

**THE CHRISTIAN POLITICAL THEOLOGY OF RT. REV.  
DR. JOHN HENRY OKULLU, BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE  
OF MASENO SOUTH OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF  
KENYA (1929-1999).**

BY

JEMIMA ATIENO OLUOCH

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**NATAL, PIETERMARITZBURG**

## DECLARATION

With the exception of the sources specifically acknowledged in the text, this dissertation is entirely my own work, and has not been submitted to any other University.



**Jemima Oluoch**

January 2003

### Supervisor's Agreement

As supervisor I have agreed that this dissertation be submitted

**Professor Kwame Bediako**



## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my late grandmother, Huldah Omollo (Yuda) *nyar* Noah Sati (1910-1999). A woman of integrity. In memory of her work ethics, perseverance and devotion to her earthly father and her heavenly Father.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The research and writing of this dissertation would not have been possible without the help, generosity and support of various people. I am extremely grateful to the following people: Professor Kwame Bediako, my supervisor, for his mentoring, inspiration and kindness; Professor Stephen Talitwala, Vice-Chancellor Daystar University and Daystar University for financing my MTh. Programme and giving me time off to study; Professor Andrew Walls, Dr. Gillian Bediako, Professor Watson Omulokoli, Dr. Philomena Mwaura, Professor Addo- Fenning, Dr. Elom Dovlo and others who sharpened my mind in the MTh Programme; Mrs Esther Okullu, Phoebe Mugo, Humphrey Ojwang, Professor Anyang Nyongo, Dr Samson Obwa, and Maurice Onyango who provided resources and useful information on the late bishop; library staff and lecturers of Nairobi International School of Theology for their encouragement and kindness in allowing me to use their library as one of their own; Dr. Kombo, Dr. Michael Chelogoi, Richard Odiwa and Professor Emil Chandran who spared the time to discuss my work with me; May and Pete Ondeng', Catherine Mbarire, Mary Ariviza, Jane Awiti, Paul Mbutu, Dr. Maureen Iheancho and others who encouraged and prayed for me; family members: the Betty & Roc, Bob & Betty, Lizy, Debu, Pebbles, Paula, Luke, Sandy, mum and dad who supported, prayed and encouraged me; and finally above all, to the Lord my Saviour who has been my help, provider and comfort.

## ABSTRACT

This research proceeds from the premise that Okullu was a significant church leader in Kenya. His significance relates to his outspokenness on issues of social justice including the struggle for political liberation from the oppressive one party system and issues of human rights.

The purpose of this dissertation is to reconstruct Okullu's Christian political theology through establishing what motivated him and the biblical basis for his socio-political activities. An attempt is made to reconstruct the socio-political environment, which gave birth and necessitated Okullu's prophetic ministry and to investigate the social and spiritual factors, which shaped him.

The findings of the research reveal that Okullu spoke out of conviction. His theology of development and participation had its roots in evangelical and ecumenical perspectives emerging between the 1960's and early 1980's. For Okullu the mission of the church was the total liberation (salvation) of the whole person body, soul and spirit. Evangelism and social concern were mutually inclusive.

The major sources of his theology were African socialism and the Bible. The ideals of African socialism, which he incorporated in his theology, which are in harmony with biblical principles were: the high value placed on the individual, the principle of equality and the central place of the community in development. He argued for a people-centred holistic development, which took account of the whole human person- body, soul and spirit.

For Okullu, the biblical basis upon which Christians should act in a non- Christian society is the prophetic role of the church, founded upon the justice of God as illustrated in the writings of the Old Testament and continued in the concept of the 'kingdom of God' and the concept of 'God as judge in the teachings of Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

Although Okullu affirmed the validity of the doctrine of separation in church-state relations, the concept of separation according to him does not fully explain the relationship. The separation is only institutional but at value level the two are bound together in the realm of ethics owing to their common origin in God. It is this integrated whole that gives the church its mandate for involvement in politics.

Okullu's significance is demonstrated historically, by the literary out-put containing his socio-political challenges that faced Kenyan society in his time, testimony of others expressed in condolence letters and the views of groups of persons interviewed for this work.

Okullu spoke out against injustices. He fought for human rights. His most significant contribution was spearheading the multi-party debate and the repeal of the section of the constitution of Kenya, which had made Kenya a single party system. His prophetic ministry was hammered out in the public arena. He was an Amos of his time.

## ABSTRACT (LUO)

### WECHÉ MOFWENYORE E YO MACHIEK

Migosi Okullu ne en jatend kanisa marahuma ei Kenya duto. Ne okwedo timbe moko mane piny owacho luwo mane miyo jopiny odak kajoma nie ut ang'enge. Ne ok oyie ni piny owacho mondo olos mana gi bura achiel mar siasa to bende ne odagi timbe mahundu mane piny owacho timo ni jopiny.

Wach maduong' ma wanono tiendé ka en siasa Migosi Okullu, gima omiyo ne ogoyo siasa ma kamano to kod andiko mag Wach Nyasaye mane osirogo siasa ma kamano. Mondo wayud tiend wehegi malong'o, wadwaro nyiso kit gik mane timore e kinde mane Migosi Okullu chandore kod wehegi, to bende wadwaro nono gigo ma mane omiye obedo kaka koro wang'eyeno.

Bang' nono wehegi, nenore ratiro ni Migosi Okullu ne wacho weche mane nie chunye ma iye. Migosi Okullu ne paro ni wach Nyasaye puonjo nywako dongruok. Puonj ma kama ne yudore e mise mane jo-Injili to gi jo-Ekumenikal ogero koa chak 1960 nyaka kar 1980. Migosi Okullu ne onge'yo ni tij kanisa maduong' en kelo kwo ni ringruok kaachiel gi chunye. Kuom mano, Migosi Okullu ok ne oketo pogruok ekind lando injili to gi konyo jopiny.

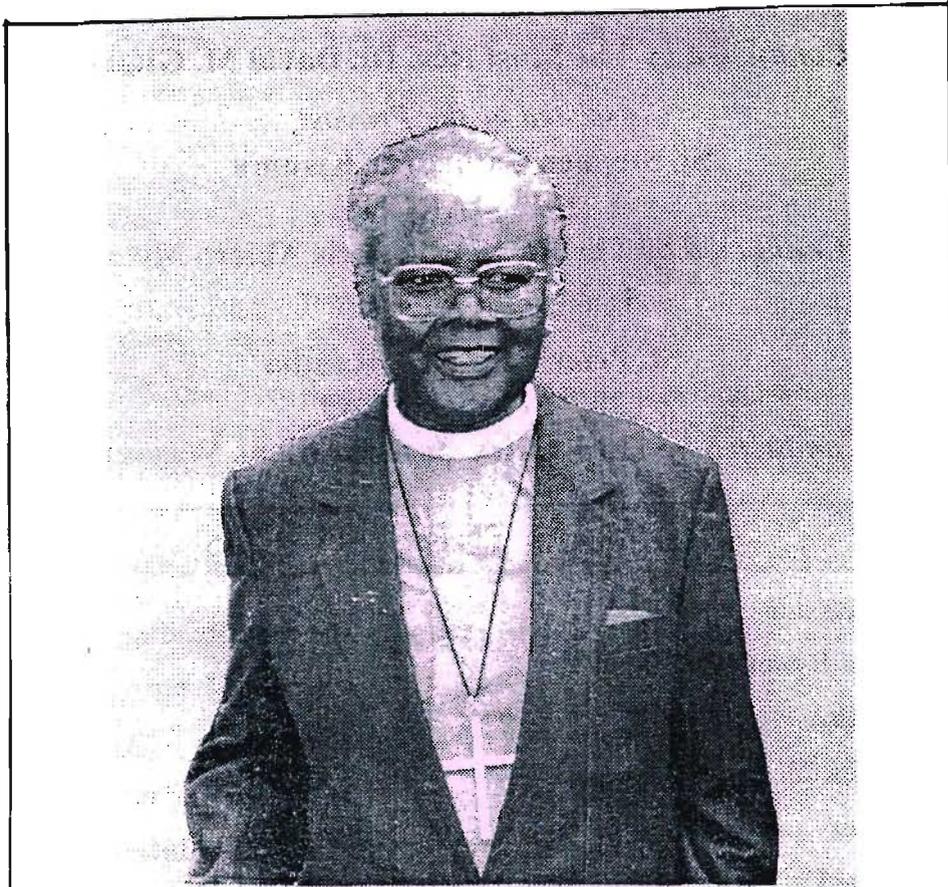
Puonj Migosi Okullu duto ne nigi misegi ei Muma to gi dak mar kanyakla ma en kit yawa majo-Afrika. Weche mabeyo kendo mowinjore gi puonj Muma mane ogolo ekit dak mar yawa mane obedone misingi gin weche machalo gi luor moganda miyo ng'ato ka ng'ato, puonj majiwo ni ji duto romre, to gi nywako weche mag dongruok. Migosi Okullu ne wacho ni kit dongruok mar oganda nyaka nyisre ratiro eyo ma dongruokno kelogo pogruok ni ringruok kaachiel gi chunje.

Migosi Okullu ne jiwo ni Muma mar Nyasaye chiko ni ka jo-Kristo dwaro dak e dier jopiny to nyaka giluw kit kanisa ma en dwoko ji ir Nyasaye. Mise mar kidoni oger e adiera mar Nyasaye ma waneno e Muma Machon to bende wanene e Muma Manyien kwonde mawuoyo kuom 'Loch Nyasaye' kendo majiwo ni 'Nyasaye e jang'ad bura'.

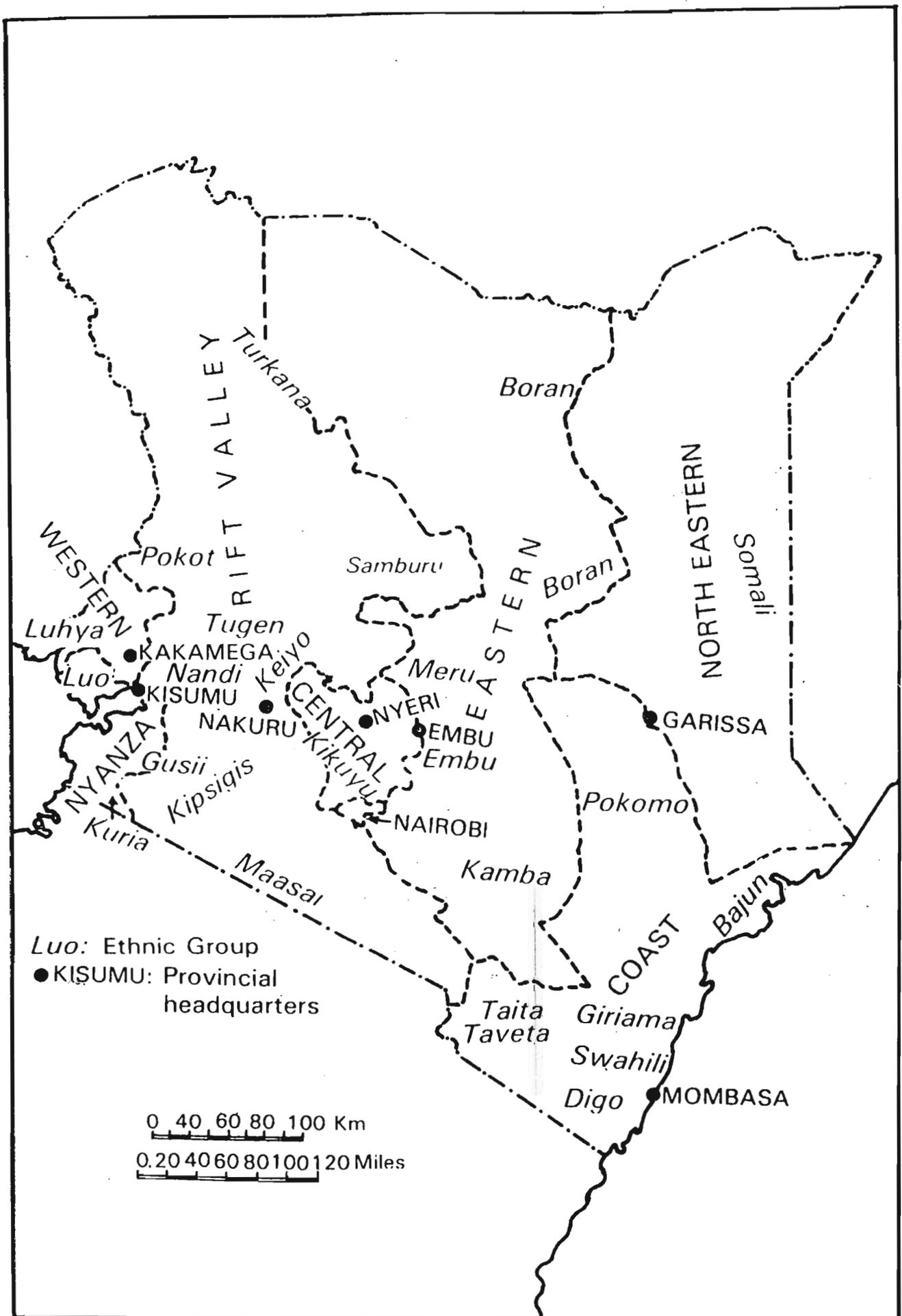
Migosi Okullu ne ong'eyo ni pogruok nyaka bedie e kind kanisa to gi piny owacho. Katakamano ne ok onyiso kit tudruok ma kanisa nigo gi piny owacho. Kaluwre gi puonj Okulu pogruok manie kind kanisa gi piny owacho ni mana e kitgi ma oko, to gi eigi to gitudore e jiwo dimbruok. Tudruok ma kama miyo kanisa ok nyal pogre kendo weyo mabor weche mag rito piny (siasa).

Humb Migosi Okullu nyisore ratiro e weche mane ondiko kuom chandruok mane oneno kuom jo-Kenya mandalone. Onyisore bende e barupe mag kuyo mane ji mopogore opogore no oro bang' nindo migosino to gi neno mag ji mane wapenjo e thwolo mane wanonie wehegi.

Migosi Okullu nochung' ni adiera. Ne okedo ni golo mahundu e kind jopiny. Maduong' to ne omako matek wach mar loso ute buche mathoth mag siasa e kinde ma chik ma-Kenya ok ne oyie bedogi ute buche mathoth mag siasa. En ne owacho wehegi e pap lela oko ma ok opondo. Adier jali ne en janabi Amos ma ndalone.



**The Right Rev. Dr. John Henry Okullu**  
**Born 1.9.1929 Died 13.3.1999**



*Kenya: Provincial boundaries and ethnic groups*

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## CHAPTER 1

### **1. 0 Introduction**

The Rt. Rev. Dr. John Henry Okullu, Bishop of the Anglican Church of Kenya Diocese of Maseno South, died on March 13, 1999. He was 70 years old. The condolence messages and comments made during his funeral and burial services by key leaders in Kenya bore witness to the unique, critical and public role Bishop Okullu had played in his life.

Three categories of people gave testimonies: the politicians, churchmen and leaders from Bishop Okullu's ethnic community.

#### 1. Testimonies of Politicians

President Daniel Arap Moi said:

The late Okullu was in the forefront in fighting against injustices in society and his consistency in the promotion of a fair and just society was outstanding. He will be remembered for his exemplary pastoral life (*Nation*, March 15, 1999).

Langata Member of Parliament (MP), Raila Odinga described Okullu as:

A conscientious and precise critic of perpetrators of evil in society. His enormous and valuable contribution and sacrifice to the restoration of pluralist politics during Second Liberation of this country will remain an indelible mark and unparalleled in the annals of Kenyan history (*Nation*, March 17, 1999).

#### 2. Testimonies of Church Leaders

The Anglican Bishop David Gitari said:

As a journalist and bishop, he has courageously challenged injustices in the society and was greatly admired for his consistent principles of promotion of a fair and just society (*Nation* March 15, 1999).

Retired Archbishop Olang, the first Kenyan Anglican Primate said:

The Anglican Community has lost a dedicated shepherd. He will be remembered for leading the church to its present form (*Standard* 17, March 1999).

Prebyterian clergyman Timothy Njoya said:

Okullu had been 'Commander- in Chief ' in the Kenya's religious sphere leading the 'generals' who fought for human rights and democracy (*Nation* March 21, 1999).

### 3. Testimony of community leaders

Luo Council of Elders in a statement signed by Professor G.E .M Ogutu and the chairman Fanuel Adala Otuko stated:

Indeed Kenya and the Anglican Community have lost a great man and brave leader. Bishop Okullu has been a real source inspiration in his fight against injustices in society. He was a great church leader, preacher and moulder of youth (*Standard* March 20, 1999).

From these comments it is evident that Bishop Okullu was viewed as a significant church leader in Kenya. He was perceived as one who was a passionate advocate of human rights and social justice. He fought against injustices in the society and played a critical role in the struggle for political pluralism. He was also a thinker, a theologian and a writer.

#### **1.1 Rationale**

Bishop Okullu exemplified one who spoke as a 'voice for the voiceless'. He formulated an indigenous theology of resistance to the demands of a hostile secular authority (Throup1995:172). The purpose of this research is to investigate Bishop Okullu's Christian political theology as the driving force behind his outspokenness in socio-political issues; secondly, to investigate the factors that shaped him to become the prophetic figure that he was; and thirdly, to assess his legacy and the contextual relevance of his Christian political theology to the Kenyan context.

## 1.2 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. Identify the biblical themes upon which Bishop Okullu based his political theology and the Christian traditions that influenced his political activity.
2. Identify the important social-political issues Bishop Okullu tackled and the context in which this occurred.
3. Identify the significant experiences that shaped him to become the prophetic figure he was.
4. Demonstrate how his theology relates to praxis.

## 1.3 Significance of the study

As an evangelical I have been raised on the notion that there is a dichotomy between my faith and involvement in socio-political matters. In the course of time I have come to realise that that evangelical faith does not exclude involvement in socio-political issues. Bishop Okullu in my view serves as an example of an evangelical who broke out of this mould and intergrated his faith with concern for socio-political issues. My motivation therefore in doing this study is to discover what made Okullu different and to explore the theological basis undergirding his socio-political activity.

This study is important for two reasons. First, Bishop Okullu was an important person in his own right. Various people have testified to this fact. He was a national figure who wrote several books, some of which have been used as textbooks in various academic programmes. His writings included books such as, *Church and Politics in East Africa* (1974) Uzima Press, *Church and Marriage in East Africa* (1976) Nairobi: Uzima Press, *Church and State in Nation Building and Human Development* (1984) Nairobi: Uzima Press and *Quest for Justice* (1997) Kisumu: Shalom Publishers. He also presented papers in both local and international forums. An example is 'Church-State Relations: The African Situation' presented to World Council of Churches (1978). Bishop Okullu held

important ecclesiastical positions both locally and internationally. He was the Chairman of the National Council of Churches of Kenya (1989-1990), Chairman of the National Ecumenical Civic Education Programme (1992), a member of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, and Vice-Chairman of Unit Two on Justice and Peace of World Council of Churches, President of the World Conference on Religion and Peace, Africa Region, and Chairman of the Commission of Human Rights of the Africa Conference of Human Rights amongst others.

Secondly, Bishop Okullu's thought and career serves as an illustration of a contextual African Christian political theology and demonstrates the interrelationship between theology and praxis.

Political theology considers its thesis to be authorized by certain precedents, in biblical and Christian tradition. These include prophetism, the Hebrew Exodus from Egypt and Jesus' public confrontation with the political authorities of his day (Fierro 1977:133). When biblical themes of the various Christian political theologies are examined, it is evident that there is no uniformity.

\* Examples of biblical themes which have been incorporated in liberation theology include; salvation, creation, the exodus, prophetic denunciations, the political implications of the ministry of Jesus, eschatological promises and the role of the church (Nunez 1985:143). In the attempt to reconstruct the theology of Social Gospel, Walter Rauschenbasch in *A theology of Social Gospel* (1945) dealt with the doctrine of sin, doctrine of salvation, the mission of the church and the kingdom of God.

\* Stackhouse (1987:37) thought that the themes and principles such as creation, liberation, vocation, sin, covenant, moral law, religious freedom, ecclesiology, and the Trinity are indispensable in guiding a public theology. Since there is no uniformity in the biblical themes used in the various theologies, Bishop Okullu's writings and sermons will determine what themes will be analysed.

It is evident that the various Christian political theologies have emerged from the challenge of history. Both North American Black theology and South African Black Theology have arisen as Christian responses to black consciousness in situations where Blacks suffer because of the colour of their skins (Kirk 1980:109). Liberation theology of Latin America was born as a protest against the prevailing socio-political and economic situation. It will be necessary therefore to consider the socio-political context in which Okullu operated.

#### **1.4 Definition of terms**

The terms political theology, gospel, culture and praxis are the key terms in this study. These terms have been defined as below.

Political theology is ‘ a critical corrective of certain tendencies to confine theology to the realm of the private and personal, ... It aims at “nationalization” taking theological concepts, the language of preaching out of the private realm’. In other words, it is an effort to overcome a purely “passive” hermeneutic of Christianity in the present-day society. *Encyclopaedia of Theology: The Concise Sacramentum Mundi* (1982: 1238-1243). . This is in keeping with the definition of theology given by Gustavo Gutierrez (1973:13) ‘Theology is critical reflection on Christian praxis in the light of the word of God received in the church.’

There are many definitions of culture. But the working definition of culture in this paper is, ‘the sum total of ways of living built up by a group of human beings and transmitted from one generation to another (Newbegin 1989:188). According to Kwame Bediako (1999:8) it is helpful to think of culture in the more open- ended sense of tradition, history, identity and continuity.

On the gospel, Bediako (1999:9) has stated:

The gospel in the true sense of the word, is who Christ is, and what he means, in his person, his life on earth, his work, his death, his resurrection and its aftermath, and how

all that concerns him relates to all human beings, in all cultural traditions, histories and environments.

This is my broad understanding of the term gospel in this paper.

In his book *Theology in a new key: Responding to liberation themes*, R.M Brown (1978:70-71) wrote:

Theology issues out of engagement and this leads to renewed engagement. Praxis describes the circular traffic that is always going on between action and theory. The content of praxis grows out of, responds to, and is conditioned by the situation.

Orlando Costas (1989:7) has defined praxis as hearing and doing God's word, reflecting on God's path and following it. Praxis has to do with putting the word of God into practice, removing it from the realm of theory. Other definitions will be given in the paper as the need arises.

### 1.5 Scope and limitation of study

\* Generally it is thought that political theology is the relationship between Church and State. This study deals with the relationship between Church and State as viewed by Bishop Okullu. This is also not a general study on Christian political theologies but the Christian political theology as articulated by Bishop Okullu in an African context. The study covers the socio-political history of Kenya especially between late 1967 and 1999. These serve as the background to Bishop Okullu's socio-political activities. The study is also limited to the Bishop's works, and aims at showing the relationship between theology and praxis.

\* Sources used in this dissertation are limited to what is available in Kenya. Critical sources like the *Target* Newspapers during the period Okullu was editor are missing from University libraries, the National Archives, Public Libraries and the archives of the National Council of Churches. Sermons are limited only to those supplied by the Okullu family. Okullu's sermons are not available anywhere else. Information on Kenya's socio-political and economic history covering the period 1990-1999 limited to the few books

published covering this period and information in and magazine and Newspaper articles covering the period. The research is also limited by time and financial constraints.

### **1.6 Research and methodology**

The research will involve the use of primary and secondary literary sources as well as oral sources related to the topic.

The primary sources will include, Bishop Okullu's works and his sermons. Secondary literary sources will be; books, newspapers, and magazine articles on the bishop. For instance the Weekly Review Magazine published in Nairobi will be a particularly important source.

The fieldwork will involve interviewing those who knew the Bishop well or interacted with him on key political issues. These include clergymen, those who worked with him and close family members. In order to assess and evaluate Bishop Okullu's legacy I will also interview a younger generation of clergymen who did not work with him, students from a few theological seminaries and public university. The research instruments and techniques that will be used are formally structured interviews with some open-ended questions.

### **1.7 Literature review**

Not much work has been done on the Christian political theology of Bishop Okullu. Professor G.E.M Ogotu in a paper entitled '*Okullu, Caesarism and the Quest for Justice*' (2000) traces the conflict of church and state relationship during the colonial era and after independence. He locates Okullu's stance against this backdrop. Since there was little difference in the policy and practice of the church and state both before and after independence, some saw the need for the church to play a new role. This new role was to critique the state. This role was made difficult because of the ethnic and denominational differences. He saw Bishop Okullu as playing a prophetic role even though his theology on the Church was ambiguous.

Although the paper gives a good background on the development of church and state relations against which Okullu operated, it does not deal with the socio-political issues prevailing at the time. Neither does it give an in depth analysis of Bishop Okullu's Christian political theology.

Mary Crouch in the book *A Vision of Christian Reflections on the Great Commission in Kenya 1943-1993* (1993) gives a three page profile on Bishop Okullu. The profile gives a brief overview of Bishop Okullu's life and traces the development of his social conscience. This includes his writings on social issues in the *New Day* and *Target* Newspapers in Uganda and Kenya respectively. On becoming a Provost in 1973 and later on a Bishop, he continued to be vocal on issues of justice and public accountability. The profile is limited in scope and deals with one aspect of Bishop Okullu's life. It leaves out crucial elements of his life such as his Christian political theology and the factors that shaped his life.

In his article '*Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's: The politics of Church-State conflict in Kenya 1978-1990*' in Hansen B H & Twaddle M (eds) 1995, David Throup traces the growing political role of main protestant denominations and the Catholic Church in Kenya since President Moi came to power in 1978. He points out the fact that throughout the Kenyatta era and during the first years of President Moi's reign relations between church and state were fairly cordial. However Okullu 'criticized the government on several occasions castigating the pervasive materialistic ethos and growing social inequality of Kenya's society'. One of the occasions he highlights is the editorial Okullu wrote in *Target* Newspaper leading the campaign against oathing among the Kikuyu after the assassination of Tom Mboya. He further noted that by 1985 KANU (Kenya African National Union) became the most important institution in the state. After Moi dismantled Kikuyu hegemony, he took on the trappings of a dictator. It is against this background that Okullu together with Alexander Muge, David Gitari, and Timothy Njoya became the four church leaders identified as critics of the state. They were opposed to the queue polling method. Okullu questioned the future of one-party state. He

argued for multi-pluralism. He condemned the state's cowardly action in detaining without trial advocates of multi-party democracy. This article is limited in that it does not give the full picture of Okullu's career.

G.P Benson in his article, '*Ideological Politics Versus Biblical Hermeneutics: Kenya Protestant Churches and the Nyayo State*' also in Hansen H B & Twaddle M (eds)1995 agrees with others that apart from the Roman Catholic Church, the churches in Kenya have historically possessed a limited theology of secular power. This, Benson argues, misses out the significant fact that the churches in Kenya have possessed a well developed biblical hermeneutic. He identifies some church leaders who have attempted to lay their own foundations for a theology of power. These include Okullu, Timothy Njoya and David Gitari. Okullu's criterion is justice. This justice is not limited to retribution for wrongs or holding the ring of society. It entails actively promoting righteousness and human wellbeing. Part of God's plan is that there should be both church and state sharing a common call to justice but institutionally independent of one another. Tribes and other lesser units of society should be valued as building blocks of national unity. He concludes that the Church's engagement with the *Nyayo* State was essentially reactive offering a practical critique of *Nyayoism*. Its principal agenda is essentially evangelistic, pastoral and developmental.

In their book, *Multi-Party Politics in Kenya*, David Throup and Charles Hornsby, drew attention to Okullu's key role in the process of development of multi-party democracy in Kenya. Bishop Okullu was one of the outspoken clergymen who met with and advised Kenneth Matiba and his colleagues on the Matiba-Rubia campaign for political reforms in 1990. This in turn led to a mass movement for multi-party democracy. These incidents demonstrate that Bishop Okullu's socio-political involvement formed an important part in the construction of his theology.

For many years several newspapers and magazines reported on Bishop Okullu's utterances and political involvement. The Bishop featured prominently in the *Weekly*

*Review Magazine* from 1975-1998 when the issues stopped being produced. Okullu also appeared in the *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, *The East African* and *Target* Newspapers.

X Of Okullu's writings the following are the most significant for this dissertation; *Church and Politics in East Africa* (1974) Nairobi: Uzima Press; *Church and State in Nation Building and Human Development* (1984) Nairobi: Uzima Press; *Quest for Justice: An Autobiography of Bishop Henry Okullu* (1997) Kisumu: Shalom Press.

The basis of Bishop Okullu's book, *Church and Politics in East Africa* (1974) is the conviction of the integral wholistic nature of salvation. Okullu seeks to show reasons for Christian involvement and attitudes towards various issues.

In the book, *Church and State in Nation building and Human Development* (1984), Okullu defines the biblical basis for the church's interference in politics as a quest for justice that is a biblical mandate. He discusses the issue of justice in society and the implications of justice in nation building.

The book *Quest for Justice: An Autobiography of Bishop Henry Okullu*(1997a), focuses on the life and times of Bishop Okullu and his fight for justice throughout his life. The book gives insights into what factors shaped Okullu.

This study therefore is an attempt to provide an in-depth investigation of a chapter in the socio-political history of post independent Kenya, with particular focus on Bishop Okullu, whose life and career encapsulates the struggles of his time.

## **OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS**

Chapter 1: serves as an introduction to the research; its rationale, objectives, significance and literary review. Chapter 2 recreates the socio-political and economic conditions, which necessitated and gave, rise to Okullu's prophetic ministry. Chapter 3 traces the

spiritual and social factors that shaped Okullu to become the prophetic figure that he was. Chapter 4 gives highlights of Okullu's prophetic ministry as recorded in the print media. Chapter 5 discusses Okullu's Christian political theology and finally, Chapter 6 evaluates and assesses Okullu's legacy.

## CHAPTER 2

### SOCIO-POLITICAL HISTORY OF INDEPENDENT KENYA 1963-1999

#### 2.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to reconstruct the socio-political and economic conditions, which gave birth to and necessitated Okullu's prophetic ministry. Kenya's colonial legacy, the socio-political and economic conditions prevailing in the Kenyatta and Moi era (Kenya's first and second President) are explored briefly.

#### 2.1 Colonial legacy

Gertzel (1970:1) observed that, 'the manner in which Kenya has tackled the problems of independence and set out to create a new political order has to a considerable degree, been dictated by circumstances and institutions from the past'.

It is generally accepted that independent Kenya did not affect a major ideological or structural break with the colonial state and all that she did was to expand on the former colonial administration and economic structures. This led to Kenya being labeled a neo-colonial state in economic, political and cultural fields (Ochieng & Odhiambo 1995:viii).

Due to the western and capitalistic orientation of Kenyatta and his regime, Kenya's colonial heritage-laws, parliament, civil service, police, army, education and provincial administration remained largely unchanged, unsympathetic and estranged from popular vote (Ochieng 1995:104). This problem was exacerbated by Kenya's heavy reliance on capitalistic countries for skilled manpower, development, technical grants and trade (Ochieng 1995:106). Maloba (1995:21) has pointed out that adherence to the colonial model of administration leads to authoritarian rule, impatient with opposition or restraints of power. At the same time maintenance of colonial economic institutions tends to

reinforce exploitation of the country by foreign or even local companies and does not provide a viable model for national economic development. It is this adherence to the colonial administrative and economic structure by both the Moi and Kenyatta government resulting in authoritarianism, which gave rise to Okullu's prophetic ministry.

In theory Kenya inherited what in form was essentially a fragmented political structure based on the so-called '*Majimbo* Constitution' (Oyugi 1994:154) or federal constitution. This constitution was too complicated and unworkable, as many of the functions had been transferred to the regions without proper planning. This resulted in confusion in many departments (Odinga 1967:240). Kenya had for seventy years been used to a strong center and a powerful bureaucracy had developed to give meaning to its operations (Oyugi 1994:157). It is therefore not surprising that the Kenyatta government's first priority was to establish its dominance, with its own political framework, destroying the new system and returning to a unitary system as in the colonial era. Most of the discussions revolved around constitutionality, administration, division of powers, civil rights and obligations (Goldsworthy 1982:220). Kenyatta was also intent on establishing a government of national unity. In November 1964 the Constitution Amendment Bill dismantling the *Majimbo* Constitution was passed in both houses (Kyle 1999:199). In December 1964 Kenya became a republic under an executive President (Oyugi 1994:54).

Morton (1998:139) observed that just as a unitary government triumphed over regional rule, so the executive and administration, effectively an alliance between senior ministers and civil servants, became more significant than KANU (Kenya African National Union), the ruling party and Parliament.

## **2.2 KENYATTA ERA 1963-1978**

### **2.2.1 Introduction**

Kenya attained internal self-government in June 1963 with Jomo Kenyatta as the Prime Minister. Kenyatta was a symbol of Kenya's independence and nationhood, a leader whom no one could criticise, the founding father of both nationalistic politics and the nation (Throup & Hornsby 1998:11). In his inaugural speech as Prime Minister Kenyatta

launched a new slogan: *Harambee*- 'All pull together'- to link up with *Uhuru*-'Freedom'- which had long been the popular cry (Kyle 1999:179).

Between 1963 and 1978 the ruling national bourgeoisie under Kenyatta effected major constitutional changes that helped them to consolidate political and economic dominance over the state. In the process the ruling party KANU was neglected and by extension participation of the *wananchi* (ordinary people) in the political process (Ochieng 1995:106). At the same time the weakness of KANU was matched by the dilution of the parliamentary authority. The National Assembly was largely irrelevant to the workings of government run from State House with powerful Provincial and District Commissioners, invariably Kikuyu, implementing policy (Morton 1998:138).

Facing a state determined to consolidate its power without any intention of implementing the regional constitution imposed on it, KADU (Kenya African Democratic Union) the sole opposition party dissolved with many of its members of parliament defecting to KANU. The incorporation of KADU into KANU speeded up the process of internal divisions within the governing party (Throup & Hornsby 1998:12).

The first two years of independence were years of political adjustment with the opposition being absorbed into KANU. The 'radical' wing consisting mainly of Oginga Odinga, allied with ex-detainees, Bildad Kaggia, Achieng Oneko and others, differed with the 'conservative' wing of KANU mainly composed of Tom Mboya allied with the Kikuyu inner group: Charles Njonjo, Njoroge Mungai, Mbiyu Koinange, James Gichuru, J.G Kiano and others (Goldsworthy 1982:232). The main contestants were Mboya and Odinga who lobbied for support in the party.

