

Issa, Witness

In the Theological House of Faith Lugazia

In:

Maseno, Loreen; Mombo, Esther; Muke, Nagaju; u. a. (Hrsg.), Queen of Sheba : East and Central African Women's Theologies of Liberation (Circle Jubilee Volume 2), Bamberg : University of Bamberg Press, p. 205-216. 2024. DOI: 10.20378/irb-92896

Bookpart - Published Version

DOI of the Article: 10.20378/irb-94429

Date of Publication: 28.03.2024

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 License CC BY**.



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

12 | In the Theological House of Faith Lugazia

Witness Issa

Introduction

Faith Lugazia, a wife to Mr Jeoivan Kattaraia and a mother of two, is a Pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania and a professor of systematic theology, mission, and gender studies. She was born in 1964 in Bukoba, Kagera one of the regions around the Lake Victoria. Her mother was Bertha Kokulolwa and her Father was Lugazia Katariaia. She was born in a middle-class working family where her father was a medical doctor and her mother was a clerk in a government company. She spent most of her childhood in the village with her grandmother and grandfather. This is because during those days it was the tradition to take children after breastfeeding to their paternal grandparents. This was believed to be necessary for the parents to have another child. So, she stayed in the village until the time she had to start school, she joined her parents in Dar es Salaam to start her schooling there.

In 1979 her father died. This made all her family including her mother move to the village and into her paternal grandparents' household. Everything they had accumulated in the city with their father was sold off. It is very important to mention her grandmother because that is where she was molded into whom she is today. She owes a lot to her grandmother. From nurturing to influencing changes and participating to make changes she wants to see.

After completing primary and secondary education, in 1988 she joined Makumira theological college for a certificate in theological training. She was the only girl in her class, and she happened to score very high grades. In the year 1998, she came back to the same intuition for the bachelor's degree of divinity which she completed with high credits. In the year 2001, she got a scholarship for a master degree at Luther Seminary Minnesota, USA. She was privileged due to her credibility and determination. She got

a scholarship for a Ph.D. in systematic theology at Luther Seminary, Minnesota, USA in the year 2010.

How her background influences her as an activist?

Yes, she said. “First; Being raised by my grandmother who had five female children and only one boy child has contributed much to whom I am. Under the influence of my grandma, my grandpa gave the right to education to all children regardless of their gender” she insisted. According to her, since she grew up seeing her uncles going to school and working and employed in different both government and private sectors the issue of the right to education for both girls and boys was a must. She takes education as a tool for liberation. She can hardly imagine the liberation of a woman without a quality education. This is the reason she also got access to education even when her father passed away. The grandparents took over to support her education.

Another thing to do with her background is the influence of culture in undermining or exploiting women. When her father died and the whole family had to leave the city for the village. Her mother had to give up her work in a government company. The family sold all their belongings including the house and all that they had to move to the village, assuming a mother cannot take care of the family after the death of her husband.

Her father was a teacher by profession employed by the government. Faith’s childhood even after moving to the village nothing really changed. This is because her grandfather was able to provide, she and her siblings needed. Since her father was the only son of her grandparents, after his death all his belongings were placed under her grandfather. The family also was doing agricultural activities in the village something that made the family to have enough food and surplus for generation income.

Faith never felt this as a challenge before going to the theological college. After going to the college and facing discrimination because she was a woman is when she started to recall about the situation of her mother back home. She felt that she lost her economic freedom the day her husband died. Because she did not want to remarry, she had to be taken care of by her father-in-law. Even when she wanted to do a small thing she had to ask from her father-in-law. She was never economically free.

They thought they were helping her, but Faith started questioning the cultural practices of the Haya from that tender age. *Bahaya* people are the people from North-West Tanzania living in the area around Lake Victoria, in Kagera region, one of regions in Tanzania. As many African cultures they are very strong patrilineal society. She placed her mother as every African woman, especially in the Bahaya cultural setting, where they do not have right to inherit their husband's belongings after the death of their husband. In Bahaya's mode of production is small scale farming and animal keeping. Usually women participate fully in these activities. During the harvest women have tendency to visit each other with the products from their farms.

