Tamar as Victim of Levirate Marriage?
Reading Genesis 38 within a Zulu Cultural Context of Marriage

By

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DECLARATION

By submitting this thesis, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the authorship owner thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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ABSTRACT

Zulu society for the most part is deeply patriarchal in nature and rooted in male dominance that is supported by androcentric cultural beliefs and practices that have led to the oppression of women. Because of patriarchy, Zulu marriage for many women implies victimization and objectification. In particular, the inability to bear male children has resulted in the victimization of the wives that subsequently diminishes their worth as human beings and also has implications for their religious life.

In this study, the story of Tamar as told in Genesis 38 is read in the context of the ostracism and oppression that many Zulu women continue to experience in marriage. Reading the story of Tamar, who can be described as a victim of levirate marriage gone wrong, by means of an African Feminist and a Postcolonial Feminist exegetical approach, this study proposes that the story of Tamar may offer Zulu women an alternative way of understanding their own situation, not just as victims, but as survivors as well.

In Chapter 2 of this study, I explore Zulu culture and identity in relation to gender by venturing into the cultural folktales to discover the hidden oppression over its women. The purpose of this chapter is to show how cultural symbols like folktales reflect the culture of subjugation and domination over women. But, more importantly, I demonstrate how these folktales serve as a way of socialization of girls and the perpetuation of the male idealization of women in marriage. Furthermore, I show in this chapter how the dominant paradigm of Zulu life in relation to marriage to a great extent continues to centres on the necessity of procreation. I moreover show that the reality of infertility and barrenness and the social consequences reveal some of the layers of ambiguities within the Zulu context of marriage that is rooted in a patriarchal culture that oppresses women and is detrimental to their health.

In Chapter 3 of this thesis, the story of Tamar will be read by means of an African Feminist approach that will employ the experience of Zulu women's oppression in the context of marriage in order to expose the different practices that allow men to victimise, objectify and control women in the cultural marital context. And in Chapter 4 of this thesis, the same text will be read through the lens of a Postcolonial Feminist approach in which themes such as hybridity and mimicry will be used to explore the imperial elements in Genesis 38 when it will be shown how the character of Judah comes to represent Israel as the "coloniser" who is subjugating the Canaanite "Other", Tamar.

Reading Tamar's story through an African Feminist as well as a Postcolonial Feminist lens affirms that subalterns like Tamar as also many Zulu women today do have a voice after all. Through this study, the possibility for the voices of Zulu women regarding their oppression they experience in terms of marriage is opened up. Female survivors of such oppression are called to help liberate the women of our culture by teaching them how one subverts the oppressive structures in order for every woman in the Zulu culture to flourish. This is a society in which Zulu men treat their women with the same dignity and respect that they themselves demand and which Zulu women are able to reach their full potential and not judged in terms of their ability of bringing a male child in the world.

OPSOMMING

Die Zoeloe gemeenskap is grootliks patriargaal in aard en gebaseer op manlike oorheersing wat deur androsentriese kulturele oortuigings en praktyke gevoed word wat lei tot die onderdrukking van vroue. As gevolg van patriargie, impliseer die instelling van die huwelik vir baie vroue viktimisasie en objektivering. In besonder, die onvermoë om seuns in die wêreld te bring gee aanleiding tot die viktimisering van vroue wat hulle waarde as volwaardige mense aantas wat ondermeer implikasies inhou ook vir hul godsdienstige lewe.

In hierdie studie, word die verhaal van Tamar soos vertel in Genesis 38 gelees in die konteks van die onderdrukking en verwerping wat baie Zoeloe vroue steeds ervaar in die huwelik. Die verhaal van Tamar, wat beskryf kan word as 'n slagoffer van leviraat huwelik wat verkeerd geloop het, word in hierdie studie deur middel van 'n Afrika Feministiese en 'n Postkoloniale Feministiese eksegetiese benadering gelees. Die studie stel voor dat die verhaal van Tamar vir Zoeloe vroue 'n alternatiewe manier bied om hul eie situasie te verstaan, nie net as slagoffers nie, maar ook as oorwinnaars.

In hoofstuk 2 van hierdie studie, word die Zoeloe kultuur en identiteit in terme van gender deur middel van kulturele volksverhale ondersoek om die onderdrukking van vroue aan te spreek wat dikwels versteek is. Die doel van hierdie hoofstuk is om aan te toon hoe kulturele simbole soos volksverhale die kultuur van die onderwerping van en oorheersing oor vroue weerspieël. Maar meer belangrik, hierdie studie demonstreer hoe hierdie volksverhale as 'n manier van sosialisering van meisies kan dien wat die voortbestaan van die manlike idealisering van vroue in die huwelik insluit. Daar word ondermeer in hierdie hoofstuk aangetoon hoe die dominante paradigma van Zoeloe lewe met betrekking tot die huwelik tot 'n groot mate nog steeds gemik is op die noodsaaklikheid van voortplanting. Hoofstuk 2 wys verder op die realiteit van onvrugbaarheid in die Zoeloe konteks en veral die sosiale gevolge wat dit inhou vir vroue binne die konteks van die huwelik wat grootliks gegrond is in 'n patriargale kultuur wat vroue onderdruk en voorts nadelig is vir hul gesondheid.

In Hoofstuk 3 van hierdie tesis sal die verhaal van Tamar gelees word deur middel van 'n Afrika Feministiese benadering wat fokus op die onderdrukking wat Zoeloe vroue in die konteks ervaar en skadelike praktyke wat toelaat dat vroue geviktimiseer, verobjektiveer en beheer word in diens in van die kultuur blootlê. En in Hoofstuk 4 van hierdie tesis sal dieselfde teks gelees word deur die lens van 'n postkoloniale feministiese benadering wanneer temas soos hibriditeit ("hybridity") en nabootsing ("mimcry") gebruik word om die imperialistiese elemente in Genesis 38 te ondersoek. Daar sal ondermeer aangetoon word hoe die karakter van Juda, Israel verteenwoordig as die "koloniseerder" wat die Kanaänitiese "Ander," Tamar, onderwerp.

Deur die verhaal van Tamar deur 'n Afrika Feministiese sowel as 'n Postkoloniale Feministiese lens te lees bevestig hierdie studie dat subalterns soos Tamar asook Zoeloe vroue vandag tog wel 'n stem het. Deur middel van hierdie studie, word die moontlikheid geopen vir hierdie stemme van Zoeloe vroue met betrekking tot die onderdrukking wat hulle

ervaar in terme van hulle huwelik om gehoor te word. Vroue wat sodanige onderdrukking ervaar het, word opgeroep om te help om die vroue van ons kultuur te bevry deur hulle te help nadink oor die moontlikhede om onderdrukkende strukture teen te staan ten einde dit moontlik te maak vir elke vrou in die Zoeloe kultuur om te floreer. Die hoop is om 'n samelewing daar te stel waarin Zoeloe mans hul vroue met dieselfde waardigheid en respek behandel as wat hulle vir hulself wens, en wat verder Zoeloe vroue in staat stel om hul volle potensiaal te bereik wat nie beperk is tot hul vermoë om 'n manlike kind in die wêreld te bring.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1.   Background and Motivation

For many women in the Zulu society, marriage is a power struggle in the sense that their bodies become the "sites of their oppression" (Isherwood 1998:15). The Zulu culture, like many other African cultures, is mostly patriarchal in nature. This implies that people are socialised to regard men as superior to women and to view women as possessions of men. Women grow up under their father's rule and, once they marry, that role is transferred to their husbands. Thus, women are objects of power exchange between men. In Zulu culture, male dominance which affords men the right to "own" women as property is encouraged, but in some cases this translates into violence against women by husbands who wish to render them subservient. Such oppressive practices continue to shape the gender roles within the patriarchal communal setting as they are transferred from one generation to another.

My personal consciousness of the negative dynamics of marriage in the Zulu culture is the result of witnessing my mother treated as a disposable object because she failed to produce a male heir. Her story is not the only one of its kind among Zulu women. The tendency to measure the sexual prowess and the pride of a Zulu man against the number of his male offspring has negative implications for the girl child, which more often than not understandably results in an inferiority complex among Zulu daughters. The boy child becomes the bearer of the father's surname when the latter dies, and it is believed that the father's identity is immortalised in his son/s. In comparison, the only real value that the Zulu patriarchy accords daughters stems from the fact that she will ultimately contribute to the family's wealth by way of the bride price (lobola) the family receives when she gets married and the expectation that she herself will produce sons for her new family. Otherwise, women are not seen as significant contributors to the clan.

In a sense, my mother's story inspired me to write about the oppression that Zulu women encounter in marital spaces. Her failure to become an ideal wife to my father by giving birth to a son resulted in a painful divorce and her ostracism from the community. The society that should have protected her not only rejected her due to her status as a divorcee but exclusively blamed her for the failure of her marriage! Not only the men around her, but also the women, within and outside the family, were not sure how to deal with her. She became an outsider and even though she had access to the family – she was allowed to attend family gatherings

and funerals when invited – others felt uneasy around her because her position had changed to that of a former sister-in-law.

As mentioned above, my mother is not alone in her fate. I was shocked to realise that many Zulu marriages could and do end because the wife does not give birth to a boy child. Part of my initial shock was that I, like many others, was under the impression that this tragic state of affairs exists only in rural settings, that is, such injustices only occur in very traditional settings and definitely not in "enlightened", "modern", urban settings. However, to my surprise, many African scholars have pointed out exactly the opposite namely that in African communities, patriarchal norms are not only limited to rural contexts (cf. Mbiti 1969: xi; Zondi 2013:164; Ngubane 2010:1). Patriarchy is neither a thing of the past, nor is it limited to particular spaces/environments. Moreover, women in cities also have to contend with forms of patriarchal violence and oppression that women in traditional settings experience.

However, talking openly about such oppression creates its own set of challenges for women as objecting to it often results in feelings of shame which ultimately contribute to ostracism from family and community. These women and even those who complain about their situation are seen as rebels who fail to live up to cultural expectations. As Hollos and Larsen (2008:162) have noted:

Findings show that regardless of the medical causes of infertility in most of these cultures, women suffer personal grief and frustration social stigma, ostracism and often serious economic deprivation. They receive the major blame for reproductive mishaps and in many places infertility is a ground for divorce, causing a woman to lose access to her livelihood.

Moreover, Greil et al (2010:146), in their analysis of the psychological experiences of infertility in men, found that a man's masculinity is threatened by infertility. Studies have shown that fertility proves "[a man's] heterosexuality and masculinity" (cf. Herrera 2013:1063). The man's sense of self and identity as a man is compromised by failure to reproduce (Hanna & Gough 2015:3)[1].

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[1] According to Johannson *et al* (2011:8), male factor infertility generates feelings of inadequacy about manliness in many men. According to Hanna and Gough (2015:3), the norms of hegemonic masculinity are being used to narrate the experiences of fertility and infertility in men.

A solution Zulu women often opt for when faced with infertility or the absence of male offspring, is to be content with their partners' decision to resort to polygamous relationships[2]. Polygamy then becomes a way of remedying the situation of a woman who fails the patriarchal expectation of giving birth to a son or to children. According to Masuku (2005:81), "If the first wife has no children or only has daughters it follows without exception that her husband will take another wife to remedy childlessness and also to remove the shame of apparent unproductivity." Under such circumstances, the infertile woman or the woman without sons seldom leaves, but rather chooses the financial security of remaining in the marriage as a first wife, even if it means having to share her husband with a second, fertile wife. However, some men do not even go into a polygamous marriage, but simply become unfaithful to their wives in order to produce a son. Mercy Oduyoye confirms that certain men out of desperation enter into secret affairs to secure progeny (Oduyoye 1999:109)[3].

Another problematic element of such forms of oppression is that they inadvertently promote the patriarchal agenda. The mere fact that men or even women can and do distance themselves from an individual woman's fate accomplishes the patriarchal goal. In Tanzania, for instance, many women live in fear of their mothers and sisters-in-law who tend to meddle in their lives when the marriage proves to be childless or when only daughters are born (Hollos & Larsen 2008:18). This situation is also common among Zulu women who fail to conceive or produce an heir. Boddy (cited in Hollos & Larsen 2013:4) affirms that in patriarchal societies children are regarded as a source of power to women in relation to men, but barrenness disrupts that "power and the social order", leaving the infertile woman powerless and socially unacceptable.

A major motivation for this study is the desire to help create awareness and to challenge the objectification, victimisation and attribution of an inferior status to Zulu women, particularly in the patriarchal marital setting. South African feminist theologian Denise Ackerman sees patriarchy as a legal, economic and social system that validates and enforces the sovereignty of the male head of the family over its other members, wives, children and slaves (Ackerman 1993b:22)[4]. As a social, historical, religious and economic system, patriarchy is characterised by profound androcentrism, which is defined as male-centeredness. In short,

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[2] It has been observed that men who fail to reproduce often engage in extra marital affairs as a way of affirming their masculinity (2015:5).

[3] Hanna and Gough (2015:5) maintain that the "even reassurance and support from the spouse are not enough to readdress their feelings that their identity as men had been undermined".

[4] The concept of patriarchy will be discussed more fully in chapter 2

this means that what is thought of as being universally human or generally valid norms have been exclusively described and analysed by men.

While patriarchal practices exist in many cultural settings, I have chosen to focus on the effects of patriarchy on Zulu women in the context of marriage, not only because of my own experiences as a Zulu, but also because there are clear and pronounced expectations regarding the roles of women in Zulu marriage which often serve a patriarchal agenda rather than ensure the wellbeing of women. One of these is the inferior status assigned to infertile women and the preference of the male child or the mothers of male children to females to the detriment not only of the mother of the girl children only, but also of the girl children themselves.

As a student of the Old Testament, I am drawn to biblical texts that depict victimisation and oppression of women. Through my involvement in the Gender, Health and Theology MTh program at Stellenbosch University, I have been sensitised to recognise elements of oppression in the biblical stories that are akin to those in my own cultural context. In particular, I have come to acknowledge the dehumanising factors that threaten women's lives in the ancient biblical narratives.

I find the story of Tamar as told in Genesis 38 especially striking. Tamar was a Canaanite woman who married Er, Judah's firstborn son. However, Er died before they (Tamar and Er) could conceive a son and his death left Tamar with an uncertain future. Judah then instructed his second son Onan to marry Tamar in order to provide an offspring "for his dead brother". However, Onan purposefully "withdrew his seed" from Tamar in order to prevent conception. According to the narrator, the action displeased God and he slew Onan for the injustice perpetrated against Tamar.

Judah was concerned that Tamar could be the cause of the death of his two sons, and decided to withhold his third son Shelah from Tamar. Judah then sent Tamar back to her father's house to wait until Shelah was old enough to marry her. Although Judah's decision made allowance for the future marriage between Tamar and Shelah, his actions in the meantime isolated Tamar from her family as she had to wait until the youngest son was old enough to marry. As time passed, it became evident that Judah did not intend to give his third son to Tamar at all! This left Tamar with few options. When she heard of the death of Judah's wife, Tamar seized the opportunity to devise a plan that would change her social status which had denied her access to a proper life. She dressed as a prostitute, positioned herself by the side of

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the road and waited for Judah to pass by to make advances at her. Indeed, when he saw her, Judah was attracted to her and under the impression that she was a prostitute, he approached her for sex.

After the encounter with her father-in-law, Tamar secured Judah's signet, cord and staff, as an "insurance policy" to claim back her dignity when the time arrived. Subsequently, Tamar became pregnant, and she almost got killed, as Judah instructed that she be burnt. However, she produced the signet, cord and staff to show that the impregnator was the one condemning her to death. Tamar later gave birth to twin sons which changed her status for the better.

The story of Tamar is of interest to me because it is the story of a woman who faced great obstacles in a patriarchal system but refused to remain a victim. Rather, she orchestrated methods of survival and resistance to retain her place in the society as well as to demand the restoration of her stolen dignity. In Tamar's story, one finds issues that resonate with the experiences of Zulu women in a patriarchal system. Tamar was a widow who experienced oppression and ostracism for not following "the script of ideal womanhood". It is assumed that the focus on the victimisation and objectification of Tamar as told in the narrative could help Zulu women not only to recognise part of their own oppression, but also to learn from Tamar's example of resistance the importance of denouncing oppression in their own marital contexts.

I also realise that these stories may be used in my own quest to challenge the elements of patriarchy that are embedded in my own culture. By exposing the patriarchal structures and the role of patriarchy in the victimisation of women, specifically, in the context of marriage in Old Testament stories, I hope to help women in my culture to realise that their way of being in the world has been defined chiefly by men who follow a patriarchal agenda, that they are the interpreters of their own identity, roles and cultural narratives, and that they do not necessarily have to follow the idealised patriarchal view of them as women, wives and mothers.

However, this is no easy task. I realise all too well that there is enormous resistance from custodians of Zulu patriarchy against any attempts to identify its oppressive practices towards women. For instance, Dirk Buchner, in a Bible study with male Zulu students of KwaZulu-Natal University that sought to sensitise both men and women to the oppressive elements found in the views on gender within their culture, finds that the participants strongly denied that patriarchy led to the oppression of women. The young male students who participated in

the study denied that their actions towards women could be considered life-denying and did not see any need for the community to change. According to Buchner, to even point out the existence of inequality between men and women was considered absurd![5]

1.2.   Research Focus and Aim of Study

As shown above, male dominance that is supported by androcentric norms in the form of cultural beliefs and practices that account for the oppression of women is deeply rooted in the Zulu patriarchal society. Due to the dictates of patriarchy, Zulu marriage for many women implies victimisation and objectification. In particular, the inability to bear a male child by a Zulu wife could result in victimisation which subsequently diminishes her worth as a human being and sometimes affects her religious life. This, in turn, poses serious questions with regards to women's belief in God as a provider or the One "who opens the womb"[6]. Thus, marriage is not a particularly safe space for Zulu women, and within an honour and shame society[7] such as the Zulu society, divorced women and widows who are without male protection are greatly exposed and vulnerable to the violation of their human rights and dignity as gender inequality could cause them to further fall victim to ostracism.

Madipoane Masenya tells the story of Mmanape who finds her place in the patriarchal family and is regarded as an African woman only after giving birth to a boy child (Masenya 2012:284). With this story, Masenya confirms that in some African cultures a woman is only considered an authentic wife if her first child is a son! The finding is true also of the Zulu culture in which marriage has become a weapon for dehumanising women in settings that should provide comfort and safety. The issue is not limited to the obsession with producing a male child, but also relates, for example, to diverse forms of sexual violence perpetrated against women as well as their increased vulnerability to the threat of HIV and AIDS, which is detrimental to their health. Of the health aspects more needs to be said at this point. Interestingly, Juliana Claassens, in her article, "Resisting Dehumanization: Ruth, Tamar and

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[5] Buckner (1997:367).

[6] Phyllis Trible argues that the control of the womb does not belong to a woman, husband, foetus or society but rather it is in the hands of God (Trible 1978:35). Kroeger and Evans (2002:157) also agree that God is the only agent with the power to enable childbirth.

[7] Matthews (1998:98) who writes on "*Honor and Shame in Gender Related Legal Situations in the Hebrew Bible*" asserts that "the biblical text is a product of a tradition oriented society which places a great deal of value in honourable behaviour. Codes of correct behaviour are measures of honour or dishonour". Honour and shame also characterise the Zulu cultural norms in the sense that men and women both respond to communal responsibilities according to the honour and shame ethos (Garfinkle 1995:204 & Dworkin 1996:129).

the Quest for Human Dignity, establishes a clear link between patriarchal systems and the disregard for women's dignity" (Claassens 2012:659).

At the beginning of this chapter, it was noted that women's bodies have been described as "sites of female oppression" (Isherwood 1998:15). According to Isherwood, marriage has become a space where men decide what should happen to women's bodies because they are married to them. In recent times, a number of Christian feminists including Isherwood, Ackerman, Claassens, and Oduyoye have shared the concerns of their sisters outside the guild regarding a "patriarchal theology" that relates, amongst other things, to the bodies of women. Isherwood (1998:16) argues, for example, that the idea that Eve was removed from the side of Adam means that Eve "becomes an object, an "other" detached from God's original creation".

There can be little doubt that in the African context, patriarchy, together with culture and religion, serves as the basis for oppressive realities that women experience (Phiri 2002:24). Since society is fabricated on androcentric norms, women become objectified. According to South African theologian Beverly Haddad, traditionally, women have little to say in issues of sexual engagement (Haddad 2002:95). In fact, their sexuality is controlled by their husbands. Therefore, their bodies are vulnerable, which raises health questions about their health. Isabel Phiri also argues that it is because marriage is valued more than being single, young married women are advised to turn a blind eye on their husband's infidelity, which means they are powerless to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (Phiri 2002:24). Furthermore, what is particularly hypocritical about many African marriages is that a man's infidelity is usually not treated as a violation of his commitment to his wife, whereas the adulteress is thought of having wronged the husband or father and his clan because she has received foreign seed (Baloyi 2009:6).

Another important factor to consider in the context of Zulu marriage is the incidence of gender-based violence. The World Health Report (1996:5) defines "violence as the use of physical power against oneself or the other person that could either result in injury, psychological harm or deprivation. Types of violence include physical, sexual, psychological, deprivation or neglect". For Cheryl Kirk-Duggan, "violence is that which defames God's created order" (Kirk-Duggan 2003:3), and in the case of gender based violence, Phiri (2002:24) asserts that sexual violence flourishes in the African marital spaces because of patriarchy.

The above explanation serves as background to this study, which investigates how issues of procreation and male child preference in Zulu marriage could function as a hermeneutical framework for reading the representation of marriage in Genesis 38 where the main character, Tamar, becomes the victim of a levirate marriage gone wrong. In other words, the aim of this study is to reread Tamar's story in the context of Zulu marriage and in particular the suffering women experience under the influence of patriarchy, in order to offer Zulu women an alternative way of understanding their own situation, not just as victims, but also as survivors. Thus, the next section outlines the research questions that this study seeks to answer.

1.3.   Research Questions

This study will respond to the following research questions:

a)   In what ways can Zulu women's experience of marriage serve as a hermeneutical framework for reading the narrative of Tamar and Judah in Genesis 38?

b)   How can the depiction of the victimisation of women through the practice of the so-called levirate marriage in Genesis 38 help to give women in contemporary Zulu society the language to describe their own experiences in marriage?

c)   In what ways can the depiction of Tamar in terms of her hybrid identity as an insider/outsider help (Zulu) women's to creatively challenge and resist oppressive treatment that they undergo in the course of marriage?

1.4.   Research Objectives and Methodology

The primary objective of this study is to describe Zulu women's experience of marriage with particular reference to the role of patriarchy and male child preference. Certain Zulu folktales, to the extent that they portray social scripts and ideologies, will be probed to show how they foreground individual gendered experiences.

A second research objective seeks, by means of some recent exegetical approaches, to reread the humiliation that Tamar experienced in the context of a levirate marriage in the Genesis 38 narrative. Tamar's story in which she is abandoned by the patriarch of her society will be read in the light of the oppression that many Zulu women experience in marriage due to patriarchy. In this regard, two methodological approaches are deemed to be particularly

helpful namely an African feminist approach as well as an African postcolonial feminist approach. In Chapter 3 of this thesis, an African feminist approach will be employed to probe Zulu women's experiences of oppression in the context of marriage in order to expose the different cultural practices that allow men to victimise, objectify and control women in the marital context. In Chapter 4, a postcolonial feminist approach that employs themes such as hybridity and mimicry to explore the imperial elements in Genesis 38 will be adopted. The reading portrays Judah who represents Israel as the "coloniser" who subjugates the Canaanite "Other", Tamar.

These two approaches have been selected, first, because the African feminist reading of Tamar's story in Chapter 3 has the potential to help Zulu women today to comprehend just how deeply immersed they are in a patriarchal culture which shapes their way of life, and often in harmful ways. An African feminist approach to Genesis 38 would help to scrutinise Zulu culture by exploring the various elements of oppression portrayed in the story of Tamar that set the stage for violence against women and their oppression in the marital setting.

Secondly, the postcolonial feminist approach that will be used in Chapter 4 to read the story of Tamar is a helpful tool for reflecting on the view of gender at the macro-level. The focus on the macro-level offers a glimpse into the elements that affect gender and consequently women's individual behaviour. A postcolonial feminist approach helps us to consider ways in which African communities (and the Zulu community in particular) deal with their colonial past and how postcolonial concepts such as multiculturalism and hybridity may be helpful in thinking of the gender dynamics in an African setting.

1.5.   Exegetical Approach

The exegetical method followed in this thesis will be the narrative criticism approach that Gunn (1999:201) defines as "interpreting the existing text in its final form in terms of its own story world." This means that in this thesis, a close reading of Genesis 38 will be given that recognises formal and conformist structures of the story that focuses on plot, characterization, different points of view, language play that helps one to identify a central theme(s). Narrative criticism provides additional consideration to the reader in the making of meaning which also can be linked to what has been called reader response criticism.

Furthermore, Resseguie (2005:20) contends that narrative criticism is focussed on the role of the characters and their characterization in the text, and particular the spoken word and actions of the characters that are framed in order to reveal their partialities, apprehensions and worldviews.

1.6.   Chapter Outline

Following an outline of the background and motivation, research problem, questions and objectives of this study in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 will consider based on some Zulu folktales issues of fertility and infertility in marriage in order to provide a cultural background for the Zulu paradigm of women's role in marriage. The chapter will explore negative impact of culture on women and its bias towards men as well as ways in which culture furthers the patriarchal agenda while putting women's health at risk. In Chapter 2, it will also be shown that lobola (bride price) is used chiefly by men as a powerful tool to further the oppression and victimisation of women.

The detailed studies by Musa Ngobese (2003), Norma Masuku (2005), Siegfried Ngubane 2010, and Nompumelelo Zondi (2013) will provide an overview of the impact of patriarchy in Zulu marriage which has become a site of oppression for many women. Notably, the abovementioned authors all emerge from Zululand. Whereas Masuku (2005) and Zondi (2013) focus on Zulu women's experience in marriage from a female perspective, Ngobese (2003) writes about women's oppression from a male perspective, but as an advocate for women. As such, it is quite significant that even though both Ngobese and Ngubane are Zulu men, they recognise the effects of patriarchy and the injustices perpetrated against women in the Zulu cultural setting. For instance, Ngubane (2010:1) argues that in many cases, because a Zulu man paid lobola on his wife, he treats her as personal property. The payment of lobola makes men often become the initiator and the dictators of what happens within a marriage.

The Malawian theologian Isabel Phiri who writes about sexual violence in the African cultural setting acknowledges that sex also is a tool of domination employed by patriarchs (Phiri 2002:26). In the African marriage setting, power imbalances are an operational reality; but these power dynamics tend to produce negative feelings in women. Kanyoro (cited in Nyengelele 2002:23) maintains that culture is the main tool used for silencing many women in the African contexts. The silencing of women is observed in many familial spaces among the Zulu. For example, when a daughter is abducted for marriage in the practice of

ukuthwala, the mother of the daughter usually does not have a say in the matter, only the father does. If there is a lobola negotiation, the mother of the bride does not have a say in the matter, the men of the family dictate the course of action. This does not mean that the woman does not have an opinion, she is just not allowed to express it. When a man wishes to take a second wife, his mother barely opposes the move, rather she complies with whatever the patriarchal hierarchy suggests. The list is endless, but what is disturbing is the reluctance on the part of women to challenge the status quo set by patriarchy and the willingness to abide by its rule. Due to its norms and rules, culture itself is guilty of silencing women, as traditional folktales create a picture of the ideal wife which ignores the diverse characteristics of women.

It will also be shown in Chapter 2 how society ostracises and silences childless women, divorced women as well as widows. In fact, it seems that women are vocal only when they participate in degrading other women and reminding them how they have failed to adhere to the ideal set by patriarchy, and trying to shame those who are already victims! In particular, the chapter will consider the practice of inventing hierarchies among women which is a subtle outcome of patriarchal domination in Zulu culture[8].

Furthermore, a number of African scholars such as Baloyi (2009:3), Turaki (1999:107) and Nhlapho (1991:143) have observed that various factors account for the preference of the male to a female child in Zulu culture and this will be addressed in Chapter 2 as well. However, one of the primary causes is the perceived necessity in many African societies to continue the family lineage, amongst others, because when parents reach old age, they tend to be dependent on a male child or male children to support them. Moreover, a mother cannot give away her daughter's hand in marriage; only a father can do this, which suggests that in many cases, traditional roles requiring specific male engagement continue to be the norm. The birth of a boy child elevates the woman's status in the family into which she is married (Ngobese 2003:75; Masenya 2012:284). This means that a woman is not recognised for any of the roles she plays as a wife but only by producing a son is her relevance acknowledged.

In Chapter 3, an African feminist approach will be employed to read the story of Tamar in Genesis 38. Among others, the work of Mercy Amba Oduyoye, an African feminist scholar who writes from the perspective of the patriarchal realities faced by African women will be reviewed. Oduyoye's work illustrates the African feminist task of interpreting the biblical

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[8] Carol Myers explains that heterarchy concedes the existence of hierarchies within a societal setting, emphasizing their intersectionality with one another and causing power discrepancies (Meyers 2013:27).

text from the perspective of the African culture. Mercy Oduyoye is an African feminist scholar and the initiator of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians which has as one of its key objectives the sensitising of women on the continent to the oppression they experience under various forms of patriarchal rule. Oduyoye argues that Africa with its multidimensional cultures challenges women to engage with Scripture differently, based on their (African women's) various experiences, cultures and spatial settings (Phiri 2004a:16). African women come to the biblical text with different questions relating to their circumstances. Therefore, an African feminist approach engenders theologies of African women. Mercy Oduyoye argues that women in every setting should be given the platform to relate their experiences of oppression and be involved in the process of resistance and agency towards that which oppresses them (Pui-Lan 2004: 16).