The 'radical' and 'conservative' wings in KANU clashed over a widerange of policy issues, foremost among which were issues of land use, developmental planning and foreign policy (Goldsworthy 1982:232). Radicals called for the 'Africanisation' of the civil service, economy and the publication of the blueprint for economic and social development (Ochieng 1995:95). The radicals accused KANU of betraying the pledges

they had made to the masses before independence (Ochieng 1995:94). The radicals were not prepared to accept without struggle what they saw as the progressive surrender of the interests of the poor peasants to neo-colonial interests (Leys 1975:215).

Through 1964-1965, the land argument gained a new intensity. On the one hand, the elite began to accumulate land and on the other hand, the number of disillusioned persons grew rapidly (Goldsworthy 1982:234).

No one tried more conscientiously than Bildad Kaggia to put the government on the road to a land policy that would be good for Kenya's expanding economy, the interests of the landless and the confidence of the poor people who had elected the *Uhuru* government (Odinga 1967:262).

Apart from advocating free land for the landless, Kaggia also called for free education and free medical facilities for the people. By agitating for the rights of the poor, Kaggia made powerful enemies in Kenyatta's government and was forced to resign in 1964 (Ochieng 1995:95). The land argument went on nonetheless (Goldsworthy 1982:234). The issue of land allocation and usage is one which Okullu would address in his prophetic ministry. He said that nationalization of land was the closest thing to the African ethos of land usage (*Target*, December 1976).

To placate the radicals, Kenyatta instructed Tom Mboya, his Minister of Planning and Economic Development, to formulate the famous Sessional Paper No 10 of 1965 (Ochieng 1995:96). The Kenyatta regime's ideology was embodied in this remarkable policy statement entitled 'African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya,' which was unanimously passed by the National Assembly in May 1965. Kenyatta described it as Kenya's economic 'Bible'. According to Leys (1975:221), it was a pure statement of 'bourgeoisie socialism.'

The Paper sought to do two things: one, to Africanise not nationalise institutions and private property and two, to promote the idea that growth could only be secured through

the inflow of foreign investment (Leys 1975: 222). The principle sources of distilling what Mboya meant by 'African Socialism' include his book *Freedom & After* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1963) published on the eve of independence.

The publication of the Paper sparked off fresh controversy and acrimony that eventually led to the break away of radicals from KANU. Jaramogi Oginga Odinga (1967:285) expressed the following sentiments about it:

In KANU everyone advocates for 'African Socialism' but in the case of most party and government leaders this has become a cloak for the practice of total capitalism. The politicians want to build a capitalistic system but are too embarrassed or dishonest to call it that. The interpretation of independence and African Socialism is that they should move into jobs and privileges previously held by settlers... If Kenya started without an elite class she is rapidly acquiring one.

The blue print clearly had no intention of enacting the inherited colonial and social structures especially their law and order aspects (Ochieng 1995:96). Goldsworthy (1982:257) noted that in the late Sixties Kenya came to be seen as an archetype of dependent, peripheral capitalism where the alliance of foreign capital with local bourgeoisie had profoundly underdevelopment effects. The term 'underdevelopment' was defined at the All African Peoples Conference held in Cairo in 1961 as:

The survival of the colonial system in spite of formal recognition of political independence in emerging countries which become the victims of an indirect and subtle form of domination by political, economic, social, military and technical means

(Leys 1975:6).

Okullu discussed various views of African socialism held by African statesmen in the context of nation building. Some elements of African socialism form the basis of his political theology (1984: 28-49).

### 2.2.2 Formation of KPU

During 1965 Kenyatta resolved at last that the Odinga group must be forced out of the party. After that, all his power and prestige was directed towards making Odinga's position in the government and party untenable (Goldsworthy 1982:232). The party conference in Limuru, March 1960 was the decisive turn of the screw.

At the Limuru Conference, KANU Constitution drafted by Mboya was adopted. One of the most significant changes was the restructuring of the single Vice President post held by Odinga and the creation of eight posts with each Vice President representing the eight provinces. This system ensured that nobody would automatically succeed Kenyatta as party President (Karimi & Ochieng 1980:9). A week later, Odinga resigned from the government taking Kaggia, Oneko and Munyua Waiyaki with him and formed a radical opposition party called Kenya's People's Union (KPU). Thirty members of the two Houses indicated support and were instantly faced with retaliation. New legislation was rushed through to vacate the 31 seats, 21 members of the new opposition including Kaggia and Oneko failed to regain their seats in what was called 'The Little General Election' (Kyle 1999:200).

The KPU constitution defined its objective as the fight for economic independence of the people of Kenya. KPU insisted that KANU's 'African Socialism' was simply a cloak for the practice of tribalism and capitalism (Leys 1975:225). On the crucial land issue the KPU manifesto included the following measures: land should be taken from the remaining Kenyan White Settlers and be given free to the landless, and that no African owned land should be expropriated (Leys 1975:225). Hesitantly the manifesto said that regarding land taken from the Europeans co-operative farming would be 'preferred'. Big land holdings would be reduced in size on the basis that 'we do not want a new class of big landlords (Leys 1975:225).

Joseph Murumbi, a mild mannered veteran of the independence movement (Karimi & Ochieng 1980:115) replaced Odinga as Kenyatta's Vice President. After a few

months Murumbi resigned from this position and from politics because 'he was appalled at the way the Kikuyu elite were voraciously lining their pocket at the expense of the nation' (Morton 1998:128).

Daniel Arap Moi replaced Murumbi as the Vice President. According to Leys (1975:229) the substitution of Moi and the Kalenjin leaders for Odinga and the Luo leaders as the chief allies of Kikuyu leaders implied a bargain; the Kalenjin would not resist Kikuyu movement into the Rift Valley, while the regime would provide the Kalenjin who lacked capital and organisational experience with state assistance for their own efforts to compete in the land purchase market. Moi experienced a serious blow in popularity in his Rift Valley homeland as a result of this. Many Kalenjin believed that Moi had sold out his people in exchange for his new-elevated position (Morton 1998:131).

Moi faced criticism from local MPs particularly J.M. Seroney, William Murgor and John Keen, who felt that he had bent too far to accommodate the Kikuyu (Morton 1998:131). In July 1969 with general elections impending, John Seroney published the 'Nandi Hills Declaration', which claimed that all settler held land in the area was for the Nandi alone. Seroney was prosecuted and convicted (Leys 1975:229). Moi whom Odinga (1967:145) described as 'a giraffe with long neck that saw from afar' weathered these storms.

### **2.2.3 Political assassinations in Kenyatta's era**

The political record of the Kenyatta government was marred by political assassinations, which have never been adequately explained or cleared up. The first was the assassination of Pio Gama Pinto, who though an Asian, was regarded by Odinga (1967:251) to have been 'as African as the truest nationalist.' He played an invaluable role in the struggle for independence. Pinto was gunned down outside his house early in the morning of February 24 1965 (Odinga 1967:251).

Tom Mboya was the next victim. He was shot in broad daylight in a Nairobi street on July 5, 1969. In spite of Mboya's leading role in the removal of Odinga from power and

subsequent harassment of KPU, his killing was seen by the Luo as an attack on the whole Luo people through the murder of 'one of their brilliant sons' (Leys 1975:236). The removal of Jaramogi Oginga Odinga from the fold had left Mboya as a favourite successor to Kenyatta (Karimi & Ochieng 1980:9).

There were huge demonstrations and sporadic rioting in Nairobi and elsewhere. Odinga, the symbol of Luo solidarity, threatened to become not only the undisputed leader of the Luo but of the rest of Kenya as *wananchi* united in protest in what they saw as a Kikuyu orchestrated assassination (Morton 1998:140). The suspicion hardened into certainty with the arrest and ultimate conviction of a Kikuyu assassin Njenga Njoroge. Although he was later charged and hanged, the Luo did not forgive Kenyatta, for they felt the assassin was his agent (Ochieng 1995:102).

Goldsworthy (1982:290) described Mboya as 'a leader of intellectual brilliance, vast experience, fine judgment, great drive, courage and dedication'. His death left a void at the heart of Kenya's political and government system. Goldsworthy at the same time wrote what amounts to an obituary for him, which captures the essence of his political achievements: 'The most brilliant minister, the shrewdest political strategist, the most efficient organiser and administrator, the ablest government spokesman at home and abroad; all destroyed by a single bullet'.

The Kikuyu leadership responded to the hostilities by inaugurating mass oathing programmes among the Kikuyu, Embu, Meru and also part of neighbouring Kamba (Leys 1975:236). The oath takers were forced to swear, 'to keep the presidency in the House of Mumbi' the founder of the Kikuyu tribe (Throup & Hornsby 1998:140). It was Kikuyu tribalism pitched against Luo tribalism (Leys 1975:236). As during the Emergency, Christian Kikuyus who refused to take the oath were savagely beaten (Morton 1998:141). Okullu wrote a hard hitting front page article protesting this in the *Target* September 1969 Newspaper entitled 'Oathing is Killing our Unity' with pictures of the burial ceremony of a Kikuyu Presbyterian official who had declined to take the oath. This editorial took the lead in the fight against oathing. This was one of the first incidents,

which brought Okullu into the public eye. The oathing went on for two months until it was called off in September shortly before parliament was due to assemble (Karimi & Ochieng 1980:13).

In order to placate the Luo and diffuse the growing adulation for Odinga, Kenyatta visited Kisumu in Luo land on what was in effect a campaign tour. The highlight of the visit was to be the opening of a new hospital in Kisumu built by funds from Russia (Morton 1998:141). The sequence of events which took place on that day, resulting in the shooting of the crowds by Kenyatta's bodyguards, wounding and killing some people is not clear. Different authors give different versions of the same story and different statistics on those wounded and killed.

According to Leys (1975:237) 10 people were killed, 70 wounded; Throup & Hornsby (1998:14) at least 100 people died; Ochieng (1995:102) 43 people were shot dead; Morton (1998:141) 18 people were killed and 25 wounded. What is consistent in the different versions of the event is the fact that Kenyatta faced a hostile crowd, which either pelted him or his motorcade with stones. His bodyguards opened fire on the hostile crowds, killing and wounding some.

The government used the Kisumu tragedy as the opportunity to ban KPU. It blamed the party for organising the disturbance: KPU leaders were detained. Odinga himself was not freed until 1971. The 1969 General Elections were thus a walkover for KANU (Karimi & Ochieng 1980:15) The major consequence of all this was that mainstream Luo politics was driven underground into the arms of militant revolutionaries (Morton 1998:141). Relations between the Luo and Kikuyu since then have been characterized by mutual distrust.

Leys (1975:238) observed that from 1966 onwards a marked shift towards reliance on coercion and the suppression of dissent had been accompanied by a steady enlargement of Kikuyu share in the means of control. Kenyatta increasingly relied on provincial administration; the police and Kikuyu dominated the army. The cabinet became

insignificant in running the affairs of the state. The real power lay in Kenyatta's court at his country home in Gatundu. Kenyatta's inner circle consisted of Mbiyu Koinange, Njoroge Muigai and Charles Njonjo, all Kikuyu's from Kiambu District (Ochieng 1995:102).

The banning of KPU did not eliminate radicalism in Kenya. The radicals now launched their activity from KANU backbenches in Parliament led by the populist Nyandarua MP, Josiah Mwangi popularly known as J.M Kariuki and the University (Ochieng 1995:103). He was the Assistant Minister for Tourism and Wildlife (Kyle 1999:201).

J.M Kariuki's popularity throughout the country was undeniable due to the manner in which he dished out personal funds for *Harambee* (self-help) projects in all corners of the nation (Karimi & Ochieng 1980:97). Both in Parliament and on public platforms J.M Kariuki championed people's rights to free medical services, education and land (Ochieng 1995:103). He spoke out against corruption as well as advocating for radical wealth and land redistribution (Morton 1998:149). The following statements are attributed to him,

A few powerful groups of greedy, self-seeking elite in the form of politicians, civil servants and business people have steadily but surely monopolized the fruits of independence to the exclusion of the majority of people. We do not want a Kenya of 10 millionaires and 100 million beggars (Ochieng 1995:103).

Throup & Hornsby (1998:19) pointed out that whereas Oginga Odinga and senior cabinet minister Tom Mboya had challenged the authority of the state outside its Kikuyu stronghold, Kariuki spoke from within the Kikuyu community on behalf of the have-nots who had gained little from independence. Peasants, students and nationalists like J. Seroney, Martin Shikuku and George Anyona, staunchly supported him (Ochieng 1995:103).

In 1975 J.M Kariuki vanished and after a few days of confusion and contradictory reports his body was discovered in Ngong Hills, South West of Nairobi. He had been badly

beaten and shot. This discovery created tremendous furore, provoking open attacks on the state apparatus from Kariuki's supporters and colleagues (Throup & Hornsby 1998:19). J.M Kariuki's murder and the protests it provoked brought about a dramatic change in the regime's treatment of its critics. The media, academics and dissident backbenchers suddenly found they had less room to manoeuvre as the regime clamped down on all forms of criticism (Throup & Hornsby 1998:20).

Accusing fingers firmly pointed in the direction of the Kiambu clique and GEMA (Gikuyu Embu Meru Association) leaders as suspects in the Kariuki murder (Morton 1998:149). The Parliamentary Select Committee Report incriminated senior members of the regime including Mbiyu Koinange the Presidents' brother in law and the GSU (General Service Unit) Commander Ben Gethii (Throup & Hornsby 1998:20). The aftermath of the Kariuki murder was the last time Kenyatta actively entered the political arena. From 1976, the regime began to drift as rival factions contended for power. Kenyatta now in his late eighties was deteriorating in health and no longer controlled his government colleagues with the same effectiveness (Throup & Hornsby 1998:20).

In the period leading to 1977 a number of radical politicians and academicians including George Anyona, Martin Shikuku, Seroney, Ngungi wa Thiongo, Chelagat Mutai and Mark Mwithaga were imprisoned for minor criminal charges or detained without trial (Ochieng 1995:104). The judicious combination of rewards and intimidation broke up the backbench coalition (Throup & Hornsby 1998:20).

Okullu (1997:53) constantly challenged detention without trial, authoritarianism, corruption in employment or educational opportunities, land grabbing and tribalism during Kenyatta's regime. See my chapter 4 for more details on Okullu's social political activity.

#### 2.2.4 Kenyatta succession

According to Ogot (1995:187) since independence the country has produced several leaders who could be considered as potential contenders for succession. Oginga Odinga, Tom Mboya and Ronald Ngala. None of these three however was fated to succeed. Odinga went into the political wilderness when he resigned from KANU to form his party KPU, which was later banned. Tom Mboya was assassinated on July 5 1969, and four years later Ronald Ngala former President of KADU died in a road accident. This left Daniel Arap Moi who became Kenya's third Vice President in 1967, Mbiyu Koinange, Njoroge Muigai, Mwai Kibaki as possible contenders.

When Kenyatta died on 22 August 1978, Moi succeeded him with the overwhelming support of the people of Kenya. Prior to the succession Moi faced considerable opposition from powerful Kikuyu ethnic interests (Ogot 1995:188). Moi's enemies employed three methods against him: constitutional, political and military (Morton 1998:144).

The 'Change the Constitution Group' was launched in Nakuru on September 1976 led by Kihika Kimani Nakuru North MP, Dr. Njoroge Mungai and leaders of GEMA (Ogot 1995:188) whose initial aims of unity and welfare were channeled into stopping the political leadership from leaving Central Province (Morton 1998:146). The group wanted to change the constitution to prevent Moi from succeeding Kenyatta. As Kenya's constitution stands, if the President dies in office, the Vice President takes over the post for 90 days until the new President is elected. Morton (1998:155) observed that this lengthy period gives the President in waiting ample time to consolidate his position and nullify any opposition – hence the argument for change. The change proposed by the group was that the Speaker of the National Assembly should be the interim President until elections were held to appoint a new President. They proposed Dr. Njoroge Mungai for the post (Morton 1998:155).

The attempt to shut out Moi failed because of Kenyatta's opposition to the way in which partisan pressure was being put on him and the parliament to amend the constitution (Ogot 1995:189). It also failed partly because of the vocal opposition of 98 MPs who condemned the move as 'unethical, immoral, bordering on criminality and very un-African' (Morton 1998:157) and the extremely legalistic posture adopted by Charles Njonjo the Attorney General (Ogot 1995:189). Quoting directly from the constitution, Njonjo reminded the group that, 'it is criminal to encompass, imagine, devise or intend the death or deposition of the President' (Morton 1998:158). He further stated that the constitution would not be amended. This brought the matter to a close.

KANU party elections play a crucial role in the choice of the president of Kenya. Early in 1977 it was announced that KANU national elections would be held on April 3, 1977 (Ogot 1995:189). While Moi was the Vice President of the party, under the new rule, the election would produce only one KANU Vice President (Morton 1998:158).

It soon became clear that there were two factions within the Party, 'KANU A' which supported the candidacy of Njoroge Muigai and 'KANU B' which supported Moi. But when it became evident that the Moi group was likely to win the elections, the elections were called off on April 1, 1977 until after Kenyatta's death (Ogot 1995:189).

When it gradually became apparent that Moi would succeed Kenyatta an armed gang of would-be assassins, the *Ngoroko's* based in Nakuru was organized to prevent such an eventuality. It was created as part of the Stock Theft Unit, which had been organized within the Kenya Police Force to fight cattle rustlers in Northern Kenya (Ogot 1995:189). The unit consisting of two hundred and fifty assassins was funded by government as well as highly placed Kikuyu, most notably Mbiyu Koinange (Morton 1998:160). James Muigai the Assistant Police Commissioner and the *Ngoroko* had plotted to assassinate Moi and other high-ranking civil servants (Morton 1998:162).

On the fateful day of Kenyatta's death, 22 August 1978, Moi the number one target reached Nairobi from his Kabarak home near Nakuru, before the *Ngoroko* could set up a

road block (Ogot 1995:190). On the next day he was formally installed as the second President of the Republic of Kenya. There was a profound sense of relief that the transition had been effected so peacefully, as well as optimism that the repression and corruption which had tarnished the last years of Kenyatta's reign were over (Morton 1998:168).

Ogot (1995:191) has suggested two reasons for the smooth and peaceful ascendancy of Moi to power. One was that his would-be political enemies underestimated him. They believed that he was not ambitious. They therefore referred to him as 'a passing cloud'. Secondly, despite their strong presence in the important fields, the Kikuyu were fragmented into various camps that were hostile to one another. Moi effectively exploited these deep-seated divisions.

### **2.2.5 Socio-economic changes**

During the last years of Kenyatta's rule in the mid 1970's, Kenya's economy enjoyed a period of unprecedented economic prosperity as the international prices of Kenyan tea and coffee soared, following the destruction of the Brazilian coffee harvest (Throup & Hornsby 1998:19).

The government undertook massive expansion of education and health facilities and Africanisation in both public and health sectors (Maxon 1995:110). The period of prosperity enabled the regime to weather the storm of J.M Kariuki's murder (Throup & Hornsby 1998:19). However within a few months of Kariuki's death, according to Morton (1998: 152), the country teetered on the brink of economic and political anarchy. Land grabbing became the norm, police-sponsored robbery was endemic, while ivory and coffee smuggling reached epic proportions.

Since the 1960's Kenyatta was able to reward the educated Africans with employment, parastatal sinecures, government loans and, most important of all, land. However this patronage system was rapidly undermined by the rapid increase in population.

## 2.3 MOI ERA (1978-1999)

### 2.3.0 Introduction

President Moi on ascending to power was faced with combined public and political apprehension and with the task of diffusing opposition. According to Ogot (1995:192) a large section of the public was apprehensive about the tremendous increase in smuggling and corruption, activities known as *magendo* which marked Kenya's public life. Those who had enriched themselves at the expense of the public were afraid of reprisals.

At the same time, Moi, a Kalenjin, had inherited a predominantly Kikuyu establishment. They dominated business, commerce, the civil service, the armed forces, many of the professions and politics (Throup & Hornsby 1998:26). Further to this, Moi lacked Kenyatta's political prestige and the legitimacy he had gained as 'the father of independence.'

In Ogot's view (1995:192) the challenge before Moi's government also raised fundamental questions about how a one-party government that rules over a fragmented clientelist society can apply corrective policies to redistribute power and resources away from those who have previously most enjoyed them and towards the least favoured by the regime, with the consent of the majority.

Moi's first task was to establish his position with the assistance of Kikuyu advisors, Charles Njonjo and Mwai Kibaki who had controlled legal and financial affairs respectively during the Kenyatta government. Throup & Hornsby (1998:27) noted that although the new president's room to manoeuvre was limited, this changed as he became more entrenched, establishing his own political network.

In a series of shrewd moves, within one year Moi had succeeded in neutralizing his opponents. He practiced a policy of reconciliation and forgiveness instead of pitching

open battles with his opponents (Ogot 1995:193). Moi forgave the 'Change the Constitution' group. He urged the public to forget the *Ngoroko* affair. James Mungai the former head of *Ngoroko* who had fled the country in November 1978, was allowed to return to the country without prosecution. On *Jamhuri* (Independence) day December 1978, Moi released all political detainees.

Moi instead of making a significant break from the Kenyatta regime, adopted the '*nyayo* philosophy.' '*Nyayo*' is a Kiswahili word meaning 'footsteps'. He would follow in the footsteps of his predecessor. There would be social, economic and political reforms without discontinuity. Continuity also extended to the retention of the Kenyatta cabinet for a year, neither dropping nor adding a minister. Moi preferred to wait for the 1979 elections to make more comprehensive changes in the government. *Nyayo* thus became a national motto, symbolizing continuity, love, peace and stability (Ogot 1995:193).

True to its operative philosophy, the *nyayo* regime inherited intact the infrastructure of the state power. Oyugi (1994:174) noted that 'whatever changes one finds are in style rather than substance'. These include the provincial administration, which is the power base of the executive. As Moi consolidated his power, *nyayoism* expanded to acquire ideological functions. It gradually became a blanket ideology under which various ideologies were encompassed. Ogot (1995:193) lists these as constitutional democracy, African socialism, Christian and Islamic morality, nationalism, patriotism, anti-tribalism and other positive ideas.

Eventually anyone who acted contrary to *nyayo* philosophy was perceived as being anti-government. This marked further entrenchment of political monolithism. The ideology in its expanded form came under attack by voices of dissent most of which preached what the government regarded as 'foreign ideology'. According to Ogot (1995:194-195) Moi had to constantly address the problem of foreign ideology or dissent between 1978-1988.

Within the first few years of his rule, Moi made himself accessible to the *wananchi*-Kenya public. He set about touring the whole country, meeting ordinary Kenyans,

condemning corruption and inefficiency. Moi's populism soon revealed itself in his concern for the common man, which soon emerged as a central point to his rule (Ogot 1995:193). One major drawback highlighted by Morton (1998:169) accruing from all this was what Morton calls 'policy making on the hoof.' Moi's populist rhetoric could not be made to match reality. More often than not the result would be a 'series of half baked compromises or benign neglect as administrators quietly shelved presidential directives, once the President moved to new pastures.'

### 2.3.1 1979 General elections

The November 8, 1979 National Elections, which were peaceful and hotly contested gave Moi a sweeping mandate. Throup & Hornsby (1998:28) hold the view that the elections revealed the authoritarian tendencies which the President had managed to conceal during the eleven years he was Kenyatta's Vice-President. Moi campaigned for a slate of candidates around the country, donating huge sums of money in their *harambees* (fund raising drives) to support various development projects (Morton 1998:174). Most of them triumphed. However the Moi regime refused to clear former KPU leader Oginga Odinga and Achieng Oneko to contest the election on KANU ticket (Throup & Hornsby 1998:28).

Almost half the incumbents lost their seats including Mbiyu Koinange, Jackson Angaine and Kihika Kimani, all members of 'Change the Constitution' movement group (Morton 1998:174). The results of the elections enabled Moi to consolidate his authority. After the elections, Moi brought his supporters into key positions. These included Nicholas Biwott his former personal assistant, G.G Kariuki, a former Kikuyu Assistant Minister who had backed Moi for succession, Henry Kosgey and Jonathan Arap Ng'eno were appointed ministers. Shariff Nassir and Stanley Oloiptip, his most stalwart supporters, were appointed to front bench posts (Morton 1998:174). Their appointment carried the message that co-operation with the new regime would be rewarded.

Moi formed a new enlarged cabinet from a broad base, bringing new blood to serve the nation, in a bid to promote national unity and reconciliation (Ogot 1995:193). Unlike Kenyatta, Moi preferred to co-opt potential dissidents either into his government or into parastatals, hence the appointment of moderate Luo Politicians like Robert Ouko and Mathews Ogotu into the cabinet and Oginga Odinga as the Chairman of Cotton Lint and Marketing Board (Morton 1998:174).

Morton (1998:174) further noted that whereas Kenyatta had enjoyed the support of the Kikuyu by right, Moi had never had the luxury of support from the influential tribe. As a result, the establishment of a tribal consensus became central to Moi's political calculations. In an attempt to embrace all tribes, virtually every district was represented by an Assistant Minister in the new government.

After the elections, in July 1980, President Moi convened the Third Leaders Conference since independence. During the conference the leaders resolved to dissolve all ethnic organizations to promote national unity. These included Gema, Luo Union (East Africa), The New Akamba Union (NAU), the Abaluhya Association, the Kalenjin and Mijikenda Association (Ogot 1995:195). The stability of the Moi regime was however increasingly threatened by growing opposition, stigmatized as dissidence from intellectuals based mainly at the University of Nairobi and political activists such as Oginga Odinga, Masinde Muliro, George Anyona, Marin Shikuku and Koigi wa Wamwere (Ogot 1995:197). The problem was that Kenya lacked mechanisms, which could permit open criticism.

According to Throup & Hornsby (1998:30) the period 1980-1982 was dominated by increased open factional conflict within the new ruling team as Charles Njonjo (then Minister for Constitutional Affairs) quietly challenged Mwai Kibaki the Vice-President and Minister of Finance for the Vice Presidency. These growing tensions between the two 'in' Kikuyu teams, with the third group (Kenyatta era leaders) on the sidelines, enabled Moi to make effective use of divide and rule tactics to enhance his authority. As the two prominent Kikuyu politicians skirmished, Moi begun cautiously to recruit new

allies. These included Elijah Mwangale from Bungoma and Moses Mudavadi, both from the Abaluhya ethnic group. The President also promoted non-Kikuyu technocrats in the civil service and solidified his base in the Rift Valley.

In February 1982 Moi felt strong enough to move against his former Kikuyu patrons. In a key reshuffle Kibaki was demoted from the powerful Ministry of Finance to that of Home Affairs. At the same time G.G Kariuki, a close ally of Njonjo, was removed as Minister of State in the Office of the President in charge of Internal Security (Throup & Hornby 1998:32).

1982 was also the year in which the constitution was amended inserting section 2(A), making Kenya a *de-jure* one-party state. Oginga Odinga and George Anyona sought to establish another opposition party, the Kenya Socialist Alliance (Oyugi 1994:183). Odinga and Anyona attempted to take advantage of the fact that Kenya, since the banning of KPU in 1969 had simply been *de-facto* rather than a *de-jure* one-party state. Needless to say, the Registrar of Societies refused to register the party and shortly afterwards, legislation was drafted by Njonjo and his legal advisor Paul Muite and was rushed through Parliament by the Vice President Kibaki, to make Kenya a *de-jure* one party state (Throup & Hornsby 1998:31).

Throughout the 1980's various groups opposed the one-party rule using various strategies (Oyugi 1994:183). Church leaders including Okullu, the Law Society of Kenya and various critics, both local, and foreign, participated actively in this debate of the church. The critics contended that 'unity needed for national reconstruction, called for a new kind of politics, based on open discussion, consultation and consensus' which the single party by its nature could not stimulate (Ogot 1995:210). For twenty years Moi and KANU staunchly defended the one party system as quintessentially African (Throup & Hornsby 1998:2).

Okullu called for change in the Constitution of Kenya to do away with the single party monopoly. He also suggested a two- month limit to the tenure of any future president. He

contended that for almost three decades, the one party system had failed to give Kenyans complete freedom to choose leaders of their own choice, make them accountable or remove them from office if they failed in their duties (*Weekly Review*, April 27, 1990)

### **2.3.2. August 1, 1982 coup attempt and its aftermath**

On August 1, 1982 rank and file members of Kenya Air Force (KAF) at GADU (Ground Air Defence Unit) base in Embakasi in Nairobi staged an unsuccessful coup *d'état*. This was arguably the most traumatic event in the life of independent Kenya. This was the second coup plot by the same group, which regrouped after the first plot was unearthed. The implicated soldiers including the mastermind were arrested and imprisoned after court martial (*East African* July 29-August 4, 2002).

James Wuore Dianga (*Nation* July 29, 2002) the mastermind, stated the following reasons for the coup attempt.

Our desire to overthrow President Daniel Arap Moi and KANU regime was motivated by the fact that Kenyans, (we included) had lost faith in his one-party regime. We considered those in the government corrupt, incompetent and ignorant of their responsibilities as leaders of a country.

The government had a bad human rights record. It had denied Kenyans freedom of speech, the freedom to associate with each other freely as people of one society. It did not tolerate criticism. Those who had criticized the government ended up in detention.

Left without any alternative to bring about any change, since KANU had decided to make Kenya a *de-facto* one party state, we in the military would step in to restore the sovereignty of both the Kenyan state and the individual citizen.

In the court martial which followed the mutiny, Senior Private Hezekiah Ochuka and Pancras Oteyo Okumu together with eight others predominantly Luo were named as ringleaders. The eight like Ochuka and Okumu were found guilty of high treason and

hanged between 1984 and 1985. They are buried at Kamiti Maximum Prison on the outskirts of Nairobi (*Nation* July 29, 2002).

During the Court martials the name of Oginga Odinga was frequently mentioned as either having given cash or his blessing to the plotters. It later emerged that Odinga's son Raila who became the longest serving detainee in Kenya was linked to the coup leader, Senior Private Ochuka. Consequently Oginga Odinga was placed under house arrest, while his son Raila together with a number of Luo civilians, including several University lecturers ended in court on charges of treason and were detained (Morton 1998: 192).

Throup & Hornsby (1998:31) observed that though there were two if not three coups in preparation by different military and political groups with different aims and objectives, the most serious seems to have involved senior Kikuyu politicians and officers in the army and police. Rumours abounded in Nairobi before the Air force coup attempt of the plot by Kikuyu officers to overthrow the President while he was attending an OAU Summit in Tripoli over the second weekend of August.

Although the army put down the coup, the delayed response by the army revealed the high command's lack of loyalty to the President (Throup & Hornsby 1998:32). This fact is corroborated by the former Chief of General Staff, retired General Mulinge who was quoted as saying: 'Although Major General Kariuki (KAF) Commander was aware of the intention of some junior officers to stage unrest, he allowed the coup plot to go ahead and I blame him for dragging his feet over a sensitive matter affecting the country's security' (*Nation* July 31, 2002). A court martial ruled that Kariuki had been negligent and was sentenced to four years in jail (*Nation* August 1, 2002).

A security source revealed that the fact that Ben Gethi the Police Commissioner, got to the President before the Director of Intelligence did and the fact that the GSU (General Service Unit) suffered no major casualties that day made the President suspicious that Gethi may have been involved with the coup plotters. This led to his summary dismissal, a few weeks after the coup attempt (*Nation* August 1, 2002).

Severely shaken Moi made major changes in the country's internal security. The KAF was disbanded and radically reorganized, a number of high ranking officers dismissed or demoted, five provincial officers were weeded out, Special Branch and uniformed police revamped (Morton 1998:195). In the two years following the coup attempt, Moi systematically moved against the remaining senior Kikuyu in the officer corp, in the army, police and GSU. He replaced them with the Kalenjin. The purge of the Kikuyu members of the officer corps continued throughout the 1980's systematically reducing the threat of a coup attempt from their ranks. The most sophisticated sections of the armed forces including the armoured brigades were placed under pro-Moi forces (Throup & Hornsby 1998: 32).

Politically and personally Moi learnt a number of hard lessons from the coup attempt. He became unwilling to trust his remaining Kikuyu advisors especially Njonjo whose loyalty he questioned (Throup & Hornsby 1998:31). Eventually he got rid of all of them. Progressively he surrounded himself with figures mostly drawn from North Rift Valley, whom he could better trust to occupy all-important levers of the state. The coup attempt created a President who valued unstinted loyalty over competence and qualifications and thus spawned the conditions that would lead to steady deterioration of institutions and the economy (*Nation* August 1, 2002).

Politically the days of easy-going camaraderie and collective decision-making were gone; a necessary distance was built between the President and those who sought to control his thoughts and actions (Morton 1998:195). Consequently the period following the attempted coup up to 1988 was characterized by the concentration of power in the executive, the over-bureaucratization of life and the marginalisation of the civil society (Ogot 1995:201).

According to Macharia Gaitho (*Nation* August 1, 2002), the coup also made President Moi realize just how vulnerable he could be. It could, indirectly have influenced him to conclude that his security as President lay not just in controlling the political security

levers, but also in having access to unlimited financial resources to better grease his way through. Thus the abortive coup marked the beginning of the degeneration of the nation of Kenya: unbridled corruption, the placing of loyalty over competence and professionalism, the running down of institutions, nepotism and tribalism within the entire public service.

### **2.3.3. The traitor affair**

Hardly had Kenya recovered from the shock of the coup attempt, than the country was faced with the traitor affair (Ogot 1995:200). Moi began to isolate the former Attorney General (Throup & Hornsby 1998:33). At a public rally in Kisii in May 1983, Moi revealed that a powerful politician in his cabinet was plotting to overthrow his government, with the assistance of some foreign governments. The traitor was soon identified as Charles Mugane Njonjo (Ogot 1995:200).

Charles Njonjo was at that time the most feared minister in Kenya. He had, for over a long period, as Kenya's Attorney General established elaborate machinery involving the police, senior civil servants and the judiciary, which provided him with a formidable power base (Ogot 1995:201). However Njonjo's ambition and arrogance during his 17 years as the government's chief law officer had alienated many (Throup & Hornsby 1998:33).

