

Re-Inculturating *Suum-Ngi* Creation Worldview within Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) in Nigeria: An African Feminist Missiological Perspective

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Abstract:

This article offers an African Feminist Missiological perspective on re-inculturating of *Suum-ngi*¹ creation worldview of *Kadung* people within the Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN). The article argues that COCIN seems to have uncritically inculturated the *suum-ngi* creation worldview with all its patriarchal tendencies which have found new and unhelpful power expressions within COCIN. This uncritical inculturation of *suum-ngi* has facilitated gender discrimination in the Church, which tends to oppose the principles of the mission of God in the world. The choice of COCIN in this article is informed by the fact that majority of *Kadung* Christians belong to this church denomination. The article also highlights, that despite the patriarchal connotations the *suum-ngi* can still be re-inculturated as an indigenous resource that can facilitate gender justice as it has some elements that can foster equality of humanity and gender justice in COCIN. Therefore, we propose the re-inculturation of the worldview through the lens of African feminist missiological perspective in search of gender justice in the COCIN.

Keywords: *Kadung*, *Suum-ngi*, Re-inculturation, Gender justice, African Feminist missiological, Church of Christ in Nations

Introduction

The aim of this article is to critique *suum-ngi* creation worldview in the context of gender justice in the Church of Christ in Nations (hereafter COCIN), Nigeria. The article argues that *suum-ngi* worldview contains elements of destructive patriarchy, which have been uncritically inculturated within COCIN. The article argues and calls for the re-inculturation of the worldview to reflect gender justice in COCIN in such a way that the COCIN can truly reflect the mission of God in

¹ *Suum-ngi* is a vernacular term among the *Kadung* ethnic group in Nigeria. *Suum* is the root word which means 'human being' whether a male, a female, a child or an adult (Lusa, 2010:4). When the suffix *-ngi* is added to it, it becomes *suum-ngi* which then means 'humanity' or human-ness; this refers to the *essence* of being human, which is a common trait to all human beings regardless of sex, class, religion, ethnicity, political party, culture, race, and colour.

treating men and women as co-equal creatures of God. Lamis B. Liza (2007:32) defined 'gender justice' as "ending of and, if necessary, the provision of redress for inequalities between women and men that results in the subordination and oppression of women. It is fostering radical justice and equality for all human beings. Gender justice, thus, includes justice for all". The search for gender justice begins by analysing gender: who decides and who benefits, who uses resources or power and who do not benefit from these resources? Doing gender justice is first of all, to take on critical perspective of the majority of the poor and the oppressed who are women (Liza, 2007: 32). Gender justice calls for reconstructing what Nyambura Njoroge (2009: 5) referred to as "historical and socially constructed roles of men and women, ordered hierarchically with men exercising power and control over women. Male dominance and female subordination, which have both ideological and material bases". Christian Aid (2014:4) argues that "gender justice is out to correct gender inequality, which is primarily an issue of unequal power relations—of inequitable relationships between women and men. It violates human rights, constrains choice and agency, and negatively impacts upon people's ability to participate in, contribute to, and benefit from development". In line with this call for gender justice, this article argues for re-inculturating *suum-ngi* creation worldview in COCIN to deconstruct destructive patriarchy and make it life-giving. *Suum-ngi* is a creation worldview of the *Kadung* people of Plateau state of Nigeria (this point is elaborated below).

This article seeks to engage *suum-ngi* from African feminist missiological perspective which seeks to promote gender equality and justice as mission imperative in the search to establish the reign of the Kingdom of God on earth. African feminist missiologists focus on critiquing dominant patriarchy and male chauvinism deeply entrenched within some African beliefs and practices such as *suum-ngi* creation myth (Odooyoye 1995). The gender-justice-unfriendly creation myths or worldviews are deeply rooted and entrenched in some African cultures as they form the core of the cultural socialization processes. Hence, the need to critically inculturate them in the Church in a way that affirms gender justice and equality. In the context where some African beliefs and practices appear to be uncritically inculturated, there is always a need to subject them to critical analysis through gendered approaches such as African feminist missiological framework. Isabel Apawo Phiri and Sarojini Nadar have described this framework as "heeding to the call to understand mission as not just religious conversion but indeed as spreading the good news of justice and love, a move which of necessity requires transforming injustice in the world" (2010: 9). They have challenged gender injustice and sexism which some African Churches have unconsciously or consciously transferred from African cultures into their Church beliefs and practices. The question may be raised here: What are the African feminist missiological implications of *suum-ngi* creation worldview on gender justice in the Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN)?