Thus, in Chapter 3, the experiences of African women as regards fertility, childlessness and boy child preference will be examined in order to relate the story of Tamar in Genesis 38 to the Zulu women's trauma in the context of marriage by showing that the patriarchal culture denies many women their dignity. It will be shown that Tamar in Genesis 38 can be seen as both a victim as well as a survivor who tried to resist patriarchy. Van der Walt (2015:69) makes an important comment regarding the story of Tamar, namely that it embodies an alternative for those who find themselves without power and without a voice, but who nonetheless continue to search for means of liberation and alternative means of expression in heteronormative spaces.

There is little doubt that Tamar is portrayed as a victim in the Genesis text, but there is also more to say about her character. From the narrator's lens, Tamar is victimised because she is denied the chance of procreation by Onan. Claassens (2012:662) argues that the levirate custom is inconsistent because though it is created to help the destitute to flourish, it fails when the male protagonists neglects the "responsibility to act for the good of the vulnerable members". Abasili (2011:569) in "Seeing Tamar through the Prism of African Women" also shows that Tamar suffered more than any other character in Genesis 38. Oduyoye (1999:109) in reflecting on her own experience of being childless highlights the victimisation that burdens the childless woman in an African society. Oduyoye asserts that in "Africa lives and relationships are ruined daily over the childlessness factor", and as shown above, in some cases, childlessness even leads to divorce. Furthermore, Abasili rightly shows that when Tamar is innocently condemned to death, she is denied a voice, which is a basic human right, to express her feelings regarding the decisions made about her life.

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However, as will be shown, considering the issue of Tamar's agency, Susan Niditch notes that Tamar resorts to being a trickster who deceives her father-in-law by dressing as a prostitute to claim her lost identity (Niditch 2012:42). Furthermore, Spina (2005:54) also recognises that Tamar's disguise as a harlot constitutes a revolt against the established authority and its customs which would normally be considered offensive. Niditch and Spina may not be African scholars, however, their analysis of Tamar's deception scene is valuable to an African feminist interpretation because it comprehends the realities of the patriarchal society.

In Chapter 4 of this study, the story of Tamar will be read through the lens of postcolonial feminist interpretation. In order to understand and apply the postcolonial feminist approach, the works of postcolonial feminist interpreter, Musa Dube, will be especially helpful. Dube (2006:146) describes the "dynamics of empire" through the pursuit of "Gold and Glory" while using God to fulfil the imperial agenda. Dube (2006:146) notes that those who eventually become colonised often stand the chance of losing their political, economic and cultural control and she is also concerned about how gender roles play out in colonial spaces. She acknowledges that both men and women are subjugated by the empire. However, seeing that men usually occupy the leadership roles in colonised spaces, subjugated men never think twice about sacrificing their women to gain relations[9] with the empire! Therefore, Dube (2006:147) adds that the concept of "Gender" be closely scrutinised in the same vein as "Gold, God and Glory" since it plays not a trivial but a crucial role in the necessitation of imperialism. According to Dube (2006:148), one cannot fully perform a postcolonial reading without paying attention to the issue of gender subjugation because oftentimes it is through gender that the empire finds a means of entry to the land it colonises.

In Chapter 4 therefore, the story of Tamar in Genesis 38 is viewed through what may be termed "the lens of empire". Questions are asked about the influence of the colonial agenda on a colonised nation. However, the chapter will also evaluate the impact of the postcolonial approach on the gender dynamics in the colonised nation. For instance, looking at Tamar through a postcolonial lens, it will be shown that Tamar shifts from one identity to another. She is both an insider and an outsider reminiscent of the example of Kimpa Vita cited by Musa Dube in her article "Talitha Cumi Hermeneutics of Liberation: Some African Women's Way of Reading the Bible." Kimpa Vita, according to Dube, was a Congolese woman who was named Donna Beatrice after receiving her Christian baptism. Kimpa Vita and the rest of

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[9] Such a sacrifice is a means of forging beneficial relations with an empire.

her people were subjugated to foreign rule through religion and culture, and were taught to despise all that represented the cosmology of her people. Through her faith however, Kimpa Vita crossed cultural boundaries and navigated between the worlds of the colonised and the coloniser. Like Kimpa Vita, who is both an insider and outsider to the coloniser and the colonised, Tamar can be said to be "wearing and weaving a new multi-coloured coat of boundary crossing in that highly unequal world" of the patriarchs (Dube 2012:30). Tamar exhibits a hybrid identity since she belongs to her husband's culture and traditions by marriage whilst holding at the same time a Canaanite nationality that is perceived as cursed.

By reading the story of Tamar from these two different, though interrelated, methodological perspectives, it is possible to foreground some important elements of 21st century Zulu identity. Laband et al (2008:23) observes the fluidity of the Zulu identity and its counter effect on individuals who can never claim to be pure Zulus but rather exhibit a hybrid identity due to the many cultural influences around them. I would argue that though both Zulu men and women see themselves in a situation of hybridity, cultural gender oppression has not evolved in certain spaces. While ancient cultural practices demand that women be submissive to their husbands as an attribution of honour and respect, modern practices demand that they gain autonomy (Yafeh Deigh 2012:431). Zulu women, swayed by both modernity and traditional culture, often find themselves at the margins, trying to fit in or to find a welcoming space in each. The renegotiation of their identities shows that they belong to and at the same time are excluded from their culture. Therefore, postcolonial theory with its emphasis on the experience of the colonised could help Zulu women whose survival mode depends on it. Firstly it understands the position of Zulu women for having been colonised historically and secondly it offers solutions on how these women's hybrid position can continue to strive under new forms of oppression imposed on their bodies.

The insight gained from reading the story of Tamar and Judah as narrated in Genesis 38 through an African feminist and a postcolonial feminist lens may help the reader to see the oppression in her own context as well as the Zulu women of my context to find language to describe their own situation of oppression.

Gerald West quoted by Sarojini Nadar in the "Postcolonial Perspective in Biblical Interpretation" points out that the duty of biblical scholars to the oppressed is to help them discover the hidden transcripts in their communities (Nadar 2012:392). "Hidden transcripts," according to Nadar, are modes of resistance that each human being possesses, depending on

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the context of the oppression. The works of Van der Walt (2012, 2015 forthcoming), West (2006a; 2007) and Nadar (2012) will be helpful in thinking through the issues involved in constructing a Contextual Bible Study that may be employed fruitfully to create awareness among and empower in particular Zulu women. It is also important to identify instances of such "hidden testimonies" (Buthelezi 2009:29) in the story of Tamar. For instance, a postcolonial feminist reading of the story of Tamar in terms of her hybrid identity and her determination to survive her difficult circumstances, African women may be encouraged/ empowered to look at their situation with new eyes. An African feminist approach will also bring the real life experiences of Zulu women into conversation with the resistant measures of deception that Tamar employed in order to claim her worth as a woman in a patriarchal community. This trickster method is valuable as it may inspire Zulu women to reclaim their agency and understand in the words of Dube (2006:153) that, "women actually can defend themselves".

In line with the above chapter outline, the next chapter will present some Zulu folktales in order to show that the social scripts in Zulu culture are oppressive towards women. The folktales will be probed for traces of how they shape women's behaviour to fit the patriarchal ideal. In particular, the representation of women, marriage and procreation in these stories will be examined in addition to the function of the Zulu folktales as an operational measure to preserve communal patriarchal norms in the socialisation process of women, which then render women who fail to adhere to these norms, outcasts.

CHAPTER 2

MARRIAGE, PROCREATION AND INFERTILITY IN ZULU CULTURE

2.1.   Introduction

It has been observed that in a typical African society, folktales are used as an "an authoritative source for describing and prescribing what life is and ought to be" (Oduyoye 1995:20). In this chapter, therefore, I seek to outline some of the Zulu perceptions about marriage, procreation and infertility which are also important to the shaping of Zulu identity. As this is a very broad topic, I will employ only two folk narratives as an entry point into the Zulu cultural understanding of marriage.

In particular, I will focus on the way in which culture shapes gender roles by placing women in disadvantaged positions that make them vulnerable to injustice and oppression. Folktales also serve a second function as they are used to outline certain expectations of the ideal woman. These narratives, furthermore, reveal that women who fail to meet the cultural expectations are subjected to shame. In the eyes of society, the emphasis on shame legitimises the idea of ostracising women who are seen as bringing dishonour to the family[10].

Part of the discussion in this chapter will show how the value attributed to a boy child compared to a girl child in Zulu society serves as a paradigm for understanding the power discrepancies that loom large between women and men throughout their lives. That value also determines the gender that dominates in marriage and that which has less power, and the dominance of men is justified in particular by the cultural understanding of who a man is supposed to be. We will further see how the perceptions about marriage in Zulu culture set the tone for various forms of injustice against women. In many instances, marriage occurs in a hierarchy of oppression that continues to ostracise the woman to the point whereby her health is jeopardised.

One should point out that the Zulu folktales identified in this chapter do not specifically talk about levirate marriage that will be an important theme in story of Tamar as told in Genesis

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[10] As mentioned in Chapter 1, many Zulu people today live in urban settings, and many of those who do so have adopted Western ways of living. However, regardless of how westernised they may have become, Zulu people still often find ways to implement their cultural norms in their daily lives especially in relation to the traditional description of patriarchal, societal expectations of what a woman should be. As will be shown in this chapter, patriarchal practices have been used to ensure the subordination of women not only in the Zulu culture but also in many other African settings. Therefore, Oduyoye (1995:63) contends that "we deceive ourselves to think that all women who have not spoken up are satisfied with their lot in society."

38. However, these folktales are important as they give some insight in the Zulu understanding of marriage and particularly the deep yearning there is for having children. It will be evident that all the women in the folktales as well as Tamar in Genesis 38 find themselves outside of their cultural protection or boundaries when they fail the cultural expectation of what a woman is supposed to experience in the context of marriage.

With regard to the structure of this chapter, an appropriate point of departure will be to offer conceptual clarity of the term "culture" which is then linked to "identity". What is, of course of special importance is how these phenomena relate to gender and (Zulu) gender roles. This will be followed by a review of two Zulu folktales which will serve as the basis for identifying some characteristics of Zulu culture and gender roles. However, as a key concept for interpreting the folktales and understanding Zulu culture, a short note on what constitutes patriarchy will be helpful. It will be shown that patriarchy in its many manifestations such as in relation to violence, sex and power, is reflected in gender relationships in Zulu culture, especially in the issues that form the focus of this study, namely marriage, procreation and (in)fertility, parenthood as well as the health and wellbeing of Zulu women.

2.2.   Understanding Zulu Culture

2.2.1.   Defining culture

Culture is the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterise a society or a social group (Koskinen 2008:167). Culture incorporates the values, norms and the material goods of a group, and it is often defined by the elite in a group setting, as only certain voices are authorised to outline and interpret cultural norms and rules (Albertyn 2009:170). Culture is also an inherited phenomenon largely handed down from one generation to another; it frames the way an individual perceives and understands the world in which he or she lives (Helman cited in Gesler and Kearns 2002:3). Cosgrove and Jackson (2002:12) define culture as "the medium through which people transform the ordinary phenomena of the material world of significant symbols to which they give meaning and attach value". Gesler and Kearns (2002:12) expand these definitions of culture by adding other aspects such as spatial features that affect the human development phase. They assert that culture should not be seen as a phenomenon that exists independent of the people who retain it, but rather in the light of the numerous elements involved in a context that influences an individual and which, therefore, influence the

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formation and development of culture. Consequently, the authors argue that culture should be understood on historical, economic, social, political and geographical grounds since all of these aspects play a pivotal role in shaping culture.

The above definitions of culture show that culture, like identity, is a complex phenomenon that is hybrid, contextual and fluid (more on this in section b, below). Thus, Kanyoro (cited in Nyengelele 2004:56) contends that "culture is a two edged sword. In some instances, it is a badge or even the creed of community identity. However, in others it is used to make a distinction between different people in the community which sometimes results in oppression and injustice." At this point, it is important to make some further comments on the contentious view that culture is subject to change.

2.2.2.   Are culture and tradition unchangeable?

As stated above, many scholars agree that culture is fluid; it is not static (cf. Gesler & Kearns 2002:12). This innate fluidity of culture makes it difficult to arrive at a definition. However, the notion of fluidity is noteworthy as it highlights the reality of space and time in culture. It also shows that humanity is in a constant process of evolving and that culture must find ways to remain relevant within the progression of humanity and its contextual realities. Mitchelle's (cited in Gesler and Kearns 2002:13) observation that culture is a phenomenon drenched in a pendulum of power discourse of dominance and subordination also reflects this fluidity. Albertyn (2009:173) asserts that in reality "the portrayal of a cultural group as a closed unity tends to mask inequalities within and to reproduce sectional power and interests as the elite within the group control the membership resources and voice." This statement seems true because culture is usually written or rather shaped by those in advantageous positions who wish to fulfil their own agenda rather than that of other members of the society. Therefore, the entire process of implementation of culture becomes a constant renegotiation between those who have power and those who do not[11]. As will be shown later in this chapter, this understanding of culture applies to Zulu culture in the sense that while patriarchy determines cultural rules and norms, women, though part of this culture, have no say in issues but are compelled to obey men. Zulu culture appears to illustrate Kanyoro's (cited in Nyengelele

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[11] People who are denied power in the society are not necessarily individuals without power; they are only denied the space to exercise power by those who are at an advantageous position, usually those who are economically and politically prominent and who use their position to make those who are disadvantaged feel overpowered and subjugated (Lancaster 2002:21)

2004:55) statement that, "African women have been silenced by culture in that culture has relegated them to a secondary position in relation to men in family and society". Thus, some scholars are of the opinion that gender is closely related to culture, as the discussion below will show.

2.2.3.   Gender and culture?

Gender identities and gender relations are significant facets of culture and influence in the day-to-day life in the family and the wider community. Culture shapes gender identity by creating expectations and "appropriate" behaviours that should be adhered to by women and men and in their relations with one another (Koskinen 2008:159). Njogu & Orchardson-Mazrui (2013:2) remarks that "gender roles assigned to men are significantly defined structurally and culturally in ways which create, reinforce and perpetuate relationships of male dominance". Furthermore, "gender identities and gender relations function as organizing principles for society because of the cultural meanings given to being male or female" (Koskinen 2008:159). This binary division is apparent in both private and public spheres, for example, in labour divisions assigned according to gender (Nyengelele 2004:55). In most societies, the allocated work designated to both women and men in the household and the wider community is validated and explained by culture (Koskinen 2008:159).

Furthermore, refusal to change cultural inequalities is usually supported by those who are at an advantage. Albertyn (2009:173) argues that "usually those who defend practices that are harmful to women in the name of preserving their cultural ethnic identity are often seeking to protect certain political or economic interests, which is to maintain the status quo and a set of power relations that are tied to certain practices" (cf. also section 8 below on the relationship between patriarchy and power). In this regard, Kneller's (cited in Du Bruin 2002:40) observation rings particularly true namely that "man creates culture but culture in turn makes man". This statement highlights the inseparability of people from their culture, but it also implies that people's identities are closely linked to culture. As such, Zulu culture should also be key in the formation and expression of Zulu identity.

2.3.   Zulu Identities

2.3.1.   Definition of identity

Identity can be defined as what every human being possesses and that which differentiates one individual from the other (Buckingham 2008:1), and elements such as family, culture and profession all constitute one's identity (Crae and Costa 2003:167). People assume multiple identities because they occupy multiple roles, are members of multiple groups and claim multiple personal characteristics (Burke 2009:3).

Identity is constituted by personal engagements, and it is therefore fluid like culture, being also characterised by complexity. On the relationship between identity and culture, Kidd and Teagle (2012:6) state that identity needs culture in order to express itself. Jonker (2009:201) also contends that identity should not be standardised; rather it should be understood as a constant becoming because an individual is surrounded by many structures that affect the development of his or her identity. Factors such as politics, religion, and economic fluctuations all contribute to what an individual eventually becomes. In a similar vein, Bauman notes that identity is constantly being negotiated and often "identity underestimates the continuing importance of routine and stability" (cited in Beckingham 2008:2). Lawler (2008:17) agrees with Bauman that as a social phenomenon, identity is continuously "interpreted and reinterpreted".

Again, mindful of the different contexts of contemporary Zulu people, one would admit that that the identities of the Zulu are not uniform, and different spatial settings influence those identities. When different people and cultures interact, a hybrid identity is created which is what best describes many of the Zulu identities today. It is important to note that the very notion of Zulu identity is already hybrid in itself even before it interacts with other cultures. Burke (2009:3) calls this the "multiplicity of identity". The notion of hybridity will once again feature in Chapter 4 where postcolonial feminist interpretation will be used to read Tamar's story. The inference is that Zulu people share a similar culture even though they practice tradition differently according to their geographical settings, and the diverse clans they belong to. This particular mechanism is what distinguishes one clan from the other. With the rise of modernity, certain Zulu identities found in the rural areas may differ from those attested in the urban settings.

Nevertheless, Mbiti (1969: xi) contends that "traditional concepts still form the essential background of many African people though this differs from family to family and from place

to place". This implies that although Zulu identities may have evolved, many aspects still follow the traditional cultural practices, which form a core of such identities. Hence, we cannot conclude, for example, that patriarchal oppression exists only in traditional settings. Zondi (2013:165) argues that women should not regard male domination as "a thing of the homestead because patriarchy does not belong to a particular space, it is rather what informs the belief system" and it affects every aspect of Zulu life.

As regards the two folktales that will be examined, Kidd and Teagle (2012:10) have shown that "culture allows us to build the reality we live in through the meanings we give to symbols, passed down in language". Thus, folktales are excellent sources of data when searching for elements of Zulu culture. As noted above, Oduyoye (2005:37) shows that "folktales are used as socialization devices, they are vehicles for the transmission of norms."

2.4.   Zulu Folktales as a Reflection of Zulu Culture

Folklores are as old as humankind itself. These stories have no clear authors since they are passed down orally from memory throughout the centuries (Masuku 2005:7). Kidd and Teagle (2012:12) argue that the method of traditions being passed down through generations can be understood in terms of a process of socialisation. Similarly, Oduyoye (1995:19) notes that folktales serve as a means of propagating the norms and values of the society and thus function as a devise to shape social relations. For Oosthuisen (1977:61), folktales are socially significant because of the "deeper meanings" that they are able to convey. Importantly, folktales reinforce culture, and thus serve as conditioning agents in the society. They do so often by way of their ridiculing elements, as Du Bruin (2002:41) has shown: "Folktales have reward and punishment which are both means for manipulating behaviour". In other words, one is either rewarded for keeping to cultural norms or ridiculed (shamed and publicly humiliated) for deviating from the norms.

For the purpose of this study, it is important to note that folktales have been "observed to legitimise sexism" (Oduyoye 1995:35). This means that these cultural stories condition men and women to embrace gender identities that are based on gender inequalities and stereotypes. Sociologists assert that humans are shaped by their culture and that they in return perpetuate it in their daily lives as they interact with others. Based on that observation, it would be easy to understand the statement by Kanyoro (cited in Nyengelele 2002:56), who writes extensively about the oppression of women in African culture contends that "African

culture is not seen by African women as inherently oppressive to them" even though it is. Oduyoye (1995:35) affirms that, "often a person who hears these folktales cannot wait to repeat them". This simply implies that folktales are internalised by those who hear them and the eagerness to repeat the stories lends credence to them.

Thus, in the light of this study and of the two folktales that will be analysed in the next sections, Oduyoye's (1995:141) statement that procreation is considered an essential element to marriage in Africa becomes significant. She argues that,

whether matrilineal, the woman's duty to the clan lies in procreation to ensure a link between two realms, seen and unseen, mystery and matter, or patrilineal, the man's duty lies in procreation to perpetuate the family names, the only sign that males are partners in peopling the earth (Oduyoye 1995:141).

According to Oduyoye's statement above, the ideology implies that the responsibilities of men and women in marriage are the same, that is, to ensure procreation. However, it should be noted that the cultural ideology about procreation serves to propagate the reincarnation of parents since some characteristics of one's personality are attributed to one's ancestors. Therefore, having no descendants in a community implies that when an individual dies, he is considered dead forever because his lineage has been blocked.

A central question to ask therefore is how do these folktales depict Zulu women in the area of marriage and procreation? A related question also would be: in what ways would such portrayal of marriage and procreation be considered dangerous for Zulu women in today's context? In this regard, two Zulu folktales which express society's depiction of an ideal woman or wife as well as the consequences of not living up to these ideals will be examined in the following sub-sections.

2.4.1.   Umamba kaMaquba

Umamba kaMaquba is a story of two sisters who were sent to fetch water from the river by their mother. The older sister's calabash fell down and broke. Afraid to return home, she decided to send her younger sister to inform their mother of the incident. Their mother understood that this was a simple accident and asked the sisters to return home. However, the conniving little sister lied and deceived the older sister into believing that she could not return home. Devastated by the response, the older sister set off to look for a husband and she

encountered two older women at different times on her journey. First, she came across an old lady with eyes filled with pus. The old lady begged the girl to lick the oozing off her eyes so she could show her the way to Mamba's place, and the girl obeyed. With gratitude the old lady informed the young girl that she would find marriage ahead. The girl continued her journey. Again, she met another woman who was struggling to carry her load on her buttocks. The woman pleaded with the girl to help place her load correctly on her back. In return for her kindness, the girl was promised marriage. She continued on her journey and arrived at Mamba ka Maquba's homestead. While Mamba was out herding cattle, she was asked to grind sorghum for Maquba who was at that moment out herding cows. She ground the sorghum finely. When Mamba returned, she fearlessly allowed him to wrap himself around her even after discovering that he was a snake. She married him and later gave birth to a child which signifies a blessed union.

One day the older sister came back home to visit her family with her baby. Her mother was home with her younger sister, and on hearing that she had married, the mother inquired why she left home. The older sister explained that the message from the younger sister was that she must never return home. Anyway, the mother was happy to see her child again, but the younger sister's jealousy was aroused, and she also decided to go and look for Mamba ka Maquba so she could marry him. The younger sister then encountered the same two old women on the way but she did not offer any assistance to them. In return, she was reprimanded and told there would be no marriage for her. On arriving at Mamba's homestead, she ground the sorghum roughly and coarsely, that is, contrary to custom. She further shrieked in fear and repulsion at the sight of Mamba the snake. Therefore, Mamba chased her home with a stick, but Mamba is later captured, killed and burnt by the people of the village. His ashes were collected by the older sister, and he magically retransformed into a human being. Mamba, his wife and their child then left to make a home for themselves and to live happily ever after.

According to Msimang (1986:120), this folktale serves to express the readiness of the woman to be considered for marriage having undergone suffering[12]. The story reveals that marriage and procreation are considered fundamental to the lives of traditional women. It is said to expose the Zulu society's view of marriage, and specifically the ideal conduct of a woman considered worthy for marriage (Masuku 2005:69). This folktale reveals standard elements of

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[12] Suffering in this case entails doing something that would be humiliating, demeaning, and that tests one's patience.

marriage such as respect and obedience towards the man and his family but it also heightens the wife's obligation to submit to her husband. On a neutral level, the folktale shows that selfish, rude, and jealous behaviour is intolerable but humility and tolerance of others are more acceptable. In the case of the younger sister, her jealousy of her sister's life only brought her nothing in life as she became an outcast, while the older sister's humility and obedience towards elders and her husband profited her in the end. From a gender perspective, this view has heavy implications of oppression.

As Oduyoye (1995:33) has observed in her analysis of folktales that there is an ongoing "tendency in folktales to use women to illustrate negative human traits as if men never behave out of character". In this particular Zulu folktale, the younger sister is used to convey negative human traits, while not much is said about Mamba ka Maquba who chased her home with a stick; his violent nature is not criticised much in the folktale. The community killed Mamba only because he was a snake; the villagers did not know he was a man trapped in the body of a snake.

Contrasting the characters of the two sisters, Du Bruin (2002:68) interprets this tale in the context of favouritism, noting that the younger sister was consumed with jealousy for her older sister due to their mother's preferential treatment of the older daughter. On his part, Masuku (2005:70) shows that the older sister portrays the ideal characteristics of a woman that is marriageable, while the younger sister deviates from the norm. In other words, the older sister shows determination to endure humiliation and non-aggression in order to attain marriage[13]. Oduyoye (1995:34) contends that myths are "structured in such a way that make all females put community welfare above their personal desires." Consequently, the older sister is seen to be continually opting for life-affirming methods by succumbing to situations in order to create a stable environment for her husband and their child. She collected the ashes of the snake and placed them in her hut, which was to her advantage because later the man transformed into a human being. Her obedience to her dead husband and acceptance of her husband's shortcomings, that is, her proven moral excellence caused her to gain a human husband in the end.

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[13] For example, in the tale, the older sister had to lick the pus that oozed from the old woman's eyes and tolerate a snake to prove her worth, whereas the younger sister refused to subject herself to all that the older sister endured and she ran away when she discovered that the so-called husband was not human. The contrast between the two sisters is meant to prove that an obedient girl never questions the man, she simply obeys. Thus, the older sister had a brighter future than the younger.

Oduyoye (1995:34) has also observed that in many folktales, the good woman is always portrayed as one who does not put her own needs first but rather shows selflessness. In the Zulu story, the older sister epitomises this ideal of a good woman. From the time she met the two older women on her journey, her selflessness guaranteed positive wishes for her to find marriage and stay happy. As the wife of a snake, she could have needed a human touch, but she settled for life with a snake and did not complain about being unable to have normal conversations with her non-human husband. She was more of a giver than a receiver in the union.

In contrast, the younger sister played the role of the bad girl; she was rebellious and a non-conformist in terms of the societal expectations. The rebellion began with her refusal to help the older women on their first encounter, her failure to recognise that refusal to help the old women already guaranteed failure on her journey. Oduyoye (1995:34) affirms that female rebels are duly contained, since the society discourages an outcry or rebellion of women. What the younger sister did may impress feminists because her autonomy challenges society's status quo (Masuku 2012:97), however, in the story, this results in her failure to find and retain a husband. She was not submissive like her older sister; rather she was repulsed by his shortcomings namely that he was a snake, and did not have human traits.

Interestingly, while males can choose a place for themselves in society, women are unable to do so (Oduyoye 1995:34). In the story, Mamba was happy that the two young women offered themselves to be his wives, but their attitude towards him determined whether he took them as wife. Submitting to the man and obeying his demands increases the woman's chances of becoming a wife, whilst failure to do these diminishes the hope. However, this expectation ensures male dominance while perpetuating female subordination. Unfortunately, the younger sister had no child, which is what happens to women who fail to conform to societal norms. Their status in the society remains lower while those who conform to patriarchal dictates receive hierarchical prominence.

In her article, "Songs and Folktales as Conduits for Social Change in Zulu Culture: A Perspective on Umkhwekazi Namasi," Norma Masuku praises the actions of the younger woman which deviated from the cultural norms. The Umkhwekazi folktale shows that from ancient times, there were individuals in society who challenged and resisted unfair laws and norms. This, in Masuku's view, proves that culture is a contestable mechanism (Masuku 2012:97). However, one could argue that the younger sister's behaviour is questionable in

any society. Even though she challenged the status quo, her motivation was to spite her sister. Thus, we may commend her resistant behaviour but we also have to acknowledge her jealousy of her sister. This issue is also what some feminists have pointed out, the oppression of women by other women, and as noted earlier, women themselves often perpetuate patriarchy and inequality.

Even though we understand the fate that befell the younger sister, her case illustrates the plight of childless women. Masuku (2005:70) asserts that in general "childless, domineering or assertive and insubordinate women are despised and stigmatised" by society. A woman could miss her chances of getting married by failing to demonstrate certain expected attributes such as kindness, humility and sacrifice. Moreover, Mtuze (1990:61) contends that though there are clear elements of oppression in the story, one can also appreciate its positive elements, which are needed by young women. The story teaches them the value of courage and wisdom to face life, and that one has to fight in order to conquer.

Although being single (and indirectly being childless) is the main issue in the above story, the next story is about infertility. The folktale about Nyumbakatali contains elements that echo some of those in the Tamar story which will be the subject of Chapters 3 and 4 of this study. In the story, we shall see a woman who takes the initiative to find the remedy to her infertility in order to safeguard her marriage.

2.4.2.   Udumudumu

Dumudumu had four wives who all bore crows as children. Then, Dumudumu married Nyumbakatali whose name literary means "the infertile one". As her name suggests, she was barren; therefore, she was maltreated by everyone including the crows. Dumudumu then decided that Nyumbakatali should go and live in a hut near the ash heap far from anyone else since she could not produce any child – not even crows like the other wives. One day in the fields, she met some green doves which advised her to draw blood from her legs and place in clay pots. A boy and a girl emerged from the blood and they were then sealed inside the clay pots. Nyumbakatali was warned not to open the pots, except when she wanted to feed the babies. Nyumbakatali became happy. An old man however discovered her secret babies and told Dumudumu, who was overjoyed on discovering the babies. He ordered all the crows to be killed. The jealous wives tried to kill Nyumbakatali but Dumudumu promoted her to the

position of chief wife. One wife then died and another left. The remaining two stayed behind and became Nyumbakatali's slaves.

In this story, polygyny is treated as a norm, even though many other stories highlight problems in the system. According to Masuku (2005:83), the folktale foregrounds jealousy which often occurs in a polygamous homestead. Largely, the story emphasises competition amongst co-wives for the affection of their shared husband. Polygamy (or polygyny) is usually justified by men as a "system that maintains the endless line of births and rebirths furthermore to strengthen the power of the family as well as the status of the old patriarch through the growth in the family size and the expansion of conjugal linkages to other clans" (Hayase & Liaw 1997:296). Clearly, the system promotes a patriarchal agenda. As Oduyoye (1995:52) has pointed out, "polygyny is prevalent and acceptable because only male jealousy is endorsed by the society". This implies that culture only recognises masculinity as more human than femininity which also implies that female jealousy is not worth endorsing.