A judicial Commission of Inquiry, consisting of three judges was appointed in July 1983 to inquire into the allegations made outside and within parliament involving Njonjo. The Miller Commission found out that all the allegations against Njonjo except the crucial one of treason had been proved. President Moi himself announced the findings of the Commission on December 12, 1984. During the speech, the President announced his pardon of Njonjo, giving Njonjo's age and past service to the government as reasons for the clemency (Ogot 1995:201). Following Njonjo's downfall, Moi took the opportunity to purge KANU and the government of his close associates.

The President called a snap general election in 1983. Most of Njonjo's associates including G.G Kariuki, Joseph Kamotho former Minister for Higher Education were removed through these elections (Ogot 1995:201). However not all Njonjo allies were defeated. Charles Rubia, Stanley Oloitiptip and Arthur Magugu were re-elected (Throup & Hornsby 1998:202). The government retired all civil servants and police who owed their positions to Njonjo by the end of 1984 (Morton 1998:202). The destruction of Njonjo's power base and his subsequent removal from the center of Kenyan politics, left President Moi unchallenged (Ogot 1995:201). It ushered in a more authoritarian era in Kenyan politics.

### **2.3.4 KANU under Moi**

Unchallenged the President turned his attention towards the control of basic institutions such as the party, the university, the public service, the judiciary and parliament and less towards political rivals (Ogot 1995:201). Morton (1998:217) identifies one of the political hallmarks of Moi rule as his rejuvenation and expansion of the ruling party KANU throughout the 1980's. Through massive recruitment drives the president transformed the moribund party of Kenyatta era into a formidable political force. However this success, which transformed KANU into a mass party engendered widespread fears and opposition, which resulted in a determined campaign for multi-partyism in 1989 (Ogot 1995:208).

The party provided the means through which the government controlled public debate, monitored public sentiment and suppressed the opposition (Throup & Hornsby 1998:37). By the end of the first nyayo decade, KANU had become the supreme political body in the country (Ogot 1995:208). Close associates of Moi held key positions in KANU's National Executive after the 1985 KANU elections (Throup& Hornsby 1998:38).

The KANU National Seminar held from December 2-4 1985 at Kenya Institute of Administration (KIA), made a number of far reaching recommendations aimed at strengthening and streamlining the party. One of the major changes was the establishment

of the KANU Disciplinary Committee. The second was the introduction of the controversial queuing system of voting in preliminary elections as part of the election procedures (Ogot 1995:206-207).

Soon it became the vogue for politicians to call for the suspension of their opponents, a practice, which brought KANU into collision with Parliament as suspension from KANU automatically meant suspension from the National Assembly (Morton 1998:218). Questioned whether the party or parliament was supreme, David Okiki Amayo the Chairman of the Committee said: 'political supremacy rests with the party while legislative supremacy lies with Parliament' (Ogot 1995:207). An Assistant Minister of Lands and Settlement, Mr. Sharif Nassir asserted that the party was supreme (*Weekly Review* August 30, 1991). The party relegated Members of Parliament and by extension Parliament to subordinated positions. At the same time power became increasingly centred on Moi. Policy differences, largely ceased to matter, the only criterion for political survival became absolute loyalty to the president (Throup & Hornsby 1998:39).

After 21 months Moi dissolved the Disciplinary Committee. Oyugi (1994:179) contends that the problems of the committee began precisely because unlike other party organs, its activities were beginning to receive as much attention as those of the state organs themselves.

KANU's second major reform was the introduction of queuing system of voting. In February – March 1988 General Elections voting by queuing was used as a nomination procedure followed by secret ballot-polls (Ogot 1995:207). This system of voting, which had previously been used in KANU elections of 1985, required party members to line behind the candidate or his or her representative of their choice. The system was viewed as transparent, cost effective and a practical alternative to the ballot paper which was prone to rigging (Morton 1998:218). There was however one aspect of the new nomination procedure which caused much controversy. This was the ruling that those who obtained 70% and above of the votes cast at the queue nomination were declared elected unopposed (Ogot 1995:207).

KANU's plan to employ this system of voting in local and parliamentary elections in 1988 met with widespread opposition particularly from the church and the legal profession. Okullu was one of the church leaders involved in this. The queue debate, which had started in 1986, reached a climax in 1988 when it developed into a nationwide debate. The debate continued unabated until 1991 when it was abolished (Ogot 1995:208).

The critics of the queuing system argued that the system was divisive in the sense that several categories of Kenyan citizens could not participate in the lining up nomination exercise, for fear of being publicly identified with a particular aspirant. They argued that the 70% rule meant that a non-KANU member who was a registered voter could not exercise his or her right under section 32 of the constitution to vote in his or her constituency (Ogot 1995:207). In his evaluation of the 1988 General elections Okullu said,

We are told, 'promised' is the correct word that the queuing up method of nomination, or election for that matter, would wipe out completely any form of cheating. . . to the embarrassment of all, the queue-up method produced some of the most blatant and cruel vote rigging and cheating that has been practiced in Kenya.

(Weekly Review April 21, 1988).

When the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) threatened not to participate in the 1988 elections based on the queuing system, it caused a great schism between the church and the state. As the issue threatened to get out of hand President Moi made a ruling that religious leaders, certain cadres of civil servants and members of the armed forces would be exempted from queuing and would vote by proxy (Morton 1998:219). Practically this ruling proved difficult to implement.

Throup & Hornby (1998:42) hold that 1988 elections introduced a new level of electoral malpractice in Kenyan politics, which was to presage the demise of the ruling party. The system greatly facilitated voter intimidation and electoral malpractices. According to

them at least one third of the electoral contests (60) were rigged and manipulated. Consequently, the image of the government, the party and parliament were marred, the trust in the institutions was eroded and their legitimacy challenged (Ogot 1995:213). The adoption of the queue voting system symbolized the end of the National Assembly as any form of watchdog on the system (Throup & Hornsby 1998:44).

In the period 1985-1990 Parliament made several amendments to the constitution. In 1986, an Amendment Bill, which sought to abolish the post of the Chief Secretary within the Civil Service and the removal of security of tenure of the offices of the Attorney General was issued and passed. In 1988 the Constitution Amendment Bill was issued. It sought to remove the security of tenure of the office of High Court and Court of Appeal judges, as well as members of the Public Service Commission. It was aimed at empowering the police to detain capital offenders for 14 days instead of 24 hours, before presenting them in court as had previously, been the case (Ogot 1995:211). There was widespread outcry from lawyers and church leaders. Okullu was one of those who opposed these constitutional changes.

Between 1982-1988 a strong opposition to political and intellectual monolithism gradually developed, spearheaded by dissidents (Ogot 1995:239). The dissidents included a few radical academics, university students, clergymen, radical members of the Law Society of Kenya (LSK) and a few clandestine political organizations with bases outside the country formed by Kenyan exiles abroad. *Mwakenya* was the most notable one (*Weekly Review* August 30, 1991). According to Ogot (1995:239) they questioned the tacit assumption of the majority of political bystanders that all resistance was dangerous and that it was impossible. With their emphasis on human rights and liberties, they challenged the dominant discourse of self-aggrandisement and power.

By August 1986, when the KANU Annual Delegates Conference adopted queue voting as the method to be used in future parliamentary and civic elections, the government crackdown on dissidents had been so thorough that the only opposition came from church leaders and the Law Society of Kenya (*Weekly Review* August 30, 1991). Many of the

dissidents were either detained, jailed or went into self- exile abroad. Several lawyers and politicians were detained in 1987 and 1988. Some of these include: Gibson Kamau Kuria, John Khaminwa, Kiraitu Murungi, Paul Muite, and Rumba Kinuthia amongst others. The prominent clergymen who locked horns with the government on policy issues were PCEA's Timothy Njoya, Dr. Henry Okullu, Dr. David Gitari and Bishop Alexander Muge of the Anglican Church of the Province of Kenya.

The clergymen opposed the government policies from the security of the pulpit inside the church, immune to the government and its security apparatus. Apart from this any action against them would have violated freedom of worship, which is enshrined in the country's constitution and invited international criticism (*Weekly Review* August 30, 1991).

### **2.3.5 Politically instigated murders**

#### **2.3.5.1 Robert Ouko**

One event, which fixed Moi in the eyes of the world, as unyielding dictator with blood on his hands was the bizarre, so far unsolved murder of Dr. Robert Ouko, the Minister for Foreign Affairs who was much loved and respected (Morton 1998:217).

Prior to his death Ouko had tried with some success to redeem Moi's government's dented image in western capitals. His campaign culminated in the ill-fated Washington trip in January 1990 (Kariuki 2001:128). During the visit human rights violations in Kenya dominated the public side of the visit, a factor, which according to Morton (1998:223) prompted the *London Sunday Times* and other Newspapers to allege that President Moi ordered Ouko's killing because Ouko enjoyed higher prestige in America than he did.

On February 14, 1990 the Government reported the disappearance of the minister from his Koru home near Kisumu. Two days later the Government announced the discovery of Ouko's mutilated and half burnt body by a 13 years old herds-boy. The charred remains of the minister lay near the Nyando River at the foot of Got Alila, six kilometers from his

home (Kariuki 2001:128). Angry demonstrations erupted in Kisumu and Mombasa over the murder.

According to Throup & Hornsby (1998:58), Moi invited a team from Scotland Yard to investigate the murder because he was concerned by apparent culpability of senior government and administration figures in Ouko's murder. Superintendent John Troon led an extensive investigation into circumstances surrounding Ouko's death, despite a significant lack of co-operation amongst segments of the administration, and the initial pressure to declare the killing suicide.

Although the government requested an interim report, it did not act on it immediately. Troon believed Ouko had been asked by the President to conduct a secret investigation into corruption inside the government, a probe, which allegedly revealed widespread underhand dealings of Oyugi (Minister of State in Charge of Internal Security and Provincial Administration) and Nicholas Biwott (Minister of Energy). According to him Ouko's murder had something to do with the implication of this report.

Eventually the key suspects: Hezekiah Oyugi, Nicholas Biwott, Jonah Anguka (District Commissioner, Nakuru) and others were arrested. All were released even though Jonas Anguka was prosecuted for the murder. He was later acquitted. Morton (1998:230) noted that there was certain symbolic timing in the fact that the arrests of Biwott and Oyugi in November 1991 were followed within days by an announcement by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) at the meeting of donor nations in Paris that foreign aid to Kenya would be frozen until the economy was liberalized and a more democratic and answerable system of government implemented.

In November 1990, the Government instituted the Justice Gicheru Commission of Enquiry, which had the mandate of inquiring into and prosecuting those implicated in the Ouko murder. Before the report could be compiled or recommendations given, the government disbanded the Commission (Kariuki 2001:129).

Throup & Hornsby (1998:58) concluded that Ouko's murder and revelations of inconsistencies in subsequent police and judicial inquiries were some of the crucial

motivating factors behind the campaign for multi-party democracy, crystallizing concerns about corruption and the power of those close to the President. Ouko's murder suggested that Moi, like Kenyatta, might be willing to kill those closest to him. The Ouko murder also alienated the Luo from the KANU government.

### **2.3.5.2 Bishop Alexander Muge**

Alexander Muge, CPK Bishop of the Diocese of Eldoret died in a car accident on his way home from Busia town after receiving a tumultuous welcome. His death following in the wake of the Ouko murder, profoundly shook public confidence in the government of President Moi.

Bishop Muge's trip to Busia was essentially an act of defiance following on the heels of a public warning issued four days earlier by Peter Okondo, the Minister for Labour. The minister issued a threat to the effect that if Bishop Muge and Bishop Okullu dared to step in Busia District, 'they would see fire and would not leave alive' (*Weekly Review* August 30, 1990).

In response, Muge in a press statement charged that Okondo's warning against this venture into Busia was a prelude to a plot to have him killed for calling for probes into the activities of corrupt cabinet ministers. He decried the existence of what he termed 'professional murderers' in the cabinet. His statement ended with a chilling statement, 'Let Okondo know that my innocent blood shall haunt him forever and he will not be in peace, for God does not approve of murder' (*Weekly Review* August 17, 1990).

The bishop was killed instantly when a run-away milk truck crashed into his car. Foul play was suspected. The police it was rumoured orchestrated the murder (Throup & Hornsby 1998:67). In a eulogy for the late bishop, the NCKK Director for Justice and Peace said; 'Okondo may be innocent but how will he cleanse himself from the wrath of Muge's curse?' (*Weekly Review* August 17, 1990). Okullu attributed Muge's death to the political system and the indecisiveness of the CPK leadership in granting Katakwa diocesan status as the causes of Muge's death. (*Weekly Review*, August 31, 1990).

Bishop Muge had been a controversial figure often steeped in wrangles. The authorities within the CPK, the NCCK, the government and politicians feared his harsh headline-grabbing criticism. Addressing an NCCK seminar Bishop Muge said:

‘The NCCK in Kenya is like a rotten apple. To the best of my knowledge the NCCK has nothing to lecture our nation because all the evils which eat our nation such as tribalism, favouritism, nepotism and other-isms, have found shape in NCCK’ (*Weekly Review*, March 29, 1985).

Bishop Muge was one of the most vocal Anglican Bishops together with Okullu and David Gitari, who took issue with the various constitutional amendment bills proposed by the government in the 1980’s. He for instance on several occasions spoke on the merits and the demerits of the queuing system. He said the queuing system was ‘unrealistic undemocratic and left many people dissatisfied’ (*Weekly Review*, December 8, 1989).

In many of his sermons he condemned sugar daddies and mummies, the exploitation of female job seekers by public officials, the dubious accumulation of wealth, the rigging of elections and other forms of corruption and injustice (*Weekly Review* March 29, 1985). He strongly defended the freedom of worship. Bishop Muge was also deeply involved in the parochial politics of Nandi District. He also believed that politics and ministry are complementary not contradictory. He viewed his role in society as divinely ordained to critique evil in society (*Weekly Review* March 29, 1985). There was a lot of similarity in the public ministry of Bishop Muge and Bishop Okullu.

### **2.3.6. Pro-democracy movement**

Up until 1989 openly defiant and even seditious appeals for change had failed because national and international conditions were not ripe for change (Ogot 1995:239). However the tearing down of the Berlin Wall and the eventual collapse of communism in Russia and Eastern Europe transformed utterly the West’s approach to Africa. According to Throup & Hornsby (1998:3) the changes seemed to presage not only the fall of one party system around the world but to demonstrate the value of aid in effecting the changes.

The pro-democracy movement was encouraged by policy statements from Western nations and the World Bank that future assistance would be linked to respect for human rights, transparency and accountability (Ogot 1995:240). This fact is borne out by an address given by Smith Hempstone, the United States Ambassador to Kenya, at the Rotary Club in May 1990. Hempstone stated that in future United States assistance would only go to nations that nourish democratic institutions, defend human rights and practice multi-party politics (Morton 1998:231).

Newspapers, Magazines such as the *Nairobi Law Monthly, Finance and Society* as well as well established Newspapers, such as the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* provided the crucial media support without which the opposition views could not have been made known to Kenya and the world (Ogot 1995:240).

The pro-democracy movement in the country was spearheaded by veteran politicians such as Oginga Odinga, Masinde Muliro, George Anyona, Martin Shikuku, prominent clergymen such as Dr. Henry Okullu, Bishop of CPK Diocese of Maseno, the Reverend Timothy Njoya of PCEA, lawyers and academics (Ogot 1995:240). The years of reckoning for the KANU government were 1990 and 1991.

On December 31, 1989 in a New Year's eve sermon, Rev. Timothy Njoya drew a parallel between the Kenyan political system and the falling communist dictatorships in Eastern Europe. He asserted that a similar fate would befall Kenya's one-party political system if it did not change. According to Njoya such parties had completely failed to be democratic in Eastern Europe where they were manufactured and imported by pioneer African nationalists such as Kwame Nkurumah of Ghana, Dr. Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Modipo Keita of Mali. Africa could not therefore convert one party political system that had been adopted from Europe into democracy, by baptizing them with other names (*Weekly Review*, January 5, 1990).

Njoya's sermon rocked the country's political establishment and set the tone for the events that would follow the whole year. The Njoya furore afforded politicians an opportunity to state the official rationale, namely, that the one-party system is consistent

with African traditions and national unity. A multi-party system would tend to divide Kenyans along ethnic lines (*Weekly Review* January 12, 1990).

A few days earlier, Okullu had delivered a similar sermon in which he hailed the collapse of the communist regimes and added that a similar fate awaited all other 'dictatorships' the world over. Okullu went on to predict that in five years time he was sure the dictatorships he had in mind would have crumbled (*Weekly Review*, January 5, 1990).

Soon Njoya was joined by Bishop Okullu and by veteran dissident Oginga Odinga, who supported the call for legalisation of opposition parties. They claimed that KANU was isolated from popular opinion, which could only freely be expressed with the registration of new political parties and the establishment of a freer political climate (Throup & Hornsby 1998:57). In April the debate continued with Bishop Henry Okullu stating that the imposition of the *de-jure* one-party state had been a mistake. He called for the reduction of the presidential term to two five-year terms (*Weekly Review* April 27, 1990).

In May 1990, three months after the murder of Dr. Robert Ouko the Minister for Home Affairs, the debate took a new twist when Kenneth Matiba and Charles Rubia threw their weight behind the growing chorus for the establishment of multi-party democracy in Kenya (*Weekly Review* August 30, 1991). Ex-cabinet ministers Matiba and Rubia both Kikuyu businessmen with immense wealth, called a press conference, during which they openly denounced corruption within the ruling circle, blamed the government for the declining economy and the climate of oppression, which had developed in recent years. Only the introduction of multi-party democracy, they argued would ensure greater openness and accountability in the political system (Throup & Hornsby 1998:60). In Morton's (1998:240) view, central to their case were demands, which echoed Kikuyu disenchantment with the government, notably an end to tribal favouritism in parastatals and reform of the 8.4.4 system of education.

The President, the government and KANU leaders took a very rigid and unyielding stance to the growing advocacy for change. By late June, Matiba and Rubia seemed to have formed a political alliance with Oginga Odinga leading to the charge that they were endeavouring to bring back the Kikuyu-Luo political alliance of pre-independence and

post-independence years. The political temperature reached boiling point in July 1990 when the two politicians applied for a licence to convene a meeting at Kamukunji, Nairobi. Not only did the government refuse their request but the two were placed in detention two days before the intended rally on 7 July. On the fateful day known as *Saba-Saba* (seven-seven) bloody riots broke out in Nairobi, Central Province and Nakuru. Twenty people died in the police response, and much property was damaged or destroyed (*Weekly Review* 30, August 1991).

Prior to the Kamukunji rally, in order to placate the country, KANU had convened a special KANU Delegates Conference at which a committee chaired by the Vice-President George Saitoti was mandated to tour the country, test public opinion and make recommendations. The commission provided an open forum for indictment of the regime and a source of demands for reforms (Throup & Hornsby 1998:241). The hearings by the Saitoti Commission revealed the depth of public dissatisfaction with the regime.

The report was presented to another special KANU Delegates Conference in Kasarani, Nairobi in December 1990. President Moi went against the majority of party delegates to propose that KANU should scrap the controversial queue voting system, drop expulsion as a means of maintaining party discipline and abolish the 70% nomination rule (Morton 1998:241). The meeting adopted these recommendations. The result was that the KANU reforms instituted at Kasarani not only failed to stem the tide of protest, but alienated many hard-line KANU loyalists. The decision to restore the security of tenure of judges, the Attorney General and members of the Public Service Commission had already been announced by the President (*Weekly Review* 30, August 1990).

The next assault on the political landscape was the announcement made by Oginga Odinga in February 1991 of the formation of a new political party, the National Development Party. The party's foremost objective was to seek the repeal of section 2(A) of the Constitution, which made Kenya a one-party state. The request for the registration of the party was rejected (*Weekly Review* 30 August 1990). The onus fell back upon the Church and the Law Society of Kenya (LSK) to keep up the pressure for reforms.

In mid June 1991, Bishop Henry Okullu and Paul Muite announced that the LSK in conjunction with CPK and NCCCK had formed a pressure group called the Justice and Peace Convention-Kenya (JPC-K) with the intention of holding prayer meetings and symposia throughout the country. The JPC-K's agenda calling for political reform and democratization, read like a political manifesto rather than a religious or legal programme (*Weekly Review* June 21 1991). Faced with a withering storm of criticism and threats from political leaders, Bishop Okullu, the chairman of the convention, announced the postponement of the prayer meetings (*Weekly Review* July 26, 1991).

On July 4, 1991 the anniversary of Matiba and Rubia detentions, Oginga Odinga publicly announced the formation of FORD—The Forum for the Restoration of Democracy, as an umbrella organisation for all interest groups and individuals committed to the repeal of section 2A of the Constitution and the establishment of multi-party politics. Technically as a civic forum movement FORD would not need to be registered under the Societies Act (Throup & Hornsby 1998:76). The organization gained momentum following the release of Matiba, Rubia and Raila Odinga from detention (Morton 1998:241).

In August 1991, FORD was declared an illegal organization; in September President Moi said that its supporters 'would be crushed like rats'. However emboldened by the government's paralysis created by the damaging allegations about the Ouko murder, the involvement of Biwott and other ministers in corruption scandals, and with the tacit support of the United States, FORD continued to harass KANU (Throup & Hornsby 1998:78). By the end of 1991 it looked as though the country's political fabric was unraveling (Morton 1998:241).

According to Throup & Hornsby (1998:85), beset by mounting domestic and international pressure for multi-party democracy, the revelations of the Commission of Inquiry on Ouko death, reaction against the Kalenjin call for *majimboism*, and the continuing opposition of the main churches and the LSK, the Moi regime felt hopelessly beleaguered. The Paris Groups' decision to suspend aid broke the regime's resolve.

In December 1991 at a KANU Delegates Conference, the President appealed to his fellow leaders to recognize the changed political realities in Kenya and accordingly

repeal section 2(A) of the constitution to allow other national parties to compete with KANU. This was despite the fact that the overall majority was opposed to the reforms (Morton 1998:245). By doing this President Moi seized the political initiative from FORD enabling KANU to control the legislative process which would legalise opposition parties and prepare the multi-party electoral process to KANU's advantage.

The repeal of section 2 (A) of the Constitution saw FORD transform itself from a pressure group into a political party with Odinga as its interim President and the launching of the Democratic Party (DP) led by Mwai Kibaki. FORD was the party most Kenyans hinged their hopes on for the 'second liberation'. It had grass root support in most parts of the country (Ogot 1995:247). However it faced great problems converting from a protest movement into a political party with a coherent ideology and a clear line of command (Throup & Hornsby 1998:92).

Ogot (1995:247) emphasizes the fact that given the diverse background and objectives of the original FORD, a split was bound to happen sooner or later. Its leaders were divided not only by different views of party policy but by ethnicity and generation (Throup & Hornsby 1998:247). By August 1992, FORD was on the verge of a major split. As the divisions became apparent to the general public the euphoria, which accompanied the foundation of the party was rapidly evaporating (Ogot 1995:247). It split into two political factions, FORD-Kenya supported mainly by the Luo and the Luhyia and FORD-Asili supported by the Kikuyu.

After 12 months of political ferment and emergence of four substantial opposition parties, KANU and its presidential candidate triumphed in December 1992 General Elections (Throup & Hornsby 1998:2). However the commitment of the government to the realities of multi-party democracy was ambiguous.

### **2.3.7 Ethnic clashes/ Tribal clashes**

The ethnic clashes (violent confrontations between various ethnic groups in Kenya) accompanied the angry debate for multi-partyism. By the time the clashes ended the image remained that Moi as the Kalenjin leader, had ordered his warriors to clear the

Kikuyu from the Rift Valley Province as means of proving his thesis that multi-party politics was unworkable in Kenya (Morton 1998:247). Moi held that the formation of opposition parties would divide Kenyans along ethnic lines and hinder economic development (Throup & Hornsby 1998:72).

A common denominator was the fact that the Kalenjin either from Nandi, Kipsigis or Elgeyo tribes, were involved in every dispute leading to the inevitable conclusion that the Kalenjin were behind the clashes. At the same time there were complaints that the police and local administration were showing partiality towards the Kalenjin, either by turning a blind eye to the violence or by actively assisting them (Morton 1998:246).

The clashes were started in Molo and Olengurone areas of Nakuru District between February and August 1992. The violence spread and eventually affected 13 districts in Western Kenya (Kariuki 2001:129). Opposition politicians argued that the seeds of violence had been planted shortly before the introduction of multi-partyism in December 1991 when senior KANU politicians from Rift Valley held rallies to promote *majimboism* (federalism). The rallies held at Kapsabet in Nandi District and Kaptatet in Kericho District were said to have fanned tribal antagonism (Kariuki 2001:133).

In 1993 a Parliamentary Select Committee headed by Kennedy Kiliku published a report on ethnic clashes. The centerpiece of the report was the series of allegations surrounding Nicholas Biwott's private army of Kalenjin warriors (Morton 1998:255). When it was presented to Parliament, the majority of Parliamentarians rejected it as a shoddy piece of work. It was full of hearsay and unsubstantiated allegations. The National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) commissioned a thorough investigation into the causes of the clashes. According to the report, the clashes were politically instigated and the government was requested to prosecute those who had been involved (Musalia 2001:107).

Okullu, in a sermon, attributed the clashes to inflammatory remarks which had been uttered by leaders of one ethnic group mainly from the Rift Valley who had openly stated that Rift Valley was a one party zone (*Sermon* April 17, 1992).

The Akiwumi Report on Tribal Clashes finally in October 2002, after a High Court order, confirmed that the 'tribal clashes' that started in October 1991 at Miteitei Farm in Tinderet Division of Nandi District were orchestrated by a powerful combination of serving and former political leaders, security officials and the provincial administration (*East African* October 21-27, 2002). They were politically instigated.

### **2.3.8 Constitution review process**

The review of the constitution of Kenya, the economic down-turn, and Moi succession are the three issues which have dominated public debate in Kenya from 1992 General Elections to the present. President Moi is expected to retire in the year 2003. The complicated issue of his succession, which is in the process of unraveling, is beyond the scope of this research. A brief overview of the Kenyan economy is given in the next section.

Justice A. Ringera has given a brief history of the constitutional review process up to 1998 (*Africa Law Review* No. 73 July/August 1998). This article forms the basis of much of this section.

The advent of multi-party politics in 1992 was accompanied by the desire for constitutional and legal reform. In his 1995 New Year message, President Moi announced that the country's constitution would be reviewed, this added impetus to the process. Intense national debate took hold up to the period leading to the 1997 elections.

President Moi's reluctance to implement a radical overhaul of the constitution until after 1997 rejuvenated the domestic political scene as an alliance of lawyers, international human rights groups such as Amnesty International, and churchmen including Okullu, joined the opposition to demand reform of the constitution months before elections. In a deliberate show of defiance opposition rallies were held in without applying for licenses, as required by the Kenyan law. One gathering at the end of May degenerated into an orgy of looting of shops and stoning of motorists (Morton 1998:283). On July 7, 1997 pro-reform rallies were held throughout the country and security forces killed 13 people.

From Mid 1997 before the General Elections the government reiterated its commitment to constitutional and legal reform. This need acquired a sense of urgency when it became quite clear that some reform measures would have to be taken before the General Elections were held.

After carefully considering the substance and thrust of public opinion early in 1997, the Government was persuaded that piecemeal repeals and amendments to the constitution would not satisfy the widely and strongly expressed wishes for comprehensive reform of the constitution. The KANU National Executive recommended the publishing of a bill in Parliament to establish a commission to review the constitution. Parliament passed the Constitution Review Commission Bill, which provided for the establishment of the Kenya Constitution Review Commission.

It further recommended the repeal or amendment of a number of laws dating back to the colonial period to give the opposition 'a level playing field'. The resulting reforms, agreed by the Inter Parties Group (IPPG), considerably cooled temperatures before the crucial 1997 elections (Morton 1998:284). As MP's thrashed out the numerous constitutional amendments the spectre of tribal violence once more reared its head. Armed gangs on the coast attacked a police station as well as residents, mainly Luo and Kikuyu considered as 'upcountry intruders'. Morton observed (1998:234) that while the fighting damaged the tourist industry and image abroad, there was the realization that unlike 1992, the looting, mayhem and murder was localized and had no wider national repercussions. A Judicial Commission of inquiry was set up to investigate the ethnic violence. To date the findings of the commission have not been released to the public.

President Moi and KANU emerged victorious from the 1997 General Elections, which were chaotic and marred by irregularities. The repressive pre-election environment and the lack of time for the implementation of limited IPPG reforms helped guarantee the outcome of the elections (Slack 1998:3). After the elections it was felt by a large section of Kenyans that the Constitution of Kenya Review Act, 1997 needed further re-examination. Opinions were expressed that that the process of constitutional review must be all-inclusive and reflect different shades of opinion. In this regard it was suggested

that the numbers of commissioners should be increased to include all 'stake holders'; that the powers and security of tenure of commissioners should be strengthened and respective roles of Parliament and the Executive in the process needed re-examination.

In March 1998 the President in his opening address to Parliament, requested Parliament to put in place a mechanism to look into the issue afresh. The President requested all parties to negotiate and hold consultations with a view to recommending possible amendments to the act. This led to the formation of the Inter Parties Committee of Parliamentarians. On May 11 1998 the Committee organized a meeting, which was attended by the bulk of interested persons and organizations at the Bomas of Kenya- included all political parties, major religious organizations in the country, professional and civic society organizations, community interest groups and other organizations and individuals who had expressed the desire to attend.

There was a broad agreement by most participants, that the Review Commission should obtain views from grass-root level and should commence after adequate constitutional education of Kenyans amongst other things. At the time of Bishop Okullu's death the constitution review process had stalled.

### **2.3.9 Kenyan economy in the Moi era**

During the period 1978-1988, the Kenyan economy encountered several difficulties and was presented with formidable challenges as it sought to sustain the impressive record of growth that marked the Kenyatta era.

According to Maxon and Ndiege (1995:151) the Kenyan economy was beset with economic problems of both internal and external origin. Externally, the increase in crude oil prices in 1979 and the world recession that followed in its wake had a negative impact on the Kenyan economy. Internally, the droughts of 1978-80 and 1984 which resulted in major food shortages, necessitating largescale importation of grain, provided severe setbacks for the economy as a whole.

The Gross National Product (GNP) fell from US \$ 420 in 1980 to US \$ 330 in 1987. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) fell to 3.8% during 1980-1987 as opposed to 6.9%, 1965-

1980). The government was forced as a result of these factors and others to take the unprecedented action of issuing several major sessional papers through which it sought to lay down strategies for meeting these difficulties. Most involved the adoption of what became known as Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs). Although these initiatives achieved some measure of success, a number of negative trends manifested themselves and worsened in the same period.

The nation's balance of payments remained firmly in the red, much of the 1980's witnessed double-digit inflation rates and public debt rose dramatically as a result of foreign borrowing. These factors served to demonstrate the dependent nature of the Kenyan economy.

The state remained the main employer for secondary school leavers and university graduates, and a key source of patronage for politicians and senior civil servants. By 1990 the total of government employees had grown to 270,005 from 65,933 in 1967/8 (Throup & Hornsby 1998:48).

In a paper entitled, 'An analysis of the Kenya economic malaise' (*African Law Review* No. 72. June 1998) Simeon Nyachae, the Minister for Finance, gave the following facts concerning the Kenyan economy in 1998.

The growth of the economy had virtually come to a halt. The economy had grown annually at an average rate of 2.6% during 1991-1998, barely enough to keep pace with the rate of growth of the population. As a result of the decline in growth, the income per capita had fallen substantially from US \$ 420 in 1980 to US \$ 260, in 1998. The estimated proportion of the population living below the poverty line had risen steadily to 44% in 1989 to 50% in 1998. Similarly there had been a steady increase in unemployment. Of the estimated 500,000 people joining the labour market each year, only 40,000 got employed in the formal sector while 200,000 got absorbed in the informal sector. Nyachae predicted that if these trends continued they would manifest themselves in serious socio-economic problems and lawlessness.

The stock of domestic debt, which reflects the heavy borrowing the government had undertaken over the last couple of years to pay wages, had reached unsustainable levels. This had resulted in high interest rates, which were prohibitive to investors. The balance of payment to service foreign debts had increased from 1.2% of the GDP in December 1996 to 4.4% by February 1998. A large part of these had been financed with short-term speculative capital inflows, a risky, highly volatile mode of payment.

The excessive interest caused by heavy-wage driven by the government's borrowing, a relatively strong shilling, the poor conditions particularly of roads and electric power shortfalls, the effects of the *El-nino* weather patterns on the agricultural sector and the decline in tourism due to insecurity, were some of the causes Nyachae listed for the poor economic growth.

According to Vic Duarte & Neal Cohen (*Africa Law Review* No. 72, June 1998) the root of Kenya's problems lies in the unsound economic policies, which have been practised for a long period of time and massive corruption resulting in a huge loss of revenue and investor confidence. Others (*Economic Review* March 23-29, 1998) attribute it to the government's lip service to banishing corruption, massive wastage of public funds, coupled with state inspired ethnic violence in key parts of the country.

The situation was further aggravated by the suspension of US \$ 215 million in July 1997 by The International Monetary Fund (IMF). The effects of this freeze were reminiscent of the 1991/1992, donor suspension. Lack of government commitment to combating widespread corruption, the 'Goldenberg Scandal' and the sacking of two senior civil servants, were the reasons advanced by IMF for the stoppage of a 3-year aid programme to Kenya. The high interest rates and collapse in investor confidence sent the economy into recession.

It has been estimated that the economy has to grow at the rate of 8% per annum before any meaningful changes can be realized in terms of lifting the standards of the people. Poverty remains one of the serious problems facing the majority of Kenyans but little has been done to improve the situation. Mass lay offs in the name of restructuring in both private and public sectors has compounded the problem especially because most of the

laid off workers hardly find alternative ways of maintaining their previous standards of living. The slow pace of new investment and the employment opportunities they present has not done much to minimize the problem (*Standard* July 14, 1998).