In an attempt to answer the research question, the article develops by giving a brief highlights of *Kadung* Ethnic Group, an overview of *Suum-ngi* creation worldview and how it operates within the larger *Kadung* Society, how this infiltrates the COCIN, the implications for gender justice, and missiological critique of the worldview.

***Kadung* Ethnic Group of Nigeria**

Kadung is one of the ethnic groups found in Plateau State in Nigeria. It is located specifically in Pankshin Local Government Area of the state. Historically, *Kadung* has suffered the severest neglect in terms of the reconstruction of its history and culture (Danfulani and Maigoro, 1999:15, Pokol and Kaunda, 2015: 238). Recent attempts by some historians to venture into its far past

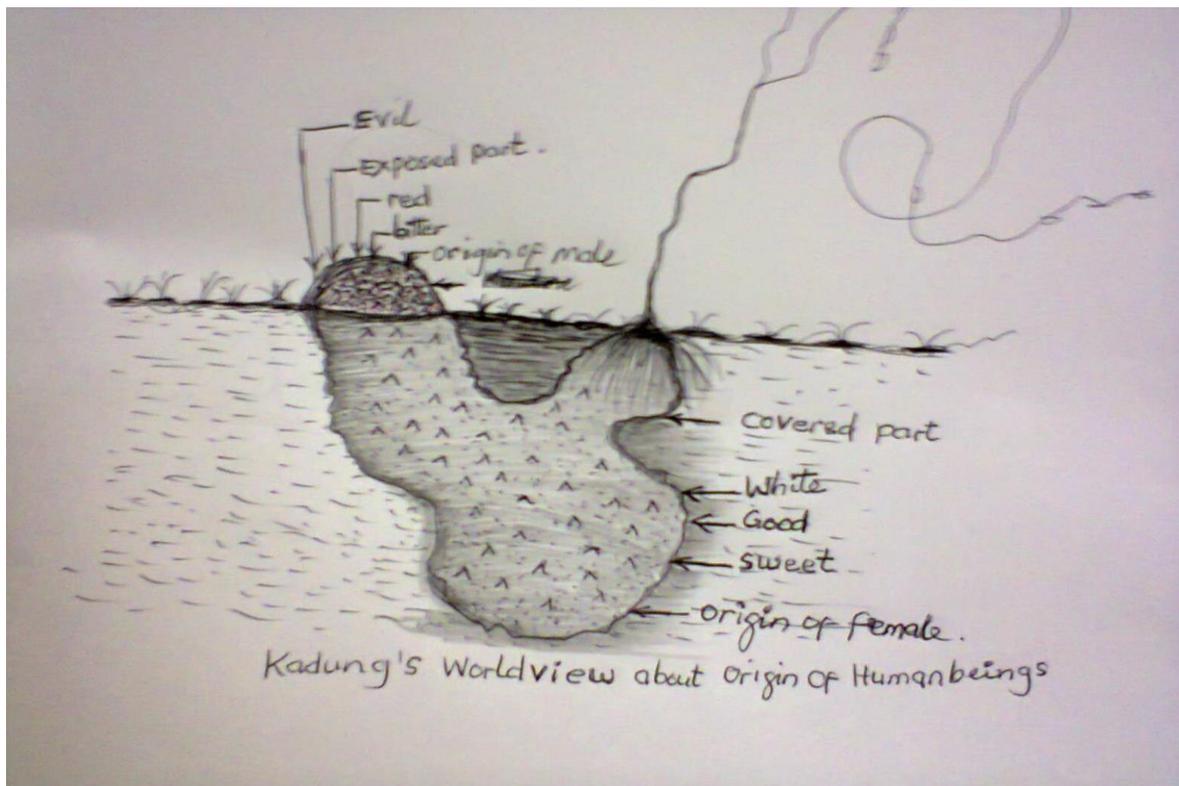
have not been very unsuccessful and never reached any reasonable conclusions as to the origin of these people (Danfulani and Maigoro, 1999:16-17, Pokol and Kaunda, 2015: 238-239). The etymology of the word *Kadung* is “better place of settlement”, which implies that they have come from elsewhere in search of a better place to settle (Danfulani and Maigoro, 1999:15, Pokol and Kaunda, 2015: 239). *Suum-ngi* as a creation worldview, therefore, serves as a lens through which the *Kadung* ethnic group views humanity as an organic whole regardless of what happens to it (Pokol and Kaunda, 2015: 239). *Suum-ngi* departs from John Mbiti’s idea of *humanity* and the Zulu’s *Ubuntu* positions which claim that we find *humanity* in community (cited in Mbigi, 2010:6-14) to finding community in humanity (Pokol and Kaunda, 2015: 239). However, Pokol and Kaunda (2015: 239) argue that community and humanity relate in the same way as chicken and egg, where it is difficult to identify which one comes first and which one second. I turn to the content of *suum-ngi* creation worldview to see what it says.

