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## Intersection of Culture, Ecclesia, and Transgender Persons Navigating Identity, Beliefs, and Acceptance

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### Abstract

Transgender persons in Kenya, Africa and the world continue to face discrimination in various facets of their lifetimes, which has negative impacts on their wellbeing. This is evident right from their respective homes, among their neighbourhoods, in educational institutions, in public and social places, and in their workplaces. The Church, as a public and social place, is crucial for the wellbeing of individuals, communities, and society in general, including transgender persons. In addition, Kenyan citizens practise various cultures and traditions, alongside other faiths that they have earned their conversion, with majority practising Christianity, followed by Islam, and other religions. These African cultures and traditions are integral in socialisation at the community level, given the fact that, by and large, it still 'takes a village to raise up a child'. As such, discrimination of transgender persons in the Church and in the local African cultures and traditions does not bode well for the wellbeing of these transgender persons. That said, there is need for the above trio to embrace transgender persons as Christ embraced all, and as African cultures and traditions also embraced different genders and sexualities. This will serve to demonstrate a workable and/or logical intersection of love, inclusivity and community. This research article utilizes an extensive review of literature to arrive at the key points. Analysis of these key points has been done in our bid to understand the intersection between the trios.

**Keywords:** Gender inclusivity, intersection, transgender, transgender theory, transphobia, queer theology

### Introduction

"For where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there am I in their midst." (Matthew 18:20, New World Translations of the Holy Scriptures (NWT)). This is the foundation of the Church, a communion/community of believers. Communion here is used in the sense of the joining together of congregants' spirits in worship while community applies as a religious collective of believers bound together in their faith in Christ. Parallel to this is that Kenyan African Cultures and Traditions are collectives at the (extended) family level, sub-clan level, clan level and onwards to the community level that refer to the ethnic nationality (Peterson, Derek & Sobania, Neal., 2003). Together, these two – the Church and African Cultures and Traditions - informs the identity of the individuals that constitutes the same; a majority of Kenyans, and exist side by side in relative harmony. Indeed, it is common for one Kenyan, on first acquaintance with another Kenyan, to inquire of their second name/surname if not proffered or ask about their origin/place of extraction/home county/home district upon introductions. This, to a visitor not familiar with the nuances of the Kenyan identity and body politic, might seem strange or offensive, archaic even. To the average Kenyan, though, it is something expected and

something to be proud of as Kenyans are first (Luhya/ Luo/ Kikuyu/ Digo/ other tribe) before they are Kenyans (Ratuva, 2019). Occasionally, though, there is the negative connotation of the tribe like when the former vice-president and then opposition's (CORD – Coalition for Reform and Democracy) presidential running mate, Stephen Kalonzo Musyoka, had a supposedly Freudian slip concerning a reporter's question. Away from government appointments and presidential contestations where Kenyans retreat into ethnic conclaves/cocoons that sets 'us versus them', they are united as Kenyans when Lupita Nyong'o wins the Oscar, Wangari Maathai the Nobel prize, Eliud Kipchoge runs the marathon under two hours, or when Kenyans on Twitter (KOT) defends the country's honour against slander by or engage in banter with other nationalities such as Ugandans, Nigerians, South African, or even when taking on institutions such as CNN over misrepresentation of the country Kenya. This 'peculiarity' (phraseology adapted from Michael Joseph, then heading Safaricom, the country's leading telecommunication, on Kenyans 'peculiar' calling habits) would have Kenyans demanding of outsiders to let them sort out their own issues of ethnicity and identity.