It is crucial that bold measures are taken to deal with the high domestic debt and high interest rate problems. Other areas requiring attention include infrastructure, delivery of public service, tourism and agriculture. These issues and possible solutions for resolving them formed the main agenda for the consultative meeting held at KCCT Mbagathi, May 6, 1998 under the chairmanship of President Moi (*Africa Law Review* No. 72 June 1998).

Peter Warutere (*Economic Review* Jan 12-18, 1998) rightly predicted that,

The fatigue of the Moi regime expressed in decaying infrastructure, corruption, widespread rural and urban poverty and other social and economic distress is likely to continue because neither the business nor the international community are likely to provide unconditional support to the regime. 'It can therefore be expected that recovery of the business sector which has been down for several months, will be painfully slow. Likewise, reconstruction of economy without much international financial support will be a particularly difficult task. Moi may not have much to show in terms of what the economy has achieved in another five years, other than possibly, enriching the wheeler dealer at the center of political economic power.

## **2.4. Church- state relations in Kenya**

### **2.4.1 Colonial/Missionary era**

Renison Githige's (1982:119) research findings on *Mission state relationship in colonial Kenya* revealed that the relationship vacillated between ambivalence, co-operation and conflict. Sometimes these overlapped. The extent of ambivalence, cooperation or conflict was largely determined by the response of the missionaries to the particular issue at hand. Missionaries and colonialists differed on their interpretation of the needs of the African. This difference was best expressed in what each group perceived to be the goals of native education. The settlers favoured a system of technical, agricultural and industrial education suited to their labour needs; missionaries and officials while not opposing such education also favoured the introduction of literary education (Githige 1982:115).

Githige (1982:123) further observed that despite their disagreements, the missionaries, settlers and colonialists had a fundamental identity of interest. He argued that at the most basic level the three groups were trying to impose a European political and social order in Kenya (Githige 1982:113).

The mission Churches and their converts were deeply involved in the Mau-Mau emergency of 1952. This ensured their close identification with the colonial regime. Kikuyu Christians played a critical role in the initial resistance to the spread of Mau-Mau (Lonsdale, Booth & Hake 1978:276). Missions were major recruiting grounds for government loyalists and were at the forefront of the rehabilitation process, part of which was the purification of detainees (Githige 1982:124). The purification involved cleansing ceremonies through which those who had taken the Mau Mau oaths could be released from the goals they had made to the society (Maloba 1993:73).

Mission churches played a very minor role in Kenya's liberation from colonialism. This is because 'they were unable to detach themselves from the colonial definition of reality in order to consider afresh the moral claims of nationalism' (Lonsdale, Booth & Hake 1978:276). Consequently the Churches led primarily by white missionaries found themselves largely in opposition to the spirit of nationalism and were alienated from nationalist leaders. This raised fears that Christianity would be thrown out with the colonialists. Independent Churches by and large supported the freedom movement and were established precisely for this reason (Waruta 1994:89). Okullu (1978a:83) observed that although Christianity was able to make peace with the state, it experienced greater difficulty in coming to terms with the political order of the new nation.

Terence Ranger (1995:15-16) in his summary and conclusion write up of the Leeds conference on 'The Christian Churches and Africa's democratisation' in 1993, wrote that even though most churches had come to terms with post independent states, they had rarely been critical of state excesses until the 1980's. One of the reasons advanced was that the Church having just emerged from colonial era was not yet able to undertake any

serious examination of its inherited theology which seemed not to relate faith to the totality of life, making protestations sound half-hearted (Ranger 1995:16).

Lonsdale, Booth & Hake (1978:267) bear witness to the absence of an adequate theology in this statement; 'apart from the Roman Catholic Church, churches in Kenya ...have historically possessed a very limited theology of secular power.' Lonsdale, Booth and Hake (1978:268) identified two distinct theological positions in Kenya namely the conservative evangelical and the modernist or liberal; of the two, the conservative evangelical tradition has been the stronger. The conservative evangelical tradition with its fundamentalist insistence on the authenticity of the Bible has tended to place a strong eschatological emphasis on individual salvation rather than social improvement in this world. The modern liberals have laid emphasis on Christ as Perfect man as well as God, social rather than individual salvation. Accordingly there have been mainly two strands of approaches in church-state relationship. These are what David Gitari (1986:120) has described as passive identification and critical collaboration.

In passive identification the churches adapt themselves passively by withdrawing into the sphere of the purely religious and abstain from making any statements or decisions and activities related to the exercise by the power of the state. In critical collaboration the churches can engage in critical and constructive collaboration with the power of the state by evaluating political decisions and proposed programs on the basis of their understanding of the Gospel (Gitari 1986:121).

#### **2.4.2. Kenyatta era (1963-1978)**

On the whole church/state relations in Kenya during the Kenyatta era were relatively cordial. One reason for this cited by Throup (1995:146) was that the Anglican Church of the Province of Kenya (CPK), Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) and the Roman Catholic Church, after independence had become increasingly dominated by Kikuyu churchmen. Their congregations in Central Province had lay members who often held influential positions in government. It may well be that deeply rooted ethnic loyalty

to Kenyatta influenced the church–state relationship. The church was also still trying to emerge from the state of alienation and defensiveness into which it had been thrown during the rise of nationalism and the drive for independence (Okullu 1978a:85).

Despite their hesitancy to become embroiled in politics, in 1969 the church spoke out against the oath-taking campaign among the Kikuyu which began after the assassination of Tom Mboya, a Luo minister in the Kenyatta government. ‘The church was moved to question the claim of the state to total loyalty, when Kikuyu ethnicity was mobilized to defend the government against threats of radical opposition’ (Berman & Lonsdale 1992a:218). Lonsdale, Booth & Hake (1978:280) view the ‘oath-taking crisis’ of 1969 as the watershed in the relations between the Kenyan state and local churches. Okullu, then the editor of the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK), which owned *Target* Newspaper, played a crucial role in this transition (Okullu 1997:55). Okullu wrote a front-page editorial entitled, ‘Killing our unity.’ This condemned the tribally divisive nature of the oath and chided church leaders for failing to give any public guidance or support to those Christians who had to face its demands. The editorial had given added point by its juxtaposition with a photograph of the administration of sacrament in Holy Communion, under the caption ‘Taking the oath.’ All churches followed this lead (Lonsdale, Booth & Hake 1978:281).

### **2.4.3 Moi era (1978- 1999)**

Unlike Kenyatta who refused to attach himself to any organized religion, although he believed in God, President Daniel Arap Moi his successor is a churchgoer and a member of the evangelical African Inland Church (Okullu 1984:55). This church pulled out of the National Christian Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) because of its involvement in politics. The ethnic factor also came into play here as well.

Although President Moi based his *Nyayo* philosophy or ideology on three sources: African traditions of public affairs, Christian faith and pragmatism (Benson 1995:178), ironically there have been more sharp and open conflicts between church and state in his

tenure unlike Kenyatta's (Okullu 1992:27). A possible explanation for this is that Moi treats the church as 'part and parcel' of the government. Church leaders in his view are just leaders, and all leaders must be part and parcel of the leadership corp of *Nyayo* (sometimes synonymous with Moi) followers (Benson 1995:185).

Okullu (1997:31) confirms this totalitarian view of statehood held by African leaders in the statement:

African national leaders unconsciously sound as though they have replaced the colonial government and therefore assumed leadership of every institution including the Church.

This attitude and the increasingly authoritarian rule of President Moi set the church and the state on a collision course. Clergymen from CPK and the Roman Catholic Church and the PCEA occupied the space left by the silencing of serious political opposition between 1982-1988. By 1985, four churchmen had already been identified as critics of the government and the ruling party KANU. These were Anglican bishops Henry Okullu, Alexander Kipsang Muge and David Gitari, and Rev. Timothy Njoya of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (Throup 1995:147). The Catholic Church periodically issued pastoral letters published in the press on issues of national concern.

Conflicts escalated in 1986 after a National Pastors Conference passed a resolution opposing the new electoral system of queuing dubbed *Mlolongo* in Kiswahili, which displaced secret ballot. Church leadership opposed the system on grounds that it would be divisive and dangerous for people in the armed forces, government administration and the church to show partiality in lining up behind candidates (Okullu 1992:29).

Other issues debated by the churches included the removal of tenure of the auditor general and the attorney general in 1986, the removal of the tenure of high court and court of appeal judges in 1988 and the repeal of section 2A of the Constitution, which made Kenya a *de-jure* one-party state (Lane 1992:71-75). Kenya became a multi-party state partly because of this in December 1991. In the run up to the General Elections of 1992 and 1997 the church and civil society made several efforts to unite the opposition

parties in fielding a single Presidential candidate against the authoritarian rule of President Moi. The church working with NCCCK also set up a Commission to investigate the ethnic clashes associated with the 1992 General Elections (Okullu 1993:151).

In the period before the 1992 General Elections to the present, the church, together with other religious groups, political activists and the civil society have campaigned for a comprehensive constitutional review, which should take account of popular sentiment.

Benson (1995:186) writing in this context agreed that although Lonsdale, Booth & Hake were right about the existence of an inadequate theology of secular power by most churches in Kenya other than the Catholic Church, he argues that they overlooked the more significant fact that these churches in Kenya possessed a well developed hermeneutic. Their involvement in politics therefore is the result of a sustained hermeneutical enterprise (Benson 1995:196). In his view the vocal Protestant clergy have used the Augustinian model of creative imagination to transpose the words of sacred scripture to the historical events in Kenya in their sermons. An example of this is an excerpt of a sermon preached by Okullu at St. Stephen's Cathedral, Kisumu, Sunday July 15, 1990.

#### **The signs of the Times**

And the Pharisees and the Sadducees came and to test him they asked him to show them a sign from heaven. He answered them, 'When it is evening you say, it will be stormy today, for the sky is red, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah'. So he left them and departed (Mathew 16: 1-4).

#### **A moment to decide**

This is not the time for the state to flex its muscles; it is not time to cling to old political ideas and slogans. This is not time to hang on to egos and refuse to discard the sense of self-importance. This is not the time for power politics and listening to songs of praise as if the motherland is tranquil and the sparrows are flying in peace. This is the time when God has put us to the test and we stand accused of rising up as a great nation or sinking into the abyss of senseless turmoil in defence of worthless earthly values! This is a time to decide.

#### **Why the crisis?**

Why are we where we are today, with gunshots and stone throwing with the police out on the streets battling ordinary citizens and the incumbent government declaring war on strange frontiers against its own people? Who has driven us to this ugly predicament, this temptation to go backwards we could never have thought of? The blame must lie on the

KANU government which, inspite of calls to arrange for a *National Convention*, a dialogue with all people, and a democratic form of government, has INSISTED on doing things its own way: the resort to repression.

(Okullu 1997a:151-155)

This is what Gutierrez (1973:115) has called ‘critical reflection on historical praxis’. The churches have reacted to the immediate crisis; they have not engaged in long doctrinal controversy (Lonsdale 2001:xi). He concludes that:

The churches did not consider it their task to develop a theology of power. Their principal agenda in Kenya was evangelistic, pastoral and developmental. Nevertheless from the point of view of *Nyayo* itself the churches threw down a challenge just by existing as separate institutions, outside the framework of *Nyayo* leadership.

However Benson (1995:187) has identified two Kenyan church leaders who have attempted to lay down their own foundations for a theology of power. These are Bishop Henry Okullu and Timothy Njoya who use the criteria of ‘justice’ and ‘human dignity’ respectively.

## 2.5 Conclusion

Okullu entered the Kenyan political scene during Kenyatta’s era in 1968. By then Kenyatta had laid the foundations upon which the nation would be built. Inadvertently Kenya became a *de-facto* one-party state through the dissolution of the sole opposition party KADU. Kenya was pursuing a capitalistic system with economic policies, which surrendered the interests of the poor to neo-colonial interests. Economic growth was dependent on foreign funding. The government promoted africanisation rather than nationalization of institutions and businesses. Wealth was concentrated in the hands of the ruling elite surrounding Kenyatta who appropriated for themselves the privileges of the settlers- land and positions. The poor remained landless. Those who challenged the authority of the state, advocated for radical wealth and land redistribution, spoke out against corruption were eliminated or detained without trial or fled the country. Potential presidential candidates who became a threat to the ruling elite were assassinated. Politics

became 'tribalised', serving the interests of some members of one ethnic community. Kenyatta and his inner circle ruled through the provincial administration, police and the army. The ruling party KANU and Parliament became irrelevant to the workings of the government. Ordinary people did not participate in the political process. Repression and corruption tarnished the last years of Kenyatta's rule. However church state relations in Kenyatta era were fairly cordial probably due to the fact that most of the prominent church leaders in the Kenyatta era were Kikuyu. They did not critique the Kenyatta government probably out of ethnic loyalty.

It is in these conditions and environment, which gave rise to Okullu's prophetic career. Okullu consistently challenged corruption, land grabbing, tribalism in employment or educational opportunities, detention without trial and authoritarianism during the Kenyatta regime.

The death of Kenyatta ushered in a more authoritarian rule by President Moi. He did not make any significant break with the Kenyatta regime except that he transformed the ruling party KANU into a formidable political force. KANU became the supreme political body in the country, overriding Parliament to the extent that it introduced major constitution changes affecting the electoral process, such as queue voting. Under Moi there has increasingly been a concentration of power in the executive and the marginalisation of the civil society.

Since Moi faced considerable opposition from powerful Kikuyu ethnic interests when he became President, he set about dismantling Kikuyu hegemony in the political and economic domain. He put his allies, mostly from his own ethnic group into key positions, irrespective of whether they were qualified for the jobs or not. He valued loyalty over competence and qualification. This led to the deterioration of national institutions, the economy, unbridled corruption, nepotism and tribalism. Many lost their lives in politically instigated ethnic clashes.

Moi like Kenyatta has been intolerant of criticism, under him Kenya became a *de-jure* one party state, abolishing the formation of opposition parties until December 1990 when section 2 (A) of the constitution was repealed, turning Kenya into a multi-party system. Those who were critical of the government or a threat to the ruling elite were detained without trial, fled the country or murdered like Robert Ouko and Bishop Alexander Muge.

The Moi regime made several unpopular amendments to the constitution, which resulted in severe indictment of the regime by church leaders, lawyers and the civil society. Many of these amendments were reviewed as a result of this.

It was in this increasingly repressive and bloody period of Kenyan history that Okullu's prophetic ministry would climax. In this highly ethnic conscious society, Okullu spoke not so much as a prominent Luo leader but as a churchman for the 'voiceless' and oppressed. Church-state relations in the Moi era have for the most part been confrontational, this is ironic as Moi is a churchgoer. It could be because Moi viewed the church as one of the institutions of the government.

In the Moi era Okullu was involved in the queue debate, challenged the various constitutional amendment bills, and agitated for the repeal of section 2 (A) of the Kenyan Constitution turning Kenya into a multi-party state.

The next chapter explores the social and spiritual factors which would shape Okullu to become the prophetic figure that he was.

## CHAPTER 3

### OKULLU'S SPIRITUAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter attempts to answer the following question; what factors shaped Okullu to become the prophetic figure that he was? Much of the material used in this chapter is drawn from his autobiography, *Quest for Justice: An Autobiography of Bishop Henry Okullu* (Kisumu: Shalom 1997a) because this gives an accurate picture of the various stages of Okullu's life. For purposes of the study, Okullu's life has been divided into three stages: formative, mature and old or retirement stages.

#### **3.1 Formative stage (1929-1971)**

Okullu was born in 1929 in a Luo traditional home in Ramba village, Asembo Location in what is now Siaya District, Western Kenya. He was the first male child of Ong'owo Adero and Ngore (Nyar Alaro) to survive after nine children had died in infancy and childhood. His surviving siblings were a girl Adero, Joseph Ogola and William Sijeny (Okullu 1997a:3). Since his parents were illiterate and did not record the specific month and date in which he was born, he later fixed it on 1, September when taking an insurance policy (Okullu 1997a:1).

Okullu was named after Francis Omondi a reputed *nyatiti* (harp) player who was playing near his home on the night he was born. In the Luo community, 'harpists were a recognised institution awarding approval to individual and communal achievements, and admonishing and reprimanding those who did not come up to standard' (Odinga 1967:9) Okullu was also named Obonyo and Onduru after two dead relatives but the name Okullu prevailed.

His mother Ngore daughter of Alaro Okuku was a strong influence on his life. He described her as 'industrious and fiercely independent'. She came from a clan reputed to bear daughters with stronger leadership qualities than men. She was a hard working fishmonger. When she was not doing this, she grew food for the family (Okullu 1997a:3). His friends called him '*Oke K'Ochieng*'- the son of daughter of K'Ochieng...or *Wuod Ngore*- son of Ngore.

### **3.1.1 The call, school education (1939-47/48)**

Okullu traced his call to the ministry back to the age of ten. A cousin of his Mariko Odero, was reading Revelation Chapter 9 out loud. His heart was gripped by the message of this passage. It was about the great tribulations that would come upon those who had not received the seal of God on their foreheads. He wondered how he could help people escape this and how he could learn to read the book for himself (Okullu 1997a:20). He decided against his parents' wishes to go to school. They wanted him to be a cowherd. Despite attempts by his father to prevent him from going to school, he continued with the support of Hezron Osuka, the headmaster. In a few months he had learnt how to read the New Testament. Ramba Okullu's birthplace was a bastion of Anglican Church influence. Okullu went to the primary school run by the Church.

Due to poverty and lack of support from his parents, Okullu's education suffered a great deal. He missed a lot of class time because he had to work in order to pay fees. He worked at a gold mine and later on as a kitchen boy for an Asian family. The only advantage he had, was a 'magnetic brain' which one of his employers described as a 'retentive mind' (Okullu 1997a:6). His mental abilities enabled him to cover a years' work in half the time it took others. For instance he was given accelerated promotion from Sub A to Sub B, then standard 1 in the first term of 1943 and standard 2 in the second term of the same year (Okullu 1997a:7).

He enrolled at Kisumu Sector School (Komulo) within the precinct of St. Stephen's Anglican Cathedral, the Episcopal Seat of the Bishop of Maseno that he would ascend to later in his life. He passed his Common Entrance Examinations (CEE) in 1945, completing the course time in four years instead of six (Okullu 1997a:8). He then joined Kima Central School run by Church of God Mission. Initially it was in Bunyore but due to disciplinary problems associated with the close proximity of Bunyore Girls' School, it was moved to Ingotse near Kakamega Town. Kima though near Maseno School did not measure up to it academically. It however produced outstanding scholars like Professor Simeon Ominde, the first Kenyan to be appointed a University professor. Throughout his school days at Kima, Okullu won scholarships administered by the school because he was always at the top of his class. Some of his classmates and teachers resented him because of this (Okullu 1997a:9).

The school at Ingotse had poor facilities and bad food. The boys had porridge for lunch and *nyoyo* (maize mixed with beans) for dinner. This was a big problem for the boys, a time bomb waiting to explode (Okullu 1997a:9). It finally led to a strike, which started when Okullu and his friend Gideon Odhiambo had gone to buy some groundnuts at a nearby shop. When the two returned, they found boys outside the makeshift dining hall shouting, 'No porridge again! No porridge again!' After diffusing the strike, the teachers interviewed the boys to establish the cause of the cause. Some of them claimed that Okullu was the ringleader of the strike. Okullu accepted the punishment meted out to him even though he knew that it was unjust. He got caned, had to hew a huge wattle tree, dig up all its roots and chop the trunk for firewood (Okullu 1997a:10). On satisfactorily completing the punishment, he resumed class, worked hard and achieved top grades.

However when he went home for the holidays, he wrote to the Principal of Ingotse informing him that he would not return to School because he had been unjustly treated. He also requested his Leaving Certificate. This was promptly sent to him. It stated amongst other things that his academic performance had been fair. The Certificate intensified his anger and rebellion against injustice so he tore it up. He wrote, 'at that time I decided I was not going to tolerate injustice whatever the cost. I paid dearly for

this: I walked into the world without a certificate' (Okullu 1997a:10). This marked the beginning of the development of his strong sense of justice. He got his first academic certificate (Cambridge School Certificate) through correspondence in 1960. He was a vicar by this time, having already obtained two Certificates: an ordination Certificate and a Certificate from Bishop Tucker College in Mukono, Uganda (Okullu 1997a:32).

While at Kima Central School he was baptised by immersion by the Church of God missionaries. He acquired the names John Henry. This he wrote 'implied to all that I was now a Christian, whose full name was John Henry Okullu!' (Okullu 1997a:21). After baptism he had a series of dreams that in his view confirmed God's call on his life. In the first dream God told him to ask all boys in his dormitory to go to Him for a three-day meeting, he did this. In the second dream God told him to tell the whole school to go for the same three- day meeting, which he did. In the third dream God told him to go 'tell the whole world to come to him'. By this time he was overwhelmed and confused. While at home during vacation, he tried to ask some people to interpret these visions. When they told him he needed to get 'saved' he did not understand (Okullu 1997a:21).

After leaving school, Okullu taught temporarily at Ramba Primary School after which he got manual work with the Military Construction Unit. He found the work and daily rigorous exercises strenuous. Just when he was about to run away, his ability to speak good English was spotted by a Resident Sergeant Major (RSM) Joseph Odhiambo who appointed him Clerk/Interpreter (Okullu 1997a:11). He was posted to Mombasa. Here he landed in trouble and was posted to Voi. He commented, 'I was not a good Christian at Mombasa and lured into every kind of evil'. He had backslidden as a Christian. At Voi he made friends with two brothers who introduced him to Esther Nyambok whom he later married. From Voi he was transferred to McKinnon Road, Kisumu, where he remained until the end of his contract in 1951. The Chaplain liked him and often asked him to read the lesson in the Morning Service to soldiers who were mostly unruly (Okullu 1997a:12).

### 3.1.2 Marriage and ordination (1951-1958)

Okullu and Esther Nyambok were married on September 26, 1951. Because of a series of events caused by bad weather, the marriage service was conducted at 8.00 pm by Rev. Hezron Nyongo, Vicar of Ramba, his home diocese. He wrote this about his wife: 'mature, stable in character and fully committed to the family, she has contributed tremendously to the way I have executed my ministry to the church and nation' (Okullu 1997a:18-19). She supported him, felt with him, worked with him, counselled him and prayed with him. He recognised her as a leader in her own right. Okullu commented that as a couple they were in a hurry to populate the earth (Okullu 1997a:16). Together they had six children. Paul, Ruth, Elizabeth, Timothy, Sarah and Phoebe. All their children received sound education. Okullu took great pride in this (Okullu 1997:17-18).

After his marriage, while en route to Mombasa to seek employment, he was persuaded by a relative to go to Kampala instead. He arrived in Uganda aboard the S.S Usoga having sailed across Lake Victoria from Kisumu. He reminisced,

My coming to Uganda was not as incidental as it would appear. Looking back now, I know that it was God's plan to bring me to this situation to reveal to me more clearly His call, which I first heard when I was a herds-boy (sic) of about ten years old.

(Okullu 1997a:20).

Initially he was employed as a clerk with the East African Railways and Harbour in Kampala. He went to Uganda at the height of the East African Revival. He lived with a relative Meshack Oiro who was an ardent revivalist. Oiro immediately embarked on a campaign to have him converted. He took him to many revival meetings and invited as many brethren as possible to witness to him (1997a:22). As Okullu interacted with the brethren he realized that they had something that he did not have. He was greatly weighed down by guilt and his sense of unworthiness increased. He felt the need to be freed.

On January 2, 1952 while opening the Bible aimlessly, it opened to the Letter of Hebrews Chapter 2, verse 3: 'How can they escape if they ignore such a great salvation?' He was reading New Revised Standard version. These words convicted him so much that he decided to 'escape' from Meshack Oiro's house to go live with Richard Oracha, but left it too late in the evening. Because it was dark he lost his way and landed on the doorstep of a saved woman Jerusa Nyambok whom he knew. He knelt down and wept bitterly. He repented and got 'saved'. The revivalists at home received the news with great jubilation while his wife was dumbfounded (Okullu 1997a:23). Although she came from a conservative evangelical Christian home, she had been warned by her parents not to join the 'saved' group at Ramba (Okullu 1997a:18). She later came round to his way of thinking, and also joined the revival movement like her husband (Okullu 1997a:26).

Okullu was in Uganda during the years of liberation struggle in Kenya. At this stage in his life he was indifferent to life in the society. His whole orientation was to convert souls and to take them to heaven. He wrote,

I had heard of the big names like Kenyatta, Tom Mboya, Oginga Odinga, Milton Obote, Julius Nyerere, James Gichuru and Eliud Mathu. My heroes were however great preachers like William Nagenda, Eric Sabiti, later the first Anglican Archbishop of Uganda Josiah Kinuka and Joe Church of Rwanda (1997a:16).

In 1955 in St. Paul's Cathedral, Kampala he witnessed the consecration of Festo Olang' and Obadiah Kariuki of Kenya, John Omari of Tanzania and Daniel Deng' Atong' of Southern Sudan. This event led him to answer affirmatively to the call of ordination (Okullu 1997a:23).

Okullu faced a very difficult time with the revival leaders over his desire for ordination until he shelved the idea and even 'repented' to the brethren that he ever wanted to be ordained (Okullu 1997a:25). One of them Musa Amoke regarded as the pillar of revival in Western Kenya asked him, 'If all you have full in your heart is the desire for

ordination, where is Jesus?' Later after Okullu's ordination the same man said, 'If Festo Olang' is a bishop, I am also a bishop. If you are a priest I am a priest too, so you must be obedient to the brethren' (Okullu 1997a:24).

It would appear that the East African Revival Movement established a leadership structure with its own rules and regulations for the conduct of its membership. Ultimately Okullu had to face William Nagenda and Yona Mondo (regarded as the second revival leader after Nagenda). Rev. Dishon Mukasa the ordained treasurer of the Church of Uganda was also present. He asked Okullu, 'What is your vision?' This question completely staggered and upset Okullu. Nagenda sensing his utter helplessness dismissed him saying: 'You are still young. Go and find out. Pray about it.' Okullu was at times bothered by the overconfidence of the revival leaders. He described himself as born shy but reasonable and responsible even though later in life he surprised himself by becoming vocal against oppression and injustice (Okullu 1997a:25).

Okullu's difficulties with the Revival Brethren over ordination, sprung from the intolerant view the brethren held towards those who did not fit the same pattern of experience or behaviour as them (Rostedt 1983:83). At the same time the brethren were sceptical about the sacraments offered by the churches, they claimed that these were formalities incapable of saving a person from sin and consequent damnation (Rostedt 1983:80). Ordination into the priesthood in their view, spelt the danger of one becoming lukewarm, losing their faith and maybe wasting their life, as 'Revival was the life of the church' (Rostedt 1983:80). This was probably their fear for Okullu.

Okullu saw himself as a victim in a situation in which the Revival Movement threatened to split the Church. Calamity was avoided when the brethren decided to remain obedient to the Church leadership and concluded that persecution by the Church would in the end, bear more fruit than starting a Church. Revival leaders did not want their potential young leaders to join the Church hierarchy. Bishop Stuart had expelled many of the leaders from Bishop Tucker College in 1940. If anyone sought ordination he was suspected of siding

with the oppressive church leaders. Only after severe testing and exhaustive examination by the brethren would one be allowed to approach church leaders (Okullu 1997a:22-25).

Unfortunately when Okullu also enquired about conditions for entering St. Pauls' Theological College, Limuru in Kenya from his own Bishop, Festo Olang' Bishop of Maseno, he told him that the ordained ministry was extremely difficult. He was better off being a clerk with East African Railways and harbours. In retrospect he admitted that Bishop Olang was right but asked; 'What does one do when he feels called to the ordained ministry by God himself' (Okullu 1997a:99).

Two years later, Rev. Dishon Mukasa asked him whether he was still interested in ordination and if so to attend a meeting he had set up for him with Bishop Leslie Brown the next day. He consented and was interviewed and admitted for ordination training at Bishop Tucker Theological College, Mukono, Uganda. At around the same time a letter came from Railways and Harbours headquarters in Nairobi notifying him of his promotion and immediate transfer to Dodoma. His increment in salary was to be backdated one year. He turned down the offer. His favourite text in those days was Amos 3: 8.

The lion has roared –  
Who will not fear?  
The Sovereign Lord has spoken  
Who can but prophesy?

He remarked,

Little did I know that I would live like Amos –'who was among the shepherds of Tekoa' preaching against evil in society and being attacked by political leadership and sometimes even from within the church (1997a:26).

At Theological College he was immensely interested in the OT prophets. He also learnt to speak Luganda. This was useful later in his understanding of church and politics in

Uganda. He was a top grade student throughout the two years at Mukono (Okullu 1992a:72). During his last year he was unanimously elected head student. This was no mean achievement for a foreigner (Okullu 1997a:28). One other important thing Okullu noted at this time was the presence of a female student, Florence Nanjali at the College. She was studying theology even though there had been no discussions on ordination of women then. Eventually she was commissioned a Lay Reader and the Provincial Mother's Union Leader of Church Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi (Okullu 1997a:27). This could be one of the factors that influenced his early decision to ordain women in his diocese before other bishops in Kenya.

Okullu was ordained on December 14, 1958 at Namirembe Cathedral by Leslie Brown Archbishop of Uganda and Bishop of Namirembe Cathedral. In his zeal for ordination, Okullu's sympathy lay with Kenyan Luo's, thousands of who were working in Kampala. He wanted to return home to serve them after ordination (Okullu 1997a:29). He was therefore disappointed when he was posted to Kakira as a Chaplain of Madhvani Sugar factory, the largest sugar-producing factory in Uganda. The Archdeacon of Busoga Bill Butler wanted him to serve here because of his knowledge of Kiswahili (Okullu 1997:30). Kakira employed about ten thousand workers from all over East and Central Africa: Kenya, Congo (Zaire), Sudan, and Tanzania. He was later compelled to learn and conduct services in Lingala, a vernacular language spoken by a large ethnic group in Zaire (Okullu 1997a:30).

### **3.1.3 A shift in ministry focus (1958-1962)**

Okullu and his family faced a lot of difficulties in Kakira. They had to contend with sickness, poverty, loneliness, and lack of proper schooling for the children. He was depressed, questioned his ordination and was tempted to quit. He wrote Archdeacon Bill Butler, 'I feel very lonely; God has deserted me. I must go'. Bill Butler together with Yowasi Musajjakawa and Micah Mwavu came to Kakira to encourage them. They said to him, 'You must have your victory here. After that you can go. If you accept defeat here it will always follow you' (Okullu 1997a:31). He stayed and things got better. He later

commented, 'ministry at Kakira was a real turning point in my theological vision and biblical interpretation' (Okullu 1997a:31). Two significant events occurred here, which started shifting Okullu's ministry in a new direction.

Silas Okumu, a Kenyan got saved about the same time his fellow workers were contemplating forming a trade union. They asked him to be their leader. Okullu advised him to take up the job. Unfortunately, the management threatened by the movement banned the union and dismissed Okumu. Okullu later learnt that Okumu had got a job in Mombasa but had become a Muslim. This incident troubled Okullu. He questioned himself, 'Did I mislead him or was I beginning to say that Christianity should be tried out where the shoe pinches?' (Okullu 1997a:32).

The other event which contributed to Okullu's shift in ministry focus was one involving an Asian headman who slapped a worker called Elisha and hurled verbal abuse at him in a plantation owned by the Madhvani group. Okullu asked the Asian why he had done this and went to inform the Welfare Officer, a European, about the incident. The officer did not take kindly to his interference. He demanded the removal of Okullu from the area but the Archdeacon Bill Butler intervened. Okullu stayed on with stern warnings against interference. He continued to serve at Kakira but he remained silent on what he regarded as the social implications of the gospel. However he continued to be plagued with a very unsettling, unanswered question: 'How can I just convert these people's souls and have nothing to do with their physical and spiritual well being?' (Okullu 1997a:33).

In 1961 Okullu was asked to write journal articles on church and society for *New Day*, a Church periodical launched by a British Journalist, Norman Hart, at the request of Bishop Leslie Brown. Rev. Jack Hodgins, an Irish clergyman who was the Warden of Bishop Tucker had recommended Okullu to Hart because of his good writing skills. This opportunity, according to Okullu, marked the beginning of a career, which was to be his trademark. 'I was now to assume the role of Amos, Isaiah, Micah and the rest' (Okullu 1997a:34). He was later appointed Assistant Editor of the periodical. His ministry became that of priest/journalist fulfilling priestly duties around Kampala and on weekdays

reporting on religious as well as other activities including politics. For him this time the crucial question was, 'what is the Church's mission in the world?' (Okullu 1997a:35).

His training as a journalist by Norman Hart consisted of four principles of simple communication,

- (1) Say the truth and nothing but the truth
- (2) Be simple and avoid flowery language
- (3) Write short clear sentences
- (4) Say what you want to say and shut up! (Okullu 1984:34)

One of the articles he remembers writing at this time was against the British Protectorate Government of Uganda for detaining without trial some leading Ugandan leaders. This was a time of intense political activity in Uganda leading to political independence (Okullu 1997a:34).

Due to the wise counsel of Bishop Leslie Brown, who said to Okullu, 'I think your future will be in church leadership', and had negotiated a scholarship for him, Okullu went to Virginia Theological Seminary (1963-1965) to pursue a Bachelor of Divinity Degree. Traditionally the Seminary was evangelical. Okullu himself had been intent on pursuing a degree in Communications at Syracuse University in New York. In Virginia he experienced culture shock. Okullu narrated one such incidence:

I was feeling hungry after shopping in downtown Alexandria, which is not far from the Seminary. I entered a restaurant, and sat down to eat lunch. All waiters and customers stared at me, giving me curious looks. Eventually, a waiter came to me and explained, 'Sir we do not serve blacks here'. 'I don't want blacks: I want chicken,' I shouted. The man was as surprised as I was, because I had never known any food called 'blacks'.

(Okullu 1997a:36).

Okullu was in America during the assassination of John F. Kennedy in November 1963. There is however no mention of the American Civil Rights Movement as one of the

factors that influenced him to become the prophetic figure he later became in his autobiography

### 3.1.4 Further training and ministry as priest/journalist (1963-1971)

His studies in Virginia set him on a new path of discovery, namely that the mission of the church was the total liberation (salvation) of the whole person, body, soul and spirit (Okullu 1997a:37). His favourite text on this was Colossians 1:28

It is him whom we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in wisdom so that we present everyone complete and mature in Christ. For this I toil and struggle with all the energy he powerfully inspires within me.