An Overview of *suum-ngi* creation worldview

The concept of *Suum-ngi* comes from the *Kadung* ethnic group in Plateau State, Nigeria (Lusa, 2010:4). *Suum* means human being; which does not indicate male-ness or female-ness. It means *human being* in general without any designation of sex or gender. The concept embodies the quintessential essence of humanness, specifically as human being as inherently embodiment of the community, respect, love, equality and justice that guides all aspects of daily life. It is the essence of being human from which the community springs (Pokol and Kaunda 2015; Lusa 2010). The community is understood as being inherently human in characteristics. It is the principle embedded within each human being as the community within from which values of respect for dignity, diversity, peace and justice originate. *Suum-ngi* is about right-ness, peace and justice. It promotes shared mutual respect and unconditional love for each other and obligation to know each other by name, face and consent to mutual concerns for each other. This offers a constructive basis for gender equality and what God intends for the common good of all human beings. It implies that any worldview that places one sex above the other goes against the original plan of the creator. Thus, COCIN cannot afford to uncritically inculturate such deviation from God’s plan in its practices by discriminating against some of its members if it must fulfil the mission of God. Being male (*Imorom*) or female (*Iyih*) is a mere description of their sexual distinct features after they were created as *suum* (human) originally, essentially, and by destination, they are moving to the same place (Lusa, 2010: 5-6, Pokol and Kaunda, 2015: 238). When the suffix *ngi* is added to *suum*, it becomes *suum-ngi*, which means the essence of being human (Lusa, 2010:7, Pokol and Kaunda, 2015: 238-239). It also implies that *suum-ngi*, the essence of being human, is what counts, not *imorom* (male) or *iyih* (female) because these are mere descriptions of the two components of the same *suum* (human being). *Suum-ngi* worldview claims that human beings originated from a wild yams tuber; sharing a common *origin*, *essence*, and moving to a common *destination* (Lusa, 2010:12, Pokol and Kaunda, 2015: 239).

The worldview holds that the wild yam plant found itself in a fertile soil and grew so large that its tuber grew so big that part of it got exposed to the sun. The exposed part eventually changed its normal colour to red and normal taste to bitter taste (Lusa, 2010: 13). The tuber eventually metamorphosed into two human beings at the same time: The exposed part produced a male human being, while the covered part produced a female human being. This worldview treats the two parts of the yams tuber as sources of sweetness and bitterness. These are represented by bad and good people in the world. In this case, the male is bitter and bad while the female is sweet and good. Nevertheless, the two parts are also regarded as sources of strength and