Similarly, Kenyan Christians who attend the same church or denomination are likely to greet one another in the name or in the goodness of Christ – thus religion also being a strong component of one's identity (Waweru, 2020). Thus, discrimination of transgender individuals in the Church and in African Cultures and Traditions bereaves them of an integral part of their identity. According to the National Transgender Discrimination Survey (2022), transgender persons in Kenya faced various instances of discrimination. For instance, harassment by fellow students due to their chosen gender at 79%, 61% and 65% in primary schools, secondary schools and tertiary institutions respectively. In matters work, 54% of the transgender persons had experienced job loss due to their gender while 49% had been denied a job due to the same. Other types of discrimination faced by transgender persons in Kenya included being denied housing (46%), experiencing unequal health services (62%), and experiencing unequal legal services (57%). Further, they faced discrimination in restaurants (52%), harassment upon representation of identity cards (26%) deemed as falsified regarding perceived gender by the other person serving them, and harassment in shelters (33%). As well as the discrimination to transgender persons discussed above, the Church also contributes to the transphobia experienced by transgender persons in Kenya. These include pronouncements uttered by Church leaders against transgender and LGBTIQ persons, pronouncements uttered by political leaders on Church pulpits or while in Church functions, and conversion therapies of transgender individuals, including casting out demons and witchcraft that is transgender and LGBTIQ. Further, transphobia in Kenya can be traced to Christian missionaries and the British colonisers (Gupta, 2009).

### **Other functions of the Church**

The Church remains an integral part of the Kenyan society. Towards this end, it serves many other functions beyond communion and spiritual nourishment of its membership. Taking truly after Christ who took care of the physical needs of his people by way of healing miracles (Luke 8:43-48; John 4:46-47) and physical nourishment that was the miracle of multiplying the bread and fish (Matthew 14:15-21), it provides essential services that is healthcare (hospitals), shelter (housing, guest houses, restaurant accommodation and shelters), and education (pre-primary, primary, secondary, tertiary and associated scholarships/sponsorships). In addition, it is a major employer across all cadres of workers – management, technical, semi-skilled, unskilled, and casual. Indeed, some of the best secondary schools and tertiary educations in Kenya are run by the Church or are affiliated to the Church. These include Precious Blood Secondary School-Riruta, Alliance High School and Strathmore University. The same is replicated in provision of healthcare, more so, affordable and quality healthcare at the community level that is Missions' hospitals. Regarding housing, the Church provides affordable rentals (such as the Presbyterian Church of East Africa's (PCEA) through their self-help concept as an entity of 'Jitegemea'), guest houses, restaurant accommodation, shelters, rescue centres/children's orphanages and rehabilitation centres. Further, the Church also runs various humanitarian and relief organisations that offer respite to victims and survivors of both natural and man-made catastrophes such as floods, famines and acts of wars including terrorism. This being the case, in provision of these essential services, with the Church sometimes segregating

beneficiaries into a binary of gender that is either male or female (for example, girls or boys only secondary boarding schools), discrimination of transgender persons is likely to occur in accessing these services. Regarding healthcare, Church health facilities may refuse transgender persons transition-related care, including counselling or provision of transition hormones, or even something as basic as contraceptives, more so, for those transgender persons involved in sex work for diverse reasons, including denial of job opportunities due to their self-identified genders. Such denial of employment may also happen in Church organisations that do not recognise transgender, thus trampling on their right to earn a living and exacerbating the woes faced by the transgender persons. Further, in Churches such as the Roman/Latin Catholic Church that ordains only priests who are male, transgender individuals who identify as transmen may miss out on this opportunity to serve the Church and Christ.