The subjects that had a profound effect in transforming his theological thinking were, Church and Society, Christian Social Ethics and Studies of the O.T prophets. He also had a particular liking for Church History. Two notable figures he studied in the Church and Society course were, Fredrick Denison Maurice and J.M. F Ludlow's struggles during the Industrial revolution in the United Kingdom. He seems to have been influenced by Maurices' high view of the Church and an equally high view of the State. He held that both Church and State, law and religion, have a divine origin, but are quite distinct though necessarily united. Okullu also quoted him as having made the statement: 'A churchman must be a politician' (Okullu 1997a:37).

F. D Maurice was a Christian Socialist. He and his friends including J. F Ludlow read and interpreted the 'sign of their times,' in the light of the gospel, taking the context seriously as an act of Christian discipleship. This meant considering 'the questions which were currently occupying the minds of their countrymen. Apart from this, they collaborated with others to provide practical innovative solutions to their people's problem. They also challenged the prevailing theological and ecclesiastical orthodoxies. For more on this, see John Atherton's book entitled *Social Christianity: A Reader*. (London: SPCK, 1994).

Okullu's prophetic ministry to a large degree involved interpreting the immediate political events, the questions and answers being articulated and responded to these, bringing the mind of Christ to bear on these issues. Practically, Okullu and others set up Victoria Finance Limited-Kenya to harness the savings of the people from the Lake Region and to support credit needs of its economy (Okullu 1997a:173). He also initiated community based development projects in his diocese. Okullu challenged the evangelical other worldly beliefs. He believed in the development of the whole person, body, soul and spirit.

Virginia Seminary in 1974 awarded him an honorary Doctoral Degree in Divinity in recognition of 'his restless concern for freedom in Christ and his prophetic voice in the church and out' (Okullu 1997a:72). He also got the opportunity to write his autobiography during his sabbatical at the same institution.

After graduating in 1965, he immediately went on attachment with *Daily Post* and *Echo* Newspapers in Liverpool in Britain as preparation for taking over as editor of *New Day*. He learnt one important thing there,

There is no such thing as 'Christian Communication' in a narrow sense. One has to learn how to master the art: the basic principles of communication and then apply the skills in one's field of ministry (Okullu 1997a:38).

Okullu may have been repudiating the narrow concept of Christian communication with the notion of only certain material qualifying to be labelled Christian. Any issue interpreted from a Christian perspectives, qualifies to be called Christian communication. Communication is a neutral tool or medium. It's the content being relayed, which determines its nature. This discovery set Okullu's mind free to address all manner of issues from the one-party system, certain constitutional amendments, issues of corruption, injustice, human rights, democracy, federalism amongst other things. For more details see my chapter 4.

He took over the editorship of *New Day* towards the end of 1966, and was concerned that his nationality could become an issue. He was the only graduate priest in the Church of Uganda except for the late Tom Nabate who was a lecturer at Makerere University. His terms and conditions of service vastly improved. According to him, the Scripture, 'seek ye first God's kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you', became literally true. His children went to the best schools in Uganda. He was also appointed the Provincial Publicity Secretary of the Church of Uganda. He handled all matters concerning publicity and publications (Okullu 1997a:40). Janani Luwum, later Bishop of Northern Uganda, Archbishop of Uganda, to be assassinated by Idi Amin, who was the Provincial Secretary at the time (Okullu 1997a:45) also was his colleague and great friend.

When Okullu took over as editor of *New Day* the Anglican Church was embroiled in a fierce campaign to elect the first African Archbishop to replace Leslie Brown. The revival movement was torn between legalists and liberals and a civil war was looming between the Central Government led by Milton Obote and the Kingdom of Buganda (Okullu 1997a:40).

In the 1950's as the spirit of nationalism swept through Uganda, the major question that remained unsolved was the place of the Kabaka (King of Baganda) in an independent Uganda. The Kabaka was also perceived to be the father of the Church of Uganda. The two leading politicians, Apollo Milton Obote and Benedicto Kiwanuka and their parties, Uganda People's Congress (UPC) and the Democratic Party (DP), respectively sought to strike a deal with the Kabaka and his party Kabaka Yekka (KY). Obote, the shrewder politician of the two, offered Kabaka Mutesa the position of head of state in return for his position as prime minister, upon independence. He proposed a coalition government between UPC and KY (Okullu 1997a:40-43).

In 1960 Obote's Army, led by Idi Amin, descended upon Lubiri (Mutesa's Palace) and destroyed it. Disguised as a Catholic Priest, the Kabaka escaped and fled to England.

Obote proceeded to abolish the Kingdoms of Buganda, Bunyoro, Toro, Busoga and all other ethnic entities everywhere in Uganda (Okullu 1997a:43).

Milton Obote having destroyed the kingdoms and driven Mutesa out then proceeded to declare Uganda a One-Party State and banned all opposition parties. Okullu wrote a strongly worded editorial in *New Day* objecting to this and saying that it would introduce dictatorship. This caused a major uproar in the Ugandan Parliament (Okullu 1997a:46).

Archbishop Leslie Brown influenced the appointment of his successor, Eric Sabiti rather than the Muganda Dunston Nsubaga. He had become more and more disenchanted with the Baganda who, before independence sought ascendancy both in Church and State. The Baganda had accused him of colluding with the Governor to deport Kabaka to the United Kingdom. According to Okullu, Sabiti was the best man for the job as he was a Makerere graduate, widely travelled and a leading figure in the East African Revival. He considered him 'one of the greatest Christian people' he ever met (Okullu 1997a:45).

In 1967, during the Obote/Mutesa crisis, Okullu accompanied Luwum, Yona Okoth and Archbishop Sabiti to the Parliament buildings in Kampala to meet Obote and to protest against the stories of soldiers molesting, robbing, and committing all kinds of atrocities in the villages against innocent people. Obote promised to return the soldiers to barracks. However, on the next day the photograph they had taken with Obote appeared in the *Uganda Argus*. The Baganda attacked Archbishop Sabiti, accusing him of having taken his 'Gentile' brothers (non-Baganda) to Obote to thank him for killing the Baganda (Okullu 1997a:45).

Another incident occurred which precipitated Okullu's desire to return home even after he had seriously thought of becoming a Ugandan citizen. He relates the incident as follows,

One evening, our son Timothy, came home and asked me, '*Babu wan jokanye?*' (Luo), meaning 'Father where are we from?' I told him we were Kenyan, 'Timothy replied, 'And why don't we go there?' Talking more with Timothy he told me that Baganda

children had been telling him 'Gwe muganda w'Obote' (Luganda), meaning 'You are Obote's kinsman.' Timothy loathed this statement. The Baganda loathed Obote.

(Okullu 1997a:46).

It was at this time that Rev. Stanley Booth-Clibborn the editor of *Target* (English) and *Lengo* (Kiswahili) newspapers approached him. Okullu returned to Kenya at the end of 1967, after sixteen years (Okullu 1997a:46).

The East Africa Venture Company published the weekly newspapers, *Target* and *Lengo* weekly. The National Council of Kenya and the Christian Council of Tanzania had established the newspapers as 'tools for speaking against the evil in society', which they perceived to be their role (Okullu 1997:49). *Target* and *Lengo* had inherited a tradition established in the past by the National Council of Churches of Kenya that had published a periodical called *Rock*, which waged a tough battle against the colonial Government. It had fought for Jomo Kenyatta's (Kenya's first President) release from detention and joined the campaign for Kenya's independence. Stanley Booth-Clibborn had also edited it (Okullu 1997a:49).

On December 2, 1968, Okullu reported for duty with *Target* and *Lengo* as Assistant Editor. Booth-Clibborn had left and had been replaced by another CMS expatriate the Rev. John Schofield (1997a:48). By then Okullu was certain that there was no going back on his firm conviction, formed after a lot of Bible reading, that 'the Church is not here merely to convert souls. The Church must be the mouthpiece for those who cannot speak for themselves on political, economic and other social issues'. He set out to employ *Target* and *Lengo* 'to speak out for the underdogs of the two countries' (Okullu 1997a:49).

In 1968 he wrote a scathing editorial attacking the proposed building of KANU (Kenya African National Union) headquarters at 2.8 million Kenya Pounds while so many people were living in atrocious conditions in Mathare slums in Nairobi. The article provoked

much anger in the Government. The editor John Schofield was dismissed at the instigation of the Attorney General, Charles Njonjo. Okullu took over as editor.

There are important questions that arise about the financing of this enormous building and 1.8 million pounds is a vast sum for a party headquarters. We would hope the pros and the cons of such are weighed very carefully when there is not only a shortage of houses for people. But obviously such questions will be asked by parliament and no doubt satisfactory answers will be forthcoming from the minister responsible.

1960s were a difficult time for any critic of the Government. Oginga Odinga (Kenya's first Vice-President) and his party Kenya People's Union (KPU) became highly critical of the Government on various issues but focussed primarily on the Government's policies on land. Since *Target* and *Lengo* addressed the same issues though from a distinctly different platform, the two newspapers were branded as supporters of KPU. This situation was made worse by the fact that Okullu and Odinga were both Luo's. Secret Police begun trailing Okullu everywhere he went (Okullu 1997a:51).

Faced with financial uncertainties arising from the fact that the newspapers were run by donations from abroad which could cease anytime, and the pressure by the government on the printer of the two Newspapers to tone down its language, Okullu raised funds abroad, purchased a printing press and a building on Tom Mboya Street, Nairobi to house it (later called Lengo House). He also bought land and built a house for the editor.

Two significant events occurred while Okullu was editor of *Target/Lengo*. The assassination of Tom Mboya, the then minister for Economic Planning and Development and the General Secretary of KANU on July 5, 1969 and the subsequent oath taking in Central Province thereafter. He wrote his strongest editorial blaming the Kikuyu dominated Government for the Mboya murder (Okullu 1997a:53). I am unable to quote excerpts from this material because the material was unavailable, even in the Kenya National Archives, libraries of Public Universities and the NCKK archives. This is a sad reflection of our inability to keep records or an indication of the extent of hostility the government had towards Okullu's articulation of socio-political and economic issues.

He wrote another hard hitting editorial which led in the fight against oathing. The oathing reminiscent of the Mau Mau period of 1950's was taking place in Central province among the Kikuyu people. For more details on the Mau Mau movement and oathing see, Wanyabari O Maloba. *Mau-Mau and Kenya: An Analysis of a Peasant Revolt* (Indiana: Indiana Press, 1993); Tabotha Kanogo. *Squatters & the Roots of Mau-Mau: 1905-1963* (London: James Currey, 1987); and Bruce Berman & John Lonsdale. *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya & Africa. Book Two: Violence & Ethnicity* (London: James Currey, 1992).

The 1969 oathing was allegedly being used to unite the Kikuyu's against the Luo's, the first and second largest tribe then respectively. It was intended to keep the Kikuyu in power forever (Okullu 1997a:54). Many Kikuyu Christians were persecuted for declining to take the oath. Okullu's subsequent issue of *Target* led the fight against oathing. Others endorsed his stand and within a few months it stopped. He made the following observation concerning this incident,

It is a very painful lonely business occasionally to obey a call from God to give a lead in a fiercely controversial national issue. But that is the role of prophetic demand (Okullu 1997a:53).

As a priest in the period 1968-70 Okullu had extended preaching programmes in various churches and schools in and around Nairobi. Most of his preaching was done at St. Stephen's Anglican Church on Jogoo Road (Okullu 1997a:56). In late 1970, Raymond Harris the Provost of the All Saint's Cathedral approached him formally to assist him with Sunday Services at the Cathedral. His assistance was required because the Curate John Nyesi had gone for theological studies at Cambridge University, United Kingdom. Okullu accepted the invitation reluctantly because he knew it would seriously curtail his preaching activities in schools and churches. On average he preached once a month, in the morning at the Cathedral (Okullu 1997a:57).

When Raymond Harris the Provost gave notice to the Cathedral that he was planning to leave by June 1971, he persuaded the Cathedral Parochial Church Council and Chapter that it was time for a native Kenyan, to take over as provost. The Cathedral had been the official Colonial Church with a special seat for the Colonial Governor, even after the declaration of independence. It still had a large nucleus of older white population (Okullu 1997a:58). Guided by the general feeling in the congregation that Okullu would be the most suitable for the job, Harris approached Okullu once again. Okullu consented to be considered for the position.

It was a difficult decision for him to make. He was bothered by a lot of questions. For instance how could he translate his ministry, which up to now had been highly critical of social evils in the society, into the full-time work at the Cathedral where the Attorney General, Charles Njonjo, among others, was a staunch member? (Okullu 1997a:58). However Okullu agreed to become Provost because he remembered what Bishop Leslie Brown had told, 'Your future is in church leadership not in journalism' (Okullu 1997a:58).

### **3.1.5 Ministry as Provost of All Saints Cathedral, Nairobi (1971-1974)**

In 1971 Okullu then resigned to become the first African Provost of All Saints Cathedral. He was inducted by Archbishop Festo Olang'. When the news of Okullu's appointment became known, many church leaders such as John Gatu the Secretary of the Presbyterian Church in East Africa were very disappointed. They asked Okullu why he was quitting a ministry of such ecumenical importance for a post with a limited scope like the Provost of a Cathedral? In retrospect Okullu commented,

Thank God, the scope was growing ever wider with my acceptance of that job. My quest in the church and society and in the ecumenical movement in East Africa, and far beyond its borders cannot be matched by a simple statement I had uttered, 'I want to become Provost' (Okullu 1997a:58).

At Okullu's death, Rev. John Gatu admitted in a condolence letter to the family and ACK Archbishop, David Gitari, written on 18<sup>th</sup> March 1999, his earlier disappointment at Okullu's acceptance of the cathedral position. He wrote:

Later when Henry John Okullu became the first African Provost ... some of us were not quite sure that this was the right move at the time; but he being an Anglican, in his own mind, knew quite clearly what he was doing. This move and his work at the Cathedral prepared for the Bishopric of Maseno South.

After gaining the confidence of the congregation administratively and emotionally, he got the opportunity to start speaking out again on social issues. Most of the sermons he preached during 1972-1973 were based on the books of the O.T prophets. He consistently challenged corruption, land grabbing, ethnicity in employment or education opportunities, detention without trial and authoritarianism (Okullu 1997a:63). The sermons were unsettling to a number of pro-establishment figures especially in the One-Party regime.

One of his happiest moments at the Cathedral was when he presided over what he termed 'the wedding of the decade' between the then Attorney General Charles Mugane Njonjo and Margaret Bryson in 1972 (Okullu 1997a:67-71). This is significant because Njonjo was considered to be Okullu's worst enemy (Okullu 1997a:68).

Njonjo's stormy relationship with Okullu had begun when Okullu took over as editor of *Target* and *Lengo* and adopted a highly political editorial policy. There was a permanent state of confrontation between the two at official level as Njonjo was the Attorney General. According to Njonjo the influence of the newspapers rivalled that of the Government. Njonjo said:

The late Bishop became the most fiery and feared editor, until we in the government wondered whether he was running a parallel government or the Target itself was a government.

(*Kenya Times* March 19, 1999)

The situation worsened when Okullu became the Provost of All Saints Cathedral. Okullu's sermons were provocative. He used the pulpit to critically hit at the government. Njonjo admitted that he was forced to use the floor of the House and Parliamentary immunity to hit back at the Provost (*People* March 19, 1999). This was because Okullu's messages 'were strong and had a lot of influence on the citizens' (*Kenya Times* March 19, 1999).

Njonjo relayed these facts during his eulogy at Okullu's funeral service at All Saints Cathedral, 18 March 1999. The former Attorney General said that their relationship later blossomed into a close friendship such that Okullu was able to preside over his wedding and over the confirmation of his first daughter, Wairimu (*People*, March 19, 1999). According to the *Nation* of March 19, 1999, Njonjo admitted that Okullu's unrelenting denunciation of injustice and bad governance had been justified.

### **3.2. Mature stage (1974-1994)**

#### **3.2.1 Ministry as Bishop of Maseno South Diocese**

Okullu succeeded Bishop Agola of Maseno South who prior to his retirement approached him to inquire whether he would be willing to succeed him as bishop. There were other candidates for the job. Remembering once again what Archbishop Leslie Brown had said to him concerning his future being in church leadership, Okullu accepted to be considered for the elevation.

Bishop Agola had organised some important projects for him like leading clergy retreats and preaching. The Electoral College of the Diocese met in the second week of November 1973 and elected him as the second Bishop of the Diocese of Maseno South (Okullu 1997a:73). Professor Simeon Ominde among others strongly objected to the move arguing that leaving Nairobi that was the centre of political, intellectual and administrative activities was a bad mistake. Others, like Samuel Ayany and his wife, were for it (Okullu 1994:74). They presented him with a Bible and quoted this passage:

One night the Lord said to Paul ‘Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will lay a hand on you, for there are many in this city who are my people (Acts 18:9-10).

Okullu was consecrated Bishop of Maseno South in 1974. Those who laid hands on him were Archbishop Festo Olang’ of Kenya, Archbishop Eric Sabiti of Uganda, Bishop Peter Mwangombe of Mombasa, Bishop Janani Luwum of Northern Uganda, and Bishop Raphael Ndingi, then Catholic Bishop of Machakos. He was consecrated at the age of forty-two becoming the youngest bishop in the country (Okullu 1997a:76).

Okullu became bishop at a very dark time in Luo history. The Luo were politically isolated and sidelined because of their support for Oginga Odinga’s Party and ideas. Several Luo leaders had died in mysterious accidents: others, like Tom Mboya had been assassinated. Many Luos turned up to witness Okullu’s consecration. This fact made Archbishop Sabiti comment, ‘I had no idea of the importance to your people of your being bishop here...Let not your people possess you; be available for the Church and the people of God everywhere in Kenya and beyond’. He pleaded with him to remain a national leader rather than a sectional leader (Okullu 1997a:80).

As a bishop he faced many challenges. The Diocese of Maseno South was the largest diocese in terms of population. It had about 250,000 members and over four hundred congregations according to a survey done by CORAT- Christian Organisation for Research Assistance Trust (Okullu 1997a:81). The Diocese of Maseno consisted of the administrative Districts of South Nyanza, Kisii, Kisumu and Siaya. It was also the poorest Diocese in the Church of the Province of Kenya, due to the fact that Nyanza was about the poorest Province, seriously lagging behind in economic development. The diocese was short of ordained leadership as none had been sponsored for theological training for several years. The few ordained staff were underpaid and seriously overburdened with work. The diocese was in bad shape administratively (Okullu 1997a:81). Even though there was no money, the first thing Okullu was prepared to do was to change the administrative structure. He wrote,

Money or no money, I made changes. It had been my operational policy since that time that I plan first and then I look for funds. Not once, in my many years as a church- man, have I failed to secure the money for a good and worthy cause. This has been a blessing and sometimes a curse (Okullu 1997a:82).

In 1975, Okullu launched the integrated Rural Development Programme. The Programme embraced primary health-care, agriculture, provision of clean water, nutrition and appropriate technology to uplift the living standards of his people. The Programme became a model for every Diocese in the CPK and some dioceses in Uganda even though the Diocese of Nakuru and the NCKK were running similar programmes (Okullu 1997a:89).

In order to generate income, the diocese built Alpha House, a multi million three-storey Office building, for rental. With the help of investors, Bishop Okullu founded Victoria Finance Company a church sponsored commercial bank (Okullu 1997a:91). He put up decent living quarters for the clergy and workers of his diocese (*Weekly Review*, March 19, 1999). Under his leadership, many of the clergy got theological training abroad and in Kenya (Personal interview, Ocholla Nov, 10 2001). The Diocese of Maseno South experienced phenomenal growth that resulted in its division into several Dioceses: Maseno West Diocese with headquarters in Siaya, Southern Nyanza with headquarters in Homabay and Maseno South Diocese with headquarters in Kisumu (Ojwang' 2002:68).

During his episcopate as bishop, Okullu travelled extensively in Europe, Asia, North America and Africa. He served as a Committee Member of several Committees of the World Council of Churches (WCC) such as the Central Committee of Churches, Justice, Peace and Sustainable Society, and Review Committee. He was Chairman of the Department of Communication (WCC) for seven years (Okullu 1997a:90-91). He served as Chairman of NCKK for two terms (Crouch 1993:157). The two terms were in the years 1976-1978 and 1988-1991. He was also closely associated with All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC).

Some of the achievements Okullu enumerates as bishop include the establishment of Uzima Press, a Publishing House for the CPK as Chairman of the Provincial Board of Communication. This fact is disputed in the book *Archbishop Kuria: A Biography: Strong in the Storms* (Nairobi: Cana Publishing, 2001). The Archbishop claims that the idea to set up a local publishing house began with him Okullu only took over from him. As Chairman of the Provincial Board of Community Services, Okullu established a community development network in all dioceses. He revived the CPK Unit of Research and started a research network in all dioceses. He was Chairman of the CPK Commission of Peace and Justice that was to become active in civic education and the promotion of human rights. He also served as Chairman of the Provincial Board of Finance and Chairman of the Commission to Review the CPK Constitution (Okullu 1997a:107).

One major event that occurred which affected Bishop Okullu was the murder of Janani Luwum by Idi Amin in July 1977. Luwum's family and others took refuge in Okullu's house in Kisumu. These included Archbishop Yona Okoth. This prompted Idi Amin to put a price on Okullu's head saying, 'If Bishop Okullu steps into Uganda he will be arrested and tried by military tribunal' (Okullu 1997a:95-96). Okullu lived with all Luwum's family until after Amin's fall (Okullu 1997a:95).

Another significant event that occurred which affected Bishop Okullu was the unceremonious retirement of Archbishop Festo Olang' and the subsequent election of his successor. Okullu (1997a:97) held the view that he was the most suitable candidate for the position of archbishop.

According to Okullu, the late Bishop Stephen Neil, who established the Department of Religious Studies University of Nairobi once told Okullu, 'You are the only person who knows anything about Anglicanism among Kenyan clergy. I hope you will be the next archbishop' (1997a:97). At one of the funeral services held for the late Bishop Okullu, the late Chief Justice Zacchaeus Chesoni made a scathing attack on those who had blocked Okullu's appointment as Archbishop. He commented, 'He was the best candidate but the saboteurs emerged' (*Nation*, March 20 1999). This fact is borne out by the media

during that period of time. The *Weekly Review*, August 31, 1990 made the following statements,

When Kuria was first chosen as head of CPK to replace retired Archbishop Festo Olang' in 1980, his election was widely regarded as having been influenced by extraneous forces especially powerful Charles Mugane Njonjo, a former Attorney General. Okullu had been widely regarded as the leading candidate to succeed Olang' and the election of the largely unknown Kuria came as a real surprise to independent observers.

According to Bishop Okullu, Luhya and Kikuyu ethnic sentiments enforced by political tribalism completely blocked his way such that a third person out of about twenty-five electors could not be found to sign his nomination form (Okullu 1997a:103). The Luhya tribalism was exhibited in the collusion of Archbishop Olang' with Bishop Mundia of Maseno North to support Crispus Nzano the Assistant Bishop of Mombasa for the archbishop position. Okullu's support was necessary to prevent a Kikuyu from getting the position. Okullu told the Archbishop to count him out of the plan (Okullu 1997a:98-99). He further said,

Crispus Nzano is a dear brother in the Lord, but I do not see in him such exemplary qualities, which would compel me to put him ahead of the more experienced Diocesan Bishops (1997a:99).

This was after the Archbishop had admitted to Okullu that he was the most suitable person to succeed him but that he would not recommend him for the job because the Government, namely the President and Attorney General would block his appointment (Okullu 1997a:98).

Okullu stated that it has been repeatedly indicated that his candidacy was blocked by Kikuyu tribalism (1997a:102-103). Archbishop David Gitari (the most immediate past Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Kenya) acknowledged that there was widespread knowledge that there were anti-Okullu feelings among the Kikuyu Clergy because they believed Okullu hated the Kikuyu or held an anti Kikuyu attitude, and that he had demonstrated this in his articles in the *Target* Newspapers (Musalia 2001:66).

According to Okullu the Kikuyu factor was very strongly enforced by political tribalism, in which Charles Njonjo was the prime mover (Okullu 1997a:103). This was the bitterest time in his life and ministry (Okullu 1997a:102). It is no wonder therefore that the relationship between Bishop Okullu and Archbishop Kuria was not very cordial at the beginning. The Archbishop was also less vocal on social ills than Okullu (*Weekly Review* August 31,1990).

Okullu wrote,

By the grace of God, before and after the Kuria election, I have been instrumental perhaps more so than any other bishop in the developing the underpinning structures for the church and in systematically and persistently pushing the church into a leading position in addressing public issues for which I have suffered savage attacks from politicians and their agents. The advocacy role of the Church must continue in Kenya (Okullu 1997a:107).

In 1983 Okullu was invited to attend an interview for the position of Secretary of the Anglican Consultative Council, to succeed Bishop John Howe. After much consultation with Deans and Archdeacons in his Diocese, and with the House of Bishops, Okullu received mixed reactions. Archbishop Manasses Kuria highly recommended him for the job while Bishop David Gitari then of Kirinyaga Diocese said 'I would not recommend that Bishop Okullu should go out of Kenya at this time' (Okullu 1997a:104). Okullu went ahead with the interview but failed to secure the job. The reason he was given for not securing the job were,

The Committee discovered in you a person totally committed to the service of his Church and Nation and his people, to take you from your Diocese and from Kenya would mean an extreme separation (Okullu 1997a:106).

As bishop, Okullu ordained Mrs Lucia Okuthe the first female priest of the Church of the Province of Kenya. In 1983 he ordained her as the first woman priest in Kenya. He argued that women were endowed with intelligence just like men so they should also be

given a chance to serve as ministers (Ojwang 2002:72). He did this before the Church of the Province of Kenya (CPK) resolved the issue of the ordination of women. Needless to say, this created a great deal of controversy. He was able to act independently because each Diocese in (CPK) was administratively autonomous. Up to 1991 the Diocese of Maseno South alone had ordained women to the priesthood (Okullu 1997a:68).

### 3.3 Old/Retirement stage (1994-1999)

Bishop Okullu retired in 1994. His socio-political involvement continued. He felt an inclination to enter politics; he was conscious of the pressure upon him to do so.

‘A lot of appeals have come to me to assist the Luo, and despite my low profile, the pressure continued. I have yielded to the pressure and now declare in politics, I’ve been, I am and will be’ (Weekly Review, November 11, 1994).

Okullu said he had spent some time since he had retired reflecting on the political trends in Nyanza and felt that he was now ready to take over from where the late Jaramogi Oginga Odinga had left off. He said he had come under intense pressure from a section of the ruling party, KANU, as well as the opposition to ‘salvage the Luo community and lead them’ (*Weekly Review* November 11, 1994). He seriously thought about vying for the Rarieda Parliamentary Seat or the newly created Kisumu West Parliamentary Seat as well as the Presidency but nothing came of these ambitions. There was a widespread belief in Nyanza Province that he was moving too fast too soon (*Nation* March 21, 1999). Others felt he wanted to run for the Bondo Parliamentary seat vacated by Odinga. He came under intense criticism for this (*Weekly Review* November 18, 1994).

Okullu’s retirement coincided with the death of Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, the undisputed Luo leader. Prior to this, Okullu’s name had been floated as one of the likely claimants for the vacant Luo ‘throne’. He was not averse to the idea. This irritated a lot of Luo leaders including the Odinga family. The general mood was that Okullu’s ambitions were getting the better of him. The idea of him filling in the vacuum left by Odinga was

laughed off in Luoland (*Nation* March, 20 1999). The Member of Parliament for Rongo Constituency Mr Aluoch Polo, criticised Okullu and those Luo elders who were supporting him, on the premise that 'the Luo community was not a kingdom to be inherited. A leader cannot be imposed on people' (*Weekly Review* November 18, 1994).

Okullu had been a close associate of Jaramogi Oginga Odinga and a key opinion leader in his camp. Okullu's influence was such that many aspiring politicians in Luoland made long queues at his doorstep to seek reference and to ask him to intercede on their behalf so as to be in favour with Odinga's (*Weekly Review* November 18, 1994). Only those politicians vetted by Odinga made it to parliament. Okullu was however not on good terms with Raila Odinga, Odinga's son, then leader of National Development Party (NDP).

Bishop John Henry Okullu died on 13<sup>th</sup> March 1999 at Nairobi Hospital of heart failure (*Nation*, March 15, 1999). He was buried in St. Peters' Ramba Anglican Church compound, his home church according to his wishes. Simplicity marked his burial. There was no feasting, no flowers and no cemented grave (*People* March 21, 1999). In a sermon preached at Stephen's Cathedral, Kisumu on August 1994 the Bishop had expressed his wish concerning this, 'Expensive suits and dresses and flowers are all right for princes but not for me. Dust to dust, ashes to ashes is my will. No cemented grave. I have told my family'.

The wishes of his Asembo Kokise clan which had wanted to perform some traditional mourning rites like feeding mourners and using bulls, shields, spears and giant clubs to perform a mock fight against death (*Nation* March 18, 1999) were thwarted. The late Bishop was buried under the Rights and Canonical Laws of the Anglican Church. The ruling was made by three Anglican Church of Kenya Bishops from Nyanza Province namely, Bishops Francis Mwai Abiero, (Maseno South Diocese), Joseph Otieno Wesonga (Maseno West), and Haggai Nyang (Southern Nyanza Diocese).

### 3.4 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to establish the factors that shaped Bishop Okullu to become the prophetic figure that he became

It is evident that Okullu had a keen sense of what was right and just in his teenage years when he was falsely accused of leading a strike. He was willing to pay a high price against injustice by leaving school without a certificate. This required great courage and boldness.

Okullu had great determination to do God's will for his life despite the many obstacles he faced. An example of this was his tenacity in seeking ordination when faced with opposition from the Revival brethren. Ultimately he humbly submitted to the spiritual authority of the Revival leaders until they gave him permission to proceed on. Apart from the Revival brethren, other people who influenced his life were his mother, from whom he got his strong leadership abilities; his wife, who supported, counselled, felt with him and prayed with him; and Bishop Leslie Brown whose wise counsel helped steer his subsequent career. He had told him that his future was in church leadership not journalism as Okullu had thought.

Others individuals who influenced Okullu were Norman Hart from whom he acquired basic skills of communication as a journalist; Eric Sabiti, Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Uganda who cautioned him against allowing his ministry as a bishop to be confined to his ethnic group but rather to have a national outlook; and veteran politician Jaramogi Oginga Odinga who was a close associate of his.

Okullu had a brilliant and reflective mind. He was able to think clearly and grapple with issues. He sought Christian explanations and interpretations for events. At a personal level he reflected on the events and circumstances of his life and the significance these

had for his ministry, his understanding of the gospel and the role of the Church in society. As a Chaplain at Kakira when told not to interfere in the ill treatment of personnel by the Management, he asked himself 'how can I just convert people's souls and have nothing to do with their spiritual well-being?' When he became Editor of *New Day*, the crucial question was, 'what is the church's role in the world?' He interpreted the request to write journal articles on church and society for *New Day* as an opportunity to assume a prophetic role.

Okullu was greatly influenced by his theological training. As a student at Bishop Tucker Theological Seminary he had taken a very keen interest in the Old Testament prophets. This interest continued in his theological training at Virginia Theological Seminary in USA. Other courses that shaped his theological thinking were Church and Society, Christian Social Ethics and Church History. Apart from Old Testament prophets his role models were Fredrick Denison Maurice and J M F Ludlow, two churchmen who played significant roles during the Industrial Revolution in the United Kingdom. By the end of his studies in Virginia he had come to the conclusion that the mission of the Church was the total liberation (salvation) of the whole person body, soul and spirit. This conviction formed the basis for his later activities.

As a priest/journalist, Okullu deployed his communication/journalistic skills in his ministry. These included his good writing skills and linguistic talents. He was fluent in English, Kiswahili, Luganda, Lingala and Luo. He did not go back on his firm conviction formed after much Bible reading, that the Church must be the mouthpiece of those who cannot speak for themselves on political, social and other social issues. He set out to employ *Target* and *Lengo* newspapers to speak out for the under dogs.

Okullu understood his ministry to be prophetic like that of the Old Testament prophets. As a prophetic voice he would speak for the voiceless and suffering in society. He would come to have great influence on political reflection in Kenya and a strong unwavering commitment to justice, truth and human rights. He would use the pulpit both as Bishop and Provost to challenge ills in the society even though this did not endear him to a lot of

people especially those in favour with the political establishment. He had the ability to read the signs of the times, the courage to not only preach, but also to write and live what he believed. As a Bishop he would not only address the spiritual needs of his people but their economic and developmental needs as well.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **THE EMERGENCE OF A PROPHET**

#### **4.0. Introduction**

The focus of Okullu's ministry was social concern particularly in the area of social justice. In both the Kenyatta and Moi's era, but particularly in the Moi era, he tackled issues relating to political liberation from the two repressive governments, through the struggle for democracy and multi-party politics; the disproportionate distribution of resources and opportunities to certain sections of the society; issues of human rights and the use of violence to resist opposition. He also condemned social evil in the form of corruption and tribalism. This chapter gives examples of instances when Okullu dealt with these issues.

#### **4.1. Okullu's struggle for political liberation**

##### **4.1.1 A brief overview of Okullu's political involvement**

One of the crucial issues Okullu struggled with was the repressive one-party system. Okullu called for change in the constitution to do away with the one-party state. This ultimately led to Kenya becoming a multi-party state in December 1990. Closely related to this struggle for democracy was the issue of queue voting for the 1988 General elections, and the banning of the secret ballot, which Okullu and others strongly opposed. Okullu also frequently dealt with the issue of church involvement in politics as he was constantly told to leave politics to politicians and concentrate on spiritual matters.

After Kenya became a multi-party state Okullu was involved in other initiatives aimed at expanding the democratic space. He and others formed a pressure group called Friends of

Democracy (FoD) with the sole purpose of coming up with a formula on how to choose one opposition presidential candidate to stand against President Moi in the 1992 General elections. Later on he came up with ideas on how to form a broad based reform oriented government and a new initiative for the selection of a single opposition presidential candidate. Because of his desire for a united opposition Okullu played a crucial role in reconciliation, trying to bring opposition leaders together and in retaining their hard won rights, and democratic space.