However, another important factor is that the folktale also seems to highlight the perception that a barren woman is incomplete. Du Bruin (2002:54) says that in the community, Nyumbakatali is valued for all she could offer as a woman; nonetheless, her barrenness threatened her full humanity. Nyumbakatali who was submissive to her husband epitomises an ideal wife, even though he treated her poorly. Compared to the first tale, Mamba ka Maquba, Nyumbakatali highlights the characteristics outlined by culture that makes a woman worthy of marriage and a good wife. However, her potential is ignored due to her infertility. One could argue that the cultural expectations about women were not set rules but were continually reinterpreted in light of contextual realities, which could be regarded as a ploy to set women up for failure. For example, in the first folktale, Mamba had to produce finely ground sorghum for the husband to accept her, but the younger sister's inability to do a good job was seen as a negative trait. The second folktale however expresses a different concern; women's value is determined by their fertility rather than their cooking skills. Clearly, each setting has an ultimate standard that must be met by the new wife, and her failure to meet such a standard will necessitate a negative reaction against the woman.

Therefore, when he discovered that Nyumbakatali was infertile, Dumudumu placed his wife at the far end of the homestead near the ash heap which is a clear demonstration that she was being punished for not adhering to the marital script. Pottow (1990:145) argues that the experience of childlessness is regarded as a great affliction for a married woman because it

implies a bitter old age. Masuku (2005:83) adds that women are "sometimes scorned and ill-treated by the relatives or the husband himself for not producing a son". Oluduro (2013) also notes that the male is preferred to the female child in many African cultures for several reasons. For instance, in many African families, continuing the family lineage is of great importance and when parents become old, they tend to turn to their son/s to support them.

Kanyoro (cited in Nyengelele 2004:63) points out that "for centuries African women have gone along with cultural prescriptions to such an extent that they came to believe that their lives were to be managed by commands of their culture." Nyengelele (2004:63) also adds that African feminist theologians have acknowledged that such cultural constraints are problematic in that they deny women the choice to be who they wish to be. She argues that, "As a result, women engage in the business of fulfilling the cultural expectations that may end up proving to be oppressive especially when it brings no sense of fulfilment in women carrying them out". For example, in the story of Dumudumu whose wives engaged in constant competition for his attention and strove to please him, the women are not depicted as opinionated or as individuals who also have needs. Rather, the focus is on their marital role and their response to the patriarchal agenda. These women remained characters without dreams and aspirations; they were mere puppets, and no one ever asked whether they actually wanted children. If they could express themselves, I do wonder what they would say.

Masuku further explains that the inability to bear Dumudumu an heir by the four wives was probably the reason that he married the fifth wife, with the hope that she would give him a son. Therefore, this folktale does not only focus on polygamy and childbearing but it also propagates the necessity of male progeny (Njogu and Orchadson-Mazrui 2013:2). However, the fifth wife's position was also threatened when she failed to produce any child (Masuku 2005:83)! Her position as the fifth wife forced her to engage in rivalry with the other wives but her position was not secure because of her failure to produce an heir. Unfortunately, even though Dumudumu was the principal wife, she seemed to suffer a worse fate than the other four wives. While they could bear "crows", Dumudumu, was infertile, and she had to move from the centre of the home to a hut near the ash dump (Masuku 2005:84) which can be considered a classic symbol of marginalisation.

If procreation is the blueprint of marriage, it goes without saying that "women who are unwilling to adapt to social norms, for example who rather chose not to have children are considered as unnatural, selfish and pitiable since motherhood is regarded as the natural

destination for girls and women" (Masuku 2005:84). Nyengelele (2004:63) also affirms that if a woman fails to accomplish the role ascribed to her by culture she "automatically is perceived as being selfish and hence a witch." In fact, motherhood is understood to be natural and its absence is seen as unnatural for the infertile or childless woman is not only seen as selfish, she is often regarded as a witch.

Du Bruin (2002:54) assumes that Nyumbakatali's problem is solved because of her submissive and unselfish behaviour. Du Bruin also notes that goodness will always be rewarded since Nyumbakatali never tried to retaliate even though she was mistreated by her husband and his other wives. She continued to perform all her wifely duties except bearing children. She cultivated the land and reaped sorghum. Du Bruin also believes that when Nyumbakatali eventually bore a son, it brought shame to the other four wives for their hateful treatment of her. However, I would argue that this kind of reciprocal shaming perpetuates the culture of female rivalry in situations which one woman is considered more valuable and more resourceful than some other women. Besides, it contends that God also perpetuates the rivalry by giving Nyumbakatali human children and denying the other four wives who only had crows as children. It is also significant that Nyumbakatali had a boy child which is seen as the greatest achievement by a woman. However, against Du Bruin's view, Masuku (2005:84) argues that good acts could not produce such results; rather, what seems to be communicated here is human limitations and the power of God who alone could "open the womb".

Lastly, like the hero of the first folktale Umamba ka Maquba, Nyumbakatali in Udumudumu also had to endure and persevere in the face of marital hardships in order to be rewarded with the gift of children and a long and lasting marriage. The folktales both communicate the same message, which is that hardships would arise in marriage but a woman needs to prepare to humble herself to prove her worth. This is a subtle way of preparing a woman for the patriarchal humiliation she would encounter in the marital space. However, she is encouraged to stay in the marriage and make it work even in the face of abuse. A major challenge is the inability to produce children especially sons which is considered unnatural and a failure on the part of the wife. This again clearly supports Oduyoye's (1995:65) view that folktales underline the social pressure to get married, stay married and have children!

In the folktales, and in the whole of this study, the proverbial "elephant in the room" is, unquestionably, the underlying element of patriarchy as a controlling and socialising agent. In

Zulu culture (as will be shown in Chapters 3 and 4, in ancient Old Testament culture also), this phenomenon of patriarchy determines and defines gender roles and the expectations of men and women. Therefore, the following section will offer a definition of the notion of patriarchy – what patriarchy means as well as how it shapes public and private life.

2.5.   Defining Patriarchy

In Chapter 1 of this study, reference was made to Denise Ackerman's definition of patriarchy "as constituting a legal, economic and social system that validates and enforces the sovereignty of the male head of the family over its other members, wives, [and] children (1993b:22)". On the pervasive role of patriarchy, Richardson (cited in Sydie 1994:51) states that, "Patriarchalism is to a culture as a rhythm section is to a band. Sometimes it overrides the melodic theme and sometimes it is hushed but it is always there."

A closer look at patriarchy will show its various characteristics and pervasive influence. The term patriarchy is from the Greek words pater (father) and archer (rule) (Sydie 1994:209). It designates the rule of the fathers in a male-controlled society (Bhasin 1993:3). According to Walby (1990:20), it can be regarded as a "system of social structures and practices where men dominate oppress and exploit women." Johnson explains that patriarchy is enabled by "social structures" namely economic, political, religious, legal, educational, domestic and military structures, because the mere presence of such structures requires authoritative positions. Patriarchal societies are characterised in this sense by the male claim or acquisition of privilege and dominance over others (Johnson 2005:5). This in turn implies that hierarchical structures necessitate binaries and that hierarchies have inherent power to complicate life, not only between husband and wife, but between individuals in a given society. Ackerman (1993b:22) confirms that patriarchal domination is fundamentally androcentric and it transcends the public sphere.

Like Sydie (1994:51) who correctly observes that patriarchal male dominance varies with culture, Aghtaie and Gangoli (2014:6) observe that patriarchy is a fluid mechanism which appears in different forms through time and space. Thus, while women and other entities under patriarchal rule all over the world may contest patriarchy from their various contexts, their issues and concerns do also differ according to their spatial settings. It means that difference in patriarchal experience does not necessarily imply the non-existence of patriarchy, but that patriarchy manifests in different ways and degrees.

Walby (1989:228) remarks that patriarchy in the society exists between two realms – the public and private – and "public patriarchy" has to do with the social exclusion of women whilst private patriarchy is male dominance in the domestic realm. This, according to Ray (2011:1), further necessitates power negotiations between men and women. Moffett (2006:143), on the other hand, does not see much difference between the public and the private manifestation of patriarchy. Moffett writes from the South African context where many women are allowed to occupy governmental positions but many of them remain subordinate in the private and domestic realm. His view implies that the realm in which women operate does not really count because patriarchal domination will always find a way to manifest.

 Lerner (1986:7) also shows that patriarchal domination is disguised in the traditioning process, as the issue of preference for the male child which is enacted within the family structure has significant ramifications in forming a "hierarchical system mirrors the order in the state, it educates children and constantly reinforces that order". According to Walby (1990:20) this particular incongruence prepares the ground for the exploitation, oppression and control of women as well as violence against them.

Furthermore, because of patriarchy's accessibility to power and insistence on oppression, it is regarded as operating in parallel to empire in its ideological claim, since it favours the economic, political and social dominance of one group over the other (Plaatjies-van Huffel 2011:3). The relationship between patriarchy, power and empire will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, but it is noteworthy that Dube (2006:150) discourages the merging of the two, arguing that while patriarchy oppresses women and some marginalised men, imperialism oppresses both men and women even those of high status. Therefore, patriarchy cannot operate under the guise of the empire even though both thrive through oppression.

Although some women have challenged and resisted oppressive patriarchal structures, it has been observed in this study that some other women also colluded with patriarchy and "supported it, while most have raised their sons and daughters and sons to conform to it" (MacKinnon 2013:245). Findings from the folktales show that women conform to patriarchal expectations. For instance, in Mamba ka Maquba, the older sister fulfils the patriarchal norm and she is rewarded for doing so, and in Dumudumu, the other four wives victimise the fifth wife for failing to meet the patriarchal expectation of reproduction. Thus, MacKinnon

explains that women who support patriarchy are sufferers of false consciousness[14] who have been misled by patriarchy or kyriarchy. Nonetheless, even when women oppose or realise the consequences of patriarchy, it cannot be denied that many women do suffer victimisation under patriarchal rule. Therefore, patriarchal history is not only about women but also about men. Specifically, it is the history of women, not only as victims, but also as survivors, resistors and even agents of patriarchy. Suranjita Ray (cited in Smith et al 2015:2) asserts that, "based on a system of power relations which are hierarchical and unequal, patriarchy imposes masculinity and femininity character stereotypes in society which strengthen the iniquitous power relation between men and women".

Patriarchy, as already noted in Chapter 1, is alive in both the private and the public sphere. In the following section the intersectional nature of the phenomenon will be probed, that is, the extent to which patriarchy intersects with the order of social institutions creating a hierarchy which results in power tensions, which necessitates not only a degree of exclusion but also of othering.

2.6.   Patriarchy at the Intersection

According to Moolman (2013:94), social relations are continuously reconstructed through different operations of power. Sokoloff and Pratt (2005:26-27) affirm that "we exist in a social context created by the intersection of systems of power for example race, class, gender and sexual orientation and oppression prejudice, class stratification, gender inequality and hetero sexist bias". This classification creates a binary division in a given society in which a dominant group relegates another group to the margins of society (Smith et al 2015:2). For this to happen, the dominant group has to be in control of power.

Writing on power, the renowned twentieth-century French philosopher, Michel Foucault maintains that:

Power is not possessed, given seized, captured relinquished or exchanged, rather it is exercised. It exists only in actions. It is a complex set of ever changing relations of force a moveable substratum upon which the economy, mode of production, modes of governing and decision making, forms of knowledge etc. are conditioned (in Grosz 1990:90).

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[14] False consciousness is the distortion or manipulation of reality by the ruling class (Inhorn 1996:19).

Foucault's description of power shows that patriarchal authority manifests in the world namely as a power structure that is found at the hinge of every system including social, corporate and even academic/scholarly structures. Power operates according to methods that serve the dominant gender, which is male[15]. Since patriarchy exists within and in-between many other systems, and therefore necessitates hierarchical orderings, it can be described as being at the intersections of these existing systems. Ensuring hierarchical organisations of race, class, et cetera, stacked one upon the other, patriarchy ensures and entrenches power discrepancies (Lancaster 2002:21).

Reuther (1983:61) adds that patriarchy is a worldwide phenomenon and for Lancaster (2002:21), the power dynamics of patriarchy demands that there are always outsiders in patriarchal systems, especially those who oppose it. Hence, "patriarchy reinforces subordination of women as well as the weak and the marginalised groups are held subordinate to the rich and powerful", and this includes the Third World countries (Reuther 1983:61). Women have been victims as well as opponents of patriarchy which marginalises them. However, it is also fair to note that patriarchy has had some negative consequences for men.

Kaufman who writes about "Men, Feminism and Men's Contradictory Experience of power" agrees that men enjoy much privilege for simply being males; but he contends that this world of power created by men has not been a conducive space for not only women but more especially for men. Furthermore, male power also births isolation and pain in a male world (Kaufman 1999:59). Johnson (2005:6) further argues that patriarchy does not necessarily imply that all men are powerful, nor does it mean that all women are powerless. This is true in a sense, as Claassens (2016:157) also notes, male dominance operates beyond race, class, and gender. It could also be witnessed in settings in which elite men subjugate poor men or elite women hold sway over poor women. Therefore, structures of sexism, racism, classism and colonialism are all birthed by patriarchal ideology.

Claassens' view above follows Schüssler Fiorenza's compelling argument (cited in Claassens 2016:156) that the many faces of patriarchy could be seen as "kyriarchy"[16] which captures the "complex pyramidal system of intersecting multiplicative social structures of super-

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[15] Smith *et al* (2015:2) asserts that patriarchy like otherness is a social construct in which masculinity is privileged over femininity.
[16] Kyriarchy is a concept used by feminist theologian Elisabeth Fiorenza to refer to social structures based on domination and coercion. It is an intersectional extension of the idea of patriarchy beyond gender (Scheinberg 2002:17).

ordination and subordination, of ruling and oppression". Kyriarchy encapsulates the minor and the major ramifications of patriarchal influence in gender, race, class, ethnicity, et cetera.

In the dynamics of having power over the other, it is evident that the dominated group is seen as inferior and secondary while the dominant is in a position to impose its ideology in any matter that concerns the dominated group (Smith et al 2015:2). Thus, the hierarchical ordering of the world through patriarchy produces power inequality between societies as well as between men and women. This power struggle serves to perpetuate violence because the one in the authoritative position does not wish to share power, and the fear of losing control perpetuates violence which helps to keep the weak in a subordinate position (Holland et al 1990:342). This will be the focus of the next section, namely the relationship between patriarchy and violence. It has been noted that many decades of work done by activists and scholars show that gender inequality, patriarchy and men's power over women create an environment in which violence against women is widespread and accepted (cf. Fulu et al 2013:6). Therefore, the relationship between patriarchy and violence will be the focus of the next section.

2.7.   Patriarchy and Violence

Since patriarchy is characterised by male dominance, it is also at the heart of gender-based violence. Fulu et al (2013:9), contend that violence against women is influenced by gender hierarchies and power imbalances between men and men both within families and communities. Gender-based violence is primarily violence against women and children but sometimes also against men when such violence is necessitated by one's ascribed gender identity (Aghataie & Gangoli 2014:6). Gangoli writes that gender and power are two concepts closely fundamental to gender-based violence debates because they are both interrelated with the concept of hegemonic masculinities (2014:7). For Connell (1987:184),

Within each specific context, there is a form of culturally dominant construction of masculinity and that hegemonic masculinity is the supreme model. Although not every man in that specific society adheres to this model however it is the anticipated and normative one.

Regarding patriarchy and the gender roles, the issue of course is not only about how "femaleness" and "being a woman" are socially constructed but also about the construction of "maleness" and "masculinity". John Galtung's famous demonstration of cultural and

structural violence as normalisation of explicit acts of violence is important in this regard. For example, "Honor killing or child marriage are clear examples of normalization of cultural violence", says Galtung. He adds that,

Cultural violence makes direct and structural violence looks and even feel right at least not wrong. Cultural violence highlights the way in which the act of direct violence and the fact of structural violence are legitimized and thus rendered acceptable in society (Galtung 1990:291).

Similarly, Malik and Lindhal (1998:411) acknowledge the close relationship between power bases and the cultural norms that construct them. The norms include beliefs about who has the authority or status in the society.

It has been noted that hegemonic masculinity normalises gender based violence. However, what also seems odd about hegemonic masculinity is its construction in relation to women and femininity. Connell (1987:184) argues that "masculinity is relational and that it does not exist except in contrast to femininity and that it embodies a currently accepted strategy." Thus, Aghataie & Gangoli (2014:13) assert that society is inundated with strategies which result in hierarchical relations between women and men and which endorse hegemonic masculinity. Furthermore, Smith et al (2015:5) asserts that gender studies and feminist criticism note that hegemony emphasises power relations as a means of absolute control of the male gender over the female in perpetual subjugation.

Most power theorists have also shown that power is reflected in the expression and exertion of influence of one partner over the other (Malik & Lindahl 1998:411). Therefore, it is not surprising that patriarchy and the power dynamics around it find expression in sexual relationships between men and women.

2.8.   Sex, Power and Patriarchy

Holland et al (1990:341) contend that since "sexuality cannot be divorced form the body, it is also socially constructed and the negotiation of desires and practices occur in social contexts in which power is embedded". Millett (cited in Aghtaie and Gangoli 2014:17) also claims that the relationship between men and women is a power relationship which is grounded in

politics and which involves power over others. As such, Millet also sees sex as an operative measure to imbue status, which also has political implications. Thus, Miller refers, for instance, to "examples of sex as a particular and especially powerful means of doing power over women [which] are provided via the novels which make explicit the cultural norms and tensions concerning women's position visa-versa men".

Feminist scholar Lisa Isherwood (1998:23), mentioned in chapter one of this study, explores the question of "who defines the sexual desire for women". She asserts that "female desire has been dictated by both male desire and male fear". Isherwood also agrees with Millet that the definition of what a female body should be, and the abuse that it is subjected to, carry political implications. This implies that female bodies are in constant renegotiation of their own identities, because societies especially men have taken it upon themselves to define what female bodies can and cannot be, and have turned them into both a site of oppression as well as sources of power negotiation.

Sex, as it is currently socially constructed in its various forms, cannot be simply understood as a pleasurable physical activity; it is redolent with symbolic meanings, which are inseparable from gendered power relations and are active in shaping sexual interaction (Holland 1990:339). Foucault (1988:118) maintains that the social body itself hides the best things, while for Jackson (1994:185), "the art of love was about securing the consent of women to male dominance and female submission by eroticising it as a natural." Jackson's study shows that by being taught how to feel and behave during coitus, women are conditioned to submissive behaviour. Jackson further argues that the so-called missionary sexual position between married couples is a manifestation of male sexual dominance! According to Holland et al (1990:342), "[m]ale control over female is then taken to be a crucial mechanism for the reproduction of sexual hierarchy and male violence against women an important instrument in maintaining that control."

Havelock Ellis (cited in Isherwood & Stuart 1998:24) who is a renowned sexologist claims that a woman may say no but that is only modesty, and it is a man's job to overcome the woman. His claim implies that the male needs to exercise authority and control even in intimate situations which power struggles should not be an issue. Isherwood adds that "to be aroused by a man meant that one acknowledges being conquered which is the natural way to be." Thus, a woman is expected to submit to a master, but this is a negative norm because being dominated means being enslaved. The man derives pleasure from driving the person he

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is intimate with to a place of vulnerability similar to that of a slave. Feminists have recognised sexuality as a political issue and have now taken it upon themselves to engage in the social reconstruction of women's bodies because traditional views of women's bodies have played a significant role in controlling women's lives.

The above observation is also present in the folktales examined in the previous chapter. In Dumudumu, Dumudumu kept acquiring wives but discarded them one after another when they failed to produce the desired male child, which shows that for him these women were mere objects that he could use as he pleased to satisfy his needs. Furthermore, moving the fifth wife to the ash heap shows that she had lost her position as the favoured wife because her body failed to fulfil the social expectation. Her body's failure to reproduce children meant that her status as a woman and wife was worthless in the eyes of Dumudumu and the society. Her other physical abilities as a woman were tainted by the fact that she could not reproduce an heir. Therefore, exclusion and ostracism served as a means to teach her a lesson, which implies that a married woman who fails like Nyumba will suffer the same fate.

In the following chapter, we shall show that sex also is a powerful tool that was used by the patriarch in the story of Tamar to deny Tamar an heir that could secure her future after the death of her husband. In an interesting twist, Tamar also uses sex to "settle scores" with the patriarch and recover what she was denied.

2.9. Aspects of Zulu Culture

The two folktales introduced above offer a helpful point of departure for analysing the following aspects of Zulu culture that are important for the purpose of this study. Furthermore, the concept of patriarchy helps to clarify the idea of male dominance which exerts control over the female.

2.9.1. Gender in the Zulu culture

Zulu society operates a strong set of differing rules and standards for men, women, boys and girls (Du Bruin 2002:2). Girls and boys are expected to behave in a certain way and play different roles in the society (Njogu and Orchardson-Mazrui 2013:2). In the story of Mamba, the girls are assigned the task of fetching water and refining sorghum, while Mamba a young man, is out herding the cows in the field. Gcangca (2005:81) notes that the social and communal reality of young girls implies that they are socialised into serving as nursemaids

besides attending to household duties. In Dumudumu, Nyumba is portrayed as a woman who cultivates the land and reaps sorghum which are her greatest contributions as a wife (Du Bruin 2002:54). Du Bruin (2002:2) also argues that "while girls are expected to carry themselves in a respectable and obedient manner, boys were taught to be brave, clever and respectful. In most of the Zulu folktales, "good" girls are rewarded with a "good" husband and the prospect of bearing a man healthy children. This is also evident in the first story in which the older sister marries and bears a child for Mamba; their marriage is considered a healthy one, the kind to be emulated. Algeier and McCormick (1983:12) notes "children develop a sense of what it means to be a boy or girl in their culture". Njogu and Ochardson-Mazrui (2013:2) further asserts that the conditioning and stereotyping could prove dangerous to young minds because the more they are repeated, the more difficult it is to uproot them from their mental frames in adulthood.

Gender constitutes a significant aspect of culture. However, gender inequality is expressed variously in a number of domains within the family. Furthermore, the cultural preference for the male child may restrict girls' experience in life (Njogu and Orchardson-Mazrui 2013:2). In his study of the history of the Zulu gender identity, Sifiso Ndlovu reveals that the Zulu kingdom once held a culture of social equality between men and women, as women's contributions were received and recognised in the decades leading up to the western conquest of King Cetshwayo's army in 1879 (Ndlovu 2008:112). His statement implies that women were treated as equals by the Zulu patriarchy at some point in time[17]. Ndlovu (2008:111) further states that "women were both workers and decision makers exercising agency in the agricultural economy, they were also leaders in the family homestead of the Zulu kingdom".

Ndlovu reports that certain communal roles did not have a specific gender designation. Boys in the ancient Zulu society often performed duties that would normally be assigned to girls today such as cooking and fetching water. Girls on the other hand were sent to the fields to herd cows and were also involved in military tasks (2008:113). This finding contrasts with the story of Mamba who was found in the field tending the cows while the girls fetched water from the river. However, it is possible that Ndlovu's account is reminiscent of the social-historical setting of the Zulu people which has been altered seriously over the years. It is important to note that the progression of the Zulu society from Mkabayi's time to the twenty-first century narrates a different story of Zulu gender identities. It is evident that each century

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[17] Gesler and Kearns (2012:12) assert that culture is an ever fluid and changing phenomenon, and space and time are major factors that shape it.

brings with it a different set of rules that is used by society to alter the ancient culture according to time. Having noted that culture is complex, contextual and hybrid, it is also important to point out Ndlovu's argument that culture is a great mirror through which the Zulu society can see its history but that the Zulu society does not adhere to such standards of equality any longer. Male dominance in African cultures is not an imagined reality but a threat to society especially to the lives of women.

2.9.2. Patriarchy in Zulu Households

Patriarchy is a form of male dominance that is characterised by the powerful role of the father as the head of the household (Sathiparsad et al 2008:5). Patriarchy includes various discourses and practices that allow men to set the terms and limits for women in different areas of society (George 2005:20). Traditional Zulu society is strongly patriarchal in nature and many of its cultural practices are geared towards maintaining a man's status as the undisputed head of his household and a figure of authority (Hone et al 1996:28). This is observed in the story of Dumudumu, who keeps acquiring more wives without asking for the permission of his other women. However, even if the other wives had refused, Dumudumu had the right to marry another wife. The society is slowly changing the way Zulu men are perceived due to modern influences such as the increasing economic independence of Zulu women and the Western education that is available to their children (Derwent 1998:70). Typically, fathers served as the heads of households and commanded more power, control and respect than mothers (Sathiparad et al 2008:8). Being the head of a household means that fathers make rigid rules and decisions, control household activities and provide for the family materially (Hone et al 1996:28). Moreover, Zulu society remains patriarchal even in urban settings where most residents adopted a Western lifestyle (Mbiti 1969: xi; Ngubane 2010:1; Zondi 2013:164). Zondi (2013:176) asserts that "patriarchal power should be understood beyond the day to day oppression of women due to the fact that males function for the most part as the providers of the home."

In the past, Zulu men expressed their masculinity with a strong emphasis on their role as warriors (Derwent et al 1998: 70). The Zulu society was highly hierarchical and men enjoyed positions of power both at home and in the wider society (Uchendo 2008:8). However, Zondi (2013:164, 176) asserts that even though modernity has brought many changes, the Zulu society maintains its patriarchal hierarchy in the society and at the home front. Hone et al

(2006:28) comments on the idea of male superiority, which can be observed in the way men typically are served first and exclusively at all meals before women and children. Njogu and Orchardson-Mazrui (2013:2) asserts that this form of inequality reinforces gender related power which may help spread violence against women.

2.9.3.   Changes in the status of Zulu women in relation to men

Most African cultures are patriarchal and patrilineal in nature with female sexuality being placed largely in the hands of males (Khumalo-Sakutukwa and Garbus 2002:8). In the Zulu society "women are subordinate, the Zulu woman takes her role as a wife wholeheartedly, accepting the physical demands of her daily chores and her subordinate role within the homestead" (Hone et al 2006:44). This observation is consistent with the role of the wives in the story of Dumudumu, in which the fifth wife reaps sorghum while cultivating the fields. However, Nyengelele (2004:63) argues that if a woman refuses to adhere to the role ascribed to her by culture, she is perceived to be a rebel and could be ostracised by her community. The younger sister in the story of Mamba was that kind of rebel. She did not know how to refine sorghum, she did not help the two older women she met along the way, and she did not show obedience and respect towards Mamba. It is assumed that "women's status in a society is also determined by how their responsibility fare according to the patriarchy" (Mbuwayesango 1997:34). In particular, we see how patriarchy produces a constellation of hierarchical relationships in many African communities. In the story of Mamba, for example, the first woman was envied by her younger sister for being a wife, that is, she had a husband and had given birth to a child. The younger sister then went after her sister's husband in order to acquire a similar status. A core belief in many African cultures is the idea that a woman can only be recognised for who she is through her symbolic attachment to a man (Mustapha 2013: 124). For instance, in Phiri's (2002:25) article, "Why does God allow our husbands to abuse us", she recalls the belief that being single (unmarried) is a curse. Typical of the story of Mamba ka Maquba, the younger sister shows discontentment with being single, which suggests that she is incomplete. She therefore decided that if no man would have her she would have her sister's husband. Apparently, the older women perpetuate the idea that having a husband is a privilege for a woman, even if the husband has a bad reputation. For example, in Mamba ka Maquba, it is the older women who validate the older sister's journey. Since being married is highly rated in African cultures, young women are asked to turn a blind eye

to the infidelity of their husbands. Moreover, the issue of acquiring more wives which benefits only the man is observed in the story of Dumudumu.

Secondly, Kambarami (2006:3) notes that a woman gains respect by being married, and this causes many single women to desire marriage. According to Mustapha (2013:124), in the African context, married women are given a higher status than single women on the basis not of their occupational status but of their marital status. Therefore, the source of power for married women is their marital status, and their connection to a man. However, what is more problematic is that though some women hold prominent status through marriage, the overriding factor in deciding their fate is their ability to produce (male) offspring (Oduyoye 1995:141). We can see this in the character of Dumudumu, who kept acquiring wives in order to secure progeny. The action implies that a woman may be married and have power over other women, but she is only fully recognised when she gives birth to sons. Many African scholars confirm that a woman's value in the society is only enhanced with the birth of sons (Baloyi 2009:4). If she had only girl children, she would be undervalued in the community and regarded as no better than a single woman (Njogu and Orchardson-Mazrui 2009:3). One does wonder what would have been the fate of Dumudumu's fifth wife had the children turned out to be females?

The dynamics of this phenomenon is illustrated well by a well-known Zulu historical account which also reflects the same views underlying the folktales, namely the story of the birth of Shaka Zulu. Shaka Zulus father Senzangakhona impregnated the princess Nandi before her marriage, and even though many people pleaded with Senzangakhona to marry Nandi, he refused. Nandi's predicament brought shame to her father, the king, and she had to be exiled. However, even though Senzangakhona's first two wives had born him sons, they could not be given kingship because Shaka was the first born heir. When Senzangakhona had died the Zulu kingdom brought back the deserted Nandi who had born Senzangakhona the first son to be king upon the Zulu throne. Nandi through Shaka became the designated queen of the Zulu's (Madden 2000:15-16). Due to the birth of her son, Nandi's honour and dignity were restored (Hone et al 2006:122). Had Nandi given birth to a girl child rather than a firstborn son, the Zulu kingdom probably would not have considered taking her in to be a queen (Kinni 2015:771-776). Her status is emphatically linked to her ability to bear a son.

Thirdly, should a Zulu woman find herself in a situation of divorce, the social stigma that would follow could haunt her identity and drag her family name through the mud (Njogu and

Orchardson-Mazrui 2013:11). Divorce is considered a great embarrassment to the family in the Zulu society (Udeze 2009:49). It goes without saying that the woman's status decreases in terms of the shame associated with divorce. In the story of Dumudumu, although Dumudumu did not divorce the women who did not bear male children for him, he kept them in his homestead possibly to spare them the shame of having to return to their original families. Maluleke (2012:15) raises an important issue relating to the status of widows. He observes that the status of a widow drastically shifts downward after the death of her husband. Once again, one recognises the shame and humiliation experienced by a woman who is without a man in her life. Does it mean women are not complete in themselves and society can appreciate their value only in association to a man?