weakness--the male being strong, while the female is weak (Lusa, 2010:34). Strength and weakness, in this case, include everything that concerns the make-up of the male and female--physically, mentally, psychologically, politically, religiously, and emotionally (Lusa, 2010: 54). These sources seem to determine their respective functions in the society where anything that calls for strength goes to the man; while anything that is attached to weakness goes to the woman. Therefore, the male is obliged to provide security and protection for the female. The female's obligations are restricted internally or private within the home as a good and sweet person to welcome visitors that may come; while the male plays external or public roles (Lusa, 2010:50, Pokol and Kaunda, 2015: 240-241) and the provision of the needs of the family. This is the aspect of the worldview which seems to have been uncritically inculturated in COCIN (Pokol and Kaunda, 2015). This suum-ngi worldview has been transferred into COCIN and females are regarded second class to males. The current promotion of cultural revivalism among minority ethnic groups in Nigeria has resulted in COCIN's search for Africanization of Church. This to some extent has resulted in uncritically inculturation of certain African beliefs and practices without subjecting them to critical scrutinisation as to their viability in promoting justice and peace. The process of cultural re-socialisation is pursued in COCIN consciously and unconsciously as means to consolidate Kadung identity and gain recognition in Nigeria. But this has also resulted in cultural foundationalism (Pokol and Kaunda, 2015). The COCIN perception of women through *suum-ngi* worldview has resulted in gross deviation and abuse of the original plan of the creator; hence, the urgent call for re-inculturating the concept in order to reflect the mission of God in the world where the creator means well for everyone. The diagram below illustrates the tuber of wild yams and its two parts where male and female originated:



A tuber of wild yams sketch adapted from Audu Lusa (2010: 20-24)

The practice of *suum-ngi* worldview by the *Kadung* ethnic group

This worldview and its gender implications are inculcated into the young ones right at birth (Adu, 2012: 2-4). Lusa (2010: 20-26) notes that “right from the behaviour of a pregnant woman, it is detected whether she will give birth to a male or female. If a pregnant woman experiences intermittent illness during pregnancy, she is like to give birth to a female; if she behaves in strange ways like eating mud or being selective about what food to eat, she is likely to give birth to a female. But when all these are absent, she is likely to give birth to a male”. This seems to attach bad luck or failures to the girl child while good luck or success is reserved for the male child. This is functions against gender justice and equality. Dalin (2013: 14-16) reveals that “it is a sad news for any firstborn child to be a female because it sends a message of hopelessness and discontinuity to the family. This is why names like *Lokdal* (family has come to stay) is given to firstborn male children”. The idea behind *Lokdal* means that a male child is a means by which the family stays, while a girl child eventually goes away to her husband’s home (Lusa, 2010:54). This idea affects the nature of rituals and celebrations that follow the birth of a child among the Kadung group (Dalin, 2013: 26). It could also be argued that this notion also informs why female children are not usually given educational opportunities like those given to male children in most African societies (Phiri, 2007: 7).

The girls are discouraged from participating in peer groups involving boys to discourage masculine behaviors such as toughness and publicness. Those who are fond of interacting with boys are suspected of immorality or ridiculed of displaying boyish behaviour and are warned for doing so (Adu, 2012: 13). They are monitored more closely than the boys because their loose or boyish behaviour is said to be punishable by ancestors, which may later result in barrenness (Lusa, 2010: 46). The boys are freer with their parents than girls. The latter are restricted from asking certain questions that boys could freely ask such as the age it is appropriate to have intercourse (Dalin, 2013:2-5). Concerning their day to day behaviour, girl children, on the one hand, are told to “sit properly like a woman”, “remain indoors when it is night”, “go to the kitchen and help your mother”, “girls are not to be seen outside at this time of the day”, and “stop talking when boys are talking”, and girls are not allowed to eat eggs because they will not make good housewives” (Lusa, 2010: 37, Adu, 2012: 5-6, Dalin, 2013: 7).