The Church too is heavily invested in the economic well-being of its memberships and in national development. Firstly, the Church is a substantial employer of Kenyan residents – running the whole gamut that is the different cadres of workers – management, technical, skilled, semi-skilled, unskilled, casuals and volunteers. Such employment is provided via work opportunities in its various institutions – the physical church, schools, hospitals, media centres, etc. – the construction, running and maintenance of the same. Further, via its educational institutions (pre-primary to tertiary education), it equips learners to be productive workers of the Kenyan society. Further, the Church gives scholarships and sponsorships to students drawn from underserved communities (to which inclusion of transgender students need to be added) to enhance their employability. In addition, the Church facilitates its membership to access business finance. These include grants and loans. The business owners are also equipped with business skills in addition to the Church availing spaces for its membership to engage in commerce (availing of church grounds for sale of rosaries, provision of business stalls, provision of online business platforms, etc.). On matters economic development, the Church contributes to the same directly and indirectly (Kamaara, 2000). This as an employer and as an enabler as previously stated. In addition, the Church adds a crucial voice to the good governance of the country – from agitating for political plurality (Muoki & Asol, 2016), calling out the excesses of government (Makokha, 2018; Ndereba, 2021), to its leaders serving in ward and constituency bursary committees (the inference being that they can be relied upon to truthfully confirm deserving cases), acting as referees/recommenders in matters job and passport application (again, they can be relied upon to truthfully vouch for the conduct and particulars of the applicants). Church leadership has also been entrusted to sensitive commissions such as the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (previously headed by retired Anglican archbishop Eliud Wabukhala, and now, by a former bishop of Christ is the Answer Ministries – CITAM – Dr. David Oginde), and the National Cohesion and Integration Commission – NCIC-headed by the Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia – with these two institutions entrusted with safeguarding public resources and enhancing national harmony, respectively. As members of county and national legislature, Church leaders provide sobriety and are a voice of reason in moments of intransigence, more so, during the debate of polarising issues. Lastly, routine engagement of Church leadership with political, civil, cultural and other religious leaders provides for a plurality of perspectives in the onerous task that is national building and economic development of the country.

### **Harambee and the Church**

Harambee, or self-help, as a national ethos in Kenya was popularised by the late president Jomo Kenyatta (1889-1978), Kenya's first president after gaining independence (Askwith, 1995). It then grew in popularity under the second president, the late Toroitich Arap Moi. As a concept, it can be distilled to communities pulling together to achieve a common purpose: building a hospital, construction of a gabion, raising school fees for a bright but needy student, offsetting medical bills for close friends and family... with the advent of technology, the same technology has been co-opted into this via apps such as M-Changa and WhatsApp groups. At the Church level, harambees are conducted on almost a weekly or monthly basis... acquisition of a church bus, roofing the church's building, feeding the poor... with political players, both at the local, regional and national level given prominence at these events as 'Chief Guests'. Following from this argument and extrapolating it further, it is only then logical

that transgender persons, who also give to the Church – including harambee contributions – should then not be discriminated against when it comes to accessing provisions such as healthcare and education, which hospitals and schools their contributions helped to build. At the community level, schools, hospitals, roads, markets and other important infrastructure (others include harambees for cultural sports teams) have been erected when communities organise harambees. Oftentimes, in the various harambees held across the country, they provide for a colourful mix of State (presence of political leaders and government administration officials such as chiefs; government grounds and facilities as venues), religion/Church (the clergy to sanctify and dedicate) and African Cultures and Traditions (presence of elders, cultural performances, rituals, etc.).

### **State, Church and African Cultures and Traditions: A coming together**

The Kenyan constitution provides for a separation of State and the Church/Religion (The Constitution of Kenya, 2010: Chapter Two – The Republic, Article 8. 'There shall be no State Religion.'). In practise, though, it is hard to separate the two, beginning with the Kenyan's constitution's preamble that states that, 'We, the people of Kenya, Acknowledging the supremacy of the Almighty God of all creation... God bless Kenya.' In addition, the National Anthem, as a National Symbol, states that, 'O God of all creation, Bless this our land and nation...'. Further, various State Officers (The president, deputy president, judges, etc.) have to oath 'So help me God' at the end of their oathing. Clearly, from these interpretations, one cannot divorce God/religion from the State; instead, the constitution expressly provides that no one religion (in this case, Christianity/Church), shall be exalted above the others in matters of the State. That said, the Church has often been used in matters statecraft, more so, in reaching out to the voter, from the presidential level (Kinas, M. V., Karega, R. D. J. B., & Chacha, D. B. K., 2018) to the lowest level of political representation that is the Member of County Assembly (MCA).