Lastly, Mbuwayesango (1997:34), pointing to a recurrent theme in this study, also agrees that "women's relationships are governed by what society expects from women", and that this also affects and creates further hierarchies among women. Patriarchy is responsible for creating a love-hate relation among African women as it incites competition between two or more women for the attention of a man. This kind of rivalry is observed in the second folktale in which the four wives of Dumudumu find pleasure in shaming the fifth wife for not being able to conceive. Their actions can be regarded as jealousy because the fifth wife was preferred by the man they have devoted their lives to. Mbuwayesango (1997:34) adds that "mothers and aunts carry the responsibility of making sure that young women fulfil their patriarchal obligation". Sibiya (2011:35) calls this an "institutionalised cultural violence, where women are abusing other women in the name of culture."

As noted above, culture is outlined by the male elites of the society in order to perpetuate a hierarchical system in the society, and this has been internalised by women who continue to uphold the norms in their relationship with one another. Therefore, a hierarchical relationship also exists among women, for example, in the mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationship. Mothers-in-law often hold the highest status among the females in a family and are regarded as heads of the family in some African cultures. Hence, some mothers-in-law may take it upon themselves to mistreat their daughters-in-law to advance their own selfish agendas (Sibiya 2011:35). It seems that the mere existence of patriarchy in the African setting problematizes existing societal gender relations. Patriarchal power is at the centre of the hierarchical distinctions between women.

2.9.4.   Zulu marriage

Oduyoye (1995:64) argues that "the only natural long term relationship between a man and a woman other than family ties is marriage, which in any culture is fraught with ambiguities and tensions." This observation is especially true because of the cultural expectations placed over the women. Different cultures make different demands on women which may cause a woman to stretch herself more than necessary just to prove her worth in marriage. In the two folktales examined above, the women were expected to demonstrate certain qualities to prove that they were qualified to marry. The woman never really knows what the actual requirements are until she enters the territory of her husband. Oduyoye (1995:64) further argues that "marriage becomes a necessity, a cultivated institution upheld by society for the expedience of orderly procreation". Commenting on the South African context, Derwent et al (1998:74) notes that with the emergence of colonialists from the West the practice of lobola for instance was mistaken for the sale of women, and various efforts were made to diminish its practice. However, the practice of receiving lobola has continued to this day. A Zulu marriage begins with the payment of lobola; the lobola negotiation is the highlight of a wedding event. It is believed that the payment of lobola is a way of reimbursing the father of the bride for all the investments he made on the daughter through the years of nurturing her (Derwent 1998:122). It is after the payment of the lobola has been concluded satisfactorily that the father of the bride sets the wedding date.

Furthermore, Posel and Rudwick (2014:118) assert that more than anything else, the lobola highlights the role and significance of female reproduction. Therefore, it should not be regarded as a bride price but more fittingly a "child price". This notion opened the way for the husband to claim the sister of the wife as his second wife should his wife be found infertile, that is, as a kind of compensation. However, if the bride did not have a sister, the lobola had to be returned. Moreover, if the bride died shortly after giving birth to two children, some parts of the lobola would be returned (Posel and Rudwick 2014:118). However, in the twenty-first century, a new dimension is witnessed in lobola negotiation which has adapted to the dictates of "a capitalist economy" (Shope 2011:67). Noteworthy, the notion of lobola is not emphasised in the two folktales above, but it can be deduced that Dumudumu could not have acquired wives without paying lobola. Additionally, Dumudumu chose to acquire different women instead of the first wife's sisters after she failed to bear an heir. I would argue that even though a Zulus marriage is constituted with the payment of lobola, the practice continues to be marred by echoes of gender and power relations.

According to Mbiti (1975:133), among African people, "Marriage is regarded as the focus of existence. It is the point where all the members of given community meet, the departed and the yet to be born. Marriage is a drama in which everyone must participate. Marriage is considered a duty, a requirement from the corporate society and a rhythm of life in which everyone must participate."

However, those who do not conform to the norms by participating in marriage are regarded as outcasts by the community; they are seen as subhuman. Failure to marry is regarded as a rejection of the society which then implies that the person would also be rejected by the society. In the Dumudumu folktale, the four wives did not fight to uphold their dignity, but chose to remain married to rather than divorce the man who objectified them. They feared the ostracism that came with divorce which would diminish their status as married women. Somehow they chose to be counted as those who achieved the cultural expectation of being married and having participated in the duty of marriage, even though their wombs failed them.

According to Ngobese (2003:75), marriage is an important institution in Africa; it is a means of procreation. Failure to obtain children in a marriage is treated with grave concern. For instance, when the fifth wife failed to produce children in Dumudumu, she was kicked out of the house. She then lived on an ash heap, which is a sign of exclusion for her failure to produce children. Many interpret the absence of children in a marriage as a sign that the ancestors are not happy with the marriage (Du Bruin 2002:52). The coming together of two individuals in marriage is seen as the union of their two families and of their clans (Shope 2011:65). In Dumudumu, the fifth wife became the favourite after producing an heir. Her status changed from that of a despised fifth wife to the favourite. This further implies that the wife literally becomes the daughter in her husband's family and he is regarded as a son in her family. It is therefore interesting to note that the claim of ownership is made on the bride by the bridegroom's family. Consequently, the woman cannot leave her newly adopted family even when her husband dies because the whole family structure is affected by the union (Ngobese 2003:76). Oduyoye (1995:65) contends that African societies operate in such a way that men and women accept that marriage is unavoidable. To be seen as a responsible adult, one ought to be married and one ought to raise children.

2.9.5.   Procreation in Zulu Culture

Marriage and procreation in the Zulu culture ought to be understood in terms of the broader understanding not only of the material but, importantly also of the spiritual dimensions of personhood, according to Ngobese (2003:47). In particular, procreation is an integral part of the Zulu people's understanding of life. In this paradigm, life extends itself in such a way that the dead have the power to manipulate the world of the living. Consequently, the living are conscious of the power of the dead. It is assumed that humans not merely die but rather attain continuation through their children and wives (Hayase & Liaw 1997:296). The presence of the ancestors is necessary in order to create a sense of order in the cosmology of an African society. The presence of ancestors is essential to the community because they are expected to prosper and protect the members of the community. Contact with ancestors is established through the divination of sangomas which also appeases any ancestral threat that is meant to cause harm to the community (Ngobese 2003:47). This proximity of the living and the dead in Zulu culture explains why reproduction is considered important for both men and women alike (Ngobese 2003:48). Hollos and Larsen (2008:4) write that "in cosmology of African societies children represent a connection to the ancestors and their birth represents a continuation of the family not only on physical but religious terms."

Oduyoye (1995:142) further argues that "often procreation is described as if women are simply objects of genetic and social transmission" However, for men procreation is perceived as a form of growing in power. Gcangca (1987:5) confirms that "the man is reborn in the multitude of his descendants therefore many will remember him after his death." Many men believe that the bigger their families are, the more esteemed they are in the community. However, should the wife give birth to only daughters, then her husband has to take another wife to mitigate the anxiety of apparent unproductivity (Gcangca 1987:5). In this way, the importance of girl children is diminished, while boys are esteemed as the ideal perpetuator of their lineage or clan.

2.9.6.   Parenthood and Barrenness in Zulu society

Thus far, we have seen that fertility is an indispensable element in marriage in Africa and that procreation is viewed as the only way to ensure survival and continuation of the family and community (Mugambi cited in Baloyi 2009:1). Masenya (1998:284) asserts that "in the Northern Sotho bareness is viewed as coming from God". The Zulu as well as many other

African peoples have instituted various means of curbing the problem of barrenness, which include the cultural practices of polygamy and surrogacy (Masenya 1998:285). Whenever a woman fails to give birth or is infertile, the husband's family would find another woman who can produce children for the family, either through marriage or by using the infertile woman's sister as surrogate. Again, if a man dies prematurely before reproducing children, the levirate custom can be used to remedy the situation (Baloyi 2015:484). Since it is culturally unacceptable for a man to die childless, if a man dies without a wife, the family would arrange a wife for one of his brothers on his behalf to perpetuate his name. The children born from such a union then belong to the deceased brother. One could question all these three measures of checking infertility, as they actually serve a male agenda. When a woman dies childless, no one thinks of finding a substitute who would give birth to children on her behalf in order to perpetuate her name. Only men deserve immortality and the family would help him to achieve that if he failed to do so himself.

Biblical stories such as that of Sarah and Hagar (Genesis 16; 18) or of Rachel and Leah (Gen 29; 30) reveal similar struggles relating to infertility. The story of Tamar also shows that the levirate marriage was used to rectify the problem of infertility. In the stories of both Sarah and Rachel, we see something of the anxiety associated with barrenness because barren women are made to feel unworthy and that they have failed the society. In the folktale of Dumudumu, the infertile fifth wife is sent to live far away from the homestead. She becomes an outcast and the example of a woman who failed to fulfil her societal role. Hence, the notion of surrogacy (as in the case of Hagar) seems to satisfy only the institution of patriarchy and does not attend to the needs of women. Mbuwayesango (1997:34), who reads the story of Sarah and Hagar in the context of Zimbabwean women's experience, argues that the fact that the Sarah and Hagar narrative "concludes with Sarah having a son serves to enforce the idea that every woman must fulfil the obligation of bearing children, especially a son". This is by and large an endorsement of the patriarchal agenda.

The consequences of the absence of a male heir are so dire that if a man is found to be infertile in some African cultures, his mother could conspire with his wife to send the man away temporarily and find a willing candidate to impregnate the wife! However, as soon as the woman conceives, the surrogate father disappears and the product of that encounter is named after the infertile husband (Masuku 2005:82). The disparity in the reactions to infertility in a man and in a woman is shockingly obvious. When a man is infertile, the family

arranges a secret sperm donor whose identity will never be disclosed to impregnate his wife but if a woman is infertile, she is ostracised from the community (Mbuwayesango 1997:28).

Again, when polygamy is regarded as a solution to infertility, the wives in question are forced to get along and live together even long after one of them has given birth to a child. While the male shame is hidden within such an arrangement, the woman's shame is exposed for all to see and she becomes the subject of ridicule. Typically, in the story of Dumudumu, all the wives live in the same homestead, and the shame of their barrenness is open but Dumudumu's infertility is concealed. It is also possible that the failure to conceive by the wives was from Dumudumu because the story shows that when the fifth wife conceived, she had not slept with him for days. No one questions how she was actually able to conceive since she had been cast out of the homestead and was living on the ash heap. However, when she appeared with children, Dumudumu was the first to celebrate this joyous occasion.

2.9.7.   Women's health in Zulu culture

Oppression has detrimental implications to the health and wellbeing of the oppressed. Johnson (2000:39) shows that for every social category that is privileged, one or more other categories are oppressed in relation to it. This means that one's power is directly connected to the oppression of another. The statement rings true of patriarchy which oppresses women in a given society – it needs to have the weaker entity present in order to feel power over it. Freire (2005:49-50) rightly points out that oppression is dignity denying. Violence according to Freire is initiated by those who fail to see others as persons. If men viewed women as persons, how could they institute structures that belittle their dignity?

However, not only is male domination detrimental to women's dignity, it also affects them emotionally, physically and spiritually. Oduyoye (1995:164) asserts that the "socio-cultural norms that demand women's submission and subordinate behaviour of women make women easy victims of violence and predispose them to accept violence done unto them". The oppression of women indeed has consequences for their health, which the World Health Organization claims affects the social, economic, spiritual and cultural wellbeing of the whole community.

We have seen in this chapter how married women in the Zulu context often suffer emotional abuse by their own husbands. In Dumudumu, the life of the fifth wife who was rejected and excommunicated from the family was threatened and her isolation confirms that she was not considered good enough by her husband. We have also seen that if these women fail to meet their husband's expectations, they become vulnerable to social ostracism (Njogu and Orchardson-Mazrui 2013:8), which means they cannot opt out of the marriage because they will be treated as outcasts and traitors by the society including other women who help to affirm the patriarchal structures in the society.

We furthermore see that many Zulu women are vulnerable to HIV/AIDS because they accept their men's infidelity. Social norms that require female passivity and economic dependence on men also make it difficult for women to insist on mutual fidelity or condom use (Haddad 2002:24). Social norms contribute to violence against women including rape, domestic violence, murder and sexual abuse. Female victims of violence rarely receive legal protection, compensation or rehabilitative care (Gender and Development Document, 1996: iv). Thus, the health of a woman remains vulnerable to various forms of attack caused by the spouse's need for control and subjugation since society is built on androcentric norms, which objectify women and permit men to control women's bodies (Isherwood 1998:15). Again, on the spiritual level, women are made to believe that God is patriarchal and he supports their oppression by men. Wood (2013:3) asserts that because of the patriarchal order in the society, the Bible has been interpreted by men and as such, men have propagated male ideology which is constructed according to how men experience and see the world. Lancaster (2002:21) further remarks that Judaism and Christianity are steeped in patriarchal authority which enables men to achieve their patriarchal agenda by religious means. Men use God's name to affirm their superiority thereby leaving women powerless and subdued.

2.10.   Conclusion of Chapter

In this chapter, I have explored Zulu culture and identity in relation to gender in some cultural folktales to discover the hidden oppression of women. The aim is to show how cultural symbols such as folktales reflect the culture of subjugation and men's domination of women. More importantly, it is shown that the folktales are used to socialise girls and perpetuate men's idealisation of women in marriage. The chapter also probes the dominant paradigm in Zulu marriage by considering the socialisation process undergone by women and

men in marriage, as well as the belief in the indispensability of procreation. Thus, the reality of infertility and barrenness and the social consequences reveal some layers of ambiguity in Zulu marriage which is rooted in a patriarchal culture that oppresses women and is detrimental to their health.

The goal of the chapter is to sketch the context in which the story of Tamar in Genesis 38 will be read. A point of contact between Zulu women in my context as well as the story of Tamar is the patriarchal world they share in which culture through its oppressive measures demeans and denies women their dignity. In the next two chapters, the story of Tamar will be read through two different methodological lenses that could help me to draw connections with my own context and the Zulu women's experience in marriage. Firstly, in chapter 3, Genesis 38 will be read through the eyes of culture, that is, by exposing the cultural layers of oppression that befall women in marriage. The analysis will benefit from the works of selected African feminist biblical scholars. Furthermore, because issues at the macro level have much influence on how gender is reconstructed on the macro level, in Chapter 4, Genesis 38 will be read through a postcolonial lens to draw attention to issues from a national point of view. The macro level analysis will help to show that gender is affected also by events at the national level, which affect the micro contextual display of gender in the households, especially in the area of marriage. However, it is crucial to approach the story of Tamar first through the lens of African feminist interpretation.

CHAPTER 3

READING TAMAR THROUGH THE LENS OF AFRICAN FEMINIST BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

3.1.   Introduction

In this chapter, I will read the story of Tamar in Genesis 38 through the lens of African feminist biblical interpretation. In particular, I will focus on the plight of Zulu women who face the threat of divorce or rejection by their husbands for their inability to produce a male child. I propose that a reading of the story of Tamar in Genesis 38 could help contemporary readers to reflect on their own experiences of the victimisation and oppression that continue to confront many women in a context of patriarchy. The narrative shows that Tamar's womanhood is in jeopardy as she is abused shortly after losing her husband. She is victimised and rejected and without a boy child to help her access the inheritance needed for her survival.

 Thus, the views of African feminist biblical interpreters will help us to listen closely to the narrative of Genesis 38 and to hear the whispers of the different forms of patriarchy at play which expose the intersections of race, gender, sexuality and culture. Tamar, the main character in the narrative is the object of patriarchal oppression. Thus, this chapter will not only explore the oppression but the indignity to which that Tamar and women in similar situations are subjected. In other words, Tamar's experience will be brought into conversation with the experiences of Zulu women within the marital space. A key theme in this narrative has to do with the pressure on the woman to produce an heir, which shows that the patriarchs control the reproduction of women with tools of culture, sexuality, gender and race.

The patriarchal world reflected in Genesis 38, according to Gravett et al (2008:129), is entrenched in the ideology of the bet av (literally: "the house of the father"). The ideology functioned commonly in Israel and had significant meaning, as "it found its way into thinking about the national political and religious life of the people". Furthermore, the bet av ideology was projected onto the people as a whole and it assigned in addition the role of the patriarchal father to Yahweh and the king. The ideology also dominated many other aspects of Israelite society including the law, education and religion, and it reinforced the power of the father – the patriarch – in every area he operated (Gravett et al 2008: 114, 129). However, Kwok-

Puilan is suspicious of such an ideology that is embodied in the father, maintaining that it served to "appropriate their prerogatives" (Puilan 2005:110). As father, "Yahweh ruled over the cosmic household, so too did every Israelite senior man rule over his own household and not only as father, but perhaps also as king and deity" (Gravett et al 2008:129). Indeed, the authority of the father was powerful, that is, both as a lived reality in the social realm and as a cultural ideal.

On the relationship between the patriarch and the family, the power of the father was such that he was regarded as the owner of his children who were attributed an economic value. As such, parents could sell their children in order to pay off debts (Gravett et al 2008:129)! According to Niditch (1998:13), such patriarchal ideology placed women in a highly unequal position to men in Genesis; women exercised power, if at all they did, only in private rather than in the public realm. This ideology clearly outlines an androcentric society, implying that the stories of the patriarchs were a way of traditionalizing society (Van Seters 1983:4). I would argue however that they were also a way of maintain the subjugation and oppression of women.

Even more disturbing is the fact that the "Hebrew bible hints that the household heads held power of life and death over children and their spouses" (Gravett 2008:129). In the story of Tamar, Judah, for example, sentences his daughter in-law to death by burning (Genesis 38:24)! The action exposes the power dynamics that operated within the broader Israelite society.

Before reading the story of Tamar through the lens of African feminist biblical interpretation, it is important to first define African feminist biblical interpretation and consider its genesis as well its key features and proponents.

3.2.   Defining African Feminist Biblical Interpretation

In order to understand African feminist biblical interpretation, first, it is important to understand how the approach relates to feminism in general, and secondly, to feminist biblical interpretation in particular.

3.2.1.   The Emergence of Feminism

As an enterprise, feminism is dedicated to the liberation of women and calls for equal political, social, sexual, intellectual and economic rights for women and men. Feminism seeks, first, to create awareness of the reality of patriarchal control and the variety of ways this proves to be oppressive to women's wellbeing. Secondly, feminism wishes to find means to transform this reality (Bhasin & Khan 1999:3).

Feminism has engaged in women's struggle by seeking new ways to bring life-affirming spaces in oppressive contexts. Tuttle (1986:107) argues that "feminism is a call to action, it can never be simply a belief system, without action feminism would merely be an empty rhetoric which cancels itself out." As such, feminism can be described as a "fluid movement" grounded in the multiplicity of methods and tasks (cf. Ruether, cited in Parsons 2002:3). Due to its dynamic nature, various streams of feminism have emerged such as liberal, radical and socialist, and black feminism (Mathye 2003:15).

Feminist theology has its origins in the secular feminist movement of women in the 1960s whose point of departure was the liberation of women from all forms of sexism based on the conviction that patriarchy was and remains at the centre of women's oppression in all spheres of life (cf. Reuther 1983). In particular, Phiri (2004:16) contends that feminist theology is rooted in the works of middle class white American and European women. Therefore Christian women of other racial groups realised that their theological world was embedded in religious, social, historical and political connotations, racial and cultural contexts are also central factors to their experiences of gender discrimination. It is after this realisation that the feminist theological emphasis on the experiences of women in 20th century began the process of localising feminist theology so that it could relate to the particular experiences of Christian women in the various contexts. This gave rise to specific theologies which bear different names. In Africa, women also began to reflect on their context and their faith, which gave rise to African women's theologies (Phiri 1997a). It is important to reiterate that part of maintaining the distinction between African and other forms of feminism is the need to address specific issues that pertain to African women who operate in a different culture from Western women. Behind this distinction also lies African feminists' criticism of views about the domination and superiority of Western culture over the rest of the world (cf. in Ackerman, Draper & Mashinini 1991:135).

As can be expected, an important element in the work of African feminist theologians is the way they view and interpret the Bible as African women on the African continent.

3.2.2.   Feminist Biblical Interpretation

As African feminism is to feminism in general, so is African feminist biblical interpretation to feminist biblical interpretation in the sense that it challenges harmful interpretations of the biblical text that are rooted in patriarchal oppression. In respect of feminist biblical interpretation, Seibert (2012:134), for example, probes instances of violence reported in the Old Testament and argues that the patriarchal script manifests in various ways throughout the Old Testament mostly in texts that "marginalize, silence and oppress women time and again." According to Seibert, what is especially alarming, is the fact that many women read these accounts of violence against women as ordained by God and they, therefore, easily internalise the texts as reflecting who they are and what God requires from them and from the men around them.

Internalising the patriarchal texts is dangerous because God is represented in a way that does not often side with women, but always with men, thereby complicating women's relationship with God and reducing it to a master-servant relationship. It is not surprising that women are said to have had an ambiguous relationship with the Bible (Ringe 1998:3). The ambiguity lies in the fact that though women do find biblical stories that have positive implications for their daily lives, they also encounter stories of oppression and violence against them in the same book. Similarly, the Bible is used as a tool of alienating women, with women seldom being given a chance to represent themselves. No one would deny that in biblical texts, it is mostly males who continually speak on behalf of women; and the ways in which women are spoken for and of only affirm and seldom challenge the norms and ideologies created by men (Ringe 1998:3). For example, in biblical narratives, it is mostly men who are chosen by God to fulfil leadership roles. That fact leads to the assumption that the man is the head of the house, which, in turn, implies that women should submit to men.

Furthermore, because culture and religion play a major role in the order of things in society, these texts not only serve to explain how women became inferior but also affirm the inferiority as necessary (Fuchs 2012:133). Men have organised society in such a way that the power discrepancy cannot be questioned because the voice of God is used to enforce it. Therefore, as Ringe (1998:3) has noted, "Women are then not given platforms of journeying

their own religious journeys". Clearly in many contexts, women's experiences of God are tainted by the crippling effects of the patriarchal order.

It is in the light of the above observations that African feminist biblical interpretation challenges harmful readings of the Bible that promote the religious and cultural victimisation of women with a view to empower women (Code 2002:42).

Against this backdrop of feminist biblical interpretation, the following section will offer a definition of African feminist biblical interpretation, followed by a brief review of the works of selected prominent African feminist interpreters and their understanding of the unique nature of reading the Bible through an African feminist lens.

3.2.3.   African Feminist Biblical Interpretation

African feminism can be described as a movement which "criticises dominant narratives that generalise and essentialize the condition of African women, men and children and seeks to bring recognition of specific contexts, cultures and peoples" (Chilisa & Ntseane 2010:618). Since Africans experienced the gospel not only in terms of salvation, but also as a tool of colonialism, racism, sexism, classism and exclusivism, a movement of liberation or a theology of protest eventually emerged (Phiri 2004:16). African Feminism and African Feminist Theology both emerged from a movement of retaliation and resistance.

African feminist theologians focus on redefining the nature of theology in terms of African women's experience and reanalysing the relation between traditional theology and culture noting that patriarchy serves as an unhealthy point of contact between the two. Ringe (1998:4) asserts that "what makes African feminist biblical interpretation unique is that many women are working in different ways with different parts of the Bible in different contexts or occasions of interpretation. This produces a contextual and liberative theology". However, Oduyoye and Kanyoro (2001:1) note that, "African women theologians have come to realise that as long as men and foreign research remain the authorities on culture, rituals and religion, African women will continue to be spoken of as if they were dead." Therefore, African feminist theologians claim agency in scrutinising the cultural influences on the position of women, by placing emphasis on its non-neutrality especially in terms of gender relations (Phiri in Mouton et al 2015:240).

Phiri (in Mouton et al 2015:240) further stresses that cultures are constructed in ways that place some people at advantage at the expense of others, and at times, using theological views to justify the cultural norms. Therefore, it is without question that a gendered approach to theology acknowledges that it is people who construct culture, and some people–with the power to do so – are capable of manipulating culture to their own advantage. However, Phiri warns that the cultural practices in the Bible should not be confused or easily equated with the will of God.

 In Section 2 above, the links between feminism, theological feminism and African theological feminism are considered, both from a historical viewpoint and in terms of objectives and content. However, it should be noted that some African feminist interpreters prefer to be identified as "womanists" instead of "feminists", arguing that feminism connotes Western ideologies. For example, Musa Dube identifies herself as an African feminist but other scholars such as Mercy Oduyoye and Isabel Phiri regard themselves as womanist scholars[18]. As we shall see later in this chapter, Madipoane Masenya calls her own approach to biblical interpretation, bosadi, distinguishing it from both feminist and womanist biblical interpretations.

To illustrate the difference between the approaches to biblical interpretation by Western and African women, Musimbi Kanyoro reads the story of Ruth, which occurs in a culture in which a widow was expected to marry the brother of her dead husband – a practice she observes remains operative in many parts of Africa (Kanyoro cited in Pui-lan 2004:18). She argues that because this custom is found in the story of Ruth, it is easier for the church and women themselves to accept it as part of their realities. In contrast with Western feminists, Kanyoro (in Pui-lan 2004:18) seeks to show the difference in the readings by these two groups of women, arguing that in their reading of Ruth, Western feminists tend to praise the friendship between Naomi and Ruth and highlight their courage in making decisions about their survival. She claims that it is easier for Western feminists to bypass certain realities because they do not resonate with their own experiences. Therefore, Kanyoro (in Pui-lan 2004:19) in her reading of the story of Orpah asks how one can support women who do not follow cultural expectations of their time. Would there be any blessing for Orpah who decides to be different? In this regard, Kwok-Puilan (in Pui-lan 2004:19) argues that reading

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[18] The term "womanism" has been adopted by some African feminists in order to avoid the distractions associated with the term feminism. The term was coined by the African-American activist Alice Walker to denote a black feminism or feminism of colour (Chilisa and Ntseane 2010:619).

the text through both cultural as well as gendered lens could enable us to see the multilayers of the text. Although women of Western descent and African women share gender as the great equaliser, their experiences in life differ in many ways due to culture and context.

The question is, how is the difference reflected in the work of specific African feminist biblical scholars? To answer this question, the works of three scholars namely Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Madipoane Masenya (Ngwan' a Mphahlele) and Isabel Phiri will be reviewed in the following section. I will highlight their distinctive approaches as well as the significance of their works especially in relation to the present study.

3.2.4. Key Figures in African Feminist Biblical Interpretation

For the purpose of this thesis, I have chosen to focus on the work of Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Isabel Phiri and Madipoane Masenya (Ngwan' a Maphahlele) as three representatives of African Biblical Interpretation. I do acknowledge that there also other prolific African female scholars like Funlola Olojede whose works are: Unsung Heroines of the Hebrew Bible: A Contextual Theological Reading from the Perspective of Woman Wisdom (2011), The "First Deborah"-Genesis 35:8 in the Literary and Theological Context (2016). Olujede is an Old Testament scholar who has written extensively on gender specifically women oppression in the Old Testament perspective of the text. Teresa Okure is a New Testament scholar of gender hermeneutics her works include The Will To Arise: Reflections on Luke 8:40-56 (1992) and The Global Bible Commentary Hebrews Sacrifice in an African Perspective (2004). However, in light of the goals of this study, the work of Oduyoye, Phiri and Masenya (Ngwan' a Maphahlele) was considered most helpful for the purpose of this study.

3.2.4.1. Mercy Oduyoye

Mercy Amba Oduyoye is often called the mother of African women's theology. She is known for her work that focuses on deconstructing patriarchy in the African setting. Oduyoye's mission of liberating women from patriarchal oppression in Africa has been recognised worldwide but it has also invited negative criticism from Africans who disapprove of her agency and who believe that her views disrupt the patriarchal structures.

A main characteristic of Oduyoye's theology is the focus on exposing a system that oppresses women and denies them hospitality. Oduyoye acknowledges that women's experiences in

Africa diverge due to differences in race, culture, politics, economy and religion (Phiri 2004a:16). Kwok-Pui-lan (2004:10) adds that, as a feminist theologian, Oduyoye has worked tirelessly to ensure that women's voices and concerns are heard in the middle of the historic changes taking precedence in African societies.

Although one of Oduyoye's central concerns is to evaluate the effect of culture and religion on African women's experiences, she recognises that culture can and does create a sense of belonging for women and offer them communal identity (Oduyoye 1995:87). However, culture (and religion) can be used as a power tool for oppressing women. Oduyoye also recognises the importance of working side-by-side with male counterparts in order to raise an inclusive coherent voice against patriarchal oppression. She further stresses that liberation theology has not begun to do its job if it is one-sided and does not take into consideration the realities of poor women. With regard to the inculturation of Christianity on the African soil, Oduyoye cautions against ignoring the patriarchal layers in African cultures (Pui-Lan 2004:10). She argues that "feminism should be at the heart of both liberation and inculturation and not marginalised from them" (Oduyoye 1995:86).

Oduyoye (2010:10) has introduced a women's theology that covers a wide variety of societal and historical concerns such as the history of slavery and colonisation, culture and spiritual imperialism as well as other struggles that women experience in the society. Oduyoye maintains that African women's theologies ought to be critical in challenging women's oppression, particularly in the struggle against societal, cultural and religious patriarchy (Njoroge 2000:457).

With regard to postcolonial theory, Pui-Lan (2004:12) notes that although Oduyoye does not draw from the postcolonial theoretical framework as such, there are parallels of postcolonial thought in her work, especially in her cultural criticism. This is because Oduyoye's analysis centres on the same cultural phenomena facing newly independent countries, even though she does not utilise postcolonial terminology. Her work also resonates with postcolonial cultural criticism to the extent that she considers the construction of generalised and universalised identity that collapses differences into sameness by denying the reality of the diversity of African cultures as well as the development of hybridity over time (Pui-lan 2004:12).

