

Getui, Mary

Book Review: Kiama Kia Ngo: An African christian feminist ethic of resistance and transformation, Accra, Legon theological studies series, 2000

In:

Chitando, Ezra; Mombo, Esther; Gunda, Masiwa Ragies (Eds.), That all may live! : essays in honour of Nyambura J. Njoroge, Bamberg : University of Bamberg Press, p. 109-111. 2021. DOI: 10.20378/irb-50019

Bookpart - Published Version

DOI of the Article: 10.20378/irb-93731

Date of Publication: 18.03.2024

Legal Notice:

This work is protected by copyright and/or the indication of a licence. You are free to use this work in any way permitted by the copyright and/or the licence that applies to your usage. For other uses, you must obtain permission from the rights-holder(s).

This document is made available under the **Creative Commons Lizense CC BY**.



This licencse information is available online:
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

**BOOK REVIEW: KIAMA KIA NGO:
AN AFRICAN CHRISTIAN FEMINIST ETHIC OF RESISTANCE
AND TRANSFORMATION,
ACCRA, LEGON THEOLOGICAL STUDIES SERIES, 2000**

Mary Getui

In the call for contributions to this volume, Nyambura Njoroge is described as a leading African woman theologian, ethicist, activist, administrator and ecumenist. Other attributes mentioned of Nyambura include scholar, one who is engaged in the community, a contributor to African women theologies, HIV & AIDS theologies, ecumenical theological education, children's theologies, theology and disability, theology and sexual diversity and other themes. Nyambura is also described as being consistent in her call for life giving theologies and effective leadership in Africa.

Her book, *Kiama Kia Ngo: An African Christian Feminist Ethic of Resistance and Transformation* captures many of these attributes and concerns of Nyambura. The outstanding ones are the place and contribution, and challenges of the African Christian woman in church and society within Africa - a context riddled with oppression, domination, discrimination, control and dehumanization's; gender dynamics in the church and society; leadership; ecumenism; and community engagement. Under-scoring these concerns and attributes is the double-edged impact, namely resistance and transformation.

The book arose out of Nyambura PhD dissertation at Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey, USA. This is commendable effort in that a book, rather than a dissertation, reaches many more people. Again, a dissertation takes an academic format while a book is reader friendly. A book can also be described as practical, touching on the lives of the people, even at grassroots level. The book is a demonstration of Nyambura as a scholar who translates theory to the practical. Notably, it is based on primary field research, with the voices of some of the pioneer adherents of the Presbyterian tradition in Kenya, as well as reference to

records, songs, symbols and projects in line with the centrality and value of orality and symbolism in the African context.

The book is published in Africa, which makes it accessible and hopefully, affordable, considering that many books by Africans and on Africa but published outside the continent are beyond the reach of many. Further, it is the second, which is a feat, in the Legon Theological Series, a project by the Theological Education Fund of the World Council of Churches. The series is intended to be characterized by Africanis, which concerns a theological perspective that is informed by the history, cultures and issues as well as the hopes and fears of Africa. This book therefore meets this criteria, thus it is relevant and applicable to Africa.

The content of the book is broadly women's ethic of resistance and transformation with focus on the Woman's Guild of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, Kenya. The community of interest are African women, represented by the *Agikuyu*. This focus reflects the unique place and contribution of African Christian women in the church and in society. Nyambura brings out several theological issues such as women's view of God, women in Church and society and how women are viewed by men on these and other issues. She also mentions some men who and how they have accompanied the quest of the Woman's Guild. The book is hence a worthwhile resource on feminist theology, and on the dynamics of the relationship between men and women in church and in the wider society.

Nyambura highlights that one issue that the Woman's Guild stood against right at their inception in the 1920s is female circumcision. This is a rite of passage that has deep cultural, social, religious and even economic significance but which also raises equally deep human rights concerns. By raising this issue, Nyambura confirms that she is consistent in her call for life giving theologies. This book serves well for those of the school of thought that that initiation rites are irrelevant, as well as those of the school of thought that considers that (aspects of) these rites serve a useful purpose in nurturing and moulding the participants, even in the contemporary times.

A critical concern for Africa, indeed the world over is leadership. Nyambura, who has been consistent in her call for effective leadership in Africa, investigates the organizational structure of the Woman's Guild to establish how it empowers or hinders women's participation in the life of the church, and by extension participation in society. Basing on the Woman's Guild this book offers useful insights on leadership.

The book also brings out Nyambura the ecumenist. While her focus is on the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, she is generous in acknowledging the contributions and place of non-Presbyterians not only in her own personal and career growth but also generally in the history and journey of Christianity. She makes references to the history of ecumenism in Africa and summarizes the contribution of ecumenical bodies such as National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK), All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), and Pan Africa Christian Women Assembly (PACWA).

Nyambura proposes a theoretical model that she considers useful for the Woman's Guild to emulate to empower and broaden the African Christian women's agency and ethic of resistance and transformation in Africa. She bases the model on *Kamiriithu* Community Educational and Cultural Center in Kenya. Two factors for choosing this center are first, that the center had done a thorough analysis in analyzing their social context and developing practical strategies for transforming the situation and secondly, the community was initiated and constituted in the immanent process of self-determination and resistance by men and women at grassroots level. This model is applicable for the individual and other agencies that are concerned and interested in promoting life to its fullness. This recommendation would be used as an illustration of Nyambura the activist. Such a proposal is bound to rock the boat as it were- it is borrowing from the secular for the sacred! It is borrowing from grassroots for the church and for the Guild.

The pioneers of the Woman's Guild were ready to break out of the silence, fear and invisibility that had served to perpetuate the dehumanizing and injustice inflicted on women for such a long time. At the turn of the 21st century, Nyambura followed the footsteps of these pioneers by writing this book- she is among the pioneer female theologians to speak out fearlessly and visibly on the issues covered in the title of this book. These issues remain relevant two decades down the line for the African Christian Woman, the African Christian Female Theologian, and the African Woman at the Grassroots and the church in Africa have lessons to learn from *Kiama Kia Ngo: An African Christian Feminist Ethic of Resistance and Transformation*. There is a stake for Church people, scholars, theologians, ecumenists, feminists, cultural enthusiasts those engaged in the community, and people of good will in this publication.