Further to this, cultural leaders (with religious/Church leaders sometimes doubling as the same), are sought after by many political leaders for them (the politicians) to be crowned as community leaders, both as symbolism and for the practicality of gathering that community's vote. For instance, as a precursor to the 2022 general elections in Kenya, both William Ruto and Gideon Moi (then, potential presidential candidates from the conglomeration of related tribes that is the Kalenjin) sought to be crowned as ethnic chieftains by the elders of the Talai (a sub-group of the Kalenjin thought to hold sway as the Kalenjin's gatekeepers to political power as they are descendants of Koitalel Arap Samoei, the Kalenjin leader who resisted British colonisation). This cultural coronation also plays out at the inter-ethnic community level, such as Raila Odinga's (a Luo) installation as a Gikuyu elder during the same period. The three identities: State, Church, African Cultures and Traditions also answer existential questions to those they give an identity to. Who am I? - (Kenyan/Christian/'tribe' such as Luo or Gikuyu. What is my purpose here on earth? – To pay taxes as a productive citizen/to exercise fully my gifts and talents/to continue the cycle of life that is the ancestors, the living and the unborn, etc.

As noted under the functions and conduct of harambees, the Church, the State and various African Cultures and Traditions provides for an interesting intersection in diverse contexts. For example, during national days (Madaraka Day, Mashujaa Day, Jamhuri Day), the prayers that typically signify what is loosely the official start of the national celebrations include Christian, Islamic, and African traditional religions – with the occasional Hindu prayers - to reflect Kenya's diversity in matters worship. In addition, such celebrations include the display of various religions, nations, cultures and heritages: gospel performances, folk songs and dances (from Kenya and from the region in the spirit of Pan-African and East African co-operation), contemporary secular compositions, the parade of various organisations, and so on. This is to be expected because, after all, the constitution also recognises the importance of culture:

Article 11. (1) This Constitution recognises culture as the foundation of the nation and as the cumulative civilization of the Kenyan people and nation. (2) The State shall— promote all forms of national and cultural expression through literature, the arts, traditional celebrations, science, communication, information, mass media, publications, libraries and other cultural heritage; recognise the role of science and indigenous technologies in the development of the nation; and (c) promote the intellectual property rights of the people of Kenya.

Crucially missing in all these is the expression of stifled persons and organisations such as transgender and LGBTIQ. This as the Kenyan constitution safeguards freedom of expression, culture and heritage as earlier demonstrated, and provides for non-discrimination of Kenyan citizens irrespective of religion, creed, sex and such other social constructs:

27. (1) Every person is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law; 2) Equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and fundamental freedoms; (4) The State shall not discriminate directly or indirectly against any person on any ground, including race, sex, pregnancy, marital status, health status, ethnic or social origin, colour, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, dress, language or birth; (6) To give full effect to the realisation of the rights guaranteed under this Article, the State shall take legislative and other measures, including affirmative action programmes and policies designed to redress any disadvantage suffered by individuals or groups because of past discrimination.

As earlier noted, at the national level, the political leaders are, first and foremost, ethnic leaders (their own, as well as being crowned elders of other communities – a cultural appropriation of some sorts that is ‘trans’; with said symbolism helping in their ‘national appeal’ to matters galvanisation of the presidential vote). In the political leaders being installed as (ethnic) community elders/tribal chiefs, cultural leaders (including religious leaders/Church leaders doubling as the same) play a critical role in these ceremonies. Further, cultural associations, with relative economic, social or political sway such as GEMA (Gikuyu, Embu, Meru Association) (Feeders, 2006) have been known to endorse certain candidates (more pronounced at the presidential level) to the supposedly relative detriment of opposing candidates. The political leaders have also been noted to provide patronage to ethnic and cultural entities, including sports teams centred on this. Add to this mix amorphous organisations such as ‘Bunge la Mwananchi’, ‘Hustlers’ and other patronages with class identity as a way of countering the cultural organisations. What does this portend for transgender persons? That they can organise effectively and run powerful organisations to secure their interests. This as politics (more so, as State’s allocation of resources) determine everything... the price of ‘unga’, who gets employed, what services one’s public medical scheme covers (such as inclusion or otherwise of transition-related health care services), and who gets jailed (for instance, formulation of anti-trans/anti-LGBTIQ legislation). That said, transgender and LGBTIQ organisations can build up on the example of David Kuria who ran for political office as an openly gay candidate. In addition, it behoves transgender persons to fight to head creative and cultural organisations and hubs such as the Kenya Film Classification Board and the Kenya Cultural Centre as ideally, these should be safe spaces for expression. In lieu of these, transgender/LBTIQ expressions such as the award winning movie ‘Rafiki’ will continuously be stifled.