#### **4.1.2. One- party system**

As already stated, one of the key issues Okullu contended with was the one party system of government especially under President Moi. In the Kenyatta era Okullu was strongly opposed to it because of its bureaucratic nature, personalization of leadership, tendency to abuse of power and the blinding of people to their rights. He likened it to dictatorship. The *Weekly Review*, July 18, 1977 reported Okullu as having said,

Politically most African States are ruled by military dictators with every individual's life expendable at any time the ruler may decide so. Powerful bureaucracies rule the few remaining states. Leadership is personalized and this personalization leads to idolization of the leader to such an extent that people are made to believe that their rights come from the generosity of that leader.

This misunderstanding of power, as something given by the Creator for the service of one's fellow men is what has led to this abuse. Power is sought and maintained, often by unjust means, for its own sake. As a result of this Africa is involuntarily, by calculation, experimenting with something new: a system of government, which should best be described as one of party dictatorship.

This repressive element was evident in the way the KANU (the ruling party) leaders expelled from the party, members with dissenting views from theirs. Okullu was one of the three Anglican bishops who in various forums appealed to party leaders to exercise tolerance and restraint in dealing with party members. The other two were David Gitari of Mount Kenya East Diocese and Alexander Muge of Eldoret Diocese (*Weekly Review*

January 3, 1986). Okullu cautioned that although Kenya had been spared the political violence that was rife in other African countries, there was still tension in the party as members were expelled and sent into 'political destitution' (*Weekly Review* June 10, 1986).

In the Moi era Okullu gave other reasons for opposing the one-party system. He for instance criticised the one-party system saying that it could not sustain democracy because it left insufficient room for the practice of democratic concepts (*Weekly Review* September 26, 1986).

As 1989 drew to a close according to the *Weekly Review* of January 5, 1990 two clerics Bishop Henry Okullu of the Church of the Province of Kenya (CPK) and Rev. Njoya of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA), delivered controversial sermons in which they charged that collapse of communism in eastern Europe were lessons that African leaders and others elsewhere should keep in mind to avoid catastrophe. In what amounted to a New Year message to his congregation at Nairobi's PCEA St. Andrews Church, Njoya asked African leaders to re-examine their preference for single political party systems in light of the recent developments in Eastern Europe. Okullu predicted that a similar fate awaited 'dictatorships' the world over, including those he had in mind. This would happen within five years.

The *Weekly Review* of January 12, 1990 reported Njoya as having said

Such one party systems had completely failed to be democratic in Eastern European countries where they were manufactured and imported by such pioneer African nationalists as the late Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Dr. Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and the late Mr. Modibo Keita of Mali. Africa could not convert one-party political systems that they adopted from Eastern Europe into democracy by baptizing them under other names. He added, 'all forms of evils appear to stop being evil when baptized African.'

In same issue of the *Weekly Review* Kenyan political leaders condemned Njoya's sermon.

The Vice President George Saitoti said, 'Njoya's claim that the one-party system was imported was to deny the fact that Africans were capable of conceiving for themselves suitable political systems'. KANU chairman Mr. Peter Oloo Aringo argued that the one party-system was essentially African in concept and origin. He also said that Njoya's claims were 'a distortion of history and a manifestation of deep lack of knowledge of African political traditions.' The minister for livestock and development, demanded that those who make statements such as Njoya's, even from the pulpit should be detained without trial. The churchmen scoffed at such threats.

When Joseph Kamotho, KANU secretary general and minister for transport and communications promised that the ruling party would open debate on the type of political system Kenyans wanted, Okullu welcomed the promise but called for change in the Kenyan constitution to do away with the single party monopoly. The rest of his response reported in the *Weekly Review* of April 27, 1990 is given below:

Okullu declared categorically that it was a mistake to make Kenya a *de-jure* one-party state. He also suggested a two-term limit to the tenure of any future president. 'Power corrupts even a person with the best of will in the world, therefore power must be limited by fairly acceptable checks and balances.'

Okullu however expressed the fear however that open debate had become foreign to Kenya and said many people had been forced to withdraw into what he called their 'professional ghettos' for fear of intimidation, when they express their views that differ from those of KANU.

He further said, 'there is the assumption that the national destiny is and remains in the hands of the party leaders, whether the future looks catastrophic or not'. He suggested that a commission be formed to look into what relevant political and economic systems Kenyans wanted. He also noted that neither a multi-party system nor a single-party system would automatically guarantee what Kenyans are looking for 'namely to allow the people to elect their leaders freely and have them accountable to the people'. Okullu declared that the problem in Africa was not political systems or ideologies but low quality leadership and that Kenya was ready for a plural- 'unity within diversity'-political approach. According to him, for almost three decades, the one-party systems had failed to give Kenyans complete freedom to choose leaders of their own choice, make them accountable or remove them from offices when they failed in their duties.

The *Weekly Review*, May 4, 1990 reported support for Okullu's call to the effect that constitution be changed as having come from the same controversial clergymen and lawyers who had in the past been at the forefront of taking on the government over contentious political issues. These included the Presbyterian Church of Africa (PCEA) cleric, Dr. Rev. Timothy Njoya, the bishop of the Mount Kenya East Diocese of CPK Dr. David Gitari, the provost of the St. Paul's Cathedral in Embu, Canon Gideon Ileri while the lawyers included ex-detainee Mr. Gibson Kamau Kuria, his partner Mr. Kiraitu Murungi, the editor of *Nairobi Law Monthly* magazine Mr. Gitobu Imanyara and Rumba Kinuthia.

The exception, however, was a statement issued by the CPK Bishop of the diocese of Eldoret, the Rt. Rev. Alexander Muge and the Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church in Kenya Bishop Lawi Imathiu, supporting the one-party system reported in the same issue of the *Weekly Review*.

Muge and Imathiu supported the one-party system citing the same reason as KANU politicians that a multi-party system ran the danger of degenerating into tribal groupings. The two bishops added, however that strong checks and balances should be introduced to ensure democracy within the system. However the arguments for and against multi party system remained in the wake of Okullu's bombshell.

The next week's *Weekly Review* of May 11, 1990 reported Okullu as having re-entered the fray with his circulation of a document signed by members of a standing committee of his Maseno South Diocese reiterating disenchantment with single party system.

In June 1990 when the government detained Rubia and Matiba in July 1990 for agitating for multi-party democracy, The *Weekly Review*, July 20 1990 reported Okullu, as having demanded the resignation of the KANU government and fresh elections.

Okullu called for the establishment of a constituent assembly to amend the country's constitution to allow for a more binding social contract between the government and the

governed. Okullu also said that a transitional government of national unity should follow the resignation of the government, while a more viable political system was being worked out.

According to the *Weekly Review* of July 27, 1990 as the momentum for changing the constitution grew Okullu faced threats to his life. He was confronted by a mob of 40 KANU youth armed with sticks and whips, outside a church in Kisumu on a Sunday. The youth harassed the bishop, accusing him of inciting people against the government through his sermons in favour of political reform and finally threatened to arrest him. Okullu later described the incident as scaring, saying 'I cannot gather my mind after the ugly episode.' This illustrates how vulnerable Okullu was. His life was constantly in danger.

The *Weekly Review* of July 27, 1990 reported the reaction of various personalities to the incident. The action of the youth was strongly condemned by other church leaders especially those from Okullu's diocese. The immediate reaction of KANU was to dissociate the party from the action. Surprisingly two MPs said in Parliament that the action of the youth was justified. According to the MP of Nyakach, Ojwang K'Ombudo there was nothing irregular about the incident because the youth had confronted 'Okullu the politician not Okullu the bishop'. For his part, the MP for Webuye, Mr. Joash wa Mang'oli told the House that Okullu deserved to be harassed and warned that a similar fate would befall Okullu if he dared to step into Mang'oli's constituency.

The response of Joseph Kamotho, KANU secretary general was reported in the *Weekly Review*, August 3, 1990.

Describing the youth's action as admirable, Kamotho said that they were performing their normal duties by ensuring that Okullu did not convene an illegal meeting. Kamotho said that Okullu had been behaving more like a self-appointed politician and agitator than a church leader and that his 'public behaviour could no be tolerated in a society that believes in the rule of law.'

According to the *Weekly Review* of August 10, 1990 Luo politicians eager to distance themselves and the Luo community from Okullu's and Oginga Odinga's involvement with the multi-party debate, led a delegation of leaders from Kisumu, Siaya, and South Nyanza districts to pledge allegiance to President Moi at his Kabarak home in Nakuru. All the cabinet ministers from the three districts, Onyango Midika, Ndolo Ayah, John Okwanya and Dalmas Otieno were part of the group.

In clear allusion to Okullu and Odinga,

Aringo stated that those 'who write letters and call press conferences' had no following among the Luo. Okwanya took issue with the two men describing them as 'black sheep' who had disgraced the Luo community. According to them the two did not represent Luo opinion.

The same *Weekly Review* of August 10, 1990 recorded Okullu's response to Aringo and Okwanya. Okullu said that he spoke for the Luo 'more than all the Luo MPs put together.' This incident highlights the lonely path Okullu walked. He was even rejected by prominent leaders from his own ethnic community. He paid a high price for his outspokenness.

The *Weekly Review* April 5, 1991 reported that after an Easter sermon at St. Stephen's Cathedral in Kisumu, Okullu renewed his call for a multiparty political system.

He said that democracy 'had never been, and would never be possible under the one-party system'. He repeated his earlier call for 'a national convention' to discuss what he termed 'major issues' facing the country, and dismissed last December KANU delegates conference at Kasarani as a 'rehearsed pantomime.'

Okullu described 'one party system' as a misnomer since, in his view the process ruled out any contest over policies and reduced elections 'to mere beauty contests'. He claimed that the demand for a multi-party system was a demand for accountability, adding that those Kenyans calling for multi-party system were 'asking to be given a choice between or among different policies of running the government'. Okullu also outlined what he

said were important matters still outstanding on Kenya's political agenda: free and fair elections, the limitation of presidential term of office to a maximum of 10 years, and the abolition of detention without trial. 'As I said even before the KANU review committee started its work, the debate has just begun; we cannot think that the task has been fulfilled'.

#### **4.1.3. Other initiatives by Okullu aimed at increasing the democratic space**

The *Weekly Review* of June 21, 1991 reported the announcement of the formation of the Justice and Peace Convention-Kenya (JPC-K) by Okullu the convention's chairman. The convention was the joint effort of The Law Society of Kenya (LSK), the Church of the Province of Kenya (CPK) and the National Council of Churches (NCCK).

The aim of the convention was to hold prayer symposiums in all provincial headquarters with a view to discussing the process of 'establishing and sustaining justice and peace in a free and democratic Kenya.'

Details of what the convention stood for were given in the same *Weekly Review* of June 21, 1991. These are given below:

Among the JPC's objectives were to ascertain the election of the country's President by all Kenyans and the limitation of the presidential tenure to two five year terms; the rehabilitation of the economy by promoting indigenous initiatives and encouraging foreign investment; the provision of effective guarantees of civil, political, social and economic rights and freedoms for all Kenyans; provision of adequate homes and essential services for the urban poor; the establishment of laws and other legal instruments that conform with the United Nations Charter on fundamental human rights and freedoms ; the creation of just socio-economic structures, in the full knowledge that the violation of human rights is often rooted in unjust structures in society.

Regarding the theological basis of the convention, the document declared, 'our prayers are intended to be a channel where God will use us to shake the foundations of this nation. The intention of the convention was to go beyond protest to assume responsibility for proposing and pursuing a people's alternative to the oppressive system.'

The first symposium, scheduled for 30 June at All Saints Cathedral in Nairobi, was bound to be a highly charged affair with anti-government clergy and lawyers tearing government policy apart.

Okullu's announcement caused a predictable uproar. He called off the convention at the last minute. The *Weekly Review* of June 21, 1991 reported the change in plans.

According to the same issue of the *Weekly Review* the immediate result of Okullu's announcement were splits within the sponsoring organisations. Some LSK members, led by Mutula Kilonzo accused Paul Muite of committing the society to the convention without the members' mandate, while the NCCK's General Secretary, Mr. Samuel Kobia, said that the Council's Executive Committee had not been consulted in the matter and was therefore, not party to the convention.

The initial reaction of the government was

'These are not prayers', said the KANU's National Chairman and Minister for Education, Mr. Peter Oloo Aringo. 'This is a political meeting with a purpose'. Various politicians echoed his view. Aringo said the government would take stern measures against those who attended the meeting.

The same issue of the *Weekly Review* June 21, 1991 also reported that the announcement of the Convention came in the wake of the governments' refusal to register Oginga Odinga's proposed National Development Party. Odinga was the one prominent politician who publicly supported the JPC. He said that it was a positive step in the right direction since meaningful reforms and changes could only be initiated and enacted if all Kenyans were allowed to freely discuss the problems of the day and make proposals for resolving them.

The *Weekly Review* of March 15, 1996, reported Okullu's next political initiative. This was the launch of a new anti-government lobby group, Friends of Democracy (FoD) in a

declared attempt to bring fresh momentum to the ongoing search for a single opposition presidential candidate who would take on President Moi in the next general elections.

Okullu disclosed that the other members of the lobby group were Bishop Raphael Ndingi Mwana a' Nzeki of Nakuru Catholic diocese, a former presiding prelate of the Methodist Church, Bishop Johan Mbogori, the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) Rev. Timothy Njoya and a former minister in the first post independence cabinet, Mr. J.D Otiende and five other people he did not name.

The group, Friends of Democracy released a statement warning of renewed ethnic cleansing, enhanced land grabbing, corruption and mismanagement of the economy if KANU returns to power. It said constitutional experts have worked out modalities of having an interim government and set its terms and conditions.

The gist of the proposal was spelt out in the *Weekly Review* March 22, 1996 issue.

It starts from the premise that left to their own devices, the leadership of the opposition political parties in the country could not agree on the issue of a single opposition presidential candidate. The search had to go beyond the present landscape of opposition politicians and look out for a viable neutral player, possibly a clergyman or a leader from the NGO with strong credentials, who had been involved in advocacy for good governance and human rights. Before such a neutral single opposition presidential candidate was chosen, all democratic forces in the country, including the leaderships of political parties, are to enter into a written binding agreement with the neutral leader to the effect that he will be no more than a stop gap president whose mandate will be to form a government of national unity in which he will share power with leaders of opposition political parties in what is known as a Presidential Council.

According to the strategy the neutral leader's other mandate would be to change the constitution and to remove the provisions which gave the incumbent President an advantage over electoral challengers, so as to establish, what is referred to in multi-party politics as a level playing field.

After two years, the government of national unity would be dissolved, the neutral leader will stand down to allow politicians to compete in free and fair elections conducted in a level playing field. According to the scheme, the first thing to do will be to strengthen the

existing opposition political parties so that they could continue to hold on to their ethnic constituencies, with FORD Kenya controlling its Luo constituents and FORD Asili and DP controlling their GEMA constituents. In this scenario, come 1997 elections, the parties would refrain from putting up presidential candidates leaving it to the clergyman or NGO leader to run against President Moi. Thus the neutral president would be president without the support of parliamentarians from his party, making it difficult for him or her to turn into a dictator. This idea proved unworkable or was not taken up by the relevant people.

In June 1996, after the un-successful venture of FoD, Okullu called for the formation of a broad-based and reform oriented government (*Weekly Review* June 21, 1996). The details of this venture were given in the same issue of the *Weekly Review* as follows:

Okullu and other FoD founders believed that a new government that would have a vision and focus on reforms was a pre-requisite for democracy. 'The ultimate goal in Kenya is to be governed by leaders who have a strong mandate and for the people to be guaranteed their basic rights, including the right to change their leaders when necessary through the ballot'.

He suggested that the opposition field a single candidate against President Moi when the general election was called. 'It is our belief that such a presidential candidate will be truly committed to democratic values (and will) lead the country through a reform agenda that will culminate in a future general election.' However Okullu was quick to point out that a reform government would be broad based. For real changes to be made everyone must be involved and KANU should not be locked out of the process. The opposition would include KANU in the reform government when the proposal was implemented.

The *Weekly Review* of December 13, 1996 reported Okullu's next initiative, which involved the selection of a single opposition presidential candidate. The center-piece of Okullu's formula was outlined in the same issue of the *Weekly Review* was

A system that would allow the opposition parties to share power with organized civil society in a reform government. Under the formula, a number of ministerial and parliamentary seats would be designated for organized civil society. The single

presidential candidate would either be selected from the leadership of political parties or from civil society.

A conference whose only agenda would be the selection of a single presidential candidate would be convened. Representatives of all registered political parties, civil organizations actively involved in the democratisation process, churches, mosques, professional bodies and opposition members of parliament would be invited to the conference. In addition, certain distinguished Kenyans drawn from public life and the media, as well as international friends, would be invited. On winning the presidential seat the candidate would form a government of national unity that would be a coalition in which all political parties would be guaranteed participation depending on whether they would have been able to produce a member of parliament or have managed to garner five percent of the total votes cast in the general election.

The government would have 18 ministries, including the attorney general. Of these, 15 would be shared among parties proportionally and depending on the number of seats they won in parliament. The party that had the majority seats in parliament would have the vice-presidency, the party with the second-largest, ministry of finance and the third largest the ministry of foreign affairs. The government of national unity would run for five years, during which it would be mandated to review the constitution.

Nothing materialised from this project as the opposition leaders failed to unite because of selfish interests. However, this initiative and others already mentioned, point to the fact that Okullu relentlessly struggled for democracy. His ideas became more pragmatic and complex with time.

#### **4.2 Church and Politics**

\* Okullu was frequently accused of mixing religion with politics when he expressed views at variance with those of politicians or the government. He was constantly told to concern himself with spiritual matters and leave politics to politicians or else leave the church and become a politician. He could not play both roles at the same time.

For his part Okullu did not see any conflict between the church and politics. According to the *Weekly Review* of August 31, 1984:

Both served as vehicles of social changes and justice. Their roles were complimentary and Okullu was not averse to going into politics even though he did not think that was his goal at that particular time. 'If one-day I persuade myself to agree that God wanted me in politics, then I will go'. He said he did not share the views of Njonjo and others who thought that politics was a dirty game. 'The people who enter politics are dirty themselves and should not blame politics for their shortcomings.'

Okullu felt that it is the responsibility of the church to comment on social evil and act against it before they permeate the entire social fabric. 'If there is corruption in society, church leaders must be the first to champion its rejection by speaking openly against it.'

The *Weekly Review* of September 26, 1986 reported that when Okullu maintained the fact that his criticism of the one party system reflected long held beliefs of his, and not some new- found criticism of the Kenya government, politicians advised him to stick to his prophetic mission and desist from involving himself in politics.

In the same *Weekly Review*, Okullu responded:

'Politics and religion are the same thing, for clergymen are concerned with the entire development of human beings, there are no hierarchical borders in human development which should be catered for by different parties.' He further said that the church is concerned with such matters as education, provision of medical care and the necessities of life. These are the same matters politicians and governments address themselves to. According to Okullu, the politicians cannot keep clergy out of politics; the two parties should look for common ground from which to operate.

The *Weekly Review* of February 3, 1989 reported that on January 25, 1989 the executive board of NCCK paid a courtesy call on President Moi at State House. According to the *Weekly Review* of March 17, 1989 the NCCK delegation consisted of prominent CPK among them Archbishop Manasses Kuria and Bishop Alexander Muge of Diocese of Eldoret. Also in the delegation were Bishop Lawi Imathiu of Methodist Church and the

Secretary of NCK Rev. Samuel Kobia. Okullu and David Gitari of Mount Kenya East Diocese were not in the delegation. This was probably intentional given their well-known radical stance.

According to the *Weekly Review* of February 3, 1989,

The message the churchmen presented to the President was that they were firmly behind him and fully supported him and the government's endeavours in tackling the county's problems. Even more significantly, they dissociated themselves from any form of opposition to the government and said they had no links with subversives. 'The churches cannot be involved or associated with organizations which are bent on destabilising the constitutionally elected government which we fully support', the churchmen assured the President. It was a statement that marked a significant shift in the relationship between church and state in Kenya.

Later on according to the *Weekly Review* of March 17, 1989

Okullu interpreted his exclusion from the delegation as evidence of a plot to isolate him from church leadership and mar his credibility by maligning his name as a servant of God. He defended his 'constitutional right to act and speak freely within his stride'. He wondered how he could be expected to 'save souls in a vacuum', and concluded that these attempts to isolate him would not succeed because 'the Kenyan population knows that I stand for truth, and justice.'

In a related incident, reported by the *Weekly Review* of February 10, 1989 the minister for energy Mr. Nicholas Biwott was quoted as saying that

The differences between the church and State had come to an end because 'a few misguided church leaders realized the futility of their militancy against the government and KANU. He went on to say that the same misguided churchmen had previously taken to trade union type politics in their criticism of the government and of the ruling party.

In a rejoinder in the same issue of the *Weekly Review*,

Okullu reminded politicians that there were still 'very serious issues' on the agenda of Kenyans that the church would continue to pursue. He cited what he called 'erosion of the electoral system' as the top issue, which Kenyans felt the church must address.

According to Okullu, recent pledges of loyalty to President Moi, were merely clarification of certain issues and if the minister (Biwott) or anyone has concluded that the voice of the churches has finally been silenced and that 'we have become silent, then such people will have to eat their words very soon'. Okullu then went on to tell politicians that it would be a serious betrayal of the people of Kenya if the churches could run away and leave them stranded.

Gitari for his part warned that church leaders, would not remain silent when 'glaring injustices are made the order of the day'. He clarified that whenever church leaders speak out against social and political injustices, they do so out of their sense of loyalty and patriotism and they are not misguided as Biwott implied.

These statements not only presented a challenge to the establishment but also broke ranks with some of his fellow church leaders who had declared that the church had no quarrel with the state.

The *Weekly Review* of December 8, 1989 reported NCCCK'S resolution read by Okullu, then its chairman at the end of a conference held at Limuru. The resolution read:

The conference has listened to the experience of many Christians from all over the country and felt convinced that the electoral system as practised had not demonstrated clearly the free and fair participation of all Kenyans. Consequently we call upon the government to come up with an electoral system which is fair and just that will restore the confidence of Kenyans in the elections.

The recommendations also included a call to the government to fight 'rampart corruption' at all levels, stating 'that corruption was a cancer that was eating up the political, social and economic fabric of our society'. The NCCCK added tribalism to the vices that threatened to destroy the integrity of the nation.

According to the same issue of the *Weekly Review*, the resolution resulted in heated debate between politicians and churchmen finally degenerating into personal attacks on the three most outspoken bishops of the Anglican Church of Kenya. Rt. Revs. Alexander Muge, David Gitari and Henry Okullu- all of whom were accused of using the pulpit to dabble into politics. The NCCK, for its part faced the old accusation of acting at the instigation of foreign masters to provide an unofficial opposition to government policies.

The next issue of the *Weekly Review* of December 15, 1989 reported John Okwara MP for Butere as having claimed the church leaders were out to cause chaos in a country 'by criticizing popularly elected leaders. Let them resign and seek parliamentary or KANU seats if they want to prove that they are popular instead of hiding behind the church.' The response of the bishops was recorded in the same *Weekly Review*,

Okullu queried, 'who took Okwara to Parliament? It is ridiculous that a non-entity like Okwara should tell bishops to resign.' Okullu challenged Okwara to 'first of all convince all of us that he was elected to parliament.' Muge added the stinging rejoinder: Mr Okwara should know that there was an outcry in Butere constituency after the November 1988 by-election at which he was elected,' suggesting that Okwara made it to parliament through rigging.

The *Nation* of April 6, 1996 reported that Okullu had preached a Good Friday sermon at St. Stephen's Cathedral, Kisumu based on the resurrection theme entitled: 'Death to the Past: New life for the future'.

Okullu said he would like to see Kenya 'resurrected the way Jesus did on Easter Monday'. This could only be done through a 'fresh democratisation campaign to help salvage the country from growing injustices and political evils.'

We want Kenya with true unity not uniformity. Despite democratisation achievements already made, I still appeal to my fellow countrymen to commit themselves a little more to enable us to resurrect Kenya.

We are yearning for a Kenya where job and education opportunities will be given, not according to ethnic consideration, but according to qualifications.

President Moi's challenged Okullu to come out in the open and operate as a politician and face others in the political arena instead of hiding behind the pulpit. The President said religion was sacred, and told Bishop Okullu to stop using the church to launch malicious and offensive attacks on the government. This was reported in the *Nation* of April 7, 1996 the following day.

Okullu's rebuttal to the President's remarks was reported in the *Nation* of April 10, 1996.

I have been a politician for 30 years. What do they mean? Okullu declared that he was a priest in the order of order of Melchizedek and 'I will die a priest, when I die, I will be buried in my robes. I am also a politician and will die a politician.' He said he was a priest by conviction the same applied to politics.

Bishop Okullu said he had actively participated in politics in his heyday as the Provost of Nairobi's All Saint's Cathedral. And as bishop of Maseno South Diocese he participated in calling for the introduction of multi-partyism He would not be shaken by what critics said about mixing God's work and politics. 'I have been portrayed in newspaper cartoons as hiding behind the pulpit while throwing missiles into the political field. This is not my true image.'

Okullu saw his involvement in politics as part and parcel of his spiritual ministry. His ministry was not just confined to the church but extended to the social arena given his holistic understanding of salvation and the gospel. These statements and others of a similar nature show how Okullu shattered the myth that church and politics do not mix.

#### **4.3 Queue voting and the abolition of the secret ballot.**

The *Weekly Review* of September 26, 1986 reported the genesis of the queue voting debate.

The KANU national leaders David Okiki Amayo (the National Chairman) and Laban Kitele (National Organising Secretary) said that the decision to introduce preliminary

elections in 1988 in which voters would be required to line up behind candidates was final, and not open to public discussion and debate.

This decision sparked off heated national controversy following its opposition by pastors attending a conference under the auspices of the National Council of Churches of Kenya.

Mwai Kibaki the Vice President defended the polling method at the closing ceremony of the pastors' conference, saying it was perfectly democratic and that it had been used many times in co-operative societies' elections and in other areas. He told the pastors and other church leaders that the issue was not a theological one but a political one.

Responding to Kibaki's remarks according to the same issue of the *Weekly Review*, Okullu:

Agreed that the decision by the pastors was a political one, based on their pastoral concern for their sheep. He said there was no law that barred pastors or even bishops from taking part in national politics including contesting parliamentary or civic elections. According to Okullu, the number of people who were secretly in support of NCCK was staggering for KANU to appreciate.

In my opinion the decision was a political one because Okullu believed that getting involved in politics was part of his mandate in ministering the whole gospel to the whole man. Politics was part and parcel of a priest's life. He made no distinction between church and politics. The two were two sides of the same coin.

In April 1988, Shariff Nassir told a press conference in his office that the secret ballot would be done away with '*wapende wasipende*' (whether people like it or not). Churchmen objected to this statement and rose in defence of the secret ballot. These included Alexander Muge, Rt. Rev. Ndingi Mwana a' Nzeki, Catholic Bishop of Nakuru and Rev. Jephthah Githaka, then Communications director of the Anglican diocese of Kenya system. All three called for a referendum on the issue, expressing concern that the matter would be forced through parliament (See *Weekly Review* April 29, 1988 for the full text of Ndingi's and Muge's statements).

Okullu gave a press release concerning the issue (Weekly Review April 29, 1988). The following is the full text of it.

#### Picking Up the Pieces

‘After the recent election exercises and the formation of a new government, Kenyan citizens still have many bits to pick up, for the nominations and elections raised certain fundamental issues that still must be discussed. As a nation continuing to grow to political and economic maturity, we are laying down certain basic socio-political traditions that will eventually be called the Kenyan way of life by future generations, so, we must agree to go through the process of re-evaluating some of the ways in which we think and act in the task of nation building. In other words, we should not be too hasty, or content with simplistic, ad hoc or opportunistic conclusions.

In August 1986, KANU arrived at a decision to nominate candidates for Parliamentary and civic positions by the system of voters queuing behind the candidates of their choice. It is possible that there was no way in which this decision was tested with the electorate to see if it was acceptable or not, except during public rallies when the President asked them to do so. So many people reacted nervously. We must admit that in some respects, this kind of reaction is natural and human: we fear the unknown and cherish the known. The main two Christian communities, the Roman Catholic Church and member churches of the National Council of Christian Churches of Kenya, made strong statements however, against lining up for reasons, which they believed would be divisive.

Okullu quoted the following appeal made by NCCK on August 21, 1986 as part of his press statement.

We therefore urge KANU and parliament to find an alternative method in which church leaders can participate in primary elections so that they can exercise their democratic rights as members of this nation.

If the procedure to line up behind candidates is followed and if many church leaders or other Christians refrain from taking part in the elections, (nominations) they will have been denied their human and political rights.

Okullu also quoted the memorandum issued, released and presented to the President on November 13 by Catholic bishops. It read:

Your Excellency has made your views very clear on the KANU decision to adopt the queuing method for preliminary elections. We acknowledge that the responsibility for the decision rests with your parliament.

Nonetheless we feel that we would be failing in our duty if we did not draw attention to the danger of divisiveness inherent in the proposed system. As senior religious leaders Your Excellency has graciously exempted us from a public declaration of our preferences in preliminary elections. Nonetheless, we appeal on behalf of others who would risk becoming marked men and women by this public manner of voting. We can envisage situations where professional people' businessmen and even the humblest worker would be faced with the choice of compromising their means of livelihood or abstaining from exercising their right to vote. We ask that they be given an opportunity to air their views in the appropriate fora and these views be keenly listened to before the matter is brought to parliament for debate and final decision.

Okullu noted that the President took the NCCK pastors seriously and that his response, made publicly, excluded people of various categories in society from voting by lining up behind candidates and promised some other methods would be found.

Those excluded from queue voting were people in the armed forces, senior civil servants, senior administration officers and religious leaders. They would vote secretly or by proxy.

Okullu also included the concerns of Bishop David Gitari who close to nomination time sought to know, the procedures to be followed by KANU members who were exempted from queuing during the forthcoming nominations. Bishop Gitari said:

We have cadres of civil servants, members of the armed forces and the religious leaders who had been exempted from queuing, but a booklet released recently on rules to be followed during the nominations did not indicate what system these people would follow to exercise their constitutional rights. I have carefully studied the booklet published on February 2, 1988. The rules give clear guidance on how the nominations will be carried out by queuing behind candidates of his /her agent. If these rules are followed faithfully

without prejudice or favouritism, and if a large number of party leaders participated, then we will expect fair election.

I am however, concerned that the rules do not give guidance on how those members of KANU exempted from queuing will exercise their right to vote.

Okullu reported the Secretary General of the party, Mr. Burudi Nabwera, as having said the following in the *Standard* of February 11, 1988 in response to Gitari's statement:

'There is no special way of voting without queuing. You either stay away or join the queue.'

The rest of Okullu's statement summing up the various views expressed above read as follows:

We have stated above that there were three different areas in which different people reacted to lining-up system. The first, as we have noticed is natural fear of change. Secondly, is its potential for divisiveness, and thirdly its exclusion of many Kenyans from taking part in it. The first reason we accept. Whether or not the system needs to be looked into. It might be an interesting subject for some student doing research work to do a survey and tell us. What is true however, is that thousands of Kenyan citizens, including clergy, all those in the armed forces and people in administration, including chiefs even assistant chiefs, did not and could not take part in the lining up nomination exercise, for fear of being publicly identified with a particular aspirant. These categories of people could still claim, with justification that the system denied them the rights to participate in the nomination of candidates to parliament and civic elections. This matter must therefore, stay on the agenda as an important item yet to be addressed.

What is completely alarming are the outrageous statements that are being made by politicians, and so soon after the elections. No one else has revived the lining-up debate but they themselves. Our own judgment is that the politicians are reacting against their own feelings of greed. We are told, 'promised' is the correct word that the queuing-up method of nomination, or election for that matter, would wipe out completely any form of cheating. To the embarrassment of us all, the queuing-up method produced some of the most blatant and cruel vote rigging and cheating that has ever been practiced in Kenya.

Now, instead of opening up a frank and open debate on the matter, politicians have come out to say they will change the electoral system whether people like it or not.

For the time being, having come through what we have witnessed, some of us are convinced that lining up system is not necessarily the main problem in this nation. Kenya's fundamental issue in any method of electing leaders is cheating –vote-rigging.

What many of us find most odd is that it should be possible for a person to enter parliament or local council by getting a certain percentage of the votes cast at nomination stage, and that it should be final, not even challengeable in a court of law. By any stretch of logic, one cannot perceive how it is inconceivable that a mistake could occur during queuing, but that such mistakes occur during secret balloting and are challengeable in a court of law. If, for example, the president had not intervened in Kangundo, Gen. Jackson Mulinge would now be in parliament, probably even a minister, with Mr. Paul Ngei in the cold. Is it not conceivable that similar mistakes occurred elsewhere in the Republic? In God's name, if the percentage were to be fixed for a candidate to go through at the nomination stage, let provision be made for the aggrieved party to be able to challenge the nomination in court if he or she believes that malpractice occurred during the nomination.

Or better still, let the nomination just be for selecting, say a maximum of three candidates for eventual proper election. Indeed, the latter would allow those who were excluded at the nomination stage to cast their votes in actual election.'

For Okullu the fundamental issue at stake was the issue of cheating or vote rigging rather than the method of polling used. For the sake of justice and fair play Okullu recommended that the queuing method be used to nominate at least three candidates to be elected through secret ballot for parliament. Secondly, if one believed that some malpractise had occurred during the nomination process, they were to be allowed to challenge the matter in a court of law.

#### **4.4. Okullu's role in reconciliation**

Okullu played a significant role in attempts to unite the opposition and to maintain the hard won democratic space, which had been fought for. The following are some incidents, which indicate this.

The NCKK convened the first inter-parties symposium on May 11, 1992. According to the *Weekly Review* of June 19, 1992 the agenda was to discuss national issues, particularly the latest spate of ethnic clashes in the country. The symposium turned out to be a meeting between the NCKK and the opposition as the ruling party KANU did not send any representatives. In his keynote address to the gathering, the chairman of the NCKK'S Justice, Peace and Reconciliation Commission, Bishop Henry Okullu of the Anglican Church, betrayed his frustrations at the fact that the opposition parties were not united in their battle against KANU. He accused them of having let down the public, saying 'our people are asking what has gone wrong? Where shall our true liberators come from?'