Her mother like other widows were not having the freedom to take anything from the harvest as they visit friends or relatives because they do not have control of anything. Everything is under the control of their in-laws and they were like other children, they should ask if they need anything. She has been challenging the African patriarchal system in most of her works. She is determined to realize cultural transformation in her society. She addresses this many of her works particular *Continuity and Discontinuity of Haya Traditions on Charismatic Teaching on Human Sexuality in Tanzania (2020)* where she raised a lot of issues in Bahaya tribe including the denied right to sexual satisfaction to women and *Naweza: Kitabu cha Masomo ya Biblia kwa Wanawake (2015)*, she shows the strength of a woman and the power of trying something. She uses example of women in her own contexts who went beyond limits by trying to do things that community for so long believed they are not for women eg the first woman in Bahaya to study theology and the first woman to own and drive a car.

Her education journey positively molds her to be a gender and women's rights activist as well. She recalls girls to be minorities in most of the classes she was registered. As she started her journey to theology in higher education, she was the only woman in the class. Being a minority in the class, she faced a lot of discrimination and rejection from her male classmates. They could even question her intellectual capacity especially when she became among the best students in the class on exams. As the saying goes what doesn't kill you makes you strong. All the situations she

encountered from her childhood to adulthood strengthened her and made her the phenomenal lady she is today.

This paper will be discussing the work of Faith Lugazia from different perspectives including theological context, her motives, purpose, and the source of her both inspiration and aspiration

Theological contexts

She is an African woman scholar; her theological context is as much as African Christianity and as well as in wider perspective of Lutheran Theology as well as part of the global community. She is a third generation of Christian in her family as her grandfather studied in Uganda and met Anglican missionaries and being baptized. After the studies in Uganda her grandfather and his fellows came back as missionaries for Christianity. On his wedding day there were Lutheran missionaries in Karagwe area, therefore her grandfather was converted to Lutheranism. So, she was born in Lutheran family and being baptized when she had five months.

Since her entire family was religious and close to the church, Faith grew up wishes to work in and for the church. When she was in secondary school, she shared her ambition with the student pastor at that point she wanted to study something that would made her working with the church and for the church. Since she had never seen any woman pastor and even heard about a woman theologian (even though Alice Kabugumila the very first woman theologian from same diocese had completed her theological studies), nursing was in her mind. It is the student pastor who introduced her to the so-called theological education and motivated her to that. So, after passing the interview, she was enrolled to Lutheran Theological collage Makumira where she started her theological journey.

She embodies the struggle for women to be recognized in their cultural context. Struggle against abusive powers and seeking for recognition, and dignity. The right for power to lead and be fully faults of community experiences with God. In relationship with the Church, her writings This paper will be discussing the work of Faith Lugazia from different perspectives including theological context, her motives, purpose,

and the source of her both inspiration and aspiration are opening the eyes of Churches in Africa to look for Christ who is beyond our culture and who is liberating and a reconciler. His role is to empower both men and women for the mission and evangelization work. Hence, contextual, and Biblical hermeneutics has been applied to support liberating and transformative concepts in the work documented.

Sources for her Theology

We glean from Faith her sources for theology. One source is her experiences as an African woman in Tanzania. Her work is also full of her own experiences with the Lutheran Church. She even had to wait for about two decades after the completion of her theological training for her church under the patriarchal culture to accept women's ordination. All these years she was working hard in different positions like Diocese director for women and children, teaching bible knowledge in schools, being the head of education desk in the diocese as well as serving the entire church as director for women and children for Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. She also used her time very wisely to continue with education whenever there was possibilities. So, went back to Makumira for bachelor's degree, and by the time the church agreed to ordain women in her diocese she was already in Minnesota for her doctoral studies in Luther seminar. She works her talk when she tells young women to thrive for education, hard work and determination.