### **Trans as symbolism: Blood, circumcision, flags**

‘Trans’ provides for an interesting perspective on matters Church, State, African Cultures and Traditions, and transgender. In matters Christianity – its foundation and its global spread – it could be argued that the Church existence is premised on ‘trans’. For instance, from a biblical perspective, ‘trans’ allows for blood to be both profane (Leviticus 15:1-33) and sacred (Genesis 17:1-27). Whereas a woman’s ‘bleeding’ or menstruation is regarded as unclean in the bible, ritualistic sacrifices for ‘cleansing’ (acts of offense against God/sins), including circumcision, involves the shedding of blood. In the Old Testament, we have Abraham being required to sacrifice his beloved son, Isaac. At the last possible moment, a ram is provided for that dies in Isaac’s stead – a ‘trans’ of sorts. In the New Testament, Christ dies for humanity’s sins, hence no more need of animal sacrifice in Christian worship – another instance of ‘trans’. In the continuation of the Passover feast that is the Last Supper, Christ breaks unleavened bread and wine to his disciples to symbolise his body and his blood – another instance of ‘trans’. This symbolism of Christ as God-man is a central tenet of Christian worship, with partaking of the Holy Communion – Eucharist - being the highest form of adoration. Parallel to this, in various African Cultures and Traditions such as the Gikuyu (Kenyatta,1965) animal sacrifice and the attendant shedding of blood is a mainstay of its various rituals that seek to purify an offender, cleanse the land, give thanks for bountiful harvest, and so forth. In both Christianity and Gikuyu culture, the shedding of blood symbolises atonement and ‘a life for a life’,

eternally or otherwise. It is instructive to note that, in Kenya, the State is the only institution mandated with the monopoly to 'shed blood' as symbolism of taking away a person's life, say, for instance, due to commission of a capital offense that is treason (though, in practice, such offenders are incarcerated to what would be perceived as life imprisonment) or the medical abortion of a pregnancy in order to save a mother's life.

Circumcision, as espoused in the Old Testament, is central to the Israelites as God's chosen people that is the Abrahamic Covenant. Upon the birth of Jesus and on his eighth day of existence, he is circumcised (celebrated as the New Year, January the 1st) in keeping with his people's faith. In many Kenyan African Cultures and Traditions, circumcision too is of utmost importance. For instance, among the Gikuyu, Embu and Ameru (Peterson, Derek & Sobania, Neal., 2003) , it signifies a 'cross-over' from childhood to (the beginning) of adulthood – a 'trans'; accompanied by a myriad of 'performing' to symbolise this. The Kenyan flag, as a national symbol, has the colour red to signify the blood of the warriors shed in the fight for liberation against the British coloniser. By extension, some Kenyans take this to mean that blood sacrifice is constantly required to 'water the tree of liberation' – hence excusing/extolling martyrdom in the various other contestations for perceived infringements of rights and freedoms – including historical injustices. To this can be added the continued fights for electoral justice regarding presidential contestations and human rights for transgender persons. Common to the national flag as symbol of national unity, there is the transgender flag that rallies transgender persons (and their allies) towards a common cause – as proud identification, as protest against a supposedly hetero-normative society, as celebration of transgender, and as empathetic of transgender. Which transgender organising should strive to have atop Mt. Kenya and side by side with the Kenyan flag?