On the other hand, boys are treated as courageous and told “not to cry because men do not cry, do not answer any call from a woman when eating food, boys do not dip their hands in soup containers because it makes them behave like women, and boys are not to go near a girl because they can be sent out any time to fetch some herbs for the protection of the family in times of war” (Adu, 2012: 6-7). It could be argued that all these views have painted the girl child as a symbol of failure in the family, which totally goes against the will of God and his mission for a just and equitable world of women and men. Other behaviours expected of boys are, “boys do not sleep in the same rooms with their mothers, boys do not talk too much in the presence of women because they might reveal community secrets, and boys are the only ones to be sent into the granary (food store) to fetch grains for women because they can withstand the snakes (family totems) that guide the grains in the granaries” (Dalin, 2013: 9). Boys are not supposed to disclose to their mothers when they discover that grains are exhausted from the granaries (Adu, 2012:45, Dalin, 2013: 11). Boys are portrayed as sign-posts of success and prosperity while girls are portrayed as sign-posts of failure and curse (Adu, 2012:45). When boys are taken into

the bush for circumcision, they are supervised and guarded by the *mu-mbutur*,² and throughout the period they are not supposed to be seen by or communicate with a woman until they return to the village as qualified “men”³ of the community. All these practices are part of *suum-ngi* worldview that constitutes the content of socialization which has been transposed in COCIN (Lusa, 2010:46).

However, Lusa reveals that in the whole of *Kadungland*, only one elderly woman, who is known to have cultivated a high life of fidelity and chastity is crowned as *Fayi ma Ndaghal*⁴ (daughter of the land), and she is given a representative status in the council of male elders of the community on behalf of all the women in the community (2010:50). *Fayi ma Ndaghal* is exposed to all the herbs and other rituals of the community but she is not allowed to reveal any of these mysteries to other women (Adu, 2012:12). These practices are still being practiced in *Kadungland*.

Summ-ngi is always reflected in the way the *Kadung* people build their houses: the husband’s room is always at the entrance of the house; and even in the bed room. When husband and wife sleep on the same bed, the husband is always at the front to protect his wife towards the wall (Lusa, 2010:16, Pokol and Kaunda, 2015: 239). When husband and wife have to walk together to the market or attend any public functions, the wife is always in front while the husband walks behind to see to her welfare in case something dangerous may attack them from behind (Adu, 2012:24).

The husband may keep late night away from home without any problem but the wife is not expected to do the same because she is the vulnerable party. Where the wife is found to keep late nights outside, she is suspected of flirting; and each time the oldest cock in the house crows between 6.00PM and 12 AM, or the oldest dog in the house is seen climbing the roof of the house, or a pre-mature egg is discovered in the house, she is held responsible for flirting, which she must confess otherwise some sickness may befall the family members (Lusa, 2010: 45). None of these restrictions apply to the husband because he is the “owner” of the house, the wife, and the rituals of the family (Lusa, 2010: 48). Since the wife is not expected to resist or verify the accusations labelled against her, she usually admits even if she only answered some greetings from another man who is not her husband in the community or outside the community (Lusa, 2010:56). All these restrictions on the wife are attributed to the fact that she originated from the covered part of the yams tuber. One could argue that *suum-ngi* creation worldview has life-denying mentalities that impede gender justice and equality in Kadung society. It seems

² *Mu-mbutur* is usually the oldest man in the village who qualifies as the teacher of male-oriented values to the young males during the rite of passage. He has all the knowledge of the myths and secrets of the community. He equally serves as a seer for the community and warns the community of any impending calamity that may befall it. Sometimes young boys who are mature for rite of passage are kept in the caves for many months undergoing tough lessons that make them “men” of courage in the community. During this period, they are warned not to allow themselves to be seen by women. If they happen to be seen by a woman, they said to have failed the manhood test and some were even killed in the process.

³ “Men” in this context does not mean male but it means those who have become custodians of the secrets of the community because they have successfully gone through the initiation rites.

