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SALOME NOLEGA DAVID: PROGRESSIVE AND TRANSFORMATIVE FEMINIST LEADER OF WESTERN PROVINCE; 1932-1985

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this article is to reconstruct the history of a Luhya Woman –Salome Nolega David as a progressive and transformative leader of western Kenya. With the advent of the first Friends African Mission (hereafter FAM) station at Kaimosi, in 1902, Education was handy in winning more converts to this new religion. The women traditions and culture had first to be transformed, through acceptance of western cultural attributes. Consequently, FAM missionaries offered education opportunities of the sons and daughters of the first generation believers to enable them be employed in secular sectors such as medical services, education service, industrial and agricultural sector, as an approach for reinforcing evangelization and expanding their area of influence. It is due to this; the Friends Church's secular policy, its formulation, implementation and impact on the education in the Luhya that is the subject of this study. Anecdotal evidence indicate members of the Friends Church are to found all over the country today. Unfortunately, the contributions of the daughters of the first and second generation adherents of F.A.M to the growth and transformation in education among the Luhya of old Vihiga district has not been realized. In recognition of this fact, the article addresses the pertinent issues Salome Nolega David found herself agitating for among the Luhya of western Kenya. Indeed, much of the material for the article was derived from unpublished theses, oral interviews and secondary sources which addressed the role of Nolega David among the Friends Church affiliates. Other sources included, written source of information on the Friends Church is the East African Yearly Meeting (hereafter EAYM) records preserved at Kaimosi and those from The Kenya National Archives (hereafter KNA).

The article relied on three theoretical frameworks –that is; modernization, social exchange and social conflict theories which offered a deep insight on the progressive and transformative ideas of Salome Nolega David. Modernization theory granted the framework for analyzing the formulation, implementation and impact of FAM secular policy on education, whereas social exchange and social conflict theories were used to guide in understanding the relationships that facilitated change within the church and contributed to conflict among the East Africa Yearly Meeting. The article reveals a number findings when considered in light of its objectives and theoretical frameworks. It has shown that FAM secular education policy was one of the most important agencies of winning new converts

which brought about progress in education of traditional women in Luhya land. The secular education policy led to the emergence of pioneer-teacher and establishment of girl's schools. Among these elite, indicators of strive, rejection of the Luhya traditions came into play, representation of women in international forums was attained and provision of higher education for girl child had a central place in the heart of Salome Nolega David. But with these developments, the church viewed Salome Nolega David a leading agency of airing the women views globally.

KEYWORDS: Progressive, Transformative and Feminist Leader

1. INTRODUCTION

Who was Salome Nolega David? Salome Nolega David the daughter of David Mbarani and Damary Kadagaya belonged to the first generation of Friends African Mission missionary (F.A.M) converts in Kenya. She was born in 1932 in Kisangula Village, North Maragoli Location of old Vihiga District. Nolega was a young vibrant and bright student who pursued her secondary school education at Alliance Girls School that was established in 1926 under the Alliance of Protestant churches in Kenya (O.I, B. Kagagaya; Feb 21st 2021). This attest to her strong Christian background and her affiliation to the F.A.M. Furthermore, was privileged to secure the mission scholarship to Leeds University in USA IN 1959. Upon her completion of her studies in USA, she was among the most educated women in Kenya (O.I, F. Wekesa,; Feb 16th 2021). This formed the basis of her appointment as the first ever female principal to be appointed to head a teacher's training college in Kenya in 1965.

1.1 TRACING NOLEGA ROOTS TO WESTERN EDUCATION IN WESTERN KENYA.

When the F.A.M established their base in Kenya, they founded Kaimosi as their sole Centre of operation. This necessitated the need to win more converts to spearhead a powerful area of influence in Western region of Kenya. Due to this the trained evangelist had to transverse the region and planted village meeting points for their new converts. In Vihiga district, Yohana Amugune became handy in fulfilling the dreams of these missionaries. He founded churches at Chavakali, Viyalo and Vokoli areas. Salome Nolega's parents David Mbarani and Damary Kadagaya happened to be among the first converts to accept the F.A.M missionary faith. According to Amatsimbi (2009: p 86) the missionaries recruited new converts through inducements like the provision of sweets, beads and education.