On matters wine and alcohol, it is instructive to note that Christianity shares a lot with diverse African Cultures and Traditions. For instance, wine (and unleavened bread) was used to celebrate the Passover feast – where Israelites' firstborn sons had been spared as their Egyptian counterparts were smitten down as a precursor to leaving Egypt for the Promised Land, Canaan. Upon commencement of Christ's ministry, his first miracle was that of turning water into (very fine) wine (John 2:1-11), at a wedding of the unnamed bridegroom that could possibly be that of Jesus himself to his beloved, the disciple John the Evangelist (Loughlin, 2008). The bible further advises one to partake of wine for its healing properties (1 Timothy 5:23). To be fair, though, it does warn of abuse (Ephesians 5:18), parallel to the instructions on alcohol by such Kenyan African cultures such as the Gikuyu and coastal tribes (Peterson, Derek & Sobania, Neal., 2003). In the same vein, transgender persons have used and abused alcohol as a coping strategy against discrimination (Harper et al., 2011). In many Kenyan African Cultures and Traditions, alcohol also plays a central part in many cultural practices and events such as initiation and marriage ceremonies, for instance, among the Gikuyu (Kenyatta, 1965).

### **Coat of many colours: Intercession, intercessors and transgender**

Reading the bible indeed gives one the impression that Israel was the original 'Rainbow Nation', albeit with blatant discrimination of the equivalent of transgender persons and members of the LGBTIQ community of their times. Still, where such persons or practices existed in what would have been admission of the same on a positive note, they tend to be desexualised or degendered. But before that, how is one to read and interpret the bible? Is bible reading and interpretation to be left only to those erudite in matters exegesis and hermeneutics? If so, does this then render a monopoly of ecclesiastical power to only a select few as God's chosen ones? Following from the Protestant Reformation as popularised by Martin Luther, this simply cannot hold sway. For the great schism so occasioned was centred on Gutenberg's press revolution that enabled thousands access the bible to read and interpret for their own selves, as well as get access to Luther's theses; any other such attempt to render the power of bible reading, understanding and interpretation using whatever highfalutin that is attendant terminology to only a few select groupings as offering the 'correct' stands should be vigorously resisted.

A further reading of the Church' history shows that many of the denominations currently in existence resulted from schisms centred on interpretation of scripture or dogma (cite). In Genesis (6-8), we have the destruction of life on earth that is the Great Flood, occasioned by God's anger at the violence that had filled the earth. Apparently, the violence came about when the true sons of God (angels?) had sexual intercourse with

daughters of men and bore a mighty race of men that were the Nephilim 'trans' – was what angered God to destroy the earth, not the fact of 'trans' that bore the Nephilim. In this regard, it is worth noting that God abhors violence (Psalms 11:5), a caution to Christians who violate the rights of others, including the rights of transgender person. The sign that God's anger had abated? The rainbow (Genesis 9:13-16). Abraham, the Father of many nations, bore Isaac, who bore Esau and Jacob. Jacob 'passed' as Esau (complete with hairy hands and neck – parallel to the 'passing' of transgender persons for various reasons – Genesis 27) and went on to establish the Twelve Tribes of Israel; while at it, he also did 'trans' that was his allegorical wrestling with a man-angel-God (Genesis 32: 24-31) (Wrestling men: A queer reading of Genesis 32: 24-30 by Simon Hallonsten). Jacob's son, Joseph, was sold to Egypt by his jealous brother for his coat of many colours and his dreams; with said coat equivalent to cross-dressing. In the bible, Joseph (described as beautiful – Genesis 39:6; as opposed to Saul who is described as handsome – 1 Samuel 9:2) plays a critical role as an intercessor to God to various people (the Potiphar, the Pharaoh's cupbearer, the Israelites). Parallel to Joseph as a transgender intercessor (Harris, 2019) are various other cultural transgender intercessors from around the world (Murray, Roscoe, et al., 1998). We also have King David whose relationship with Jonathan has been argued by some scholars as being homosexual in nature (Loughlin, 2008), and Ruth and Naomi possibly as a lesbian couple (Slater & Cornwall, 2022).