Even though the meeting did not achieve much, two significant developments arose from the gathering: first the NCKK sent clear message to the opposition that it was willing to lend a helping hand, secondly, the meeting broke the ice between the opposition parties such that subsequent meetings between them became much easier to organize and were more relaxed.

Although KANU and President Moi won the 1992 elections, the outcome of the elections were considered 'flawed' by the three opposition leaders: Oginga Odinga of FORD-Kenya, Kenneth Matiba of FORD-Asili, and Mwai Kibaki of DP. This is because of many irregularities, which favoured President Moi and the ruling party KANU (Okullu 1997:137). The three resolved to prevent the President from assuming office as a result of the elections. They called for fresh and fair elections and the boycott of parliament. This rejection of the election results sent shock waves all over the world. It got extensive media coverage locally and internationally (Okullu 1997:138). Several powerful voices from Kenya and the diplomatic community appealed to the opposition to take their seats in parliament. One such voice was that of Chief Emeka Anyaoku, Secretary General of

the Commonwealth Secretariat who tried to broker a meeting between President Moi and opposition leaders (Okullu 1997:139).

On 24 December 1992, Okullu gave a combined Christmas and Election message to all Kenyans. Part of Okullu's statement read:

Kenyans to the last person are apprehensive about their lives and welfare after the 'rigged' elections.

The process to-date includes every conceivable measure necessary to rig KANU back to power. It is hardly possible that the next few days can reverse the damage already done to convince even the most disinterested observer that our multi-part elections are free and fair.

My plea is, therefore, to the opposition parties to look beyond the rigged elections for intelligent, patriotic and peaceful arrangements to achieve through parliament what has been denied through the ballot box.

Democratisation is a slow, painful, and frustrating process. Kenyans have come a long way in only one year. Let us cherish what we have achieved: the freedom to speak our mind without fear of arrest, the prospect of a multi-party legislature. Our resolve to resist evil should not bind us from these important victories.

(Okullu 1997: 139)

On New Years day 1993 Okullu preached another message at St. Stephen's Cathedral Kisumu in which he congratulated the opposition for their performance in spite of all the hurdles the KANU regime had put in their path during the elections (Okullu 1997a:139). The following is a summary of the sermon given by Okullu (1997a:139-140).

In my message to Kenyans, I said that we must look to the future of our country for children, our property and ourselves. I urged them to reject any belated move to withdraw from the elections although they had been massively rigged. That was to be expected given the fact that the top leadership in KANU had a long history of election rigging. In the circumstances I felt that the opposition had done extremely well with 88 seats in parliament. I concluded my sermon by calling for calm and maturity on the part of

millions of Kenyans who had felt cheated: for non-violence is the greatest weapon against monstrous dictatorships the world over. That however does not mean complacency. Some democratic space has now been gained. It is up to the opposition leaders and Kenyans in general to expand that space. Let us work together in hope and freedom now and in the life to come. The Kingdom of heaven is with us both now and in the future; in this life and in the life to come. The struggle continues.

#### 4.5 Human right and social justice issues

Okullu tackled a lot of issues related to human rights and justice. The following are some examples of the issues he tackled. In January 1968 as an Assistant Editor of *Target* Newspaper Okullu wrote an editorial attacking the grandiose project proposed for the construction of KANU headquarters. John Schofield edited the article. He got sacked because of the article (Okullu 1997: 51). The following are excerpts of the letter.

We do not wish to raise the question of where the money for the building is coming from. There are some important questions that arise about the financing of this enormous building and 1.8 million pounds is a vast sum for a party headquarters. We would hope that the pros and cons of such a building are weighed very carefully when there is not only a shortage of capital in Kenya but also an even greater shortage of houses for the people. But obviously such questions will be asked in Parliament and no doubt satisfactory answers will be forthcoming from the minister responsible.

Surely Mr. President the greatness of your party does not rest upon the fine buildings and massive expenditure on prestigious projects. You will recall the old story of Sparta, when a visitor to the city was taken to see its walls. Where the walls should have stood surrounding the houses there was nothing and in fields surrounding the fields the young men of Sparta were running and wrestling and hurling their javelins. 'But where are your walls?' asked the visitor. 'There they are, came the reply, our young men are our walls and they provide a sufficient defence'.

Is this not true of any institution or society? Is this not true of Kenya herself? In the long years when you led the struggle for the independence of your nation, you had no buildings with which to impress and over-awe your opponents. It was they who had the buildings. You had a band of men with their hearts on fire with a longing for freedom and self-respect. You won the day and are hailed as the Father of the Nation.

It is sad that this lesson now seems to too have been set aside, as though it applied at one stage in Kenya's development but not another. The fact of the matter is that it is always wrong and dangerous to put material things before people. Has KANU grown faint-hearted in its stature in the estimate of the electorate? It does not need to dominate national political scene.

We are writing to ask you and the party you lead to think again. No doubt the building must go on, but when it is finished, let it be used for some purpose other than the headquarters of your party, and let KANU officials occupy some more modest premises with the humility that always has been and always will be the hallmark of true greatness.

(*Target* January 1968)

The *Target* Newspaper of December 11, 1976 reported Okullu's call for the nationalization of all agricultural land with a provision to let individuals or group of individuals hire part of it for a specific period. He said nationalization of land was 'the nearest thing to African ethos of land usage'. He described private ownership of land as 'one of the unsettled issues in Kenya.' He further stated,

It was highly doubtful whether it was God's original intention for man to have permanent ownership of land or any property. When God put Adam and Eve in the Garden, he gave them a permanent and free use of the Garden. But he did not give them its title deeds – they did not have the right of permanent ownership, even if they were given this right it must have been conditional. Ownership was not the same as use. We all need to have use of land to survive, but we don't have to own it.

After a press release in which David Gitari, Bishop of Mount Kenya Diocese criticised the manner in which KANU conducted its business during its annual delegates conference, politicians heavily censored three church leaders namely, Okullu, Alexander Muge (Anglican bishop of Eldoret Diocese) and Rev. Timothy Njoya of Presbyterian Church of East Africa for their continued criticism of the government (*Weekly Review* October 7, 1988).

Gitari took issue with the party over the method it had employed in ratifying draft resolutions, claiming that delegates were being used as rubber stamps to endorse resolutions they had no part in formulating,

Like his fellow MPs, Mudavadi (KANU Secretary- General) was harshly critical of Gitari and others, he said that if they did not change the trend where every decision made by the political establishment was criticized by the church, they should not be surprised if their freedom to do so were removed through parliament.

As usual, the church leaders responded stating that no government could remove freedom of worship because it is a God given right, and not a privilege granted by governments (*Weekly Review*, October 7, 1988).

In September 1989 there was a student demonstration at Medical Training Centre in Nairobi. Okullu found the manner in which the government handled the matter wanting (Okullu 1997a:123). In the *Nation* Newspaper on the same day the incident happened, there was a brief report of the arrest of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, his wife and a group of 30 people in South Africa. The archbishop and the group were arrested by the police as they embarked on a protest against police brutality directed at church workers taking part in the national defiance before the racist regime's election (Okullu 1997a: 124).

In his statement Okullu noted that both the church group in South Africa and Medical Students in Nairobi were taking part in peaceful demonstrations. Yet the brute force used against them prevented their innocent expression of their honestly held opinions on what they felt to be unjust. Okullu said 'allow us the freedom which you have repeatedly stressed at every political rally. If we are different from the racist regime in South Africa can we demonstrate it?' (Okullu 1997:124).

The incident reported in the *Weekly Review* March 15, 1991 in which two *Weekly Review* reporters had been whipped by bodyguards of the minister for energy, Mr. Nicholas Biwott, after they had covered a meeting the minister was to address in his Kerio South

constituency, was heard with some dismay by other journalists and by several politicians and clergymen who issued press statements condemning the incident.

In the same issue of the *Weekly Review*, Okullu, said:

If the incident as reported was true, then it must be deeply regretted and strongly condemned as an infringement of the freedom of expression and denial of people's right to be informed'. Okullu said that politics is public business that should be conducted in the open. 'If mass media people are barred from covering such gatherings as was being addressed by Biwott then there is something that is seriously wrong with Kenya politics.'

On Good Friday 1992, according to the *Weekly Review* of April 17, 1992 Okullu conducted a memorial service at St. Stephen's Cathedral in Kisumu, for those who lost their lives in mysterious circumstances called border clashes in Western Kenya in the last six months). The sermon was entitled: 'God sent his son.' The following are excerpts from the sermon.

Since October 1991, there have been problems, conflicts, physical violence and deaths within the borders of Nyanza, Western Province and even Rift Valley Province. When these problems started to take place, I was out of the country on leave. The literature, which I kept receiving from all over the place, suggested that these had followed a series of inflammatory remarks, which had been uttered by leaders of one ethnic group mainly from Rift Valley. It did not take long before it was, reportedly, stated openly that Rift Valley was, reportedly, a one-party Zone. That was enough to say to some people living in that area to begin behaving irresponsibly and shall we say beastly.

We are here to remember that some of our country's very innocent people have suffered very unjustly. We are not just to remember them, but also to say to the rest of Kenyans, that we denounce violence as a means of solving our political differences. We mourn and weep over those who are dead, and more so over those who have caused their deaths by action or by loose tongue.

Lastly fellow country people let us not fight each other. It is futile to disown a brother and sister because of the accidental place of her/his birth. We are brothers and sisters

created by God, in God's image, and when things went wrong between him and Adam, he made a new plan. He sent his son, on a second rescue operation. Kenyans were first liberated through a liberation movement from the colonial powers, but we are now involved in second liberation from black colonialists. This time the battle is subtle because no one enjoys stepping on the toe of a brother or sister. But, indeed, the colonization of body and mind by a sister or brother is more painful. In that case, in desperation, some once said, 'take away love and give me life or give me liberty.'

Okullu discussed the issue of foreign aid and the impoverishing effect this has on the nation in a *Nation* article on June 9, 1996. The following are excerpts of his article entitled 'Western aid perpetuates misery in Third World' (*Nation*, June 9, 1996).

The International Monetary Fund last month agreed to pour tons of money into Kenya in the name of restructuring.

My enduring message is that we must rededicate our efforts to eradicate poverty by struggling to get a fair distribution of our national wealth. Kenya is a relatively rich nation and we Kenyans must do it for ourselves. The IMF and other patrons will not do it for us.

One bone of contention related to foreign aid and loans is the issue of foreign debt. Aid to poor countries is given in hard currencies to be paid back in soft currencies over hundreds of years. Effectively, this is mortgaging Kenya and others long after those who have taken the loans have rotted in their graves, leaving our children and grandchildren to pay for it.

What are the immediate and long time results? The perpetuation of poverty among our rural communities- denying them much-needed essential health services, essential communications networks – roads, telephones, electricity-because the debts must be serviced in hard currency. Permanent mortgaging of national entities entails also unemployment, vagrancy, crime, drug addiction and prostitution.

The signs of the times in Kenya are that the international community has decided that President Moi is their candidate for sometime to come and to use Kenya as a launching pad to reach the rest of Africa. They are entitled to their desires. But our honest judgment is that this is for their economic well-being. In Kenya, we must strive to build strong

independent institutions- the religious community, trade unions, universities, the Press, etc. This is why the struggle must continue. The time of the John Kennedys, De Gaulles, Khrushchev's, Thatcher's Haile Selassies, Tubmans, Tafawa Balewas, Maos, and Kenyatta is past. We must think of strong independent institutional pillars to support our societies. My submission is that external debts are also a major cause of poverty in Africa.

It is evident from this article and others that Okullu was concerned about a wide range of issues affecting the nation. These he critiqued but also provided alternative approaches or solutions.

#### 4.6 Social evil

The *Nation* of July 28, 1996 reported Okullu as having accused the government of dragging its feet in the fight against corruption and mismanagement of public assets.

He said the collapse of the giant Kenya National Assurance Company was proof of how decadence, corruption and bad management had plagued Kenya's economic stability.

Okullu said the rich and politically connected had taken control of public assets and were busy enriching themselves as the majority sink even more into poverty. It seems to us that people in high political positions are working only for their stomachs and giving a little bit of what remains to *harambee* projects to keep the poor quiet.'

He challenged the government to state how many parastatal heads and government officers had been arrested since the formation of the Anti-Corruption squad. 'Commissions and commissions have been appointed by the Government, including the Anti-corruption squad, but up to now we have heard of nobody in high positions arrested for their evil activities', he said.

Okullu said there were fears that customers of the wound up KNAC would be transferred to another firm, where 'the big men control more than 66% of the shares'. He said the KNAC collapse had horrified Kenyans and termed the sudden sacking of the more than 1,000 workers 'inhuman'.

He said the early retirement programme had a negative impact on the country as it had sent experienced administrators to the villages and replaced them with 'lazy inexperienced people who are only happy to sit behind big desks.'

Corruption was not the only social evil Okullu addressed. He tackled the issue of ethnicity, which had led to ethnic violence in various parts of the country. In an article entitled, 'Majimbo could be Answer to tribalism in Kenya' published in the East African September 1-7, 1997b Okullu said,

A strong view is emerging that the best system of government in Kenya could be federalism or majimbo. For democracy and human rights to flourish in Kenya, any new constitutional order must recognise all different sub-nationalities or ethnic groups; their political, economic or socio-cultural expression must not be trampled upon in the name of simple majority. Their rights must be guaranteed through the devolution of state power and giving autonomy to reconstituted regions or provinces and enhanced local authorities.

It is in this context that the '25 percent rule' should be retained in the new constitution, but with one modification; that the president of the Federal Republic of Kenya must win 25% of the total votes cast in five out of eight provinces or a similar proportion of re-constituted regions.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

It is evident from this chapter that Okullu's prophetic ministry evolved as he offered criticism to what was happening in the Kenyan society. Okullu moved from protest to taking responsibility for proposing alternative solutions to what was happening. With time the solutions became more and more complex, reflecting his maturity and probably the complexity of the situation. This called for courage, wisdom and discernment of events as they happened. He engaged political leaders in public debate over these issues. In this way he influenced political reflection in Kenya. He addressed issues relating to human rights, justice, social evil and democracy.

Briefly, Okullu condemned the infringement of the freedom of expression and the denial of peoples' right to be informed; use of ethnic violence as a means of solving political differences; denial of people's right to vote through the use of queuing method of voting in KANU nominations and the 1988 general elections; and the right to present opposing views—preventing people from honestly expressing opinions against what they felt was unjust. He defended the freedom of worship as a right given by God enshrined in the constitution and not given by any ruler.

Okullu strongly opposed detention without trial calling for its abolition, land grabbing, amassing of wealth by individual public servants and politicians. He urged the government to fight rampant corruption and tribalism, which were eating up the political, social and economic fibre of the Kenyan society. He advocated for fair distribution of national wealth and changes in the electoral system to allow for just and fair elections.

Okullu contributed to the debate on democratisation. He said that the one-party system did not give room for democracy to prevail. It also had oppressive tendencies arising out of the personalization of power, which led to idolization and ultimately, the abuse of power. He led the clamour for multi-party democracy calling for the re-introduction of multi-party system, through the repeal of section of the Constitution of Kenya that made Kenya *de-jure* one party state. He proposed the limitation of the presidential tenure to two terms and the exercise of power through acceptable checks and balances in the constitution.

Finally this chapter shows that Okullu's socio-political activity occurred in the public sphere. The press captured his sermons, utterances and ideas. The pulpit also served as an important public channel. His prophetic profile was hammered out in the public eye. He was clearly a busy man. He did not have much time to write his own treatise. Chapter 5 delves into his political theology, a theology that was public and critical.

## CHAPTER 5

### OKULLU'S CHRISTIAN POLITICAL THEOLOGY

#### 5.0. Introduction- a theology that is public and critical.

Okullu's theology was public and and critical. This was confirmed by his visible presence in the media in Chapter 4. Kwame Bediako (2002: 3) said,

✗ It is undeniable that in many societies of Africa, pre-colonial political systems tended towards a pattern of traditional, religious and cultural norms that sacralised power and authority and so placed the exercise of power on a pedestal beyond public debate.

Under the totalitarian one-party system, debate on the exercise of power was prohibited. This was the system of government prevailing during much of Okullu's prophetic ministry. Those who dared to challenge this were severely dealt with. The majority of the people were cowed into passivity. The dominant evangelical tradition with its eschatological emphasis on individual salvation rather than social concern did not help matters. Many felt that it was not their duty to get involved in politics. Others thought that politics was a dirty game.

Okullu through his sermons, which were publicised through the print media, and press conferences, critically evaluated the political decisions and proposed programmes of the state. His evaluation was based on biblical principles. Consequently he demystified the exercise of power, and awakened peoples' conscience to question what originally was viewed as 'sacred.'

Okullu's theology was public and political as opposed to being private. It was concerned with critiquing the exercise of power in the public arena or market place based on biblical principles. It was critical rather than passive; that is withdrawing into the realm of the purely religious and abstaining from making any statements on the decisions and activities related to the exercise of power by the state. Okullu's socio-political activity was frequently criticized.

### 5.1 The contributory elements of Okullu's theology

In the early 1970's through to the early 1980's when Bishop Okullu wrote his two books *Church and Politics in East Africa* (Nairobi: Uzima Press, 1974) and *Church and State in Nation Building and Human Development* (Nairobi: Uzima Press, 1984), Okullu was already recognized as a 'prophetic voice' inside and outside Kenya. His honorary doctorate of divinity award by Virginia Seminary in the USA was in recognition of this reputation, which derived from his articles in *Target* and his controversial political sermons as the Provost of All Saints Cathedral, Nairobi and as Anglican Bishop of Maseno South Diocese.

Although *Church and Politics in East Africa* (1974) gives a general sense of his reflection on Christian involvement in sociopolitical and economic issues, his Christian political theology was then not well developed. The stated intention of the book was to provoke thinking on the great issues of the day and to try and discuss how Christians, collectively and individually could take up the challenge and responsibility posed by contemporary political, social and economic action in East Africa (Okullu 1974:xi). *Church and State in Nation Building and Human Development* (1984) was written along the same lines with a similar intention. It discusses the church's role in development. The book is more focused with a more mature reflection on the same issues. It is from this second book that his political theology can be reconstructed.

He gave three reasons for his continued concern over these issues. The first concern was the fact that some people saw Christian conversion as merely related to the 'soul' and unrelated to the struggle for the development of the entire person. Secondly, the need to fight against the world, or human society, which is organized without any consideration for God, by seeking to demolish structures of oppression and injustice. Thirdly, the pledge to struggle against the powers of darkness and death, which twist the image of God in his children, those evil powers, which militate against God's reign in the human heart (Okullu 1984:xiv-xv).

Okullu wrote his second book, when development was the most important agenda of African countries. He expresses this vividly:

Development has become a magic word in Africa and the stick with which all are driven to action. The word passes through many lips each day in various and varied contexts. Politicians, civil servants, churchmen, teachers, housewives, businessmen, trade union leaders and workers have made it a powerful tool. Yet it is a completely new term in the vocabulary of East Africa, a relatively small minority understands its wider and fuller meaning.

(Okullu 1984:21).

Okullu wrote against the background of western development theory with its origin in the enlightenment imported to Africa by the colonial governments and missionaries. This development theory excluded belief in God who acts in history. Consequently the world and the future are solely in human hands (Sine 1987:2). This theory was premised on the view that human society was inevitably progressing towards the attainment of a materialistic kingdom (Sine 1987:2). It fostered a reductionist view of human personality and activity often ignoring the areas of spiritual, cultural and relational development. The individual was reduced to activity of production and consumption to find meaning and purpose. It measured development solely materialistically on the basis of per capita and gross national product (Sine 1987:4). Paul Gifford (1998:2) highlights these development theories used in Africa from the 1960'-1990's and the impact each has had on development in Africa. These are: modernisation, dependency theories and what he terms 'new realism' resulting in the remedy of structural adjustments.

Okullu counters these assumptions in his theology of development. He (Okullu 1984:105) promotes ideas of human dignity and fulfillment. Developing the person is at the center of developmental activities (Okullu 1984:102). It is holistic: 'God has charged us with the responsibility of presenting to him every man and woman mature, that is fully developed, in mind, body and soul. No one can be mature unless you care for all aspects of his life' (Okullu 1984:118). Their spiritual and cultural conditions are to be enhanced and improved so that they may indeed be the children of God made in his image (Okullu 1984:99-100).

The All India Consultation on Development (1974) defined development as follows:

Development is the process by which persons and societies come to realize the full potential of human life in the context of social justice. It is essentially a people's struggle in which the poor and oppressed are active participants and beneficiaries... Development is the conscientisation process by which people are awakened to the opportunities within reach. Development is freedom, wholeness and justice.

(Peters 1977:5).

Samuel & Sugden (1981:19) defined development as 'process by which people gain greater control over themselves, their environment and their future, in order to realize the full potential of life that God has made possible towards a goal.' They also defined theology of development as 'reflection on the reasons for Christian involvement in development, and the goal of involvement from a Christian and biblical perspective.'

Okullu's definitions of development contain similar ideas. He has stated it variously as: Development is the process of people taking charge of their lives. To develop is to gain power to define, analyse and to solve one's own problems (1984:105). Development is people talking, people deciding, people acting (1984:105). For Okullu (1978a:86) development theology has to do with 'how to relate Christian teaching to the throbbing heartbeat of the whole African society'. This to him was a more crucial issue than working out a fine theology of church state-relations. He wrote:

The deeper issue confronting us is that of the relation between the Christian society, conceived of as a single kingdom of God under the single law of Christ, and the national society, regarded as the realm of a tradition that is secular yet spiritual, that covers a territory and is peculiar to its people.

(Okullu 1978a:86)

Since development took center stage in the 1960's and the 1970's there was also the clustering of theological thoughts around the notion of development. Theologians came up with various theologies of development. 1960's and 1970's was also the decade of independence of African countries, decolonisation and the differentiation between developing and developed nations.

Okullu's prophetic conscience and theology was radicalized by theological debate in evangelical and ecumenical circles in the 1960's through to the early 1980's when he wrote his books.

## **5.2 The roots of Okullu's theology**

### **5.2.1 Theology of development-ecumenical perspective**

Alistair Kee (1974:69) noted that in the 1960s virtually all political theology became 'theology of development'. The World Council of Churches (WCC) entered the development debate early, investigating its moral and theological implications. This concern is evident in the conference it held in Geneva in 1966 on 'Church and Society.' It held a subsequent consultation near Moscow in 1968 on 'Theological Issues on Church and Society.' Alistair Kee (1974:69) asserts that 'perhaps the most significant fact in the emergent theology of development was that it represented a concern also of the Catholic Church so that reflection on this issue became the basis of a new kind of ecumenical theology.'

Bishop Okullu (1984) subscribed to the World Council of Churches (WCC) reaffirmation of the integrated approach to the quest for justice in the world. This statement was made at the Melbourne Conference on Mission and Evangelism in 1980 under the heading, 'Your kingdom come' which Okullu attended. For Okullu, this conference marked, for Africa, a turning point in the church's self-understanding of its mission to the world, which must be concerned with the whole of humanity. Okullu quotes the explanation given by Emilio Castro, then the Director of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of World Council of Churches (WCC) in his summary of the conference:

The kingdom of the crucified Christ reminds the churches to reconsider their missionary style, strategies, and priorities. One of the important realizations of the delegates at Melbourne was that the church everywhere is increasingly called to confront the powers of the world....

If we take seriously the fact that proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom of God is above all for the poor, we are faced with a clear calling to our world missionary commitment, within the same commitment, an engagement towards justice, in order to announce the Gospel that is really Good News to the downtrodden of the earth.

(Okullu 1984:20)

### **5.2.2 Theology of development – evangelical perspective**

Evangelical circles in the early 1970's and 1980's were to be marked by a rediscovery of the biblical summons to serve the poor, minister to the needy, correct injustice and seek

*shalom*. The Chicago Declaration of Evangelical Social Concern (1973), the Lausanne Covenant's section on social responsibility (1974), Madras Declaration of Social Action (1979) and the Evangelical commitment to simple lifestyle (1980) were symptomatic of this far-reaching change (Sider 1981: Preface).

The Lausanne Covenant of 1974 was particularly significant. Rene' Padilla (1976:14) underscored the importance of Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization as follows;

In the final analysis, the greatest accomplishment of the congress was to clarify the meaning and nature of Christian mission. Over and against an unbiblical isolation of the proclamation of the gospel from the total mission of the church; there emerged a concept of evangelism in which the proclamation was seen as inextricably connected with social responsibility, discipleship and church renewal.

(Padilla 1976:14)

Key contributions in the area of Christian social responsibility which shaped the outcome of the conference in this regard according to Athol Gill (1976:89-92) were made by third world theologians Rene' Padilla and Samuel Escobar; American evangelicals Carl F Henry and George Hoffman; and John Stott a renowned British theologian.

Rene' Padilla launched an attack on 'culture Christianity' of the variety manufactured by North American evangelicals and exported South in large quantities. This was a gospel obsessed with technology and numbers but truncated and distorted in its lack of emphasis upon the radical nature of discipleship in the daily social implications of the gospel.

Amongst other things, in his condemnation of the identification of Christianity with the 'American way of life' Padilla (1975:137) wrote,

When the church allows itself to be squeezed into the mould of the world, it loses the capacity to see and even more, to denounce the social evils in its own situation.

In his view, this was the only way to explain, how it was possible for American culture Christianity to integrate racial and class segregation into its strategy for world evangelization (Padilla 1975:137). He commented,

No amount of exegetical manoeuvring can ever bring this approach in line with the explicit teaching of the N.T regarding the unity of men in Christ, 'Here there cannot be

Greek and Jews, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, freemen, but Christ is all and in all' (Col 3:11)....

How can a church that for the sake of numeral expansion deliberately opts for segregation, speak to a divided world? By what authority can it preach man's reconciliation with God through the death of Christ, which is one aspect of the gospel, when in fact it has denied man's reconciliation with man through the same death, which is another aspect of the gospel (Ephesians 21:14-18).

(Padilla 1975:135).

Samuel Escobar said,

The danger of evangelicalism is that it will present a saving work of Christ without the consequent ethical demand...A spirituality without discipleship in the daily social economic and political aspects of life is religiosity and not Christianity.

(Escobar 1975:310)

John Stott placed evangelism within the context of the church's total mission of service to the world. Carl Henry affirmed that 'the church under Christ's Lordship is sent into the world to proclaim personal and social redemption' (Gill 1976:90).

In his Summary Report on 'The Social Responsibility of Evangelization', George Hoffman quoted the profound statements made by Dr. Visser't Hooft, general secretary of World Council of Churches at the Uppsala Assembly on his retirement.'

A Christianity, which has lost its vertical dimension, has lost its salt, and is not only insipid in itself, but is useless to the world. But Christianity, which would use the vertical dimension as means of escape is a denial of the incarnation of God's life for the world manifested in Christ.

With these and other contributions, section 5 of the covenant read,

We affirm that God is both the Creator and the judge of all men. We therefore should share his concern for justice and reconciliation throughout human society and for the liberation of men from every kind of oppression. Because mankind is made in the image of God, every person regardless of race, religion, colour, culture, class, sex, or age, has an intrinsic dignity because of which he should be respected and served, not exploited. Here too we express penitence both for our neglect and for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive. Although reconciliation with man is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both parts of our Christian duty. For both are necessary expressions of our doctrines of God and man, our love for our neighbour and our obedience to Jesus Christ. The message of salvation implies also a message of judgment upon every form of alienation, oppression and discrimination, and we should not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist. When people receive Christ they are born again into his kingdom and must seek not only to exhibit but also to spread righteousness in the midst of an

unrighteous world. The salvation we claim should be transforming us in the totality of our personal and social responsibilities. Faith without works is dead.

(Stott 1996:24).

It affirmed social involvement as part of mission of the church and was a statement in radical discipleship, which called for holistic approach to missions (Sine 1987:ix). The covenant raised issues of social justice and expressed concern over every kind of oppression. This was primarily the contribution of Third World evangelicals who were reading the Bible in the contexts of dependency, poverty, injustice and oppression (Stearnagel 1991:53).

The following statements sum up Okullu's holistic view of salvation.

If Christ is acknowledged to be the Life of the world, then clearly, the Christian faith, that is belief in the Lordship of Jesus Christ, cannot be relegated merely to the personal level. It must save both the individual souls as well as the total social life. Christianity is a religion, which addresses itself to the total humanity: man's and woman's politics, their personal as well as public conducts. The concept of salvation includes even preventing the soil from being washed away into the lakes and seas, or destroying wildlife, rivers and lakes for quick gains.

(Okullu 1983:108)

Closely tied to the Evangelical reawakening to social responsibility was the search for relevant theologies of development in various contexts of the world. Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden (1981:31-38) identified four theologies of development in Africa. These were: Julius Nyerere's theology of participation, which stresses the need to build a society whose political structures promote community responsibility and participation; Black theology of South Africa, which is a theology of liberation; Human dignity, which requires people of specific cultures to work out their understanding of Christian development in light of the scripture; and the Lutheran theology of development exemplified by the work of Klaus Nurnberger, who discusses models of development using the Lutheran division of Law and Gospel division. Since Okullu's political theology of development emphasizes participation, it could be labelled 'a theology of participation' according to this classification.

### 5.3 The components of Okullu's development theology of participation

#### 5.3.1 African socialism

Okullu's theology of development is shaped to some degree by his interaction with the writings and political philosophies of African statesmen—Kenneth Kaunda, Julius Nyerere and Leopold Senghor who attempted to build their states on the concept of 'African socialism' (Okullu 1984:29-50).

At the center of Kaunda's humanism is the importance of the individual. Kaunda sought to relate his political philosophy to pre-colonial African societies in which he believes the individual was of primary importance regardless of age, role and status (Parratt 1995:145).

To a certain extent, we in Africa have always had a gift for enjoying man for himself. It is at the heart of our traditional culture, but now we see the possibility of extending the scale of our discovery by example to the whole world. Let the West have its technology and Asia its mysticism! Africa's gift to world culture must be in the realm of human relationships.

(Kaunda 1966:22)

Nyerere also placed high value on man. He said,

The purpose of development is man. It is the creation of conditions, both material and spiritual, which enables man, the individual and man the species to become his best...Christianity demands that every man should aspire towards union with God through Christ.

(Nyerere 1987:117).

He also said,

To talk of the development of man, and to work for the development of man, must mean the development also of that kind of society, which serves man, which enhances his well being and preserves his dignity...I refuse to imagine a God who is poor, ignorant, superstitious, fearful, oppressed and wretched, which is the lot of the majority of those created in his image.

(Nyerere 1987:118)

Both emphasized the importance of community in the pre-colonial past. For Kaunda the pre-colonial community was a kind, mutual society that, because of kinship ties, was all inclusive, its economic system was geared towards the needs of the whole society. It was anti-capitalistic, and not conducive to the exploitation of one's fellow humans. The

needs of the elderly and other non-productive members were taken care of by the society (Kaunda 1966:24-28). The *Ujamaa* ideal, as outlined in Arusha declaration and the writings of Nyerere, is also centred on the community as the term *ujamaa* (family-hood) implies (Parratt 1995: 145).

According to Okullu (1984:48), Leopold Senghor emphasized the fact that if there is any single contribution Africa can offer to Christianity and the rest of the Western World, it is life in the community as opposed to the depersonalization of persons.

Senghor said:

I have often spoken of the role of the underdeveloped nations on the building of the international community. Because the Negro Africans have kept a sense of brotherhood and dialogue, because they are inspired by religions that preach love and above all because they live those religions, they can propose positive solutions for the construction of the international as well as the national community. The importance of love as essential energy, the stuff of life, is at the heart of Negritude underlying the black man's ontology. (Shorter 1978:56).

Okullu's theology of development incorporates some of the ideals of these systems, which are in harmony with Christian principles. These include the value placed on the individual, the principle of equality and the central place of the community in development (Parrat 1987:55).

### **5.3.2 The Bible- Justice in the O.T teaching and in the teaching of Jesus.**

Oliver Barclay (1990: 63-86) discusses various approaches, which have been used to answer the question: On what basis should Christians act in a society not explicitly Christian? The approaches include doctrine of the kingdom; the traditional Lutheran approach of two kingdoms, creation ethics, the idea of common grace, doctrine of incarnation, Marxist analysis of society, natural law, the church as prophet, jubilee, diaconia and other approaches. The reason he gives for such a wide variety of approaches is that the direct New Testament material on social ethics is small and the Old Testament material though extensive is hard to interpret with confidence for our world.

Okullu (1974:1) *Church and Politics in East Africa* seems to take the creation approach. His major text is: 'The earth is the Lord's and all therein' (Psalms 24:1). He expounds this by quoting the Anglican Consultative Council's Report, 1974:41.

There is the conviction that God is at work in the world, far beyond the boundaries of the church... There is, therefore, a recovery of biblical perspective which had been forgotten: a vision of salvation as God's total, all embracing gift of healing and liberation for his whole creation: of this salvation being concerned with men's bodies as well as with their personal and private life.

This report affirms the holistic nature of salvation and the universal operation of God's work. In his second book, *Church and State in Nation building and Human development*, Okullu approaches social concern from the view- point of the church's prophetic role (1984:5), which is founded on God's justice. This is emphasized in the prophetic writings of the O.T (Okullu 1984:12-13) and is continued in Jesus' teaching on the 'Kingdom of God' and 'God as judge' in the N.T (Okullu 1984:13).

Okullu said:

Our call is to take the Gospel: the good news to every man who has not heard it, while at the same time trying to establish a tradition of prophetic ministry which enables us to make effective contribution in creating and establishing new value systems.

(Okullu 1976:32)

Elsewhere he said:

Let my people go, that they may serve me.' (Ex. 8:20), is still God's call to the unjust structures of the world which imprison his children and keep them in bondage so that they are hindered from serving and enjoying him. A prophet is not a man or a woman who preaches his/her opinion. Their words have the foundation, 'thus saith the Lord.' The church's prophetic role is to speak both for God and for the millions of the voiceless people of the world.

(Okullu 1984:5)

According to Walter Brueggemann (1978:13), the task of the prophetic ministry is 'to nurture, nourish, and evoke consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us.'