By 1918, F.A.M had 317 full members and 976 members who were under probation terms (Amatsimbi: 2009. p 90). The F.A.M relied heavily on education as a means of evangelization. Winning new converts and education were two inseparable entities; and the western education was the greatest extrinsic motivation because it was a better option for high paying jobs during colonial times. Because of this, F.A.M begun a teacher's training college and girls boarding schools at Kaimosi headquarter in 1922. With the new found education centres, student enrolment for higher education short up drastically. The F.A.M reports of 1928 posit:

Interest in higher education continue to increase. The latest request is for a secondary school in this province. At present the colony has two secondary schools. One manned by the Alliance of protestant mission and one by the Catholic Mission. There has no time that this part of the colony has had their share of the pupils in Alliance High School. {EAYM reports 1928}

Importantly, this new female Christian development in F.A.M ushered in modified women roles contrary to the traditional ones. For instance, by 1932, Kaimosi girls school had three female teachers who became the role models for the young girls. The F.A.M reports of 1936 noted:

The average class-age of the girls is almost the same as that of boys in the primary school. This fact shows that there is now, the schools practically an even balance in education of the girls and boys.

This is just glimpse of how the girl child education became a centre of interest in Western Kenya.

1.2 THE EDUCATION JOURNEY OF SALOME NOLEGA DAVID

Miss Salome Nolega D began her early education from Kisangula village school in 1941 to 1942. She later continued her basic studies at Kigama basic school from 1943 to 1945 before proceeding to Kaimosi intermediate school. As a brilliant student, she passed her intermediate exams and from 1947 upto 1950 she continued with her advanced education at Alliance girl's high school. Since the F.A.M was in dire need of human manpower, Salome was offered a teaching position at Kaimosi girl's immediately she completed her studies in Alliance girls' High school (O.I, B. Kadagaya; Feb 21st 2021). In 1960, Nolega secured an educational scholarship at Berean College Kentucky USA to study Bachelor's degree Arts in Home Economics and Education of which she graduated in 1964.

2.0 THE TENETS OF PROGRESSIVITY IN F.A.M CHURCH.

The year 1953-1963 proved to invoke progressivity spirit among the F.A.M members. Just like other African converts elsewhere, the Luhya friends converts sought to expand secondary school development far beyond the Beecher's 1952 recommendations. In their struggle for more academic progression, F.A.M leaders had to collaborate with the EAYM towards this venture in education. This resulted in the EAYM elite members to seek overseas education opportunities for their children and building of more girls schools (Amatsimbi: 2009). In a spirited progressive feminist view of 1959, Salome Nolega David opine; "unless opportunities are found for more girls to be trained, the interest in education for the girls will decrease". This thrilling opinion sparked great desire for the need to build more girls schools under the management of F.A.M sphere of influence in Western Kenya. Her progressive talk zeroed on the fact that the girls were missing placement in government secondary schools. Amatsimbi work of 2009 notes:

36 girls sat for the examination and 22 passed. Five of those who passed would be accepted into a high school, seven into teacher training college and two have

been accepted into nurse training Centre's. The remaining eight will probably not be able to find places for further training.

Salome Nolega's observation reveal her focus on the progress of the girl child in education. Her zeal to support the girl child education enabled her to collaborate with Pear Spoon who was the headmistress of Kaimosi girl's boarding school (GBS) to agitate for the upgrading of GBS to a secondary school. In their new found union (Amatsimbi, 2009), the dual twin progressivists opined:

We see the need for a high school here and at Kaimosi and we hope to be able to take a first class in 1961. There is a greater need for women leaders in Kenya who can take their places in the church, in the community and in the political and social life of this country... in order for the friends to meet this need, we must give these girls a higher degree of education.... We feel that there is a great urgency in making the necessary preparation to provide high school.

In their unrelenting demands for girls' education, the F.A.M headquarter gave in to this demand such that in 1960 GBS was upgraded to a secondary school. Her advocacy among other able women leaders who included Elicca Adagala, Bernice Mululu and Pear Spoon resulted the first girl's secondary school being initiated with an enrolment of 140 students in 1964. Unfortunately for Nolega, she became pregnant while still under the care of her parents. Having pregnant before marriage was a taboo among the luhya community (Amatsimbi, 2009). For Nolega, life was unbearable because she came from strong strict Quaker Christian family. But Nolega being an independent minded woman and also educated, she declined to accept forced marriage to an old man. Instead, she escaped from home and went to live with her other relatives in Mt Elgon, Kenya. This formed the basis of her transformative ideology.