### **The land question: Home is where the tree is**

In many cultures around the world, land (and the resources that are in it; broadly speaking, on, under, below, and – in the case of sea/ocean boundaries – adjacent to – it informs a nation's identity, with nations – in the broad sense of countries or tribes - going to wars since time immemorial over trespass of the same (Gathogo 2020 & 2020b). This as land equates to life – the resources in it are what gives sustenance to life, oils commerce and contributes to nations' Growth Domestic Products (and such other measures that inform peoples' quality of life in nations or serve as indicators of productivity) as illustrated by Stanford (2008). Even the most technologically advanced nations on earth derive the raw materials of their advanced technologies from earth. A trip down history lane shows that the various social, political and economic (indeed, economists used to call their study 'political economy') models of their time – feudalism, and capitalism and communism and their various mutations that is democracy, socialism and so on - came about by way of how land (as a factor of production, later on, capital), was held or organised. In almost all instances, the mighty few held the most land and lorded over the rest. The land question has not eluded the Church, with the example of the Latin/Roman Catholic Church cited as one of the largest 'landlords'(used here deliberately as men lord over in the Church, with women as mere appendages as far as the concentration of power goes) in the world. Further to this, the land question led to the prohibition of marriages for the priesthood as they were wont to divide up Church land and property to their offspring. In England, it is instructive to note that the Queen/King as nominal head of the Anglican Church (and the State), and by extension, the British aristocracy, is amongst the largest owners of landed estate there and in the world. In virtually all African cultures, land plays a crucial role in the daily lives and organisations of communities. For instance, the burying of one's umbilical cord on ancestral land (parallel to Joseph's bones being carried over from Egypt to the Promised Land), the shedding of blood during sacrifices and circumcisions, and the mixing of blood during wedding ceremonies among the Gikuyu (Kenyatta, 1965).

These communities draw further parallels with the biblical genesis of creation that is Eden. For instance, the Gikuyu have '*Mukurwe wa Nyagathanga*' as the genesis of their community. In this regard, when transgender individuals have to run away from their communities due to discrimination, they lose part of their identity. Land (as a source for raw materials, as a market, and as a source of indentured labour) was a main reason for European colonisation of the Africa, the Americas and Asia). Indeed, this has been the history of humanity and the various conquests and empires (Egyptian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek, Roman, Mongol, Ottoman, Dutch, Portuguese, British, French, etc.). For instance, World War II was a result of German's geographic expansion of land to create a 'living space' for its people as earlier noted. Also, various nations tend to refer to their countries as the 'motherland' (France, England) or as the 'fatherland' (Germany, Russia) – further illustrating the critical attachment of peoples to their land. Drawing from current International Theorising that

is unipolar in structure, with the United States of America (USA) as the world sole 'super power' with the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1989 (Stanford, 2008), much of the USA's economic power is derived from its vast resources (land, its peoples – including exported culture that is Hollywood, own internal markets and advanced technology). The advent of China into a global behemoth is attributed to its vast resources too (firstly, land that is able to host a billion plus peoples – own internal market, advances in technology).

Other countries that have relatively huge lands also have huge economies (Brazil, India, and Canada) due to abundant resources therein. In lieu of this, smaller countries (such as Japan) but with advanced economies have achieved this due to their ability to exploit the resources of other countries), hence the global divide of poverty that is North-South. Kenya, other African countries, and other countries elsewhere that have found themselves on the South side of poverty (bringing to mind 'go south' as an expression of things worsening) have continuously sought to fight this injustice; beginning with the fights for liberation from colonialism (in Kenya, christened as the 'fight for land'), to the present push against neo-colonialism. Foremost in this being against unfavourable policies advanced by Bretton Woods institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) that control world's finance; and, unfavourable terms of commerce as advanced by the World Trade Organisation (WTO), for instance. That aside, similar push and pull occurrences are increasingly being seen across the globe including attempts at de-dollarisation, an expanded BRICS (Brazil, India, Iran, Indonesia, China, South Africa, Saudi Arabia) economic reorganisation, and so on – essentially, a fight for the exploitation of the earth's (land) resources. In Kenya, land remains an emotive issue (Jenkins, 2012), both at the intra- and inter-ethnic levels. At the intra-ethnic level, reportage of kin harming or suing kin routinely appears on prime time news. At the inter-ethnic level, banditry and clashes over land are also routine, becoming pronounced during election years.