For Okullu the basic meaning of the Hebrew word *sedāqā* and its cognates in the Bible are translated justice or righteousness. The two words are used interchangeably. The concept of justice is primarily a relational activity, binding people together, and in turn

God (Okullu 1984:7). According to the *New Dictionary of Theology* (1988:59) it denotes the idea of right standing and consequently right behaviour in community. Okullu (1984:7) expounds this idea as follows:

Justice is the axis around which life in community revolves. It describes the relationship between the ruler and the ruled, the judge and the complainant, a person and his property, a family and a tribe, a citizen and other citizens ... To act justly is a deed which enhances life in community. Acts of violence, fraud, theft, bribery are unjust because they destroy community life.

In the O.T the concept of justice is closely linked to benevolence, charity and mercy. This exceeds the Greek concept of justice, which prevails in some countries in the West. In Greek understanding, justice was primarily recompense. In this sense justice is like balancing of scales, or the idea 'you have yours, I have mine'. This leads to a heightened sense of individual justice, which ultimately leads to social injustice (Okullu 1984:7-8).

The whole notion of God's justice is rooted in his covenant relationship with his people (Okullu 1984:7). God and his people were to remain true to this covenant, the breaking of which was tantamount to a failure of justice (Okullu 1984:8). The assertion of the justice of Yahweh is not derived from his nature but rather the concrete events that are intrinsic to the covenant relationship. The community in which God makes the covenant is created by liberation and so justice is also liberation. Okullu (1984:8) observes that 'it is as though deliverance from a situation of domination is a precondition for a true community'. Living in community, which is the condition of justice, is deepened in the new community in Christ (Okullu 1984:9).

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people...Once you were no people but now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy (I Peter 2:10).

The O.T prophetic movement is about calling the people of Israel back to embrace justice. The champions of these are Amos, Jeremiah and Isaiah (Okullu 1984: 11). Since the standard of judgment is the covenant law of God, justice is conformity with covenant requirements.

In Okullu's (1984:10) view, the justice of God is creative. It creates that which was not there before. 'In economic terms it would seek a redistribution, a restructuring of the oppressive systems, to give a chance for the redistribution for the downtrodden, the wretched of the earth, to receive their due'. Revelation 21:5, 'Behold I make all things new', is the message of God's creative justice.

Okullu (1984:11) holds that the paradigm of how people should be treated is how God treats strangers, widows and the oppressed. God vindicates the poor and needy-not in the sense of crushing the enemy but by creating a new situation of freedom and liberation in which people are free to make a fresh start. 'He executes justice for the fatherless (Deut 10:18), and give justice to the weak' (Ps. 82:3-4). 'The Lord works vindication and justice for all who are oppressed' (Ps 103:6). His justice is distributive.

Okullu (1984:12) also sees God's justice as retributive. God is also judge of the oppressor. His key scripture for this is the 'Magnificat' (Luke 1:46-55).

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, holy is his name. And his mercy is on those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm, he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, he has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree; he has filled the hungry with good things, the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his posterity forever.

God is not only a righteous judge of his covenant people, he is judge over all the earth (Genesis 18:25).

The kingdom in relation to justice carries within it all the meanings attached to it in the O.T. An example of this is Psalms 97:1-2 in which Yahweh's rule and the establishment of justice are closely linked (Okullu 1984:13). It reads, 'The Lord reigns; let the earth be glad; let the distant shores rejoice. Clouds and thick darkness surround him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne'.

Jesus saw the existence of the Kingdom as the inbreaking presence of God's very power and justice. He begins his ministry by the proclamation, 'The kingdom of God is at hand'

(Mark 1:15). By identifying the arrival of God's kingdom with his own ministry and teaching, Jesus proclaims the advent of God's justice. The kingdom is proclaimed as a present reality, active and calling for a response from the hearers: 'Repent for the kingdom is at hand' (Mathew 3:2). 'The kingdom of God has come near you' Luke 10:9 (Okullu 1984:13-14). It is the power of God active in the world, transforming it and confronting the powers of the world. It is to find a home among the poor (Mathew 5:3), and the persecuted, and the rich enter it with the greatest difficulty (Mark 10:23).

By associating with those considered outcast by society, like Zaccheus (Luke 19) and Mathew both 'tax collectors', Jesus 'shows another way of creatively proclaiming God's justice. He redeems them, has fellowship with them, thus creating a new situation for them, a new style of living'. In Okullu's view (1984:4) he is showing that God's judgment, often seen by us only in negative terms, seeks to redeem, create and recreate.

Mathew 25:31-46 the judgment scene where Jesus separates the sheep from the goats, serves as a warning to Christians of all ages not only on what doing of justice is but where justice is located. It is as in the O.T the marginal ones, the least, that become the touchstone for doing justice (Okullu 1984:15).

Okullu (1984:15) calls the book of Luke the paradigm of a social gospel. In his view both Luke and Acts are full of the implications of the message of the gospel in the world. He does not discuss the concept of justice in the Pauline letters and in the rest of the N.T.

#### **5.4 Church – state relations in light of Okullu's political theology**

Okullu writes on church/ state relations from the stand- point of human development (1992:25) and the church's participation in the task of nation building (1992:25).

In 1978 in a paper entitled 'Church-State Relations: The African situation', Okullu concluded; 'It is clear that the church state situation in Africa is still far from being settled, that after a few formative years of political and ecclesiastical independence the issue is still confused' (Okullu 1978a:86).

In the 1970's when Okullu wrote, the prevailing church-state relationship, was the one-party state claiming an absolute sovereignty under the personalized often, idolized—leadership of one man. Even though the church in many countries was strong in terms of numbers, it was ineffective politically partly because it was often compromised by the docility of its colonial past, partly by poor leadership, and partly by its vulnerability. It is because of these facts that Okullu concludes 'there is hardly any ideological church state tension in Africa' (Okullu 1978a:86).

In a paper entitled, 'Church State and Society in East Africa' (1992); Okullu wrote:

Looking at various parts of the world, one can see that even in the USA or great Britain where there is an explicit statement on the subject, church-state relationship is still evolving, with peoples understanding of the functions and the nature of the two continuing to change. For this reason all positions ...must be critically examined, particularly given the church's understanding of the gospel.

(Okullu 1992:34).

Since the understanding of the nature and functions of church and state continue to change, Okullu asserts that the relationship 'should be dynamic rather than legalistic or static'. Consequently, the overriding question, which Christians must examine critically, is the nature of the church's call to witness in society. This determines what the relationship of the church to the state should be, what kind of witness the church wishes to have in society, and what services it seeks to render (Okullu 1992:34).

Okullu (1992:34) identified two ways in which the church has been called to bear witness. These are the distinct and indispensable proclamation of the word of God and the call of Christians to be a living and serving community. This kind of witness is visible where churches are truly open for the poor and the despised for whom our modern societies have little concern. He puts this in another way,

I am convinced that whereas churches must be concerned with Christian witness as it relates to personal salvation, they also have an historical mission, which is to assist in the articulation of just political, economic and social objectives.

(Okullu 1997a:xv).

Okullu recognised the nation as being spiritual in nature. He wrote:

A nation is essentially a spiritual society built upon common memories of the past, common hopes for the future, and above all a common will issuing from common memories, ideas and hopes.

(Okullu 1984:30)

He observed that the new nations in Africa are not built on such foundations.

'They are made up of different ethnic groups, some of which conceive of themselves as nations. They have no affinity for each other than being in the same geographic location.'

(Okullu 1984:30).

Unity therefore is still a goal to be achieved. In contemporary times a national ideology has developed to provide unity and cohesion in a nation (Samuel 1991:8).

In Okullu's recognition of the new authority and functions of the state owing to the combination of modern statehood with the nation, he (Okullu 1984:66) declared 'the state now assumes responsibility for its citizens in almost any department...It is the function of the state to regulate life in society and plan for the welfare of the people'. Okullu adopted Dietrich Bonhoffer's definitions of the state. The term 'state' means an ordered community (Okullu 1984:30).

He sounds the warning that the enormous power bestowed upon the state in this regard, can lead to state absolutism and idolization of leaders which is demonic.

Christian responsibility demands that we take the modern state seriously. We have to recognize its status as an agency for political, social, economic and indeed religious and cultural reforms. But we must reject emperor worship.

(Okullu 1992:35).

Okullu wrote in the early 1970's and 1980's when the prevailing political concept in Africa was the one party system. Okullu held the view that the one-party state idea was built on the African concept of the state, which bears close resemblance to the Roman understanding of the nature of the state (Okullu 1978a:80). According to Samuel (1991:7), the Roman Empire developed a view of the state, which lifted it up above religious cults. The state developed its own worship with the emperor at the center. Loyalty to the state was to be expressed by participation in Roman worship. In this view the state and allegiance to the state was supreme over all other allegiances.

Okullu wrote the following concerning this African understanding of the state:

Africa's concept of the state comes close to the idea that a state is made up of an aggregate of individuals with one person at the top. The rest whatever their rank including ministers – are virtually his servants. This personalized leadership is expressed in the saying: 'The President is the state and the state is the President'.

(Okullu 1978a:80)

Okullu (1992:80) observed that when the state understands itself to be absolute. 'Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and God what belongs to God' is interpreted as if God and Caesar are equals. The states efforts are aimed at self-preservation rather than keeping law and order and protecting individual human rights. He further stated:

'African national leaders sound as though they have replaced the colonial government and have therefore assumed the leadership of every institution, including the church. Some regard the church as the praying department of the state'.

(Okullu 1992:31)

The implication of these statements is that the church exists purely to serve the state and that the state sets the agenda for the church. Okullu has challenged this:

It is the duty and responsibility of the church to clarify its own understanding of its mission, and to state it clearly and repeatedly in public so that everyone may understand ... The church must move back to the center of life, think of the African people in all matters, and state its case clearly. If the trumpet does not sound, no one will go to war. It should be as in the case of Prophet Amos, 'the lion has roared who will not fear?'

(Okullu 1992:80).

Although Okullu affirmed the validity and relevance of the doctrine of separation in church–state relations (Okullu1997:xv), he held the view that the church/state relationship defied easy definition or generalization. The term 'separation' does not fully account for the nature of the relation (Okullu 1994:60). For him the separation is only institutional, but at value level the two are bound in the realms of ethics by owing their origin to God (Okullu 1992:33). It is this integrated whole that gives the church its mandate for involvement in politics.

Okullu (1984:64-65) asserted that:

The recognition of the separation of church and state at institutional level must be seasoned by an equally vigorous recognition of the integrated view of life at a deeper level. Consequently there is need to work out a unified ethical whole.

(Okullu 1992:33).

The reason he gave as to why this was necessary is that God is Lord not only of the church and individuals but also of economic and political systems. 'Our religious ethics must speak of interpersonal love as well as social justice.' Okullu rejected any religion, which spoke only of social concerns and neglected a deep personal faith in Jesus Christ.

Okullu spelt out the practical implications of separation for both church and state as follows:

Separation for the church generally means guaranteed freedom from state interference. State officials cannot and should not exert pressure on the appointment of church leaders nor interfere with the inner life of the church. Secondly, the church has the freedom to have its own financial resources and to dispense them freely. Thirdly, owing to the universal nature of the church, each national church should have the freedom to contact other churches. For the state, the separation means that there is no interference by the church and that government is responsible to its citizens or the electorate, not to ecclesiastical authorities.

(Okullu 1992:33)

He (1992:82) believed that the credibility of the state lay in the degree to which it could fulfill God-given responsibilities towards its individual citizens. 'This is because the state derives power from the people and should only hold it with their approval and consent and only as long as they allow that power to be invested in it'.

Regarding the issue of a just rebellion and revolution,' Okullu (1978a:82) asked the questions: can there be good reasons for people to rebel against the government? Are they justified in working to overthrow it, because it has failed to fulfill its obligations? The answer to this was affirmative. Okullu believed that,

If the government, is given a particular task by the community to fulfill, and it fails, if the government introduces a state of conflict and oppression, the process towards a just order can then be justly set in motion by revolutionary measures.

(Okullu 1992a:67).

He acknowledged that even though theoretically it ought to be possible for the government to be overthrown by the electorate at the polls, the reality is that no government wants to be voted out, so the alternative is to rule by military force. In such a situation he argues, 'our Christian conscience allows us to accept revolution as the logical method of changing government.' However since revolution is destructive and in many instances hardly succeeds in correcting the ills it sets out to correct, 'it should be a primary duty of the church, in its services to society, to prevent revolution from happening. Further to this, 'the church must in its witness to society strive to establish and maintain justice that revolutionary uprisings do not occur' (Okullu 1992:36).

Okullu (1978a:86) concludes the issue church-state relations with these statements:

It is my considered opinion that the African approach to church- state relationships must be more pragmatic than idealistic. The transient nature of the situation, which still prevails in many African countries, demands that the relationship between the church and secular society be one of working together for what has been called a just and a participatory government.

### **5.5 Community development as a demonstration of Okullu's political theology**

Rural development was the focus of Okullu's ministry. Due to the deeply entrenched ethnic factor in Kenyan politics, which influenced the distribution of the national cake, Okullu inherited one of the largest and poorest dioceses of the Church of the Province of Kenya. Maseno South Diocese seriously lagged behind in economic development (Okullu 1997a: 89).

Okullu initiated an Integrated Rural Development Programme, which embraced primary health care, agriculture, provision of clean water, nutrition and appropriate technology to uplift the living standard of his people. According to Okullu, the Programme became a

model for every Diocese in the Church of the Province of Kenya and some of the Diocese of the Church of Uganda (Okullu 1997a:89).

In order to generate income, the diocese built Alpha House, a multi-million three- storied office building for rental. With the help of investors, Bishop Okullu founded Victoria Finance Company; a church sponsored commercial bank (Okullu 1997a:91). The aim of the financial institution was to harness the savings of people from the Lake Region and to support its economy. Bishop Okullu also put up decent living quarters for the clergy and workers in his diocese. In this way he worked out his theology in praxis.

## 5.6 Conclusion

Okullu's development theology of participation had its roots in evangelical and ecumenical perspectives emerging between the 1960's and early 1980's when Okullu wrote his books.

For Okullu the mission of the church was the total liberation (salvation) of the whole person, body, soul and spirit. Evangelism and social concern were mutually inclusive. He believed that the Lordship of Jesus Christ could not be limited to a personal level. It must redeem both the individual souls as well as the total social life. He rejected any religion, which spoke only of social concern and neglected a deep personal faith in Jesus Christ.

The major sources of his theology were African socialism and the Bible. The ideals of African socialism, which he incorporated into his theology, which are in harmony with biblical principles, were; the value placed on the individual, the principle of equality and the central place of the community in development.

He argued for a people centred, holistic development which took into account man's body, soul and spirit. For this reason men's spiritual and cultural conditions were to be enhanced and to be improved so that they could truly be children made in the image of God.

For Okullu the biblical basis upon which Christians should act in a non-Christian society was the prophetic ministry of the church, founded upon the justice of God as illustrated in the prophetic writings of the O.T and the concepts of the 'Kingdom of God' and 'God as judge' in the teachings of Jesus Christ in the N.T.

Although he affirmed the validity of the doctrine of separation, the concept of separation does not fully explain the relationship. The separation is only institutional but at value level the two are bound together in the realm of ethics owing their origin to God. It is this integrated whole that gives the church its mandate for involvement in politics.

Okullu demonstrated his theology practically through initiating community-based development in his diocese. The development projects included water, irrigation, and income generating projects amongst others. To facilitate investment in the Lake basin region, Okullu and others formed Victoria Financing Company, a banking company owned by the diocese. He also built Alpha House, a three storied office building, for renting to generate income for his diocese.

It is evident from the literature examined in the previous chapters and in this chapter that Okullu has a legacy and that he was a significant church leader in Kenya. However as oral sources are important in establishing a legacy in Africa, additional survey was carried out. This involved interviewing those who knew Okullu well as well as a younger generation of students who were studying and were involved in Christian ministry. Sentiments of various personalities in letters of condolence to the Okullu family at his death were also examined. The specific details of the survey and the results are given in the concluding chapter.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION- BISHOP OKULLU'S LEGACY

#### 6.0 Introduction

The hypothesis of this dissertation has been that Okullu was a significant church leader who left a mark on the church and the nation and his community. The major finding is that Okullu left a legacy. This relates to the prophetic role he played in shaping Kenya's socio-political and economic destiny at a time when any opposing view was not tolerated and dissidents silenced ruthlessly.

Additional research found that he was a significant church leader based on:

- (1) The literary output containing his prophetic treatment of socio-political challenges that faced Kenyan society of his time, in the form of articles and books. These form part of his legacy.
- (2) Testimony of others expressed in letters of condolence
- (3) Views of groups of persons interviewed for this work.

We shall consider these in turn.

(1) Okullu wrote several books and articles. The key books being, *The Quest for Justice: An Autobiography of Bishop Henry Okullu* (Kisumu: Shalom, 1997a) and *Church and State in Nation Building and Human Development* (Nairobi: Uzima, 1984). The key articles he wrote are 'Church-State Relations: The African Situation' (1978) and 'Church, State and Society in East Africa' (1992). These together with Newspaper and

Magazine articles especially in the *Weekly Review* contained his thinking on socio-political issues and indicate the significance of his presence in the public sphere.

The focus of Okullu's ministry was social concern. He spoke on issues of social justice. This included political liberation from two oppressive governments through the struggle for democracy and multi-party politics; issues of human rights including the infringement of the freedom of expression and denial of people's right to be informed; the use of ethnic violence as a means of solving political differences, denial of people's right to vote, to present opposing views and the right to trial before detention among others; he condemned social evil such as corruption and tribalism; and addressed the issue of church and politics in the matter of how the church relates to the state.

In his fight for political liberation he opposed the one-party system, the abolition of voting through secret ballot, various constitutional amendments which sought to abolish the post of Chief Secretary within the civil service and the removal of the security of tenure of the offices of the attorney general, high court and court of appeal judges as well as members of the public service commission. Okullu spearheaded the multi-party debate by proposing the repeal of the section of the constitution of Kenya (2A), which made Kenya a *de-jure* one party state.

Okullu is also remembered for initiating community –based projects in his constituency. He initiated water, irrigation, electricity projects and polytechnics in his diocese. In conjunction with others he established Victoria Finance Company to promote investments in the lake Basin region. He believed in the development of the whole person-body, soul and spirit.

(2) The following are excerpts of condolence messages received which captured the essence of who Okullu was. Professor Wangare Mathae Green Belt Movement, Coordinator, said

We have known Bishop Okullu for his devotion to his call and his concern for the welfare of Kenyans both materially and spiritually. His work for restoration of democracy in this country, and the forceful voice he added to the pro-democracy movement ...will never be forgotten.

(Letter, March 15, 1999).

Amos Wako, Kenya's Attorney General, said:

Like the prophets of old, Okullu never lost a chance to remind leaders and the led that what the Lord requires of us is to do justice and to love kindness and walk humbly with your God; that the gospel is not just concerned with the spiritual welfare of a person but also with the person's physical and mental health, that everyone has the right to realise his/her knowledge according to God's will.

.... I was impressed with the bishop's eloquent articulation of the key issues facing Africa and the world from a Christian perspective. We shall miss his incisive analysis and his views on the way forward.

(Letter, March 17, 1999)

Konrad Raiser, General Secretary, WCC said

Bishop Okullu was an astute and critical observer of social and political developments in Africa and has helped to voice and give language to a public Christian witness in critical situations.... Throughout those more than two decades, he was an advocate for justice, liberation, respect for human dignity out of the African context and has contributed to raising ecumenical awareness for the African situation world wide.

(Letter, March 19, 1999)

The Very Revd Fr David Kamau. Vicar General, Arch Diocese of Nairobi, on behalf of for R.S Ndingi Mwana a' Nzeki, Archbishop of the Catholic Church wrote:

Okullu will be remembered for his incisive critique on vital national issues, his care and concern for all Christians and citizens of this country and for his wonderful ecumenical spirit. He was a scholar and Christian gentleman who helped shape the destiny of the church in Kenya and that of the nation.

(Letter, 15 March 1999)

The phrases ‘eloquent articulation of key issues, from a Christian perspective’, ‘incisive analysis of issues’, ‘critical observer of social and political trends’ are pointers to Okullu’s prophetic ministry and political theology. He had great influence on political reflection in Kenya.

The immediate former Archbishop of ACK, Dr. David Gitari in a sermon entitled ‘A Good Steward of God’s varied Grace,’ based on I Peter 4:7-11 preached during Okullu’s funeral at St. Peter’s Ramba Church in Bondo District on March 20, 1999 identified one of Okullu’s gifts as prophecy. Okullu had been called to be a prophet. ‘Once God had spoken he had no alternative than to prophesy to the nation and the international community. He used this gift with courage and determination’.

Okullu influenced the church’s theology by insisting that the Gospel was holistic, not just concerned with the spiritual welfare of a person but also with a person’s physical and mental health. This is what he called development. Politically he played a leading role in the restoration of democracy in Kenya’s ‘second liberation.’

There is reference to Okullu having been an advocate for justice, liberation and respect for human dignity out of the African context in one of the condolence letters. This is a recurrent theme in other condolence letters.

John L Peterson, of Anglican Communion, said:

Okullu will be remembered for his courageous stand against injustice and his concern for issues of economic development and the welfare of the people of Kenya.

(Letter, March 17, 1999)

Bethwell Kiplagat, Chairman, Church Army Board said:

Okullu has provided bold and brave leadership and made considerable contributions in the area of justice and peace and in promoting grass roots development.

(Letter, March 15, 1999).

(3). In order to establish whether or not Okullu has legacy, a survey was carried out among 42 students in Nairobi the capital of Kenya. These students were chosen purposefully. They were students who were involved in training and were available during the scheduled time for interview. The sample group consisted of various age groups as follows: 20-30 (7), 31-40.(18), 41-50 (15), 51 and above (2).

The survey tool was a structured questionnaire (See Appendix 1). The students responded to the following three questions:

- (1) What if at all do you remember about Bishop Okullu?
- (2) Did his life have an impact on the Church in Kenya or the nation? Yes/No?
- (3) If yes, what contribution did he make?

Generally those of age group 51+ were very familiar with what Okullu did and gave detailed information about this. Age group 41-50 gave fairly detailed and specific information about Okullu's contribution. Age group 31-40 gave general areas in which Okullu made a contribution. Those of age group 21-30 remember him generally as someone who spoke when others were silent and the legacy that church and politics go together.

The findings revealed the following: 16.6% of the students did not know Okullu. These were foreign students from Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi and Ghana. The implication of this is that Okullu was not known outside of Kenya.

25% identified Okullu as one who was vocal, outspoken, and spoke his mind when others of his calibre were silent. 16% stated that he spoke boldly, courageously, fearlessly, without being intimidated. In other words he was a brave man.

It is Okullu's role as an Anglican Bishop/ church leader, which stands out (30%). He is also identified as a writer/author by 8% of those interviewed. 11% of those interviewed

pinpointed the following concerning his character- a good man who stood on Christian principles and did not compromise. 14% viewed him as one who stood for or defended the rights of Kenyans. He spoke out against injustice; oppression of innocent citizens; agitated for democracy and advocated the rights of the disadvantaged.

33% believe that Okullu contributed significantly on the issue of church involvement in politics. This is expressed variously as follows:

- (1) 'He left a legacy that politics and religion go together and there is no way church leaders can dissociate themselves from political issues. He set a precedent that the church is the societal advocate.'
- (2) 'He showed people that church and politics are inseparable that is the church has a role to play in government affairs.
- (3) 'He made a positive contribution in enlightening the Kenyan church to be involved in social activities of the society.

The following are facts obtained from representative in depth personal interviews (See appendix 2) this section focuses primarily on Okullu's motivation, socio-political involvement and contribution to the nation, the Church in Kenya at large, and the Anglican Church of Kenya. The following were interviewed:

(a). Rev. Dr. Wanjau, former Moderator of PCEA, on November 16, 2002. Dr. Wanjau was Okullu's contemporary. He knew him for 31 years.

Dr Wanjau commented:

Once Okullu believed in something he was willing to die for it. He really stood for what he knew to be the truth he did not waver. This made him unpopular in some quarters.

Okullu wanted things to be done in the right way and the rights of the poor addressed. His Christian convictions and the Spirit of Jesus Christ drove him. He was outspoken about

not following political leaders blindly. He had a good grasp of issues and was articulate because of his journalistic training.

His major contribution was in the area of church and politics. He believed that church and state should exist together. The state should not think that theirs is an exclusive area of operation but that even political systems are under the scrutiny of the church. The church needs to maintain its prophetic voice.

(b) Rev. Charlton Ocholla, of Theology Desk, NCKK. Rev. Ocholla knew the bishop for 24 years as a colleague and a personal friend. The interview was conducted on October 6, 2001 at NCKK offices in Church House, Nairobi.

According to Ocholla, Okullu will be remembered for the following reasons:

He spearheaded multi-party democracy. He felt that the one party system at that time was dictatorial, patronising, paternalistic and oppressive. He held that a multi-party state would allow for more freedom for people to contribute and participate in nation building. He had a vision that one day there would be a time when Kenyans would have freedom of expression, association and movement, a country where people's views would be respected and appreciated. He played a very important role in advocacy.

When Okullu saw bad governance he would speak about it, he would not rest until he was sure he had spoken to relevant people to rectify the situation. In his diocese he initiated development projects. These included water projects, health care and education. He initiated the formation of Victoria Finance Company- a banking company, which is now wholly owned by the diocese. His focus was on rural development. In his tenure as bishop, Maseno South Diocese was leading on issues to do with rural development. He initiated income- generating activities, which have continued to this day.

His contribution to the church nationally was his enhancement of ecumenism. This enabled him to be elected twice as chairman of NCKK.

(C). Mrs Phoebe Mugo, Managing Director, Uzima press. Phoebe Mugo is Okullu's last child.

This is what Phoebe Mugo said about Okullu's contribution to the nation:

In the days of single party system he was like the opposition and by so being he provided the checks and balances that the single party government needed. He was constantly checking them, when he saw something that should be done he spoke boldly about it. Many politicians in the government were not happy with what was going on but they did not have the courage to speak, they feared for their lives. We were constantly worried that he would be assassinated. He spoke a lot for people who did not have the courage to speak for themselves. Politicians let him speak because they thought he was a churchman and could not be killed. Later on, he was joined in this by Muge, Gitari and Kuria.

According to Phoebe Mugo, Okullu's contribution to the Anglican Church of Kenya was in the area of development. During Okullu's tenure, the diocese of Maseno South developed more than any other diocese in the history of the church. Okullu was internationally known and was able to attract a lot of donor funding. Other bishops in the Anglican Church, for instance, Dr. David Gitari then of Kirinyaga Diocese, incorporated Okullu's ideas in the development of their diocese.

Okullu chaired the committee, which wrote the new constitution of the Anglican Church, which changed its name from Church of the Province of Kenya to Anglican Church of Kenya. One of the radical recommendations of the constitution was to adopt the Catholic tradition of appointing and posting bishops not necessarily to their ethnic group in order to do away with tribalism where each ethnic group wants its own bishop. This has not been adopted yet. Okullu was also the first bishop in the Anglican Church to ordain women.

In Phoebe Mugo's view Okullu left a legacy of speaking out on national issues, some clergy picked up on this. He spoke out on queue voting, the one party system and was involved in the multi-party democracy debate. Phoebe Mugo pointed out that even though people talked a lot about the important role of Matiba and Rubia played in the multi-party debate, Okullu held a lot of discussions with the two in the background.

Okullu was also instrumental in spearheading communication especially in the print media. He was editor of *Target/Lengo* Newspapers, and started Uzima Press, which took

up issues on social justice. For instance, he was very concerned about certain aspects of Luo culture, which hindered the community from development. He was concerned about the time wasted at funerals, which took the whole day and eating at funerals, which impoverished the bereaved family. He tried to introduce reforms in his diocese about these matters.

In addition to Phoebe Mugo, as a person Okullu was highly disciplined. He worked hard, studied a lot and spent a lot of time meditating on issues.

### 6.1. Conclusion

One of the research findings through interviews conducted revealed that foreign students from Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi and Ghana did not know Okullu. Although this was the case outside of Kenya, Okullu was well known in Kenya. It is in Kenya that he has left a legacy. This also argues for his commitment to Kenya.

This thesis began by presenting the socio-political context in which Okullu's ministry would begin and the challenges he would face in Kenya's socio-political context. One major finding of the chapter is the evidence of the deeply entrenched ethnic factor in Kenyan politics, which had implications for church-state relationships. In the Kenyatta era almost all church leaders were Kikuyu and church-state relations were fairly cordial. In the transition period Moi, a non-Kikuyu, tried to co-opt the church into being the praying department of the state. It is in the Moi era that Okullu's theology would emerge significantly. In a deeply entrenched ethnic environment with 'tribalised' politics Okullu emerged not as a prominent Luo but as a churchman. This can be attributed to the fact that much of Okullu's spiritual formation took place outside of Kenya in Uganda, giving him a national outlook on issues rather than a parochial one.

He spoke out of deep conviction derived from his evangelical fervour rooted in the East African Revival and radicalisation of his conscience through some elements of World Council of Churches teaching on social responsibility and the radical wing of

evangelicalism on evangelism and social responsibility emerging out of the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelisation (1974). For Okullu the mission of the Church was the total liberation (salvation) of the whole person body, soul and spirit. Evangelism and social concern were mutually inclusive. The Lordship of Jesus Christ could not be relegated to a personal level; it must also redeem the total social life.

In the Kenyatta era Okullu tackled issues of social concern such as corruption, land grabbing, tribalism in employment or educational opportunities, detention without trial among others. His article in *Target* Newspaper on oath-taking after the Mboya murder amongst others launched him into the public eye. His prophetic ministry grew further through his preaching as Provost of the All Saints Cathedral on social issues. Some of his preaching even then was reported in the daily newspapers. As bishop he continued preaching 'political' sermons whose content was of great interest to the press who publicised this. Being bishop gave him the platform to air his view. It is conceivable however that even if he had not been a bishop he would have found some other way of doing it. His conviction was very deep. As bishop he wrote the books *Church and Politics in East Africa* (1974), *Church and Nation Building and Human Development* (1984). He wrote his autobiography after retirement. It was published in 1997.

His prophetic ministry climaxed in the Moi regime. In the Moi era Okullu tackled issues related to the violation of human rights, fought for democracy and multi-party political system, the use of violence to suppress opposition and the use of ethnic violence as a means of solving political problems.

Okullu's prophetic profile was hammered out in the public eye. This required much courage and vulnerability, which is the mark of a true prophet. Okullu was an Amos of his time. He was a man on the move. He did not have time to write his treatise.

I believe Okullu destroyed the misconception that church and politics do not mix. He prepared the ground for others to do similar work such as Dr. David Gitari the immediate retired Archbishop of Anglican Church of Kenya, the late Bishop Alexander Muge and

Dr. Timothy Njoya as is attested to by Gideon Githige's book entitled, *The Church as the Bulwark against Authoritarianism. Development of Church-State Relations in Kenya, with Particular Reference to the Years after Political Independence 1963-1992*. Oxford: Regnum, 2002. Others such as Mutava Musyimi, General Secretary, National Christian Council of Kenya and most recently the Evangelical Churches of Kenya have taken up the challenge.

In a prophetic way, Okullu's proposal concerning the fielding of a single opposition presidential candidate against KANU's (the ruling party) presidential candidate carried the day in the 2002 General Elections. Thirteen opposition parties united and defeated the ruling party's presidential candidate with a landslide majority.

The National Constitutional Conference to discuss the Draft Constitution of Kenya is expected to be convened before June 2003, when the New Constitution of Kenya is expected to be completed. The dawning of a new democratic dispensation in Kenya's politics must be accounted a vindication of the Christian political theology of Bishop John Henry Okullu.



Yes/No?

3. If yes, what contribution did he make?

## APPENDIX II

### INDEPTH INTERVIEW

#### **Identification Data**

Interviewee's name \_\_\_\_\_

No. Of the interview \_\_\_\_\_

Date of the interview \_\_\_\_\_

Place of the interview \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Sex \_\_\_ Male \_\_\_ Female

#### **Instructions**

The interviewee will be request for permission to tape the interview.

#### **Introduction**

The aim of this interview is to acquire more knowledge and insight into Okullu the man, what he stood for, why he did what he did and what shaped him to play such a crucial socio-political role. Others who interacted with him closely like family members, friends and colleagues will also be interviewed.

#### **Questions**

##### **A. Understanding Okullu the man**

How would you describe Okullu?

What kind of a pastor/friend/family man/boss/or colleague was he to you?

What were his activities on a normal day?

What activity/activities occupied most of his time?

What did he love speaking about?

Who/what do you perceive to be the great influences on his life?

What in your opinion made him so bold unlike other people in the various positions that he held?

### **B. Okullu's motivation**

What in your opinion drove Okullu to become outspoken on socio-political issues? Was it his personal ambition or Christian convictions or something else? Explain.

What Christian convictions if any did he hold which you think led him to play such a public role?

### **C. Okullu's socio-political involvement**

What in your opinion were the key socio-political issues Okullu spoke out on? What was the context for this activity? What reason if any did he give for his involvement?

### **D. Okullu's contribution**

What important contribution has Okullu made in your opinion?

Has he left a legacy? What is it?

### **Demographics**

1. Please indicate the range into which your age falls

(1) \_\_\_ below 20 years

(2) \_\_\_ 21-35 years

(3) \_\_\_ 36-65 years

(4) \_\_\_ 51-65 years

(5)\_\_\_ more than 65 years

2. Which of the following represents your educational level

(1)\_\_\_ Primary education

(2)\_\_\_ Secondary education

(3)\_\_\_ Diploma/Certificate

(4)\_\_\_ University Education (first degree)

(5)\_\_\_ University Education (more than one degree)

(6)\_\_\_ other, please specify

3. In what capacity did you know the Bishop?

\_\_\_ Family member

\_\_\_ Friend

\_\_\_ Colleague (workmate, clergyman)

\_\_\_ Other (specify)

4. How many years did you know the Bishop?

\_\_\_ Less than 5 years

\_\_\_ 6-10 years

\_\_\_ 11-15 years

\_\_\_ Over 20 years

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