3.0 PROMINENT AND TRANSFORMATIVE LEADER

The concomitant nature of F.A.M made them to fall behind the schedule in preparing future leaders in Western Kenya. While most missions were offering bursaries to their younger generations to further their education abroad, the F.A.M under Everett Kellum felt it was not yet time. Fortunately, a number of Luhya leaders had been enlightened by the happenings of educational events elsewhere. These enlightened leaders of F.A.M who included Simeon Sabwa, Nathani Luvai, Benjamin Kaptain, Jotham Standa, Thomas Lung'aho and Pearl Spoon requested for educational scholarship of their sons and daughters abroad. Through the push of these leaders were offered twelve slots in USA. For Salome Nolega D, the year 1960 provided an opportunity that marked the end of her predicament of mockery in the society because she was among the students who benefitted from the overseas education scholarship programme. The 12 students who were nominated for the overseas education scholarship included Salome Nolega David, Jedidah Khivali Ngaira, Eunice Nambiro, John M. Roman, Fred Egambi Dalizu Filemona, Elijah Mwangale, Joshua Angatia and Noar Wekesa amongst others (KNA/EAYM 1958-1960).

These sons and daughters of the first and second generation F.A.M converts hence played a central role of transforming the society's perspective on education. The years 1960 up to 1964 in the overseas institutions had translated these young Kenyans into transformative leaders. Upon their completion of their studies and their return in Kenya, they became little shining lights in their respective regions. For instance, Joseph Otiende became the first minister of education in the independent Kenya, Joshua Angatia was elected as the second MP for Lurambi constituency, Eunice Nambiro became the first District Education officer whereas Salome Nolega David became the first African woman to be appointed as a Principal of a teachers training college (EAYM Report: 1957-1963)

3.1 FIRST AFRICAN WOMEN PRINCIPAL IN KENYA -1965-1967

According to (O.I, B. Kadagaya; 2021) Salome Nolega David was appointed as vice Principal of Kaimosi TTC IN 1965. However, after serving for half a year she was hence promoted to a Principal taking over from Caleb Smith in 1965. Her leadership style deviated greatly from her predecessor Caleb smith. While Caleb smith was academic and gentle, Nolega was a no nonsense and performance focused principal. This earned her space in the male dominated world. She handled personnel issues far better than Caleb smith the predecessor. Her presence was an aroma of what female leadership entailed. According to her former colleague Jane Forsay:

Nolega had an upper hand in leadership because of language advantage. She was so fluent in English, Kiswahili and Mother Tongue which boosted her leadership style. Her access to parliament debate sessions offered her a wide range of exposure to the political class in Kenya.

The views of Jane Forsey point to an African woman who knew how to navigate the different human terrain. She understood how the Kenyan system operated and how to manure the muddy waters. It is through this understanding that enabled her to secure government grants for building and equipping Kaimosi TTC. Despite the fact, she had a child outside wedlock, Salome Nolega sailed through the nasty judgmental society with her head raised and sense of achievement. This optimistic life style became her identity as observed by Jane Forsay that: "Salome lived a life to the full. Nothing would bow her down. She was excellent with the students; she stood no nonsense but dealt with their grumbles and sticking points as only Kenyan could" (Nyagah; Daily Nation 18th/11/2013).

In acknowledging the transformative ideas of Salome Nolega, Jane Forsay further noted that;

I got on very well with Salome. She was a breath of fresh air. It was as if she realized that there I was a single woman, not bound by conventional Africa or European marriage in which the man was or tended to be the head of the family – Daily nation 2013

The transformative ideas Salome held to was anchored in her belief that an educated woman had been liberated from the cultural bondage of male dominance.

3.2 PRINCIPAL IN HIGHRIDGE TEACHERS COLLEGE 1968-1971

According to the Friends Journal (June 15th, 1969) Salome was transferred from the ministry of education on Highridge TTC in 1968-1971. As the Principal of Highridge TTC, she persuaded members of the F.A.M to invest in the reconstruction of an international like institute in Nairobi. In her vibrant speech in F.A.M Conference in USA, Nolega sheds light on her undertakings that:

The newly opened Friends Inter-national Centre, which you have probably read about, since we have been raising funds here to try to build it up so that it can serve the needs of young and old Friends in Nairobi. Activities include a Sunday morning worship, a Thursday evening discussion group, a youth social program, and Sunday School for children. These will, of course, be better organized when we have enough money to put up proper buildings for them. You also know of the Ofafa Friends Centre, which was established here some years ago and where activities go on for the benefit not only of Friends but also of the community. Meetings are beginning to develop in various parts of Nairobi as the city grows larger and it becomes hard for people to travel to the only two Friends Centres. I was principal of Kaimosi Teachers College for two and a half years, and then I was transferred to Highridge Teachers College which is in Nairobi.