Despite the progressive articles in the Kenyan Constitution 2010 on land, the establishment of an independent land commission, and various other such fora as the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) and the Ndung'u Land Report. The Church too has not been spared either in this – as a beneficiary or victim of land fraud, including irregular allocation/ acquisition. That aside, community organisations as land buying entities and the Church (or organisations under it) have been able to pool resources together to acquire land and develop it; a lesson for transgender organisation, say, for instance, by forming a housing co-operative, hence addressing the challenge of housing discrimination. After all, land is where the tree is. This tree being analogous to the symbol of the item impaled on the ground to signify land ownership, such other ownership, and the sanctity of the grounds upon which the said item rests: flag (pole), cross, Maasai spear, Moses' wooden snake, 'mugumo' tree. Concerning matters land, too, is the special reverence of mountains in diverse cultures as revelation – elevation of 'trans': Moses' being given the commandments; Jesus' beatitudes, transformation (a 'coming out' to his most trusted disciples) and crucifixion; Gikuyu the man being shown the land to occupy; Joseph Munyao hoisting the Kenyan flag upon its attainment of independence to symbolise the new State... indeed, upon Christ's resurrection and his 'reveal' to various of his followers, he would have them touch his stigmata (a modern rendition would have him saying, "Touch, feel, see that I have transitioned into a higher form.") – denoting his fatal wounding that was the tree, his entombment that was the land, and his resurrection as triumph over death to become a new being: the triumph of Trans.

### **The anthem heard round the world: Trans as the Holy Trinity**

Another weekend, another marathon won by a Kenyan... again, the Kenyan anthem is heard around the world in some other European capital, the proud striped flag hosted, the national anthem sung, nay, performed. Only that, this time, the stripes are pink, blue, white... the words of the anthem remain the same, though prayed different by the transgender Kenyan who attends Church and practices their Kenyan African Culture and Traditions.

O God of all creation (that is all trans)  
Bless this our land and nation  
Justice be our shield and defender



May we dwell in unity (holy, of the Church, the State, and African Cultures and Traditions)  
Peace and liberty  
Plenty be found within our borders. (Amen)  
Let one and all arise  
With hearts both strong and true  
Service be our earnest endeavour,  
And our Homeland of Kenya  
Heritage of splendour,  
Firm may we stand to defend.  
Let all with one accord  
In common bond united, (Church, State, African Cultures and Traditions)  
Build this our nation together  
And the glory of Kenya  
The fruit of our labour  
Fill every heart with thanksgiving.

The Church, the State, and African Cultures and Traditions have become one: The Holy Trinity.

### Conclusion

Transgender is contested site; hence this research article is basically a retelling of possibilities, a performativity and being. It has contrasted the sacred and the profane, shame and pride, and power and powerlessness. It calls for a critical re-examination of what we think, know to what we ought to know. It sought to address the philosophy behind being open to new possibilities on diverse things: worlds and words, and things and thoughts among other dichotomies. This research article has thus examined the possibilities that Trans organising have at their disposal as far as political power is exercised in Kenya: the State, the Church, and diverse Kenyan African Cultures and Traditions. It has showcased Trans as part and parcel of all the three. This has been done through an integration that is critical of a supposedly hetero-normative society: the existence of trans in African Cultures and Traditions in pre-colonial Kenya, trans in (Kenya's) Church through Queer Theology, and a progressive State based on a progressive constitution that is peculiarly Kenyan in that the State, the Church, and African Cultures and Traditions are able to exist harmoniously.

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