⁴ The term *Fayi ma Ndaghal* literally means ‘daughter of the land’. She is raised to the position of knowing what men do. She is not qualified to formulate any of the myths for the community. She is given the privilege to represent the women folk in the gathering of men because of her chastity. Before she is appointed to such a position, she must have been put under observation for many years by the *mu-mbutur*.

women are only used for the benefit of men. Women are regarded as symbols of bad luck; they are never recognized as equal partners with the men counterparts; this is an outright denial of the mission of God, which calls for justice and equity among all human beings especially that this worldview is also reflected in the life of COCIN as explained in the following section.

***Suum-ngi* as Organising Principle of COCIN**

The COCIN is an evangelical denomination founded in 1904 in Plateau State, Nigeria by the Sudan United Mission, British Branch (Gutip, 1998:3-6, Goshit, 2013:2-3). The COCIN is a regional denomination found mainly in Nigeria, Republic of Benin, Republic of Ghana, Republic of Malawi, Republic of Tanzania, Republic of Kenya, Republic of Uganda, and recently, the United Kingdom (Goshit, 2013:4, COCIN's News Letter, 2015). It constitutes the dominant Christian denomination in Plateau State with Kadung ethnic group as the main membership. The Church exists to promote the well-being of the society by being and living out the missio-political mandate of COCIN's identity and vocation with its relationship with the Plateau State, Nigeria (Bearing, 2013:4).

Majority of the *Kadung* people are found in Pankshing, Mangu, and Kangke Local Government Areas of Plateau State (Goshit, 2013:14-15), where COCIN dominates. According to the institutional structure of COCIN, *Kadung* people have one Regional Church Council with 12 Local Church Councils apart from numerous Congregational Churches. Obvious manifestations of *suum-ngi* creation worldview that could be identified in COCIN as a Church include:

- A) Each congregation at the church congregational (cc) level and the local church councils (lcc) level has seven elders; two of whom are women while five are men (COCIN's Constitution, 2012). It is not clear why this variation in the number of men and women in the constitution of the elders. However, wherever male communicant members are in short supply, the number of women may exceed two, but such are usually considered as an unusual situation (COCIN General Conditions of Service [hereafter Conditions], 2008: 46-57). The two female elders are usually attached mostly to the kitchen and catering services during church functions. Cleaning the church and all other worship venues is reserved for women who have to prepare a roster for themselves because sweeping is not for men.
- B) Pastors' wives whose spouses die in active service are given the maximum of three Months to stay in the Church residential quarters after which they are assisted financially and sent off to their people, but this is not the same with the Pastors if their spouses die (Conditions, 2008:46-60). Pastors' wives who have theological training are employed to work along with their husbands if they are posted to teach in seminaries; but they can be transferred to another station without consideration for the employment of their wives (Conditions, 2008: 56-60). Women theologians are employed to teach and train Pastors for ordination but they are not ordained nor given churches to pastor because they are women (Conditions, 2008: 66-65).

The four Sudan United Mission (S.U.M) Missionaries who first brought the gospel to Nigeria in 1904 were all men who have been honoured as "founding fathers," without a single woman (Sudan United Mission 1907; COCIN Constitution, 2012; Goshit, 2013). It could also be argued that this patriarchal missionary party also contributed to the uncritical inculturation of *suum-ngi* worldview in COCIN. When the SUM started involving the indigenous people in the leadership of COCIN in 1951, it was Rev, Bawado Damina, a male, who became the first president of the

Church (Goshit, 2013: 336), and Da Bitrus Pam, also a male was general Secretary (Goshit, 2013: 341). From 1951 to 2015, COCIN has had seven presidents and eight general secretaries all of them males (Goshit, 2013:336-349). COCIN has seven Directors who oversee different departments at the headquarters of the church, but only two of these are women. The missionaries sideline women based on the biblical tradition while the Kadung leadership that taken over has used both Kadung culture and biblical tradition as basis for excluding women from ordination and certain leadership responsibilities in COCIN (Goshit 2013)

