizations which were a step for women to involve in political participation in the nationalist movement. And It was during this time that many women made a path to contribute in political activities. They took advantage of this foundation to take part in politics. (Lubosi Kikamba:p158).

The Women's Brigade was born in 1953, it came to exist due to the African National Congress led by Harry Mwaanga Nkumbula which was the first party to establish Women's Brigade. It served and worked for the interest of female citizens such as demanding for women's rights and equal participation in politics. Thus, women were mobilized to carry out different political activities planned by ANC.(Lubosi.Kikamba:p 159)

Later in 1958, it was formed the Zambia African National Congress and many members of the African National Congress Women's Brigade have joined it. Mama Chikamoneka became one of the first activists and fighters for freedom, and a founder member of that party. Her courage pushed her to determine the political destiny of their country. Mama Chikamoneka encouraged several women to join the Zambia African National Congress.

Chapter Three: The Campaign for Independence

Then, following the Zambia African National Congress, in 1959 a new political party called United National Independence Party was formed to succeed the Zambia African National Congress. The party itself also established the Women's Brigade in its structure. This means Women's Brigade continued existing as a dominant political wing under the National Independence Party. (Lubosi Kikamba:p159)

It was an important innovation in the evolving of Zambian nationalism because it started the beginning of women's involvement in the political process. women's organisations were used by Zambian women as an alternative public sphere to participate as collective political members in order to bring out their issues and also pursue their gender equality goals. Also, women's organizations contributed to the political development of Zambia in 1964. Regardless to the significant role of women in setting up parties and transforming political structures in order to bring issues and gender concerns in the public arena. (Lubosi.Kikamba: p161)

2- Women's involvement in Nationalist Politics

In Zambia, women resisted in the political sphere and aimed to recapture power from the colonial rulers. They worked side by side with men in various political activities in order to bring independence to the country. Most of the literature on Zambian politics has underestimated women's role in the nationalist politics. Men have been given recognition as the main political actors while women's participation has been ignored. However, Zambian women wanted to prove their involvement and activities as a result of their contribution to political organizations in which they took part.(Irene.Manda:2) So the campaign for independence involved women in spite of the recent traditional exclusion from politics. Their involvement was mainly due to socio-economic and political pressures brought by the colonial rule.

It took various forms. It has been realized that women made an integral part in development especially in the process of national development. They occupied a very significant place due to their strongest resistance for equal participation. (Irene. Manda:6) Besides, women contributed in the formation and development of the new parties as it was mentioned recently. They were involved in the Zambia African National Congress which was followed by the United National Independence Party.

Chapter Three: The Campaign for Independence

In both these parties, women helped also in the raising for funds for registration of the parties and for other uses. As they were instrumental in bringing together the small parties which had emerged after 1959 to form the United National Independence Party.(Lubos.Kikamba:161) They participated in more political boycotts and demonstrations which helped to influence the decisions of the colonial administrators. Women were also involved in activities that helped to ensure the success of the political parties.(Irene.Manda:17) On the other hands, women improved their social welfare during the nationalist politics. The women who became involved came from various walks. There were married as well as unmarried and single women. They did not involved as separate groups but as one part to the social welfare.(Irene.M,1992:24)

Mama Julia Chikamoneka commented in her book End of Kaunda Era on the important role which women played during nationalist politics:

“Mind you ! Although we do not have authority, we have the influence When for example, we approached someone that he or she joined the party, they had to oblige or they risked being ostracized. This is wherethe power of the women lies. We recruited new members of African National Congress, Zambia African National Congress and the United National Independence Party”

Mama Julia have mentioned that women had an impact and a role in political parties as they contributed as members and good organizers. So Zambian women played an active role in the nationalist politics involvement. It was a result of the political organizations formed by women that were for ensuring their issues and interests.(Irene.M,1992:27)

3-Organizations Fight for Women’s Right

Throughout history, women did not have the same rights as men. This was due to their gender and many forms of discrimination that deprived them equal rights. Recently, women could not vote, they could not work outside of the home. They were supposed to remain behind the men. After years many organizations rights and conventions have come through the years to help women get the rights that every human being should have. Among these organizations the National Organization for Women, and The United Nation’s Women Treaty:

Chapter Three: The Campaign for Independence

3-1 National Organization for Women

The National Organization for Women was established in 1966 to ensure equality for all women in society. It has put women in political posts, increased educational opportunities, employment for women; and enacted against violence and sex discrimination . It was one of the most famous women's organizations that has helped for the fight for women's rights. It has been a main source of protection in different issues and domains. The National Organization for women has been important feature in the progress of women's movement. Besides, its goal was make sure women had the opportunity to fully participate in all aspects of society with the same status as men. In 1967, the National Organization for Women adopted Bill of rights which state that women would be protected by law to insure their rights. Equal employment opportunity be guaranteed to all women. The right of women to be educated equally as men be by eliminating all discrimination and segregation of gender. The right of women to control their own reproductive lives. Finally, the right to have equal participation in politics. So the National Organization for Women had one aim to achieve which is ensuring equal rights for women in all spheres of life and fight all forms of discrimination against them.(now.org)

4- The United Nation's Women Treaty

The United Nation's Women Treaty was another organization that fight all forms of discrimination against women. It was adopted in 1979. It has set up bill of rights which defined what constituted discrimination against women. Also, it realized equality between women and men through ensuring women's equal access to political and public life .This included the right to vote and to stand for election , as well as education, health and employment. Appropriate measures were taken, so that women can enjoy all their human rights and fundamental freedoms. Moreover, the United Nation's Women Treaty was an essential human rights treaty which assured the reproductive rights of women and targets culture and tradition that shaped female gender including all forms of exploitation of women.(wikipedia.org) States took a series of measures to end discrimination against women in all forms, including: the right to vote in all elections to be eligible, establishing tribunals and other public institutions to ensure the effective protection of women.

Chapter Three: The Campaign for Independence

Participating in the formulation of government policy and holding public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government. Providing the opportunity to represent their Governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organizations. Eliminating discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education, they got the same conditions for access to studies and for the achievement of diplomas in educational of all categories in rural as well as in urban areas. States helped women in the field of employment in order to ensure the same employment opportunities even free choice of profession and job security. Women were given also the right to protection of health and to safety in working conditions. States set up also significant measures in the political, social, economic and cultural fields to ensure the full development and advancement of women and to enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men.(ohchr.org)

So, the United Nation's Women aimed to implement the principle of equality of rights for men and women. It recognized the value women's right in most spheres of life such as equal access to social and public services in the country, equality in the status of men and women in the enjoyment and exercise of political rights. In other words, it required that women should accord rights equal to those of men and the ability to enjoy all their rights in practice.

Conclusion

The campaign for independence was a result of women's involvement in Nationalist politics. They involved and struggled as individuals and collective groups to achieve equal rights. One way that helped them to engage in politics was the organizations that they formed. They gave them support and encouragement to be visible in political activities. As they contributed to the political development of Zambia. On the other part, Zambian women played a cardinal role to bring their issues and concerns and put them at the front of their future achievements. There were also organizations that fought for women's rights and ended all kinds of discrimination against women such as National Organizations for women and the United Nation's Treaty. Both of them contributed to eliminate what denied women equal access to political life in particular and social and economic issues in general.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

In Zambia, gender inequality was mainly characterized by the unequal treatment of men and women. It arose due to the differences in gender roles regarded to political, social and economic features. Moreover culture and traditions were the major reason which made female disadvantaged. In a patriarchal society, authority and decision making were given to men and women kept lag behind men. Even with the coming of the British colonists, they wanted to eradicate women's situation and focus on men, colonial officials and patriarchy constrained female advancement and power. However, Zambian women did not accept this aggravated situation that affected them. They reacted in different ways and struggled for long time in order to achieve equality not only for their under estimation in social arena but also for their under representation in politics. They fought individually and collectively for the political right to challenge all what constrained their advancement. One way that contributed to the engagement of Zambian women in politics was the involvement in Nationalist Politics which led then to the independence of the country. Zambian women started creating organizations that help them to put a path to their future political participation. The organizations helped them to be active in politics, and to bring out their issues and also pursue their gender equality goal. Besides, there were organizations that fought for the rights of women. They diminished all forms of discrimination against women and guarantees access to decision-making in political and public life. According to the Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has the right to take part in the government of his or her country. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women builds on previous conventions and its article concerns women's access to decision-making in political and public life. the right of women to vote in all elections and to be eligible for election, the right to participate in the formulation of government policy and its implementation to access to leadership, to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government, and the right to participate. Also, achievements of equal rights, women's participation in politics, contribution in the development of Zambian politics.

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