The observations made by Nolega capture a leader who admired to see the young generations attain the international stands. Not only did she value the younger generation, but further still she envisaged a future where better infrastructure that support community aspirations were constructed. A part from educational activities, she was appointed as the manageress of the Kenyan Olympics team in 1968 that represented Kenya in Mexico summer competitions.

3.3 PRINCIPAL IN LUGULU HIGH SCHOOL, 1974-1978

Salome Naloge D served as the principal of Lugulu Girls Secondary School for a period of four years. As a leader of in EAYM, she felt that the world was not offering great attention to the girl's education. Her position could not conceal her valued ideas. For instance, the UN proclaimed 1975 as an international women year and Nolega as the Head of Lugulu girls was nominated as a representative at the conference. In her powerful view of the women education, she noted that:

In order that a country, be able to call itself developed in all aspects, no person in that country suffers from discrimination of any kind and I know there would be few, if any, countries in this world that can say this. One true fact, I believe, is that when women are left behind in any county, however industrialized it may be, that country can and should be considered as being underdeveloped. (Friends Journal July 1/15, 1974)''

This African woman envisaged a society that treats everyone equally and offered a healthy environment for the girl child. In demonstration of her conviction on this matter, Nolega practiced what she advocated. Even though she was the principal of Lugulu Secondary school, She was also the head of Board of Governors (B.OG) of Malava girls school of which she proved to be a real role model for the girl child. This attribute could be traced in the observations made by Marian Baker, a young Quaker representative who attended a women conference held in Malava Girls School. Marian Baker posit:

On the 6th July 1975, I went to visit the Malava yearly meeting pastor's conference. I found a headmistress of a school giving a lesson on how to pastors and then afterwards... I was so impressed at how Salome Nolega (Headmistress of Lugulu school and Chair of Board of Malava girls was able to stand up and speak to the president, that I decided I wanted to become educated woman like Salome Nolega of which I am.

In the world forums, Nolega was called upon represent the interest of Quakers. For instance in 1978, while serving as vice chairlady of friends world consultative committee at the UN general assembly on disarmament she was the only African lady given an opportunity to speak at the conference. Her moving speech on vulnerability of women and children in times of war received international applause from the delegates.

3.4 PRINCIPAL AT ST. AUGUSTINE EREGI TEACHERS COLLEGE 1979-1983

Nolega's helm as the principal of Eregi TTC was short lived (KNA, HB/27/7/4). Having struggled in the male dominated world, her vigor had begun to dwindle. Even though she was the principal of a TTC under the Roman Catholic sphere of influence, she did not avoid peeping her nose in the struggle to have a great say in the management of EAYM (O.I B, Kadagaya; Feb 21st 2021). A good example of such scenario is her advocacy to have Friends College of Research and Technology be placed under the EAYM South. This was aggravated by the fact that her persistent call for change in the EAYM had created many friends and enemies in equal measure. Anecdotal evidence (Amatsimbi 2009) is her closeness to regional political class as indicated in a letter sent by the Kakamega DC to the PC of Western Kenya that:

There appears to be two groups in dispute over the college. The first group consists of Hon M.B Mudavadi, Hon H,J, Onamu, Miss Salome Nolega and their supporters. The second group consists of Mr. Thomas lung'aho, Hon. J,M Angatia, former MP for Hamisis constituency, Mr Samson Mmasistsi, Mr. F.Mwashu Shivernge, Chairman Board of Governors and their supporters. These groups have also affected the running of the EAYM. The first group is in favour of a breakaway from the main group, ie Kaimosi

The conflict between the two EAYM groups invited the wrath of the donor agencies by suspending further funding to the institute. Unfortunately for Salome Nolega David, her health became a challenge because she had developed the cancer of bones. She succumbed to this monstrous disease in 1983.

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