***Suum-ngi* Creation Worldview and Gender Justice in COCIN**

This worldview needs to be critically analysed and weighed against the mission of God as a standard for gender justice because it is to be wondered how male and female who originated from the same source and essence could be so divided in their essential and functional responsibilities and dignity to this extent. Why is it that women are generally portrayed as signposts of failure? Why are women classified as people who are only good for some internal and restricted functions in the community? How best can this status quo be challenged? Where should the campaign begin? Ordinarily, one would expect that male and female maintain equality in every aspect of their beings because of their common *origin*, common *essence*, and common *destination*. If all the parts of the plant were equal (as they are), there is no room for hierarchy of functions. Just as *suum-ngi* emphasizes the *one-ness* and *same-ness* of the tuber, regardless of its separate parts, this one-ness is strength because it means that neither humanity nor creation is superior or inferior to the other. The fact that the male and female human beings, and other creatures originated from distinct parts of the same plant should only justify variety in creation; not differences or domineering hierarchy (Lusa, 2010:19).

How come the man who originated from the exposed part of the tuber is the one who is portrayed as stronger and protector of the woman who originated from the normal part of the tuber sitting in the normal place? Why is it that the man who originated from the part that was pushed out of normal position is the one occupying superior position? Nature and common knowledge seems to show that any part of tuber that is exposed to the harsh weather loses its natural taste and colour; and it is supposed to be inferior to the part that is covered normally in the ground. Tubers are naturally meant to be covered in the ground in order to be root crops. Since the tuber protruded and exposed itself outside, it means it was in need of more soil to cover itself. The part that got exposed is the one that suffers because it became vulnerable. Hence, it is to be understood as having lost security and some nutrients from itself. How then does it become the one that gives security to the covered part which remained secure? Should it not be argued that because the exposed part might have lost some essential elements to the harsh weather? Harsh weather is known to reduce quality of everything, how come man is regarded as stronger than the woman?

It could be argued that if the male who originated from the exposed part of this tuber is ascribed superiority over the female who originated from the covered and secure part, then this worldview constitutes a contradiction because tubers are not naturally meant to be exposed to harsh weather. The stronger is normally the one that pushes the weaker outside. If external things were superior to internal things, then other creatures that originated from the vine and leaves of the plant could be considered as even more superior to male and female human beings because leaves and vine have always been outside the ground.

From the implications of *suum-ngi*, it could be argued that injustice has been done to female human beings within Kadung culture because logically, it is supposed to imply that women are superior to men because they originated from the normal part of the tuber. Absolute care must be taken in the process of retrieving this notion of worldview in order not to be seen as justifying patriarchy as already being done within COCIN (Pokol and Kaunda, 2015). Uncritical inculturation has potential to perpetuate gender injustice and inequality. Life-giving inculturation rejects any cultural aspects that do not promote the humanity and equality of both women and men in the church and community. What about single parent-females who have their own houses, who protects them? Therefore, while *suum-ngi* offers an important analogy for African theology of peace and communitarianism that could promote just and equitable community, one ought to be careful about its implications on gender equality and how it may work against gender justice (Pokol and Kaunda, 2015).

African Feminist Missiological Implications of *Suum-ngi* within COCIN

African women contribution to missiological thinking is based on the search for innovative African cultural identity to inform contemporary African Christianity. African feminist missiological imagination unveils that African cultural traditions are a double-edged sword that gives women identity, integrity, and way of life and simultaneously reinforcing patriarchal denomination in the Church and society (Phiri and Nadar 2010). The framework is a gendered cultural hermeneutics that seeks to critique patriarchy as it manifests in the trilogy of African cultures, modern Western cultural imperialism and Christian faith in order to extricate aspects in these traditions that are liberating and life-giving for women from those bent on perpetuating patriarchal domination (Kanyoro 2002). African feminist missiological thinking therefore, calls for gender sensitive approaches to God's mission that can take seriously proclamation of the good news through radical affirmation of life over death and that God's missional transformative acts in the world emerges from below that is "at the margins because transformation never genuinely happens at the centre but at the margins where the reality of people seeking fullness of life 'that becomes a new creative core'" (Kaunda and Hewitt 2015:11). The question is how can African feminist missiological thinking help COCIN to re-inculturate the concept of *suum-ngi*?