Furthermore, Oduyoye (1995:19) regards oral traditions in Africa as conditioning agents of women's behaviour which help to fulfil patriarchal agendas. She further criticizes the absence of male theologians in the struggle against patriarchy. Oduyoye's uncompromising stance is

that cultural hermeneutics as an important tool for women to interpret their own experiences in order to shape their own realities (Pui-Lan 2004:6). Oduyoye calls this process dreaming, "the bringing into being new arrangements of reality" (in Nyengelele 2004:64). She imagines a situation in which women create their own realities according to their own imagination.

3.2.4.2.   Madipoane Masenya (Ngwan' a Mphahlele)

Madipoane Masenya (Ngwan' a Mphahlele) is an African womanist biblical scholar from South Africa who is known for her use of the term bosadi, which is the northern Sotho word for womanhood. Bosadi an abstract noun from the word mosadi which means woman, married woman or wife. Though the noun is a Sotho word, it has cognates in other Southern African languages such as musadzi (Venda), wansati (xi-Tsonga) umfazi (Zulu) and so forth. By using this term, Masenya's bosadi approach clearly seeks to address issues relating to native South African women.

In her bosadi approach, Masenya addresses issues of faith and highlights the importance of faith in the life of African women in their encounters with, among other things, the Bible. Secondly, the bosadi approach revives the positive, liberative elements of the African culture, analyses both the negative and the positive elements of culture and shows that culture is sufficient for its people. Masenya's bosadi approach also elevates the significance of the family. Acknowledging the role that the family has played in the bid to subordinate women (Hooks 1984:36-37), bosadi seeks a balance and stresses that building a family must not be viewed as solely a woman's task.

For Masenya, in the past, Africans in South Africa had their identities defined for them but now there is a need for Africans, particularly African women, to redefine themselves. As an Old Testament scholar, Masenya has written extensively on issues that are not only culturally relevant but that also explore colonial discourses. This implies that she can also be considered a postcolonial scholar.

In her article, "A Northern Sotho Marriage Setting: A Weal or a Woe? Focus on Some Feminist/Womanist Principles," Masenya (1994) explores the cultural dynamics of a Sotho marriage. In "Deconstructing a (male) Anthropocentric Reading of Job (3) through an Eco-bosadi Lens," Masenya (2010) also examines ways in which fundamentalist interpretations of

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the Christian Bible have impacted negatively on human relations with the earth and with women; an impact which has contributed in part to the present ecological crisis. She has also offered an earth/women-friendly reading of the Book of Job, and in "Sacrificing Female Bodies at the Altar of Male Privilege: A Bosadi Reading of Judges 19," Masenya (2003) considers the present South African landscape which is typified, amongst other evils, by violent acts committed against women and children. The violence is entrenched in some church and family contexts, not only through biblical interpretations that are hostile to women, but also through the use of some violent biblical texts by those who benefit from patriarchy. Therefore, in her reading of Judges 19, Masenya challenges the violence perpetrated against the women in the text from the perspective of African female Bible readers in South Africa.

Masenya's work urges South African Old Testament scholars to decolonise their reading of the Bible in order to discover a God that identifies with them in the context in which they find themselves. In "Teaching Western-Oriented Old Testament Studies to African Students: An Exercise in Wisdom or in Folly? Old Testament Essays," Masenya (2004), therefore, probes the alienation of South Africans on their own soil by strangers who impose their cultures, languages, and ideologies, et cetera on the continent. She further analyses the impact of the colonial enterprise on the African identity. Given the extent of the harm done by colonial and apartheid education to African-South African students, she asks whether it is a wise exercise to continue offering these students a theology which continues to alienate them from their real identities. In the light of the post-apartheid era, which is an era of self-recovery, self-affirmation, and of searching for one's roots, is teaching Western-oriented Old Testament studies an exercise in wisdom or in folly? As Old Testament scholars, are we offering the right word at the right time to the right people? These are some of the questions that Masenya's article grapples with.

Masenya's contribution is evident in the comment by Smith (2015:72) who notes that, "Bosadi is not simply comparative analysis between the biblical text and the African culture. It critiques both cultures and texts not only in terms of gender concerns. It also includes issues of class woman as strange and Africans as strange in their own territory." Moreover, what makes bosadi a compelling approach is its commitment to upholding the realities of African women in South Africa.

3.2.4.3.   Isabel Phiri

Isabel Apawo Phiri is an African feminist from Malawi but who is currently an Associate General Secretary of the World Council of Churches in Geneva. Her primary contribution lies in her extensive scholarly work on African culture and religion.

Like Mercy Oduyoye, Phiri also claims that women of Africa have multiple theologies to offer from their divergent contexts. In other words, women have diverse experiences based on the uniqueness of their cultures. Therefore, Phiri's methodological approach can be described as an "African cultural theology", which also emerged as a protest against colonial and missionary interpretations that regard African religions and cultures as evil and against the will of God (Phiri 2004:16). Phiri views herself as an African womanist scholar who strives to deconstruct cultural patriarchy embedded in society as well as in religion in Africa.

Phiri writes from the perspective and context of a Malawian woman, and traces the struggles and contributions of Chewa women to the development of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (1997). However, Phiri's work and influence extends beyond Malawi and Malawian women; her research embraces aspects of other African cultures and contexts. Phiri (2008) highlights the major challenges faced by African women theologians in theological education in an article titled "Major Challenges for African Women Theologians in Theological Education" (2004). She identifies the major challenges that African women theologians face which include redefining the identity of African women theologians and, promoting the inclusion of African women's theology in the theological curriculum while collaborating with male theologians.

Moreover, in the above mentioned article article Phiri traces the development of African women's theologies in Southern Africa since its inception especially in relation to the activities of the Circle of African Women Theologians. The methodologies and content of this theology are analysed from the perspective of African theology. In particular, Phiri highlights the urgent need for theological and practical responses to the issue of HIV and AIDS from a gendered perspective, pointing out that women theologians need to grapple with a variety of issues in Southern Africa which continue to affect the (sexual) health of African women.

An example of Phiri's view of patriarchy and sexuality is found in an article that she co-wrote with South African Old Testament scholar Sarojini Nadar, "Going through the Fire with Eyes Wide Open: African Women's Perspective on Indigenous Knowledge, Patriarchy and Sexuality." In the article, Phiri and Nadar (2009) explore ways in which Zulu songs and proverbs critique or promote patriarchy.

In short, Phiri's work as a womanist theologian addresses the plight of African women, in relation to religion, culture and health. Through her activities with "the Circle" and other African women theologians she has endeavoured to open up safe spaces for African women to claim their liberation from detrimental effects of the current patriarchal order. With these studies as a background to what one may expect from an African feminist reading of the Bible, in the following section, we shall return to the text of Genesis 38 and read the story of Tamar from an African feminist perspective.

3.2.5.   The Story of Tamar from an African Feminist Perspective

3.2.5.1. Naming Patriarchy in Genesis 38

Since patriarchy is an ideology that is said to promote male power in a society and that carries oppressive overtones (see chapter 2 figure 5 above), to read the narrative of Genesis 38 from an African feminist perspective, it is important to recognise first the patriarchal nature of the text.

Claassens, in her book Claiming Her Dignity (2016:156), contends that the Old Testament contains numerous illustrations of intersections of structural and cultural violence that are associated with the institution of patriarchy. Claassens cites the compelling argument by Carol Meyers that the term "heterarchy" rather than patriarchy should be used to describe the multiple intersectional modes of oppression in society, hence, expanding the scope of the term, patriarchy (Meyers in Claassens 2016:156). Meyers asserts that "heterarchy" is a more accurate term for describing the social setting in ancient Israel because it acknowledges that male dominance was in balance with female dominance. The point that Meyers makes is that one has to be careful not to paint the entire society as being dominated by men since the Bible confirms that in some instances power was shared. Thus, Meyers also recognises that the Israelite society had a variety of hierarchies within it, implying the existence of different power structures, which probably complicated the social structure.

Further, it is important to note that the book of Genesis in which the story of Tamar occurs contains the account of both the beginning of the cosmos as well as the first families. As such it addresses ontological questions (Niditch 1998:13). According to Towner (2001:4), behind the written texts of Genesis was a rich oral tradition of stories about the ancestors of Israel and God the creator, founder and providential preserver of Israel. Stories are fundamental to human life, for they are said to order experience. As such, stories were used by the people of Israel to endorse their identity through the process of reiteration, first, orally and later in written form (Gunn & Fewell 1993:1). The lore was handed down from parents to children, from tribal tellers to students of one generation to another (Westermann 1986:4). This was a creative method of establishing tradition in the society (Van Seters 1983:4). According to Westermann (1986: xii), many of the traditions such as the stories of the matriarchs and patriarchs emerged individually. Renowned Old Testament scholar Hermann Gunkel noted that when told, each story included a pause; however, these pauses found in between the stories were later removed in order to formulate a coherent continuing story between individual stories (Coats 1985:31).

Furthermore, these coherent, enduring stories were transmitted and written in order to portray the paradigm of the patriarchs with whom God related in extraordinary ways (Niditch 1998:13). Westermann (1986:23) notes that the memory of the origin from families and ancestors became a paradigm in the formation of the state. In addition, Israel's narratives in Genesis is a reflection of life in the ancient Near East (Kroger & Evans 2002:1), which implies that the stories give the reader a socio-historical script of the society.

Amit (2001:11) rightly points out that the "depiction of history is never free of ideology, whether written, oral, past or present it is a political act." Thus, in the story of Israel, different ideologies that shaped the community to a certain destination are discernible. Furthermore, Gartner-Breton (2008:49) asserts that the biblical text is religion that is grounded in politics; its text is delimited by nationalistic agenda, giving examples of patriarchal stories such as Moses and Egypt, the Canaan conquest as well as the prophetic speeches and arguments all transmit a "political and nationalistic" agenda (Gartner-Breton 2008:48). Therefore, in as much as these stories were a way of creating tradition, they were also a way of creating hierarchies in the community and on the home front, of declaring male superiority over women.

Viewed through gender lenses, it is clear that the authority of the father was powerful both as a lived reality in the social realm and as a cultural ideal. Gravett et al (2008:134) argue that the writers of the Hebrew Bible expected male characters to "project control". In other words, because they needed to display control, men used power and aggression. Sometimes control relied on possession of knowledge and/or a special relationship with a powerful figure, especially Yahweh. Contrasting the male role with that of the female, Niditch (1998:13) observes that Genesis depicts women as only exercising power more in the private realm and seldom in the public space. This ideology shapes the reader's understanding of women's role and place compared to that of men. According to Meyers (cited in Sloane 2012:47), "it remains the case that Israel's laws and social structures were dominated by men and can be termed patriarchal so long as care is taken when doing so."

The socio-historical background of Genesis 38 is thus grounded in patriarchy and this is clear from the themes it presents such as progeny, Levirate marriage and prostitution, which are all instituted structures that benefit the males in the society. For instance, the Levirate marriage connotes that the surviving brother is obligated to continue the name of the deceased brother by marrying his widowed sister-in-law. The first child in that union would then be regarded as the child of the deceased brother (Brenner 2012:279). This child, preferably a son, would give the woman a roof over her head otherwise she would be discarded.

The institution of prostitution that is presupposed in Genesis 38 also shows that male sexual enjoyment is considered central. However, it also provided women economic gain since the women mostly involved in prostitution were often widows who were discarded from the boundaries of the normal community and were therefore destitute (Walton 2009:193)

With regard to this study, it should be noted that the above understanding of patriarchy reflected in the Hebrew Bible can also be seen at work in other contemporary communities. For instance, in the Zulu women's context, which forms the focus of this study, patriarchy is an oppressive element that continues to be used to abuse and victimise women – for example, in the Zulu form of the Levirate marriage noted in the story of Tamar in Chapter 2. However, identifying the nature and extent of patriarchy is only one aspect of the study of the text and of the contemporary situation of Zulu women. Feminist criticism also offers women in the African context a way of exposing patriarchy's injustices as well as liberating themselves from it and creating a space for them to flourish.

In the rest of this chapter, I will show how elements of the patriarchal reality found in Genesis 38 is brought into sharper focus when read from an African feminist perspective which brings elements of Zulu culture into conversation with the biblical text. However, we will also show that even though the effects of patriarchy are brutal on its victims as in the case of Tamar, it is possible, like Tamar to rise above the circumstances which can be described as life-denying in nature.

3.2.6.   Judah the patriarch

Genesis 38 describes Judah's act of acquiring a wife with the violent words translated as "saw" "took" and "went into". His actions are reminiscent of the Zulu cultural practice called ukuthwala, which is a form of marriage that still occurs in rural communities in South Africa. The practice, also referred to as abduction marriage or forced marriage (Rice 2004:381), takes place either with or without the knowledge of a young woman or her parents. Tamar is also not "given" in marriage by her father, but rather is "taken" by Judah as a bride for his son, as if the woman has no father to negotiate on her behalf (Aschkenasy 1998:82).

3.2.6.1.   Ukuthwala

The cultural practice of ukuthwala mentioned above has been recognised as a violation of human rights (Rice 2004:381). Without a negotiator in a marriage proposal especially in the Zulu marital context, the marriage is considered forced even though the idea of negotiating for a woman may in itself be understood as perpetuation of patriarchy and control over a woman. However, negotiation is regarded as the only method of showing that a woman is willing to enter into matrimony (Nel 2007:54). Judah's "violent" behaviour, reminiscent of ukuthwala, affirms Judah's superiority and in contemporary parlance would be seen as the violation of the human rights of another.

Judah's actions also represent what is often described as the dynamics of an honour and shame culture. Bechtel (1997:237) asserts that in a society driven by honour, hierarchy is bestowed on some people authority over others – such as parents over children, husbands over wives, et cetera. Therefore, the magnitude of Judah's authority and dominance over his household is demonstrated by the fact that the members of his household do not oppose his commands; his wife and sons do not have a contending voice, rather what the narrator shows

is Judah's aggressive stance about how things should be. Judah, by making matrimonial decisions on behalf of his sons, reinforces his authority over even the grown men in his home (Aschkenasy 1998:82)!

3.2.6.2.   The significance of procreation

Judah was the product of a culture that was significantly grounded in patriarchal ideology. His marriage to Shua's daughter is informed by the need to obtain heirs. In the light of the two folktales that highlight elements of Zulu marriage and family culture in Chapter 2, Judah's story is similar to the Zulu's emphasis on the importance of children and the primary role of Zulu women. The narrator's emphasis on procreation is demonstrated by the fact that Judah's children are born one after the other which, according to Abasili (2011:586), depicts that Judah's sexual encounters with his wife are merely for the sake of procreation– again clear parallels are found within the African paradigm of marriage.

Furthermore, because bearing children guarantees eternal life in African culture (Turaki 1999:107), children are regarded as a source of power for women, that is, in relation to men. This explains why infertility poses a threat to both women's power and the social order in which it is exercised. However, as noted above, the issue is further problematized by the fact that the significance of begetting a child depends solely on the gender of the child. It is expected to be a male child (Baloyi 2009:4).

Moreover, behind the emphasis on procreation are also "religious values associated with sex [that] are concentrated on procreation and not sexual activity" (Mair 1969:3). Reproduction is a religious duty; within many African cultures, a childless marriage is considered abnormal and is usually frowned upon (Oduyoye 1999:109) – not only in social but also in spiritual terms. Thus, one can imagine that Tamar must have faced the same fate of ostracism from her community and her status must have disintegrated amongst women who lived up to the norm.

In Genesis 38, problems began after the death of Er, which created a point of conflict in the family. Verse 7 merely mentions that Er died due to his wicked ways; therefore, his death is regarded as punishment but only God knows the offense. It was not strange in ancient societies to attribute death to the gods, especially when the death could not be explained (Westermann 1986:51). According to the narrator, Tamar was widowed and had no children. It became Judah's prerogative as well as social and religious duty to give her to his second son Onan as wife. Through Onan, Tamar was expected to ensure the continuation of the

family of Er. According to the law in Deuteronomy 25:5-10, a surviving brother is obligated to continue the name of his deceased brother by marrying his sister-in-law. The first-born child is regarded as the child of the deceased brother and he would inherit his (the deceased brother's) estate (Walton 2009:193).

What further complicates the issue, according to scholars such as Walton and Arnold (2003:326) is that the levirate institution was meant to protect the childless widow and to safeguard the continuance of the ancestral lands in the family. However, Anderson (2009:40) contends that biblical laws actually denied the widow from inheriting her husband's estate and that in the levirate marriage the man's eldest son is the only one qualified to do so (Deut 21:15-17). The only access a widow has to the estate of her late husband is via her son which means the widow could be marginalised; her needs are unimportant in a levirate marriage. The sole purpose of the levirate marriage is to continue the line of the deceased because marrying someone from outside is regarded as the diminishing of the property of the tribe (or family) (Brenner 2012: 218).

Onan, however, shrugged off his responsibilities and let his seed fall on the ground. Consequently, Onan died and his death is portrayed as punishment from Yahweh for dishonouring his duty as levir (Deut 25:7). Interestingly, Anderson (2009:37) gives a more nuanced explanation of this matter by asserting that the importance of sexuality was procreation; therefore, the proper use of the male seed was held in high regard in ancient society. Furthermore, the importance of the male seed is recognised in the law that prohibited a man from having sexual intercourse with a menstruating woman due to the belief that a woman is infertile during menstruation. As such, the male seed would be wasted and washed away with the menstrual flow. Moreover, Onan disregarded cultural rules by refusing to give Tamar his seed because his own honour as a man was at stake. A man's honour in the ancient society was measured by his ability to procreate (Freedman 2000:604). Onan also advanced his power and violated Tamar's body by refusing her a child. However, his action was orchestrated carefully since male domination of women was a cultural norm and symbol of honour (Anderson 2009:33). Again, in the text, it seems that the shame that was brought by Onan's refusal to fulfil his obligation is what matters most.

3.2.6.3.   Failure to produce an heir

In the African experience, failure to produce an heir may cause a woman to lose her livelihood (Hollos & Larsen 2005:3). This painful reality adds an interesting perspective to the actions of Judah, who in Genesis 38 discards his daughter-in-law and strips her off the economic privileges that should have been hers. Since the headship in patriarchal households is male, women are under the authority of their husbands in marriage. However, should he die, the man's heir (male!) will rule the household. In the case of childlessness, the father of the woman continues that role (Daber 2003:12).

Judah believed that Tamar's marriage to his sons caused their deaths, and he complicated the plot by attempting to resolve an existing conflict through deception (Krutschwitz 2012:393). He commanded Tamar to return to her father's house to live as a widow with a false promise that he would give her to Shelah, his youngest son, when the latter became of age to marry. A widow without children was a woman without legal, economic or social status, a woman without a household (Walton 2009:193). By sending her home, Judah disowned Tamar (Krutschwitz 2012:398). Newsome and Ringe (2012:42) add that the levirate institution that was supposed to protect Tamar failed to prevent her from anomaly; she lost ties with her husband's clan because she did not conceive. However, she also no longer belonged to her father's household. Tamar's departure placed the future of Er's family in jeopardy because it was left without a womb to produce an heir; yet Judah was completely oblivious of this threat (Matthews 2008:39). Consequently, what Judah did to Tamar left her in a greatly vulnerable position. Although Judah placed Tamar in a position of forced barrenness, he also exposed his family to misfortune.

3.2.7.   Tamar the victim

An African feminist reading of Genesis 38 shows various ways in which Tamar is made vulnerable by the patriarchal society in which she found herself.

3.2.7.1.   The issue of childlessness

As in many other African cultures, childlessness is considered a misfortune in the Zulu culture (Akujobi 2011:3). Similarly, in Judah's household, it seems that barrenness was the cause of complication of the plot in vv. 6-10 of the narrative. The narrator reports that Judah tried to ensure the continuation of his lineage by finding a wife for his son Er. Menn

(1997:20) argues that Judah's action is taken under the belief that Er's marriage would lead to the procreation of children. However, Er's unknown action fuels Yahweh's anger and he was sent to his death before he could fulfil the role of fatherhood. Jacob (1974:258) contends that Er probably did not want children and used sex as mere gratification, which contrasted with the ancient culture's view of sex as primarily a means of procreation. In a culture filled with procreation anxiety, Onan also obscured the norm. Nonetheless there is not much evidence to support these assumptions.

With the death of Er, Judah's expectation of progeny was now in dire jeopardy (Abasili 2011:559). The narrator does refer to a time of mourning but provokes the reader to imagine that Tamar must have taken time to mourn before Judah suggested that Onan take up his brother's duty, by acting as the levir. Thus, Judah's command in v.8, "go into your brother's wife" did not take into account the feelings of the woman involved. Tamar is spoken of as if her voice or opinion did not matter at all – and indeed, in such a setting, it did not.

Judah's command to Onan demonstrates the desperation to ensure the importance of the continuation of the Judah tribe. There seems to be an urgency for Onan to quickly make right what was wrong in the family. Judah's desperation can be likened to the desperation and fear of the Zulu (and other African) men, when there is no descendant to continue their name after death (Oduyoye 1999:113). However, Onan's refusal to fulfil this obligation would expose him to public ridicule (Abasili 2011:559) As Deuteronomy 25:7-8 clearly stipulates, a man who fails to build up his brother's house is vulnerable to public shame.

Abasili (2011:560) argues that Onan did not disobey his father's command for fear of public shame. He continued to sleep with Tamar but spilled his seed on the ground (Gen 38:9). According to the narrator, this was because Onan knew that the child would not belong to him. The injustice done to Tamar by Onan exposed her to the kind of grief suffered by other childless women in Genesis. Niditch (1998:33) draws our attention to the sufferings of Sarah, Rebecca and Rachel, who like Tamar were objects of ridicule which fertile women in the clan did not experience (Gen 16:4). As noted above, Tamar's situation is comparable to the situation of childless African and Zulu women who suffer similar social stigma and ostracism. However, there is an important difference between the other infertile women in Genesis and Tamar in that their infertility was considered natural whereas Tamar's barrenness was brought about by Onan's rebellion (Abasili 2011:560). Tamar's case shows that an infertile woman could be sent back to her father's house, irrespective of the cause of

the infertility! Similarly, the infertility of a Zulu woman whether it was due to her own actions or not often results in divorce and loss of livelihood (Hollos & Larsen 2008:162).

Commenting on the plight of African women Phiri (2002:25) states that in African cultures, it is mostly a woman's wish to get married because singleness is feared as a curse while being married is highly valued. Often women who are desperate to get married are not well equipped to deal with some of the expectations that come with being married especially motherhood. Motherhood determines whether a marriage would succeed or fail (Baloyi 2009:4). Johnson Hanks observes that in Cameroon, and even amongst the educated women, a man's worth is based on his economic status as well as his marital and reproduction achievements (Hans 2006:81). On the other hand, all the honour and respect a woman gets is determined by her ability to produce children (Hollos & Larsen 2008:81). Therefore, Tamar's predicament of childlessness in a society where a male child guarantees a woman's security reflects the dilemma of African women in similar situations (Abasili 2011:11).

In the same vein, Ikenga Metuh (1999:188) contends that motherhood is a much sought after status in most African societies and it is the dream of many young African women. "A woman who has not given birth or is infertile is regarded a social misfit. If she has never conceived, she is openly ridiculed and told that she is not a woman". Only through motherhood is an African woman's worth established. The anxiety caused by the shame of childlessness is demonstrated in Sarai's desperation to get Hagar to become her surrogate in order to continue Abraham's line. Masenya (1998:283) points out that with the knowledge that Sarai is seen as a disgrace to a community that places great significance on children, Hagar takes advantage of the situation and acted proudly to the chagrin of Sarai who then sent her away. The kind of treatment that Hagar suffered is also a reality in many African societies whose infertile women fail to live up to the status quo. Fertile women attribute superiority to themselves and often show no sympathy for the plight of an infertile woman (Hollos and Larsen 2013:160)

However, Abasili (2011:561) again points out that in such a patrilineal society, the fate that accompanies a childless or infertile woman is also shared by the woman who bears only girl children. Among the Yoruba of Nigeria, for example, when a baby is born, the first question asked is about the gender. If the child is a girl, the mother would be judged harshly, and if a boy, praises will be showered on the mother. The Zulu culture does not necessarily react with contempt towards the mother of a girl child; rather, the judgement is silent. Ngobese

(2003:61) observes that in African marriages, only in the birth of a son is the marriage process complete. When a woman gives birth to a baby boy, her status is elevated, she is recognised within the family and society at large (Masenya 1998:121). At times, a woman could be sent back to her parents if she is infertile, and the lobola is repaid due to the shame of infertility. Many Zulu people still believe that infertility implies that the ancestors are not happy with a marriage (Ngobese 2003:57). Therefore, by sending Tamar home, Judah did what many African cultures continue to do till this day.

In some African societies, for example in Tanzania, when an infertile or a childless woman dies, her corpse is buried on the outskirts of the town (Hollos & Larsen 2013:162). This is a further demonstration that society considers the infertile woman abnormal and her corpse should be hidden so as to prevent her reincarnation (Oduyoye 1999:113).

Lastly, Oduyoye (1999:114) asserts that issues of infertility evoke infidelity in the community. At times, some men engage in sexual relationships outside marriage to acquire sons or children due to their wives' infertility. Thus, whether a woman is sent back to her natal family or she remained in her matrimonial home, she continues to suffer different forms of injustice one way or another. Being childless or having only female children in this kind of context could drive any woman to take dangerous measures in order to prevent ostracism and stigma. It is against this background that Tamar's desperate move to disguise as a prostitute should be understood.

3.2.7.2.   Vulnerable situation of African widows in light of the story of Tamar

Long after Tamar was sent back to her parents, news of Judah's wife's death spread, and Tamar learnt that Judah had gone into mourning and was now out. Spina (2005:44) contends that the period was long enough for Shelah to have become an adult (Gen 38:14). He also notes that Judah seemed to have resumed his daily activities after his wife's death. Judah was comforted after his wife's death but Tamar was not comforted after the death of her two husbands. All that time, Tamar was a childless widow living under her father's authority, wearing mourning clothes. It is disturbing that for such a long period, lawfully and publicly, Tamar continued to grieve (Spina 2005:44).

Similarly, in the Zulu setting, widows mourned for a year or two while widowers spent three months or less in mourning. The period of mourning shows the cultural value attached to

each gender (Daber 2003:15). Moreover, while widows wore dark clothing to emphasise their grief, widowers did not have to wear different clothing. Instead they blend with the society and are encouraged to take a new wife as soon as possible (Adefemi 2015:23). According to Adefemi (2015:22), the mourning attire of the widows was deliberately designed to make them appear distasteful and repulsive. Widows faced communal marginalisation as well as loneliness, isolation, stigmatisation and depression (Daber 2003:15). Being a widow comes with its own challenges, but without children, widows are stripped of legal, economic or social status (Walton 2009:193). Although Tamar was already an outcast of the patriarchal society because of her childlessness, being a widow intensified it. The experiences of many Zulu widows compare with that of Tamar.

Since widowhood is mostly associated with bad luck and death, the belief in many African cultures is that the widow needs to be kept at a distance as much as possible (Daber 2003:70). Thus, it is unclear whether Judah sent Tamar away because she was childless or because he thought she spelt bad luck for his family and therefore needed to be kept a distance. Only after the cleansing ritual or purification ceremony can a woman be allowed to interact with others in public without the fear that she still carried the aura of death. After the cleansing, the widow could also relate with another man if she so desired (Adefemi 2015:22).

The story reaches a climax when Tamar is found pregnant. Judah ordered that she be burnt because she had played the harlot. The crime was an insult to the memory of Tamar's dead husband and she was therefore found guilty of adultery, not only as Er's widow but also as Shelah's wife-to-be (Westermann 1986:54). Judah's decision is swift and cruel; "…she is to be burnt… bring her out…." (Newsom & Ringe 1998:43). The death penalty was to be carried out outside the town where everyone could participate in the execution. Moreover, since the law insinuated that the female body was under the control of a male, whether her father or her husband (Anderson 2009:33), it was easy for Judah to exploit and control Tamar. It is striking that not even Tamar's father could save her or speak on her behalf after Judah humiliated her by sending her back to her parents. However, the strategy of deception that Tamar employed later in the story transformed her from a victim to a victor.

3.2.7.3.   Widow cleansing

Another African custom that may offer an interesting perspective on the story of Tamar is the cultural practice of widow cleansing. In many African communities, there is a specific ritual for "cleansing" a woman who has lost her husband. In some contexts, this practice has been discouraged or dismissed for its negative effects on the health of the community. Among the Zulu, to officially end the cleansing procedures for widows, they are to engage in sexual cleansing (Daber 2003:83). Refusal to perform such a ritual resulted in ostracism. The ritual entails that after a one-year mourning period, a widow is given to a relative of her late husband who would have sexual intercourse with her. In some cases, the man could be a total stranger and the aim is to ensure a spiritual separation between the widow and the deceased (Adefemi 2015:26). Junod's studies amongst the South Eastern Bantu shows that to nullify the apparent bad luck that clung to the widow, she would have to seduce the stranger into having intercourse with her (cf. Daber 2003:82). The man would carry the bad luck with him while the woman becomes purified. This practice has been condemned as it is considered detrimental to the health of both the woman and the man or stranger due to the possibility of contacting various sexually transmitted diseases. Be that as it may, the widow's redemption in the community is tied to this practice.

As a widow, Tamar wore her widow's garment for a long time. In v.11, Judah told her: "Go and live as a widow in your father's house until my son Shelah grows"). Later, in v.14, the narrator relates that Tamar took off her widow's clothes and covered herself with a veil to disguise herself. Abasili (2011:565) contends that, since Tamar was a betrothed widow, only her in-laws had the right to control her sexuality. Verses 11 and 14 imply that Judah was in control of Tamar's fate, since her husband was dead. It was within his rights to command her to go and live "as a widow" in her father's house. Niditch (1979:45) confirms that in ancient Israel, a young woman was allowed to play only two proper roles: either as a virgin living under her father's house or a married faithful woman living with her husband's family. Tamar could not seek a new life for herself; only Judah had power over her and he chose to keep her bound to a dead husband. He also decided how long the period of her mourning would be. In v. 24, his statement, "Bring her out to be burnt" confirms his control because he Judah and not Tamar's father in whose house she was now living had the right to pronounce judgement on her. However, the entire issue of widowhood is problematized by the narrator's depiction of Tamar taking off her widow's garment. It shows that Tamar had been forced to

mourn for a longer period than was required hence she needed to be cleansed from her attachment to the dead husband.