According to her, Biblical narratives are one of the important sources in her rich house of theology. As Lutheran Christians, we all affirm the authority of Scripture in our theological formation. The Word of God is the fundamental source of theology. Faith has been in discussion with creation narratives if a woman is also *imago Dei* (created in the image of God). She answers this question in some of her works including, "Priesthood of All Believers: A Reformation Legacy for Gender Parity in Lutheran Churches in Africa." In *Martin Luther's accounts and Africa: Reflection on the Reformation and Christianity in Africa* (2016) and in *Theology of Presence* in *African Christianity: A Transforming Missiological Factor for Women in Contemporary Pentecostal Churches in Africa* in *International Review of Mission* (Lugazia, 2017).

Cultural Narratives as well as those from the experiences of other people in their relationship with God are said to be among her source of theological formation. In her works “Naweza, Kitabu Cha Masomo ya Biblia kwa Wanawake” (2015) and “Continuity and Discontinuity of Haya Traditions on Charismatic Teaching on Human Sexuality in Tanzania” in *Genders, Sexualities, and Spiritualities in African Pentecostalism: Your Body is a Temple of the Holy Spirit*” (2020). In *naweza*, she shares the successful life journey of women who happened to go beyond cultural boundaries to do things women were not expected to do. Their achievements become inspirational to the younger generation and those still in cultural lockups.

In *Continuity and Discontinuity of Haya Traditions on Charismatic Teaching on Human Sexuality in Tanzania*, “*Genders, Sexualities, and Spiritualities in African Pentecostalism: Your Body is a Temple of the Holy Spirit*” she explores how Haya tradition addresses women’s sexuality. It seems to her that African traditions do not allow women even those who are married to discuss their sexual desire something that is also being promoted in African Pentecostalism and Spirituality. She took this as a challenge to be confronted with the reality that women too deserve sexual satisfaction in marriage.

Also, she is writing from her experience and people’s experience and relationship with God. This is seen in her different works with subjects like Women and culture, Christ beyond Culture, and God’s inclusion of women in God’s oikos. Ecumenism, Theology of presence among Pentecostal Christianity. Although my work is situated in African Christianity, some examples are borrowed and recognized from another context in the world.

The purpose of Faith’s theological thinking

It is clear that Faith has a purpose for her thinking and writing. She is passionate for Women’s rights, recognition, voice, representation, and being given space are one big purpose she has been addressing in many of her works. Using her intellectual and theological position to advocate for women’s rights and to claim for active participation of women in the life and work of the Church by claiming the importance of Women in the Church’s “God -Talk”. Furthermore, she strives for women’s Rights to

education and their opportunities to participate in decision-making in the church and community larger.

Her main works, intend to decolonize Western male-dominating theology which has been muting women in religious space and African men scholars whose ideas are in line with patriarchy and oppressive culture which define women as “others” For example in her papers like *Theology of presence*. She agrees with Western Feminist theology, because of its liberating nature. Agreeing does not mean she is buying the politicizing feminism from God-Talk for liberation, repentance, and getting home to Human rights ideology which bleaches individual ethics accountability before the Lord and impose human will/efforts to obtain salvation and sanctification.

Its strength is its liberating nature and so focus on bringing transformation and change. The contribution is that it calls the Church universally to move from the comfort zone and afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted.

Faith, patriarchy, oppression, and women’s agenda

Advocacy for women’s rights and equality, justice, and fair treatment, as well as mutual respect for women not just those doing theology but all women in the church and entire society, has always been dear to her. She desires that every woman, facing abuse, violence, humiliation, poverty, diseases, or political mistreatment to be included in her intervention initiatives. Those who have been around her can bear witness to the thirst in her to be quenched by justice and transformative masculinity. I can still remember when we got information about the death of one of our fellow women pastors in Tanzania when she was the chairperson of the forum. This pastor was found dead and it was said she was killed pitilessly but those committed this crime were yet to be known. So, Faith on behalf of other women theologians wrote a letter to the President of the Republic of Tanzania, asking justice to prevail during the investigation and judgement of the case. She also asked the state through ministry for Health and social welfare to assist upbringing of the children of the deceased as she was the breadwinner of the family.