The African feminist missiological thinking will help COCIN to re-inculturate *suum-ngi* in COCIN because *suum-ngi* has lots of constructive elements that can promote gender justice in the Church and society: the essential oneness of humanity, the essential equality of humanity, the oneness of creation, and the return of all creation to a common destination ought to be emphasized to replace the destructive discrimination against women in COCIN as a result of uncritical inculturation. The fact that humanity and non-human creation originated from one source without any essential gender discrimination or gender role variations, tallies with the African feminist missiological implication of the oneness of all creation. Re-inculturating *suum-ngi* is about acting to realize God's Kingdom of justice, dignity, and peace by challenging gender injustice and sexism through radical solidarity in love in approach to both biblical interpretation and reclamation of African cultures. Within COCIN, it calls for reconceptualization of what it means to be human beings in the search for justice and equality. The sweetness and hospitable nature of women that *suum-ngi* suggests is a missiological imperative that women can contribute to the beauty of the entire society and creation at large. Re-inculturating *suum-ngi* in COCIN becomes necessary in order to stress the constructive elements above the destructive ones because if there is anything the Church is doing to fulfil the mission of God in the world, gender justice should be moved to the centre because God is a God of justice.

The African feminist missiological framework, centered on justice, holds every destructive aspect of African indigenous resources accountable to gender justice. Phiri and Nadar (2010: 9) have argued that “a description of the work of women in mission is not the same as feminist missiology. A feminist perspective would advocate for the full humanity of all women together with men...who see themselves as working together for justice as postcolonial subjects.” Chammah Kaunda (2014: 121) agreed with them and argues that “the vision of a gender inclusive model is to develop a just and equitable society through affirmation of equality and full humanity of all members of the community.” Earlier, Isabel Phiri (2008/2009:115) noted that patriarchy is a cause of societal inequality which results in crime. This is a valid argument because even if there are other factors that serve to foster life-denying mentalities and impede just and equitable community, they do not justify gender inequality. Kaunda further posited that “gender inclusiveness challenges the societal and political status quo that denies people an equal share of resources in society through gender imbalance and pervasive greed” (2014: 121). We are in consonant with the concept of pervasive greed because it could be argued that worldviews like *suum-ngi* are definitely fed and shaped by pervasive greed. Gender roles are ‘manufactured’ in the ‘factories’ of greedy hearts and have no respect for the creative and life-giving mandate of the creator.

Conclusion

Every form of gender discrimination either consciously or unconsciously constructed or perpetuated goes against the original plan of the creator, who wants to see justice reigned among his equal creatures. African Christianity needs to watch out for its alliance with worldviews that tend to oppose this good will of God for the society. The influence of *suum-ngi* in COCIN’s tradition and practices seems to have confirmed Kaunda’s submission that “African Christianity appears to be in unholy relationship with African culture” (2013: 110), and that denying any human being justice and equality means not only denying their full participation in life-affirming relationships, but also constitutes violence against their inherent sanctity and the very image of God in which all have been created (2012: 143).

In this article, we have argued that *suum-ngi* has been uncritically inculturated in COCIN because its destructive elements which tend to feed gender inequality against women in the society have been uncritically transferred into the church policies and practices that work against women’s human rights, interests, and freedom to live as human beings. We also argued that these policies have reduced women to second class citizens who are said to need protection from men. We made a case that, male human beings through subtleness constructed patriarchy for themselves from the destructive elements of *suum-ngi* worldview that needs to be re-inculturated to facilitate a life-giving society which God intended. It has also been argued that COCIN has not allowed women the opportunity of playing equal roles and functions with men in the Church. Therefore, we proposed and argued for the use of African feminist missiological perspective, which centres on gender justice, to re-inculturate *suum-ngi* in COCIN, stressing its constructive elements to facilitate gender justice and the fulfilment of the mission of God, which focuses on gender justice for all human beings whether male or female.

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