It is easy, in the light of the discussion above, to conclude that Tamar was a victim of patriarchy. However, in a surprising turn of events, one finds signs that Tamar actually transcended patriarchy! To (African) feminist biblical scholars, herein lies the additional, if not the primary, importance of the story.

3.3.   Tamar Transcending Patriarchy

3.3.1.   A Widow Taking off Her Mourning Clothes

Thatcher (2011:26) poses a significant question: "If power shapes our thoughts, how can we resist it, since the tools given to us to do this are themselves a product of power? If resistance too is also a power, how do we acquire it?" Thatcher's question is profound in that it reveals the ambiguity that lies at the root of resisting and claiming power back. In Tamar's case, the tool available to her to resist power was deception which in itself is a corrupting agent. Nonetheless, it granted her the freedom she desired and deception was her tool of power.

Bosworth (2008:53) contends that the complications in the story are intensified by the role of the victim whose attempted solution is also a crime (Bosworth 2008:53). Deception is the next phase in which the victim in desperation takes matters into her own hands; her only tool of power is now deception. (Thatcher 2011:28). Tamar has been abandoned and probably branded as a dangerous woman, an unmarriageable, childless widow. Arnold (2003:327) agrees that this was the most defenceless state one could be as a woman in the Semitic society. However, the remarkable thing about Genesis 38 is that Tamar was able to transcend the effects of patriarchy by taking her fate into her own hands. It is within the patriarchal context outlined above that Tamar engineered a daring but dangerous plan, removed her mourning gown, disguised her identity with a veil and positioned herself where Judah would find her as he made his way to "the entrance of Enaim" to sheer his sheep (Westermann 1986:269).

When Judah saw Tamar, he assumed she was a prostitute (Gen 38:15). However, Gunn and Fewell (1993:125) recognise the power of language in this scene. They contend that by masquerading as a prostitute, Tamar bargained with Judah with regard to the payment for her

sexual services. Tamar's negotiation is significant. Even though Judah promised to pay her with a young goat; she decided to take his seal, cord and staff as leverage (Adeyemo 2006:68).

However, Judah misunderstood Tamar because at that point he was in a position of weakness. He thought Tamar was asking for the staff in his hands which he willingly gave her. It is significant that Tamar demanded for Judah's staff. Emphasising the synonym of the Hebrew word for "staff", Gunn and Fewell (1993:126) note that the word could also mean, tribe, implying that with Tamar being in possession of the staff she had taken control of the tribe of Judah. Paradoxically, Tamar's request could also have been for a phallus, which she intended to use as a bargaining tool to get children and regain her security. She therefore used that bargaining tool to emasculate Judah when he ordered that she be burnt.

Moreover, Tamar's act of seducing Judah could be understood in the light of the cleansing ritual outlined in the previous section. Israel did not have a specific cleansing ritual for widows as evident in the book of Ruth. In Ruth, Orpah, Ruth and Naomi all lost their husbands but there was no mention of a cleansing ritual; rather, the focus was on how to find a levir in Bethlehem of Judah. Malungo (2001:327) notes that in some Zambian communities, a levirate marriage is regarded as a form of sexual act of ritual cleansing for the widow who is to be inherited or wedded.

It should be noted also that it was not a stranger that seduced Judah but a purpose-driven Tamar. Knowing that the man she slept with would bear the curse of misfortune that had hung over her head for so many years as she dressed in mourning clothes, did she choose Judah for her purification ritual based on the injustices he had done to her in the past? Alternatively, could it be that Tamar chose Judah because it was his responsibility to provide a levir, and if he would not, he should have performed a cleansing ritual to release her to marry another man? Tamar was trapped in her mourning clothes, the clothing that placed boundaries on her life and kept her out of the public space (Daber 2003:70).

3.3.2.   Trickery

Relinquishing her position as a victim, Tamar employed trickery to get even with Judah. By seducing Judah rather than another man, it is clear that she had concluded in her mind that the only way to reincarnate her dead husband was through Judah's seed. She then orchestrated

three things: first, she arranged the ritual purification from mourning in order to free herself from widowhood and the attendant victimisation. Second, she used the ritual to renounce her identity as a childless woman as she became the mother of twin boys; and third, she used the ritual to undermine Judah and all that he represented.

However, for childless African women who cannot engage in trickery like Tamar, the levirate arrangement and surrogacy seem to be the only means of overcoming the consequences of childlessness (Ngobese 2003:64). Masenya (1998:284) acknowledges that in the case of a barren woman, the family would sometimes first seek the help of a traditional doctor. However, if that does not work, the family through the consent of the barren wife would find a substitute wife for the man. Again, one must remember that the reproach of the infertile, childless woman does not end with the birth of just any child, the child has to be a male. Otherwise, the woman with the girl child would remain in the same vulnerable situation.

3.3.3.   Effects of Tamar's resistance

According to Kruschwitz (2012:389), the resolution to Tamar's story includes the remaining two components of the counter deceiver type scene – the acknowledgement of wrongdoing and the scene of anagnorisis. Kruschwitz describes anagnorisis as the moment in a play when someone makes an important discovery. The discovery serves as an important recognition of a person and what the person represents. In Genesis 38, Tamar demanded that Judah "recognise" not her but himself and implicitly his wrongdoing (v.25). Furthermore, the act of deception is said to alienate the parties whereas the act of counter-deception reconciles them (Kruschwitz 2012:394). Judah drove Tamar to her father's house as a widow without actually intending to give her to Shelah when he grew up. The act is reminiscent of the plan of Judah and his brothers when they sold Joseph into slavery; they had no intention of ever seeing him again. Tamar's deception of Judah resulted in the conception and birth of his children, which unified rather than destroy the bond between her and his family. Tamar's resistance is also reminiscent of Joseph's deception of his brothers when they sought his help in Egypt, which resulted in reuniting the entire family.

It is also important to mention that Buchner (1997:563) approaches Genesis 38 as well as Ruth's case from the perspective of the role of patriarchy and how to obtain justice for women in an African context. With reference to Ruth and Tamar, Buchner considers the social position of the childless widow and argues that Tamar was able to subvert the social

structures against her through trickery. Thus, both Tamar and Ruth were eventually guaranteed a place in the lineage of Jesus Christ!

3.3.4.   Tamar as a depatriarchalising figure?

In the light of the above discussion of patriarchy and its consequences above, Tamar may indeed be described as a "depatriarchalising" figure in the narrative because she resisted the role of the victim that pushed her outside of the social boundary. Tamar took matters into her own hands to end the patriarchal control over her life. She used the same tool of patriarchy, that is, the control of sexuality, to get even with the man who forced her into the position of marginalisation and exclusion from the society.

The expression that after Tamar gave birth to twins, Judah did not "know her" again also needs some explanation. Newsom argues that the statement could be a reference to Leviticus 18:15, which states that a father-in-law should not have sexual relations with his daughter-in-law. However, Westermann (1986:55) contends that the narrative presupposes that Tamar was received back into her family honourably. In other words, the shame of childlessness had been subverted and her status elevated. Here lies an ironic conclusion to the story. As Mbuwayesango (1997:34) notes, Tamar's fate in fact promotes the patriarchal agenda! The fact that the text ends with Tamar conceiving a son "seems to enforce the very idea that every woman must fulfil such an obligation of bearing children especially a son." Kanyoro (cited in Nyengelele 2004:63) also adds that African feminist theologians do challenge beliefs and norms that deny women the chance to be who they wish to be and force them to fulfil cultural expectations that may be oppressive in nature. One cannot help but consider what would have happened if Tamar gave birth to twin girls? In the end, it does appear that the text still contributes to the advancement of the patriarchal agenda.

3.4.   Conclusion of Chapter

Tamar's story, as told in Genesis 38, has been read by various feminist biblical scholars who take seriously the ramifications of patriarchal oppression in women's lives in various contexts. Even though Genesis 38 could be read differently from one setting to another, the effects of powerlessness and the restoration of human dignity seem to be a theme that relates to many of the readings of this text by feminist scholars. For instance, Claassens (2012:662)

considers the failure of the levirate custom in the story of Tamar, and argues that the narrative is used to show that the custom itself is flawed. It is ironic that a system that is designed by patriarchy to ensure the survival of the widow ultimately threatens the human dignity of the members of the community. Therefore, we have argued in this chapter that Tamar had no choice but to engage in trickery in order to claim the dignity that she has been denied. In this regard, Van der Walt (2015:69) argues that Tamar's role is epitomised as an alternative for all those who find themselves without power and without a voice but who nonetheless are continuing to search for means of liberation and alternative means of expression in heteronormative spaces.

The contribution of this chapter lies in the description of the effects of patriarchy and the various means of resistance in the Tamar story which is enhanced by the reading of the story through the lens of an African biblical feminist and in conversation with Western feminists. The injustices that Tamar faced as a woman under patriarchal domination were highlighted and her story is brought into conversation with some of the experiences of Zulu women in the marital space. Tamar who as a depatriarchalising figure that resisted the system of injustice that threatened the core of her being, offers Zulu women the opportunity to reflect on their own position and role in marriage. Through Tamar's acts of resistance, Zulu women could appreciate their strength better, as the figure of Tamar challenges them to recognise not only their suffering but also their sources of power. The story also offers them alternative tools of resistance that can be used in their own context to disrupt the strategies of the powerful. Findings from the African feminist approach to the reading of the Bible could help Zulu women to recognise and name their oppression and thereby transcend patriarchy.

In the next chapter, I will employ a postcolonial African feminist lens to read Genesis 38, thus, focusing on the story of an individual as a cipher for the people of Israel as a whole. The idea of the coloniser and the colonised will be considered important as the different themes of resistance used by the subjugated in a colonial context are examined. The goal of the chapter is to show that the gender dynamics in typical Zulu household marriages are influenced by changes and tensions on the macro level. Furthermore, it will be argued that the macro level affects the micro level in various ways which contribute to a particular culture of oppression that is related but also different from the one explored in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 4

TAMAR AND POSTCOLONIAL FEMINIST BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

4.1.   Introduction

In this chapter, an additional lens will be used to interpret the story of Judah and Tamar, namely the postcolonial feminist approach. Attention will be paid to the two main characters in the story and the ways in which they relate to the power dynamics present in the story. In what follows, the character of Judah will be viewed as a coloniser because of the dominant and subjugating role that he played in the lives of people who are not of Israelite descent. Moreover, Tamar will be read in terms of her role as the "resistive other" in the story; the one who embraces a hybrid identity in order to live in and belong to the setting she called home. In terms of this study's objective of reading the story of Tamar in light of the Zulu marital context, the postcolonial approach is helpful in probing the struggles of women who are married to Zulu men in contemporary South African society. In this regard, Moolman (2013:94) argues that one cannot define who a black South African man is without taking into consideration the repercussions of imperial rule on the black nation, for the apartheid system left a definite mark on the identity of both black men and women in South Africa. The reality is that the Zulu society prides itself in having men as leaders, but with the increasing number of successful women in the work place, the patriarchal system is placed under great pressure (Moolman 2013:104), and men seek to reassert their power even with greater force. Thus, a postcolonial reading of the story of Tamar may help Zulu women to contemplate modes of resistance that could enable them to survive the patriarchal forces that seek to subjugate them.

Regarding the concepts of power and power structures, this chapter focuses on the two operational power structures that made life difficult for Tamar. First, there are signs of a colonial agenda that aimed to subjugate Tamar as the Canaanite Other. Second, Tamar became the victim of a patriarchal androcentric agenda that objectified her because of her gender. In this chapter, I am interested in exposing the power dynamics that take precedence in the relationship between the character of Tamar the Israelite man Judah and his sons. Besides, the analysis will expose the creative methods that Tamar employed in the struggle to live with the powerful men around her which includes rejecting victimisation and oppression.

Several feminist critics have written extensively on Tamar's use of trickery to question patriarchal life-denying power forces in the story (cf. Fentress-Williams 2007; Claassens 2012; Van der Walt 2015). Some of the views in this chapter have been shaped particularly by Fentress-Williams who argues that location is significant in setting the tone for the Genesis 38 narrative. Fentress-Williams interprets the narrative of Tamar in its broader literary context, namely the story of Joseph (Genesis 37-50). She notes that the narrative of Genesis 38 serves to clarify the events in the Joseph narrative, and that neither of the stories can be read without reference to the other. Fentress-Williams' perspective is helpful in viewing Genesis 38 through a postcolonial lens, as the surrounding context of the narrative helps to clarify the context of colonialism that serves as the backdrop for the Tamar narrative. One is also able to get a glimpse of Judah's background when the story is read as part of the larger Joseph novella, which helps to get a clearer picture of the character of Judah in terms of his family's isolated life in Canaan.

This imperial paradigm is inspired by the history of Yehud. Yehud was captured by the Babylonian Empire which was later defeated by the Persian Empire resulting in the restoration of Judah as a colony (Berquist 2006:78)[19]. Berquist who traces also ways in which Yehud's canon constitutes colonial and colonising literature argues that the canon cannot be understood unless one takes into consideration the realities of empire that led Jerusalem into exile. Brett also remarks that the ancestral religion is not exempt from colonial regimes (2008:45). Furthermore, Berquist (2006:79) contends that both the Old and the New Testaments are not free from imperial ideologies. Thus, one must be attentive to such ideological realities in the Israelite story when engaging with the canon, and the fact that Israel asserts itself as an empire in its scriptures because it had been under other empires. Darden (2012:67) claims that "it must be hermeneutically suspected that an ideological bias informs the production of meaning by traditional historical biblical scholar".

To my knowledge, the story of Tamar in Genesis 38 has not yet been read from a postcolonial critical perspective. Therefore, by reading Genesis 38 through a postcolonial lens, I wish to highlight, as an African woman, the layers of oppression hidden in the stories of subjugated women. Tamar then serves as a model of resistance of aspects of colonial oppression in her own context. It is important to be aware of the effects of colonialism on subjugated

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[19] Brett and Heard who explore the ambiguity of the narratives in the final text of Genesis from an ideological viewpoint assume that the final edition of Genesis probably took place in the Persian period (Heard cited in Brett 2008:120).

individuals who struggle to survive and claim their identity. Southern African theologian Musa Dube argues, for example, that in dealing with postcolonial literature, one's concern should be directed towards national forms of oppression that confront men and women (Dube 2006:147). However, she acknowledges that the international forms of oppression affect both men and women.

On the issue of oppression, I will refer to the work of Freire (2005) which problematizes the notion of hybridity (one of the central categories in postcolonial criticism) by showing that, when the oppressed eventually claim back their liberation, they are never the same again. Freire infers that liberation often leaves traces of brokenness in the oppressed making them liable to being oppressors themselves. It is thus important to acknowledge that even though the experience of oppression creates a different individual, the process of negotiating one's identity within a life-denying space has major implications for the person one becomes in the battle for survival.

Consequently, I will show that a postcolonial feminist approach to the Tamar story offers helpful perspectives in understanding the Zulu women's experiences in marriage. In Chapter 3, I have shown that Tamar experienced oppression and abuse within the marital setting which is comparable to the fate of many women in my Zulu context. This chapter will also show that the strategies of resistance employed by Tamar could prove helpful in probing the injustices faced by Zulu women and point to ways that could help them to emerge as survivors in efforts to resist subjugation at the hands of the empire. As such, Tamar's experience serves as a mirror to Zulu women and to expose the injustices that confront them.

In order to achieve the aims of the previous paragraph, Chapter 4 will follow the same logic and order of Chapter 3 where the story of Tamar was read through an African feminist lens. As such, an overview of "postcolonial approach" and "postcolonial biblical interpretation" will be offered as well as the appropriation of the method by African scholars, specifically, African female theologians. In a postcolonial reading of the Tamar story which will again be brought into conversation with the plight of infertile married Zulu women (see Chapters 2 and 3 above), the different key themes or foci of postcolonial theory will be applied to the text to help understand the situation of Tamar and of contemporary Zulu women.

One should note that in some ways, Chapter 4 builds upon Chapter 3 in the sense that it reveals further levels of meaning in the text. While Chapter 3 focuses its attention on the actions of individual characters, Chapter 4 turns its attention to a broader scope in terms of

nationality, subjected groups and the further implications that also emerge from such a textual perspective. This broader focus also connects with the discrimination many people in South Africa experienced in the form of apartheid which was a direct outflow of colonisation. The subjugation that the Canaanites experienced under the rule of Israelites offers a point of connection with the reality of Zulu people under an apartheid regime.

Before turning to a definition of postcolonial theory, the imperial background of Genesis 38 warrants brief consideration.

4.2.   The Imperial Context of Genesis 38

In his attempt to show the spirit of colonialism that is foregrounded in biblical literature, Brett (2008:7) admits that the biblical text is a colonising discourse that was constructed by individuals who emerged from imperial contexts. Therefore, it is conceivable that national power dynamics would be at play as they composed the text. Barr (1980:268) confirms that the Bible contains multiple political images, and Ogden (cited in Brett 2008:179) points readers to the harsh reality that the biblical text is not fundamentally based only on religion, but also a discourse that involves cultural, political and economic matters within which religion is embedded. Many texts in the biblical texts are found to be informed by the imperial paradigm, and in the story of Judah and Tamar as told in Genesis 38, one encounters similar political, cultural and economic powers at play, which we shall closely investigate based on the historical background of the book of Genesis.

The Pentateuch is the work of various authors from different periods of history. Genesis, the first of the five books, can be described as a book of genealogies. Ska (2006:24) states that in ancient times, genealogies were used to legitimise the privilege of a certain group and people over another. Further, Genesis is a book that is centred on patriarchal genealogy, specifically, the patriarchal concern for the survival of the lineage and the promise of land (Ska 2006:24). In Genesis, there is an intertwining thread that links those who are chosen to inherit the land and those who are excluded from this blessing. From the book of beginnings, one encounters discrepancies in power relations between nations and a God who is used to validating the interests of those in power. Indeed, as Brett has noted, the setting of Genesis was also under a colonial regime (Brett 2008:45).

It goes without saying that many scholars recognise that the writers of the patriarchal narratives portray Israel as the chosen nation (Marttila 2012:36). Schwartz (1998:10) attributes this preoccupation of scholars with uncovering Israel's collective identity to a German nationalism which emerged around the same time that the historical critical method gained grounds. The ideology of Israel's chosen-ness is particularly seen in the way Israel interacted with people of other nations such as Canaanites, Amalekites, Midianites, among others (Marttila 2012:36), and the ideology set the tone for xenophobia and violence (Schwartz 1998:11). Moreover, these surrounding nations were portrayed deliberately in a negative light by biblical authors who wrote in various texts that it was "a customary command that Israelites annihilate them" (Marttila 2012:36)[20]. Such ideology of exclusion and anti-foreignness by Israel is also observed in the Tamar and Judah narrative although not many scholars pay attention to this dynamic. The fact that Judah was an Israelite and Tamar a Canaanite thus has significant implications for the direction the story takes. The story is told from the Judahite perspective and it forces Tamar to participate in the establishment of an empire. Even though Judah married a Canaanite woman[21], he operated with a colonial mentality that subjugated and violated the non-Israelite Tamar. Judah's marriage to a Canaanite woman is problematic since the foreign woman has always been stereotyped as dangerous, seductive, and promiscuous (Pui-lan 2005:110). However, does it mean that the Canaanite women, Tamar and Shua's daughter whom Judah and his sons married were free of the negative stereotype?

Schwartz (cited in Pui-lan 2005:116) regards the "history in the Hebrew Bible as a series of discontinuities, ruptures and incoherencies", which may lead to the conclusion that Genesis is a book of contrasts. However, the book of Genesis also consists of individual oral traditions woven together to form a coherent ongoing story (Towner 2001:5). The stories are a form of oral tradition which were meant not to prove Israel's history but to contribute to the shaping of social identity. By commemorating the past and using the stories in Genesis in a symbolic fashion, the mythic past is used to understand and legitimatise the present (Bailey 2013:42). Furthermore, it suggests that Israel probably wished to reconstruct a present identity through the collective representations of its past and state symbolically what it believed and wanted

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[20] What is interesting to note about this division of nations is the ideology of the oppressor versus the oppressed that it promotes. Brett (2008:42-43) compares this ideology which has shaped the biblical canon with European modernism and colonialism.

[21] Up till that point, marrying a Canaanite was prohibited by the patriarchs in (Gen 24:3). Abraham forbade Isaac to marry a Canaanite (Gen 27:46; 28:1), while Isaac and Rebecca regretted Esau's marriage to a Canaanite woman and prevented Jacob from suffering the same fate as Esau (Brett 2008:77).

itself to be. Therefore, "this process of social reconstructed memory is dynamic and unceasing because it is woven into the ever shifting present" (Bailey 2013:48). However, Schwartz is suspicious of identity formation procedures, arguing that "the act of identity formation is an act of violence" by humanity because it involves, a separating of oneself from the other, boundary making and line drawing (Schwartz 1997:5).

The assumption is that the biblical text is guided fundamentally by an ideology of exclusion, which is also found to be dangerous because of its potential to shape the readers approach to the text. For instance, the same idea of being a covenant and chosen people or of being inheritors of a promised land was used by the West to justify the colonisation and annihilation of native peoples (Schwartz 1997: ix-x).

Gravett et al (2008:324) define ideology as a basic set of assumptions that describe the way reality operates, "the way things are". One could also think of ideology as a tool that could be used to establish what is normal. Keesmaat and Walsh (2014) argue that empires project a sense of all-embracing normality; "not only do empires want its subjects to think that reality is totally composed of the structures, symbols and systems that have been imperially constructed they moreover want us to believe that the future holds no more than a heightened realization of imperial hopes and dreams". Biblical authors therefore emphasised and supported the ideology of power by making it seem natural. Gravett et al (2008:325) assert that ideology is seldom contested because it makes certain social structures seem obvious and unquestionable.

It is against this backdrop that the biblical text can be viewed as the product of a series of political, economic and religious ideologies, inscribed by those in power. Brett (2008:61) asserts that the presence of the ideologies made the biblical concept of redemption largely intelligible. Readers hear the story of Tamar, for example, from the perspective of the Judahites, and one wonders how it would sound if told from the perspective of the excluded nations?

In the next section, a brief definition of colonisation will be presented in order to clarify the idea of the coloniser and of the colonised.

4.3.   A Brief History of Colonialism

In order to understand postcolonialism one first needs to come to terms with colonialism[22]. Colonialism is an ancient phenomenon whose roots extend beyond the European colonial age. According to Loomba (1998:20), colonialism can be defined as the conquest and the control of other people's land and goods with the purpose of settling in the land and exploiting it. Colonialism involves political, religious, cultural and economic conquests. Dube (2006:187) shows that the forms of colonialism may vary with spatial settings, but power remains the common thread. She further states that the power is used for ruling, for trading and to promote culture and ideology.

In postcolonial writing, terms such as "imperialism" and "colonialism" are often lumped together and tend to be used interchangeably. In this usage, the term imperialism means the practice, theory and attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory, whereas colonialism which is almost always a consequence of imperialism is the implanting of settlements on distant territory (Said 1993:8). Indeed, it is notable that throughout history, colonialism has been characterised by genocidal practices, torture of prisoners, rape and enslavement of indigenous populations (Dube 2006:149).

4.3.1.   Defining Postcolonialism

Tyagi asserts that "postcolonial" as a term suggests resistance to colonial power and its discourse which continue to shape various cultures (2014:2374). Part of the task of the postcolonial theory is taking a long historical look at both old and new forms of domination (Sugirtharajah 2006:6). This is not surprising as the vision of postcolonial approach lies in using the past to understand the shape taken by the present. Edward Said adds that it would be absolutely naïve to study the present without taking into consideration the role played by the coloniser in the past (cited in Hamadi 2014:41). Dube also rightly states that postcolonialism "describes the modern history of imperialism beginning with the process of colonialism through the struggles for political independence, the attainment of independence and to the contemporary neo-colonialist realities". Her statement shows that postcolonial theory identifies how colonialism continues to assert itself in the new millennium.

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[22] Colonialism is a policy of acquiring political control over another country, occupying it with settlers and exploiting it economically. Apartheid is a policy of segregation or discrimination on grounds of race. These two systems are different and yet very related to one another in that one is the repercussion of the other apartheid emerges from the system of colonialism (Patel 2011:72-73)

Postcolonial theory does not only recognise the repercussions of the colonial past; it also critiques imperial oppressions which are disguised in new forms.

Therefore, the postcolonial task can be understood as the discourse which enables interpreters to expose colonial realities and to focus on the imperialising practices involved in the creation of a colony. It is a creative literary and resistive approach that has emerged from the countries which are former colonies of Western empires (Berquist 2006:6). Postcolonial criticism can also be understood as a form of decolonisation, a resisting or revolutionary mechanism against oppressive imperial systems.

Important concepts in postcolonial theory include "hybridity" and "mimicry", described by Homi Bhabha as devices assumed by the colonised to respond to colonial regulation (Sugirtharajah 2006:9). These central concepts will be clarified in more detail and will be applied to the text under consideration later in this chapter. However, suffice it to say at this point that "hybridity" can be considered as an in-between position into which the colonised is transformed, and as a method of disrupting binaries enacted by the colonial mission (Segovia 2000:139). For Bhabha, the significant characters in a story are those that disregard the conventionality imposed by colonialism through mimicry and blending. For Bhabha, the state of "mimicry" is an ambiguous position of being in which the colonised is placed, and by mimicking the coloniser, stands the chance of subverting the coloniser. Spivak in her often quoted essay, "Can the Subaltern speak?", recovers the voices constructed in colonial texts, noting that the women's voices are "insurrectionary" (Spivak 1993:66).

A final important concept has to do with what James Scott refers to as hidden and public transcripts, which can be described as a form of resistive tools that are utilised by the colonised in the process of socialising with the coloniser. In the colonial space, power negotiations constantly take place between the coloniser and the colonised; therefore, when the level of intimidation becomes unbearable, the colonisers try to relieve themselves of threatening situations, by means of the abovementioned tools for claiming power.

4.4.   Understanding Postcolonial Feminist Biblical Interpretation

According to Tyagi (2014:23), postcolonial feminist theory is primarily concerned about the representation of women in previously colonised countries as well as in western territories. Critics such as Carol Boyce Davies are highly sceptical about postcolonial writers whose

theories are male-centred and overlook women's experience. She asks: "Where are the women in the theorizing of postcoloniality?" (2014:46).

Noteworthy to the study of postcolonialism is Dube's (2006:142) argument that postcolonial concerns should be directed towards national forms of oppression that confront men and women. She notes also that the international forms of oppression affect both men and women, and these should be problematized by also investigating the intersection between gender oppression and other forms of oppression that are based on class, race, ethnicity, age and sexual orientation, etc.

Kwok-Puilan (2005:9) writes that:

Postcolonial feminist interpretation of the Bible needs to investigate the development of gender in the narration of identity, the negotiation of power differentials between the colonisers and the colonised and the reinforcement of patriarchal control over spheres where these elites could exercise control.

Therefore, postcolonial biblical interpretation can be understood as a phenomenon that allows for a different interpretation of the biblical narratives from traditional interpretations. Key postcolonial writers include Judith McKinley, Kwok-Puilan and many others, but this study focuses primarily on African postcolonial feminists.

4.4.1.   Defining African Postcolonial Feminist Biblical Interpretation

Mosala (2006:135) asserts that the biblical text is a political document which played a major role in the apartheid system in South Africa, as it served as a tool of colonisation. Dube (2012:1) affirms that the phenomenon was not restricted to South Africa but was witnessed in many other parts of Africa as well. Phiri (2004:17) asserts that most of the liberation theologies in Africa including black theology and feminist theologies cover a wide range of concerns on the African continent, and they address the history of slavery and colonisation as well as cultural and spiritual imperialism.

Specifically, postcolonial feminist biblical interpreters from Africa are part of communities which emerged from colonised nations and reject the European nationalism and pietism which are deemed irrelevant to the hermeneutic quests of the indigenous nations or the realities of the women of the developing world (Dube 2006:142). From the above arguments,

it can be deduced that postcolonial scholars all have a similar goal, that is, to decolonise their respective contexts through literary means. Their main difference is the context from which they have emerged. African biblical feminists specifically take up the role of probing the realities of women's subjugation in Africa using the biblical text.

At this point, I would like to discuss the views of two African postcolonial feminist biblical interpreters namely Musa Dube and Dora Mbuwayesango.

4.4.2.   Key Figures in African Postcolonial Biblical Interpretation

4.4.2.1.   Musa Dube

Musa Dube is a Motswana feminist biblical scholar with Zimbabwean roots who has written extensively on aspects of biblical studies in Africa in a postcolonial context (Feder 2011:80). On the colonisation of Africa, Dube (2012:3) remarks that western colonial powers attributed to themselves the right to grab available pieces of Africa. The move created tension and competition amongst the colonial powers and resulted in the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 during which the African continent was divided amongst the major European powers. This was known as the scramble for Africa. However, African communities were left out of the decision making process. According to Dube, the participants in the Berlin Conference were all westerners – European traders and their missionaries. They resolved to enslave the people and take their land including its resources which would be used to empower and enlarge the western empire, while the rightful owners of the land would be left with little or no benefits.

Dube is one of the leading scholars that have employed postcolonial criticism in biblical interpretation in Africa. As a postcolonial feminist interpreter, Dube argues that the Bible can be considered an imperialistic tool as far as the subjects of the Two-Thirds World are concerned. She recalls the popular African saying: "When the white man came to our country he had the Bible and we had the land. The white man said to us, let us pray, after the prayer the white man had the land and we had the Bible" (Mofokeng 1988:34). The above adage captures the view that the biblical text was used to colonise a people and possess their land. Dube therefore presents a postcolonial reading of biblical texts which can liberate the readers from imperialistic oppression (Dube 2000:199)

Dube describes feminism as a worldwide political movement with many colours. She has noted that although women in general are oppressed by patriarchy, African women or rather women of the Two-Thirds world face double or triple oppression, that is, from patriarchal systems and different forms of colonialism or neo-colonialism (Dube 1999: 217 -228). It is in this light that Dube has interpreted biblical passages either to liberate women or expose the oppressive character of certain biblical texts (Dube 2001:324). Some texts view women as nameless except for their association with men, others associate women with sin, sickness and all forms of evil. Dube therefore employs a postcolonial feminist approach to biblical interpretation that seeks the liberation of African women who experience oppression both in the church and in the society at large.