This also can be seen through her works like *Theology of Presence In African Christianity: A Transforming Missiological Factor For Women In Contemporary Pentecostal Churches In Africa*, she argues that women in missionary churches should be free from any exploitative and oppression systems acknowledging the theology of presence which affirms God's physical presence with us through the incarnation of his begotten son. She says: "Women need intervention skills to break the silence. Since although they have much freedom, they are still silent to some of the oppressive powers and violence to the fear of hurting someone or not being faithful to God".

In her theological formation she claims women's rights as human rights and therefore, women must be treated with dignity as they are created in the image of God. Her works unpack all injustices done against women in the name of Christianity and call for repentance and reconciliation. Remind the call of the Church to proclaim reconciliation and freedom to all of God's creation. It further connects the historical part of women of faith in action from the beginning of her story, reformation to the twentieth-first century where women are celebrating achievements that women have accomplished by the grace of God.

Faith and green theology

In her work *The Holy Spirit, Eco-Justice, And An African Lutheran Response To Ecological Peril* (2017), she talks about how Africans relate to the rest of creation and why environmental conservation is so very important to African indigenous culture. She presented the world view of Africa as a continent of nature, forests, waters, animals, and biodiversity of most world's flora and fauna. She Agrees with African writers like Mbiti, Mazrui, and Niwagira who show the respect Africans have for nature as a source of food, rain, sanctuary places for worship, materials for shelter, and land that unites the living, the dead, and ancestors. For these Indigenous Africans had respect and care for the environment and nature.

According to her, it is an awful situation that today African Christians have little or no respect for the environment. Those who claim to be born-again do not consider care for nature as part of the mission of Christianity.

She uses Luther as a good example when she says even if the world will collapse tomorrow, I can still plan an apple tree today.

In her pneumatological understanding, she brings the idea of the Holy Spirit as the life giver who brings life to everything including our surroundings. She calls for Lutherans to not only use Holy Spirit when we need physical healing or to acquire wealth and to prosper in material things. Instead, she insists that our understanding and engagement with the holy spirit should enable believers to care for the environment and do justice to all the creation and by so doing will be able to demonstrate our faith as Christians and humanity as Africans who initially have so much relationship with the environment.

Faith and Charismatic, Pentecostalism and Spirituality

She has written much about Charismatic, Pentecostalism, and Spirituality, especially in how they influence our social, political, and spiritual well-being in Africa. Religion has so much impact on Africans. Most African worldviews are in one way or another shaped by the way one's religion leads.

Faith is showing how these interpretations may mislead people of a certain cultural background especially when cultures may be used as the tool to justify or interpret spirituality. In some of her works, she has shown the positive side of Pentecostalism in Africa, especially in explaining the idea of the Holy Spirit and how they encounter and utilize the power of doing things like healing. In her work titled *theology of presence* she agrees with Harvey Cox and Hollenweger who are of the opinion that, Noe Pentecostal has bringing spiritual transformation. Its theology is not built in the ability to make an arguments or logical and scholarly skills but through testimonies and touching lives. It is experiencing the power of God through dancing, songs, proclamation of faith, fellowship with others and sharing of testimonies.

Faith and Reformation Legacy

In her paper titled *Priest of All Believers: Reformation Legacy for Gender Parity in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania* she is in dialogue

with Luther's doctrine of the priesthood of all believers as our reformation legacy. She agrees that Luther was not in favor of women's ordination to pastoral positions in the church as she considered them weaker sex compared to men. Although Luther's doctrine of the priesthood of all believers was intended to address the medieval church hierarchies Faith acknowledges the later development of the church especially when this doctrine is used to address gender parity within the church. There are some challenges as she has shown yet the success is proof that ELCT is valued and acknowledges the equality that both men and women in the church and before God who created both equally.

She has not just gone to school and got an education just for herself. Her education has placed her in the spotlight as one of the very first women theologians. Her critical thinking and questioning of anything require explanations. Those who happened to work with her can testify to her courage and outstanding personality that will always say: what is our agreement or resolution on this? Can we do something instead of just lamenting? Can we discuss this with authorities? Pastors, this is not something we should remain silent about. She is always a loud thinker!