Even though Dube reads the Bible through a feminist lens one should note that speaking of feminism in the African context is challenging since African women's experiences of patriarchy differ from the experiences of western feminists (Feder 2011:84). In this regard, Dube's approach of combining postcolonial interpretation with her feminist interests is helpful as it does justice to the experiences of Africans which are linked to colonialism. Her biblical reading strategies of liberation and decolonisation reflect the realities of her context, the veracities of apartheid suffered by the Africans as well as how these ramifications shape the lives of women and men. Thus, Dube proposes new and liberative ways of reading the biblical text by focusing on the representation of women in colonising texts because through the depictions, imperial features become evident.

Dube (2012:29) illustrates her reading with the story of Kimpa Vita which is helpful here in understanding Tamar's hybrid identity in her contextual space. As an outsider/insider, Tamar shifts from one identity to another, reminiscent of the life of Kimpa Vita cited by Musa Dube in her article "Talitha Cum Hermeneutics of Liberation: Some African Women's Way of Reading the Bible". As told by Dube, Kimpa Vita was a Congolese woman who was named Donna Beatrice after her Christian baptism. Kimpa Vita and the rest of her people were subjugated under foreign rule in terms of religion and culture, and were taught to despise all that represented the people's worldview. However, through her faith, Kimpa Vita crossed cultural boundaries and navigated between the worlds of the colonised and the coloniser. As will be shown later in this chapter, Tamar, as an outside/insider, shifts from one identity to another, which is reminiscent of the example of Kimpa Vita. Like Kimpa Vita who was both an insider and an outsider to the coloniser and the colonised, Tamar can be said to be "wearing and weaving a new multi-coloured coat of boundary crossing in that highly unequal

world" of the patriarchs (Dube 2012:30). Tamar exhibits a hybrid identity by belonging to her husband's culture and traditions by marriage whilst holding a cursed Canaanite nationality.

4.4.2.2.   Dora Mbuwayesango

Zimbabwean born Dora Mbuwayesango is an African postcolonial feminist interpreter who is committed to depatriarchalising and decolonising the biblical text through her writings. Mbuwayesango (quoted in Scholz 2007:113) expresses "the difficulty of the hermeneutical problems involved in supporting ordinary African women readers because colonisation is drenched in both religious and vernacular bible translations". She argues that there is a need for translations that are free of colonising indigenous concepts and belief systems.

For instance, reading the book of Joshua from her Zimbabwean and South African context where land invasion was a norm, Mbuwayesango (2004:72) examines the depiction of the ideology of a God who favours one nation over another, and shows how easy it is for the colonial nation to deny the dignity of the colonised other after acquiring their gold and silver. The act is nothing short of an imperial agenda whose goal is to exploit the colonised economically by using God to justify its claims. Mbuwayesango sees in this the danger of constructing a religious identity which is exclusive in character. I would argue that attributing the power of exclusion to God blurs the true religious agenda and reduces it to a colonial bias which also portrays God as being biased towards his creation. Mbuwayesango's goal therefore is to strip the text of the colonial burden and the bias of God.

In her article "The Joshua Illusion? Rethinking Genocide in the Bible" Mbuwayesango (2011:5) argues that the book of Joshua be used as an identity reconstruction book by the people of God by "acknowledging and making explicit the revulsion of its narrative". In other words, the image of God in the book needs to be decolonised so that the readers could encounter the story of Joshua in its true spiritual sense. In that way, the story will become more relevant to the people's lives and will no longer be a constant reminder of their colonial history. Furthermore, Mbuwayesango (2009) discusses the role of both Canaanite and Israelite women in her essay, "Canaanite Women and Israel Women in Deuteronomy: The Intersection of Sexism and Imperialism" in the book titled, Postcolonial Interventions: Essays in Honour of R. S. Sugirtharajah. She notes that colonialism potentially occurs at the intersection of sexism, as the Deuteronomic law codes normalise the male as property owners, whilst women in general and female sexuality in particular are assumed to be

properties of men. This assertion connects well with the roundtable discussion in Scholz (2013:32) in which Mbuwayesango reflects on "the need to correlate gender issues with persistent issues of imperialism, that is done merely for the reality of the fact that imperialism intersects, race, gender and class" (cited in Maier & Sharp 2014:32).

Having considered the views of these two African postcolonial feminists, the next section will show that some of the distinct terms used in postcolonial theory actually offer an interesting perspective to the reading of some of the key themes in Tamar's story in Genesis 38.

4.5.   Key Strategies of Postcolonial Resistance

4.5.1.   Hybridity

As noted earlier, one of the key concepts employed in postcolonial theory is "hybridity," which is described as a negotiation of identities. Bhabha's major contribution is the recognition of an intercultural space where hybrid identity is formed, a space of in-betweenness and liminality or the "Third Space" (cited in Jonker 2016:32). Hybridity implies that one neither belongs to the world of the coloniser or of the colonised but is in a third space of being. To enter the "third space" one generates a new sense of identity that may resemble the old identity but is not quite the same. Being in such a position means living in contradiction because one is never faithful to any of the real contexts that one is currently associated with. Hybridity gives birth to interculturalism because it mixes cultures making identity slippery as it cannot be pinned down to a certain ideal form.

Bhabha (1994:123) maintains that this adaptation of an in-between position by the colonised is meant to subvert the empire. However, Thomas (2000:9) contends that hybridity is a risky notion, and for Kuorti and Nyman (2007:1), "It is its ability to question what appears natural and complete, and problematize its boundaries". However, hybridity can also be seen as a positive construction, as a "site of transformation and change because of its power to question fixed identities. It is between the spaces that the colonised find forms of subversion as well as disruption for the colonisers' dictatorship script" (Jonker 2016:42).

In the story of Tamar, the main character can be understood in terms of a hybrid identity, as she wears the masks of both a Canaanite and a faithful wife to Israelite men. She lives in the "betwixt," which gives her enough power to betray and at the same time embrace a new culture that puts her at odds with normal existence. In the biblical text, it seems that the

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Israelite identity takes pride in "othering" non-Israelites. For example, Israel acknowledged that it is God's chosen nation, and its people maintained that mingling with other nations jeopardised their relationship with God. Tamar discovered the intensity of this exclusion through her marriage to an Israelite; and when she lost him to death, her outsider identity became most prominent. She chose when to belong and when to reject her adopted society's cultural demands. Her hybrid identity is evident when she played the harlot. Waiting for much too long for the cleansing ritual that would have signalled the end to her widowhood added to her pain and rejection. Therefore, she overturned all the rules that bound her to the Israelite code of law; she slipped out of the garment that identified her with Er and Onan and wore the mask of a prostitute.

4.5.2.   Mimicry

Kumar (2011:119) defines the term "mimicry" as the repetition of one species by another. In the act of mimicry, the colonised adopts and adapts to the culture of the coloniser, not through the simple act of copying but rather through disguise (De Jong-Kumru 2013:58). The adaptation of the coloniser's habits, language and ideas is known as mimicry. According to Bhabha (1994:121), the act of mimicking the coloniser results from a deliberate move by the empire to civilise the colonised but it is not realised because the colonised will never really become like the coloniser. Thus, mimicry is rightly described as repetition with difference. Furthermore, Bhabha contends that the issue of camouflaging should not be understood as harmonising with the background, but rather against the mottled background. It can also be understood as the use of the master's tool by the colonised to prove him wrong (De Jong-Kumru 2013:59). It is in the performances of mimicry that the pretentiousness of colonialism and imperialism are mocked and undermined. The colonised other find themselves new forms of resistive tools that will free them from the dominant structure.

However, the problem with mimicry is that it repeats rather than represents (Kumar 2011:120). One can also argue that the aim of the coloniser is to create lookalikes, and not advanced look-alikes, and failing to engage in mimicry also has its limitations. Again, if the aim is to raise suspicion by camouflaging, one risks being eliminated, and if on the other hand, it is to maintain an illusion of normality while exerting different modes of power, then one cannot raise suspicion. Bhabha (1994:126) sees mimicry as dangerous because of "its double vision in disclosing the contradiction of colonial discourse while interrupting its

authority". While it disguises as innocence, it has premeditated goals that would undermine the master.

Kumar (2011:118) agrees that the essence of mimicry is in the discrepancy; "It is a sign of double articulation a regulation and discipline which appropriates the other as it visualises power." Furthermore, mimicry adheres to the dominant strategic function of colonial power; it intensifies inspection while posing a looming threat to both normalised knowledge and disciplinary powers. Therefore, the effect of mimicking the colonial authority of colonial discourse is profound and at best troubling (Bhabha 1994:122). However, for colonial mimicry to continue to work, it must maintain this slippery quality which gives power to the colonised. Perhaps it is in living with this difference that the colonised would find new tools to attain self-liberation.

In Genesis 38, the character of Tamar can be viewed in relation to mimicry, for Tamar mimics Judah's method of trickery in order to resolve issues. In Genesis 38:15-16, Tamar clothed in a prostitute's garment seduced her father in-law who believed that he was approaching a prostitute, and did not realise it was his daughter-in-law. Judah had lied about bringing Tamar back to his household when Shelah came of age, but Tamar discovered that she had been tricked by Judah. Therefore, she also took matters into her own hands and lied about her identity. Disguised as a prostitute, she tricked Judah into engaging in sexual intercourse with her. In this way, Tamar mimicked Judah's trickery; she reclaimed power by taking it from Judah's hands. After she conceived, Judah was compelled to allow her to return to his homestead.

4.5.3.   Hidden versus public transcripts

By reading Tamar in the light of her hybrid identity and her focus on surviving her difficult circumstances, I wish to uncover elements of resistance what James Scott has described as "hidden and public transcripts" (Scott 1990:4) which may offer some liberating possibilities to Zulu women. Scott asserts that the idea of public and hidden transcripts is a shorthand way of describing the open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate them. This implies that hidden and public transcripts are used as modes of power negotiation between the coloniser and the colonised.

According to Scott (1990:3), the greater the disparity in power between the dominant and the subordinate and the more arbitrarily it is exercised, the more the public transcripts of the subordinates will take on a stereotyped ritualistic cast. Higher intimidation provokes intense disguise. Furthermore, the subordinates usually will enact characteristics of safeguard and accord while discerning the intent of the power holder. Thus, public transcript is also a dangerous inaction since it places the subordinate on the threshold.

In contrast, if public transcript is a discourse of the subordinate in the presence of the dominant, then, hidden transcript is a discourse that takes place off stage, beyond direct observation by power holders of the colonised world (Scott 1990:4). According to Scott (1990:10), the hidden transcript involves offstage speech acts, gestures and practices that confirm contradict or inflect what appears in the public transcripts. An alternative claim, nearly a logical image of the first, is that those obliged by domination to carry a mask will eventually find that their faces have grown to fit that mask. Even though the weak have compelling reasons to seek refuge behind a mask when in the presence of power, the powerful also have their own compelling reasons for adopting a mask in the presence of subordinates. There are however two differences – if a slave transgresses the script, he risks a beating, but the powerful only risk ridicule. Scott concludes that the two transcripts are a site of struggle between the dominant and the subordinate. This implies that transcripts keep the negotiation of power going; no stabilisation is attained by either the dominant or the subordinate.

In Tamar's story therefore, hidden transcripts are evident in the concealment of her identity when waiting for Judah on the road to Timnah. She had secret information that Judah would pass that route, and because he had lost his wife, he would not refuse a prostitute's offer. Therefore, by lying with her father-in-law, she found a way to be reinstated back into the family. Reading the story as a public transcript, we see Tamar display the characteristics of the accused daughter-in-law. She plays along with her father-in-law knowing all along that she has a trump card that she would use against him. Judah thus fulfilled the role of the power holder while Tamar on the surface endured the victimisation meted out by him, only to subvert it publicly when she displayed his cord, seal and staff.

d) Silence as resistance

According to Malhotra et al (2013:7), silence "emerges as a threshold between presence and absence and as intimately tied to agency and resistance". Therefore, we may interpret Tamar's silence in vv. 7-11 ironically, as an act of resistance rather than of submission. Silence is viewed as an embodied action in the world by some feminist authors like Yafeh-Deigh (2012:431), while some other feminists such as Bell hooks reject the idea of silence as a resistive agent, arguing that it is a negative tool that keeps resistors in defeated positions (cf. Roberts 2000:347). Nonetheless, silence is also seen as a positive embodiment because it births possibility (Malhotra and Rowe 2013:2). Due also to silence's binary position to speech, it is seen as an oppressive state of being (Yafeh-Deigh 2012:430), and many worlds regard it as a victimisation of the state of being. However, it has been observed that in many situations, silence has been used as a power tool for dominating others (Wagner 2012:19).

However, in postcolonial studies, silence is regarded as resistance of colonisation (McCormarck 1997:1), which is captured by Spivak's (1993:26) question, "Can the subaltern speak?" The answer is, indeed they can, and even though their modes of expression differ from the norm, and their speech comes through silence, subalterns do speak. Silence in this form is seen as an active embodiment rather than a sign of oppression. Silence is a political assertion and for silenced individuals, it is a power attainment strategy. Malhotra and Rowe (2013:2) concludes that the "figure of the subaltern gaining voice captures the political imagery that might be demanded of those in positions of power to learn to listen to subaltern inscriptions." Therefore, silence can be understood as a space of fluidity, of non-linearity and as a sacred, internal space that provides a refuge, especially for subordinate people.

I have explained the important themes of postcolonialism above in view of the different identities and strategies employed by the colonised within a colonised space. I shall continue the reading of the story of Tamar through a postcolonial lens.

4.6.   A Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of Tamar

Scholars are divided on how to judge the actions of Tamar in Genesis 38. Is she a seductress, the loyal widow or the yearning womb (Collins 2009:11)? Due to the various portrayals, it appears that Tamar's character has been misrepresented. Judith McKinlay argues that characters in biblical stories play "puppet to the narrators, in that they seem to say what the

narrator wants them to say, the narrator makes decisions for them, coordinating great persuasion so that the readers may nod in acceptance and applaud, the reader leaves the text satisfied with the resolution" (McKinlay 2004: vii).

A postcolonial reading of the story of Tamar shows her as a "subaltern" in Judah's household. When using a postcolonial lens, some of the questions that the reader could pose are as follow: Does Tamar play the narrator's puppet due to the misrepresentation of her character, and is the narrator speaking for or against Tamar concerning the dilemma that she experienced in the story? Judging from the commentators, Tamar has indeed been misrepresented as a "dangerous harlot". She is the subaltern and one wonders if she was given the platform to speak, what would she say?

A postcolonial approach is helpful for reading the story of Tamar because it exposes the elements of oppression and subjugation which are tools usually employed by the empire/coloniser. Through the character of Judah the Israelite, and Tamar the Canaanite, one encounters two nations at odds with each other. The insider/outsider dynamics evident in the narrative can be problematized with the insider Judah, an Israelite exercising power to subjugate the outsider/other, Tamar a Canaanite. Judah, the coloniser, exercises power over Tamar by oppressing her. Tamar, the colonised, is silent, shamed, and stripped of comfort and dignity, aggravating her vulnerability.

Postcolonial discourse is characterised by its resistance to empires which are known for producing hybrid identities "through modulating networks of command" (Chung 2010:22). It is thus no surprise that the narrative of Judah and Tamar also depicts the juxtaposition of the exercise of power by those in control as well as resistance from those who are subjugated. The kind of power found in this narrative is domination which is known as "power over". A reading of the characters in the plot of Genesis 38 shows that Judah is the one who exerts power over the Canaanite woman Tamar. As an Israelite descendant, Judah's colonising and patriarchal background is of great interest in our attempt to expose the active powers that subjugate, oppress and objectify Tamar.

According to Allen (1999:7), feminists have shown that power is a crucial concept that is worthy of scrutiny because it stands at the intersection of gender, race, class and sexuality. Allen further stresses that the binary is political in that masculinity and femininity are distinguished from freedom and subjection. Therefore, to be free is to be masculine whereas

to be in subjection is a feminine trait, and according to this view of power as domination, to be a woman is to be powerless and to be a man is to be powerful.

Pateman (in Allen 1999:13) adds that by virtue of their male gender, men have dominance over women. Furthermore, Amy Allen (1999:14) asserts that in Dworkin's view of power, some privileges have been ascribed to men since they exercise some kind of power over women in various aspects of life such as in the social, economic, political or physical arena. However, as Foucault has argued, wherever power is exerted, resistance takes shape (Grosz 1990:90).

With this in mind, a postcolonial feminist reading of Genesis 38 will reveal the oppression suffered by the female character Tamar in the patriarchal and imperial act that is played out within the marital realm. Furthermore, it is important to note that in that context of domination, Tamar employs different modes of resistance to ensure the restoration of her dignity as a woman and a mother in the society.

4.6.1.   Colonial oppression in the story of Tamar

As already mentioned in this chapter, postcolonial criticism is a helpful tool in reading Genesis 38, as it helps to unveil the hidden ambiguities that are overlooked by patriarchal and colonising approaches to the text. Dube stresses that it is crucial that feminist scholars do not blur the lines between patriarchy and colonialism/imperialism since the two are associated with issues that affect both the coloniser and the colonised. However, patriarchy should not be mistaken for empire nor should empire be mistaken for patriarchy (2006:148). The difference between the two is namely that imperialism oppresses both men and women while patriarchy oppresses only women. Consequently, I shall attempt to show that the Tamar narrative as told in Genesis 38 contains both patriarchal and imperialistic elements.

4.6.2.   Judah's family – the colonisers

A central feature of Turner's (2009) commentary on Genesis is its search for intertextual connections in the book. The author demonstrates that the Genesis stories seldom reach resolution in their own individual plots, but depend on subsequent stories to attain resolution. A reading forward while looking at the events gone before may be important therefore in reading the present narrative in its larger literary context. This approach of seeking intertextual connections is quite helpful to the reading of the story of Judah and Tamar in

Genesis 38, as it exposes the imperial ideology and its oppressive methods of subjugating the weak in the society through a careful picking of its threads from the preceding stories.

Patriarchy and imperialism have been identified as forms of power over another. Cooper-White (cited in Thatcher 2011:26) contends that the idea of having "power-over" necessitates domination and subjugation. As can be expected, domination thrives on violence or the threat of violence in order to maintain itself. The story of Judah and Tamar occurs in an imperial context which is characterised by various strategies of conquest that include occupation, intimidation, dispossession and cultural assimilation (Dube 2006:145).

In Genesis 37, which serves as part of the literary context of the story, it is established in the first verse that Jacob and his family had settled in Canaan. Hamilton (1995:405) notes that for Isaac, Canaan was a place of sojourning, a place of temporary stay, while for Jacob it was a place of settlement which connotes permanence. At play in the story is Israel's colonising ideology which involved taking possession of foreign geographical space, acquiring the women and oppressing the men in the land (Dube 2006:148). Thus, the plot of Genesis 37 is about Jacob's sons who engage in actions of deception that would cause division in the family (Bosworth 2008:37). Earlier in Genesis 34:13-17, Jacob's sons had succeeded also in deceiving the men of Shechem which resulted in the annihilation of men and the abduction of the women and children. The latter act of deception by Jacob's sons is seemingly balanced by the fact that their sister Dinah was violated (Jeansonne 1990:94). However, the retribution is portrayed in the text as an unjust crime. In an honour and shame cultural paradigm, the violation of Dinah is viewed as shame on the family. As Kirk-Duggan (2003:32) points out, even though the harm was done to Dinah, she was not the only one harmed, Jacob and his sons were also harmed. In a sense, their honour was challenged because the rape painted them as irresponsible protectors.

Focusing on the central aspects of postcolonial biblical interpretation, that is, "God, Gold and Glory," Dube (2006:145) argues that the "territory of a nation not only constitute a physical piece of land but also contains the economic and cultural resources of a people." Furthermore, the conquered subjects in this scenario are stripped of territory, political as well as economic and cultural power, as demonstrated by those who chose to surrender (Dube 2006:146). Dube illustrates this ideology with the book of Judith in which the subjugated nations say, "we the servants of Nebuchadnezzar the great king, lie prostate before you, do with us whatever you will… our towns and their inhabitants are also your slaves, come and

deal with them as you see fit…" (Judith 3:1-8). This implies that, often, subjugated people do not wish to put up a fight; rather, they surrender willingly because they know that resistance might bring about a violent response.

In a similar fashion, in Genesis 34:16, Jacob's sons promise that should the Hivites become circumcised, "we will dwell with you and become one people". However, after agreeing to be assimilated into the Israelite culture, the Hivite men were all killed, and their children and women were captured (Jeansonne 1990:94). The above act is indicative of colonialism. Loomba (2015:105) explains that the specific ways of seeing and representing racial, cultural and social difference were essential elements to the establishment of colonial institutions of control. The subjugation of people in a region through violence and abduction can be described as an act of imperialism (Berquist 2006:79). As colonisers, the Israelite world is governed by specific relations of the powerful to the powerless (Kharbe 2009:426). Colonisation was achieved by instigating fear and by killing their victims randomly (Dube 2006:147).

The initial unit of Genesis 37:1-11 introduces Jacob and his family, but focuses on the relationship between Joseph and his father. Joseph was elevated above his brothers because of his father's special love for him (Hamilton 1995:407). A look at the dynamics of the relationship among siblings and between the father and his sons shows tension. The plot of the Joseph story becomes complex in Genesis 37:12-36 where in a dramatic tension, his brothers sold him off to Egypt, and reduced Joseph's status to that of a slave. Latvus (2006:190) contends that amongst other things the imperial power is articulated through the deportation of certain groups or individuals. Latvus (2006:187) also remarks that power is at the heart of colonialism. Durant (1999:6) sees power as the capacity to control or influence the behaviour or attitudes of others. By selling him, Joseph's brothers demonstrated power over their sibling; they reduced him to the level of a disposable object (Bales 2012:4). According to Latvus (2006:190), deportation is one of the various expressions of imperialism, while slavery is described as a way of maintaining social control (Durant 1999:11). Control is used essentially on anyone who proves problematic. The brothers' deed caused their father Jacob much grief, and he refused to be comforted. Paradoxically, the Jacob who was known to be a deceiver was now deceived by his own sons (Jeansonne 1990:94).

The narrative of Judah and Tamar interrupts the story of Joseph by adapting its own distinct plot. It does not seem to continue from the previous plot begun by Joseph and his brothers.

Rather, it appears to be oblivious of what happened before in Genesis 37. However, it does continue and brings into a new context the tradition of imperialism found in the previous chapter. Judah the brother of Joseph is now on the centre stage as a coloniser. In the chapter, we also encounter the story of a childless widow who employed counter-trickery in order to have a son for her dead husband in Genesis 38. Viewed in the light of previous chapters, it is clear that the character of Judah in Genesis 38 emerged from an imperial context of prestige, subordination and power. McKenzie (2010:68-69) remarks that scholars have discovered that the Genesis stories are eponymous in nature. An eponymous ancestor is a character (usually a hypothetical one) who embodies and represents the group of people, nation or clan that bears his name. Thus, the character of Judah in the story represents the kingdom of Judah which later produced the dynasty of David, implying that his actions in this story carry serious repercussions for the turn of events in the future.

4.6.3.   Judah, an Israelite coloniser?

Features of a coloniser can be traced in the character of Judah which might have been shaped by his previous involvement with his brothers in the Shechem episode, and later when they sold Joseph to slavery. In Genesis 38, Judah's individual tactics confirm the traits of the coloniser outlined above.

As in chapter 37, the setting of Genesis 38 is also established early in the first verse, "And it came to pass at that time" (38:1). This reference shows a connection to the ending of chapter 37, as it reports that some time had passed since the previous event in which one brother was sold off to Egypt and their father was deceived into thinking that he was dead. In Genesis 38:1, Judah lived separate from his brothers. His geographical location is also revealed; Judah had chosen to settle in Adullam, a distance away from his family, that is, his brothers and father. Dube's (2006:148) observation that the targeted lands of the colonised are often under the leadership of men seems to ring true here. Judah settled in Canaan where he met a man called Hirah, which could imply that Judah's new location was a patriarchal setting ruled by men. It is possible that Judah found a piece of land to occupy through his collaboration with Hirah. It can be inferred from the story that Judah's relocation from a setting in which he was surrounded by family to a foreign setting portrays him as a colonising character. This inference follows the comment by Jeansonne (1990:100) that residing in Canaan was in every way a political move by Judah because his relocation was not out of necessity.

In this new background, Judah saw the daughter of a certain Canaanite. Verse 2 reports that, "he saw… he took…. and went into … the daughter of Shua." Firstly, Judah violated the family norms by marrying a Canaanite woman (Brett 2008:77). Westermann (1986:51) explains that the fact that no one complained about Judah's action when Genesis 24 already expresses disapproval with marriage to Canaanites suggests that Genesis 38 must have been an early inscription or that different authorship may be assigned to both chapters. However, it is through Genesis 24 which rules out the idea of marrying Canaanites that we observe the dynamics in Genesis 38 (Turner 2009:166). The prohibition of intermarriage was due to the complications that developed whenever Israel's norms intersected with those of another people (Jeansonne 1999:100). It has been argued that the gathering of data on non-Israelite lands and the classification of people in various ways served as a means of social control (Loomba 2015:105). Spina (2005:36) argues that Judah did not only pursue economic and social interests but also had highly personal agendas.

Nonetheless, by entering Canaan and taking himself Shua's daughter, Judah gave himself unlimited access to another nation and its resources (Dube 2006:145). Edwards and Skinner (2006:26) explains that this is because an empire is an entity that has no boundaries. Considering also the stereotypical issue of foreign women who were seen as dangerous, seductive and lustful (Pui-lan 2005:117), one wonders what could have changed about these women that made Judah choose to settle in their land. Secondly, it appears also that Judah's entry into Canaan was a "script about the domestication of the promised land of Canaan" (Dube, cited in Pui-lan 2005:117).

Moreover, Bechtel (1997:237) asserts that societies that operate an honour hierarchy determined the degree of authority held over subjects such as by parents over children or husbands over wives. Therefore, by making marital choices for his sons, Judah reinforced his authority over the adult men in his home (Aschkenasy 1998:81). In v. 6, it is said that Judah took a wife for Er namely Tamar, a Canaanite. In the context of colonisation, colonised relations are sometimes enacted using the bodies of women who are vulnerable to being taken by foreign men (Pui-lan 2006:82). In this regard, Dube (2006:76) acknowledges that "once the woman is met her affections won, then the land she represents will be entered and domesticated by the coloniser, or is at least available for the taking of the coloniser if so desired." Dube considers this an ideology that presents the targeted groups as women, as people who require and beseech domination.

However, for some unexpected reasons, God put Er to death, and Judah commanded Onan to go into his brother's wife, Tamar, in order to preserve the family lineage. Onan refused to perform his duty, as he chose to spill his semen on the ground. Serene Jones (2000:86) identifies the lack of decision making as a form of oppression which is regarded as powerlessness. Clearly, Judah acted alone when it came to decision making, placing his sons in the social exclusion category, which Byrne (1998:22) defines as a multidimensional process whereby various forms of exclusion are combined, for example, being excluded from decision making processes. However, regarding both Tamar and Judah's wife, their Canaanite identity can be understood in terms of Spivak's idea of the subaltern. Her often quoted phrase, "the subalterns cannot speak, because they can only be represented by others" (Spivak 2012:248), seems to describe the situation of these two women. Tamar and Shua's daughter were subalterns who seldom express their ideas and or desires; they were unlike Israelite women whose voices and opinions were heard in some of the events in Genesis narratives.

Due to the fear that Shelah could die if he married Tamar, Judah then asked Tamar to return to her father's house until Shelah was grown. The narrator had hidden from the audience the existence of Tamar's father until the time that Judah needed to get rid of Tamar (Aschkenasy 1998:82). Judah did not involve him in the discussion about his daughter's possible marriage to Shelah; he was non-existent. This confirms Dube's (2006:149) claim that colonial lords undermined the patriarchs of the lands they colonised, and implies that imperial oppression does not respect gender; both men and women are its victims.

Looking back at the narrative preceding the Tamar story, one finds that Judah in a way repeated his actions in chapter 37, when he and his brothers dispossessed Joseph of his coat and sold him into slavery. Such actions have some colonial connotations. However, he decided to send Tamar home because she had become a threat to his household. In the story of Ruth and Orpah, sending the two women back to their mothers' houses was justified because Naomi had lost everything including prestige, source of income and influence, and she could not think of how to get a levir that would provide security for their future. Ironically, in Tamar's case, Judah was a wealthy and influential man, yet, he sent Tamar off to her father's house (Aschkenasy 1998:82).

Clearly, enough time had elapsed for Judah to call Tamar back in order to marry Shelah. Tamar who was deceived by Judah now turned around to deceive him by putting on the

garment of a prostitute, and led him to mistake her for a prostitute (Gen 38:15). After he went in to her, she took his seal, cord and staff as security. When Judah sent a goat to Tamar in v.20 to redeem his pledge, she was nowhere to be found. Interestingly, Joseph's brothers dipped Joseph's garment in the blood of a goat in Genesis 37:31 in order to deceive Jacob into believing that Joseph was killed. Thus, the goat in either narrative serves as an instrument of deception. Tamar used a goat as a tool of negotiation that would reveal Judah's identity in Genesis 38.

Again in v.25, Tamar asked Judah to identify his identity markers and his answer was positive (v.26). That verse is analogous to Genesis 37:32-33, in which Jacob's sons asked the father to identify Joseph's coat and Jacob did identify it. According to Chia (2006:179), resisting colonial rule always places life in jeopardy. However, in the passage of time, Tamar finally conceived twin boys and secured her status in the family. A reading of the text while looking backwards shows that Judah repeated his actions in chapters 34 and 37 in Genesis 38. Thus, Tamar's deception of the deceiver was justified because she was only imitating the actions of her oppressor (Lockwood 1992:36). However, what is shocking is that the Canaanite community in Adullam had submitted to the Israelite culture because it was willing to help Judah burn its own, for playing the harlot (v24)! Mosala (2006:139) contends that "the oppressed must be seen to have bought heavily into the dominant ideology in order for their survival to find approval." Moreover, assimilation is said to be the coloniser's ploy after conquest.

The narrative highlights the point that deception is a weapon that the deceiver employs to subjugate its subjects; it serves to advance the deceiver's political or economic motives. In the story of Tamar, Judah deceived Tamar by sending her home with no intention of giving her to his youngest son, Shelah. The act renders Tamar vulnerable and without a home, and she was forced to be under her father again. In the following logic of reading the Tamar story forward while reading back, one also finds interesting similarities between Tamar's deception and the story in Genesis 12:10-20 in which the patriarch Abraham (Abram) deceived Pharaoh into believing that Sarah was his sister. Although Abraham benefitted economically from the deception, it was at the detriment of Sarah's body which suffered violation (McKinlay 2004:121). Thus, it appears that Israelite men had the tendency to use whatever resource was at their disposal to negotiate power including human beings which could be close kin.

In the following paragraph, I wish to consider closely the experiences of Shua as a coloniser's wife in the house of the coloniser she was married to.

4.6.4.   The coloniser's wife

Segregation is regarded as a common political strategy of the coloniser that is used to divide and rule (Chia 2006:175). In other words, the selection of the best candidates from the colonised nation serves the interest of the empire and it is evident in the idea of using certain people for certain tasks while designating others to perform tasks that are less pleasant. Another interesting observation is that "the coloniser expects the colonised to become like them, implying that they must rid themselves of the inferior cultural habits, in order to be elevated to the culture of the coloniser" (Jonker 2016:31). In the Tamar narrative, distinction is made between the two Canaanite women. Shua's daughter assumed the position of a colonising woman because she was more favoured than Tamar. In a society where a woman was recognised only when she had a child, Judah's wife, unlike the childless Tamar, proved to be an ideal of procreation, as she fulfilled the cultural norms and expectations (Anderson 2009:36). In a sense therefore, Judah's wife was worthy because she had played a significant role in the establishment of the empire (Pui-lan 2005:107). The empire was flourishing through her, while Tamar was unproductive. The female colonisers are usually protected and sheltered and they seem to share the glory of their men (Dube 2005:151). Judah's wife is portrayed in a good light by the narrator; her wellbeing is stable and protected. She is much like Ruth who Donaldson (2006:168) says moved from savagery to civilization as she abandoned her ethnic and cultural identity.

Furthermore, Shua's daughter received the honour of naming her last two sons (Spina 2005:39), which is seen as a symbol of power and authority (Thatcher 2011:24). The privilege of naming the babies detracts from the level of power and prestige attributed to the wife of Judah by the narrator. Chia (2006:176) adds that the significance of naming is not necessarily in the name but in the authority of the powerful.

When Judah sent Tamar home to her father's house (v.11), he was stripping her of every right and opportunity to bear a son (Newsom & Ringe 1998:26). Judah's wife remained silent through every ordeal experienced by Tamar. She must have seen Tamar oppressed but she never spoke out against the oppression. Dube (2006:150) contends that the silence of the female colonisers is always too obvious. In this narrative, the audience was not oblivious of

the silence, and the text hardly mentions that Judah's wife showed any concern for Tamar. However, Shua's daughter is not the only woman who traded her people for personal comfort or gain. For example, in Joshua 2, Rahab the non-Israelite is seen crossing the Us/Other boundary to serve the imperial agenda (McKinlay 2004:51). One interesting question that McKinlay (2004:56) asks is, what happens to women who refuse to serve the Israelite cause? For Donaldson (2006:167), Orpah in Ruth 1 connotes hope rather than perversity for not rejecting her traditions or sacred ancestors, and this view could help one to appreciate Tamar's position. Furthermore, the silence of Judah's wife as a coloniser's wife could also imply that she did not have a voice in the household, and she could have been held at a distance for being a Canaanite.

Following the above analysis of Judah's wife's as a coloniser's wife, we shall examine the experiences of the colonised men, who were subjugated by the coloniser.

4.6.5. The colonised Canaanite men

A reading of Genesis 38 through an African postcolonial feminist lens enables one to view the two Canaanite men Hirah and Shua as colonised men (vv.1-2). Hirah and Shua had connections with Judah. Hirah was Judah's friend and he probably helped Judah to settle down in Canaan (v.1), which recalls Dube's (2006:146) point that in colonised lands, the colonised men usually grant the coloniser access to the land and its resources, possibly for personal gain. Later in the story, (v.20) Judah sent Hirah to find the prostitute he had slept with, which could mean that he sent one of his colonised men to help cover his shame. Chia (2006:174) notes that it is ironic that the narrator presents the coloniser as trustworthy and honourable. This means that Judah could not be degraded; he could not be seen delivering the promised goat to the prostitute because that would be demeaning to him. Interestingly, Tamar's father could also be counted amongst the colonised males in Canaan, since Judah had the audacity to send Tamar home after being married to his two sons without informing her father. There appears to be no mutual respect between Judah and Tamar's father.

In "Some Place to Cry: Jephthah's Daughter and the Double Dilemma of Black Women in America," Valerie Cooper explores the masculinity of marginalised men in her community through the story of Jephthah (Judg 11), who though an Israelite was marginalised and

rejected for being the son of a prostitute (Cooper 2003:186). Jephthah was in exile in Tob, outside of Judah's sphere of influence. He grew up outside the context of the centralised worship of Yahweh, and he was denied the economic security and status that landholding afforded Israelite men. In the story of Judges 11, one sees a man deprived of voice in political and social spaces, a man with bruised masculinity who made a foolish vow to sacrifice his own daughter for the sake of honour. Jephthah's ticket to the inner circle cost him his daughter.

Likewise, the text does not show that the Canaanite men in Genesis 38 resisted the injustice that Judah meted out on the women of their community. Even when Judah commanded that Tamar be burnt, the community simply ignored such an atrocious act without any sign of protest. It is assumed that the role players in the burning of Tamar were mostly men. This implies that marginalised men are usually easily swayed to commit atrocious acts against their own kind, in order to curry favour with the coloniser. However, Freire (2005:47) has argued that quite often, the oppressed themselves tend to become oppressors because they have lived under human dehumanising conditions for so long that their thought patterns cannot but take the shape of that of the oppressor. Cooper (2003: 186) also observes such realities in her own African-American context, where men are denied social, economic and political power, and their women become the target of violence to gain the kind of masculinity that they are denied. South African men especially Zulu men are not exempt from this behaviour.

Following the analysis of the behaviour of the colonised Canaanite men above, it is also helpful to consider the decolonising acts of Tamar who as a Canaanite woman resisted the threats from the power holders of an Israelite household.

4.6.6.   Tamar as a decolonising agent

The narrator depicts the character of Tamar as a woman who found herself in a colonised environment. McKinlay (2004:47) asserts that Rahab was created as the "Other" in order to provide the "Us" of Israel with an identity, and it seems that Tamar suffered the same fate. Tamar is in the same class as women such as Orpah (in Ruth 1) and Jezebel (1 Kings 16:31). The imperial setting requires the individuals to either surrender to the imperialism or suffer death (Dube 2006:149). Tamar was ushered onto the scene when Er needed a wife, and Judah took her as wife for Er. When Er died, Onan went into her according to the levirate custom.

However, Onan spilled his seed so that Tamar would be unable to conceive. Based on Deuteronomy 25:7-10, it is clear that Tamar had the power invested in her by law to expose Onan's action but she chose not to. Rather, she remained silent and obedient perhaps due to the fear of being thrown out of Judah's family. Tamar kept quiet probably also because she realised that she had little power to resist all the suggested options regarding her future. Without any protest, Tamar then accepted Judah's orders (Spina 2005:43) to go and "remain a widow in your father's house" (Gen 38:11). It is interesting to note that Tamar used her silence as a form of resistance. Silence, according to Yafeh-Deigh (2012:430), is a central aspect of resistance in the power dynamics involving gender relations. Therefore, Tamar's silent response can be understood as a symbol of her determination to undermine the imperial subject. In line with Scott's (1990:4) notion of hidden and public transcripts, one could argue that Tamar seemed to act out what the coloniser expected of her, but while allowing herself to be victimised by her subjugator, she secretly searched for her own source of strength.

Moreover, Van der Walt (forthcoming) raises an important question namely how does one resist oppressive structures without assuming the oppressive identity in return, that is, without one also resorting to oppression? Thinking back on the central concept of hybridity in postcolonial criticism, one is reminded of the point that the identity of the colonised is always in a hybrid form. On the one hand is the identity by birth and on the other is the identity imposed by the colonising context (Chia 2006:181). Therefore, Tamar lived between her Canaanite culture and the Israelite culture, but she was committed to neither. Unlike other foreign women who pledge to follow the God of their coloniser, for example, Ruth, Tamar neither worshipped her Canaanite gods nor the God of Israel. According to Bhabha (2012:247), hybridity constantly causes people to negotiate the middle spaces. Like Kimpa Vita in the story told by Musa Dube mentioned above, Tamar is seen moving in and out of both Israelite and Canaanite cultures as a form of survival. In the house of the coloniser, Tamar had to live like the coloniser, which recalls Bhabha's (2012:247) notion of mimicry which she defines as a state of imitating the coloniser because the oppressors plot to assimilate the other into their culture. Although Tamar lived like the coloniser, she was not quite like the coloniser. She lived in a place of difference because she could never be fully an Israelite (Jonker 2016:32). She acted according to a hidden transcript which implies that in the public, the dominated seem to accept their inferior position, while in a subtle way, question the hegemonic system that oppresses them (Scott 1990:4).

Due to the victimisation she faced, Tamar learned to be a woman of many faces – her identity shifted from that of a daughter-in-law, childless widow, prostitute and seductress, to a mother of twin boys (Collins 2009:11). Tamar recognised the graveness of her situation and the reality of its harshness provoked her to resort to deceptive measures (Krutschwitz 2012:398). Her resistance is carried out through an act of seduction through which she jeopardised not only her own fate but also the lives of her family members (Chia 2006:181). Since Judah disregarded Tamar's father by sending Tamar back to him without conferring with him, Judah probably believed that Tamar plotted the act of trickery with her family's knowledge. Moreover, Judah could have blamed Tamar's father for allowing her to leave the house and appear in public when she was still in mourning, and for that reason he could have called for punishment for the entire family rather than for Tamar alone. However, Judah the coloniser played right into the hands of the colonised – Tamar (Chia 2006:173). Pedrotti and Edwards (2014:21) assert that while individuals draw upon their own sources of power, the environment also may provide sources of strengths and resources from which individuals can draw. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that Tamar's hybrid identity enabled her to exercise power in an environment and family that were also noted for deception, that is, Judah's imperial family.

Having explored Tamar's hybrid identity and her decolonising acts through the postcolonial tools of resistance, we shall now consider Tamar through the eyes of the other, that is, as a trickster.

4.6.7.   Tamar, a questionable female "other"

By looking at Tamar through the eyes of the other, I wish to demonstrate that the urge to survive produced the trickster in her. Viewing Tamar as the subjugated colonised "other" exposes certain limitations she encountered and the psychological implications of the injustice that she suffered. Darden (2012:63) argues that the "imperialism-colonialism system is not only a system of economic and military control, but it is also of cultural penetration/ domination that subjugates psychologically and intellectually." Freire (2005:44) explains that often, at a stage during the struggle, the oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tend to become oppressors or sub-oppressors. The reason for this, according to Freire (2005:45), is that the contradictions involved in their structural realities are also salient in shaping their intricate thought patterns. In Tamar's case, being impregnated by her father-in-law was the

"ammunition" that she needed to liberate herself. Having sex with her father-in-law was probably not the ideal thing to do, however, at that point, it was crucial for her to do so. The restoration of her dignity and identity depended on her committing the absurd.

Thus, Tamar's action is comparable to Rahab's who betrayed her own people for personal security under the colonial rule; she denied her own people for her selfish gain (Joshua 2). Tamar figured out a way that could guarantee her restoration to Judah's house. One could imagine why, after facing humiliation in Judah's house, Tamar did not choose to find love somewhere else, for example, with a Canaanite man. Regarding Rahab, Mill (cited in West 2004:4), who writes about the utilitarian moral ethics, asserts that utility is found in everything which contributes to the happiness of every national being. Actions are judged morally acceptable based on the happiness of the largest number of beneficiaries. One's search for happiness stops if the effect of that happiness decreases the happiness of another individual or of the community. It is in that context that Rahab's actions could be regarded as most selfish, since her pursuit of happiness caused suffering to her nation. However, seen through the eyes of the excluded and subjugated "other", Rahab's action appears justified. It was a struggle for survival, which defied all sense of ethics. Freire (2005:44) argues that the ideal for the oppressed is to be human, but then, to be human is often to act as an oppressor, which in many instances serves as their model of humanity.

It is noteworthy that the coloniser always guarantees life in exchange for something that affects the core of those foreign subjugated female characters. For instance, in the case of Rahab, she had to betray her own people and culture and assimilate into the Israelite society. For Ruth, to finally find happiness and continuation of life, she had to renounce her own culture, gods and people to qualify as an Israelite. In that sense, Tamar also acted to regain access into the coloniser's family. As in the case of Rahab, she had become familiar with being in the middle and with living between continuity and discontinuity, acceptance and rejection, life and death, dream and nightmare (Dube 2005:71). Due to her suffering, Tamar became a different being. Freire (2005:49) asserts that "liberation is thus a childbirth and a painful one", the man or woman who emerges is a new person, produced from the struggle of the oppressed against the oppressor in a context of dehumanisation.

However, a view of the measures of survival employed by foreign women in the biblical narratives would show findings that agree with Jackson's (2014:243) comment that "non-Israelites indeed threatened the purity of Israel by their very presence". This is especially

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clear in Jezebel's case, for what distinguished her from the other women in her context whether Israelite or foreign is her rejection of Yahweh! However, Stanley Frost (cited in Jackson 2014:245) also points out that often Israelite women were pardoned when they committed crimes such as murder and seduction, as in the case of Judith (Dube 2006:142) who emerged a hero, whereas Jezebel a foreign woman met with condemnation. It is thus significant that Tamar the foreigner was almost burned for committing adultery whereas Judah who had committed an even graver crime of denying her the continuation of life, marginalising her, sending her back to her father's house, and stripping her of all economic rights, got off free. There seems to be a double standard at work if in the eyes of the community, Tamar should be burned for having crossed the line based on unspecified criteria.

Furthermore, Israelite women employed trickery to have their way like the matriarchs Rebecca (Genesis 24-27) and Rachel in (Genesis 31:19). However none of them was condemned, perhaps because they were Israelite women. According to Jackson (2014:245) this contradiction implies that when the actions benefit Israel they are considered right and acceptable, but when they affect Israel negatively, these actions are regarded as wrong. One could make a similar argument regarding Jezebel, who is portrayed as nothing less than an intransigent unapologetic enemy of Yahweh. She is never one of us, but one of them, hence, permanently and quintessentially, is "the other." Tamar also may be one of them, married to Judah's sons but she is "othered" in many instances that serve as boundary markers and exposed her foreignness completely. She belonged but did not quite belong to the family; she was treated as one that disrupts the homogeneity of the family. However, by giving birth to sons, she regained access to the coloniser's family, and only then is she worthy enough to mingle with the Israelites.

4.7.   Conclusion of Chapter

In this chapter, I have interpreted the story of Judah and Tamar through a postcolonial feminist lens, considering the various forms of oppression to which Judah subjected Tamar and his other colonised subjects which also included the men of Canaan. Secondly, I briefly examined the psychological effects of being colonised based on the reaction of the colonised subjects. Thirdly, I explored Tamar's methods of resistance and survival under subjugation in

view of her hybrid identity, acts of mimicry, hidden transcripts and silence. I have carefully traced how all these methods offer Tamar a space to negotiate power with her oppressor.

In the concluding chapter below, I will present the findings from the reading of the story of Tamar in Genesis 38 with two interrelated methodological approaches, that is, African feminist and postcolonial feminist approaches. In particular, I will reflect on the significance of reading the story in relation to the context of Zulu marriage, as illustrated by the folktales in Chapter 2 which show that marriage has not always been a safe space for women especially those who fail to give birth to male heirs. I will also contemplate how the findings from this study could be used to bring change to the Zulu community which I belong, by raising awareness of the injustice many women encounter in the context of marriage and by considering strategies of survival that may empower women in oppressive circumstances which are detrimental to their wellbeing and prohibit them from reaching their full potential.

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

5.1.   Introduction

Growing up as a young girl in a rural area, I would often notice the sadness in the eyes of a Zulu bride when she was handed over to her husband's family. I could not help but notice that most Zulu brides cry on what is supposed to be an auspicious occasion. I have asked many women why they cry at this time that they are supposed to be celebrating. Only later when I became older was I told that brides cry because they know that the life they were transitioning into has in store heavy burdens for them to carry. The popular proverb "Ukwenda ukuzilahla" which means "To marry is to throw oneself away" comes to mind. The proverb implies that a girl cannot foretell what married life will be like (Nyembezi 1990:132). Therefore her entering into marriage is like throwing herself away[23].

In this study, findings from folktales and proverbs on marriage in the Zulu culture have been employed to support the thesis that marriage is often an abusive space for Zulu women. The study further shows that over time, Zulu women have suffered abuse and dehumanisation in the hands of men who are meant to love and protect them. In many cases, they are subjected to ostracism and ridicule, which they accept as their fate.

In Chapter 1, I argued that in the Zulu patriarchal society which is fundamentally androcentric in nature, cultural beliefs and practices are used to legitimate the objectification of women. In Chapter 2, I have used two Zulu folktales Mamba ka Maquba and Dumudumu to illustrate this assertion. The folktales offer insight into the conceptual world in which the Zulu women find themselves, that is, they offer a window into the Zulu culture. The various ways in which the characters of the stories interact also reveal something of the norms and values in the Zulu society especially in relation to marriage.

Through the folktales, I have established that for many Zulu women, being married implies being subjected to victimisation and objectification by men. Both tales reveal layers of oppression experienced by women in marriage, yet not much is demanded from the men. These stories also demonstrate that the Zulu culture upholds the impossible ideal which

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[23] This is not to imply that all marriages in the Zulu context turn out bitter, but that such proverbs were produced from the realities of Zulu life which teach that one may encounter hardships in marriage and that was considered normal since many women had endured similar fate in their marriage.

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demands that women should not assert themselves in marriage, and which is a form of oppression. Specifically, I have uncovered the depth of the ostracism that a woman who is incapable of bearing a male child encounters in marriage and the negative implications on their dignity. Understanding Zulu culture through two Zulu folktales help to clarify the Zulu understanding of marriage long before the dawn of civilisation. It is assumed that though modernisation changed the dynamics of how the Zulu conduct themselves in marriage, their ancestral roots still strongly shape some of their views of masculinity and femininity. In the two folktales, it is clear that culture places high demands on a woman and her ability to procreate. In an attempt to challenge these cultural stereotypes and the harmful expectations of what it means to be a Zulu woman, I have found African feminist and postcolonial feminist approaches to be helpful tools not only to interpret the story of Tamar in new ways, but also to empower women to reclaim their agency by challenging their culture's perception of them thereby taking their future into their own hands. In this regard, it is important to sensitise women to the fact that they are the shapers of their own cultural narratives and need to stop yielding to the power of patriarchy. Thus, in Chapters 3 and 4, I have read the story of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38 with these two interrelated methodological approaches. Both approaches help the reader to gain some insight into the various forms of cultural oppression experienced by Tamar as well as the avenues open to her to challenge the forces that cause her suffering.

I chose the story of Tamar because it is a good example of the portrait of women who experienced multiple layers of oppression in the patriarchal world in which she tried to survive. In Chapter 3, I used an African feminist approach that reveals the oppression that Tamar experienced due to patriarchal norms that operated in her context. The story of Tamar a woman who was dehumanised by culture, is a story with which Zulu women can easily identify given their experience of marriage and cultural oppression. Tamar lived in a culture which valued men more than women. Her oppression potentially serves as a mirror for Zulu women who could relate to another woman who faced similar limitations in an oppressive marriage that was legitimised by culture. In Chapter 3, we first considered Tamar in her role as a victim and the reality and intensity of her suffering. The reading aimed not only to show Tamar as one who merely escaped the injustice against her, but to draw attention to just how dire Tamar's suffering was. Therefore, her ploy to depatriarchalise her patriarchal context was driven by a desperate situation that necessitated some desperate actions. Acting as a trickster, she used her body as a weapon in her quest to depatriarchalise her context. Despite

the complexities of her context, she still emerged as a woman who conquered her circumstances.

In Chapter 4, I read the story of Tamar through an African postcolonial feminist lens. The approach is particularly significant in the contemporary context as it also reveals the unique situation of South African Zulu women. Once again, Tamar serves as a model for Zulu women who are confronted by their colonised past. Tamar, as a married woman in a colonised context, used some postcolonial modes of resistance to protect her interests and in the process, she was able to reclaim her dignity. Reading this story through a postcolonial feminist lens may be helpful to Zulu women as they seek new ways to resist not only their patriarchal culture but also the oppressive powers of the colonial world in whose shadows they continue to live. Tamar's model of resistance may therefore be an important tool for empowering Zulu women to resist injustice.

5.2. Significance of the study

Through this study, I have come to realise the masculinity crisis that the Zulu men in my context today face. In the postcolonial South African context in which Zulu men are situated, black masculinities are seen as masculinities in crisis or masculinities in transition (Morrell, cited in Moolman 2013:96). African men find that their masculine identities are in jeopardy due to their experiences during the apartheid period, and trying to reconstruct their identities in a neoliberal context comes with new challenges. However, this does not mean that the dilemma is unique to black African masculinities; Western (white) men who live on the African continent also have their own crisis, which has much to do with having to deal with the loss of power. Nonetheless in this study, the focus is on Zulu men in particular.

The transition and crisis in masculinity are said to spark "ambiguity, multiplicity and contradiction" in African men and specifically in Zulu men of my community. This implies that African masculinities continuously undergo a process of negotiation with everything else that intersects with them. Moolman (2013:96) stresses that the way in which masculinities are produced/reproduced is central to the perception of women as oppressed and objectified creatures. The history of apartheid in South Africa shows that colonisation denied African men a healthy expression of masculinity and reduced men to the level of children (boys), which resulted in an African masculinity that is at odds with itself. The insights into the crisis

in African (Zulu) masculinities help set the tone for the reading of Genesis 38 with a postcolonial feminist lens.

This study set out to challenge in part the cultural scripts which form part of the patriarchal agenda that informs the oppression that many Zulu women experience in marriage. Clearly, patriarchal expectations have contributed to the perception that women are inferior to men. Thus, this study is important because it serves to expose culture and patriarchy as both violent and dangerous when it comes to women and their health. I propose that the story of Tamar be read in community with the two hermeneutical lenses used in this study. This could be in the form of a contextual Bible study in which participants are encouraged to identify and question the injustices in their culture based on Tamar's story. In the Zulu culture, storytelling is used as a most effective tool of warning the community about danger or imparting morals. Reading the story of Tamar with groups of Zulu men and women could help in a way expose the departriarchalising power of the story in the same way that Judah eventually realised that his actions towards Tamar were unrighteous.

Secondly, the study attempted to question the assumption that cultural narratives absolutely define women's lives. As noted in Chapter 2 of this study, culture is a continuous activity by the human community; a phenomenon under continuous construction according to time and space. Although the Zulu culture consists of many different layers and observes multiple forms of oppression, women no longer have to abide by its script. The various modes of resistance examined in Chapters 3 and 4 of the study could serve to enlighten and empower Zulu women to recognise that they actually have the power to shape their narratives according to their own experiences and self-perception. Reading the story of Tamar from an African feminist and postcolonial feminist viewpoint could further help Zulu women to realise that they carry an innate potential to subvert whatever power or institution oppresses them.

Thirdly, the reading of the biblical text with a postcolonial feminist approach is important because it demonstrates that a singular approach may be inadequate for reading the biblical text. However, using multiple complimentary lenses is helpful when reading a text such as Genesis 38, as it helps to take serious the Zulu community's experience of the past and to help the people find new modes of survival in their new postcolonial context.

The reading of the Tamar narrative shows Tamar as a deserving model which Zulu women can emulate. Tamar who outsmarted the oppressive colonial powers of her context offers

tools of resistance that could help Zulu women to face their contextual realities with courage. Zulu women have also experienced colonialism in the form of apartheid in their South African context. Their experiences may differ from Tamar's in the sense that their oppression of colonisation comes from their own Zulu men rather than foreign colonisers. Due to their experiences in the past, the ramifications of colonialism have negatively affected the relational dynamics between men and women especially in the marital setting, for apartheid deliberately institutionalised gender inequality (Baden 1998:11). Many women are caught between the cultural expectations that they must submit to their men versus the political and economic power available to them in their contemporary world which greatly threaten the traditional patriarchal household. Thus, we can say that Zulu women find themselves in a liminal space, that is, like Tamar who was familiar with "being in the middle, living in-between continuity and discontinuity, acceptance and rejection, life and death, dream and nightmare" (Darden 2012:69). However, it is at the borders that the Zulu women could also "challenge and subvert the dominant ethos" (Darden 2012:69)

In Tamar's story, the postcolonial feminist lens affirms that the subalterns do have a voice after all. Zulu women have so much to say about their marital oppression, and the possibility for these voices to emerge from the gutters of oppression is opened up in this study. Even though Zulu men prioritise sons over daughters, those sons will never be able to constitute tribes and clans without daughters. Zulu women's pain can become the new frontier for cultural reform, as it begs for new cultural folktales that consider the reality of women and recognise that both males and females are equally important to the family and the society at large. No one group will succeed without the other. Even though Judah needed sons to continue his tribe, he did not have a womb to help him achieve his wish; it took Tamar's subtle intervention for him to achieve that.

Lastly, the study was inspired by the act of witnessing my own mother's experience in an oppressive marriage which favoured only male offspring. Her often painful experience is shared by many Zulu women who have not yet gathered enough strength to resist their oppression. However, my mother's example of surviving the ostracism in her society for failing to produce a male heir signifies that every other woman too can rewrite their own story after facing rejection by the community. Her resilience to strive for better things despite the challenges she faced and her eagerness to reclaim the dignity she was denied are remarkable.

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5.3.   Issues for Further Study

Many questions remain after this study. For example, how does one go about changing mind-sets and reaching out to both Zulu women and men to start a dialogue on the role of culture in marriage and procreation? It is not an easy task to change people's mind-set especially minds that have been conditioned to view oppression as a normal.

One issue that could be explored in the future is the use of a Contextual Bible Study that could draw on the exegetical insights from the reading of the story of Tamar by combining an African feminist and a postcolonial feminist approach that focus on gender roles in the Zulu society. Contextual Bible Study is a prominent tool for effecting change as demonstrated for instance in the works of Gerald West. West (2012:392) argues that it is required of the reader to bring his or her contextual realities into the process of reading the biblical text. By doing so, the Bible becomes authentic and God's word is experienced practically in terms of the real challenges that confront the people of faith. The approach of Contextual Bible Study relates very well to the work of Denise Ackerman who is known as a feminist theologian of praxis and whose work takes seriously the individual's experience. The readers' experience shapes the interpretation of one's reading process (Ackerman 2003:35). In other words, the reader's personal experience and need shape the message of the biblical text in profound ways.

It may be worthwhile in a future study to conduct a Contextual Biblical Study of Genesis 38 with groups of both Zulu men and women. Such a process of communal Bible reading could help participants to identify with the complex characters in the Tamar story who are faced with many challenges and who engage in a variety of strategies to survive. A facilitator could assist the participants to identify the oppressive gendered layers hidden in the story, and to ask questions that concern these multiple layers of oppression. The facilitator should also allow the groups to define how these gender dynamics perpetuate forms of oppression and how they could be halted. For instance, Van der Walt (2012:187) contends that "the bible reading space can enable a supportive environment where women and men may reflect on issues of gender based violence in light of the biblical stories."

By bringing both men and women together to read the Bible, each gender will have the chance to engage with the text and voice its concerns and fears in a safe communal space. Furthermore, bringing men and women together in this manner would show that transformation can only begin when both parties acknowledge the role they have played in oppressing the other. Contextual Bible Study above all aims to give women their own voice and empower them to rewrite their own narratives that define who and what they wish to be in any given communal space, and specifically, in the marital setting.

Potentially, such a Contextual Bible Study approach could involve three different groups: women, men, and a mixed group which all engage in a study of the story of Judah and Tamar. In the empirical study based on such a Contextual Bible Study, it would then be interesting to observe the gender dynamics within the groups and to determine whether relying on separate groups was more conducive for providing a safe space than the mixed group. What happens when people come together? How does the gender dynamics affect what happens? The exegetical insights from this study which used both an African feminist and a postcolonial feminist approach to read Genesis 38 will be helpful in constructing a set of questions that can help participants in the Contextual Bible Study to enter into the world of the biblical text.

In conclusion, I carried out this study to learn more about my mother's culture and understand something of the multiple layers of oppression that define Zulu women in marriage. The study has helped me to see that even though the voices of so many women in my community have been silenced because of fear and threat, women can no longer afford to remain silent. Women such as my mother (who recently graduated with a BTh degree) are called to help liberate other Zulu women by showing them how to subvert the oppressive social structures around them and to flourish. This could be achieved through what Claassens (2016:151) calls imagining the possibility of hope – anticipating a positive future for both Zulu women and Zulu men in our society. It is a society in which Zulu women are able to reach their full potential and not judged in terms of their ability or inability to bring a male child into the world; a society in which Zulu men treat their women with the same dignity and respect that they themselves demand from women.

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