In her position and status, she could remain in the offices, instead, she opted in giving a supporting hand and showing a way to go to the youngsters especially women in theology. As a pioneer, she reintroduced a circle of concerned African women, A Tanzanian chapter to all Tanzanian women theologians. This becomes a platform for all of us the rising stars to start our first step in the journey to good authors and scholars. She is one of the very selfless women theologians who will always look for others, to uplift and encourage others.

CONCLUSION

Faith Lugazia together with other pioneers of women theologians in Tanzania have done a lot in paving the way for emancipation of women theologians in the aspects of education, leadership positions, serving in ecumenical organization like Lutheran World Federations (LWF), United Evangelical Mission (UEM) to mention but few. She is a role model to many, inspiring many and continuing to nurture and mentor others in

her position as university professor and coordinator of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, Tanzania Chapter. We continue learning from her hardworking spirit and zeal for success.

Generally, her contribution to African women theology can be summarized in advocacy which she does through dialogues whenever given the chance, presentation, writing, and day to day life as continue address different injustice issues around her society. Another thing is empowerment which she does in her capacity as university professor through teaching, mentoring, guiding, counselling, advising, and supporting students including young women theologians. She is true definition of a leader as she leads by example. Very courageous and phenomenon woman, she plays a role of uniting, aspiring, and networking women in Tanzania with other women in Africa and beyond.

REFERENCES

- Lugazia, K.F. and J. Rwamunyana, 2013. "The Effects of Culture on Gender Roles in the Protestant Church: A Case Study of Churches in Huye District of Southern Province in Rwanda. In *Family, Gender and Community Development*. PIASS Publication Series 5, 53-82.
- Lugazia, K.F., 2003. "Charismatic Movements in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania." In M. Vahakangas, A. Kyomo (Eds.). *Charismatic Renewal in Africa: A Challenge for African Christianity*. Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 45-63.
- Lugazia, K.F., 2007. "Empire's Export of Prosperity Theology: Its Impact on Africa." In K. Bloomquist (Ed.). *Being the Church in the Midst of the Empire: Trinitarian Reflection*. Minneapolis: Lutheran University Press, 181-192.
- Lugazia, K.F., 2011. "Transformation of Mission Instituted Churches in Tanzania. Charismatic Renewal, Denominational Tradition and Transformation of Society. A Lutheran Voice." In *Encounter Beyond Routine*. Hamburg: Ecumenical Churches in Germany, 91-102.
- Lugazia, K.F., 2015. "*Naweza*" *Kitabu cha Masomo ya Biblia Kwa Wanawake Wakristo*. Bukoba: North Western Publishers.

- Lugazia, K.F., 2016. "Priesthood of All Believers: A Reformation Legacy for Gender Parity in Lutheran Churches in Africa." In *Martin Luther and Africa: Reflection on the Reformation and Christianity in Africa*. Kigali/Wuppertal: PIASS/UEM Publications, 117-135.
- Lugazia, K.F., 2016. "The Side-Lined Doctrine of The Holy Spirit has Place in Responding to Ecological Peril of Our Time." In *Dialog Journal of Theology* 55/3 (September), 282-286.
- Lugazia, K.F., 2017. 'Theology of Presence' in African Christianity: A Transforming Missiological Factor for Women in Contemporary Pentecostal Churches in Africa." In *International Review of Mission* 106/2 (December) 307-321.
- Lugazia, K.F., 2017. "The Relevance of some Contemporary African Pentecostal/Charismatic themes in African Christianity: A Contemporary Missiological Quest." In J. Motte, A. Parlindungan (Eds.). *Mission Still Possible? Global Perspectives on Mission Theology and Mission Practice*. Wuppertal: U.E.M. Publication, 137-149.
- Lugazia, K.F., 2018. "The Gospel Promises of Fullness of Life and Critical Considerations of the Gospel of Prosperity." In *African Christian Theology: Focus on Human Dignity*. Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 275-288.
- Lugazia, K.F., 2020. Continuity and Discontinuity of Haya Traditions on Charismatic Teaching on Human Sexuality in Tanzania." In *Genders, Sexualities, and Spiritualities in African Pentecostalism: Your Body is a Temple of the Holy Spirit*. Cham/Kaunda. Ed. Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 265-279.